

Study on the Integration and Innovation Pathways of Etiquette Culture in Ceramic Design Theory Courses at Higher Education Institutions

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Abstract

Etiquette culture serves as the core of Chinese traditional cultural values, possessing rich spiritual connotations and significant importance. Currently, ceramic design theory courses in higher education institutions are facing a series of challenges. Design education overly emphasizes the adaptability of course content to social demands, to some extent neglecting the intrinsic humanistic spirit. By employing approaches such as "illuminating etiquette through vessels," "comparing virtues with vessels," and "upholding both art and virtue," and utilizing objects as carriers, the fusion of etiquette culture with ceramic design theory courses can enhance the cultural literacy and spiritual horizons of design talents, achieving a subtle and unobtrusive educational impact.

Keywords

Etiquette Culture; Design Theory; Pathways.

1. Introduction

On December 14, 2021, General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasized in his speech at the opening ceremony of the 11th National Congress of the Chinese Federation of Literary and Art Circles and the 10th National Congress of the China Writers Association: "We must explore the ideological concepts, humanistic spirit, and moral norms of exceptional traditional Chinese culture, merging artistic creativity with the values of Chinese culture, uniting the essence of Chinese aesthetics with contemporary aesthetic pursuits, and revitalizing the energy of Chinese culture." As a core aspect reflecting traditional Chinese cultural values, rites have served as the internal driving force behind the enduring prosperity of ancient Chinese civilization. China has long been regarded as the "Land of Etiquette," with the concept of rites permeating daily life since prehistoric times. Mr. Liu Yizheng once stated, "China is a nation defined by etiquette. Establishing the nation upon the principles of balance and propriety sets the Chinese people apart from other cultures." Over thousands of years, the culture of rites has been deeply ingrained in the cultural DNA of the Chinese nation, forming the heart and soul of Chinese civilization and guiding the social and spiritual lives of its people. A pressing challenge for design theory educators is how to assimilate the ideological richness of the culture of rites and seamlessly integrate it with ceramic design theory education, effectively enhancing the humanistic qualities and theoretical knowledge of art students.

2. Addressing the Bottleneck in High School Ceramics Design Theory Courses

The relentless expansion of globalization poses severe challenges to traditional culture. In this unprecedented era of sweeping transformation and upheaval, aspects such as people's

lifestyles, thought patterns, and moral ideals are undergoing tremendous tests. While the rapid social development advances the economy, it also delivers significant impacts on people's spiritual lives, eroding traditional cultural values and moral standards. This overarching societal backdrop has influenced design education in higher institutions in various ways. China's ceramics design education began relatively late, and for an extended period, it focused on imitating and adopting Western design concepts and applying Western design education philosophies. Consequently, many students' design projects lack originality and a strong connection to their own national culture.

Ceramics design education tends to overemphasize the adaptability of course content to societal needs, inadvertently neglecting the inherent humanistic spirit and diminishing the moral and value guidance within the curriculum. Influenced by pragmatic thinking, art schools place excessive emphasis on developing "technical" skills at the expense of humanistic spirit. Explicit design ability training is prioritized in classroom education, while implicit moral values and education receive insufficient attention, failing to offer students subtle guidance in moral emotions and thought patterns. Many teachers concentrate solely on imparting design theory knowledge, overlooking the exploration of the profound culture embodied within design. As a result, design theory education becomes skill training detached from moral and cultural foundations. In light of these circumstances, design theory education urgently needs a paradigm shift. By integrating traditional culture, especially the ideas of ritual and cultural thought, into the educational process, the cultural literacy and spiritual horizons of design talents can be enhanced, ultimately achieving a subtle, nurturing educational effect.

