# Research on China Propaganda Picture from the Perspective of Visual Art

Jinsong Yu

School of Art and Design,
Wuhan University of Science and Technology,
Wuhan, China
Email: yujinsong@wust.edu.cn

Shengli Chen

School of Design,
Jianghan University,
Wuhan, China
Email: 527395960@qq.com

*Abstract*—**Visual arts is not only a language, but also a propaganda vector. As one of the artistic forms of visual arts, propaganda picture is a kind of visual language with different symbols, unique structure and rules. In a particular historical period in Chinese history, the political information visualization of the propaganda picture refers to the transformation of the ruling party's policy into graphics through visual art language, so that the policy can be easily understood and accepted by the general public. Simultaneously, propaganda picture is also a common language for the spiritual dialogue of the whole society at that time and a tool to disseminate the idea of the leadership.**

*Keywords—Visual Arts; Perspective; Propaganda picture; Visualization*

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. Visual Arts

Visual art, a kind of formative arts, through the applying of certain material materials, to create a visual image for people to watch. It covers a wide range, including a long history of architecture, sculpture, painting art, practical decorative arts and crafts, but also film and Television Art spawned by industrial technology. The art image it displays also has rich forms of visual art because of the variety of modeling techniques: from two-dimensional plane painting to three-dimensional sculpture to dynamic film visual art etc. Therefore, visual art is a visible and touching art to emphasize authenticity. "Visual art is a figurative language that uses different symbols", this formulation was first proposed by a Swiss linguist and widely recognized. As a language to convey information, visual arts should have the same structure and rules as the spoken language or written language used by human beings. Only when one understands and masters the structure and rules of this language to a certain extent, he can observe the image in the visual artworks through his own eyes and understand its information and connotation; a person who has no knowledge of the visual language and a person who possesses such linguistic expertise may feel very different in the face of the same artwork [1].

### B. Propaganda Picture

A Propaganda Picture usually refers to a political poster that appeared as early as the early twentieth century, and it was only considered as a painting of propaganda function in a long period [2]. After the founding of new China in 1949, due to the party's policy advocacy needs, the political function of the posters was established through the continuous transformation of the CCP's various campaigns and became a kind of painting with eye-catching images, prominent themes, lively styles, and charismatic images, matched with passionate text titles, they are displayed in public spaces to attract people's attention, play a powerful social role [3]. Under the controlling of the ruling party, posters are closely related to politics and become an important tool to cooperate with the political movement and shape the new socialist people and a bright future. As a kind of painting, propaganda picture also follow a certain law of development in the process of its formation, such as the evolution of art techniques, art style's change; on the other hand, in the specific background of the times and social and political needs, it shows a more stable visual appearance, such as the Repeated use of visual elements and symbols, composition style, color system, it has constituted a unique visual system from the aspects of propaganda content, targeted audiences, and advocacy means [4].

According to the above concepts, the propaganda picture is also an image language that uses different symbols and has its own structure and rules which is one of the art forms of visual art. The political information visualization of the propaganda Picture is to transform the ruling party's policy into graphics by visual art language, so that ordinary people can easily understand and accept it.

## II. VISUAL ARTS AND IMAGE LANGUAGE

As an image language, Visual art is based on the basic identity of both social dialogues, that is, it has the same or similar cognition to the social connotation represented by the same image symbol. At the same time, visual language is also a set of normative or symbolic systems, it consists of basic elements of vision and design principles to convey meaning.

### A. Visual Basic Elements

Visual basic elements include information elements and formal elements. Among them, the information element determines the main information communication and communication of a visual artwork, it consists of graphic, text, shape etc. Formal elements are responsible for the organization and the arrangement of the picture, including the direction, location, space, the center of gravity etc. to determine the order of the picture and the relationship between the elements, composed by point, line, surface, color, space and other contents. Information elements and formal elements interact with each other and restrict each other to jointly build the visual art effect of the picture. The basic elements include:

(1) Line, it is the most simple language of painting.in the course of drawing contour lines, there are varied lines of visual characteristics such as curves, lines, polylines, thick lines, thin lines, solid lines, dotted lines etc. Different morphemes express different emotions. As a line in the visual element, it has as the same characteristics as the lines in the geometric concept like length, direction, and position, and also has unique of width, dynamics, and emotion concepts.

