

THE INVESTIGATION OF THE DESIGN AESTHETICS OF CULTURAL CREATIVITY COMMODITY OF MATSU FIGURE

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ABSTRACT

The major objective of this research is to investigate and analyze the history and the culture of belief about Matsu, the origin of the Figure, the design aesthetics of Matsu figure. The primary research techniques adopted are based on the three dimensions of aesthetics, which are the essence, form, and meaning, as well as the three techniques of so-called the Xie-He's Six Canons, which are the vividness of aroma and majesty, realistic portrait of objects, and endowed aesthetics with colors, to analyze the design methodologies of the cultural commodity of Matsu figure. The style and meaning of representation, the application image, the spiritual meaning, and the innovative commodity service design of the Matsu figure will be investigated and analyzed such that specific recommendations will be drawn for the reference of the scholars, designers, and the service providers who are interested in studying and designing the related cultural commodities.

Keywords: Cultural Creativity Commodity, Matsu Figure, Design Aesthetics

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION

The major economy pattern in the 21st century is the innovative designs based knowledge economy in which the cultural creativity industries infuse innovative design elements into the conventional cultural industries such that the new add-on values could be created and the economic advancement can be promoted. The belief in Matsu is one of the characteristics of Taiwanese culture and the largest-scale religious pageant in Taiwan is the Dar-Jia Matsu Pilgrimage in which hundreds of thousands faithful adherents attend. The cultural commodity of Matsu figure evolved from the cultural codes can not only convey the cultivation of Taiwanese culture but also could create economical values for the development of cultural creativity industry. With the developments of the information networking technologies and the changes of the consumption types as well as the cultural values, people's demands and expectation for purchasing the merchandise has been promoted from the levels of its values of usage and codes to its spiritual values.

Taiwan is a typical island of maritime culture surrounded by ocean. The culture of religious belief about Matsu has been deeply loved and esteemed by the Taiwanese people since the immigration of their ancestors across the Taiwan Strait. The adherents established Temples around the island and Matsu has become the primary religious belief and spiritual commitment of the people in the coastal region of Taiwan. The March 23rd in lunar calendar is the holy festival of Matsu's birthday which is highly regarded by the people in Taiwan such that the largest-scale religious pageant in Taiwan is the Dar-Jia Matsu Pilgrimage in which hundreds of thousands faithful adherents attend. Meanwhile, through the introduction and impetus of the concept of cultural creativity industries, all of the Matsu Temples respond to such a trend and develop relative cultural commodities for the festivals to industrialize the culture of religious belief. During the period of so called the "fanaticism of Matsu" all over the Taiwan on March in lunar calendar, the popularity and sales volume of the cultural commodities are tremendously increased because the faithful adherents of Matsu believe that the cultural creativity commodity of Matsu figure possesses the functions of settling spirit of people, praying for blessings, and providing sense of security.

1.2 OBJECTIVE OF THE RESEARCH

The objective of this research is to investigate the design aesthetics of the cultural commodity of Matsu figure which is transformed from the images of Matsu icon; and the approaches for emerging the cultural spirit and connotation from the commodity used in our daily life, going deep into the people's inherent as well as extrinsic demands, and creating the values of cultural commodity through the design, manufacturing, and marketing. On the other hand, the primary research techniques adopted are based on the three dimension of aesthetics, which are the essence, form,

and meaning, as well as the three techniques of so-called the Xie-He's Six Canons, which are the vividness of aroma and majesty, realistic portrait of objects, and endowed aesthetics with colors, to analyze the design methodologies of the cultural commodity of Matsu figure. The style and meaning of representation, the application image, the spiritual meaning, and the innovative commodity service design of the Matsu figure will be investigated and analyzed such that specific recommendations will be drawn for the reference of the scholars, designers, and the service providers who are interested in studying and designing the related cultural commodities.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 THE CULTURE OF RELIGIOUS BELIEF ABOUT MATSU

