

Original Paper

The Combination of Chinese and Western Sculpture Art and the Future Direction

Wang Fuxin¹

¹ College of Landscape Architecture and Art, Jiangxi Agricultural University, Nanchang, Jiangxi, China

Received: October 1, 2023 Accepted: November 1, 2023 Online Published: December 10, 2023
doi:10.22158/elp.v6n3p55 URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22158/elp.v6n3p55>

Abstract

Sculpture art is the physical form of human emotion overflow. Sculpture is an important part of Chinese and Western culture. Whether ancient or modern, the creation of sculpture reflects the cultural spirit of the times. Due to the different cultural backgrounds, the themes of Chinese and Western sculpture art show great differences. The different cultures of China and the West determine that there are great differences between Chinese and Western sculpture art. With the development of economic globalisation, the collision and fusion of Chinese and Western cultures have prompted Chinese contemporary sculpture to present a combination of traditional and Western cultures. The performance of traditional and western culture in modern sculpture is analysed, and an effective way of combining Chinese and western culture is proposed from three aspects: theory and practice, connotation and function, and realism and realism. Sculpture art, as one of the important forms of artistic expression, is able to show the great differences between Chinese and Western cultures. The development of contemporary sculpture art, to recognize the significance of cultural integration and development, and to seek ways to effectively combine traditional Chinese culture with Western culture, so as to better promote the development of modern sculpture art.

Keywords

statuary art, cultural fusion, traditional culture

1. The Artistic Characteristics of Chinese and Western Sculpture

1.1 *The Artistic Characteristics of Chinese Sculpture*

The themes of Chinese sculpture are relatively more extensive. For example, it includes characters, fictional animals, myths and legends, life scenes, natural landscapes, historical stories, musical and dance theatre performances and so on, all of which can be used as the theme and content of sculpture. In Chinese sculpture, images of animals account for a relatively large proportion, especially during the pre-Qin and Qin-Han periods (i.e., before the flourishing of Buddhist sculpture), sculptors portrayed animal images that were more artistically successful than people. So in terms of subject matter, the centrality of man in Chinese sculpture is less prominent than in Western sculpture. Although in general there are many more figures in Chinese sculpture, they are not as striking. It is no accident that Chinese sculpture is characterised by freedom and boldness in its choice of materials, and is not limited to specific objects of expression. The Chinese believe that life is immortal, and they do not focus on the preservation of material life, but on the fulfilment of one's social duties and responsibilities. What the Chinese seek is the realisation of spiritual character in society, not the pursuit of personal immortality apart from social ethics.

1.2 *Characteristics of Western Sculpture*

The development of Western art history has a clear historical lineage, which follows the trajectory of history. Unlike Chinese sculpture, Western sculpture pays more attention to the accuracy of scale, anatomy and perspective. Western sculpture pays more attention to the expressiveness of human structure. In sculpture, certain emotions are conveyed through the changes of the human body, so it is very important for the movements and turning changes of the human body. Classical Western sculpture often uses the rich variations of block and space as a way of reflecting the shape of silhouettes and clothing lines. In addition, Western sculpture has a strong sense of volume, whereas Classical Chinese sculpture has only a great deal of volume in relation to one another and is mostly flat. Sometimes artists use intaglio lines on flat surfaces to show the wrinkles of skin and clothes, so there is still no sense of three-dimensionality, only the flat effect of painting and tanning. As a result, the surfaces of Chinese sculpture are usually smooth and do not have as many subtle variations as Western sculpture.

