

A Study of Traditional Chinese Painting in the Design of Jade Carvings in the Qing Dynasty

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Abstract: In China's long cultural history, the art of traditional painting and jade carving are like two treasures that reflect each other, and have lasted for thousands of years. The Qing Dynasty, a period of Chinese cultural prosperity and exquisite craftsmanship, witnessed the development of the deep integration and innovation of these two art forms. Traditional painting, with its unique ink and brushwork and far-reaching pursuit of meaning, not only had a profound impact on literature and calligraphy, but also left an indelible mark on the field of jade carving. Jade carvers of the Qing Dynasty skillfully integrated the compositional layout, line use and colour matching techniques of painting into their carving designs, making jade carvings not only highlight the beauty of the warm texture of the jade itself, but also contain rich cultural connotations and artistic flavours.

Keywords: Traditional Chinese painting; Qing dynasty jade; Application

DOI: 10.62639/sspjiss23.20240103

Tracing the historical lineage, the Qing Dynasty is undoubtedly a lofty peak in the development of traditional Chinese art. During this period, the art of painting and jade carving became a concentrated expression of the spirit of the times by virtue of its unique artistic charm and profound cultural connotation. As a treasure of Chinese civilisation, traditional painting, with its unique aesthetic pursuit and artistic expression, had a profound influence on later generations, and in the Qing Dynasty, this influence was particularly prominent, not only in the paintings themselves, but also penetrated deeply into the field of jade carving^[1]. With exquisite skills and keen artistic insight, Qing jade carvers cleverly integrated the mood creation, compositional techniques and emotional expression of paintings into jade carvings, creating a piece of artistic masterpieces that are both visually striking and rich in cultural connotations. This article will analyse the application of traditional Chinese painting in the design of Qing Dynasty jade carvings from multiple dimensions, showing the brilliant course of mutual integration and common development between the two, and aiming to lead the readers to appreciate the profoundness and unique charms of traditional Chinese art.

1. Overview of Traditional Chinese Painting

(1) History of development: a long history and artistic evolution from the past to the present

As an important part of Chinese civilisation, traditional Chinese painting has a long and far-reaching history of development, and after thousands of years of accumulation and accumulation, it has forged a unique artistic style and a profound cultural heritage. Its origins can be traced back to the Neolithic era of coloured ceramic decorations and rock paintings, which are primitive art forms that gave birth to the initial form of Chinese painting.

(Manuscript NO.: JISS-24-3-4001)

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Subsequently, with the changes in social history and cultural development, traditional painting has gone through an evolution from simple to complex, from simple to refined^[2]. During the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods, painting gradually became independent from craft decoration and became a specialised art form. To the Han Dynasty, silk paintings, wall paintings and the prosperity of portrait stone, portrait brick, marking the initial maturity of the art of painting. During the Wei, Jin and Northern and Southern Dynasties, the rise of literati painting prompted painting to pay more attention to the expression of personal emotions and philosophical thoughts, forming the artistic pursuit of "writing God in form". During the Tang and Song dynasties, traditional Chinese painting climbed to its peak, landscape painting, flower and bird painting became independent painting disciplines, ink painting techniques were perfected, and the creative concept of "learning from the outside, getting the source of the heart" was established. During the Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties, painters further explored the tradition of pen and ink painting and the comprehensive cultivation of poetry, calligraphy, painting and sealing, which led to the continuous innovation of traditional Chinese painting in the process of inheritance, showing a rich and diversified outlook. In the course of this development, traditional Chinese painting has not only witnessed the changes of history, but also mapped out the evolution of aesthetic taste and cultural spirit in different times, which is a vivid cultural epic that carries on the past to the present and remains everlasting.