There are a great many of mythology and tales about Matsu in the catalogue of history. Among them, the most frequently quoted story is that Matsu was named as Mo-Niang Lin born on March 23rd 960 A.D. in Fu-Jian Province of Mainland China. Since this baby girl had never cried since the day she was born to the completion of the first month after her birth, she was given a first name as Mo-Niang which means a silence girl. She was a legend of religious figure also called as the Queen of Heaven, the Concubine of Heaven, the Imperial Concubine of Heaven, and the Holly Mother of Heaven et cetera. Mo-Niang was intelligent since her childhood. She could study, remember, and explain all the classical masterpieces of the Confucians. She loved to practice Buddhism when she was ten years of age. On age thirteen, she learned the white magic from a Taoist priest. On age sixteen, after receiving a bronze charm from a fairy, she possessed of the magic power of healing people, fortune telling, and her most adorable power, the salvage, since then. On September 9th, 987 A.D., age twenty-nine, she flew away gracefully by the wind to the heaven and miracles happened frequently since then. Matsu has not only become the guidance of the voyagers but also the respectable guardian angel of the Chinese people (Tai-Shan Tsai 2004).

The religious belief about Matsu was originated from the May-Jou island of Pu-Tian county in Fu-Jian Province during the Northern Song Dynasty and expanded to the coastal region of the Mainland China. And then it was disseminated overseas through the development of the international trade during the Ming and Ching Dynasty. About one thousand years ago, the culture of the religious belief about Matsu was introduced into Taiwan with the colonization of the island by their ancestors and has been deeply loved and esteemed by the Taiwanese people. There are estimated about fourteen million adherents continuously established roughly two thousand Temples around the island (Hong-Gang Wang 2004). The main reason for making Matsu become one of the most important religious believe is because the promotion enforced by the authorities during the Ching Dynasty. The history of that can be traced back to the campaign between the Koxinga (an admiral of Ming Dynasty) and the government army of Ching authority. The government army employed the belief about Matsu and the legend of so called "Matsu has made her presence to protect the army" to devastate

morale of Koxinga's troops and eventually prevailed. After island had been successfully occupied, the Ching authority was promoting religious belief about Matsu with even greater effort such that it has become the major religious belief of the Taiwanese people.

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, the largest-scale religious pageant in Taiwan is the Dar-Jia Matsu Pilgrimage in which hundreds of thousands faithful adherents attend. Matsu has not only become one of the most important religious believe in Taiwan but also a representative of oceanic culture. The religious believe about Matsu has not only enriched the local culture of Taiwan, meanwhile, it possesses esteemed values of cultural treasures. Cooperating with the impetus on the cultural creativity industries enforced by the government, Matsu has become an internationally celebrated icon. Matsu can be regarded as the historical evidence of voyage history and foreign cultural exchange of ancient China. The culture of Matsu and the religious belief can be discovered in Taiwan, main land China, and even the five continents all over the world (Tai-Shan Tsai 2007).

2.2 THE ORIGIN OF THE FIGURE

The term "Figure" is the general appellation of icons or human shape toys. Because the artistic creation market of the Figures in Hong-Kong have yielded unusually brilliant results in Asia, "Figure" has become the representative term for all the toy figurine. Furthermore, it has transformed as the essential part of the culture and people's life (Yin-Chi Tseng 2008). Figure is originated in 1962 from the Hasbro Toy Company in United States where a series of exquisite human shape icon was manufactured based on the historic characters and American soldiers as models. In 1963, the Hasbro created and manufactured 12 inches (30 centimeters) human shape icons with movable joints and officially announced in the 1964 International Toy Exhibition held in New York City of United States. Consequently, the 12 inches human shape icons with movable joints have become popular since then. There are even more types of artistic creations up to the present (Jen-Hong Luo 2009).

The major style of organizations for developing and marketing of Figures in Hong-Kong is mainly designer-based individual studio types of workshops. The most famous designers of Figures are Michael Lau, Eric So, and Brothersfree (Jia-Jie Yi 2007). The Figure has integrated the features of character, collection, current trend, fashion, cultural identification, and artistry into the design. It totally matches the cultural ideology and emotions of pursuing fashions, restoring ancient fashions, and individualism nowadays such that it become more and more popular in the recent years (Pi-Lien Chiu 2010). Figures with movable joints can endue Figures with new vitality. Such a design style is the essential element of design for the Figures in Hong-Kong. Such a humanlike icon with personal features of styles has gradually become popular in recent years. The features of character are the major factors making the people are attracted to the Figures. Another factor of success of the Figures is that the marketing models of Japanese Current Commodity which issues limited quantity of commodity, sells in specific time and location, and cooperates with different brands are applied (Jen-Hong Luo 2009).