3. The Significance of Ritual Culture in Ceramic Design Theory Courses

Culture serves as a vital support for the healthy development of society and a key factor in enhancing national competitiveness. The Chinese traditional ritual culture, accumulated over thousands of years, holds great importance for social development and individual progress. As an exceptional traditional culture with distinct Chinese characteristics, ritual culture plays a pivotal role in shaping and guiding Chinese society, displaying the unique spirit of the Chinese nation, and significantly contributing to personal growth, social transformation, and national governance. As a distinctive and exemplary moral and ethical culture, ritual culture offers a wealth of resources for moral and aesthetic education, which holds considerable value in shaping the proper moral and ethical concepts and behavior among contemporary design students. Confucius placed great emphasis on the role of "rites" and considered them essential for maintaining social order and national stability during the Spring and Autumn period. He advocated for "governing people with virtue and leveling them with rites" and aimed to endow rituals with new cultural meanings and values by exploring their social functions and elevating them from institutional to intellectual and academic levels. Increasingly, modern scholars delve into the essence of ritual culture, combining it with contemporary education to highlight its rational value. Integrating Chinese traditional ritual culture into ceramic art design theory courses, and constructing suitable mechanisms and models for this purpose, not only enhances the appeal and relatability of college ceramic design theory courses during teaching reform exploration, but also deepens students' understanding of design theory, broadens their design perspectives, and enhances their comprehension of design connotations.

3.1. Promoting the Essence of Time-Honored Ritual Culture and Chinese Traditional Culture

Ritual culture, deeply rooted in Chinese civilization, has a long history that predates the emergence of written language. The rituals, artifacts, and even institutions of "rites" already existed in the social life and practices of ancient people. As a cultural form, "rites" have long been ingrained in the lifestyle and habits of the Chinese nation. As a uniquely Chinese cultural

phenomenon and concept, "rites" encapsulate the nation's exclusive connotations and meanings. The renowned scholar Qian Mu once stated, "China became a nation because 'rites' established social relationship norms for all Chinese people." As a representative of traditional culture, the unique appeal of "rites" lies in the depth and richness of its connotations. The spirit of harmony, benevolence, reverence, and accommodation in ritual culture not only carries the cultural memory of the Chinese nation but also reflects contemporary core values. As a primary force in cultivating the nation's future, colleges and universities should adhere to the mission of cultural education. Incorporating excellent traditional Chinese culture into ceramic design theory courses in higher education is not only a positive response to national policy calls but also a novel approach to enhancing college students' sense of cultural inheritance, innovation, and development of outstanding traditional Chinese culture. Under the influence of ritual culture, students can bolster their cultural confidence and national cultural identity, develop a consciousness of inheriting traditional culture while understanding ritual culture, and apply this awareness in design practice to preserve traditional culture through exceptional design works.

3.2. Expand Design Theory Teaching Resources to Enhance Students' Artistic Proficiency

Design holds a pivotal role in modern society, prompting hundreds of universities across the nation to offer design-related majors to address societal needs. As design education evolves rapidly, it is increasingly evident that design is more than merely producing visual representations or serving as a "rational tool" for science and technology. Mere technical instruction or theoretical indoctrination no longer satisfies contemporary design requirements. Design theory courses must tackle fundamental issues from a macro perspective, including design concepts, history, schools, aesthetics, and criticism. By incorporating traditional Chinese cultural thought, particularly Chinese etiquette culture, the course can transcend disciplinary boundaries and enrich design theory teaching resources while fostering students' artistic and humanistic literacy. In teaching practice, integrating etiquette culture into ceramic design theory courses enables students to comprehend its origins, development, and substantial influence on ancient Chinese architecture, furniture, utensils, clothing, and other design activities. By including relevant cases, images, and literature, students' preconceived notions of ceramic design theory can be transformed, allowing them to immerse themselves in traditional culture and cultivate moral character. Practical teaching activities, such as visiting ceramic museums and collecting design cases related to etiquette, can help students connect etiquette culture with design practice, refine their design taste, develop their unique style, and imbue their designs with deeper cultural and historical resonance.

