

Homogenization of Wabi-Sabi and New Chinese Design and Solutions

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Abstract: This paper focuses on the two design concepts of wabi-sabi and new Chinese style. Through the comparison of specific design cases, it analyzes the differences between the two similar styles and puts forward some suggestions on how to avoid the problem of design homogeneity. The research in this paper is not only conducive to the academic community to fully grasp the essential characteristics of the two design styles; it also helps the academic community to deeply understand the similarities and differences between the two; it has certain academic significance and practical value in promoting the theoretical research and practical application of wabi-sabi and new Chinese style.

Keywords: Wabi-sabi, New Chinese Style, Design, Homogeneity.

1. Introduction

"Wabi-sabi" usually refers to a traditional Japanese aesthetic concept that emphasizes simplicity, plainness, naturalness, and unadorned style. "New Chinese" is a design style that interprets traditional Chinese elements in a modern way. The problem of homogeneity is common in the design field. "Wabi-sabi" and "New Chinese" are very popular design concepts in recent years. They are often confused because of their common low-saturation color matching and oriental aesthetic elements. In some designs, due to the pursuit of simplicity and simplicity, the two are often similar in form, losing their unique characteristics, making it difficult for people to distinguish them in appearance. The author takes the rosewood chair as the entry point, hoping to propose a solution to avoid the homogenization of the two design styles through case comparative research. It is expected to enrich the research theoretical value of this topic and provide inspiration for practical applications.

2. Literature Review

In the existing research on aesthetic styles, the homogeneity of the new Chinese style and the wabi-sabi has been mentioned many times. The study by Hao Hongyang (2022) emphasized the difficulties faced by the design of new Chinese furniture, including serious homogeneity and lack of personalization. The reason for this homogeneity is that the two styles have highly similar cultural backgrounds, such as Zen culture and minimalist culture. The study by Wang Shaohua and Xiao Derong (2017) analyzed the influence of Zen culture in the design of new Chinese furniture from the perspective of Zen culture. They explored the influence of Zen culture on the shape, function and emotional elements of new Chinese design. At the same time, Chen Xixi (2017) deeply explored the beauty of "wabi-sabi" "originating from Zen and born from simplicity", pointing out that its essence is also a kind of incomplete beauty of Zen. The study by Li Peng and Zhu Mingyu (2019) mentioned the perfect fusion of minimalism and new Chinese style through the design concept of less is more. At the same time, Liu Peisheng's (2021) study analyzed the characteristics of Japanese Zen-

style minimalist design, and also provided designers with methods on how to draw on Zen-style minimalism in the design of Asian countries to increase the uniqueness of the design.

It is not difficult to see that the homogeneity problem in the design of the new Chinese style and Wabi-Sabi is mainly manifested in the lack of personalization, similar design elements, and the similarity of design concepts. Although some ideas for solving the homogeneity problem have been provided in existing studies, such as introducing new elements, incorporating minimalism, and focusing on emotions, these studies still have certain limitations and require more empirical research and case analysis to further propose solutions. Taking the rosewood chair design section as an example, this paper hopes to combine theory with actual design cases by digging deep into the differences in the design concepts of the two styles, so that designers can solve the homogeneity problem more specifically and create more innovative and personalized new Chinese style and Wabi-Sabi designs.

3. Comparison of Design Concepts - taking Chairs as an Example

3.1. Chairs Interpreted under the New Chinese Style

In the book *Chinese Domestic Furniture*, Gustav Ecke described many traditional Chinese chairs and their current uses: "A simple and typical backrest chair with a backrest and yoke (Figure 2), this is an ordinary household type, which is still made today with only a few modifications. There are two flat S-shaped curves on the top of the backrest, and the four-person headrest is highlighted, shaped like a porter's shoulder pole. On both sides of the backrest are two curved vertical rods that imitate or match its curved shape. The curved vertical rods are cut out of a whole piece of wood like the backrest."

