# Analysis of Dunhuang fresco elements in contemporary illustration design research

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Abstract. Dunhuang art has a long history and has a high artistic value and cultural system in the long river of history. The value of Dunhuang frescoes to Chinese art is self-evident. In recent years, many of its artistic elements and forms have been gradually explored and developed. The patterns and color elements in Dunhuang frescoes also provide modern design with unique inspiration and artistic expression forms, which are of high exploration value. Dunhuang murals, with their unique expressive force and incomparable artistic charm, have a wide impact on all kinds of art industries, especially in the field of illustration design has a unique revelation. Illustration is now more and more widely used in all kinds of modern design, widely loved by the public. However, as a modern Chinese style illustration art in the same line with Dunhuang fresco, its reference and research value has not been fully explored. The further combing of the elements of Dunhuang murals strengthens the application of color in the field of illustration, provides a lot of reference for the exploration of the field of Chinese style illustration in the future, and also lays a foundation for the exploration of folk art and culture in the future. This paper explores the possibility of Chinese style illustration by studying the application of Dunhuang frescoes in modern Chinese style illustration, inspiring and promoting Chinese people to explore the new trend of contemporary illustration by using our excellent traditional culture.

**Keywords:** Dunhuang frescoes; Textual research; Antique illustrations.

## 1. An overview of Dunhuang frescoes

Dunhuang grotto art is a form of expression in the art system. It occupies a very important position in history and has great significance. On the one hand, it links the cultural and trade exchanges between the East and the West. On the other hand, it is a gathering place of art, which integrates architecture, design, painting and other forms of expression, and at the same time integrates local and foreign expression techniques. Therefore, Dunhuang grottoes art is not only one of China's few artistic treasures but also one of the world cultural heritage. One of the most representative traditional culture as the inspiration source of Chinese style illustration is the Dunhuang Mogao Grottoes, as a world cultural heritage and human grottoes art palace. It is world-famous for its large number of murals with profound cultural heritage. At the same time, it has been the subject of many literati artists love to study. Dunhuang art has a history of thousands of years, and has developed into a series of diversified design schools, highlighting the profound connotation of Chinese culture. Influenced by the social politics, economy, culture and aesthetic orientation at that time, the contemporary Dunhuang frescoes reached their peak in decorative forms and techniques, and produced high historical literature value and aesthetic value. Tibetan related pattern elements

## 2. Color analysis in Dunhuang frescoes

Color elements occupy a relatively important position in Dunhuang frescoes, and there are various ways of using color in Dunhuang frescoes. At that time, the color was far less rich than that of today, and the pigment production was also very rough, mainly grinding various minerals into powder. At that time, artisans carried out a certain degree of innovation in pigments, used in painting, the formation of today's colorful, rich content of murals. In addition, the color also underpin the craftsmen's inner emotional expression, the mural on the distribution and arrangement of color is not in accordance with the proportion of physical to depict, but to express the feeling of the heart, according to the painter has a larger subjectivity, most importantly, the expression of this kind of colour, can admire most appreciators, even frescoes in jarring situation, People who appreciate it will

not feel very jarring. Limner for the application of color, at the time and no color theory, also does not have the colour collocation of the scientific method, but based on the rich social and life experience, and even the different historical period, the painter for colour collocation that the accused is still to an astonishing degree, can always just right with colour will blow out the Chinese culture. Among the Dunhuang murals, the relationship between black and white has attracted the most attention, with the use of black, white and gray highlighting its mystery. The color contrast in Dunhuang frescoes is very strong, and contrasting colors are often used, such as red and green, blue and yellow. Such contrast color has intense, powerful, vivid, rich colour effect. Murals will also use the same color scheme, such as deep purple and red and orange. Murals pay attention to the beauty and strength of the lines, so that the lines feel more natural, more performance with the tone of the mural, so that the whole mural looks more harmonious. Usually the background color is drawn first, and then the other colors are drawn in the middle. After completing the contour line, use a small pen to further describe the background color area outside the frame according to different main body lines as borders, and describe the main object inside the contour line. The method of filling is very careful and cannot overwrite the original shape of the surrounding image.