(2) Characteristics: Ink and writing mood, the aesthetic pursuit of the unity of heaven and mankind

The core qualities of traditional Chinese painting are embodied in its unique brush and ink techniques, the creation of profound moods, and the philosophical concept of the unity of heaven and mankind. Brush and ink, as the basic language of traditional Chinese painting, is not only a tool for shaping images, but also a medium for conveying emotions and ideas^[3]. Through the use of wet and dry ink colours and the differences in the weight of the brush strokes, painters create a myriad of visual effects, thus conveying the charm of the object and their own emotions. In terms of the use of ink and brush, traditional Chinese painting emphasises the idea of "the brush comes first", stresses the correspondence between the heart and the hand, and pursues the artistic realm of "between resemblance and non-resemblance". The creation of mood is another distinctive mark of traditional Chinese painting. When depicting natural scenery or figures, painters pay more attention to triggering the viewer's association and empathy through the picture, creating a poetic space beyond the picture itself. The creation of this mood is often embedded with philosophical thinking and life realisation, reflecting the unique insights of the Chinese literati into the universe, nature and life. The aesthetic concept of the unity of heaven and man is the philosophical core of traditional Chinese painting. In their creations, painters are committed to expressing the harmonious symbiosis of man and nature, integrating their personal emotions into nature, and achieving the artistic realm of forgetting oneself and the world. This aesthetic pursuit not only reflects the ancient Chinese philosophy of "the unity of heaven and mankind", but also highlights the artist's desire and pursuit of an ideal state of life.

2. Chinese Traditional Painting in the Qing Dynasty Jade Carving Design Application Value Implication

(1) Integration and innovation of art forms

On the basis of inheriting the skills of the previous generation, the design of Qing Dynasty jade carvings actively drew on the essence of traditional Chinese paintings, realising the fusion and innovation of art forms. Traditional Chinese painting stresses the smoothness of lines and the richness of ink colours, and these elements were exquisitely applied in the jade carvings of the Qing Dynasty. Using delicate knife techniques, carvers skilfully transformed the beauty of the lines in paintings into the texture of the jade surface, making the jade works not only present a three-dimensional texture, but also contain the unique flavour of paintings. In addition, Qing dynasty jade carvings also drew on the principles of painting in composition and layout, using clever spatial configurations to express the infinite depth of meaning in a limited space^[4]. The integration and innovation of this art form, while

enriching the expressive methods of Qing Dynasty jade carvings, also added more artistic connotations to it.

(2) Expressions of cultural connotations

Traditional Chinese paintings contain deep cultural connotations, and their themes are often rich in meaning and full of symbolism. While drawing on the elements of paintings, Qing dynasty jade carving designs also inherited and demonstrated these profound cultural meanings. Whether it was landscapes, birds and flowers, or figures, these common themes in traditional paintings were given new forms of expression in Qing dynasty jade carvings. The carvers, with their exquisite skills, transformed the cultural connotations of the paintings into vivid images on the jade, making the works not only of ornamental value, but also an important medium for the transmission and promotion of traditional culture. The inheritance and presentation of this cultural connotation not only added to the artistic charm of Qing Dynasty jade carving, but also made it a cultural link between ancient and modern times.

(3) Sublimation and expansion of aesthetic experience

Traditional Chinese painting is committed to the harmonious blend of mood and emotion, and this aesthetic experience was further sublimated and expanded in the design of Qing Dynasty jade carvings. Jade carvings of the Qing Dynasty not only pursued similarity in form, but also paid more attention to the conveyance of charm. With the help of delicate carving techniques, the beauty of the mood in paintings was transformed into a tangible and palpable physical form. When viewing these jade works, the viewer can not only appreciate the external beauty of the form, but also deeply appreciate the profound meaning and rich emotions contained in them^[5]. The sublimation and expansion of this aesthetic experience not only highlights the artistic value of Qing Dynasty jade carvings, but also makes them an important and indispensable part of people's spiritual life. Through the unique art form of jade carving, people can more deeply feel the unique charm and profound flavour of traditional Chinese culture.

