



УДК 745:76

CHINESE CHARACTER GRAPHICS DESIGN IN INK WASH STYLE BY KAN TAI-KEUNG

LI Xiaomin^{1,2}, KOLOSNICHENKO Olena¹

¹ Kyiv National University of Technologies and Design, Kyiv, Ukraine

² Shanxi University of Science and Technology, Xi'an, People's Republic of China
25685626@qq.com, 3212793@gmail.com

As a Hong Kong design master in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, Kan Tai-Keung uniquely fused the essence of traditional Chinese ink painting with modern design techniques to create Chinese character graphics that are both culturally rich and aesthetically modern. He digs deep into the connotation of Chinese characters. He subtly creates the artistic conception and philosophy of classical Chinese aesthetics, thus enhancing the cultural depth and aesthetic value of Chinese character graphics and opening up a new path for the modern transformation and international dissemination of traditional culture.

Keywords: graphics design, ink wash style, Chinese character graphics, cultural fusion, national aesthetics, international communication.

INTRODUCTION

In the context of globalization, design cultures are increasingly intermingling and colliding, and Chinese character graphics, as a treasure of Chinese culture, are experiencing unprecedented innovation and development. In the midst of this trend, Kan Tai-Keung from China, as a leading figure in the design field from the end of the 20th century to the beginning of the 21st century, has injected vivid power into this field with his unique ink style. He skillfully fused the essence of traditional Chinese painting with modern design techniques to create Chinese character graphics that are both culturally rich and contemporary. These works demonstrate the unique beauty of Chinese characters and profoundly convey the spirit of Chinese culture through the flavor and artistic conception of the ink and wash. Kan Tai-keung's design practice promotes the artistic innovation of Chinese character graphics design and facilitates the international dissemination of Chinese design culture, providing valuable reference and inspiration for the future development of Chinese character graphics design.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this article is to explore how Kan Tai-Keung skillfully blends traditional Chinese ink wash style with modern design techniques and interprets the deep cultural connotations of Chinese character graphics in an internationalized graphic language. By recognizing the innovative journey of this master designer, it provides new perspectives and references for the modern transformation and international dissemination of traditional culture nowadays.



RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Kan Tai-keung's journey in the formation of his Chinese character graphics design style is a journey of artistic exploration that is deeply influenced by the fusion of traditional culture and modern design thinking. Since his childhood, he has been associated with traditional arts such as ink, calligraphy and seal cutting, and this deep cultural heritage has laid a solid foundation for his future design path [1]. At the beginning of his design career, Kan Tai-keung was deeply influenced by Western design trends such as the Bauhaus style and Pop Art, and his works won many awards. However, as his creative practice deepened, he began to reflect on and realize the importance of traditional Chinese culture. In particular, the controversy over the 'Year of the Rat' stamps he designed in 1972 became a key point in his change of design thinking [2]. This set of works, which interpreted the Chinese zodiac culture in a modern design language with an emphasis on simple geometric shapes, was innovative, but the Westernised avant-garde design was so different from the traditional Chinese zodiac image that the general public was familiar with that it was criticized by public opinion in China. Kan Tai-keung realized that a design form that completely departed from the national style was a denial of his own cultural values and was bound to be difficult to gain public support. Therefore, he turned his attention to the local Chinese culture and traditional aesthetics, and it became his creative goal to integrate the aesthetic interests of the Chinese people within the framework of modern design concepts [3]. In the mid to late 1970s, Kan Tai-keung began to design Chinese character graphics in Ink Wash Styles, which were applied to logos and posters, and his works were very successful in both the commercial and cultural fields. By the 1990s, his design style had matured, and his innovative approach to combining Chinese and Western styles earned him great honors in the international design arena.

In the work of Chinese character graphics, Kan Tai-Keung combines the formal techniques of Chinese calligraphy and Chinese painting to create a natural and spontaneous ink effect. In order to create a design style that is both traditional and modern, he also highlights the modeling elements of dots, lines, and surfaces in his compositions. This formal feature allows the unique beauty of Chinese characters to be brought into the public eye through alternative expressions and is indeed of great significance for fusion and innovation in the era of the convergence of Chinese and Western cultures at the end of the 20th century. In addition, Kan Tai-Keung believes that apart from expressing the beauty of form, it is an important task to explore the cultural connotations and symbolism of the Chinese characters themselves as a means of expressing the meaning of the work. In his works, he presents the cultural stories and symbolism behind the Chinese characters in a graphic and refreshing way, thus triggering the audience to think deeply about Chinese characters and traditional culture. This not only enhances the artistic charm and spiritual value of the work itself but also plays a positive role in the transmission and dissemination of Chinese culture, too.

