Traditional Chinese Opera Renaissance and Aesthetic Cultivation in the Major of Art Design

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Keywords: Traditional Chinese Opera Renaissance, Higher Education, Art Colleges and Universities, Visual Design.

Abstract. Traditional Chinese opera is one of the gems of Chinese cultural art which Chinese people are proud of for centuries. Traditional Chinese opera once was the main form of recreation of the mass and one of the main ways of spiritual ballast. However, in the ever-accelerating pace of life, pressure in work and study is increasing. Thus, modern people prefer more relaxing and convenient forms of recreation, rather than traditional Chinese opera. The rich background and artistic conception, the slow and prolonged tune of Chinese opera are rarely paid attention and enjoyed by modern people. Chinese opera ignored for a long time entered into the vision of the public at a time when the government is making efforts to support and pay close attention to intangible cultural heritage project. An enormous quantity of types of Chinese opera and opera houses start their road of renaissance of Chinese opera culture. Cultivation and guidance of aesthetic consciousness and direction have always been the main targets throughout current art education in colleges and universities at home and abroad, especially the education system of the major of art design. Modern colleges and universities should strongly sense the mission of inheritance and responsibility for Chinese opera art with distinctive Chinese traditional culture characteristics.

This thesis applies the features of the major of art design in modern colleges and universities into extracting the visual elements in Chinese opera based on Chinese opera renaissance. Ideas mainly based on forms of manifestation and applied carrier is then proposed. As a result, contribution to the enlarging of the number of audience of Chinese opera and the acceleration to the process of Chinese opera renaissance will be made by utilizing the advantages of the major of art design.

The Current Situation of Chinese Opera and Its Renaissance

Traditional Chinese opera, Greek tragedy and India theatricals are equally famous as three ancient dramas in the world. This ancient artistic style has influenced and promoted the development stage performance arts such as dram in the whole West Asia. Chinese opera has coming down from its brilliant period six hundred years after its birth. Kun Opera had been popular for a century, Peking Opera and other local operas all had their own distinctive features. The scene that all the people have turned out at the auditorium of a Chinese opera show can never be found today. In modern society, only the aged and theatergoers will buy tickets of Chinese opera and go to enjoy it.

Nowadays, owing to the ever-accelerating pace of life, people living in the modern city want to have a good rest at home after a busy day. Relaxing and convenient entertainments such as KTV, television and home theater are usually adopted to meet the need of a circle centered by family members and friends. Slow and tedious stage performance forms like Chinese opera which requires mass participation obviously can not meet the recreation need of modern people. All this is one of the causes leading to the decline in stage performance market in a broad sense.

In 2000, Kun Opera of China was rated by UNESCO as the master work of the first Oral and Non-material Heritage of Mankind. Later, since 2001, a variety of types of Chinese opera including Kun Opera and Peking Opera have been rated in succession as parts of master works of China’s intangible cultural heritage of different levels. Chinese opera ignored for a long time gradually
begins to enter into the sight of the public once again. It has become a hot trend for Chinese people to watch Chinese opera and pay attention to Chinese opera culture. Performance groups and troupes around China have achieved at most to win the heart of young audience in a form beloved by them, especially in combination with the aesthetic features of modern people. Improvements and adjustments in Chinese opera performing venues, forms and sound effect have been made. Chinese operas of different types have been performed in turn around China. All these have helped to make a good start for the all-round renaissance of traditional Chinese opera.

Aesthetic Guidance in the Major of Art Design

In the process of cultivating students’ qualities, colleges and universities should make full use of disciplines, homework, all kinds of lectures in many ways and methods to meet the needs of times development. The students should be guided and cultivated to have aesthetic taste and identification ability toward beautiful and ugly aspects of a thing and judging its quality from levels such as academic atmosphere and environment. Moreover, more initiatives to guide and cultivate the aesthetic ability of students from major of art design. Aesthetic ability is the lifeline of the major of art design. As a result, higher aesthetic ability is the guarantee of the birth of excellent design works.

