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EMPTY SPACE CONCEPT IN A MODERN CHINESE POSTER AS A SIGN OF IDENTITY

The purpose of the work is to reveal and substantiate the concept of empty space in modern Chinese posters. The research is aimed at analysing the semantics and aesthetics of empty space in the structure of visual communication and revealing its role in the formation of modern visual forms in the context of preserving national identity and preserving unique aspects of Chinese culture. **The research methodology** involves the use of general scientific and special methods. A comparative-historical analysis was used to understand the development of traditional Chinese art and its influence on modern design; methods of scientific analysis and synthesis in the process of examining scientific sources; methods of art criticism and content analysis during the study of empirical material and establishing the principles of using empty space in modern posters. **The scientific novelty** of the work consists in revealing the artistic and philosophical basis of the creation of a modern composition in a Chinese poster. Formal and compositional and figurative means and their role in the formation of modern posters in China are traced and specified. The concept of empty space is substantiated and its role in modern visual forms in the context of establishing national identity and preserving unique aspects of Chinese culture is revealed. **Conclusions.** It was revealed that today in the context of globalisation trends, the issue of finding and preserving not only traditional elements and styles, but also aesthetic and philosophical approaches formed over several millennia of the country's cultural development, arises in the project activities of Chinese graphic designers. Among such approaches is the special attitude of the artist to the free space of the sheet. Its nature, its presence or absence significantly affects the perception of a graphic work, because it works on an equal footing with visual-figurative elements in conveying a message – it organises them, emphasises attention, arranges them. Accordingly, the graphic composition of the Chinese art poster today is a field of complex interaction of its visible and invisible elements. Visualisation of the content of the message, compositional laws and established visual-communicative design trends that form the external components of the poster organically work with their internal content. This content turns out to be not only aesthetically justified, but also acquires its own spiritual and aesthetic content.

Keywords: China, empty space, poster, painting, influence, tradition.

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Концепція порожнього простору у сучасному китайському плакаті як ознака ідентичності

Метою роботи є вияв та обґрунтування концепції порожнього простору у сучасному китайському плакаті. Дослідження спрямоване на аналіз семантики та естетики порожнього простору у структурі візуальної комунікації та на розкриття його ролі у формуванні сучасних візуальних форм у контексті збереження національної ідентичності та збереження унікальних аспектів китайської культури. **Методологія** дослідження передбачає використання загальнонаукових та спеціальних методів. Використано порівняльно-історичний аналіз для розуміння розвитку традиційного китайського мистецтва та його впливу на сучасний дизайн; методи наукового аналізу та синтезу у процесі розгляду наукових джерел; методи мистецтвознавчого та контент-аналізу під час дослідження емпіричного матеріалу та встановлення принципів використання порожнього простору у сучасних плакатах. **Наукова новизна** роботи полягає у вияві художньо-філософського підґрунтя створення сучасної композиції в китайському плакаті. Простежено та конкретизовано формальні та композиційно-образні засоби та їх роль в структурі плаката. Обґрунтовано концепцію порожнього простору та розкрито його роль у сучасних візуальних формах у контексті утвердження національної ідентичності та збереження унікальних аспектів китайської культури. **Висновки.** Виявлено, що сьогодні у контексті глобалізаційних тенденцій, у проєктній діяльності графічних дизайнерів Китаю постає питання пошуку та збереження не лише традиційних елементів та стилів, але й естетико-філософських підходів сформованих протягом кількох тисячоліть культурного розвитку країни. Серед таких підходів – особливе ставлення художника до вільного простору аркуша. Його характер, наявність або відсутність суттєво впливає на

сприйняття графічного твору, адже працює нарівні з візуально-образними елементами при передачі повідомлення – організує їх, акцентує увагу, впорядковує. Відповідно, графічна композиція китайського художнього плакату сьогодні це поле складної взаємодії його зримих та незримих елементів. Образотворення повідомлення, композиційні закони та усталені проектні засоби, що формують візуальну форму плаката органічно працюють з його внутрішнім змістом. Цей зміст виявляється не лише естетично виправданим, але й набуває свого духовно-естетичного змісту.

Ключові слова: Китай, порожній простір, плакат, живопис, вплив, традиція.

Relevance of the research. Today, among graphic designers of various countries, the question of preserving national artistic sources and finding a philosophical basis for works of modern design, as well as the problem of determining the degree of its national identity in the context of globalisation processes, is increasingly emerging. In China, the tendency to turn to the artistic and philosophical heritage of the past was called the “Chinese element” (中國圖像) and manifested most holistically in poster art since the 1990s. At this time, the issue of the mutual influence of globalisation trends and local traditions in practice began to be solved by designers in the fields both commercial and social poster. Using the universal approaches and principles of Western art, Chinese designers increasingly appeal to the national artistic and philosophical tradition as factors in the creation of a poster composition and its artistic image.

