

Exploration of the Practical Teaching of the Artistic Thinking of Paper-cutting and the Basic Course of Formation

ZHANG AILI

Longyan University, China

414579732@qq.com

ABSTRACT

Graphic composition occupies an important position in the basic courses of art major. However, the effect is often not brought into play due to the outdated single teaching method. This study introduces the teaching practice of paper-cutting art thinking in the curriculum teaching reform. It analyses how to use paper-cutting art thinking in the curriculum teaching reform and to use art-cutting thinking to help student better understand abstract language. This study also guides students to use paper-cutting for innovative practice in the basic course to improve the composition. The findings showed that the use of paper-cutting art thinking can effectively help students better understand abstract language. Students are constructing basic courses as the course practice of Chinese using this teaching method is richer and more innovative. The paper-cutting art thinking method provides a richer theoretical basis and practical teaching method for teaching reforms.

Keywords: artistic thinking; basic course; paper-cutting; practical teaching

INTRODUCTION

Graphic composition is a basic course of modern art design. It is usually combined with colour composition and three-dimensional composition courses to form a basic composition course, which is derived from modern art thinking. Folk paper-cutting art is a simple art form in Chinese folk art, and its order and rhythmic beauty are similar in form and plane composition (Guo & Li, 2012). Basic curricula show new vitality and stimulate students' interest in learning and reflect the characteristics of national culture. The learning of constitutional thinking promotes the innovation of folk art on the basis of inheritance. The teaching reform of the basic design course strives to combine the art of paper-cutting with graphic composition to reveal broader ideas for the innovative teaching and research of basic courses.

In the teaching experience, it is found that most of the students' homework is only the copying training of case patterns, and it does not play a role in inspiring students' innovative thinking to be achieved in the course (Zhou, 2015). Except for the three-dimensional construction, the practice of the plane and colour construction is basically based on drawing. Students' homework that is purely based on case patterns is widely available. Copying training does not inspire students' innovative thinking to be achieved in the course. In addition, in the concrete expression methods formed by students in the teaching based on copying and sketching, the morphological expression methods of 'abstraction' and 'imagery' are difficult to understand through the brief theoretical guidance that constitutes the basic curriculum. The basic curriculum is derived from the teaching system of the Western Bauhaus. The existing basic textbooks of composition are mainly introduced from Western cases. The students' understanding of Western art history is still in a relatively blank period. A certain degree of understanding exists about the concept of composition from Western cases, even with a certain degree of rejection of abstract thinking. The step-by-step introduction of classroom practice from points, lines and areas cannot stimulate students' interest, and it easily leads to imitation and plagiarism of homework (Chen, 2011).

With the inheritance and innovative teaching of Chinese traditional folk art becoming increasingly high in art teaching in colleges and universities, the history of Chinese art has

gradually enriched (Ling et al., 2021). Students' participation in folk visual arts, such as farmer painting, paper-cutting, bamboo weaving and other courses, can show students' interest in traditional art and culture. Hakka paper-cutting has the advantage of regional cultural resources in western Fujian, which makes learning the knowledge and experience transfer of local outstanding paper-cutting cultural inheritors in paper-cutting dissemination easier for students. Hakka paper-cutting inheritors conduct open paper-cutting courses for students many times and encourage students to participate. This type of course has basic paper-cutting skills and interest, which is the reason for the foreshadowing of choosing Hakka paper-cutting to integrate into the teaching composition.

In the basic teaching of composition, student practice is an important part of the curriculum. Today's student practice process is mainly hand-painted. A very rich resources of illustrations about plane composition are available on the Internet, and students can easily rely on copying to complete their homework. However, cultivating students' innovative thinking is one of the teaching purposes that constitute the curriculum. Therefore, the teaching methods and methods that constitute the basic curriculum should be diverse and changeable. Particularly, graphic design should not limit students' homework and exercises to hand-drawing (Guo, 2017). The introduction of paper-cutting as a basic course of teaching is an exploration of innovative teaching of the course. The flexible use of the modelling elements and expression techniques of paper-cutting art has a good teaching effect in design teaching (Li, 2012). Students can cut out many lifelike images using simple paper-cutting techniques. In comparison with traditional hand-painted drawings, the method is novel, the sense of operation is stronger and the students are more engaged.

