Application of Traditional Patterns in Contemporary Indoor Soft Decoration

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Abstract. Patterns and graphs are indispensable parts in soft decoration. During the sedimentation and accumulation of Chinese culture, many patterns of distinctive characteristics have been formed. Some patterns are unique, while others deliver a profound message. They are complementary with some ideas in contemporary indoor soft decoration. This essay is to analyze the application of traditional patterns in contemporary indoor soft decoration.

Traditional Patterns

Traditional patterns are those inherited historically with unique national art style, including primitive society patterns, classical patterns, folk and folk custom patterns, minority patterns.

Design Idea of Contemporary Indoor Soft Decoration

With the improvement of the standard of living, people have no longer been satisfied only with the enjoyment of material life. Rather, they begin to focus on the spiritual life. During the process, the demand of living environment design which occupies a large proportion of people’s working and study time has presented a maximum bursting point. Contemporary indoor design has been totally separated from the basic design ideas of hard decoration, no longer pursuing the simple goal of satisfying basic habitation. It makes use of the exchange of space and modeling to protrude the personalized features which has become a trend and fashion. For the essential distinctions between this design idea and hard decoration, the professional in the industry call it soft decoration design.

Application of Traditional Patterns in Contemporary Indoor Soft Decoration

Application of traditional patterns in contemporary indoor soft decoration is mainly based on four directions.

Firstly, primitive society patterns show a surrealism style of residential buildings. Many buildings are expected to show a surrealism style during the design process of contemporary indoor soft decoration. This idea seems to be easy on the surface but not so simple practically. Many engineers adopt European style during the design process. Although it takes some effect, it looks not so appropriate through the angle of Chinese traditional culture. Therefore, some engineers apply design elements into primitive society patterns. So far the pattern more applied is one called “Ling Wen”. Because this pattern is complex in modeling and stresses symmetric relation, it is very suitable for appearing partly or enlarged partly in the fabrics in soft decoration, resulting with a visual contrast effect to directly upgrade the culture taste to a totally different phase from the real life with surrealism characteristics.

However, it needs to note that because these primitive society patterns are all made public by related archaeologists through evacuation and organization, there are not many patterns directly applicable in soft decoration. Some engineers have designed some similar patterns through imitation to compensate the design shortage. I do not mean it bad method but just suggests engineers to apply primitive society patterns as “original” as possible. And only by this way can show the orthodoxy of the design. The design idea of those imitative patterns has already been placed at contemporary social angle, which cannot form an original ecology style at all. Too much imitation not only fails to reach the predicted effect, but only delivers a feel of blind imitation with ludicrous effect.
Secondly, classical patterns show the solemnness and elegance of office environment. Some are applied in pseudo-classic architecture for administrative office purpose. Classical elements have been largely applied in hard decoration design, which has not only demonstrated the external image effect but also upgraded the taste to a large extent. For the demand of rigid design of hard decoration, classical patterns have been largely applied in soft decoration of such buildings. For example, patterns of palace lantern have been extensively applied in decorative curtain and dragon in sofa cushions and so on. Application of classical patterns in soft decoration delivers an obvious contrast to contemporary fast pace of life, as if bringing people far back to old times, to some extent, just agreeing with the contemporary “traversing” style. Therefore although these classical patterns are largely applied in administrative office environment, they do not deliver a towering feel instead show a cultural spirit and atmosphere in broad sense. Integration of the classical patterns with the space and curve line design of hard decoration totally shows the classical sense of beauty of traditional culture.

However, it needs to note that due to the complexity of classical patterns and lines, and some have the effect of “symmetric with each other” except the effect of symmetric on both sides, it requires a high demand of space effect in soft decoration. It needs not only to satisfy the existing value of lines but also the practical demand of the design space, resulting that some patterns cannot be shown in whole but just in part. I do not agree with this choice of engineers, because engineers of classical patterns come with aesthetic effect which is based on the integrity of classical patterns. If they cannot be used in whole, it suggests not to adopt the partial effect, for it will affect overall aesthetics, which shows a solemn atmosphere of soft decoration but lack of elegance.

It is actually simple to solve the contradiction. If space environment elements are not adequately equipped, it can adopt the same plane figure design symmetry to realize the application of classical patterns in soft decoration. The principle of “symmetry” is the most focused reference standard for the design and application of Chinese cultural patterns. Application of the symmetry under the inadequacy of space conditions for remedy not only dilutes the overall aesthetics of classical patterns but instead makes the design of classical patterns more reasonable and optimizing in soft decoration with a seeming effect of unintentional positive outcomes.

Thirdly, folk and folk custom patterns show the subject style of good luck and happiness. In folk and folk custom culture, various patterns and graphs represent deep meanings which are mostly based on the meaning of good luck and happiness. Therefore, folk and folk custom patterns have been both extensively applied in public and home decorations. Chinese knot, lotus patterns and cloud patterns and so on can almost be seen in any building. One of the important reasons that folk and folk custom patterns can be accepted through different angles is that they not only show literature and art for overall aesthetics but also with fun effect. This fun effect is not comedy effect but the fun of integrity of living elements and space elements inherited and developed through thousands of years in China. For example, the pattern of “nian nian you yu” seems not to conform to the aforementioned traditional patterns by symmetry principle for it is an independent irregular pattern, but this pattern is the most frequently used in some necessary soft decorations like tablecloths and covers for its good meaning.