Analysis of research and publications. The problem of applying elements of traditional Chinese culture is an essential part of modern research devoted to the development of visual communications in China. Researcher Y. Ding examines modern graphic design in the context of turning to Chinese traditions in arts and crafts (2014) [2]. The reflection of globalisation and the general context of the search for cultural identity in modern Chinese design can be found in the publications by F. Feifei (2006), N. Knight (2006) [3; 5]. The philosophical basis of graphic and compositional solutions in the design and art of China is the subject of scientific interest of S. Little (2000). The researcher traces the influence of the traditional philosophical and religious teachings of Taoism on ancient and modern visual art [7]. At the same time, the issues of specifying formal and compositional figurative means and their role in the formation of modern posters in China remain unsolved.

The purpose of the study is to identify and substantiate the concept of empty space in modern Chinese posters. The research is aimed at analysing the semantics and aesthetics of empty space in the structure of visual communication and revealing its role in the formation of modern visual norms in the context of preserving national identity and preserving unique aspects of Chinese culture.

Presenting main material. The special attitude of the artist to the free space of the sheet

is traditional for both classical Chinese art and modern art. Its presence or absence, as well as its character, were thought out by the author with special attention and thoroughness. The graphic elements of the poster and its free parts work with equal force, and sometimes with the dominant effect of emptiness. The special vision of emptiness in a work of art is deeply rooted in the traditional Chinese perception of the world. The image of emptiness was developed in classical Taoist texts and the understanding of free space in objects and images has survived today precisely in the context of its Taoist understanding. For example, the functionality of a tea infuser is justified by the cavity inside, which is more important than shape and colour. Accordingly, the presence of something determines the nature of the thing's use, and its absence – the fundamental possibility to use it. This statement of Lao-tzu became the basis of the principles of creation and evaluation criteria of classical Chinese painting and calligraphy. The work is not considered complete until the artist has invested in it his own vision of emptiness in all its dimensions [7, 15]. Both in the composition and in the general structure of the work, preference is given to the invisible over the visible. The interaction of these two components of free space is vividly revealed in the modern art poster, where images are created in the style of the objective requirements for the poster and the subjective author's “I”, and the blank page is the form of being already set for these images. They will arise from it, be nourished and supported by it. The Taoist principle of acquiring knowledge through ignorance and self through self-loss is reproduced in painting by the artist's interest in free space and the symbolic world on the canvas. The classical composition of the Chinese painting never reflected material reality, it accumulated all the important qualities of the world and Tao: the inseparability of opposites, the diversity of forms of being and the great Emptiness. In the composition and in the general visual order of the picture, preference is given to invisible qualities over visible ones [6].

A large amount of empty space is an indispensable element of traditional painting of the Song and Yuan dynasties. The psychology of the perception of objects in the environment assumes that those things on which the viewer's interest is focused must be clearly seen, and objects that are outside the focus can be ignored. And this law of perception in the environment was

actively applied by Chinese artists: the main subject of an artistic picture should be clear and noticeable, and secondary details and background can be discarded and replaced by a large empty plane [6, 20]. The famous paintings of Wang Mian (1287-1359), an artist of the Yuan dynasty, depicting plum blossoms (arbitrary branches of several flowering branches interacting with each other) demonstrate this approach – the entire composition of the canvas is empty, except for the branch and a few lines of the inscription: “Thousands of plum blossoms visible to the eye, but only two or three please the eye”, which carries a direct and accurate message to the viewer and evokes figurative associations corresponding to the artistic intention [9]. For Chinese artists, what is important is not what should be in the empty space, but what role it plays in the main image of the picture. The empty space in the picture allows you to better develop and satisfy the visual awareness of the viewer, provides space for creative aesthetic thinking, mobilises the experience and feelings of the viewer so that “the viewer and the soul of the artist can feel the connection between time and space” [2, 1345]. Empty space is also interpreted as an element of Zen and carries signs of naturalness, lightness, and spontaneity. The main meaning of Chinese painting is not to dwell on the external appearance of objects, but to grasp its inner meaning and spirit, to achieve the integration of form and spirit, to have a clear mind to see the Tao. The method of observation and diffuse perspective, the combination of smooth ink spots and smooth brush work, flat two-dimensional space with the symbolism of images forms the national features of Chinese painting, which today become fertile ground for reinterpretation and adaptation in modern media of visual communication, in particular, posters.