The textbooks composed of planes are too focused on the rules of form, and most of the students' exercises and homework lack creativity (Guo, 2017). In comparison with the simple form of plane composition, folk paper-cut works are more expressive. Most of the subject matter comes from life, knowledge and perception of nature and is an expression of their inner emotions. This type of artistic expression focuses on the expression of godlikeness (Ma, 2011). For example, the theme of farming civilisation in traditional paper-cut patterns is a product of folk life culture. In comparison with painting, paper-cutting uses abstract language to express vividly the working scenes of the simple and hardworking people in farming culture, which contains many modern graphic composition designs with philosophy and artistic characteristics. The basic teaching of composition in colleges and universities combines folk culture and composition language and uses contemporary aesthetics to refine and develop traditional modelling elements. Only by refining and exerting traditional modelling elements can it have more national cultural characteristics. Assimilation can play a greater role in subsequent courses.

The introduction of contemporary art case analysis and discussion in the graphic composition course is an important way to improve students' creativity and enthusiasm. Cui (2011) indicated that the 'case teaching mode' has an immediate and unique advantage in the teaching of art design majors. In the graphic composition course, most of the studying of the cases only stays on the homework legend, and the work lacks expressiveness. The analysis and discussion of contemporary art cases can inspire students to think about the source of current creative ideas. The themes in traditional paper-cutting originate from farming culture, whereas the themes of contemporary art reflect contemporary living conditions, such as the future of science and technology and modern life. Students learn from the formal and conceptual expressions in paper-cutting works. How do traditional folk artists bring their works closer to life? In contemporary art cases, students can bring in new thinking and combine the two to learn with a better combination of tradition and modernity. This teaching reform mainly revolves around the form and constituent elements of the paper-cut culture, the cultural

symbolic meaning of form language, case collection and analysis and comprehensive creation in four aspects.

PRELIMINARY TRAINING OF BASIC GRAPHIC EXTRACTION AND PAPER-CUT TECHNIQUE ELEMENTS

Folk paper-cutting is based on life and is close to life. In folk paper-cutting art works, patterns can be simplified and refined in many ways. In teaching, inspiration is drawn from traditional paper-cut works. Teachers choose folk paper-cut works in explaining the refinement of animals, plants, characters and other forms. In this teaching stage, students are required to select one or more objects they are interested in, perform graphic simplification training and design one or more basic shapes. After students have completed the basic shape after simplifying and refining the graphic of the element, they can use the paper-cutting process to cut out the basic shape. The basic shape can be a large and small independent paper-cut, or the basic shape can be cut out by using rich cutting methods, such as symmetrical, continuous two-sided and continuous folding and paper-cutting. This stage is mainly for the extraction of basic elements and combined exercises. Students can use simple paper-cutting techniques to cut basic shapes, symmetry and continuous patterns; feel the interest of paper-cutting; and let students initially feel the flexibility of paper-cutting techniques.

The extraction of graphics is the most basic link in creation. From the observation of the object, it is summarised and refined into corresponding abstract graphic elements. The main graphics in folk paper-cutting are all refined by the paper-cut artist. The graphic extraction methods of an object are different, and the same plant can have multiple expressions. Therefore, through the study of folk paper-cut cases, students can learn the various observation and expression methods of folk artists in extracting graphics, and students can learn about the creation of basic graphics. To present ideas, students can create based on references or learn to refine and simplify methods to polish their personal style.

INSPIRATION FROM CULTURAL SYMBOLISM AND COMPOSITION RULES IN PAPER-CUTTING

Folk paper-cutting is an art form that integrates the three elements of form, meaning and beauty. The audience can interpret the unique cultural connotations from the works, such as the auspicious patterns conveyed in an ideographic manner (Li, 2012). After the students choose the basic form of training, the course allows students to try to think about the image of the selected basic form to further train this form. Students can learn the ideographic form in paper-cutting, such that the work can have concepts based on the sense of form to convey intentions and ideas. In the basic shape training of students, students are encouraged to give basic shape meaning through associations and symbols. This training gives the basic shape meaning and encourages students to think about the basic shape in multiple layers and then interpret it through the combination of shapes (Zhang, 2016).

The combination and change of the shapes in paper-cutting and the compositional rules of plane composition are similar to each other. In paper-cutting, the use of language, such as symmetry, balance, emission and approximation, abounds. For example, the folding paper-cutting method is a clever use of symmetrical design principles. Only a part of it is cut, and after unfolding, a complete and plump paper-cutting work is formed (Duan, 2011). The arrangement of characters in traditional paper-cuts often uses an approximate arrangement language. On the basis of the basic similarity of the height and body shape of the characters, the changes are made to the details of the characters (e.g., hands and head orientation) or the sequential arrangement of males and females. Contrast relations reflect similarity in comparison. Therefore, the folk paper-cutting art has inspiration and reference significance in symbolic meaning and composition rules.