Classical Chinese aesthetics emphasizes the creation of 'artistic conception,' which Kan Tai-Keung understands very well. In his Chinese character graphics, he



uses the flavor of ink and the brushwork of calligraphy to create an ethereal and far-reaching mood. In the 'Chinese Characters' series of posters (Fig.1 and Fig.2), large areas of white space and simple lines are set against each other, using the effects of reality and emptiness to enhance the visual impact of the work, while allowing the viewer to appreciate it and feel a sense of tranquility and beauty that is transcendent to the earthly realm. By drawing the brushstrokes and the image isomorphism of the stationery, he skillfully presents the hieroglyphics of 'mountain' and 'water' in front of the viewers' eyes, and the creation of this mood is an embodiment of the typical features of the classical Chinese aesthetics [4].



Fig. 1. “Chinese Characters”
series poster: “水(water)”



Fig. 2. “Chinese Characters”
series poster: “山(mountain)”



Fig. 3. “Ten Landscapes”
series poster: “九(nine)”

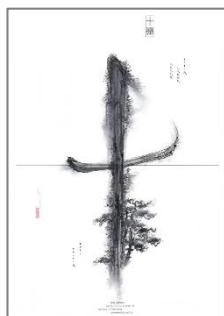


Fig. 4. “Ten Landscapes”
series poster: “十(ten)”

Drawing inspiration from nature and incorporating it into his works is another specialty of Kan Tai-keung's ink designs. He unifies the inner logic of design with its outer form, pursuing a style of returning to nature in order to achieve a lofty and free spirit. For example, in the series of posters “Ten Landscapes” (Fig.3 and Fig.4), he uses the Chinese characters “一(one)” to “十(ten)” as the skeleton of the form, with the brush strokes embedded in the landscape images of Chinese painting. The



design allows viewers to appreciate the magnificence and grandeur of the mountains, rivers, grasses and trees, and leads to a deeper contemplation of life. This design concept coincides with the Chinese philosophy of "learning from nature", reflecting the harmonious symbiotic relationship between man and nature.

CONCLUSIONS

In the creation of Chinese character graphics, Kan Tai-Keung has significantly enhanced the cultural depth and aesthetic value of this field with his outstanding design practice. His works have not only set an example for the domestic design community but have also made a wide impact on the international stage, strongly promoting the international exchange of Chinese design culture. By subtly fusing the essence of Chinese ink art with modern design concepts, Kan Tai-Keung creates design works with both deep cultural heritage and modern aesthetic characteristics. This innovative initiative provides an important inspiration for the future development of Chinese character graphic design and a useful exploration of the modern transformation and international dissemination of traditional culture, leaving a colorful mark in the history of design art.

REFERENCES

1. Kan Tai-keung. The Design Process of Graphic designers. China Youth Press, China. 1999.
2. Kan Tai-keung. Big Because of Small. Guangxi Normal University Press. China. 2020.
3. Hou Ye. Form Follows Ink--Ruminations on the Design Significance of Hong Kong's Modern Ink Painting Movement. Art Panorama. 2020. № 5. P.146-147.
4. Chen Yaxin. The Extension and Application of Ink Elements in Posters: A Case Study of Posters by Kan Tai-Keang. Art Education Research, 2022. № 19. P. 84-86.

ЛІ Сяомінь, КОЛОСНІЧЕНКО О.

ГРАФІЧНИЙ ДИЗАЙН КИТАЙСЬКИХ ІЄРОГЛІФІВ У СТИЛІ ЗМИВАННЯ ЧОРНИЛА ВІД КАН ТАЙ-КЕНА

Як гонконгський майстер дизайну кінця 20-го – початку 21-го століть, Кан Тай-Кен унікальним чином поєднав сутність традиційного китайського живопису тушшю з сучасними техніками дизайну, щоб створити китайську ієрогліфічну графіку, яка є водночас культурно багатомовною та естетично сучасною. Його глибоке дослідження конотації китайських ієрогліфів та геніальне створення настрою і філософії класичної китайської естетики посилили культурну глибину та естетичну цінність китайського ієрогліфічного графічного дизайну, а також відкрили новий шлях для сучасної трансформації та міжнародного поширення традиційної культури.

Ключові слова: графічний дизайн, китайська ієрогліфічна графіка; стиль, чорнила; культурна інтеграція; етнічна естетика; міжнародна комунікація.