

# Practice and Reflection of Folk Art Elements in Modern Chinese Graphic Design



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**Abstract:** Chinese folk art is an important part of Chinese national culture, with distinctive national and regional characteristics. Graphic design is a form of visual communication and has certain special characteristics in the use of Chinese folk art elements. This paper analyses and studies the way in which folk art elements are combined with modern graphic design, the methods of their use and their practical effects. Through the study, it can be found that folk art has certain advantages in Chinese graphic design, which can bring vitality and vibrancy to graphic design and enhance the overall design effect of the work.

**Keywords:** graphic design; folk; art elements

## 1. Preface

Folk art is a branch of China's traditional art, which is the general term for the folk art of various parts of China and ethnic minorities. China's folk art includes paper-cutting, New Year painting, clay sculpture and embroidery, etc. As the crystallization of the wisdom of our working people, folk art carries the profound connotation of our national traditional culture and plays an irreplaceable position and role in the study and research of graphic design. The integration of Chinese folk culture elements into modern graphic design can better inherit and carry forward our national culture, enrich the language form and content of current graphic design, and make it have a very profound connotation, while also playing a positive role for our country's foreign propaganda.

## 2. Overview of folk art elements and modern graphic design

### 2.1 Folk art elements

Folk art elements refer to the material and spiritual wealth that the Chinese nation has created and enjoyed continuously during its historical development, with its unique artistic forms and

aesthetic characteristics, carrying the people's ideals and aspirations in life, expressing their emotions and thoughts. Folk art is an important and unique part of China's folk art, containing a large number of folk art forms with national characteristics that have been handed down over a long period of time, have a wide influence, are close to people's lives and are rich in folk interest. In Chinese folk art, the main methods of expression are paper-cutting, New Year paintings, face painting and various decorative paintings. Paper-cutting and New Year paintings have a long history and are named after the different patterns cut out of their images (Zhang, 2022). Many of the folk arts have ethnic characteristics or styles and reflect the lives of the people and social development, and are often an important part of real life (Xie, 2018). Many of these folk arts are rich in ethnic or regional colours and images that are highly expressive and infectious (e.g. paper-cutting), and are the result of the wisdom and sweat of working people.

### 2.2 Modern graphic design

Graphic design, also known as poster design and logo design, is an art that combines text, graphics and images, and its task is to transmit information to the audience through printing or other media, so that the

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public can better understand the information conveyed. At this stage graphic design is playing an increasingly important role in the life of the public, such as product advertising and commodity packaging, and has now permeated all aspects of life. With graphic design becoming an independent art discipline, it is necessary for graphic designers to have a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of graphic design so that they can make progress in their work and gain a greater sense of achievement and satisfaction (Li, 2021). Graphic design is a form of plastic art that uses text, graphics and images as the main means of expression, and uses a variety of skills and techniques to fulfil the function of communicating information about graphics. It should not only take into account the basic attributes of visual, aesthetic and emotional factors necessary for people's material and spiritual life, but also take into account the existence and development of graphic design as a means and medium of information dissemination (Zeng, 2019). The connotation of graphic design in the context of the current era is also constantly enriched, the pursuit of diversified development of graphic design, and with the form of graphic design to show the national characteristics and regional culture, in view of this, the need for designers to strive to create a graphic design style with cultural characteristics, by drawing on and absorbing the style of China's graphic design, as a way to develop graphic design works with a strong traditional national cultural connotation.

### **2.3 Interoperability between folk art elements and modern graphic design**

As folk art is becoming more and more recognised, graphic design is also constantly and deeply influenced by folk art, making full use of the characteristics of folk art for modern graphic design. Traditional Chinese cultural elements, such as symmetry, contrast and the golden section, can be incorporated into modern design to achieve a refreshing effect (Hua, 2021). At the same time, in order to highlight Chinese cultural characteristics, designers also incorporate delicate traditional elements such as details, colours and textures into

their designs, thus making them more contemporary and individual. Currently, folk art elements and modern graphic design are becoming increasingly close to each other, effectively integrating folk art elements with modern design in an effort to push Chinese graphic design step by step towards a state of professional, innovative and rich development. The interoperability between the two is more evident in the fact that folk art shows the aspirations of our people for a better life and therefore incorporates a rich imagination in its creation, while folk art elements are not bound to traditional artistic images, which include abstract artistic techniques and exaggerated character modelling, which makes the artworks reveal a unique tension (Cheng, 2019). At the same time, in modern graphic design, a more simple and vivid image will be shaped through abstract artistic methods, so as to convey very enthusiastic and hot emotions, highlighting the characteristics of art and unique cultural connotations, based on the characteristics and spiritual features of both, the two can be well integrated, showing the times and culture.

