

Concept and Reproduction: The Intrinsic Value of Chinese Seal Art Symbol

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Abstract. In the context of diversified development of modern art, the art of seal cutting presented by Chinese ancient seal is an expression of the internal relationship between emotion and form, a change of art language from image to symbol, and the inheritance of interdisciplinarity and artistic convergence between art symbol characteristics. This article explores forms of expression, artistic characteristics and styles of seals in the history of Chinese art, demonstrates rich contents and wide-ranging subject matters of seals, hence reveals the cultural value of Chinese art symbols, and relies on the symbols to achieve the new horizon of art language.

Keywords: Seal; Symbol; Artistic style; Cultural value.

1. Introduction

The art of Chinese seal and collection culture both have a long history, and art symbol derived from the two has existed among the words and between the lines in various forms from ancient to modern times. Since the Spring and Autumn Period and the Warring States Period, seals that truly had “probative” attribute came onto the historical stage. During the modern society, as the art of seal cutting advanced, seals became remarkably diverse in terms of texture, style and design, and it became a necessity for literati, as this pure voucher evolved into a manifestation of its owner’s background, life experiences and preferences.

2. Artistic Characteristics of Seals

Chinese seals were distinct styles and salient expressiveness. As collecting and appreciating became more specialized, collection and appreciation began to take shape, and early bibliophiles used the seals used in the appreciation of Chinese calligraphy and painting in the new realm of book collection. Hence, seals were large in number and diverse in cutting styles, and there was no lack of superb works, which may be excluded in or verify extant collections of impressions of seals and are important materials for studying seal cutting [1].

Seal itself, as the art of seal cutting, possesses exceedingly high appreciative value. Exquisitely carved seal can give a full expression to the charm of Chinese character with great aesthetic pleasure and can be called as a work of art. Moreover, it is an untapped precious resource and has academic value as version, catalogue, historical document, language, seal cutting, painting and so on. Seal is characterized by rigorousness and solemnness, and it is particularly suitable for serving as a voucher with its regular structures and diverse forms. Meanwhile, bibliophiles expressed their aesthetic pursuit through seal cutting. In terms of layout, seal shows its artistic strength in a small area with a few words, and some ideas and shaping techniques were used to make the whole surface of a seal complete and harmonious, thus reflecting the aesthetic concept and purpose of the author[1-2].

3. Artistic Style of Seals

3.1 Contents and Subject Matters of Seals

Seals were rich in contents and covered a wide range of subjects. They were changed and progressed in some ways with different reigns. According to collection functions, seals are divided

into two categories-collection & ownership, and appreciation & reading. Words carved in seals for collection and ownership mostly are “collected”, “owned”, “acquired”, “treasure” and “private” (as shown in Figures 1-6). Common words for appreciation and reading include “appreciated”, “read”, “reviewed” and “recorded” (as shown in Figures 7-9). Furthermore, name, place and feelings are commonly carved on seals (as shown in Figures 10-15). [3] All these are cultural and artistic trends and achievements, and many seals are by no means mediocre in light of their layout, technique, style and shape and they are exactly a proof of artistic progress. From an artistic perspective, seal has strong artistic expression and unique art language, which can achieve the optimization of aesthetics and ideology of people and bring about a strong visual appeal.



1.新城陳氏收藏圖書之印



2.辛亥後所得圖書金石文字



3.伊萊米氏珍藏

Figure 1. Book Collection Seal of Chen (Chinese surname) in Xincheng

Figure 2. Stone Words Acquired after the Chinese era name of Xinhai

Figure 3. Cherished by Mr. Mi (Chinese surname) in Yilou



4.積餘秘籍識者寶之



5.黎照堂傳家秘書



6.吳郡葉氏訪求鄉先哲遺書

Figure 4. Connoisseur Shall Treasure It

Figure 5. Heirloom Book owned by Li Zhao Cottage

Figure 6. Ye (Chinese surname) in Wujun who was looking for books left over by the ancestors of his hometown and recorded them in articles.



7.孫伯繩讀書記



8.徐乃昌讀

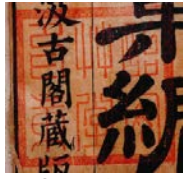


9.葉德輝煥彬甫印閱書

Figure 7. Read and recorded by Sun Bosheng

Figure 8. Xu Naichang Has Read

Figure 9. Ye Dehui (courtesy name:Huan Bin) Men's seal Has Review



10. 詒安草堂印章



11. 白岩草庵主人憲滔氏周浩印



12. 右軍將軍王羲之之章

Figure 10. Seal of Yi'an Thatched cottage

Figure 11. Seal of Zhou Hao (also called ke tao shi) , Owner of Baiyancao Hut

Figure 12. Seal of Wang Xizhi, Right Army General (Ancient Chinese official names)



13. 元之後人



14. 崇彝長壽

Figure 13. Descendants of the Yuan Dynasty

Figure 14. Chong Yi (Qing scholars) , Longevity

Figure 15.



