



REVIEW

Analysing the Spiritual Dimensions and Ceramic Sculpture in Contemporary Chinese Art

Analizando las dimensiones espirituales y la escultura cerámica en el arte chino contemporáneo

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: sculptures are artworks created by carving and assembling materials like stone or metal. It serves as cultural symbols, enhance public spaces, and express artistic ideas. Historically, sculptures have represented deities, historical figures, reflecting societal values and artistic trends. As societies evolve and economic growth accelerates, there is a growing emphasis on spiritual and artistic fulfilment beyond mere material needs. In this context, ceramic sculpture has emerged as a vital expression of artistic and cultural identity, particularly with the rich tapestry of Chinese art.

Objective: to explore the intricate association between the traditional Chinese culture and the contemporary ceramic sculpture, examining how the spiritual essence of historical art forms influences modern artistic practices. The delves into the artistic characteristics and expressive language of ceramic sculpture, assessing how national cultural values shape and manifest in contemporary works.

Method: it further investigates the effect of Western influences on Chinese ceramic art and highlights the importance of preserving and innovating traditional artistic practices.

Results: by analyzing the integration of cultural heritage into modern sculpture, this paper aims to uncover how contemporary ceramic artists can draw inspiration from historical traditions to enrich their creative expressions and contribute to the global appreciation of Chinese art.

Keywords: Sculpture Art; Spiritual Dimensions; Ceramic Sculpture; Contemporary Chinese Art.

RESUMEN

Introducción: las esculturas son obras de arte creadas mediante el tallado y la ensambladura de materiales como piedra o metal. Sirven como símbolos culturales, mejoran los espacios públicos y expresan ideas artísticas. Históricamente, las esculturas han representado deidades y figuras históricas, reflejando los valores sociales y las tendencias artísticas. A medida que las sociedades evolucionan y el crecimiento económico se acelera, hay un creciente énfasis en la satisfacción espiritual y artística más allá de las meras necesidades materiales. En este contexto, la escultura cerámica ha emergido como una expresión vital de la identidad artística y cultural, particularmente en el rico tapiz del arte chino.

Objetivo: explorar la intrincada relación entre la cultura china tradicional y la escultura cerámica contemporánea, examinando cómo la esencia espiritual de las formas de arte histórico influye en las prácticas artísticas modernas. Se profundiza en las características artísticas y el lenguaje expresivo de la escultura cerámica, evaluando cómo los valores culturales nacionales moldean y se manifiestan en las obras contemporáneas.

Método: también investiga el efecto de las influencias occidentales en el arte cerámico chino y destaca la

importancia de preservar e innovar en las prácticas artísticas tradicionales.

Resultados: al analizar la integración del patrimonio cultural en la escultura moderna, este trabajo busca descubrir cómo los artistas cerámicos contemporáneos pueden inspirarse en las tradiciones históricas para enriquecer sus expresiones creativas y contribuir a la apreciación global del arte chino.

Palabras clave: Arte de la Escultura; Dimensiones Espirituales; Escultura Cerámica; Arte Chino Contemporáneo.

INTRODUCTION

Sculpture is an artistic form that interacts with the spatial and ideological dimensions.⁽¹⁾ Sculpture is categorized into two levels of significance. Using plastic and carving as the main tools of expression, the first phase involves extending the material language and expressing the sculpture itself. The second phase enhances its connotation by drawing on daring innovations in the artistic form, idea and interdisciplinary combination of manifestations.⁽²⁾ Sculpture is a way to change the appearance of chemical materials by adding and subtracting to produce a rhythmic design. The types of sculpture based on material are clay sculpture, stone carvings, ice sculpture, wood carvings, sand sculpture and metal sculpture, based on the form includes road, translucent, relief and based on the function it includes environmental sculpture, public sculpture, exhibition sculpture, decorative sculpture, practical sculpture, garden sculpture and monumental sculpture.⁽³⁾ Sculptures also known as monuments are a fundamental component of urban space creation. The significance of monuments originates from the various services they perform in modern cities. The effects of monuments, also known as monument functions, are investigated in numerous fields, such as geography, political science, sociology, anthropology, and architecture.