### **3. The practical application of folk art elements in modern Chinese graphic design**

The development of modern Chinese graphic design is changing rapidly, especially with the rapid development of new media technology, Chinese designers have designed a series of new, innovative, varied and interesting graphic designs in different fields such as mobile internet and social media. In terms of design style, Chinese graphic design has also continued to diversify, whether in terms of style, colour, typeface or pattern, and is constantly incorporating different cultural elements and even folk art elements to achieve professionalism, unity and innovation (Shu, 2022). However, at the same time, there are still many problems in the development of modern graphic design in China, such as graphic designers focusing more on Western cultural elements and artistic concepts, etc. In the creators consciously trying to imitate the design concepts and ideas of Western designers, this

inherent form of thinking leads to the lack of Chinese elements in the works, which in turn leads to imbalanced content. When faced with the above problem, creators need to look for creative elements from Chinese folk art works, so as to inherit and carry forward folk art works with national characteristics and realise the effective integration of the two.

### **3.1 The application of graphic elements in graphic design**

Typical figurative elements in Chinese folk art include dragons, phoenixes, pandas, rabbits, sacred animals, flowers and birds, as well as pagodas, Buddhist beads, fly dustpans and bottle spouts. Folk art graphic elements have their own unique expressive power, they can create rich and simple visual effects, while graphics have clear lines of form, characteristic shape features and obvious symbolic meanings, and have more detailed and simple characteristics compared to modern abstract art, which can better highlight the thematic ideas and emotional expression of the pattern or image. This is because folk graphic elements come from the imagination and creativity of our working people and have a high aesthetic value, such as the black and white based ink elements, which show a conflicting and fused visual effect through strong colour contrast. In our folk art works, we use symbolic elements such as peonies, flowers and bats, which are very representative of our traditional art works. In addition, the use of folk art graphic elements can also be used as the basis for design, using traditional elements as themes and ideas for graphic design, making the design more innovative and distinctive, such as dragons, phoenixes, qilin and other such supernatural, but auspicious motifs, so that they can be used in graphic design to achieve innovation in expression and enhance the artistic nature of the pattern. In addition, folk art graphic elements can also be used as decoration and embellishment to make the design more colourful, such as simplifying the Tai Chi pattern and showing the contrast between yin and yang, movement and stillness through ink and wash or crayon, etc.(Su, 2019). In addition, designers can

also use folk art graphic elements to convey emotions, making the work more artistic, as well as showing the philosophical nature in the process of intermingling.

### **3.2 The application of colour elements in graphic design**

Folk art colour elements have a wide range of applications, the most common of which is in graphic design to increase the choice of colour in graphic design, to give the object a richer visual effect, as well as to highlight the characteristics of the object. For example, the five ancient colours (blue, red, yellow, white and black) in Chinese folk art works, different colours represent different meanings, such as white symbolises elegance and purity; red symbolises good luck, goodwill and enthusiasm, etc. Because the use of colour can show different visual impact, for this reason, the application of colour elements in folk art works in graphic design can show strong vitality and vivid colours. For graphic design the use of colour is relatively simple and monotonous, so colour elements in folk art can make up for this deficiency, designers can use five colours to enhance the richness of the image and give the audience a certain visual impact to achieve the message, for example, in the Chinese New Year, Coca-Cola will incorporate red elements into their advertising works as well as Chinese knots and couplets, which are unique to China, in order to cater for the New Year atmosphere For example, in Chinese New Year, Coca-Cola will incorporate red elements and unique Chinese knots and couplets to cater for the New Year atmosphere, so that consumers can intuitively feel the festivity.

### **3.3 The application of stylistic elements in graphic design**

This is because the creator is not influenced by external factors when creating the work, but rather by exaggerating, extending or imagining the work itself, in order to show the simplicity and strength of the work, while China's folk art also includes shadows and paper cuts, which are also created from two-dimensional space, showing the characteristics of things, and also giving different things a new look.

They also give new meanings to different things. For graphic design, it is possible to enhance the visual tension of graphic design works by drawing on the generalisation and dynamic expression of the modelling elements of Chinese folk art works, thus enriching the connotation of the works. For this reason graphic designers using the right folk art modelling elements can create design effects with characteristics that well emphasise the thematic meaning and characteristics of the work, adding depth and diversity to the work. In addition, the application of stylistic elements in folk art works in graphic design can also expand the designer's creative space and make graphic design works full of a strong cultural atmosphere.

#### 4. Conclusion

The value of folk art in modern graphic design is mainly reflected in highlighting historical culture and increasing the level of creativity, while folk art colour elements can help current designers highlight the theme and characteristics of their works from different angles, giving the audience more visual impact and thus showing more cultural heritage and connotation. In addition, folk art elements also provide a natural channel for contemporary designers to obtain inspiration from folklore, so as to create more of their own unique works. To this end, graphic designers can fully explore the ethnic characteristics of folk art works, and fully apply the pattern, colour and shape elements in folk art works to graphic design, so as to promote the integration of graphic design with folk art works and expand the richness of current graphic design.

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#### Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest to this work.

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