3.3. Foster the Development of Appropriate Life Values and Elevate Students' Moral Aptitude

In ancient Chinese history, etiquette culture significantly influenced and guided people's behavior, elevating their thought processes and providing essential moral education. As a result, moral education based on etiquette culture became a distinguishing feature of ancient Chinese education. From a macro perspective, etiquette culture shares crucial connections with ceramic design theory courses and can serve as a point of integration for ideological and professional education. The cultivation of artistic and design talent in higher education requires not only the transmission of professional knowledge but also the nurturing of designers' minds and spirits. Sociologist Fei Xiaotong encapsulated the role of art as "cultivating people through culture, nourishing the heart through art, and shaping individuals with beauty." Humanistic pursuits and aesthetic experiences inherent in ceramic art and design have emerged as vital aspects. By linking aesthetic education with moral education in ceramic design theory teaching, students can transcend disciplinary and professional skill limitations, embrace values that respect virtue

and cherish etiquette, and communicate their thoughts and emotions through aesthetic forms. This approach allows for the organic integration of "art," "virtue," "knowledge," and "action." The dissemination and application of traditional etiquette culture guide proper aesthetic and moral values, transcending material dimensions and collaborating with moral education to help achieve professional teaching goals and realize moral education objectives. This process produces exceptional design talents characterized by artistic and moral excellence, knowledge, and action. Actively incorporating moral education ideas from etiquette culture is crucial for thoroughly deepening moral education reform and implementing the fundamental task of moral education in higher education institutions. It is only by infusing value into the curriculum that students can develop a well-rounded perspective on life, values, and art.

4. Incorporating Ritual Culture into Ceramic Design Theory Courses: Strategies and Methods

Ritual culture has evolved, developed, and been reinforced throughout Chinese history. Since ancient times, China has placed significant emphasis on the guiding role of rituals, viewing them as the foundation for cultural inheritance. In ancient society, "ritual" was an all-encompassing cultural mode that subtly influenced people's consciousness, thoughts, and behavior norms. "Ritual" has always been at the heart of China's traditional design system, which, through harmonization with rituals, has established its own unique framework across various dimensions such as materials, decorations, techniques, and concepts. Thousands of years of ritual and music civilization have endowed the Chinese nation with invaluable spiritual wealth. In the context of globalization, it is crucial to explore and further promote its spirit in contemporary society.

4.1. Emphasizing Rituals through Artifacts - Disseminating Ritual Culture through the "Presence" of Objects

Artifacts serve as vital cultural carriers, embodying rich humanistic values. Phrases like "vessels carry the Dao" and "vessels hide rituals" exemplify the relationships between "ritual," "vessel," and "Dao." Ritual vessels, which merge both rituals and objects, function as essential moral and educational instruments. Ceramic ritual vessels, for example, have a history spanning thousands of years and preserve the splendid ritual and music civilization. The materials, craftsmanship, shapes, decorations, and usage of ceramic ritual vessels convey the ancient people's religious beliefs and cultural aspirations, becoming one of the crucial symbols of Chinese civilization. "Ceramics enrich the connotation of ritual culture, promote the development of the ritual system, and the evolution of rituals also impacts the shapes and craftsmanship of ceramics." For instance, the octagonal patterns on prehistoric ceramic ritual vessels represent the awe and worship of nature and deities by primitive ancestors; the white ceramic ritual vessels of the Shang Dynasty express the solemnity and mystery of rituals through color, materials, and decorations; and the ceramic vessels' usage by different groups during the Western Zhou Dynasty showcases the humanistic aspect of rituals. Ceramic ritual vessels carry the historical memory of Chinese ritual and music culture from both material and ideological perspectives, conveying the aesthetic ideals and life pursuits of the ancestors. The metaphysical concept of "ritual" is better manifested through the tangible form of "vessels." Therefore, in design theory education, utilizing ritual objects as carriers and introducing the design and usage of ancient ritual vessels through pictures, videos, and literature can more effectively communicate ancient ritual culture in the classroom.