The new Chinese design retains the classic Ming-style official hat chair shape, and the lines of the backrest and armrests are simple and smooth. While maintaining the elegant style of traditional furniture, it is made of modern materials and craftsmanship to increase comfort. New

Chinese chairs often draw on classic elements of traditional Chinese furniture, such as lines, patterns and structures from the Ming and Qing dynasties. However, in terms of specific design, these traditional elements are reinterpreted and presented in a more concise and modern way. For example, traditional carvings and hollow designs may be simplified, retaining their essence but more in line with modern aesthetics. In terms of the color selection of the seat, natural wood color may be matched with dark metal brackets, which not only retains the natural beauty of the wood, but also adds a sense of modernity.

Under the guidance of this design concept that takes into account both tradition and comfort, the new Chinese style seat is not only a continuation of tradition, but also an innovation and development of tradition. It combines traditional cultural elements with modern design concepts to create furniture works with a sense of the times. This design can not only meet the aesthetic needs and living habits of modern people, but also allow people to feel the charm of traditional culture in daily use. It is not difficult to see that in the design of the seat, the new Chinese style is a fusion of the past and the modern, aiming to respect tradition and integrate traditional culture into the new structural design.

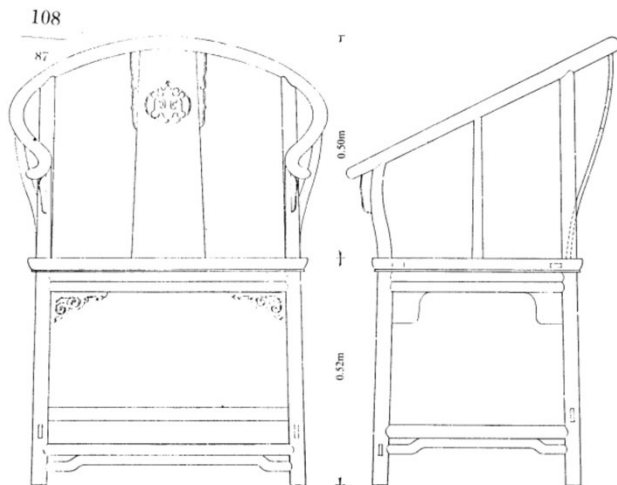


Fig.1 Gustav Ecke : *Chinese Domestic Furniture* , Diling Publishing ,1994, 108



Fig.2 Gustav Ecke : *Chinese Domestic Furniture* , Diling Publishing ,1994, 143

3.2. Wabi-sabi Chairs

Leonard Koren wrote in the book *Wabi-sabi*: "They record the sun, wind, rain, heat and cold in a language of fading, rusting, darkening, decaying, twisting, shrinking, wrinkling and cracking. Their cracks, notches, marks, scars, dents, peeling and other forms of wear and tear are historical testimonies of manipulation and abuse. Although Wabi-sabi objects may be on the verge of dematerialization (or materialization) - extremely weak, fragile or dry, they still maintain an undiminished posture and power." The design of Japanese Wabi-sabi chairs not only focuses on function and appearance, but also emphasizes the philosophical and aesthetic connotations: emphasizing the beauty of imperfection, impermanence and simplicity. It values the natural texture, simple design and the unique charm brought by the traces of time and use.

Wabi-sabi chairs are usually made of natural materials such as wood, bamboo, rattan, linen, etc. These materials have unique textures and colors that can show the beauty of nature and the traces of time. The choice of materials not only focuses on its visual effect, but also on its touch and use experience. At the same time, small flaws and irregularities in the production process become part of the seat, adding to its unique charm. Scratches, wear and discoloration are not seen as defects, but part of the history and story of the object. The imprint of time makes the seat more vital and friendly.

It can be seen that the wabi-sabi style chair interprets the core concept of wabi-sabi aesthetics through natural materials, simple design, traces of craftsmanship and imprints of time. It not only provides practical seating functions, but also conveys a deep understanding and appreciation of nature and the beauty of imperfection in daily use. This design concept not only gives the seat a unique aesthetic value, but also makes it an expression of a life attitude.