2.3 DESIGN AESTHETICS

Design aesthetics is the investigation on the structure of aesthetics knowledge and operational definition employed for engaging in the design activities. There are three dimensions of aesthetics, which are the dimensions of essence, form, and meaning. The dimension of essence is the measure of investigating the objectives and concepts of the origin of the art works' creation. It is an investigation of the metaphysical aesthetics issues which explores the view points of the course of development of the esthetic sensibilities on the aspect of self ideas. Such a measure also analyzes and probes into the concept, the scope, and the major as well as objective body of esthetics to pursue its origin of the intention. The dimension of meaning is the measure of exploring the content and connotation of the expression of the art works. The individual or group meaning of the elements employed in the fabrication, the constructed contours of presentation and the description of relating, and even the derived effects of the creator's association or metaphor in thinking are also the scope of investigation of this dimension. The dimension of form is a measure to investigate the criteria of operations for the creation of art works and is an exploration of the physical aesthetical issues. It can be demonstrated through the experienced and sensed features with regular pattern and possesses realistic states and forms of fabrication. Compared to the other two dimensions, it is easier to be discovered and explored, and is the dimension of exploration for the manufacturing and employed techniques (Yu-Fu Yang 2009).

In the time of Southern Qi Dynasty (479 to 502 A.D.), a Chinese figure painter and critic Xie-He formulated a complete methodology of painting called the Xie-He's Six Canons. The techniques of the so-called Xie-He's Six Canons are the vividness of aroma and majesty, realistic portrait of objects, transfusing strokes with strength, endowed aesthetics with colors, attentive arrangement of compositions, and to convey and change by patterned representation. These six principles of painting have become important standards and aesthetical criteria for the evaluations on the artistic works in the time of ancient China. These principles summarize the internal spirits of the portrayed figures, artist's presentation for the emotions and evaluations on the objective body, the strokes for depiction of the figure's contour, the structure and color, and the composition as well as the copying of the artistic works (Shao-Jun Lang 2000). The vividness of aroma and majesty refers to the vivid presentations of the object's spiritual connotation, which is full of vitality and integrating objects with the artist and is one of the supreme goals in fields of painting and plastic art. Transfusing strokes with strength refers to artistry of manipulating the paint brushes, which includes the esthetics of the figures' vigorousness illustrated by the strength and line structures. The realistic portrait of objects refers to the necessity of portraying the figure being resembled to the objects. Endowed aesthetics with colors means coloration, in other words, the employed colors must resemble the color of the portrayed objects. Attentive arrangement of compositions is the Composition Studies nowadays. The convey and change by patterned representation can be translated in simpler terms as "to transmit by copying" the artistic works of the other artists.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 THE DESIGN AESTHETICS OF MATSU JOSS

The common style of Matsu Josses is a statue wearing a crown with nine tassels and a Chinese dragon decorated gown, and holding an elongated pointed tablet of jade in the hands. In the ancient China, the hats with tassels can only be worn by the emperor and there should be twelve tassels on the crowns. However, the crowns on the Matsu Josses in Taiwan have nine tassels and the folks believe that the crown of the Queen of Heaven should have nine tassels and the one worn by the Concubine of Heaven should have seven tassels. The costume and accessories on the Matsu Josses are mostly capes with colorful embroideries such that it is difficult to catch a glimpse of the dress originally designed for the Josses. Take the Matsu Joss in the Pen-Kang Chao-Tien Temple as an example, the statue wears at least one long robe and the robe is long enough to extend over the knees as illustrated in Figure 1. Over the long robe, the shoulders of the statue are covered with tippet decorated with clouds. In addition to the tippet, there are two wide ribbons under the armpits. There are two belts mounted with jade pendants on the chest and abdomen of the statue. On the cuffs of the sleeves, the chest, and the abdomen portions of the long robe are embroidered with patterns of Chinese dragons. The facial features of the Matsu joss are sculpted in a dignified manner with gentle and kind facial expression. Generally, the Matsu statue has erected bridge of the nose, wide forehead, and long ears, meanwhile, the eyes are looking downward, which should be under the influences of the Buddhism such that the facial appearance of the josses are most resembled the facial features of Goddess of Mercy statue as shown in Figure 1.