COLLECTION OF WORKS OF WELL-KNOWN CONTEMPORARY PAPER-CUT ARTISTS AT HOME
AND ABROAD FOR ANALYSIS AND LEARNING

Students' creative thinking should be cultivated and the routine of solving problems should be through introducing the analysis of works of modern and contemporary artists in the course. Matisse's paper-cut style is exaggerated and imaginative, with vivid colour contrast, using simple lines and colours to express what he feels (Wu, 2019). Lu Shengzhong's paper-cutting art works closely combine tradition and modernity, using the symbol of a 'little red man' to interpret traditional Chinese folk customs. He is good at synthesis and innovation while inheriting the fine traditions of folk paper-cut styles. For the old model of 'every sword will never fall', the random and free way is to cut and paste the combination using the mutual transformation of positive and negative in modern plane composition (Wang, 2011). Artist Chen Hangfeng's work uses modern signs and symbols to interpret branded modern life concepts with paper-cut hollow art, blending modern and traditional elements and reflecting the influence of contemporary urban civilisation on traditional culture. The paper-cutting in the works of the artist Foster acts as an important medium. He is good at absorbing nourishment from cultural memory and making people have associations beyond the surface of the work (Zhan, 2019).

Most cases of folk traditional paper-cutting are based on more rigorous composition rules, such as symmetry, approximation and launching, and the techniques are relatively simple. Conversely, contemporary paper-cutting art is relatively free in terms of formal rules, and its expressions are relatively diverse. At the same time, the subject matter of contemporary paper-cutting art is more novel, and the inheritance of traditional folk paper-cutting can be more reflected in contemporary paper-cutting art. At this stage of teaching, through the display and analysis of excellent cases, students can understand the concept of the work and the realisation of the work. They can also try to compare and analyse with folk paper-cutting and broaden the thinking of contemporary art paper-cutting.

ANALYSIS OF COMPREHENSIVE TRAINING AND PRACTICAL RESULTS

Comprehensive training is the best way to improve the basic ability of composition, allowing students to combine the theoretical knowledge of plane composition with creative practice, thereby enhancing students' artistic level (Zhou, 2016). Through the first three stages of learning, students are given corresponding themes at this stage, mainly in terms of life, current social issues and auspicious symbols to allow students to establish connections based on the existing basic forms and encourage students to create works. The basic shapes can be freely cut and edited, and the outcome can even be completed with different materials according to the characteristics of the theme. For example, the theme of environmental protection can be created with corrugated paper, waste packaging paper and other materials. In comprehensive training, teachers provide staged guidance to students' creative ideas and ask questions at the right time, such that students can be more proactive in creation. The students think about whether the creative results of the work are related to the concepts they want to express and encourage groups. Various creative methods such as discussion, brainstorming and combined creation make the creative process alive (Hongtao, 2021).

The course often pursues a sense of form, and the training of the sense of form is a long-term process of aesthetic accumulation. Through the training of a course, students often only copy or make simple changes to the original case, making the composition exercises boring. This teaching reform has discovered through practice that the integration of paper-cutting art has greatly improved students' interest in learning and provided students with new ideas in

hands-on practice. At the same time, modern expressions of traditional paper-cutting art in students' comprehensive training assignments are not lacking.

As shown in Figure 1, the students chose the basic element of the dolphin. After designing the basic shape, they used paper-cuts to cut out basic shapes of similar sizes and formed a vivid collage work by arranging images, such as repetition, gradation and divergence. This work embodies the use of paper-cut techniques and a strong sense of art form and incorporates the concept of environmental protection, allowing these cute little dolphins in the work to awaken people's cherish and love for marine animals. Figure 2 uses a various plants and different character shapes. The hollowing method adds dead leaves and coloured lead to enrich the level of the work. The paper-cut composition also adopts a free layout. The characters and plants are hollowed out to make the picture lively and interesting. Figure 3 mainly uses the cutting and pasting method, with finely divided symbols. It creates a festive theme atmosphere combines traditional and modern components and presents works full of harmony and beauty.

FIGURE 1. 'You' by Yuqi Meng



FIGURE 2. 'Memory' by Wenhui Liao



FIGURE 3. 'Wedding' by Xiaoxiao Liu



The exploration of folk paper-cutting art into the basic teaching of composition in colleges and universities is performed from many aspects simultaneously. It is not only limited to learning folk paper-cutting skills but, more importantly, it also finds the similarities and differences between folk paper-cutting and composition art. It also analyses and learns, such that students can better understand what constitutes a concept. At the same time, the national culture of folk paper-cutting is integrated into modern artistic thinking, such that the curriculum has more national cultural characteristics. The combination of tradition and modernity is a significantly important topic. Through modern artistic thinking, making the inheritance of folk art more innovative is also an important aspect of this curriculum reform and exploration. From many modern and contemporary paper-cut art works, the forms and languages of paper-cutting are diverse, which has brought considerable inspiration to students.