(2) Shape, which represents a kind of existence or manifestation of a particular thing or matter, such as rectangle, square, also refers to the image, appearance. It relates to the appearance of an object other than its spatial location and orientation. As a visual element, it mainly refers to the boundary line of an object, emphasizing a contour feature.

(3) Light and shade, in painting, refers to the changes in the degree of light, backlight, and light, as well as the way of expression of the changes in various parts of the picture. In general, the shape received light will appear bright surface, gray surface, dark surface three kinds of light and shade relationship. According to the degree of light and shade, the three major surfaces are further subdivided into the bright surface; Gray surface ( light and shade connection part ); The boundary line between light and shade; Dark surface; Reflection part five levels of shading ( which should also include projection ). The light and shade in design and visual elements mainly refer to the black-and-white relationship the whole picture.

(4) Color refers to the feeling produced by much different light entering a person's eye and transmitting to the brain, which is an understanding of the change of different wavelength light.it has three basic attributes: hue, purity, lightness, also known as the three major elements of color. Under the action of light, the human visual organ is stimulated by hue, purity, and lightness, which produces experience association and physiological association which is consistent with visual experience, thus producing complex psychological reflection and obtaining the aesthetic feeling of color.

(5) Texture, the object transmitted to people's visual and tactile sensory judgment through the surface texture roughly, undulating degree. In design and visual elements, it refers to a visual impact, that is, the physical reality of the objects represented by the artwork.

(6) Space means the finite or infinite place of motion that an object exists, ie. The three-dimensional space, it is represented by its length, width, height, and size, usually refers to the direction of up and down.

As the basic unit of visual objects, the basic element of vision is the medium of communication between people and works of visual arts, as well as the words and symbols that convey the language information visually.

### B. Design Principles

The basic elements of vision follow a certain composition or design principles in order to construct a meaningful (aesthetic) visual object. Through the interaction with the works, an audience obtains the appropriate information, it means that the visual language of the visual basic elements plays a role in the communication, but also reflects the importance of design principles. The design principles include:

(1) Layout, it is a commonly used technique and terms in the visual arts, refers to a permutation and combination method that arranges the visual elements in the structure. It is an important means to express a work's art ideas, produces the force of artistic infection.

(2) Contrast, visual contrast is achieved by expanding the differences between different symbols to distinguish between different object types. By giving the spectator a visual impression of the difference in the physical stimuli of different symbols, this effect enhances the sense of difference between symbols and weakens the commonalities existing between symbols.

(3) Rhythm, in the visual arts, the repetition, correspondence, and other forms were used to organize various visual elements to form a coherent sequential visual whole.

(4) Balance In the visual arts, the visual impact usually generated by two or more visual elements interact and cancel each other to form a relatively stable visual state of rest.

(5) Unity, in visual arts, it is a means of attaining harmony as a whole by way of the inherent connections, similarities or common features of the various constituent elements. Its contrast and change in vitality are weakened in the visual but the sense of harmony and order enhanced in the overall.

Design principles provide methods and rules for permutations and combinations of visual elements [5]. Depending on different needs, artists control the relationship among various elements under the command of design principles to construct visual artworks and generate visual languages that conform to the beauty of the formal laws and produce images that can convey specific information to audiences.

## III.  PROPAGANDA PICTURE'S VISUAL LANGUAGE

### A.  *Systematic method and process*

The themes of the propaganda picture before the reform and opening up were dominated by the political, economic, cultural, scientific and technological, national defense and other aspects of the country with strong political meaning: After entering the new era, the theme and contents of propaganda picture are increasingly related to people's lives and involve more people's feelings in areas such as environmental protection, afforestation, and social morals. However, it has not been much change in the form and performance of propaganda pictures, and creators gradually form a set of stylized methods and processes in long-term creative practice [6]:

(1) Confirm the main title. First, the title should be brief, easy to identify and remember. A too-long title can cause language ambiguity. Second, a simple, powerful slogan can fix the information conveyed in the content of the visual poster and make the meaning of expression more explicit.

