

Modern Improved Design and Application of Decorative Artistic Design*

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Abstract—The decorative art movement was a great event in the history of modern design in the world. Decorative art also played its important role in contemporary design. Nowadays, the field of design and the major of decorative art design in design education turned to darkness. How to develop the decorative art design in the future and the reasons behind such phenomenon are the key points of the study in this paper.

Keywords—decorative art; modernism design; reductionism

I. INTRODUCTION

Just like other fields of artistic design, the connotation of decorative artistic design is also a phased conclusion made by former generations for the fields dabbled in and the contents contained. In this paper, the author will no longer make repetitive explanation to the concepts of decorative artistic design” of other design masters or authoritative design theory but make a characteristic description for the decorative artistic design concept from the perspective of the author: “decorative art is a kind of artistic design form full of formal beauty that exists depending on certain objective realities such as building and products, etc”. Before the modern artistic design movements, the decorative art is mostly conducted after completion of product design and fabrication and mostly exists with the characters including dermatoglyphic pattern and decoration parts. After the industrial revolution (after the era of instrument production), the formal beauty of decorative art is implied in product fabrication process, the formal beauty phenomenon of decorative art is objective existence while the decorative artistic design is subjective. The explanation to above text is concluded by the author through over ten years of professional learning and teaching experiences which is not perfect.

From the perspective of development of early industrial art to modern artistic design, people have the natural desire of “beauty” and the “formal beauty” has always been existing; many of the primitive potteries made of various kinds of argil in primitive society drew the simple dermatoglyphic patterns full of rhythm and sense of rhythm, such as the famous “dancing stripe colorful pot” where the

character shapes on pot wall imitate the dancing actions and the “hand-in-hand” form is just like “two-dimension series form”; from the feudal society to nowadays, from the external decorative motif to the initial application of glass and metal on “Crystal Palace” in the first World Expo, in the long development history of industrial art and design art, the fabrication process and decoration process of craftsman and designers finally tend to “uniform” from “separation”. For example, the earliest printers produced by machines had the simple and heavy appearance and possessed no sense of beauty except for the application functions. Raymond Loewy, the famous designer in the American design history and the engineering technicians upgraded the printer through careful studies and discussions, which can not only meet the function requirements but also optimize the internal structure. The heavy appearance of printer is also changed into the stream line form and the upgraded printers are be widely acclaimed. The appearance design of this type of printer also became the representative works of Raymond Loewy.

We can see from above progress that from arts and crafts movement to new art to modernism to internationalism, the various kinds of additional decoration on the surface of textiles, buildings and industrial products become less and less while the beauty of structure becomes more and more obvious; in addition, with the appearance of “streamline style” and “hi-tech style” in later period, it seems that the “formal beauty”, the core of decorative art has completely faded out from the fields including product, architecture and plan design, etc and is only limited in the scope of textile design and is under a difficult circumstance. Such phenomenon and cases are the strong evidences of replacement of tedious decorative design with Modernism and internationalism.

On the other hand, from the perspective of design education, starting with the famous Bauhaus, “workshop system, three major elementary courses and emphasis on standardization” establish the foundation of concise aesthetic ideology of modern design and modern design education. Bauhaus once proposed the point: “uniformity of art and techniques; the purpose of design is person but not product; the design must comply with natural and objective rules”. And the three aspects have always been used and accepted by most of design education and design industries. As the founder of Bauhaus, Henry Van de Velde led “Hans Mayer”,

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“Kandinsky” and “Naghi”, et al to establish the Bauhaus school and a series of teaching thought which lay the solid theory and practice foundation for the modern design industry and modern design education. Those masters established various types of laboratories and put design in the technological process for the first time. Bauhaus cultivated a large batch of designers who can not only understand design aesthetics but also can understand the technology. In such way, the decoration (design) will no longer be another process separated with production fabrication but integrate the design into fabrication process. Such mode combining design with machine production wasn’t there previously.

II. BOTTLENECK OF DECORATIVE ARTISTIC DESIGN

During the arts and crafts movement, William Morris was against the theatrical Victorian style and advocated simple design. However, it is unfortunate that William Morris failed in conducting thorough reformation; instead he just drew inspiration from the medieval industrial art and used such relatively plain elements to beautify the ugly industrial products; while the Art Nouveau Movement was the thorough reformation. He extended and promoted the arts and crafts movement, advocated to give up the past decoration intentions and advocated to seek for the intentions of decoration from nature. Although he advocated to handicraft, he called upon to use new materials and new technologies and explored the new beauty that may brought by both of them which possesses progressive significance. The first World Expo held in 1925 comprehensively displayed the achievements of modern. The new materials and new artistic forms including glass, metal, automobile and movie, etc on the expo came onto the historical stage one after another and the trend of modernization and industrialization also spread all over the world; with the rapid development of science and technology, in the last century, the idea of “functionalism and form following function” of modernism design has been accepted by the world. The most central “formal beauty”, “surface decoration”, “dependency and subordination” in decorative art has been basically replaced by “functionalism” and “machine manufacturing”. The decorative artistic design with the carrier of handicraft has only obtained certain development space in Japan, Scandinavia and other countries.

