Wang ZEQIAN,
orcid.org/0000-0001-9484-2273
PhD student at the Department of Design and Fundamentals of Architecture
Lviv Polytechnic National University
(Lviv, Ukraine) wangzeqianstudy@gmail.com

HISTORICAL ASPECTS OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF VISUAL COMMUNICATION DESIGN IN CHINA

The article analyzes the historical aspects of the development of visual communication design in China, starting from the oldest forms of traditional Chinese visual language to modern communication strategies in conveying messages. The level of changes and transformations that took place in the field of visual communication design in China during the 20th century is highlighted in the context of social and political events. A perspective vision of the development of China's visual communication design in the context of globalization influences has been formed. The purpose of the article is to reveal the specifics of the development of China's visual communication design in terms of historical development. The study proved that the presence of a developed centuries-old tradition of art and communication, philosophical and cultural assets became a solid foundation for the development of graphic design today. It was found that political events in the 20th century had a significant impact on the development of design. The socio-political processes taking place in the country influenced both the content of the projects and the general approaches to creating graphic images and forming a message. It was found that the policy of openness allowed the design of visual communications to acquire a new development and establish itself during the last three decades as an important professional field. International communication, economic growth, technological development have activated all modern directions of graphic design. It was found that modern Chinese designers, often having European professional education, think and design under the influence of Western practices, demonstrating direct borrowing of universal approaches. At the same time, they explore the visual elements that were used in the artifacts of traditional culture. Colors, symbols, stylistics of painting, calligraphy are again updated in projects today and are valuable resources for designers in all areas of visual communications. The synthesis of these two approaches and the rejection of stereotyped images of the past form a vision of China's design development for the future.

Key words: *China, visual communication design, tradition, calligraphy, designer, poster, development, identity.*

Ван ЦЗЕЦЯНЬ,
orcid.org/0000-0001-9484-2273
аспірант кафедри дизайну та основ архітектури
Національного університету «Львівська політехніка»
(Львів, Україна) wangzeqianstudy@gmail.com

ІСТОРИЧНІ АСПЕКТИ РОЗВИТКУ ДИЗАЙНУ ВІЗУАЛЬНИХ КОМУНІКАЦІЙ КИТАЮ

У статті проаналізовано історичні аспекти розвитку дизайну візуальних комунікацій у Китаї, починаючи від найдавніших форм традиційної китайської візуальної мови до сучасних комунікаційних стратегій при передачі повідомлень. Увиразнено рівень змін та трансформацій, які відбулись у галузі дизайну візуальних комунікацій Китаю протягом ХХ ст. у контексті суспільно-політичних подій. Сформовано перспективне бачення розвитку дизайну візуальних комунікацій Китаю у контексті глобалізаційних впливів. Мета статті полягає у розкритті особливостей розвитку дизайну візуальних комунікації Китаю у зрізі історичного розвитку. У дослідженні доведено, що наявність розвиненої багатовікової традиції мистецтва та комунікації, філософських та культурних надбань стали ємним підґрунтям для розвитку графічного дизайну сьогодні. Виявлено, що суттєвий вплив на розвиток дизайну мали політичні події у ХХ ст. Суспільно-політичні процеси, що відбувалися у країні, впливали як на зміст проектів, так і на загальні підходи до створення графічних образів та формування повідомлення. Також, політичні процеси, а саме політика відкритості, дозволили дизайну візуальних комунікацій набути нового розвитку та утвердитись протягом останніх трьох десятиліть як важлива професійна сфера. Міжнародна комунікація, ріст економіки, технологічний розвиток активізували усі сучасні напрями графічного дизайну. Виявлено, що сучасні дизайнери Китаю, маючи часто європейську фахову освіту мислять та проектують під впливом західних практик, демонструючи пряме запозичення універсальних підходів. Водночас, вони досліджують візуальні елементи, які були використані в артефактах традиційної культури. Кольори, символи, стилістика традиційного живопису, каліграфія сьогодні знову актуалізуються у проектах та можуть стати цінними

ресурсами для дизайнерів у всіх сферах візуальних комунікацій. Синтез цих двох підходів і відмова від стереотип-ності образів минулого формують бачення розвитку дизайну Китаю на подальшу перспективу.

Ключові слова: *Китай, дизайн візуальних комунікацій, традиція, каліграфія, дизайнер, плакат, розвиток, ідентичність.*

Formulation of the problem. Today, the design of visual communications is an extremely important tool for solving problems related to human interaction with the environment. The amount of information, which is rapidly increasing, actualizes the issue of increasing its visual compactness and effectiveness in the context of both an international scale and in the context of local cultures. In this perspective, China's design is one of the most promising and noteworthy topics. This country plays an important role in the global economy and culture. It is also one of the oldest civilizations in the world with a rich cultural heritage, including a rich tradition of art and design.