In Dunhuang frescoes, color elements are mostly displayed in the illustration screen, and the "Flying Apsaras" figure image is often combined with numerous patterns and decorative patterns in the screen. Such as female figures in the flower petals, surrounding decorative patterns lotus pattern, flame pattern, honeysuckle pattern and so on. In addition, in some shrines, buddhist classical patterns are also used. Ancient people through the characters

Besides drawing, the blank part is filled, and the display of patterns not only enriches the picture, but also combines the distribution of patterns with characters, making the picture full of vitality and charm, highlighting the diversity of colors and greatly improving the visual impact.

# 3. Analysis of patterns in Dunhuang murals

The patterns of Dunhuang frescoes are mostly from People's Daily life at that time, such as clothing and jewelry, which are the "prototypes" of various artistic contents of the frescoes. After the painters continue to carve the prototypes and innovate with their own understanding, different artistic images such as flowers, birds and people are formed. These patterns are a collection of life customs and representative objects of various Ethnic groups in China, showing the national culture of China to the greatest extent. The national spirit contained in these patterns has been spread in different versions of stories and passed down from generation to generation.

Graphic elements have been successfully refined and applied in modern art design, the most typical of which is the "flying apsaras" image, which was originally derived from the Dunhuang Mogao Grottoes in Gansu Province, which is a different interpretation of the painter. , of course, with the development of The Times, "flying day" image representative of the significance of changes have taken place in, especially after the tang dynasty, eliminate some of the western art elements, the localization of "flying" art has reached the peak, then the art elements in contemporary art and design, also has high reference value to the full integration, Some of the images need to be carefully observed and decomposed, and to find some differences from ordinary works of art.

First of all, the focus of apsaras in Dunhuang frescoes is not the same. The image of apsaras that we know daily should be flying in the clouds and fog, without any carrying objects, can fly through the air. However, in Dunhuang frescoes, apsaras pay more attention to, showing the process of apsaras and apsaras character dynamics. The process of flying in the sky has a sense of rhythm, which is mainly reflected by the fluttering of the clothes of the characters, which is unusually elegant and flexible. The dynamic expression of figures is mainly expressed through various movements of figures, such as twisting and turning, so the apsaras image in Dunhuang is more dynamic and formal.

Second, at the time of the graphic elements for refining, can be "flying" graphics, to generalize the basic elements to break it down on the basis of tracing technique, such as, different point, line and plane combination, and to innovation and coordination, tracing lines with modern way to express a

different image of the "flying", this is a kind of innovation of Dunhuang murals, Also let "flying" has a more realistic representative significance.

Finally, Dunhuang fresco art is a relatively three-dimensional art, and its expression forms are mainly sculpture, painting, architecture, etc. Therefore, when the decomposition elements are used, they can be broken up and then combined to show different artistic effects.

## 4. The application of Dunhuang fresco elements in illustration design

As a unique art, Dunhuang fresco art has become the carrier of painting art. Many figures and compositional forms have strong characteristics. Dunhuang frescoes have lasting artistic charm and unique artistic effect. Studying the characteristics and composition of Dunhuang frescoes can help people have a deeper understanding of Chinese painting.

Nowadays, many illustrators in China have gradually realized the importance of Dunhuang fresco for art and developed their own style characteristics under its influence. For example, every illustration of Kuri Huang, a Chinese illustrator, is a story, expressing a mysterious atmosphere through the screen. In the works, the gods bless the earth and the world is full of beauty. Kuri Huang's illustration works show the atmosphere characteristic of religious color, which also plays a certain role in the development of religious art and culture. Kuri Huang is also good at reflecting the fantasy and magic of the fairy tale world through bright colors, and often uses symbolic techniques to make people feel that this is a wonderful world.