Fig. 1 Josses of Matsu and Goddess of Mercy in the Pen-Kang Chao-Tien Temple

As shown in Figure 2, there are three different skin color of Matsu Joss. One color is close to normal people representing that Matsu was originally a real person and has the same skin color of the yellow

race. This kind of skin color is also called as Powdered Skin Color. The other color is black representing that Matsu has received worships from a great many of people such that the statue absorbed incense and became black. This color also represents the spirit of relieving the people from the needy or poor and the distressed situations. Another color is gold representing that Matsu is a goddess and is immortal.

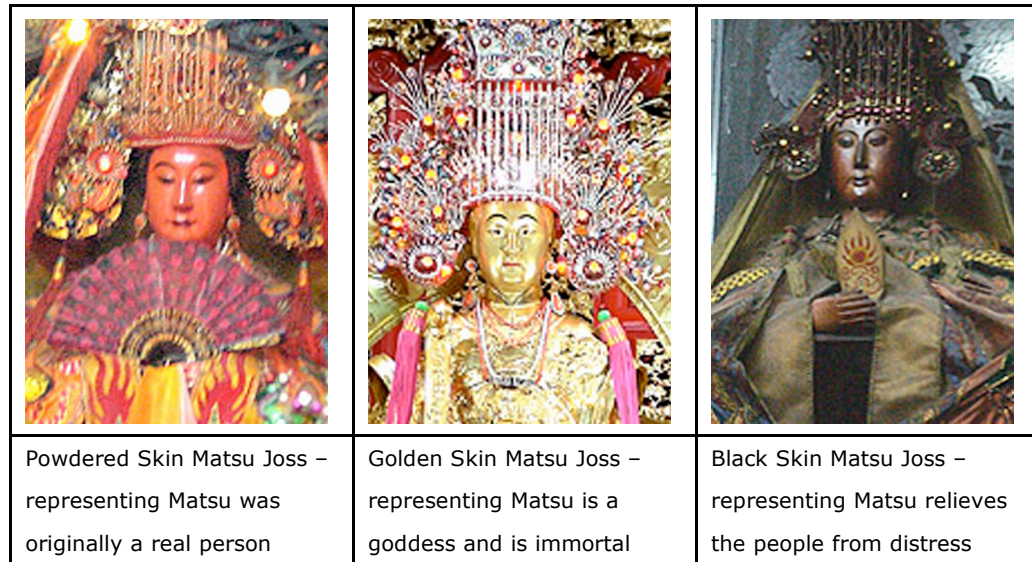


Fig. 2 Matsu Joss with Three Kinds of Skin Colors

3.2 THE DESIGN AESTHETICS OF MATSU FIGURE

As illustrated in Figure 3, the case studies employed in this research are the Q (cute) version of Matsu Figures released by the Lu-Gang Tian-Ho (Queen of Heaven) Temple, Dar-Jar Jen-Lan Temple, the FamilyMart, and the other organizations. The primary research techniques adopted are based on the three dimensions of aesthetics, which are the essence, form, and meaning, as well as the three techniques of so-called the Xie-He's Six Canons, which are the vividness of aroma and majesty, realistic portrait of objects, and endowed aesthetics with colors, to analyze the design methodologies and the style and meaning of representation of the cultural commodity of Matsu figure as illustrated in Table 1.

Powdered Skin Matsu Figure of Lu-Gang Tian-Ho Temple	Black Skin Matsu Figure of Lu-Gang Tian-Ho Temple	Q (cute) Version of Matsu Figure of Lu-Gang Tian-Ho Temple	Matsu Figure of Praying for Blessings
			
Powdered Skin Matsu Figure of Dar-Jar Jen-Lan Temple	Black Skin Matsu Figure of Dar-Jar Jen-Lan Temple	The 2 nd Generation of FamilyMart Matsu Figure	Q (cute) and Head Shaking Version of Matsu Figure
			
Matsu Figure of Lu-Gang Tian-Ho Temple	Matsu Figure of Dar-Jar Jen-Lan Temple	FamilyMart Matsu Figure	2009 Golden Matsu Figure of Lu-Gang Tian-Ho Temple
			