The opinion of “form following function” of “Sullivan”, the representative personage of modernism design completely placed formal beauty and function on the two opposite sides and the consequence is self-evident. More people choose “function” and this choice is more suitable for the development of the times at that moment and can conform to the thoughts of the mass; when the Modernism develops to the limit, the form following function is evolved into “less being more” and the thought of “reductionism” appears. Such thought returns decoration to zero. From the visual sense, there is no decorative beauty but just beauty of structure. Under such background, from the perspective of Chinese design education, the contents of design courses of some colleges are even equal to those of folk decorative patterns or the major of decorative art is changed into the

courses such as craftwork design and mural. Some of the students graduated from major of decorative art have to change the profession after graduation. The education in the field of decorative artistic design and the decorative artistic design is seriously shrunk.

The primary causes resulting in meltdown of major of decorative art and the clouded prospect of development of decorative artistic industry include the constraint of production capacity and technological conditions, the inherent “dependency” and “subordinate position” of decorative art which cause it hard for decorative art to separate from the subject. For example, most of the decorative artistic forms at all times and all over the world exist by relying on building, handicraft, clothing and textile, etc. And there is without exception for the exquisite ornamentation and sculpture on the coffin chamber or the building external surface full of rhythm; after the production capacity and science and technology have been improved during industrial revolution, the big machine production has been more and more popularized. The products produced at early phase of machine production are slightly bulky and are laughed by the world, however there appears the first generation of dedicated industrial designers and the process of decoration of products is gradually omitted since Ramon Loewy of internationalism with the improvement of scientific and technological level and the reformation of design ideas, instead the issue of product appearance beauty has been taken into consideration at the beginning of product fabrication. In 1943, the “freezing point refrigerator” designed by Raymond Loewy adopted stream line form with elegant appearance and reasonable zone division which can meet the practical demands of people. Ever since the launch of freezing point refrigerator, the annual sales volume increased sharply from 60000 sets to 275000 sets; later, the reformation designs of telephone of Loewy are all based on the coordination of function and appearance for redesign. The design philosophy of Raymond Loewy is “stream line form and simplification”. Such simplified design can be enduring; the “Shell” engine oil logo and “Coca Cola” logo created by Raymond Loewy is still in use today.

Second, from the perspectives of time and manufacturing sequence, during the period with low productivity, the decorative beauty can only be accomplished after completion basic manufacturing of products which is also inevitable of historic development; now, the productivity develops rapidly and the scientific and technical conditions change quickly and the engineers can help the designers to consider the issue of beauty at the early phase of design of various types of products. Therefore, after completion of product fabrication, there will not be the step of adding decoration which causes the step of “later addition of decoration” to be omitted and therefore the decorative art gradually fades out from design industry and design education.

Third, from the perspective of communication media, decorative art is disseminated mostly by means of architectures, sculptures, planar works and handicrafts. For example, the pyramid in ancient Egypt, the Buddhist murals in China, large glass murals are seen in medieval churches, textiles of William Morris in the period of arts and crafts,

exaggerated posters and textiles in graphic design of Pop movement; Now this kind of monumental architecture and coffin chamber architecture becomes rare. Although the inside and outside of the general new building has the own formal beauty and rule in itself, however, it is neglected by the public because its manifestation mode is greatly different from that before.

Fourth, from a disciplinary perspective, when professors teach decorative art as knowledge or as a subject in teaching, they have to teach decorative art in combination with sculptures, paintings, textiles and other subjects in order to get an intuitive teaching effect, which leads to a relatively superficial conclusion: "decorative art is equal to the design of sculpture, mural and textile etc." From the perspective of teaching status, decorative art is as important as the essence of the three major components, but it is difficult to be independent.

III. THE DECORATIVE ARTISTIC DESIGN AT A CRITICAL TURNING POINT

From the perspective of history, objective existence and human needs, the formal beauty principle of decorative artistic design and decorative art formal will not die out. At the beginning of human being, as for rhythm, rhyme, primitive man's innate desire for beauty, objective world, dance art, music art, mountains and rivers, rivers, streets, plants, flowers, animal patterns, microbial world, we human beings need these beautiful existence actively or passively. Human needs are always two sides of material and spiritual, which can be reflected from the emergence of Popper and post-modernist design.

For example, "Pop Design" is a direct reflection of the human spiritual needs in the context of a prosperous society after World War II. Pop-style designers will use discarded posters, glasses, records, photos and other items, and then deal with them. The design of new artworks has been weakened, which is completely out of the designer's self-expression needs. At the time, Andy Warhol, a Pop Design Movement representative, used a lot of "repetitive forms" in order to express his understanding of the production of the devices. In one of his poster, the film star "Marilyn Monroe" appeared repeatedly as a visual element. This approach is bold and innovative, which is completely different from previous artistic creations. Warhol used a repetitive form to express his understanding of large machines that "these machines are working repeatedly every moment, and every product produced by these machines is exactly the same". Pop design style is the germination of abstraction, and has important inspiration for post-modernism, Dadaism, the art of ideas and others.