2. A Simple Comparison of Chinese and Western Traditional Sculpture

2.1 *Chinese Traditional Sculpture*

Mr Wu Weishan, a contemporary Chinese sculptor, said in *Blurring and Vividness*: “The support of writing is the sensitivity of the Chinese. Sensitivity makes time swift. However, Zhongjie has an astringent flavour and is uneven like volcanic lava. The infectious power of Chinese sculpture-the radiation of emotion-acquires the first voice and achieves a high degree of evocation. It vividly attracts the viewer. Lines represent three levels: contour, volume and spirit. The expression is centred on pinching and moulding. Unlike the Western spirit of discursive rationality, Chinese rationality is practical rationality focusing on practice. Body, hand and heart correspond to each other, fingers are

connected to the heart, and human heart, humanity and human feelings are focused on humanity. The continuity and length of this line is consistent from beginning to end. It breaks down the boundaries between everything and is a metaphysical pursuit that runs through the entire life process". His 16-metre-high work, "The Unity of Heaven and Humankind-Image of Lao Tzu", wearing a wide Taoist robe with large flowing sleeves and long eyebrows, portrays a natural and profound way of creating all things in the heavens and the earth, which is highly esteemed by first-timers. It embodies the glamour of Chinese landscape and nature, that is to say, Laozi's Tao Te Ching advocates that "man obeys the law of the land, the earth obeys the law of the sky, the sky obeys the law of the Tao, and the Tao obeys the law of nature". Wu Weishan's "Portrait of Laozi" reflects the author's unique understanding and thinking of traditional Chinese religion, philosophy and art. Wu Weishan's sculpture is a rediscovery of the traditional Chinese way of thinking, the beauty of oriental "nature", and a response to Western sculpture. "There is nothing in this pavilion, sitting and looking at the scenery you get everything". The shape of traditional Chinese sculpture reflects the charm of nature and the Chinese unique view of nature. Wu Weishan pursues an unbalanced aesthetic attitude, which is similar to some of the ingenious compositions in Chinese freehand painting. At the same time, when shaping the image, it is also necessary to grasp the principle of "similarity with difference" in traditional Chinese painting theory, meaning "no similarity at all, not easy to reach the ears", "heaven and earth are one, then divided into wind and rain, the four seasons, light and dark, far and near, wind and rain, and the four seasons, light and dark, far and near, and the four seasons. The four seasons, the light and darkness, the distance and the proximity, are not similar. All these are just right".

2.2 Western Traditional Sculpture

The aesthetic value of western traditional sculpture is a concept of form that emphasises diversity and unity, based on the unity of difference and opposition between the local and the whole. Emphasis is placed on form, thinking in terms of proportion, space, structure and turn of form. In terms of expression, under the guidance of the theory of "representation", traditional Western sculpture has developed a realistic and reproducible approach. According to sculptor Hildebrand, "Sculpture should be based on relief vision, i.e., showing a face from a fixed point of view, whereas sculpture in the round prohibits viewing from the periphery. Like a bas-relief, it should show the form it wants to show in a decreasing manner, a face advancing backward one layer at a time". The sculptures of Michelangelo, an icon of Renaissance sculpture, also valued form. The statue of David he created as a whole has been highly summarised and refined, filled with infinite power in a quiet gesture, showing extraordinary heroism, focusing on all the male beauty and showing Michelangelo's strong emotions that border on exaggeration. His works underwent an extraordinary ideal processing on the basis of realism and became typical symbols of the whole era. He believed that the criteria for good sculpture were modesty, completeness, and full of volume, and he paid more attention to the study of art and related disciplines, including natural sciences, geography, botany, geometry, anatomy, architecture, and so on. Michelangelo's keen observation, great skill and powerful spirit pushed the Western realist tradition to

unsurpassed heights. These are also influenced by the Western traditional culture, which is an indispensable force in the history of Western culture, constantly influencing and changing the sculptor's form of sculpture art, as well as the unique aesthetic ideas and unique concepts of treating nature and society possessed by Western sculptors.

3. The Expression of Western Culture in Modern Sculpture under the Perspective of Cultural Integration

Influenced by the different philosophies of China and the West, Chinese and Western sculpture have different cultural spirits. However, Chinese modern sculpture is deeply influenced by Western culture and is often expressed in the form of Western art.

3.1 Performance in Terms of Subject Matter

From the theme point of view, Western sculpture focuses on characterisation and expression of ideas, pays more attention to the scientific nature of the human body's proportional structure, and is accustomed to using human body changes to express emotions, so the movements and turns of the sculpture form are more important. Contemporary sculpture "Chord" is a bronze sculpture that depicts musicians playing music between cities in a realistic way. The work reflects the silhouette of the figure and the modelling of the clothes with rich block changes, and the whole has a strong sense of three-dimensionality. Obviously, it adopts the figure shaping method of western sculpture, highlighting the beauty of the scene by showing the beauty of the human body, which is in line with the artistic characteristics of western sculpture with the theme of the beauty of the human body.

