

Interpreting the “New Cultural Mix” in Contemporary Home Design--Alessi “The Chin Family” “Orientales” Kitchen Creative Products as an Example

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Abstract: The traditional Chinese graphic elements that carry a long history and culture are an important source to awaken the local Chinese design to the world. If Chinese traditional graphics, which represent local culture, religion and folklore, are examined and excavated from the perspective of the new era, their latent visual value will be discovered, which will become a cultural identity for the “world’s China” design, and will be accepted by the diversified global consumption methods. Through Alessi “The Chin Family” kitchen creative product design, this paper interprets the design ideas of “cultural hybrid new products” in contemporary home design, and through new thinking and creative expression the collision and fusion of eastern and western cultural exchange.

Keywords: Chinese traditional graphic elements; Chinese indigenous cultural design; Cultural identity; East-meets-West cultural fusion

1. “Cultural mix” of new products of frenzy

Chinese elements have come to a global audience time and time again, from Disney’s Hua Mulan to DreamWorks’ Kung Fu Panda. It has caused strong reactions not only in China but also worldwide. The successful Chinese traditional style and spirit of animated blockbusters with Chinese cultural thematic elements brought to the world, which triggered new thinking and new examination of the use of traditional elements of our own nation. Those traditional graphics under the influence of different Chinese ideas, religions, folklore and regions will find their latent visual value if they are re-examined and deeply excavated from the perspective of the new era.

The forms and symbols in traditional Chinese culture can be reproduced by designers with flexible and creative changes, and integrated into the contemporary design field, becoming new rather than commonplace. And the creation of Alessi “The Chin Family” kitchen creative products is the best reflection and example of this. The perfect combination of traditional cultural elements and contemporary interior life creates a unique cultural heritage and emotional integration, making the home more dignified and elegant. By grasping the contemporary home culture node, cleverly integrating traditional cultural elements, let us respect the cultural heritage of our hometown, active its vital elements, create a unique comfortable aesthetic atmosphere of home space, create a new home interactive experience, reflect the new era of home culture hybrid new design concept.

2. Alessi “The Chin Family” Kitchen Creative Product Design

In recent years, domestic and foreign home furnishing product markets have launched “cultural hybrid” new products, which is a concrete manifestation of cultural pluralism in the contemporary post-modernism trend, and these Chinese and Western home furnishing products are trying to interpret the Oriental charm with modern art design. For example, Figure-1 shows the “The Chin Family” series of family tableware designed by the National Palace Museum in Taiwan, China, in cooperation with the Italian household brand Alessi in 2007, Chin series egg cups, timers and Mr. & Mrs. Chin series pepper shaker set. The products are very cute, friendly, simple, modern and innovative to show the concept of “Fashion Palace”, which is refreshing.

Alessi designed this series of kitchen and home products inspired by a portrait of Emperor Qianlong in “Imperial order

poems,” in which Qianlong is about 30 years old, wearing a blue court dress and an inverted trapezoidal official hat with a red cap. The product is designed by partial extraction, simplification and abstraction, extracting the official hat, official clothes and the single phoenix eye symbolizing oriental people from the original painting, and then simplifying and abstracting these elements into the simplest geometric shape, like the inverted trapezoid hat, the face of the doll is round and the body is conical. The doll’s clothes are decorated with three kinds of auspicious patterns (bat-shaped lucky pattern, auspicious cloud pattern and rich flower pattern), and finally these modeling elements are combined with egg cups, salt and pepper shakers, key chains and wine bottle openers to form a series of interesting and practical household products. The shape, structure, materials and even craftsmanship of the products are modern, but the decorative elements and decorative points are traditional Chinese, these small products are designed to span both East and West cultures, and express a blend of old and new, while intertwining imagination and reality. These small products are designed to cross the East and West cultures and express a blend of the old and the new, while intertwining imagination and reality. A combination of Western and local Chinese culture has been cleverly found, with a Western-style minimalist but Chinese flavor.

“The Chin Family” kitchen product design is not simply the “like” or “unlike” of Chinese elements, but rather It is a product of the collision and fusion of East and West cultures, and is the inevitable product of the process of cultural globalization. This set of creative products shows the world a different oriental culture, not only promotes the traditional Chinese culture, but also shows the concept of modern western design. As the crystallization of culture and technology, it also reflects the design’s care for people. “The Chin Family - Qing Gong Series” is a new experience of creativity and fun in a way that exceeds people’s imagination. The products successfully translate and apply traditional elements in the design to create a modern.