Stone has been utilized as a significant material for housewares tools, and buildings as early as the New Stone Age.⁽⁴⁾ Throughout the world's continents, stone structures and monuments have increased in significance. Stone structures and monuments are subject to ambient temperature, sunlight, rain, and other natural elements, as well as chemical and microbiological pollutants from the atmosphere.⁽⁵⁾ When enough effort has been employed to produce unique pieces that are representative of the location, sculptures created by modern natives in a region, such as statues and carvings, are referred to be "works of art". Sculptures do not allude to any particular sign; rather, they are merely one representation of an identity (icons).

Symbolic is an expressive method that conveys a sense of suggestion rather than a straight statement.⁽⁶⁾ The artwork aims to convey a deeper meaning than eyes are capable of perceiving to sense that the image represents something deeper. Sculptures with symbolic meanings convey ideas of spirituality, creation, harmony, and collaboration in an artistic way.⁽⁷⁾ Although some modern ceramicists have attempted to reframe ceramics as authentic fine art, it is frequently regarded as practical art. Conversely, as certain contemporary works by certain sculptors demonstrate, sculpture has largely moved towards the stylized, abstract, and conceptual in recent years.⁽⁸⁾ The methods that were employed to manufacture the ceramics include the coiling, slab, wheel, casting, and pinching procedures. Given that ceramic sculpture is a component of creative production, its creation still requires development.

To generate creative inspiration for modern art design, examined ceramics and sculptures from the Han dynasty, performed X-ray diffraction analysis on pieces of pottery and sculpture that had been excavated from certain cemeteries and investigated the lacquer color characteristics and style of these pieces in relation to pertinent historical materials.⁽⁹⁾ The findings indicate that the early Han Dynasty's ceramic and sculpture styles were uncomplicated and harsh, whereas the later period's forms were intricate, vibrant, and bright. Analyzing sculpture's evolution in the context of modern society, examined the relationship between sculpture and culture.⁽¹⁰⁾ To enable modern sculpture to participate with the West and stand on international art platforms, the article attempts to create Chinese-inspired sculpture art ideas. Redrawing the improvement series of the traditional Chinese sculpture art and analyzing its evolution at different levels, author challenged the traditional chronological method by examining the association between the evolution of sculpture art and the human awareness.⁽¹¹⁾ As a result, sculpting education and art creation will be guided by the need for sculptors to develop their cultural awareness.

Using landscape designs that balance the needs of the local population and the environment, investigated how traditional Chinese ecological wisdom has been applied in sustainable settings.⁽¹²⁾ Establishing sustainable ecosystems in places with no environmental restrictions and prioritizing the use of already-existing resources over pricy technologies are emphasized. Using reality as a starting point and modern ceramic art examined the cultural and psychological differences in modern ceramic art creation, additionally the transition of Chinese ceramic art from the traditional to the modern in an effort to rethink the direction of the development in

modern ceramic art.⁽¹³⁾ It intended to determine the most efficient teaching techniques, identify elements of art teacher training programs, and develop an online platform for teaching contemporary art in China.

From 1930s to 1980s, examined how modern Chinese art was acquired and collected in the West.⁽¹⁴⁾ The objective was to discern significant individuals and trends in British art by examining displays and the connections between Chinese artists and British dealers, curators, and scholars. The study's objectives were to map patterns and pinpoint influential individuals who introduced Chinese pictorial art to the British public. A three-dimension(3D) reconstruction method based on the photometric stereo has been presented to replicate the complex surface geometry appearance in Chinese calligraphy.⁽¹⁵⁾ The Iterative Closest Point (ICP) approach is used to evaluate the 3D intrinsic forms between the calligraphy of Chinese and the handwriting of calligraphy aficionado. Experiments conducted on a variety of historical dynasties indicate the effectiveness and usability of the approach.

To provide inspiration for modern art design, examined ceramics and sculptures from the Han dynasty, performed X-ray diffraction analysis on pieces of pottery and sculpture that had been excavated from certain cemeteries and investigated the lacquer color characteristics and style of these works using pertinent historical materials.⁽¹⁶⁾ The findings indicate that the early Han Dynasty porcelain and sculpture were rough and uncomplicated, whereas later periods were delicate, bright, and vibrant. Case analysis, data comparison, and literature research are used in to investigate how polymer materials are used in modern sculpture art. The three forms for shaping sculptures, two methods for embellishing and texture-imitating them, and spray-film preservation are all covered.⁽¹⁷⁾ For modern sculpting artists, the study suggests increased efficiency and new sources of inspiration while highlighting the advantages and disadvantages of using polymer materials.