3.2 Material Performance

Western industrial civilisation is relatively mature, and got rid of the dependence on natural resources earlier. Therefore, Western sculpture materials tend to choose stone, metal and other materials. The materials used in the sculpture "Enjoying Moon Flowers" are mainly stone and copper, using the stone carving of the moon with patterns to create a beautiful landscape image, so that the bronze statue blends well with the surrounding landscape and thus achieves a perfect decorative effect. On the surface of the material, whether it is stone or copper carving, there are subtle changes, such as the use of negative engraving to show the folds of the clothes, giving a strong sense of three-dimensionality, better reflecting the aesthetic characteristics of Western sculpture art.

3.3 Manner of Performance

In terms of artistic expression, western sculpture art is a three-dimensional modelling art, focusing on the use of the actual volume, the pursuit of formal perfection and display. In the creation of stone sculpture, in the West, through three-dimensional carving, the use of the texture of the stone itself to reflect the sense of depth and realism, so as to enhance the simplicity of the work with simple tones. The sculpture "Power" realistically shows a fast steel ball pushing against a steel plate. With the thickness of the steel plate and the deformation of the steel ball, it statically reflects the dynamic process, conveys the philosophy of movement as opposed to static, and embodies the unique artistic

charm of Western sculpture.

4. Effective Combination of Traditional Culture and Western Culture in Modern Sculpture under the Perspective of Cultural Integration

In the context of cultural integration, modern sculpture also needs to achieve an effective combination of Chinese and Western culture, so as to strengthen the exchange and interaction between Chinese and Western culture, and better create modern sculpture to meet the aesthetic needs of people in modern society.

4.1 Combination of Theory and Practice

The reason why Chinese sculpture art has long been stagnated by the impact of Western culture is directly related to the lagging development of Chinese sculpture theory. Chinese traditional sculpture has not been given enough attention, and the relevant theories have not been well developed and perfected, resulting in the contemporary Chinese sculpture artists in the face of Western sculpture art are in the degradation of their own problems, but the Chinese sculpture art after thousands of years of development, has accumulated a wealth of practical experience, and is able to show the unique charm of traditional Chinese culture in the creation of art. In fact, the development of Western sculpture art is also deeply influenced by Chinese art style. For example, the History of Western Modern Sculpture has repeatedly mentioned the influence of Chinese art style on the process of Western modern art, and Oriental porcelain and embroidery have brought creative inspiration to Western artists. Therefore, in the creation of contemporary sculpture art, the theory of western modern sculpture should be combined with the practice of traditional Chinese sculpture art to promote the progress and development of Chinese sculpture art under the guidance of theory. Drawing on western sculpture styles and materials, we can achieve the innovation of contemporary sculpture forms, strengthen the personalised pursuit of contemporary sculpture art language, and complete the creation of works with both romanticism and critical realism. From the development history of the Chinese nation, traditional Chinese culture has shown a strong vitality. Therefore, in the creation of contemporary sculpture art, it is also necessary to give full play to the advantages of traditional Chinese culture, to achieve tolerance of Western sculpture culture, and to draw nutrition from it, so as to better promote the development of traditional culture while achieving cultural inheritance.

