



The Visual Fusion Application of Occult Elements and Graphic Design

Songmin Li

University of California, Davis; One Shields Avenue, Davis, CA 95616;

smili@ucdavis.edu

Abstract. With the improvement of human spiritual and cultural needs, artistic aesthetics has entered a diversified stage. People also tend to appreciate design works with more cultural connotations, spirituality and a high sense of generalization. Among them, occultism has attracted widespread attention. Graphic design, since it is a discipline that combines artistry and practicality, has also extracted and used elements from occultism. This article will conduct a theoretical study on the combination of mysticism and graphic design through literature analysis, case analysis and current situation analysis. The elements of mysticism have a strong symbolic meaning, which brings a heavy humanistic atmosphere and spirituality to graphic design and enhances the visual appeal of the work. At the same time, it condenses the cultural core of different fields and can bring cultural recognition to design works.

Keywords: Graphic Design; Occultism; Visual Communication; Mysticism

1 INTRODUCTION

Behind the graphics (symbolic elements) of mysticism are different cultures and mythological stories [1]. It is precisely because of this that it has rich artistic connotations and visual impact, which can bring inspiration to various artists. At the same time, it has promoted many artistic and cultural movements and laid the foundation for contemporary art [2]. Mysticism is also well combined and applied in art disciplines that emphasize geometric sense (such as architecture) [3]. Among art disciplines, graphic design is a relatively free discipline because it combines practicality and artistry [4]. Moreover, graphic design plays an indispensable role in modern life. It can be used in social campaigns and public outreach to raise public awareness of certain social issues through visual communication. It can also reflect and convey specific cultural values and aesthetic concepts, and become a medium for cultural exchange and expression. Graphic design plays an important role in improving the quality of life, promoting economic development and cultural inheritance[5].Mystical elements can well enhance the communication effect through simple visual language. Therefore, this article wants to understand the application of mystical elements in

graphic design through independent exploration, and explore future development in this field by reviewing some existing cases.

2 OCCULTISM

2.1 The Definition of Occultism

When people really get into occultism itself, people will fall into a passive state. Occultism cannot be answered by a single definition, because it is located between rationality and sensibility and does not have standard terminology. In the textual templates of mysticism, some belong to history, some come from literature or even philosophy, and some come from theology and religion, or even from nature. Therefore, it is difficult for us to clearly understand what Occultism is. It is generally spiritual, transcending intuition, and metaphysical. And precisely because of its own profoundness and ineffability, various art movements and artists have been deeply influenced by it, and mysticism is regarded as a trend, thus giving birth to “modern art” (from the second half of the 19th century to the 1970s) and “historical avant-garde” (from the early 20th century to World War II) [3]. The first two art schools mentioned above come from Western art culture, and because mysticism is a relatively grand concept, it can also include traditional cultural elements of the East (East Asia), and these Eastern elements also come from disciplines such as mythology, feng shui, philosophy, and metaphysics that are based on real texts but do not have scientific effects.

2.2 Branches of Occultism and Their Representative Elements

Ancient Egypt is one of the oldest schools of occultism, and its most representative branches include Tarot and alchemy. Ancient Greece gave birth to mystical astrology and numerology [4]. These can all be classified as predictive and extrasensory mystical fields. Among them, Tarot cards, as an iconic element that has been passed down to this day, have a strong visual symbolic meaning. It has four sets of cards like playing cards, which are called Minor Arcana (abbreviated as: Minor Cards); in addition, Tarot cards also have cards called Major Arcana (abbreviated as Major Cards), which are not found in playing cards. Major Cards represent the causes of the operation of all things in the universe. The suits of Minor Cards vary from region to region. The figure 1 below shows the trump card of the new Tarot deck in 1910.



Fig. 1. The trump card of the new Tarot deck in 1910

Another important branch of occultism is magic, which is divided into black magic and white magic. These two types of magic are often strongly related to religion and theology [6]. The iconic representative elements include the geometric abstract elements of Freemasonry, as shown in the figure 2 below.



Fig. 2. Freemasonry



Fig. 3. Tai Chi Bagua diagram

The abstraction and combination of images from nature and myths and legends to produce philosophical logic and allegorical nature is the graphic thinking of mysticism[7]. The above mentioned are representative elements in the field of Western mysticism. In the East, there are many such mysterious symbols, such as Tai Chi. The Qian Gua represents the sky, eternal energy, and infinite creative ability, which is similar to the worldview and the “Trinity” theory of the Bible. Figure 3 is the Tai Chi Bagua diagram. Tai Chi is also related to Chinese Feng Shui culture. What’s more, there are many gods and goblins in Greek mythology, which can be used as symbols in the design. Dragons are also important elements in traditional Chinese mythology.