The scientific problem lies in analyzing how the spiritual symbolism and evolving artistic methods in ceramic sculpture contribute to the cultural identity and global relevance of Chinese art. This analysis is justified because it helps to understand how traditional values and modern creativity intersect, enabling Chinese ceramic sculpture to maintain cultural heritage while adapting to global artistic trends. These findings have the potential to promote cross-cultural understanding and sharing of ideas.

Beyond basic material requirements, there is an increasing emphasis on spiritual and creative fulfillment as cultures change and economic growth quickens. Particularly in the setting of the rich tapestry of Chinese art, ceramic sculpture has become an important representation of creative and cultural identity in this context. This study investigates the complex relationship between modern ceramic sculpture and ancient Chinese culture, looking at how the spiritual core of earlier art forms informs present artistic practices.

The organization of the study contains the following structure. Part 2 contains the History of ceramic sculpture and contemporary ceramic sculpture in China and part 3 contains the association between the traditional Chinese culture and the contemporary ceramic sculpture, part 4 contains the artistic characteristics of contemporary ceramic sculpture, part 5 explains the expressive language of ceramic sculpture and contemporary ceramics and Part 6 concludes the study.

METHOD

Ceramic Sculpture

Chinese ceramic art started to develop after the Neolithic period. Chinese ceramics have a long history that goes back more than ten millennia.⁽¹⁸⁾ Ceramic Sculpture is a form of sculpture that allows for the re-excitation of the artist's inner world and spiritual world as well as the expression of personal feelings. Its creative process is similar to an individual's artistic conduct in an unrestricted setting. Ceramic Sculpture will be constrained by the public surroundings in addition to numerous other criteria when it becomes one of the fundamental pieces of public environmental art. The intricate methods involved in creating ceramic sculptures for public spaces necessitate that they penetrate the shared issues encountered by other sculpture forms, giving their design a dual meaning.

The practice of Ceramic Sculpture as a cultural invention, as well as the art form itself, will contribute to human survival and advancement. In ceramic sculpture, pure individualism entails not just subjective action but also conscious and logical thought. To direct thoughts and impact the worlds of current people and their aesthetic orientation, Ceramic Sculpture is an essential tool for contemporary artists.⁽¹⁸⁾ Chinese ceramic sculptures display traditional styles and cultural ideas. Examples include earthenware dancing sculptures and reddish-orange terracotta dancing figures. Chinese porcelain sculptures like Sancai-Glazed Pottery Houses are renowned for their distinctive characteristics, like their curving helmets and tripartite flower headdresses. These historic Chinese porcelain sculptures have an impact on modern society and the direction of aesthetics in both material and cultural forms. The Sancai-Glazed Pottery can be seen in figure 1.



Figure 1. Ceramic Sculpture

Contemporary Chinese Ceramic Sculpture

Chinese contemporary art emerged with the Cultural Revolution, and during the previous century, China has undergone tremendous transformations in both culture and the arts. Realism was historically restricted to ritual art in China, but the progressive ideas and inventive techniques of modern Chinese painters have contributed to modernizing this genre.⁽¹⁸⁾ To promote the creative interchange of local and foreign artists, China initiated international art events in the early 1900s, including pottery symposiums, workshops, and art fairs. Modern ceramic sculptures from China are more expensive than those from other nations mostly because of their superior visual quality. The subject matter or theme is regarded as a fundamental component of modern art.

Chinese tradition and culture have a significant influence on contemporary Chinese porcelain sculptures, which are made by contemporary artists using their own emotions as inspiration rather than following traditional techniques. China's socialist system has a profound impact on the ideas of modern Chinese artists, who create works of art that are distinctive and have a strong cultural identity. Because of this, modern Chinese ceramic sculptors are rising to prominence throughout the world, improving their aesthetics and developing in tandem with the Chinese economy. Figure 2 illustrates the contemporary Chinese ceramic sculpture.



Figure 2. Contemporary Chinese Ceramic Sculpture

Association between the contemporary ceramic sculpture and the Traditional Chinese culture

The association between the contemporary ceramic sculpture and the Traditional Chinese culture involves an active interaction of historical influences and modern innovations.⁽¹⁹⁾ The contemporary period marks a period of revolutionary advancements in the art sector.

