

# On the Innovative Application of Cultural Symbols in the Design of Daily Ceramics

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**Abstract:** *Ceramics are a kind of material existence in cultural symbols. In the design of daily-use ceramics, the modeling form, decorative aesthetics and cultural symbols are an effective and unified design whole, which is a complementary "cultural system". How to integrate the artistic creativity in the cultural connotation of daily-use ceramics with cultural symbols and values, and how to combine the Chinese aesthetic spirit with the contemporary aesthetic pursuit is a problem worth thinking about in the design.*

**Keywords:** culture, symbol, daily-use ceramics, innovation.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

As one of the important carriers of traditional cultural symbols, daily-use ceramics witness the changes of social life style and aesthetic fashion, and also promote the integration and development of Chinese and foreign cultures. The core of daily-use ceramics is to serve people. Its development is influenced by aesthetic concepts and artistic forms, and has a unique language and connotation. This paper explains the characteristics and significance of cultural symbols used in the design of daily-use ceramics in China, and explains the innovative methods of the use of cultural symbols.

## 2. DEFINITION OF CULTURAL SYMBOLS

Xuhengchun mentioned in "design aesthetics" that "we live in a cultural world, and any cultural achievement depends on a variety of symbols to convey its significance.<sup>[1]</sup>". Human beings have converged the symbols of different languages in history into a broad cultural system, and with the help of semiotics, cultural symbols are transformed into specific objects, which are understood and remembered by the public.

Symbols represent certain things, have extraordinary significance for people, and promote the diversified development of national culture. The ancestors recorded all kinds of patterns on the surface of pottery. In addition to the decorative role, it was more the total performance of the social background, characteristics of the times, aesthetic taste and life records at that time. People have different feelings and understandings of different cultural and historical backgrounds in different periods, record and subjectively transform them, and then form a valuable cultural language, and gradually develop into national cultural symbols. At first, fish and frog patterns were painted on pottery, which was not only closely related to the hunting life at that time, but also the worship of primitive religion, the awe of nature and the beautiful expectation of reproduction and reproduction. From this point of view, cultural symbols are not only the embodiment of national cultural characteristics, but also crucial to the innovative application in the field of modern ceramic design.

## 3. EXPRESSION OF FORMAL BEAUTY OF CULTURAL SYMBOLS IN DAILY CERAMIC DESIGN

The external expression of product form is material and structure. Through various ways, the shape, color and material will be transformed into human perception objects, so that people can have cognitive and emotional reactions to the product, and play the spiritual and material functions of the product itself. Indeed, designers should be clear about the core demands of design, have mature professional training and master the latest design information, carry out targeted design work, endow products with aesthetic value of humanistic emotion and cultural spirit, and spread cultural content. According to the standard of daily-use ceramics, it is necessary to ensure the coexistence of practicality and aesthetics. For example, the Neolithic pottery Eagle tripod and black pottery high foot cup evolved from practical products to ritual vessels, which can meet people's practical needs and have emotional spirit and cultural connotation. Therefore, the change of function can not change its spirit.

### 3.1 Beauty of shape

Modeling is the foundation of utensils and the core foundation of aesthetics of utensils. Modeling determines the function, visual aesthetics and artistic style of utensils, and also interacts with function. The design and development of utensils are also closely related to the background of the times, people's living conditions and economic level. Traditional daily-use ceramics are mostly round and full lines, emphasizing the effective unity of practicality and aesthetic effect. For example, the Song Dynasty Yingqing holding pot in the Palace Museum (Figure 1) is a design case of bionic design concept and has a harmonious visual aesthetic effect. The body of the pot is melon shaped, with a straight mouth. The folded shoulder is engraved with a tangled peony pattern. It is symmetrically arranged with a curved flow and attached with a cylindrical cover. The warm bowl is shaped like a six petal sunflower. It is slender and beautiful. The whole body is painted with blue and white glaze. Its function is based on the principle of water injection and heat preservation. The pot is often used with the warm bowl. From a daily practical product to a practical viewer. "If you want to make the poem beautiful, there is no weariness of emptiness and quietness, quietness leads to group movement, and emptiness leads to a sense of beauty." the aesthetic conception of the design reflects that the literati in the Song Dynasty tended to be light and implicit, emphasizing the combination of Tao and art in their creation, and paying attention to the "bionic form" to express the "charm" of the object. The design of the injection pot reflects the scientific and technological level and aesthetic consciousness of the Song Dynasty, and is also very popular with consumers today. Western modern daily-use ceramic design mostly adopts sharp edges and corners or flowing lines, and bold innovation in modeling mostly adopts abstract forms to attract consumers. The jiminy tableware (Figure 2) designed by German designer Michela doffel has changed the traditional symmetrical form. The material is mostly made of metal accessories. It has a strong sense of modernity, breaking the complex beauty of traditional modeling and decoration. The overall form is simple and durable. The shoulder line is integrated with the pot body, achieving the uniqueness of form and design concept.