Another example is The painter Lian Yang, who is very good at drawing dragons. She has all kinds of lifelike dragons under her pen. She is known as "the youngest dragon maker in China". She once went to Dunhuang, Xizang and other places to study traditional Chinese painting art, and later she mainly created rock paintings, which were often exhibited. Most of her illustrations are Chinese myths and legends, with strong romantic color and mysterious atmosphere. She uses the cultural language that young people are passionate about to interpret a "Chinese wind" in line with the current situation. Lian Yang is good at rock color, which is made of ore and can best show the charm of Dunhuang frescoes.

## 5. The influence of Dunhuang fresco on modern Chinese style illustration

Dunhuang frescoes also have a significant impact on modern illustration design, such as the popular "flying Apsaras" image, which is widely used in various design industries. Dunhuang fresco is one of the typical representatives of Buddhist art, and the image of "apsaras" is a typical artistic image in Dunhuang fresco. With the development of culture, "flying apsaras" art covers a wider range of content and has become a classic symbol of traditional Chinese culture and art. Contemporary Chinese illustration draws on the experience of foreign illustration design, and also needs to be infused with the nutrients of Chinese traditional culture. With the development of society, people are no longer satisfied with the needs of daily life, and their demands for cultural complex are also increasing day by day. In contemporary illustrations, there are many Chinese style illustrations that reasonably use the redesign and development of traditional cultural elements in Dunhuang frescoes to express picture emotions and promote the innovative development of culture at the same time. In addition to Chinese illustrators' unique preference for Dunhuang murals, many Japanese artists have also drawn inspiration from Dunhuang murals. For example, Yoshitaka Amano, a Japanese painter, whose work is also very common in many artistic activities. In the character setting and illustration of Final Fantasy, which he participated in the production of in the 1980s, he conquered the majority of animation fans with his unique painting style. His expression technique is similar to the form in Dunhuang murals, which has a strong flavor of Dunhuang. In 1989, Amano held his first solo exhibition "Apsaras" in Japan, and his personal style took shape and became widely known. Amano combines the unique expression form of Dunhuang murals with modern illustrations, adding local Japanese art, and painting in a vivid and elegant style with strong personal characteristics.

Contemporary illustration is popular with the popularity of Chinese style. Many brands have cooperated with excellent Chinese style illustrators to launch a series of beautiful ancient style illustrations to enhance product packaging. In recent years, ancient illustrations are often used in movie posters and even in the opening titles of TV dramas, and they are becoming more and more popular. But there is no lack of impetuous works piled up by ancient elements on the market, and even similar "pointing deer at horses". Without understanding the history and culture corresponding to the theme, such "accidents" are inevitable. Enrich their historical knowledge, precipitate their own cultural connotation, learn from excellent designers, abandon impetuous traffic kidnapping, is the direction of contemporary illustration designers should strive to.

#### 6. Conclusion

Dunhuang frescoes contain rich traditional culture and are the crystallization of people's wisdom and culture. Up to now, in the age of information explosion, the Dunhuang murals with rich artistic and cultural deposits appear extremely precious, which has a profound influence on the design of modern antique illustrations. The profound historical deposits can make designers continuously inspired. The redesign and exploration of mural elements have opened up a new way to carry forward traditional culture. The expression form of Chinese style illustration is free and diverse, but the designer should also understand the corresponding history and culture when creating, avoid simple elements piling up, and create works with solid cultural atmosphere.

In today's social development, culture and art are presented to us in different forms, attracting our attention with various forms of expression. In China, a country with a long history and culture, our "national style" is gradually presented on the world stage with its own unique cultural color. For Dunhuang art frescoes, there are still a lot of contents that need us to interpret, the most important is how we as designers fully understand Dunhuang art and culture spirit. In the visual communication design, it is far from enough to analyze the color of Dunhuang murals in the field of plane. As for the refinement and reorganization of color patterns, we should show the new appearance of murals in modern visual communication design while understanding its spiritual meaning through history and culture. Looking back on the historical and cultural colors, we should combine the characteristics of modern aesthetic culture, infuse new design ideas into the soul of mural art, show people the new national cultural characteristics and design works, carry forward the "national color", constantly bring forth the new Oriental design culture and promote the progress of mural art color.

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