

A Probe into the Artistic Language of Jingdezhen Fencai Porcelain Design

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Abstract: At present, the ceramic design art in Jingdezhen is experiencing cultural exchanges and cultural collisions brought about by globalization. While traditional ceramic design art continues to develop according to its own laws, it is also actively seeking the integration of modern art, modern design and modern technology. Therefore, the artistic language of traditional ceramic design is also quietly changing. This article takes the representative Fencai Porcelain design art in Jingdezhen as the research object, and is trying to analyze the design art language of Jingdezhen Fencai Porcelain from two aspects of material craft language and decorative form language, and explore the future development direction of Fencai Porcelain design art.

The Fencai Porcelains design art of Jingdezhen has a history of nearly 300 years. In the Qing Dynasty ceramic appraisal document Tao Ya, Fencai was described as "bright and eye-catching, with extraordinary craftsmanship", and the term "light, elegant, soft and beautiful" was used when describing the art of Fencai in "History of Chinese Ceramics". This seems to sum up the artistic characteristics of traditional Fencai Porcelain. However, artistic language, as the sum of expression means and techniques that embody ideas and aesthetic content in artistic works, is always constantly improved and changed with the development of artistic creation practice. Fencai design art is no exception. The emergence of a series of concepts such as traditional Fencai, new Fencai, and modern Fencai has also confirmed the continuous development of the artistic language of Fencai design. In the current globalized and diversified era, the traditional ceramic art design including Fencai is influenced by more and more foreign cultures, showing a trend of diversification and complexity. Therefore, the theoretical analysis of the artistic language of Fencai Porcelain design is particularly important for the current and future Fencai Porcelain design creation.

1. Definition of the Concept

From the perspective of the evolution of the name of the Fencai Porcelain craft, the name "Fancai" was not used at the beginning of the craft. According to other ancient documents such as the Qing royal court archives, it was found that "Multicolored Enamel", "Foreign Color", "Porcelain Tire Painting Enamel" and other names refer to it. The term "Fancai" first appeared in the book Tao Ya in late Qing Dynasty, proving that "Fancai" was widely used since the end of Qing Dynasty. However, whether "Fancai" or other names, it actually refers to a kind of sintering temperature of 700°C to 800°C and some glassy color materials contain arsenic as an opacifier, resulting in powdery a kind of ceramic overglaze variety of effects. It is generally recognized in the academic circles that Fencai is a new type of ceramic painting technique based on the local multicolored craftsmanship and the enamel craftsmanship introduced from the western world by the Qing royal court in late Kangxi period.

Another important concept in this article is "artistic language". There have been many interpretations of "art language" in academic circles, and some scholars understand it as a material means in artistic creation. This kind of explanation seems rather biased, and I agree with Professor Zhang Jing's understanding of Communication University of China. He believes that artistic language does not only exist in the materialization stage of artistic expression, but also is the basic

basis for the inner thinking process from the artist's creative impulse to the formation of aesthetic configuration in the mind. In this paper, I believe art language as a concept independent of art content and art form. It is a bridge between content and form in the process of art creation, which means that it includes both material means in art creation and contains the artistic conception of the subject of artistic creation. In terms of the artistic language of Fencai Porcelain design, this article focuses on the study of the language of craft materials and the language of decorative forms.

2. The Craft Material Language of Fencai Design

In the field of art design, especially in handicraft design, the properties of craft materials often determining the basis of the artistic style of the design. Although this kind of materialistic remarks were severely refuted by Alois Liegel at the end of the 19th century, he also used a large number of examples in his book *The Problem of Style: The Basis of Decorative History* and demonstrated the naivety of the materialists. However, because of the refutation of materialism, the role of materials and technology in decorative design should not be underestimated, thus leading to the path of excessive formalism. Therefore, when discussing any kind of decorative art style, we need to fully study its craft materials. In particular, ceramics is a subject of science and art. Throughout the development history of ceramic art, almost every artistic breakthrough is inseparable from the improvement of materials and the innovation of craftsmanship.