Aesthetic consciousness is a subtle and imperceptible process. And aesthetic direction requires a long process of correct guidance and cultivation to come into being, just as a long penetration process is needed to get to know and love Chinese opera which can never be done in an instant. Every nation has its refined art representing its own traditional culture. Chinese opera is the art form to convey the charm of Chinese culture in a colorful way. To pay close attention to traditional Chinese opera, strengthen their understanding of it and take inheriting Chinese opera culture as their duty have undoubtedly become an urgent and unavoidable mission of contemporary students of the major of art design.

The nationality is the world. Today, we are upholding the banner of socialist core values and striving to achieve Chinese dream. As a result, in the aesthetic guidance of students in art colleges, emphasis should be placed on fostering the appreciation of traditional Chinese art forms, representative of Chinese opera. Strong enthusiasm for China's national culture and arts should be invigorated among the students of the major of art design. Only by doing so, contribution to the enlarging of the number of audience of Chinese opera and the fulfillment of Chinese opera renaissance will be made by utilizing the special forms of the major of art design applied carrier of art in future. At last, we can do our part for achieving Chinese dream through promoting national culture and establishing its standing in the world.

Vision Leading in Traditional Chinese Renaissance

In recent years, there have been some people who spent thousands of Chinese yuan shooting “pictorials of Peking Opera”. And this trend has become a hot activity carried out during Spring Festival. Those who spent thousands of Chinese yuan shooting “pictorials of Peking Opera” include foreigners having interest in traditional Chinese culture and fashionable youth who have a smattering knowledge of Chinese opera but are fascinated by the brilliant appearance of it. Thus it can be seen that visual element, such as the appearance of the actors, clothing and coloring, is one of the effective ways to help Chinese opera pull out of its slump and enlarge the number of its audience.

To achieve traditional Chinese opera renaissance, vision can be considered as leading the guidance and cultivation of aesthetic ability of students in colleges and universities’ major of art design. The visual elements of Chinese opera thus could enter into the life of the public through utilizing the major features according to circumstances and making applied creation based on the visual elements of Chinese opera in a variety of forms.
Modeling Elements

In the great and profound Chinese opera culture, a variety of wonderful role modelings are one of the main elements in the formation of the intense charm of Chinese opera with Chinese characteristics. As irreplaceable identifying features of role modeling, high boots of a scholar, unique hairstyle of female roles and the embroidered robe and flags of a martial role are beloved by Chinese opera followers. For the major of art design, these modeling elements can be combined with modern aesthetic standards to be simplified and refined, and then applied to all aspects of our life. For example, the unique modelings of characters in Chinese opera can be proportioned and made into soft or hard dolls. Modelings of the Chinese opera roles impressing the mass, such as Hu Mulan and Lu Zhishen, could be designed with flat pictures in the modeling design of seats and etc. Thus, the brilliant and profound ambience of Chinese opera will overtake the senses.

Pattern Elements

Concerning pattern elements, the main carrier of visual elements in Chinese opera is costumes and props. In normal conditions, Chinese opera characters match with their costumes. So under strict hierarchy, characters of different identities wear costumes with different patterns. For example, there is a pattern of ipomoea carica in the imperial robes, while flood dragon in the costumes of other royal members. In addition, patterns of birds and beasts in the court dresses of ancient civil and military officials imply different lucky meanings. All these patterns representing identities can be retrieved and then used as a great source of modern design.

Color Elements

Essence, energy and spirit of China have been concentrated in the coloring in Chinese opera. Unique color matching in Chinese opera is shown through high color saturation in a vast area, a variety of exquisite costumes, opera facial masks owned by every character and common makeup look highlighting eyebrows, eyes and nasal pit. If the easily identifiable color configuration is applied into visual communication design, we believe that book decoration, poster design and website design will be an epitome of the charm of Chinese culture.

Conclusion

The year of 2014 is the year of intangible cultural heritage of China. In a period of Chinese opera renaissance and faced with the current enthusiasm for intangible cultural heritage in China, teachers on the first front of the teaching of art design education should remind themselves of their mission in the long-term and progressive cultivation of the aesthetic ability of students. The teachers should realize that traditional Chinese opera is an important part of China’s image in the view of the world. Promoting and spreading Chinese opera culture is an unshakable historical mission of the teachers teaching art design education. We should contribute our part for traditional Chinese opera renaissance by utilizing the features of the major of art design.

References