4.2. Cultivating Virtue through Objects: Encouraging Moral Development in Students through Empathy

Since the Zhou Dynasty, the culture of rites has experienced rapid growth, with the forms of rites becoming increasingly diverse and their functions continuously expanding. Rites have evolved from early worship of gods and spirits to constructing social order, serving as a crucial means of harmonizing social ethics and morality. Ritual objects, as the tangible embodiments of rites, possess not only practical and symbolic purposes but also contribute to social education. The ancient design of ritual objects conveys the inherent moral education value of "nurturing virtue through objects," using the shapes, colors, materials, and decorations of objects to represent human moral character. This guides people to regulate their behavior according to etiquette norms while using these objects. By gaining a deeper understanding of ancient ritual object designs and learning about etiquette concepts, students can focus more on self-improvement and observe proper etiquette when interacting with others and society. This approach is more effective than simply force-feeding students with etiquette concepts, as it allows them to genuinely experience empathy during the learning process, internalize these behaviors, and consciously adhere to social moral norms. Students with good moral qualities will exhibit greater social responsibility and a sense of purpose when designing, taking into consideration aspects such as timing, location, material beauty, and craftsmanship. They will prioritize ethical design over the blind pursuit of luxurious appearances or the maximization of economic benefits. Incorporating the culture of rites into design theory education not only emphasizes the appreciation of the external form of ritual objects but also highlights the recognition of the intrinsic value of etiquette education. By reinforcing the normativity of etiquette while constantly internalizing it as moral consciousness, cultural identity and integration between individuals, society, and the nation can be achieved.

4.3. Balancing Artistry and Ethics: Strengthening the Collaborative Role of Professional and Ideological Education in Talent Development

Ceramic design education often places greater emphasis on technical skills at the expense of moral values, which can inadvertently overlook the importance of nurturing design ethics and professional integrity. Introducing ideological content into design theory courses offers a fresh perspective by combining professional learning with ideological and political education. While ceramic design education has traditionally focused on practicality and solving design problems through rational thinking, a value-oriented approach suggests that ceramic design should not only aim for material functionality but also address emotional and spiritual needs of individuals and society. Furthermore, it should consider potential negative impacts on the environment, social morals, and order from a broader standpoint. Incorporating etiquette culture into ceramic design theory courses can help merge professional and moral education, ensuring that ethical principles and professional standards are considered throughout the learning process. Etiquette culture embodies the cultural essence and vitality of the Chinese nation over thousands of years, and it is essential to preserve and innovate this culture in modern contexts, allowing for new interpretations and expressions. As the world grapples with the clash between traditional and modern civilizations, shifts in living spaces and social structures have transformed traditional lifestyles, aesthetic ideals, and creative concepts, leading to changes in the existing "cultural soil." Consequently, the once-revered etiquette culture has lost its former sanctity. To revitalize traditional etiquette culture, it must adapt to contemporary needs while remaining relevant to students' thinking, undergoing creative transformation and innovative development. Emphasizing narrative strategies that cater to modern aesthetics and cultural demands, promoting the core themes within etiquette culture, and highlighting positive energy are essential steps. By integrating ideological content and design education in ceramic design theory courses, educators can subtly reshape students' moral standards and guide them to

strike a balance between ethics and practical needs in design activities. This approach facilitates harmony between design, individuals, and society, ultimately reaching the ideal state of "designing for the greater good."

5. Conclusion

The concept of "Etiquette," a foundational element of traditional Chinese culture, has underpinned China's ritual civilization for thousands of years, bestowing a wealth of spiritual treasures upon the nation. In an era of globalization, it is more important than ever to delve deeper into this cultural cornerstone and ensure its continued relevance and promotion in modern society. Throughout the millennia, Etiquette has been intrinsically connected with the evolution of Chinese culture. By incorporating Etiquette into ceramic design theory courses in today's context, we not only enrich the cultural content of teaching but also foster the preservation and transmission of traditional culture among college students. This approach guarantees the sustainability and progress of design theory courses while simultaneously advancing aesthetic and moral education goals. Utilizing ritual vessels and other cultural artifacts as teaching aids helps to uncover and integrate the ideological components of design theory education, thereby enriching the practical aspects of ideological instruction. By immersing college students in the culture of Etiquette, we establish a bridge between professional creativity and humanistic values, nurturing a reverence for virtue and an appreciation of Etiquette in the development of ceramic design talents. This guidance empowers students to cultivate cultural confidence, fuel their passion for traditional culture, and develop positive moral values through the teachings of Etiquette. Through this holistic approach, students can achieve well-rounded personal growth that encompasses both knowledge and character.

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