The improvement of the "post-modernist design" adopts a large number of historical subjects, such as the elements and factors used in the Baroque and Rococo eras. The post-modernist design is the deconstruction and reorganization of modernist design, and is the compromised dispose of design style of the past. Both Pop design and post-modernism are all not a continuation of modernist design, nor a denial of all designs in the past. What they have in common is the

improvement and addition of special or some kind of design style in the past with a consistent purpose to get rid of a simple and monotonous design style in order to express the care of the human spirit and express the need for aesthetic appeal.

Second, the formal beauty principle of decorative art has always existed objectively and is closely related to our life. Formal beauty existed in the form of surface decoration in the past. Nowadays, formal beauty not only stays at surface decoration, but also inevitably involves the issue of formal beauty in visual elements such as product appearance, building facades and space layouts, and even points, lines and planes of plane design. Taking architecture as an example, architecture is the art of space, apart from practicality, firmness and beauty; it also pays attention to beauty. Successful architectural models at all times and in all over the world all interpret the eternal theme of space art. The core of symmetry and balance discussed in this decorative art is consistent.

On the contrary, these buildings that focus only on function but neglect art cannot pass the test of time. For example, in the history of modern artistic design, the notorious "Prudy-Igor" case built by St. Louis, USA is because this house is simply defined as a "human living machine" and lacks human care. People felt cold and even afraid when living in this house, so the building was extremely disgusted by the society and the public at that time. Even the poorest people were unwilling to live in such house, and finally Prudy-Igor was blown away in the explosion. However, other buildings can stand the test of time such as the world-renowned Guadi's "Saint Family" Church that began to build in 1883. The whole of the church was completely contrary to the prevailing aesthetics at that time with the complex mosaic and the bizarre and motley stone sculptures embedded in the building. What made people surprised was that the church used building stones on a large scale, but it didn't feel a little heavy and oppressive. The external facade of Guadi's church imitates natural animals and plants and adopts organic form. It took Gaudi's whole life to build the church. To this day, the building has not been completed. It can be seen that buildings with Zero decoration will not have a future, and extreme functionalism will not be accepted. Decoration design has its certain rationality in any period.

As for the future development of decorative art, we can see from the perspective of expanding the content of decorative art. In the period of arts and crafts and even earlier times mentioned in the preamble, decorative art mostly concentrates on the surface of building parts, surface detail of dyeing and weaving and clothing, as well as the surface of a large number of ceramics and metal crafts with the main reason behind this phenomenon being the production specifications. Making products and beautifying products must be divided into two steps. Now science and technology can help designers to complete by coordinating the production of products and beautifying products into one process. Therefore, designers need to keep pace with the times, not to separate these two movements of decoration and production, but to learn and understand the current

scientific and technological means, and various new materials in order to continue and expand the content of decoration art and improve the neglect of human spiritual needs by modernist design.

Third, we can see the future development of decorative art from the perspective of analyzed function and form. At all times, function and form are not two sides of completely opposite. This paper agrees with neither complete functionalism nor its complicated surface decoration. The content of formal beauty of decorative art has already changed in accordance with the progress of the times.

IV. CONCLUSION

In the previous paper, the author combed the development way of decorative artistic design, compared and analyzed the past glory and today's situation of decorative artistic design. The difference with other papers lies in that I think the outlet of decorative art lies not only in the innovation of the supremacy of modernist function, extreme mechanization, rationalism and indifference. Because of decorative artistic design has never been a superficial skill, we should change our thinking and the misunderstanding of decorative art is decorative painting, decorative sculpture, murals and crafts instead of criticizing the weakness of decorative artistic design blindly. Decorative art has existed in the form of paintings and murals but decorative art is more than these.

In the era of information technology, the connotation and extension of decorative art, like other components of artistic design, are constantly changing. Before the first industrial revolution, the level of productive forces was low throughout the world. Because of social products were only manufactured by handicraft, the decoration of production and articles for daily use remained largely behind the production processes, the decorative forms were adhered to the surface of the products; In addition, due to the material attributes, the handicrafts made of metal and stone and other materials is durable and easy to preserve, so many of the existing handicrafts and labor products before the arts and crafts movement are made of metal and stone and other similar materials. With the improvement of science and technology, human beings invented "plastics", which is a new material form. Since then, various new materials represented by plastics have provided a wider space for the shaping of various products. In this context, the content of decorative artistic design and many aspects involved also need to adapt to the development of new materials and technologies, and especially various new technologies, which provide more conditions for the realization of decorative art and provide more diverse carriers (subjects) for decorative art.

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