However, it also needs to note that although folk and folk custom patterns mean lucky, it is important to remember no “maltreat” or “abuse”. The so called maltreat is that on the basis of design train being centered on folk and folk custom patterns, it needs to design the place for patterns according to on-site practical demand to reach the predicted effect in accordance with surrounding environment elements. I used to come across a comparatively failing example. In a home decoration design plan, the engineer integrated the pattern of “gong xi fa cai” into the bathroom curtain to satisfy the client’s design requirement. Such modeling shall be shown originally based on a red background. But it was shown based on a transparent and white background, resulting with a towering feel and even a sense of fear. It totally went against the original intention of good wishes through the application of folk and folk custom patterns. At last the engineer had to change the plan of design to a shivering winding pattern of the curtain. The so called “abuse” is that to reasonably arrange the distribution of folk and folk custom patterns according to the left space conditions after
the hard decoration of indoor space environment. Especially it is important to integrate some modeling according to the practical demand of soft decoration by avoiding abuse of folk and folk custom patterns, for it will easily cause a spatial suppression feel for people. Same with a home decoration design plan of 48 m$^2$, the curtain and sofa cushion respectively adopted patterns of “Chinese knot” and “gong xi fa cai”, and the tablecloth also adopted the pattern of “nian nian you yu”, which had already shown an overall effect. But the client added a pattern of “high mountain and flowing river” when deciding the design plan, and the original soft decoration elements became totally not qualified. The engineer had to make the back cushion of chairs in the living room a six independent combination to realize the effect. Although these elements looked well, integration of folk and folk custom patterns based on different angles within a living room of only more than 10 m$^2$ did not bring a pleasant psychological feel but instead a sense of dense suppression.

Fourthly, minority patterns show a personalized effect. China is a nation with multiple nationalities. There are many minority patterns applicable in soft decoration. Furthermore, because these patterns are full of exotic feels which can demonstrate personalized elements to some extent, they can often be seen in some modernized office environment or home decorations of 85 and 90 generations.

However, it still needs to note that minority patterns are comparatively aesthetic in design style, but attention shall be paid in soft decoration. The so called attention is that once the decoration style is determined, it is important to center on one minority pattern but not the mix of multiple minorities. I used to come across an example of a home decoration design of 144 m$^2$. The client not only required the engineer to show some Mongolian characteristics in soft decoration, but also clearly required to integrate Tibetan elements in cloth design in the living room. In the end, when seeing the Qiang ethnic minority pattern of “Qiang embroider” in engineer’s material catalogue, the client again required to apply the pattern in the curtain. At last when the design plan of “neither fish nor fowl” was completed, it was denied by the client himself when checking the 3D effect picture. Hence, application of minority patterns of course can show some personalized elements for a visual contrast, but if not matched reasonably, there will be an opposite effect.

Prospect of Application of Traditional Patterns in Soft Decoration

When people’s spiritual culture reaches to some standard, they may pursue more deeply for experience of “stage”. Under the guide of this thinking, there is wider development space for application of traditional patterns in soft decoration.

On one hand, application of traditional patterns in soft decoration in the future will show more effect of “harmony”. As to many public decorations, simplicity and grace have gradually replaced the theme of luxury. Some comparatively simple lines elements in traditional patterns can perfectly show this feature in the cloth, like some traditional patters composed of hollowed elements, bringing a feel of aesthetics as well as a different environment effect. As to home decorations, good luck and happiness are the forever theme. But with the demand of fashion and personalization of young people, some patterns need to be adjusted a little. Especially those seemingly complex patterns of “gong xi fa cai” or minority patterns, it only needs to choose the comparatively classical core and make some partial effect treatment, which can help the cloth design with being full of harmonious aesthetics.

On the other hand, application of traditional patterns in soft decoration in the future shows more cultural atmosphere. The existing traditional patterns have already congealed much cultural atmosphere within, but you will discover they belong to different respects after careful check, which helps not too much for the development and spread of Chinese traditional culture. If more cultural atmosphere is shown during the process, such as the application of the patterns, to integrate hard decoration environment condition with soft decoration to form a modeling, it will not only directly upgrade the effect of soft decoration but also make the combination of soft and hard decoration more aesthetic.
Summary

Traditional auspicious patterns are one of the most ethnical modeling elements. They demonstrate the modeling features and aesthetic taste of traditional ethnical art with unique modeling ways to show ethnical regional characteristics and culture connotation. With the higher pursue of culture taste in indoor soft decoration, consumers hope that indoor soft decoration will show more ethnical styles and unique aesthetics. Traditional auspicious patterns begin to appear more frequently in various categories of indoor soft decoration.

References