Artists maintain the traditional shapes of clay sculptures while recasting them with modern expressions and innovative techniques. Ceramic art experienced significant transformations throughout this time. The detailed investigations are explained in the following steps.

Cultural Heritage

Contemporary Ceramic Sculpture has a deep historical and aesthetic foundation due to Traditional Chinese

Culture. Using conventional themes, methods, and symbolic interpretations that serve as an inspiration to contemporary artists is one example of this approach.

Techniques and Materials

Modern ceramic sculptors frequently expand upon age-old techniques including wheel-throwing, hand-building and complex glazing procedures. Even though contemporary artists can modify or invent these methods, the fundamental ideas are firmly anchored in customs.

Symbolic and Themes

The valuable patterns and symbolic connotations of traditional Chinese ceramics are well-known. These symbols can be reworked by modern artists, who can employ them in new situations or combine them with contemporary topics to observe issues and personal emotions.

Aesthetic Evolution and Continuity

Although modern ceramic art frequently embraces abstract forms and modern aesthetics, it also regularly uses classic design components. As a result, it pushes artistic boundaries while preserving aesthetic continuity and fostering a conversation between the past and the modern.

Cultural Identification and Creativity

Chinese ceramic artists today explore and express who they are by their cultural heritage. This entails reinterpreting conventional shapes and ideas in fresh ways that take into consideration one's own artistic vision as well as contemporary global influences.

Market and Globalization

Chinese ceramic art has been made, known to a worldwide audience by the global art market, which has resulted in a fusion of traditional Chinese aesthetics with contemporary artistic tendencies. While being true to their cultural origins, modern sculptors can borrow aspects from art trends.

Influence of Education

Traditional ceramics instruction is a common component of art education in China, giving modern artists a head start. Artists can experiment with new forms and ideas while staying connected to ancient methods according to this schooling.

Spiritual and Philosophical Dimensions

Daoism and Confucianism are two examples of the philosophical and spiritual ideas that are frequently reflected in traditional Chinese pottery. These subjects might be explored or reinterpreted by contemporary artists, who could integrate conventional spiritual ideas with contemporary existential concerns. Figure 3 illustrates the association between the contemporary ceramic sculpture and the Traditional Chinese Culture.



Figure 3. (a) Traditional Chinese Culture and (b) Contemporary Ceramic Sculpture

DEVELOPMENT

The artistic characteristics of Contemporary Ceramic Sculpture consist of the theme of art, diversity in material selection and glazed in colour.⁽²⁰⁾

Theme of Art

Ceramic Sculpture focuses on the theme, which expresses the artist's inner feelings and spirituality. Figures that were auspicious or burial were among the utilitarian or religious uses of ceramic sculptures in the past. However, modern sculptures made of clay have progressed from simple craftsmanship to pure artistic expression, reflecting individuality and gut reactions.⁽²⁰⁾ By rejecting conventional aesthetics in preference for exploring new creative views, the artist aims to communicate difficult emotional and conceptual information, as this adjustment highlights.

Diversity in Material Selection

Porcelain and Ceramic Clay

Numerous clays are used to create ceramic sculptures, and each has special qualities. Natural porcelain clay was frequently used in traditional ceramics, which emphasized artistry and precision in design. The flaws and "traces" are welcomed as important components of modern ceramics.⁽²⁰⁾ Artists combine different materials, such as porcelain and enamel, to produce visually arresting contrasts and harmonies in texture and appearance. This is seen in pieces that contrast rough and soft surfaces. Figure 4 represents an example of Porcelain Clay.



Figure 4. Porcelain Clay

Glazed in Colour

As painted in conventional painting, glazes play a vital role in the artistic expression of modern ceramics. In contrast to modern artists, who embrace glaze imperfections and differences, such as colour blending or cracking, as artistic characteristics, traditional ceramics valued smooth, perfect glazes.⁽²⁰⁾ The sculpture's conceptual and visual impact is increased by this method, which turns flaws into expressive parts. Figure 5 represents Glazed in colour ceramic pottery.