Fig. 3 Matsu Figure in Diverse Sculpts

Dimension of Essence	It is a concept of metaphysical aesthetic which explores that the esthetics exists in the esteem and respect to the divinities of the Queen of Heaven.
Dimension of Meaning	<p>The major meaning of aesthetics is the religious belief and fairy tales of Matsu. The meaning of aesthetics is the function and emblem of esthetics, meanwhile, is the "re-creation" after the image or appearance of Matsu being simplified such that the joss of the holy spirits with esteemed status like Matsu can be transformed and become lovely Figures to press close to the adherents, especially the young generations.</p> <p>The design of the cultural commodity of Matsu figure usually integrated with lucky ornaments of stripes; and is applied to the decoration and clothing. Among these ornaments of stripes, the wave of sea water are adopted most often, the next is the radiance of the rising sun and the stripes of clouds which represents brightness and immortals respectively. Meanwhile, these ornaments of stripes also convey the spiritual cultivation of the culture about Matsu.</p>
Dimension of Form	It is a concept of physical aesthetics which explores the regular features and the pleasure of sensations that can be experienced. The esthetics of the form of Matsu Figures is exquisite and cute. The Figure is designed to be pithy with harmony feelings, wearing crown with tassels, dressing in long robe embroidered with lucky patterns, and holding an elongated pointed tablet of jade in the hands. It is different from the regular Figures available in the market which is designed as toys. The Matsu Figures are mainly designed as exhibitions.
Vividness of Aroma and Majesty	<p>It is a technique to make the artistic works achieving the goals of highest quality and extremely fine craftsmanship. Such a principle of design is trying to pursue the level of vividness from "excellent likeness" to "catching the essence of spirits", furthermore, to the level of "Chi" which refers to the internal energy of the objects.</p> <p>The vividness of Matsu Figures can be determined mainly base on their facial expressions. As shown in Figure 3, the Matsu Figures with close eyes and smiling faces looks more vivid than the ones with wide opened eyes and little facial expressions.</p>
Realistic Portrait of Objects	The realistic portrait of objects refers to the necessity of portraying the figure being resembled to the objects. Although the designed Matsu Figures have little resemblances to the portrayed Josses of Matsu, however, the canons of design are derived from the cultural codes of the Matsu Josses.
Endowed Aesthetics with Colors	The colors of warm hue are the major colors employed on the Matsu Figures. They are colors of red, orange, yellow, gold, and coffee.

Table 1 The Analysis based on the Three Dimensions of Aesthetics and the Xie-He's Six Canons

4. CONCLUSION

As regards the design aesthetics of Matsu figure, the design styles of that are all partial to cute style of cartoon figure. The appearance looks like a baby whose proportion of head to body is bigger and

with innocent and gentle smiles. In addition, the color of warm hue such as red, yellow, and orange are used as major colors of presentation which represents festivities, enthusiasm, warm and fragrant, brightness, and hope. These are colors that could close to the customers' spirits. The Matsu figures are usually designed as Q (cute) version type of figures. The reason of that is mainly influenced by the culture reorganization and new meaning interpolation of the American and Japanese Cartoon figures. Through such cute type of cartoon figures, the serious issue of belief in Matsu can be introduced to the young population and creates different type of cultural inheritance. The design concept of the cultural commodity of Matsu figure not only illustrates the primitive cultural cultivation but also infuses and integrates the elements of foreign cultures into the Taiwanese culture. Infusing the cultural elements of western humor into the eastern cultures of mystery, the cultural commodities can not only possess innovation and diversity.

There are still several aesthetical issues involved in the design of the Matsu Figures. Due to the less carefulness on the investigations about the cultural codes of the Matsu josses, the Matsu Figures available in the market are mostly having problems of lacking cultural values. Take the crown worn by Matsu josses for example, the crown of the Queen of Heaven should have nine tassels and the one worn by the Concubine of Heaven should have seven tassels such that the tassels on the crowns of the Matsu Figures should have either seven or nine tassels. However, as illustrated in Figure 3, it can be discovered that most of the designed Matsu Figures do not conform to the cultural codes is supposed to be. Therefore, the designer of the Matsu Figures are recommended to reinforce their knowledge on the relative cultural issues in order to deeply realize the traditions and taboo matters regarding the designed objects and promote the quality and meaning of the cultural commodities.

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