**Figure 1:** Blue and white glaze carved pot and bowl of Jingdezhen kiln



**Figure 2:** Gimini tableware

### 3.2 Decorative beauty

As the saying goes, "the image must be intentional and the idea must be auspicious", most of the decorative designs of Chinese daily-use ceramics are based on beautiful and auspicious natural things, living things and pattern symbols reflecting the characteristics of the times. For example, the crabapple shaped plate with pastel figure patterns in Yongzheng of the Qing Dynasty (Figure 3), the crabapple shaped shape is natural and expressed by bionic design. This work is decorated with four groups of heavy-duty pure gold color entwined flower patterns combined with carmine landscape patterns. It is a lively scene in which the court maid and four children play, implying more children and more happiness. There are many ancient porcelain patterns and colors in the market. Due to improper use, they give people a stereotyped and stereotyped aesthetic feeling. It can be seen that the wrong way of use will eventually lead to the failure of a work. The "Chinese elements" in traditional culture should be absorbed, digested and re created in the design. The "gem coffee set" (Figure 4) designed by Mr. yangyongshan is designed with Chinese elements. This set adopts the extended design of Banpo type painted pottery patterns, which is the abstraction of natural things. It adopts the visual illusion principle of pun method. Its material is stoneware.

Its texture is hard and the glaze is fine, and its color is warm and gray. The color collocation is calm and atmospheric, and the form of color, pattern and shape is harmonious and unified. At the beginning of the 20th century, Adolf Luce proposed that "decoration is evil" and advocated non decorative forms. For example, the gropis tea set (Figure 5) designed by Walter gropis has a very high position in the ceramic design industry. It is a design that focuses on modeling functions rather than decorative forms. The whole tea set is mainly made of pure white monochrome glaze. The handle and flow of the pot are smooth and natural, and the abnormal design of geineu is also very clever. This design is industrialized and standardized, which conforms to the people-oriented purpose and is the perfect embodiment of design aesthetics.



**Figure 3:** Begonia plate with pastel figure pattern in Yongzheng of Qing Dynasty



**Figure 4:** Gem coffee set



**Figure 5:** Gropius tea set

### 3.3 Color beauty

The ceramics of each period have color characteristics that are in line with the times and reflect the living background, science and technology and culture at that time. For example, the Ru kiln azure glaze string pattern tripod bottle collected in the National Palace Museum has a delicate texture, mainly azure glaze, soft color, extremely uniform color, elegant atmosphere, exquisite but little decoration. Because of its fresh and elegant aesthetic characteristics, it has created a generation of aesthetic trend. From the perspective of glaze technology, it reflects that the aesthetic quality displayed in the process and art of the Song Dynasty has reached the peak and has high aesthetic value. While modern daily-use ceramics often need decorative elements. People began to use simple lines and color blocks to reflect the effect of decoration. For example, the Memphis style tea set tea for one (Figure 7) designed by Matteo Thun has obvious geometric factors. In the upper and lower layers, the color matching style of pink orange and black and white is adopted. It is fashionable and simple, and the shape is cleverly combined. It is a design work that pays attention to both beauty and practicality. Therefore, in the pursuit of simplicity, designers should also pay attention to the sense of rhythm and the beauty of rhythm; According to the shape, the use of color plays the role of the finishing touch as a whole, highlighting the designer's thoughts and emotions, bringing beauty enjoyment and unlimited reverie to the viewer, and understanding the color strategy of consumers and the market is also an important condition for ceramic color design.



**Figure 6:** Ru kiln azure glaze string pattern tripod bottle



**Figure 7:** Tea for One

### 3.4 Beautiful material

Chuang Tzu's Kao Gong Ji mentioned that "the weather is sometimes, the earth has Qi, the material is beautiful, and the work is skillful, and then it can be good." it stated that the conditions for making utensils should meet the requirements of the season, environment, material and technology when making utensils, and stressed that the beauty of the material itself should be respected. For example, the Ge kiln blue glazed double ear jar (Figure 8), the people of Song Dynasty advocated the beauty of nature and also enjoyed the phenomenon of split pieces. The split pieces appeared in the firing process were also defined as the laudatory names - Garbage fragments, caviar patterns, etc. Its artistic style is elegant, less decoration, and wins with the natural texture effect produced naturally. It shows that the ancient song porcelain of China has a high position in the production process, modeling function and decorative aesthetics.