Therefore, the case of this teaching is mainly analysed from paper-cut art works. However, the use of paper-cutting in design is also a significantly important case resource. For example, the exterior design concept of the Polish Pavilion at the 2010 Shanghai World Expo is derived from the traditional Polish paper-cutting art, and the whole paper-cutting fully interprets the feeling of paper-cutting. The use of paper-cut elements in the design of clothing and furniture is also extremely common, and the modern design application of traditional folk culture is also attracting increasing attention. Adding case studies from this perspective in teaching allows students to feel the beauty of paper-cutting art from many aspects, and it is also a way to stimulate students' enthusiasm for exploring this folk art.

CONCLUSION

The basic composition is a course, as a basic training, it has an extremely important teaching state, and it is basically a basic process of long-term origin, which is about to be in the future of artistic thinking (Huang, 2004). This course can better help students enter the study of design art thinking in the future. This teaching reform work shows that paper-cutting folk art is just a way to increase the vitality of the course. It includes examples of teaching achievements and the plane of teaching results.

The color art composition and three-dimensional composition in the basic composition course can also continue to deepen and create new paper composition works from paper-cutting. The discussion on how to make the learning of the course more effective and innovative will not stop here. It is hoped that creativity can be used. The teaching reform has brought innovation to the folk paper-cutting art and added vitality to the basic teaching of fine arts in colleges and universities.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Fund Project: The Fifth Batch (2019) School-level Education and Teaching Reform Research Project of Longyan University (2019JY14): Research on the teaching reform of integrating Hakka paper-cutting into the graphic composition course.

REFERENCES

- Chen, B. (2011). Starting from Interests——A Preliminary Study on the Teaching Reform of College Art Major Courses. *Beauty and Times (Part 1)*, (03), 122-123.
- Cui, J. (2011). Exploration on the Application of Case Teaching Mode in Art Design Teaching. *New West (Late. Theoretical Edition)*, (09), 223-228.
- Duan, G. (2011). Folk paper-cut and plane composition ideology. *Beauty and Times (Part 1)*, (02), 42-44.

- Guo, Y. (2017). The teaching status quo and countermeasures of plane composition course. *Quality Education in West China*, 3(08), 137-138.
- Guo, Y., & Li, C. (2012). The application of folk paper-cutting in plane composition teaching. *Journal of Chifeng University (Natural Science Edition)*, 28(09), 242-244.
- Hongtao, J. (2021). Usage of Painting Art Therapy in Mental Health Education of Chinese College Students. *Higher Education and Oriental Studies*, 1(2), 14-15.
- Huang, J. (2004). *Composition Art*. Tongji University Press.
- Li, X. (2012). A preliminary exploration of introducing folk paper-cutting teaching into the professional courses related to art design in colleges and universities. *Beauty and Times (Part I)*, (04), 125-126.
- Ling, Y., Hui, Z., & Xianshun, B. (2021). From Traditional Growth to Sustainable Development: 20 Years of Higher Education in China (1999–2019). *Higher Education and Oriental Studies*, 1(1), 142-144.
- Ma, K. (2011). The Transmutation from Tradition to Modern——Talking about the tension of traditional paper-cutting in graphic design. *Art Research*, (04), 68-69.
- Wang, X. (2011). *Contemporary Conceptual Expression of Chinese Folk Art*. Qufu Normal University.
- Wu, H. (2019). Analysis of Matisse's plant paper-cutting art and its influence on modern art. *Beauty and Times (Part I)*, (07), 63-64.
- Zhan, Q. (2019). Research on German Modern and Contemporary Paper-cutting Art. *Folk Art*, (06), 100-107.
- Zhang, G. (2016). Research on the Cultivation of Creative Thinking Mode by Plane Composition Training. *Henan Education (Higher Education)*, (04), 8-9.
- Zhou, T. (2016). Innovative thinking cultivation of the inheritors of paper-cutting art. *Art Education*, (12), 217-218.
- Zhou, X. (2015) Analysis of the integration of art design professional courses into folk paper-cut teaching. *Journal of Huaibei Normal University (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition)*, 36(06), 146-148.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Zhang Aili is born on 5th April 1988. She teaches at Department of Fine Arts Education, Faculty of Normal Education, Longyan University, China. Her interests are in the fields of contemporary art, visual art communication design, visual culture, folk art and art education. She graduated from Frank Mohr Institute, Minerva Art Academy, Hanze University of Applied Sciences, Groningen, Netherlands.