Even before the oriental craze started by Mr. Chin (The Chin Family) has subsided, Alessi is collaborating again with the National Palace Museum in Taipei on the “Orientales” design series (Figure-2). Compared to the first collection, “The Chin Family”, which was based on the traditional Qing Dynasty portraits in the National Palace collection, the spirit of this “Orientales” collection is “to see the Eastern story from a Western perspective”. “The design is more fashionable and modern, and the concept is more in-depth. The design retains traditional style elements and integrates western modern design concepts, adding new creativity and visual experience to the product design, enriching the aesthetic and emotional experience of the home, linking the dialogue between old and new eastern cultures.

The “Orientales” collection continues to focus on family tableware, with designer Stefano Giovannoni using various animal, plant and human figures, as well as Chinese red, monkeys, koi and other mascots as inspiration for the history of the Forbidden City collection. Presenting the qualities of games and traditional call stories. The series includes Bird of Paradise Pepper Shaker Set, Lotus Small Bowl, Pomegranate Candy Jar, Lily Bird Soy Sauce Pot, Lily Pond Sushi Plate Set, Banana Boy Macaque Bottle Stopper, Banana Boy Pepper Salt Shaker Set, Secret Fish Lacquer Box and more. The minimalist design style strips away all the elaborate decorations of the past. It is a complete reversal of the old days of traditional household utensils, and instead is a modern, sensual experience with a touch of humor.

As a modern kitchen and home product, Alessi’s products create a relaxed and natural environment for people to use, injecting fun and ingenuity into life while adding new aesthetics and creativity to modern home life, blending cultural and morphological archetypes, and constantly seeking the connotative elements that move consumers. On the one hand, the design needs to have practical, functional, beautiful and cultural expression, on the other hand, the cultural elements should be creatively packaged to create a novel vision to meet the curiosity of consumers. In the “Orientales” product design, the designer humorously and emotionally integrated the characters from the oriental story into the product visual image, revealing a different oriental color.

The success of Alessi’s “cultural hybrid” new product gives Chinese designers a profound inspiration: traditional graphic elements with a long history and culture are valuable resources for our nation, and we not only need to carry forward and inherit them well, but also to stand in the new era and take a new look at them to explore the huge visual value hidden in them.

3. Understanding and reflecting on contemporary Chinese home design

Different cultures can communicate with each other, learn from each other, and thus gain new development. This is especially true for a nation. When a nation develops its own culture, it has its own cultural roots and national characteristics; and when it discovers the culture of other nations, it has the motivation to learn from them. However, contemporary home product design should have local cultural traits, and should not be too foreign-oriented. Some designs impose some elements that do not match the local cultural characteristics in order to pursue exotic styles, and some even add various elements in their designs indiscriminately, including Western graphic elements and local Chinese graphic elements, which appear very strange and abrupt with their random

piling and application. Nowadays, Chinese traditional cultural elements are gradually in a state of absence, not being used and not being valued, ignoring the traditional humanistic spirit and creating a rigid set. As a designer, in addition to professional knowledge construction, we should pay more attention to and excavate the history and humanities and local cultural resources, grasp people's spiritual needs, shape the humanistic life elements reflecting local culture with innovative ideas, truly people-oriented, according to local conditions.

With the rapid development of information and more and more frequent international communication, the multicultural communication in modern design has become more important. In a highly modernized and informative society, new materials and technologies have brought new ideas and concepts, as well as the influx of various art trends from around the world, bringing unprecedented impact and development opportunities to Chinese art and design. Moreover, in modern design, Western design ideas and concepts have penetrated into every designer's design. Therefore, in the contemporary use of traditional graphics, it is important not to distinguish between Chinese and Western design ideas and elements, but to combine them in an organic way, so that the common design under multiple cultures can better meet the modern design requirements.

Today, there is an unprecedented cultural exchange between the East and the West, and the difference between the East and the West brings a new opportunity for the modernization of Chinese design. With the development of a multipolar world, when Westerners are strongly attracted by the similarity of foreign cultures and approach China with a sense of closeness, contemporary product design should try to "merge" modern Western concepts with traditional Chinese culture and build a bridge between Chinese and Western cultures in this way, in order to explore and try to make progress in the diversification and development of world design.

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