Mystical graphic design is the product of visualizing mystical thought through graphics. Its expression method can be summarized as story visualization and philosophical thought visualization [7].

3 APPLICATION OF OCCULTISM IN GRAPHIC DESIGN

3.1 The Definition of Graphic Design

Graphic design as a discipline is not very old, the term was first introduced to the world of advertising in 1922 by William Addison de Wiggins (1880-1957). Modern graphic design is one of the important contents of modern design. It mainly uses two-dimensional font, color, format, illustration, photography and other elements and their combinations, and takes modern printing technology as the main means to convey information [8]. Graphic design is mainly subordinate to commercial activities, it is closely related to creative activities, and plays an important role as a medium between producers and consumers. Graphic design is a form of modern art, it contains a series of two-dimensional, visual, communication effects of art, all related to people's behavior in the world, have the influence of graphic design [9]. After the 20th century, graphic design has made great development, and more advanced technologies and means have been added to graphic design, which has brought many new development opportunities to graphic design. After entering the new 21st century, the development of abstract art and the development of 3D simulation painting technology have made graphic design have more diversified means and ways of presentation [10]. In fact, graphic design activities span almost all of human history: from the frescoes of Lascaux Caves to the columns of Trajan in Rome, from the exquisite codices of the Middle Ages to the glittering neon designs of the Galactic sign in Tokyo... The development of modern graphic design is closely related to printing technology, and is also limited and affected by printing service objects, so it is closely related to the social background of all times.

Graphic design is one of the areas most closely related to text in each design category, it can be mass printing and production, so it has a close relationship with social, cultural, political, economic and other factors, and is also most susceptible to ideological influence, so the factors that affect the style of graphic design are the sum of social, political, economic, cultural and other factors. Whether in the long history of the past, or in the visual explosion of the 20th and 21st centuries, Concepts such as printing art, commercial art, graphic art, advertising design, and fine art are often used interchangeably. It means the visual output of the advertising industry. There is undoubtedly some degree of ambiguity and overlap in the meaning of these concepts, which often use the same elements, follow the same theories and principles, share similar practices and formal languages, and sometimes even have the same sponsors or customers. However, the ultimate goal of advertising art is to sell products and services, while graphic design, "its essence is to integrate information, give form, expression and feeling to ideas, and constitute human artistic experience". It can be said that although the form of graphic design has long existed, it has really gained great development from the modern West.

3.2 Poster Design using Occultism Elements

Occultism focuses on sensory information that transcends physical logic. Geometric design for occultism refers to the fascinating and elusive things that transcend rational geometric forms, and also the desire to communicate with the universe, the human spiritual world, or the world of the gods.

Specifically, trials to the development of ancient Greek sensibility are embodied in the rituals of mystery sects such as Orphism, Pythagoras, and Shamanism. As the structure of the labyrinth suggests, geometry is the most fundamental element of establishing the contradictions and complexity of order and disorder.

For example, just as the poster shown for the movie *A Clockwork Orange* (shown in figure 4), the triangular form of this poster gives mysterious quality, which coincides with the cult temperament of the film and the main story line's discussion of human psychological consciousness.

Another vivid example is the poster of *Rosemary's Baby* (can be seen in figure 5), which was released in 1968. The combination of the five-pointed star and the "seed" in this poster symbolizes the rebirth of the devil, and also foreshadows the identity of the baby, which echoes the name of the film. The simple five-pointed star structure brings a sense of religion and mystery that is self-evident.

In addition, the poster of *The Exorcist* (can be seen in figure 6) can present the visual effect of blending mysticism into graphic design posters. The poster contains a wealth of information. The image of the upside-down red girl represents the demon, and the overall structure is synchronous with the Hanged Man in the Tarot card, revealing the development of the plot.



Fig. 4. *A Clockwork Orange* poster

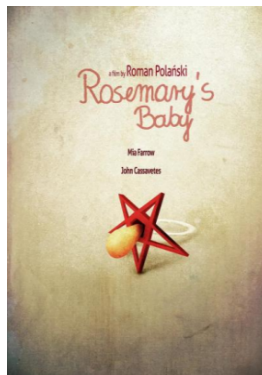


Fig. 5. *Rosemary's Baby* poster

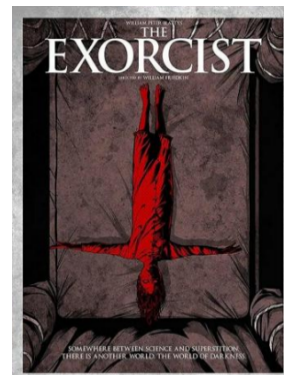


Fig. 6. *The Exorcist* poster

3.3 Logo Design Using Occultism Elements

In graphic design, Logo plays a crucial role. Logo is a visual representation of the brand, helping consumers quickly recognize and remember the brand. Some iconic logos even become part of the culture, transcending commercial value and becoming social and cultural symbols. Logo design is a process that requires the combination of creativity, strategy and aesthetics. It is not only a graphic, but also a bridge between brands and consumers. When the mystical elements are merged with the logo, it will bring a new style.