(2) Clear the theme image. The chosen theme image clearly reflects the intention of posters creation. Too much image will lead to the distinction between primary and secondary; a picture lacked visual focus cause its non-identifiable, so the irrelevant expression of a poster's content should be summarized or discarded boldly in order to strengthen the need to highlight the visual performance of the object; not only the creation demonstrate the creator's views clearly, but also produce a strong visual shock.

(3) Intuitive expression intention. The thought and ideas conveyed to the audience through the propaganda picture are relatively abstract. Therefore, the poster should be vivid and interesting in interpreting these abstract information. During the process of creation, creators should abstract their ideas into a vivid artistic image, appropriately handle the relationship between their creative intention and the image of the subject to make the audience understand the idea-expression of the creator by the image of being loved.

(4) Various ways of expression. As a kind of painting art, propaganda painting has no special requirement in expression technique. In the process of painting, no matter what kind of expression methods should choose certain materials, such as natural heavy color painting materials, water-based painting materials, oily painting materials, chemical synthesis of painting materials, etc. Different painting materials have different characteristics, showing the different picture style.

### B.  *Individuality and generality*

Compared with the other types of the paintings, the process of creating a propaganda picture has both in common and unique. The procedures and links in the creation of paintings, such as the conception, the composition of the works, the drawing of the works are the common features of the general painting; Once the poster has been selected, there is also a process of batch copying, posting widely and transmitting information to the audience, which is the personality of the propaganda picture [7].

In order to achieve the strong and unique propaganda effect, this kind of painting also have their own characteristics in the creation, such as the eye-catching headline becoming an integral part of the picture, the generalization, and typification of the images and characters etc. Which are the conclusion of practical experiences on poster creation, it is the irreplaceable guidelines for other paintings. The principle and the repeated visual elements and symbols, composition style and color system in the process of poster creation also form a unique visual language [8].

## IV.  THE MEANING OF VISUALIZATION

The posters draw the abstract political information such as political policies in the form of graphics or images into visuals that can be presented to audiences over time and space, so that they can be more easily understood and accepted. The implications of visualization include:

(1) To show the whole picture: Many of the topics covered in the discussion include multiple elements. One of the elements affects many other elements. If you do not take a visualization, you cannot see the whole picture and cannot really discuss it.

(2) Enhance understanding, facilitate dialogue, exploration and exchange.

(3) Simplify complexity and enhance scrutiny.

## V.  CONCLUSION

Visual art is a language as well as a propaganda carrier. Poster is a kind of image language using different symbols, with its own structure and rules, is one of the art forms of visual art. As a visual art in China's specific historical period, it has always been the common language of the spiritual dialogue of the whole society and a tool to promote the concept of the state.

## REFERENCES

[1]  The Art form of Visual Art, Retrieved June 2016, from https: //zhidao. baidu. com/ question/ 1821965644824362788.html

[2]  Fu-wu Hou. To change a nation: propaganda and indoctrination in Communist China [M]. Free Press of Glencoe, 1961.

[3]  Julia F. Andrews. Painters and Politics in the People's Republic of China, 1949-1979[M]. University of California Press, 1994.

[4]  Why the Various Social Functions of Art Must Be Based on the Aesthetic Value? Retrieved June 2016, from https://zhidao.baidu.com/question/2011441867036459188.html

[5]  YU, J. S. & Chen, S. L. (2016). Validation of Recursive Logic in Graphic Design. Journal of Integrated Design and Process Science, 1-15

[6]  Zeng, Y. & Cheng, G. (1991). On the Logic of Design. Design Studies, 12(3), 137-141.

[7]  Landsberger and Marien Van Der Heijden. Chinese Posters: The Iish-Landsberger Collections [G]. Prestel Art Books, 2009.

[8]  Alan P. L. Liu. Communications and national integration in Communist China [M]. University of California Press, 1971.