The craft material language of the Fencai Porcelain design is mainly reflected in the material properties and craft techniques of the Fencai. In terms of painted materials, pastel pigments are divided into oil and water. As the name implies, oils are mainly colored paints prepared with frankincense oil, camphor oil, and kerosene, mainly including pearl, brilliant black, hemp, oil red, etc., used for pastel drawing or writing promotion. For example, the lines of traditional pastel decoration pay attention to light, thin, uniform and soft, which requires the creator to control the amount of oil, put in the paint when mixing. Using more oil will cause blurry lines; otherwise it will be dry and uneven. The creation of modern pastels is based on the subject matter, and emphasizes the use of the oiliness and material properties of the color materials to achieve abundant artistic effects. For example, the use of oil and pearl materials to create a variety of texture effects, which was previously regarded as a process defect, had become a new expression technique in the creative use of artists, and the use of lines is no longer based on traditional powder. A single aesthetic standard is required. In addition to oil, the most important material in pastel decoration is water paint. Water pigments can be divided into transparent color pigments, opaque color pigments, pure pigments and dyeing pigments. Transparent pigments mainly include big green, pale purple, ocher, snow white, etc. Because they contain "snow white", the background color can be revealed after firing, showing a crystal-clear glass texture. Opaque pigments mainly include tin yellow, palace powder, pine green, glass white, etc. Because they contain "glass white", they will cover the surface of the porcelain after firing and present a soft and powdery effect. One of the most pastel features is a white paint pigment called "glass white", which is actually a milky white glass with arsenic as an opacifier. In the process of drawing traditional pastels, "whitening the glass" is a very difficult step, often resulting in various process defects due to negligence. With the progress of ceramic materials, glass white, high-cover glass white, thick glass white, etc., which can be fired multiple times, appeared. The use of new style glass white not only improves the production rate of ceramics, but also provides artists with the possibility to explore new forms of expression. Pure pigments and dyeing pigments are mainly used for the background color of the picture and the washing and dyeing on the "glass white". Various pastel decorative pigments are fired through their own material properties to form a warm, jade-like, crystal-clear material beauty. This material beauty has also become the most distinctive material language of pastel decoration design.

The craftsmanship of the pastel decoration design is extremely strong, which can be seen from the variety of tools needed. The pastel-decorated pens are divided into brushes, picking pens, washing pens, filling pens, dull pens, picking pens, etc. Among them, pens can be divided into three types: double material, half material, and single material. It is divided into sheep cents, wolf cents, both cents (of sheep and wolf cents), etc. The filling pen is divided into large, medium and small

according to the size. In addition, the tools that need to be used include a seasoning spatula, a seasoning board, a hand rest, a plate, a bowl, etc. Each tool has formed a basic usage in the long-term practice process, and also formed a fixed process technique mode. The Fencai decoration process mainly includes color drawing process and color filling process. The painting process tests the artist's full mastery of oiliness and material properties. Every step from rubbing, punching, drawing, drawing, and wiping requires a lot of time to practice. The creation of different themes will have different painting techniques, such as the use of lines. In character themes, iron line drawing, nail head and rat tail drawing, earthworm drawing, etc., are commonly used. In drawing of flowers and birds, the craftsmen use outline methods and the painting skill called no-bone. Various techniques such as hooking, chafing, rubbing and dotting are used in the theme of landscape. The color filling process occupies an important position in the pastel decoration and is more complicated. The pastel color filling process includes the steps of grinding the color material, making the mark water, making the base color, making the glass white, and dividing the color. Many coloring steps need to be done swing freely, and cannot be modified repeatedly. This requires the artist to be confident in his heart, and be perfect in the use of materials and techniques. Many coloring techniques have also been explored and created in the artist's long-term practical labor, such as flat filling, joining, washing and dyeing, dyeing, color blowing, and flower picking. In addition to traditional coloring techniques, contemporary ceramic artists also try to use high-temperature colorants in combination with snow white or other transparent water pigments for decoration, which reduces the difficulty of the process and improves the yield while ensuring the artistic effect. In addition to painting and coloring, the crafting process is also crucial to the outcome of the final work. The temperature in the kiln, the length of the kiln firing time, and the cooling rate will all affect the porcelain. Compared with the ancient kiln workers using open or dark furnaces, modern Fencai Porcelain firing generally uses an easy-to-operate electric furnace, but the corresponding firing temperature is adjusted according to the color used on the Fencai to achieve the best color effect. It is also a skill that the pastel artist must master.

The materials and craftsmanship of the Fencai have matured during the Yongzheng period of the Qing dynasty, and formed a traditional Fencai craft pattern. Subsequent developments are based on constant innovation in fixed process models. For example, in terms of materials, on the premise of maintaining the basic characteristics of the pastel, a new type of non-toxic lead-free environmentally friendly pastel pigment has been developed, and the "green design" has been realized from the material. In terms of craftsmanship, ceramic artists take the initiative to innovate, absorb modern artistic nutrition, and bring rich artistic expression through innovative coloring techniques, expanding expression tools, and discovering material characteristics, and also enhance the artistic appeal of pastel decoration design. As it were, the continuous innovation of materials and craftsmanship provides an infinite development foundation for the artistic design of Fencai.

3. The Decorative and form Language of Fencai Design

In traditional handicraft culture, the emphasis on experience is almost placed in every step of all kinds of handicrafts. Perceiving works and the world through experience has become the best method for artisans in the absence of scientific data. Faced with the problem of classification of decorative styles, empirical naming methods still work. Therefore, in terms of the naming and classification of the concept of Fencai decoration, there are currently three concepts around Fencai decoration in Jingdezhen area, traditional Fencai, new Fencai, and modern Fencai. The emergence of such concepts is obviously under empiricism produced. The concept formed by experience has intuitive characteristics, but its inherent lack of logic and organization can easily cause confusion in the concept. For example, we will find that the three concepts of pastel decoration involve both time and style. The author here does not intend to analyze the rationality of the naming of each concept, although this issue is worthy of discussion, but this article hopes to analyze the development context of the pastel decoration language through the discussion of the concept.