The development of science and technology has increased the combination of ceramics and other materials, such as the combination of ceramics and stainless steel, wood, glass, metal, etc; This innovative design not only changes the shape of traditional ceramics, but also improves more functions of products. The concept tableware (Figure 9) jointly designed by Martin hunt and Colin Lawson of the UK is used as both general tableware and oven utensils. Its material is made of fine stoneware material, and the surface is glazed; Stainless steel is used in the part of the pot handle, which has a strong modern style. Therefore, the change of surface material and structure of objects can not only bring rich visual effects, but also bring better experience, touch and appearance to the viewer. The combination of multiple materials just meets the market demand, and also meets people's spiritual, emotional and fashion aesthetic needs, bringing new design ideas to the design of daily-use ceramics.



Figure 8: Ge kiln blue glazed double ear jar

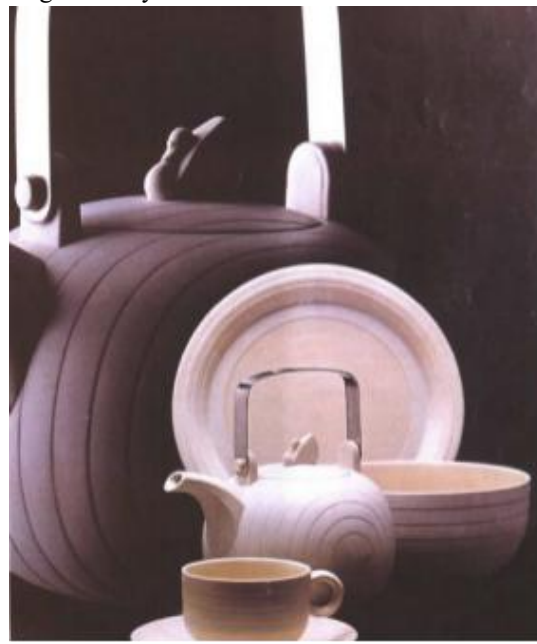


Figure 9: Concept tableware

## 4. INNOVATIVE APPLICATION OF CULTURAL SYMBOLS IN DAILY CERAMIC DESIGN

Cultural symbols are the embodiment of people's long-term accumulated artistic experience. People's existing thinking and cognition are created through intuitive design. Culture serves the design and dominates the design. The previous daily-use ceramic design mostly followed the traditional design principles. Although it reflected the function, it ignored the innovation and development. Although it reflected the historical and cultural materials in the design, it did not have the real cultural connotation. It had no characteristics of the times, no design innovation, and no artistic taste, which reduced a certain social value and aesthetic value. Facing the needs of the current society, the author discusses the innovative application of daily-use ceramic design from the context, materials, functions and other aspects.

### 4.1 Construction of interesting context

At present, there are many hand-made ceramic works in the market, which are rich in styles and various forms. They not only have the function of placing objects, but also are a perfect artistic display. For example, Katie Tomiller Nitina's story bird - drink set (Figure 10) has adopted funny, humorous and cordial concepts in the design several years ago. The overall form is vivid and interesting, and the form context method is used. The designer endows the product with emotion and life. It conveys users' imaginative and interesting feelings, and the differences in size and body shape are like a dialogue between elders and juniors, so that the viewer can be personally involved in the process of use. Yongfengyuan, a national porcelain company, launched the "Rongbao series" tea set at this year's Chengdu Universiade. In order to commemorate the event, Yongfengyuan fully displayed the lovely, simple and cute image of the mascot Rongbao, making Rongbao leap on top of porcelain, with porcelain as the carrier. During the design process, the cover bowl traditionally used in Chengdu was taken as one of the design shapes, and the cover bowl was combined with the shape of the panda to show interest, loveliness and dynamic. It also gives you a continuous stream of blessings and good luck when you open the blessing bag (LID).