3.3. Similarities and Differences

Whether it is the new Chinese style chair or the wabi-sabi style chair, they both show their unique aesthetic value through unique design concepts and clever use of materials. The new Chinese style uses high-quality wood, such as rosewood and red sandalwood, emphasizing natural texture and color; the wabi-sabi style uses natural materials, such as bamboo, rattan and wood, to retain the natural texture and original beauty. The new Chinese style combines modern minimalist style, removes complicated decorations, and emphasizes the smoothness of lines and the rationality of structure. The wabi-sabi style pursues minimalism, abandons unnecessary decorations, and focuses on pure form and functionality. Both reflect the pursuit of simple and natural beauty and respect for traditional culture.

Although the new Chinese style chair and the wabi-sabi style chair both pursue natural and simple design, they have obvious differences in design concepts, material application, aesthetic style and user experience. The new Chinese style chair is more about finding a balance between tradition and modernity, creating furniture works that have both traditional cultural heritage and modern life. The wabi-sabi style chair emphasizes the simplicity of nature and the traces of time. Through simple design and the uniqueness of handicrafts, it conveys a deep understanding and appreciation of the beauty of nature and imperfection. Both have their own unique charms and meet people with different aesthetic needs and life attitudes.

4. Solutions

4.1. Innovation

Through innovative design concepts, innovations in materials and craftsmanship, innovations in aesthetic styles, and innovations in user experience, we can effectively integrate the new Chinese style and wabi-sabi design to create furniture works that have both traditional cultural heritage and meet the needs of modern life. For example, incorporating design elements of other cultures into the new Chinese style design, such as Scandinavian minimalist style and Japanese Zen aesthetics, to create a cross-cultural fusion design. Combining traditional Chinese mortise and tenon structure with Nordic minimalist style furniture, it not only retains the structural beauty of Chinese furniture, but also shows the simplicity and elegance of Nordic design. As for the wabi-sabi, the characteristics of simplicity, freshness and functionality in modern Japanese aesthetics can be incorporated into it. Combining the two, the profound philosophical connotation is expressed through simple design. For example, designing a simple household item, such as a tea set, retains traces of hand-made workmanship on the surface, but has a simple and smooth shape, reflecting the natural beauty of wabi-sabi and the simplicity of modern aesthetics.

4.2. Understanding Beyond Elements

To truly appreciate and distinguish between New Chinese Style and Wabi-Sabi, it is crucial to look beyond the superficial elements and understand the underlying philosophies. New Chinese Style is about a harmonious blend of past and present, respecting tradition while embracing modernity. It reflects a cultural continuity and a desire to create a balanced, aesthetically pleasing environment.

Wabi-Sabi, however, is about embracing the imperfect and the transient. It finds beauty in simplicity and the natural aging process of materials. This aesthetic is deeply philosophical, encouraging an appreciation for the natural cycle of growth and decay, and the unique character that comes with time.

By focusing on these intrinsic meanings, one can create spaces that are true to their respective philosophies rather than just a mix of decorative elements. This approach leads to more authentic and meaningful designs, where every element has a purpose and contributes to the overall aesthetic harmony.

5. Conclusion

New Chinese design focuses on inheritance and innovation, while wabi-sabi emphasizes the simple beauty of imperfection and nature. The two are similar in form, but have different connotations due to different cultural backgrounds. Analyzing the two aesthetic concepts in specific examples can promote cross-cultural comparisons among researchers, which will help the academic community to have a deeper understanding of the similarities and differences between the two concepts, as well as how these concepts evolve and are systematically expressed in different cultures. In addition, through this study, it is hoped that the academic community can think more deeply about the similarities and differences between wabi-sabi and new Chinese style, and think about the philosophical concepts behind the aesthetic concepts and how they are inherited, developed and innovated in culture. Finally, from the perspective of the practical value of the research, this study can better play the role of understanding the practical application of the two aesthetic concepts, which will help to combine theoretical research with specific creations such as real art and furniture design, and further deepen the comprehensive understanding of the two aesthetic concepts.

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