3.2 Artistic Style as an Ideology

The artistic style of seals corresponds to a specific stage of culture. In a manner of speaking, it is a work created by the style of an era and can always be verified by its object. Rising library pavilion, library building, private book collection, literary notes were universal manifestations of the fact that seals reached a certain cultural stage. Taking the Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties as an example, seals in this period followed the characteristics in the Tang and Song dynasties and emphasized extensive absorption of art symbols and innovation in art forms. However, since enthusiasm for art making was relatively limited, seals did not make any fundamental breakthrough on the whole. While the Ming and Qing dynasties were relatively closed, except some innovative attempts in shape, content and theme. While seals and art symbols in this period started to change from the carrier of art making to the carrier of cultural expression, and their motivation to create was at a low level, as people paid more attention to art making other than seal and seal cutting [4].

Since literati advocated diverse seals and kept making them, the overall status of seal producers was further boosted, and the group of knowledgeable sealers was gradually stabilized. These achievements were projected onto seals and unconsciously gave rise to the comprehensive development of the art of seal in aesthetics, biography, appreciation & review, selection of topic, collection of impressions of seals among many other aspects. Seal took the path of artification and individuation, but it was a visible symbol of its uniformity as a manifestation of a holistic culture. The style of seal reflects, or projects the inner form of collective emotion, and is the form and feature of all kinds of art sharing of a culture in an important time span. In this sense, the development and integration of seals are a continuation in time and space, and contrasts between different variants and historical backgrounds of different styles, as well as changing characteristics in other cultural fields are typical revelations of individual and integral development.

4. Cultural Value of the Art Symbols

4.1 Major Carrier of Culture

From the perspective of modern culture studies, both seal and seal art symbol act as a significant bridge between Chinese literature, calligraphy, painting, architecture and other culture-related fields

during their course of development. As an implicit label, it enables art symbols to play an extremely significant role in promoting comprehensive cultural value. Even in modern society, traditional Chinese painting still owns extensive cultural value and market value by virtue of its unique innovation, and receives much attention from consumers at home and abroad. In the process of traditional Chinese landscape painting, the author uses different stamps to display his or her own proposals. Different people would use his own stamps to show their comment about a specific work while collecting or appreciating it, tend to acquire more cultural empowerment. In China's field of traditional cultural appreciation, those owners who can understand the practical use of symbol and are able to show their originality and creativity while using the seal often will be highly recognized at the cultural level.

4.2 Key Philosophical Node

Seal art symbol can serve as the epitome of unique Chinese philosophical connotations, and they play a vital role as a link in the history of philosophy. The art symbols tended to stress the uniqueness of form and showed different expressive characteristics under the influence of different schools of philosophy. Besides, there were forms of expression that pursued harmonious coexistence between nature and human, lots of natural symbols and benediction-related elements were used, and some symbols focused on philosophical thoughts in a given period of the kingly way but embodied philosophical thoughts about harmonious development between human and nature with an emphasis on human subjective initiative. As of modern times, this structure was not changed fundamentally. Until modern society, as people emphasized the use of individual style design and content design of a seal to display the philosophical proposition of an individual in an independent state. Meanwhile, art symbols at a philosophical level will give rise to a positive feedback mechanism, which makes people a firmer believer in the philosophy that they believe and a more active expresser. Since in traditional Chinese philosophic concept, subjective thoughts of people need more different means to be implicitly presented, and art symbol system tend to the most effective way to express personal philosophical proposition in this ideological context[5].

4.3 Prominent Stamp of Civilization

The related art symbol as the stamp of a civilization still last throughout the long history of the Chinese nation and display the value orientation of the Chinese people in various realms. In the arena of global development, the Chinese people has become a world nation with distinct national characteristics that can reflect progress and growth. The system of internal and external propaganda works of China in recent years shows that the trace of art symbol is everywhere, and it tends to become a specific stamp that represents the uniqueness of the Chinese nation. When observing overseas markets, in terms of Chinese book, promotional video, fashion design and other aspects, art symbol are widely used in detail processing. The wide use of this kind of label makes the value of symbols appreciated and recognized.

5. Conclusion

The universality of art symbol itself indicates that art symbol is highly correlated with culture, and its unique cultural quality plays a key role in the process of the inheritance and evolution of art symbols. The cultural characteristics of art symbol can be manifested in two levels: the first level is about effective empowerment of art symbol to culture. In the long course of history, art symbol can garner more and more cultural connotations, and people's understanding of given art symbols becomes increasingly diverse. Simple art symbols about the sun, the moon and the stars are all important elements that have extensive art making value and cultural creation value in the history of all nationalities. Besides being able to empower culture, art symbol will also derive its second-layer characteristic, namely culture per se can exert an influence on art symbol. The author's specific understanding of culture is used to express symbolic emotion and form, and then simple means of

expression are employed to give full expression to profound connotations, to contribute to the stratification, pluralism and diversity of meanings expressed by art symbols.

On the whole, both the influence of art symbols on culture and the impact of culture on art symbols show strong interaction and integration in the course of the history of art symbol, and unique cultural quality of art symbols enables it to be appropriately integrated into different cultures and show the same, similar or contrasting cultural meaning and artistic idea when interacting with these cultures.

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