4.2 Combination of Connotation and Function

Comparison of Chinese and Western culture can be found, traditional Chinese sculpture art has a deep cultural connotation, while Western modern sculpture art is very rational and practical. In the creation of contemporary sculpture art, it is necessary to pay attention to both the cultural connotation of sculpture and the social function of sculpture decorating space, and to meet people's aesthetic needs while retaining the basic characteristics of things. In order to achieve this goal, contemporary sculpture artists can seek inspiration from traditional culture, strengthen the excavation of traditional sculpture art materials, and then use western rustic modelling techniques to create, combining originality and

modernity. The sculpture “Restored Nurse Man” adopts the flat figure of Manchu folk paper-cutting art, and by realising the three-dimensional modelling of the image, it combines rusty metal and rough wood to complete the creation of the figurative sculpture, conveying a strong sense of vicissitudes. Compared with traditional Chinese sculpture, Western sculpture has a stronger propaganda character. Chinese traditional sculpture tends to serve a few people, while Western sculpture pursues the public’s appreciation of art and emphasises the promotion of the humanistic spirit. Therefore, it has more social education and cognitive functions, which can lead people to better understand the truth and history. In the creation of contemporary sculpture art, it is necessary to use traditional sculpture art and culture to inject fresh vitality into the work, while at the same time focusing on the function of the sculpture to play the role of beautifying the environment. Using this approach, sculpture design can break through the limitations of the western human thought theme, using abstract forms to show the profound ideological connotation, but also from the point of view of serving the people for artistic exploration, so that the works created to give people spiritual solace.

4.3 Combination of Realistic and Realistic Writing

In the performance of modern sculpture art, it is also necessary to strengthen the combination of traditional Chinese realism and western realism, in order to form a unique artistic charm. In the study of sculpture art, it is also necessary to strengthen the realistic training of sculpture, so as to enhance the sculptural sense of the work, better reflect the beauty of the overall structure and layout of the sculpture, and realise the pursuit of the sense of quantity. In social practice, people gradually grasp the intrinsic properties of objects through contact with objects of various shapes, and then produce different feelings, and ultimately create an aesthetic pursuit of physical form. Therefore, in the creation of contemporary sculpture, it is important to maintain the basic characteristics of modelling, thus helping people to imagine and remember, and thus bringing stronger visual impact. Strengthening the application of writing in traditional sculpture can achieve a deep understanding of the concept of traditional Chinese art creation and show the diverse styles of art creation. The sculpture “Tai Chi” adopts the western modelling norms, and at the same time refines the essence, spirit and spirit of traditional Chinese art and culture, so that the work achieves the realm of “the text as the first”, which can not only bring strong visual impact, but also evoke people’s reverie for the primitive atmosphere of life. Therefore, in the creation of contemporary sculpture, while applying Western realistic techniques, it is also necessary to strengthen the use of traditional Chinese pictorial techniques in the treatment of details, instead of deliberately pursuing strict proportionality, and to use abstract imagery to express pictorial things, so as to retain the basic characteristics of things and strengthen the transmission of imagery. Adopting this method to realise the combination of Chinese and Western cultures can perfectly portray the external form of things, while showing the inner temperament characteristics of things, thus making contemporary sculpture simultaneously realistic and abstract aesthetic significance.

5. Development of Modern Sculpture in China

5.1 Analysis of the Development Status of Modern Sculpture in China

Like other arts, sculpture in the 20th century also faced the embarrassment of not getting rid of the old ideological norms of the bondage, called “modern” is not enough, too much boast innovation and beyond, will inevitably lose themselves to nothingness. Over the past decades, the trend of modern art has been to praise rebellion, negation and scepticism for the purpose of innovation, which has become an indispensable image mark of modernist artists. Traditional aesthetic norms and formal meanings no longer play any role. The form is all that is new is good for innovation and unlimited indulgence in truth. Instead of trying their best to escape from confusion in the midst of tumultuous social change, artists indulged in confusion or used the excuses it brought to express their fears in the most extreme ways. Every sculptor tries his best to be different. If he wants to be different, he will destroy familiar forms of language... Though the common god is dead, the artist creates countless gods in his mind. Sculpture no longer focuses on the deeper meaning of expression. “The aestheticisation of life and the non-aestheticisation of art have caused the traditional norms of sculpture to disappear completely”, turning for a time the painstaking sculpture career of Michelangelo, Rodin and countless others before them into a game of jokes about society, art and life among sculptors in the 20th century. It seems that sculpture is not created for society, but for its own art circle. Some modern sculptures are highly painterly and even include some abstractions. There are two main reasons. One, there is a lack of awareness of large spaces and a need for education, experience and practice. The second is the need to study contemporary visual experience, public space, new materials and other conceptual art.