The first obvious example of a Logo with a mystical element is the Starbucks logo (can be seen in figure 7). The main body of Starbucks' logo is a siren. In ancient Greek mythology, they sang songs to attract seafarers, so that the ship ran aground and sank, and then ate the crew. The Starbucks Logo was inspired by a 16th-century Scandinavian wooden sculpture of a two-tailed sea god. This image conveys the dual meaning of primitive and modern, her face is very simple, but in the packaging of modern abstract forms. The earliest origin of this double-tailed mermaid comes from ancient Greek mythology. The image of the siren in Greek mythology has become one of the representative symbols of love, desire, sex, and temptation in Western culture. And this culture also fits the initial positioning and consideration of this brand - coffee can be a pleasant thing to drives people to indulge.

In addition, the logo of sports brands can also be integrated with mystical elements, such as Nike (can be seen in figure 8). Nike (Greek: Νίκη, "victory"; Latin transliteration: Nike) is the embodiment of victory in ancient Greek mythology who has wings which brings amazing speed. This swoosh logo can strongly remind the audience of the wings of the goddess of victory, making people feel agile and powerful.



Fig. 7. The Starbucks' logo



Fig. 8. The Nike's logo

4 CONCLUSION

Occultism is all-encompassing, spanning multiple cultural contents and different fields of knowledge, including history, politics, religion and theology, literature and philosophy, and nature; therefore, its design elements are also very diverse and rich,

which can be simple geometric lines, complex patterns with mythological atmosphere, or tarot elements full of natural aura. These elements are widely used in graphic design and disseminated in the form of posters, brand logos, books, etc.

Precisely because it relies on personal perception and understanding, the collection of literature is still very limited, so that it is impossible to have a very full understanding in the field of mysticism. These two fields are expected to be better combined in the future, so that graphic design can have more formal sense and cultural content.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

First, I am very grateful to my supervisor Ms. Xu. Under her patient guidance, my thoughts became clearer, and I mastered more precise academic writing skills and material analysis skills to complete this academic research paper. Secondly, I would like to thank the researchers who provided me with high-quality perspectives and detailed case studies. Your efforts laid the foundation for this article. Finally, I would like to thank my girlfriend, Ms. Wang Huitong, whose support and love have helped me so much. I love you.

REFERENCE

1. Xian Gang. Xie Lin on "Occult Science" [J]. Journal of Yunnan University (Social Sciences Edition), 2014, 13 (03): 15-23+111.
2. Baudin, Tessel M. *The Occult and the Visual Arts*. New York, Routledge, 2014.
3. Zou hui. The mysticism of geometry [J]. Urban Environmental Design, 2017, (03):85-88
4. Chen Zhicheng. Application of Graphic Creativity and Color Elements in Graphic Design Teaching [J]. Chemical Fiber and Textile Technology, 2024, 53 (06): 243-245.
5. Sun Dan. Discussion on the application of graphic design elements in Design [J]. Cultural Monthly, 2024,(02):132-134.
6. Zhang Butian. "Western Mystics", "Secrets of Alchemy", "Metaphysical Basis of Modern Physical Science", "Mechanization of the World Picture", "The Bible, Protestantism and the Rise of Natural Science", "Origin of Western Science"[J]. Science and Culture Review, 2019,17(02):130.
7. Yunxiao Aisin-Gioro. The tarot and the all seeing eye "of the mysticism of graphic design research [D]. Suzhou university, 2020. The DOI: 10.27351 / , dc nki. Gszhu. 2020.002660.
8. Drucker, johanna and McVarish, Emily. *Graphic Design History: A Critical Guide*. New York, Pearson Education, 2009
9. Li Hongmei. Analysis on the status quo of graphic design and the development of modern graphic design [J]. Tomorrow's Fashion, 2022,(17):121-124.
10. Zhang Mengmeng. Research on the Innovative Road of Graphic Design [J]. Journal of Information Writing and Editing, 2022,(05):54-55.

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits any noncommercial use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.