For the new Chinese poster graphics, the planar interpretation of the void is relevant, but sometimes a symbolic depth can also be read in the poster. Free spaces, with their elusiveness and at the same time real physical essence, serve in the work, among other things, to reveal the true qualities of visual forms. The air on the plane of the work of art is not just air, but an environment for the spirit of qi (one of the elements of the teachings of Taoism, a type of vital energy), therefore it is an active element. It is traditionally believed that a picture without air has no meaning. The spirit of qi organises objects on the plane of the sheet – if there are many of them – it does not allow them to be in disorder, and in the case of their small number, it does not allow them to fall apart. That is, empty space creates balance and equilibrium, ensures harmony between elements.

In a classic painting composition, the

presence of empty space above and below the format is considered optimal. Unlike classical paintings, a poster with its technical features does not oblige the author to leave a white field, and today, in the era of digital technologies, the concept of the original colour of the sheet has been completely abolished. The author of the poster can specially create voids to provide an additional meaningful accent – the main image or text acquires expressiveness and is strengthened by its formal and plastic features. It can be noted that this trend has an international character and posters with a laconic (white) background and a small number of objects are found quite often in the context of modern visual culture, and emptiness, as a form with a subtle philosophical meaning, is justified by the laws of compositional and communicative expediency [3]. The representatives of the Bauhaus school began to theoretically justify the concept of using an unprinted background in graphic design and advertising. Jan Tschichold, Walter Dexel proved the importance of the presence of “air” and unprinted space in the graphic composition as the main element of accentuation and facilitation of perception. The same trend was traced further, during the 20th century, as a sign of international style [8]. Today, most modern poster artists work with a minimal number of visual elements, avoiding details that do not contribute to the transmission of a specific message. This trend is global in nature. The composition of the poster with a plain background and one object in the visual centre becomes typical and universal in the international context. Most often, the white background is used here as a static plane, it is not active as a form and does not have any philosophical basis, but, rather, compositional expediency. At the same time, there are designers working in China who return to the historical and cultural context of such a compositional technique and make the empty background and the depicted objects actively interact. Among such designers are Kan Taikung, Chen Shaohua, Han Jiaying and others. Their posters have already become classics of Chinese graphic design today. They contain objects of different nature depending on the context, which are differently integrated into the empty space, but in general, they remind the viewer that this space is the main factor in forming the impression of the poster. Especially interesting are the posters with a lot of air, in which the images are placed at a significant distance from each other, and the text elements are disproportionately small. In such compositions, graphic images absorbed by empty space look somewhat isolated and, as in landscapes filled with air, they need to be connected not so much visually as mentally [1].

Posters where visible objects prevail over invisible ones have different properties, because the empty space in them is an interval, a space, and not a background. They set the rhythm of the sheet, do not let it “suffocate”, reveal the strength and saturation of the main images. This approach is characteristic of another famous Chinese poster artist, He Jianping. In his advertising composition dedicated to the third specialised exhibition of the Chinese poster (2005), the empty space becomes fragmented and a counter-form cuts into the main image, forming the silhouette conceived by the author. In general, this principle of the interaction of the image and empty space is also applied to modern genres of Chinese art and can be traced in many works of poster graphics, connecting free space with two dimensions: flat (a counter-form in the composition) and spatial (as a hidden spiritual essence) [2].

So, the graphic composition of the Chinese art poster today is a field of complex interaction of its visible and invisible elements. Visualisation of the content of the message, compositional laws and established visual-communicative design trends that form the external components of the poster organically work with their internal content. This content is not only aesthetically justified, but also has a philosophical basis, performs the role of an organiser of objects, acquiring its spiritual and aesthetic content. This aspect gives the graphic work special invisible properties and expresses the national identity of the Chinese people through the concepts of worldview and artistic tradition. In general, the actualisation of the use of not only traditional elements and styles, but also aesthetic and philosophical approaches formed during several millennia of Chinese cultural development become valuable resources for designers in all areas of visual communication.

The scientific novelty of the work consists in revealing the artistic and philosophical basis of the creation of a modern composition in a Chinese poster. Formal and compositional and figurative means and their role in the formation of modern posters in China are traced and specified. The concept of empty space is substantiated and its role in the structure of modern visual forms in the context of establishing national identity and preserving unique aspects of Chinese culture is revealed.

Conclusions. It was revealed that today in the context of globalisation trends, the issue of finding and preserving not only traditional elements and styles, but also aesthetic and philosophical approaches formed during several millennia of the country's cultural development,

arises in the project activities of Chinese graphic designers. Among such approaches is the special attitude of the artist to the free space of the sheet. Its nature, its presence or absence significantly affects the perception of a graphic work, because it works on an equal footing with visual-figurative elements in conveying a message – it organises them, emphasises attention, arranges them. Accordingly, the graphic composition of the Chinese art poster today is a field of complex interaction of its visible and invisible elements. Visualisation of the content of the message, compositional laws and established visual-communicative design trends that form the external components of the poster organically work with their internal content. This content is not only aesthetically justified, but also acquires its own spiritual and aesthetic content.

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