Apply Meishan Folk Art Resources to Teaching the Course of Graphic Design

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ABSTRACT. How to make good use of Meishan folk art resources in teaching the course of graphic design is a topic of era and culture that cannot be ignored for the teaching reform of major of visual communication design in Hunan University of Humanities, Science and Technology. By analyzing the current situation of applying Meishan folk art resources to teaching the course of graphic design, we find that the lack of curriculum features and folk vision are the two main problems in current curriculum teaching. In order to solve the two major problems as mentioned above, we adopt three ways of teaching graphic design, namely, embedded knowledge module collocation, characteristic textbook development and potential course edification, aiming to encourage students to pursue the past and future of Meishan culture from its folk art resources and form the teaching characteristics for the major of visual communication design in Hunan University of Humanities, Science and Technology.

KEY WORDS: Meishan Folk Art; Graphic Design; Curriculum Teaching; Teaching method

1. Introduction

In addition to maintaining regional harmony and cultural inheritance, rich and colorful folk art resources are often viewed as the regional cultural activities or cultural symbols.[1] Applying Meishan folk art resources to teaching the course of graphic design can give students cultural nourishment, enlighten their wisdom and cultivate their spirit of cultural responsibility. How to make good use of Meishan folk art resources in teaching the course of graphic design is a topic of era and culture that cannot be ignored for the teaching reform of major of visual communication design in Hunan University of Humanities, Science and Technology. Teaching the course of graphic design requires the smooth thinking, the focus on characteristics and a second view on the advantaged cultural resources of Meishan. Under the background of great social development and transformation, rich Meishan folk art resources are confronted with the imbalance of cultural ecology, the lack of cultural subjects, and the difficulties in artistic inheritance, which makes the course of graphic design become an important platform for the publicity, inheritance and

protective development of Meishan folk art. It is well known that scientific integration between graphic design course and Meishan folk art resources forms a symbiotic win-win relationship, which is also faced by the continuous exploration in both theory and practice. However, finding a path of realizing reasonable integration is always complicated and ineffective.

Currently, major of visual communication design in Hunan University of Humanities, Science and Technology is pushing forward to the direction of application-oriented education, requiring the course of graphic design to internalize the elements of Meishan folk art into students' own art conservation and apply the elements to students' own professional practice in front of Meishan folk art resources, by which, Meishan folk art resources will be well applied to graphic design teaching so as to form the unique teaching characteristics.

Meishan an ancient and historical title of the region taking Xinhua and Anhua as the center in Song Dynasty. It is speculated that Meishan got its name from its primitive belief and its scope includes today's Loudi in central Hunan Province and some counties and cities including Yiyang, Shaoyang and Longhui. Meishan is considered to be the ancestral mountain of Yao, She and other minorities, and the main activity area of the Sanmiao ethnic group in history[2]. According to the history of Song Dynasty, "this region was not connected with the mainland in history". Native minorities and some immigrants had been living isolated island-like life here for a long time, which gradually formed Meishan culture with unique characteristics as time went by. Meishan culture is characterized by an ancient, primitive and mysterious fishing and hunting culture and Wunuo culture and folk art forms preserved by far include Meishan paper-cut, Tantou new year painting, Huayao embroidery and blue cloth with design in white, etc. (Picture 1) These precious folk art resources not only provide sufficient original art materials for contemporary art presentation and teaching the course of graphic design, but also provide good art reference and inspiration. Hunan University of Humanities, Science and Technology is located in the core area of the ancient Meishan culture and has established a Meishan Graphics and Design Research Center. By taking Hunan University of Humanities, Science and Technology as a case study of Chinese universities, this paper analyzes current situation of applying Meishan folk art to teaching the course of graphic design so as to explore the way for the course of graphic design to well apply folk art resources.









Fig. 1 from left to right, Meishan paper-cut, Tantou new year painting, Huayao embroidery, blue cloth with design in white (Shot by the author)

2. Basic Problems

The major of visual communication design of Hunan University of Humanities, Science and Technology used to focus on "looking forward", which means that the course of graphic design should be set in line with the development of this era in modern days, for example, injecting interactive technology into graphic design, which is most typically represented by interactive graphic design. However, it is hard for our teachers to keep up with the era, resulting in the various qualities in talent cultivation. In recent years, graphic design teaching tends to focus on "looking backward", that is, focus on Meishan folk art resources, carry out modern development and application of folk art in curriculum teaching, which is, however, often represented by a form of dissociation and obvious popular science education in teaching. Therefore, the integration between the teaching of graphic design and Meishan folk art resources is not as ideal as expected, which is the result of two reasons as follows:

2.1 Lack of curriculum characteristics

An important trend in the development of education in the world is to highlight the national characteristics, local characteristics and individual characteristics so as to provide various possibilities for overall human development and personality development. Curriculum characteristics are an important measure for Chinese colleges and universities to realize the transformation of application-oriented talent training, well play their advantages, cultivate application-oriented talents with unique humanistic temperament, and form their brands. Internally speaking, curriculum characteristics are the means to form the support by characteristic culture, gather and inspire cohesion and confidence of teachers, students and staff, and strengthen power and competitive for their development; externally speaking, by taking the characteristic culture as the image and resource, curriculum characteristics provide honest, trustworthy and effective services for the society and the public and expand the social influence of the schools so as to broaden the channels for the schools to obtain resources. [3] Currently, the major of visual communication design of Hunan University of Humanities, Science and Technology is now focusing on "looking backward" because Meishan culture and art resources

are the indispensable fertile soil for the survival and development of graphic design and the necessary choice to cultivate the characteristics of course of graphic design, namely, treat Meishan culture and Meishan folk art as the basis for the characteristic development in teaching the course of graphic design, establish Meishan Graphic and Design Research Center, collect, sort out and establish the Meishan Folk Art Literature Reference Room and organize related scholars to promote the research on the integration of Meishan folk art and the course of graphic design, and all above have initially built a platform for teaching the course of graphic design and formed teaching characteristics, which, however, only stays here and is far away from well and flexibly applying Meishan folk art resources to teaching the course of graphic design, such as compiling related textbooks to promote the characteristics of Meishan culture, instructing students to design graphic symbols that can represent Meishan culture and promoting market-oriented development of Meishan graphic symbols in class, etc.

2.2 Lack of folk vision

Teaching the course of graphic design requires the extensive participation of Meishan folk artists and Meishan folk scholars. The author has been engaged in the Meishan folk art research for many years in School of Fine Arts and Design of Hunan University of Humanities, Science and Technology. There are many art activities spontaneously organized by local governments and the people but they never get in touch with us and it makes us miss these rare opportunities to collect field materials, which is also partially the result of our insufficient in-depth efforts, that is, our narrow vision on folk art. According to A Liu, the author's field research friend who has been engaged in the exploration of folk art such as Meishan paper-cut for a long time, "teaching the course of graphic design should undertake the important responsibilities of exploring, protecting and researching Meishan culture and it is only people like you that can accomplish this work. However, you are unwilling to make in-depth efforts." His words contain both strong expectation for our work and criticism for our lack of efforts made in exploring the opportunity of teaching Meishan folk art resources in the course of graphic design. I can understand his accusation that we still have a lot of work to do, that is, we should further expand our vision on Meishan folk art in the process of teaching graphic design. As a matter a fact, we are also doing a lot of field research for the course. However, it is hard to realize comprehensive implementation and carpet collection due to the lack of human power and funds and we are promoting this work in our own way. Meishan folk societies and local government can always sense their psychological distance from teaching the course of graphic design in our university. Therefore, we are seldom invited to attend the activities of exhibiting Meishan folk art. Some Meishan folk artists and Meishan folk researchers even believe that there is a great distance between Meishan folk art and the course of graphic design and teaching the course of graphic design does not need Meishan folk art. As a result, due to various reasons, in terms of social relationship, there is quite a distance in reality and there is lack of communication between Meishan folk artists, Meishan folk scholars and our teaching course of graphic design for students majoring in

visual transmission design.

3. Teaching methods of applying Meishan folk art resources to the course of graphic design

3.1 Embedded knowledge module collocation

Embedded knowledge module collocation is the necessary for the good application of Meishan folk art. In terms of semantics, embedding is originated from electronic technology and is of great reference significance to the design and collocation of course modules. The success of embedding relevant knowledge points of Meishan folk art into the teaching modules of graphic design course in sequence will not only diversify the graphic design modules, but also meet students' personalized demands for knowledge, so that Meishan folk art can be truly integrated into the teaching and infiltrated into the classroom. Instead of simply adding knowledge related to Meishan folk art to the graphic design modules, knowledge embedding is to combine the knowledge of Meishan folk art style, culture and habitat with the teaching units of the course in sequence, so as to realize the natural integration of Meishan folk art and the course of graphic design. For example, the first unit of graphic design course focuses on the description of Meishan Nuo mask, which includes valuable folk art resources of modern graphic such as Meishan god, Meishan goddess, Meishan land god and Meishan pattern, etc., and the teachers should instruct the students to refine and abstract the original patterns of Meishan Nuo mask and design them into posters, packaging, etc. (Picture 2) Meishan Nuo mask has successfully entered the classroom for graphic design teaching but it is far from enough because the knowledge module of Meishan folk art has not been systematically embedded in the course, which is far from well applying Meishan folk art resources. Therefore, we should embed Meishan folk art knowledge including Meishan paper-cut and Tantou new year painting, etc., into teaching unit two and teaching unit three in sequence so that Meishan folk art knowledge can be systematically and comprehensively embedded in the course, by which, students will have a comprehensive and deep understanding of the cultural ecology and artistic geography of Meishan folk art. Only in this way can students internalize the essence of Meishan folk art and apply it to other design practices in the future, which is both a contribution and innovation to Meishan culture.