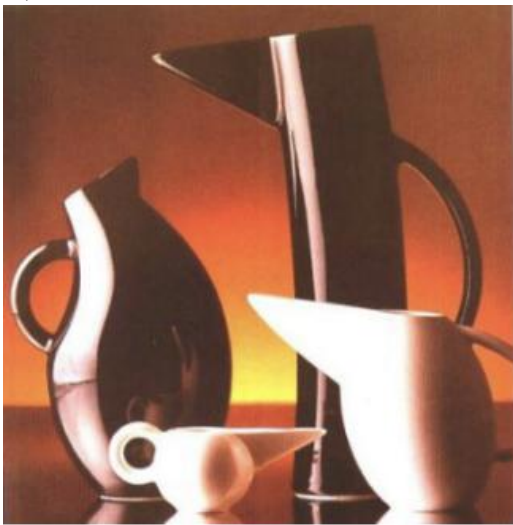


Figure 10: Story bird - drink set



Figure 11: Rongbao tea set

#### 4.2 Combination of comprehensive materials

With the development of science and technology, domestic ceramics have been combined with a variety of materials, such as stainless steel, glass, wood, etc. The combination of multiple materials improves some functions and shapes of traditional ceramics. The diversity of materials not only meets the aesthetic needs of consumers, but also better meets consumers' practical functions. For example, the Nightingale (Figure 12) designed by Dante Goods and Bads is a portable ceramic lamp with a leather handle, which can rotate 90° more than the traditional lampshade. Its design style reminds people of the appearance of traditional lanterns, although it is a beautiful work without use.<sup>[2]</sup>



Figure 12: Nightingale

#### 4.3 Diversification of functions

With the change of modern working methods, people often travel around, and many portable sets are designed to meet the needs of people who want to drink tea. The express cup has become the first choice for the new generation of travelers. Its original design intention is to simplify the tedious tea making process and meet the needs of tea drinking, highlighting the fast word in the fast-paced life. For example, the big round express cup (Figure 13) made by the creator has a mouth shaped like a fish mouth, a lovely shape, scientific design and affordable price, and is deeply loved by young people.

"Since ancient times, China's utensil design has always adhered to the design principle and design concept of making things for human use, with the goal of whether it is pleasant or not, showing the people-oriented concept of creation, containing simple scientific concepts and humanistic characteristics. [3]" excellent designers at home and abroad are advocating that ceramic designers should jump out of the traditional design concept, should be bold in design innovation, and try to use advanced ideas to complete the design. In a word, the design of daily-use ceramics is not only to meet daily needs, but also to meet people's happiness and spiritual demands.

#### 4.4 The use of auspicious symbols

Among the cultural symbols, auspicious symbols are the most intuitive, with a wide range of themes, rich forms and easily accepted meanings. Since the Tang Dynasty, peony has been loved by many people, implying a happy family and being the flower of national prosperity. For example, the "Jianguo porcelain" (Figure 14) of the fifth anniversary of the National Day in the early 1950s was the first state banquet porcelain designed and produced by the older generation of ceramic art and design experts Zhu Danian and Gao Zhuang in Jingdezhen and used for national celebrations. This "Jianguo porcelain" adopts the traditional doucai peony pattern and blue and white Begonia pattern, and uses the Dunhuang pattern characteristics to extend the design. The shape is slightly improved on the traditional basis. The overall form is huge, modern and powerful. The Chinese porcelain yongfengyuan lady porcelain pomegranate home straight pot tea set (Figure 15) has a round and round shape and uses pomegranate pattern as the decorative pattern. Since the introduction of pomegranate from the western regions in the Han Dynasty, Chinese traditional culture has regarded pomegranate as a mascot. Pomegranate "has thousands of rooms with the same membrane, and thousands of seeds are the same", and "pomegranate opens hundreds of seeds" is regarded by the world as a symbol of many children and happiness. With the growth of traditional culture, peony pattern and pomegranate pattern are important totems of the Chinese nation, which perfectly interpret the expectations and pursuit of the ancients for good luck, even now. Auspicious symbols are the true representation of people's spiritual life. The rational use of auspicious symbols and household ceramics has also become one of the most flexible and meaningful innovative ways in modern design.



**Figure 13:** Grand round express cup



**Figure 14:** Porcelain of the founding of the people's Republic of China on the fifth anniversary of the National Day



**Figure 15:** Madam porcelain pomegranate home straight pot tea set

## 5. CONCLUSION

To sum up, cultural symbols show people's long-term accumulated experience, and the design innovation of daily-use ceramics is completed on the basis of cultural symbols. Regardless of the development of modern

technology, the original intention of people-oriented is still followed in the design of daily-use ceramics. As the basic source of design, cultural symbols are full of humanistic beauty. We should comply with the requirements of the times, master ceramic technology and be brave in innovation, and perfectly integrate modeling, decoration, material and cultural connotation to form our ceramic language. Rooted in the soil of traditional Chinese culture, it is based on modern design and aesthetic vision to recognize, learn and innovate.

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