3. The Application of Chinese Traditional Painting in the Design of Jade Carving in the Qing Dynasty

(1) Integration of landscapes to build a three-dimensional picture scroll of jade carving

In the vast world of Chinese traditional art, painting and jade carving are like two dazzling stars, shining together and carrying the profound connotation of Chinese civilisation. The Qing Dynasty is regarded as the heyday of the development of Chinese traditional art, during which the art of jade carving demonstrated unprecedented creativity in the process of borrowing and fusion. Traditional Chinese landscape painting, with its unique way of composition and creation of mood, provided a constant source of inspiration for jade carving design. By subtly transforming the flat mood of landscape paintings into three-dimensional jade carvings, not only does the jade come to life, but it also makes the viewer feel as if they are in a flowing landscape scroll as they play with it. This kind of cross-border artistic fusion is not only a test of the carver's skills, but also requires them to have a deep cultural heritage and refined aesthetic taste, so that they can realise the artistic sublimation from two-dimensional plane to three-dimensional^[6].

Take the famous jade carving "Dayu Ruling the Waters" from the Qianlong period of the Qing Dynasty as an example, which is a perfect fusion of the art of jade carving and painting. Taken from the scroll of Dayu's Ruling the Waters, which was in the collection of the Imperial Household, the work took six years to complete and was meticulously designed and produced by the Qing Palace's Office of the Maker. Made of Hetian green jade and weighing over 5,300 kilograms, it is a magnificent work of art. The sculptor skilfully transformed the landscape scene in the scroll into a three-dimensional jade carving, with undulating mountains, meandering rivers, and lifelike figures, the details of which reveal the craftsman's superior skills and deep understanding of landscape painting. What is particularly praiseworthy is that the jade carving, on the basis of faithfully preserving the composition and mood of the original painting, further enhances the sense of spatial hierarchy and three-dimensionality of the

work through the use of a variety of techniques, such as round carving and relief carving, so that the viewer can appreciate the beauty of the picturesque landscape no matter from which angle they are viewing the work. This work is not only an important milestone in the history of Chinese jade carving, but also an example of the successful implementation of the creative strategy of "integrating landscapes and constructing three-dimensional scrolls of jade carving".

(2) The technique of "virtual and real", strengthening the artistic level of jade carving

As one of the core techniques of traditional Chinese painting, the essence of the "harmony of reality and emptiness" is reflected in the clever layout of "reality" and "emptiness", aiming to create a profound and far-reaching meaning beyond the picture itself.^[7] In Qing Dynasty jade carving design, the application of this technique greatly enriched the artistic expression and sense of hierarchy of jade carvings. When creating jade carvings, the jade carvers drew on the technique of dealing with reality and emptiness in painting, and carefully carved the jade materials, so that the works could show infinite space for reverie within a limited space. Specifically, "reality" is reflected in the shape and quality of the jade, which directly demonstrates the carver's skills; while "emptiness" is reflected in the white space of the jade, which provides a starting point for the viewer's imagination and association. Through the use of the technique of "virtual" and "real", jade carvings are able to transcend the constraints of material form and achieve the artistic realm of both form and spirit.

For example, the iconic jade carving of the Qing Dynasty, "Incense Holder with Figures and Landscape", is made of the finest jade, and its overall composition is both full and ethereal. The carver has skilfully combined openwork and large-format carving techniques to present the elements of pavilions, figures and landscapes one by one. In the carving of pavilions and figures, the craftsmanship is meticulous, the lines are smooth and natural, and the form is written in real; while the background of landscapes is mostly left in white, with only simple lines outlining the contours, and the mood is written in vain. This kind of layout combining the real and the imaginary not only makes the work clear and clear, but also gives it a far-reaching meaning and rich cultural connotation. The viewers, while savouring the work, are impressed by the carver's ingenuity, and at the same time deeply appreciate the unique flavour of the traditional Chinese art, which is "the combination of reality and emptiness".