5.2 Countermeasures for the Development of Modern Sculpture in China

5.2.1 The Public Nature of Modern Sculpture

Traditional sculpture is mainly an external “form” in the environment, while modern sculpture is integrated into the overall environment and becomes the internal “form” of the environment. It combines with the indoor and outdoor environment to become an inseparable work of art.

5.2.2 Spatiality of Modern Sculpture

The space reflected by modern sculpture includes environmental space, psychological space and sculpture space. Psychological space plays a decisive role as the main body of design. The whole planning, design and implementation can only be decided through the psychological space. The environment, as an object, has the function of accepting the sculpture space. Only by accepting the sculpture space can the psychological space be shaped. Sculpture as a medium between subject and object makes the design concept finally realised.

5.2.3 Naturalness of Modern Sculpture

Lao Zi’s thought of inaction in “Tao Te Ching” of “something gained, nothing used” is typically reflected in modern sculpture. Modern artists see a new way in earth art, which is to use natural materials to create works that are perfectly integrated with nature. When functionality is embodied, people treat it as a work of art; on the contrary, a cool object blends perfectly with nature, and the work

fades with the passage of time, the destruction of natural forces, and the loss of material properties.

5.2.4 Chinese Characterisation of Modern Sculpture

As a profound cultural tradition, the development and application of traditional Chinese cultural resources is an extremely important aspect of the development of Chinese modern art, whether it is ancient Greece and Rome or India and the ancient Two River Basin civilisation; the Mayan culture of South America and the tribal civilisation of Africa all have their own rich cultural traditions and resources. Chinese modern artists stand at the height of the times, re-examine their own cultural traditions and resources, organically integrate and utilise them, and will surely create modern sculptures with Chinese characteristics.

6. Conclusion

Under the background of cultural integration, Chinese and Western sculpture art has achieved cultural exchange and interaction. To promote the development of contemporary sculpture art, the effective combination of traditional Chinese culture and western culture should be strengthened, and the unique charm of contemporary sculpture art should be better demonstrated through the combination of theory and practice, connotation and function, realism and realism.

References

- Chen, L. N. (2015). Research on traditional spirit in contemporary sculpture art. *Modern Decoration: Theory*, 2015(3), 158.
- Han, Y. T. (1998). *Writing—The Soul of Chinese Aesthetics*. Haikou: Haitian Publishing House.
- Ji, F. (2009). *Chinese Urban Sculpture: Semantics, Context and Contemporary Connotation*. Nanjing: Southeast University Press.
- Liang, S. C. (2003). *History of Chinese Sculpture*. Tianjin: Hundred Flowers Literature and Art Publishing House.
- Su, L., & Wang, H. L. (2013). Analysis and research on the design of public garden landscape sculpture—Wuhu City Sculpture Park as an example. *Journal of Chifeng College: Natural Science Edition*, 2013(7), 64-65.
- Sun, Z. H. (2002). *Sculpture Space*. Changsha: Hunan Fine Arts Publishing House.
- Sun, Z. H. (2005). *Creating Chinese Way of Sculpture Art—Wu Weishan Sculpture Art Theory*. *National Art*, 2005(02).
- Tang, G. W. (2002). *World modern urban environmental sculpture*. Hunan Fine Arts Publishing House.
- Wang, H. J., & Yuan, B. L. (Eds.). (1994). *Introduction to Fine Arts*. Beijing: Higher Education Press.
- Wang, Q. J. (2010). Forms of traditional Chinese cultural elements reproduced in contemporary sculpture. *Journal of Changchun University*, 2010(11), 107-109,114.

- Wang, X. R., & Lin, Q. Y. (2002). *Theory and Practice of Western Modern Landscape Design*. China Architecture Industry Press.
- Yi, Y. (1997). Overview of Western Contemporary Sculpture. *Art Observation*, 1997(07).
- Zhou, D. J. (2015). Analysis of traditional culture and modern ceramic sculpture fusion. *Art Technology*, 2015(3), 109.