From the perspective of pastel decoration style, traditional pastel decoration mainly inherits the aesthetic characteristics of the traditional palace of the Qing Dynasty. It is mainly decorated with

patterns and patterns containing auspicious meaning, and the color matching reflects the characteristics of gorgeous, gorgeous and rich. Some works designed different combinations of borders based on porcelain shapes to enhance the richness of the works, or applied a variety of complex craftsmanship techniques to reflect the fine craftsmanship of the works, and on the whole, they have a tendency of traditional court art style. Therefore, in the context of the current era, traditional pastels are a retro palace decoration style from the perspective of artistic style. The prevalence of light crimson color at the end of the Qing Dynasty and the beginning of the in the late 19th century and early 20th century. Brought the pastel decoration into a new decorative style, which we call "new pastel color". Professor Zou Xiaosong of Jingdezhen Ceramics University once defined "new Fencai" as follows: "The concept of new Fencai" is relative to traditional Fencai. It uses traditional Fencai materials and craftsmanship to inherit the light purple color. The art of painting porcelain adopts the decorative form of Chinese painting." This type of pastel decoration is artistically free from traditional pastel palace pattern decoration and palace aesthetic style, and emphasizes the characteristics of literati painting that integrate poetry, calligraphy, painting, and printing. It fully absorbed the decorative techniques of Chinese painting from the brush, ink rhyme and color, and created a new style of ceramic literati painting. Modern pastels continue to expand pastel decorations on the basis of inheriting traditional pastels and new pastels. In terms of style and form, modern pastel decorations show a kind of diversity, and creators intentionally make their works show a different style from the past. In terms of subject matter content, modern Fencai pays more attention to the aesthetic needs of modern people, starting from contemporary life, discovering new and meaningful forms. In terms of expression techniques, the creators of modern Fencai are pursuing the ceramic body decoration language of clay, fire, glaze and color. Therefore, modern Fencai is more combined with other ceramic decoration forms such as high temperature glaze, ceramic carving, modern ceramic art, etc., presenting a comprehensive ceramic decoration style. Looking at the three concepts of traditional pastel, new pastel, and modern pastel purely from the formal style, we can summarize them into three styles: retro palace decoration style, Chinese painting style decoration style, and comprehensive ceramic decoration style.

From the perspective of the development of pastel decoration, traditional pastel, new pastel and modern pastel present a diachronic relationship. From the traditional pastels established during the Yong-Qian period of the Qing Dynasty, to the new pastels during the the first half of 20th century, to the modern pastels developed after the year of 1949, especially after the new millennium, pastel decorations have always been in accordance with their own development laws and changes in the environment of the times and keep moving forward. The three different types of Fencai have not replaced or disappeared because of their successive appearances. The coexistence of multiple styles and forms can be said to be the current situation of Jingdezhen Fencai design art, which reflects the needs of diversified aesthetics in the post-modern society. However, we can see that the current Fencai decoration and even the entire Jingdezhen ceramic decoration are still affected by the Chinese painting decoration style developed with "new famille". The aesthetics of Chinese painting occupies the mainstream aesthetics of Jingdezhen ceramic decoration, and some contemporary Fencai. The changes in the content and form of decoration are also based on the characteristics of the times under the framework of Chinese painting, which embodies the "brush and ink as the times". We need to realize that the pace of the times is constantly moving forward, and innovation has always been the driving force for the development of pastel decoration. The innovation of the new pastel color from content to form has broken through the traditional pastel decoration that has existed for nearly two hundred years, and has brought new development to the pastel decoration and continues to affect it to recent years. Similarly, modern pastel decorations are also seeking their own breakthrough when facing the literati painting aesthetic style that has long occupied the mainstream of ceramic decoration, creating a new style of pastel decoration with more ceramic characteristics of mud, fire, glaze, and color. It embodies the return of the form language of the pastel decoration to the language of the ceramic itself, and is also a new direction for the future development of the pastel decoration.

4. Conclusion

After the Fencai Porcelain matured during the Yongzheng period of Qing Dynasty, it formed a fixed traditional craft mode. The formation of a fixed craft model does not mean that ceramic artists have stopped exploring craft materials. On the basis of a relatively fixed model, continuously exploring the potential of materials and innovating craft techniques have been the unremitting pursuit of ceramic artists in Jingdezhen. The development of the material craft language of Fencai has become one of the important conditions for the innovative design of Fencai. In terms of decorative form, the Fencai decoration has experienced the traditional palace decoration style and the Chinese painting decoration style. In the environment of the times influenced by modern art, new forms and styles are bound to become the new direction of the development of Fencai decoration. Modern pastel has the historical mission of breaking through historical aesthetic inertia. The language of craft materials and the language of decorative forms jointly constitute the unique design art language of Fencai. For the future development of Fencai Porcelain design, we insist on seeking a breakthrough in the language of decorative form on the basis of exploring the language of craft materials, and which is the only route the ceramic artists must take.

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