(3) Combining poetry and painting with innovation, giving jade carving a cultural soul

In the long history of traditional Chinese art, the combination of poetry and painting has always been one of the highest realms pursued by the literati. This cross-border artistic fusion not only enriches the form of artistic expression, but also endows the works with profound cultural connotations and unique souls. In the jade carving design of the Qing Dynasty, the concept of combining poetry and painting in traditional Chinese painting was borrowed, and the meaning of poetry and the image of painting were cleverly integrated into the jade carving, which became an effective way to enhance the artistic value and cultural depth of jade carving. By engraving and painting on the front and back of the jade carving, the viewer can taste the rhythm of the poems and feel the visual impact of the paintings, thus achieving the artistic effect of "poetry in the painting and painting in the poem", and endowing the jade carving with a unique cultural soul. Take the famous jade carving work "Red Cliff Fugue" of the Qing Dynasty as an example, which fully demonstrates the exquisite use of poetry and painting in jade carving design. The creator cleverly chose "Red Cliff Fugue" by Su Shi, a Song Dynasty writer, as the theme, and not only engraved the classic words in the Fugue on one side of the jade carving, but also vividly reproduced the magnificent scene of the Battle of Red Cliff depicted in the Fugue on the other side with superb carving skills. The turbulent river, the towering mountain peaks, as well as the scholars on a flat boat together form a vivid picture that mirrors the mood of the poem. When the viewers are enjoying this jade carving, it seems that they can travel through time and space and be in the scene in person, deeply feeling the grandeur of Su Shi's writing and the beauty of nature, realising the perfect fusion of poetry, painting and jade carving, and endowing the jade carving with a deep cultural heritage and immortal artistic vitality.

(4) Refinement of the use of lines, showing the vividness of jade carving

Line is regarded as the core element of traditional Chinese painting, and its use is not only reflected in the shaping of forms, but also in the vivid conveyance of chiaroscuro. In the design of jade carvings during the Qing Dynasty, the art of line was borrowed from Chinese painting, and through the refined use of line, the texture and charm of jade carvings could be vividly demonstrated. The lines of Chinese paintings emphasise power and symbolism, as well as a sense of sculpture and jinshi (gold and stone) flavour, characteristics that are also reflected in the art of jade carving. The sculptor's use of delicate and fluent lines to accurately capture the form and charisma of the object gives the jade carving a sense of spiritual beauty that transcends the material plane, and achieves the artistic realm of both form and spirit.

Take the masterpiece of jade carving from the Qing Dynasty, Santa Claus Under the Moon, as an example, which demonstrates excellent artistic mastery in the fine use of lines. The carver skilfully uses delicate and varied lines to outline the kind and mysterious face of the old man under the moon, as well as his flowing beard and clothes. Each line seems to contain the rhythm of life, making the whole jade carving work full of vivid charm. Especially the mahogany fan in the hands of the old man under the moon, the texture and details on the fan surface are delicately portrayed through fine lines, as if it can really sway with the wind, exuding a kind of transcendent immortal aura. When appreciating this jade carving, the viewer can not only feel the realism of its form, but also deeply appreciate the deep cultural connotation and aesthetic meaning it contains. This work is undoubtedly a successful practice of the traditional Chinese art of drawing lines in the design of jade carvings, and a vivid miniature of the highly developed art of jade carving in the Qing Dynasty.

4. Conclusion

During the Qing Dynasty, as the heyday of Chinese traditional art development, the art of jade carving, on the basis of drawing on the essence of traditional Chinese painting, realised the fusion and innovation of art forms, which not only enriched the means of expression, but also gave it a deeper artistic connotation. The jade carving design of the Qing Dynasty demonstrated a cross-border artistic charm through the integration of landscapes, the use of the technique of "virtual and real", the combination of innovative poems and paintings as well as the refined use of lines. This artistic charm not only inherits the profound connotation of traditional culture, but also expands the aesthetic experience, becoming a cultural bridge connecting ancient times and modern times. These outstanding jade carvings are not only a display of skills, but also a conveyance of culture and philosophy. While savouring them, viewers can deeply feel the profoundness and unique charm of traditional Chinese art, which reflects the unceasing artistic creativity of Chinese civilisation.

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