Fig. 2 Graphic Design and Application of Meishan Nuo Mask (Designed by Jiang Yanqiao)

3.2 Characteristic textbook development

Characteristic textbook development for the course of graphic design is the key condition of realizing the good application of Meishan folk art. The characteristic textbook should focus on highlighting the dual characteristics of Meishan culture and school talent cultivation, and also looking for the characteristics of folk art in the view of Meishan culture. Characteristic textbook for the course of graphic design should be both systematic and macroscopic. In addition, the formation of characteristic textbook for the course of graphic design should have a long-term effect on college students' understanding of Meishan folk art in terms of mechanism and culture. Therefore, we have now compiled Meishan Folk Art and Re-design (Picture 3), which is conducive to the course opening and students' repeated learning. It is worth mentioning that as the immaterial embodiment of Meishan folk art, Meishan folk music has distinctive characteristics and prominent original nature, which has become the precious fortune in teaching the course of graphic design. In recent years, teachers in our school have achieved phase-based results in transforming Meishan music symbol into Meishan visual symbol and are prepare to publish the textbook Graphic Design: Transformation from Meishan Music Symbol to Meishan Visual Symbol. Meishan folk art is very popular among the people and there must be a lot of essence of culture and art in Meishan folk art. Therefore, reasonable textbook development will not only make the textbook popular among students but also can actually improve students' artistic quality and form the course characteristics.

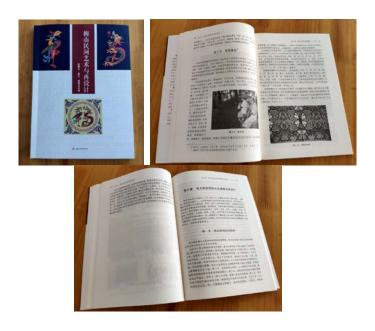


Fig.3 Meishan Folk Art and Re-design (Shot by: Chen Hong)

3.3 Potential course edification

Potential course edification is the important help for the good application of Meishan folk art. "potential course refers to the unexpected or non-planned knowledge, values, norms or attitudes that a student learns in a learning environment." [4]The course of graphic design should focus on Meishan diversified culture, Meishan spiritual belief and Meishan value orientation, all of which cannot be undertaken and expressed by the course of graphic design. Therefore, potential course is indeed able to pass on such cultural contexts as Meishan beliefs, ideas and customs that are difficult to be easily understood. The cultural customs, values and totem beliefs represented in Meishan folk art need to be influenced by the potential course, which can directly generate artistic touch on students. Potential course can play a better role in comparison with the course of graphic design for students to understand things that cannot be said. "Potential" emphasizes the imperceptible influence. We specially opened the potential courses (theories) for Meishan folk art including History of Meishan Arts and Crafts, and Introduction to Meishan Culture, etc. In addition, our school has enabled students to gain comprehensive understanding of Meishan folk art through photo exhibition, art exhibition, practical investigation, media communication and other means. Especially in recent years, many Meishan folk artists, experts and scholars have been invited to give lectures for students majoring in visual communication design of our school, which makes Meishan folk art deeply rooted in many curriculum systems of visual communication design and even in the whole school culture. According to Pierre Bourdieu, a French sociologist, "Instead of simply reflecting the society, school has the function of reproducing social relations." [5] Therefore, folk art should be reflected as a kind of cultural consciousness in the process of teaching students majoring in visual communication design in colleges and universities, thus forming a new cultural tension, which is, as a matter a fact, the narration of folk art at a deeper level.

4. Conclusion

Above all, Meishan folk art should be reflected as a kind of cultural consciousness, thus forming a new cultural tension in the process of teaching the course of graphic design, which is, as a matter of fact, the application of Meishan art folk resources at a deeper level. Good application of Meishan folk art resources in the process of teaching the course of graphic design should not be limited to the above three ways, which, in fact, belong to the empirical summary of teaching the course of graphic design for students majoring in visual communication design in Hunan University of Humanities, Science and Technology. Instead of the new wine in an old bottle, the above three ways should be a tailored and brand-new mode with the consideration of the full picture. Otherwise, we will still fail to well apply Meishan folk art to teaching; instead of being limited to the theoretical level, the above three ways should stay at the practical level. Otherwise, we will fail to accomplish specific application of Meishan folk art; instead of being the pure teaching of the course of graphic design, the above three ways should be the inheritance of Meishan culture with a sense of responsibility. Otherwise, we will fail to accomplish the in-depth application of Meishan culture and art.

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