Figure 5. Glaze Ceramic Pottery

Expression in Art

Using a variety of forms, elements, and symbols, artists have sought new expressive possibilities throughout the history of art to embody the spirit of their periods. Their artistic tendencies and convulsions are influenced by their surroundings and environment, and they express the entirety of human action. The process of artistic creation that involves ideas and feelings to produce a distinct kind of expression is called expression in art. Expression is an authentic language that shows the emotional character of the work as well as an emotional influence on the connoisseur. It serves as a communication tool since common components used in the creation of art include signs, symbols, and other elements that come together to form a unique expressive language. The artwork takes on the form of an expression of concepts, feelings, and imagery that captures the spirit of the time it was created.⁽²¹⁾

Expression in ceramic sculpture

Modern art has had a major impact on contemporary ceramic sculpture, which has changed the creative process. Compared to traditional ceramic sculptures, the production medium, the soil itself, has inherent value and expressiveness. When human civilization advanced to a high degree and its high material demands were satisfied, subjectivity and aesthetic tendencies started to shift. Artists have been impacted by modern art, forsaking earlier concepts and methods in help of concentrating on the media's expressive potential and the artists' individual ideologies. Artists working in contemporary pottery have developed new guidelines for production methods, including pulling, rolling, pounding, tearing, and glazing processes. A variety of techniques, including finger squeezing, tool texture tapping, material contrast, glazing variations, and painting after fire, have been experimented with in an effort to broaden the expression of ceramic sculptures.⁽²¹⁾ More avenues for modern ceramic sculptors to convey their ideas and emotions are made possible by this variety.

Influences from the cultural, social, and psychological spheres have changed how ceramic items seem visually. The expression of ceramic through a variety of forms and media has grown easier to obtain and more versatile. Aesthetic communication should communicate standards and mutual expressive elements, postmodernism demand a continuous shift in aesthetic and cognitive values. Constructivism combines emotional experiences for both makers and consumers with creative improvement in contemporary ceramics, resulting in a semantic environment and intricate combinations of subjective tendencies and professed talents. Modern potters use unusual forms to produce pieces that inspire curiosity and strangeness. Artists have been able to create emotive, nontraditional, and sparingly used ceramic work by using popular culture tropes thanks to this aesthetic revolution.⁽²¹⁾

DISCUSSION

The effect of Western influences on Chinese ceramic art and highlights the importance of preserving and innovating traditional artistic practices was investigated.⁽²²⁾

Effect of Western Influences on Chinese Ceramic Art

Some of the impacts of Western influences on Chinese ceramic art are given below.

Introducing New Methods and Substances

Chinese ceramic art has benefited from the introduction of novel materials and techniques from the West, including varied clay bodies and underglaze painting. The art form has been enhanced and creative possibilities have been enlarged by these innovations.

Combination of Styles

In contemporary ceramics, the fusion of Western intellectual and modernist ideas with traditional Chinese themes and forms has produced a distinctive hybrid aesthetic.

Broadening of Concepts

Chinese artists are exploring new topics and storylines, tackling social, political, and personal issues, and expanding beyond the historical concentration on adornment and practicality, Western art trends.

Exchanges of Knowledge and Cooperation

Workshops, residencies, and cooperative shows have allowed Western and Chinese artists to share information and talents more easily due to educational and cooperative exchanges.

Importance of Preserving and Innovating Traditional Artistic Practices

- It is imperative to uphold customary methods and aesthetics to preserve cultural legacy and establish a link between modern artwork and past artistry.

- Artists need to strike a balance between invention and tradition preservation to provide meaningful evolution with historical origins.
- Chinese porcelain art can be preserved while introducing distinctive innovations by examining traditional shapes from a modern perspective.
- Programs for education ought to cover both modern and traditional methods, giving artists the tools that they need to develop and maintain their medium.⁽²³⁾

CONCLUSIONS

Study demonstrates that how historical art traditions provide present practices with spiritual depth and cultural resonance, highlighting the close association between Contemporary Ceramic Sculpture and Traditional Chinese Culture. It both acknowledges and emphasizes the importance of Western creative components and national cultural values in modern works. Maintaining cultural heritage is believed to depend on the innovation and preservation of old traditions. In essence, current ceramic artists can enrich their artistic expressions and ensure the continuous progress and significance of Chinese art in the contemporary day by taking cues from ancient traditions. The study mostly focuses on a small number of current artists, thus missing larger trends, and depends mostly on qualitative analysis, which could limit generalizability. To provide a more thorough knowledge of the changing association between the Traditional Chinese Culture and the contemporary ceramic sculpture, further research could include quantitative approaches and a wider range of artists.

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