Analysis of studies. Scientists of the last decades of the 20th century actively began to consider the problems of the design of visual communications in China. Works of researchers Chu, J. (1982), Wang, S. Z. (1989), Wong, W.S. (1999; 2001), Minick, S. and Jiao P. (1990); Turner, M. (1993), raised the issue of design development during certain periods of the 20th century; studied the influence of Western design on various areas of graphic design, in particular, advertising, packaging, and posters. Researcher Landsberger, S. raised the issue of propaganda in the Chinese poster 1978–1988 (1994). Also, exhibitions and competitions were held, which were accompanied by catalogs and can serve as a fundamental source base for modern research (Catalog of Graphic Design, 1996; Exhibition Catalog, 1999). In recent decades, the interest of scholars in the issue of visual communication design in China has not decreased. Researcher Wong, W.S. continues the study of Chinese design in the context of globalization issues (Wong, 2007); Knight, N. (2006) and Feifei, F. (2006) focus on the search for national identity. At the same time, the issue of detailing the stages of development of China's visual communication design in the context of the historical and cultural background remains unsolved. It is important to have a comprehensive approach and the involvement of sources and publications that highlight the broader general political and socio-cultural context, as well as the issue of international exchanges and professional trajectories of individual personalities in recent decades.

The purpose of the article is to reveal the specifics of the development of China's visual communication design in the historical and cultural context.

Main part. Today, the design of visual communications is an integral part of the cultural and economic spheres of life. Designers from all over the world are engaged in the development of visual solutions and effective communication strategies to ensure success for their clients and users. In this context, the study of the development of Chinese visual communication design is particularly relevant. China is a country with a long history and a unique cultural heritage. Traditions and elements of Chinese design have enormous potential for use in modern projects and design solutions. Studying the history and evolution of Chinese visual communication design will help you understand the changes that have occurred in design under the influence of technology and globalization. It will also clarify which traditions and visual elements of traditional culture remain relevant and effective for modern projects.

The chronological limits of the research are determined by the last decades of the 20th century to the present day. But there is a need to briefly refer to the historically oldest forms of traditional Chinese visual language and communication strategies for conveying messages. The earliest forms of China's visual language can be traced to material culture objects dating from 5,000 BC (Hu, 2020). These are ancient patterns, graphic motifs and symbols (on ceramics, manuscripts, seals, etc.) that carry a rich meaning and form a unique visual language of Chinese traditional culture. An important factor, a driving force in the field of visual communications is, in fact, Chinese writing, the oldest monuments of which date back to III thousand BC and testify to the existence of rules for writing written signs and their aesthetic interpretation (ancient signs (ba gua), inscriptions on bronze, stone drums, etc.). The system of ancient hieroglyphs appeared in the 18th century BC and reached our time on turtle shells and bones as an element of cult rites and fortune-telling. In general, the most ancient styles of Chinese writing are united by the term Guwen, which was gradually transformed into a simpler way of writing Lishu and, later, into the modern way – Kaishu (exemplary writing). In the Tang era, thanks to the invention of the brush and ink, the cursive styles of Caoshu and Xingshu developed, and it was also possible to create printed books (first from solid planes, and from the 11th century with movable letters) (Hu, 2020). The universalism of Chinese calligraphy, which has been actively developing over the centuries, satisfying the spiritual, aesthetic and communicative needs of a person, has confirmed the status of the main element of design

and artistic activity. This status is maintained by calligraphy to this day.

Visual communications in ancient China were manifested in the context of the functioning of social activities and the economy – trademarks and symbols (in the form of text or a combination of text and symbols) were widely distributed from the Song Dynasty (960–1127) to the middle of the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911) (Hu, 2020). In the 19th century promotional wooden signs with calligraphy installed above the entrance areas of buildings with information for potential customers are distributed. The same form of communication was developed in the period of the Republic of China (1912–1949) until the middle of the 20th century to identify and form the visual image of brands, promote goods, and maintain competition with foreign companies. At the same time, starting from the 20s of the 20th century, visual propaganda also became widespread. It gained a special momentum of development after the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949. During this period, the instability of social, political and economic life negatively affected the sphere of commerce, therefore, the need to form branding systems and visual image is losing its relevance, and political propaganda is becoming more relevant in the field of visual communication design. The substantive and figurative component in the design of visual communications has also changed: the traditional Chinese style, national symbols and figurative approaches borrowed from other countries give way to a new system of graphic symbols and images – reliable tools of communist propaganda, conveying the political opinion of the country's new leadership. The color red became a symbol of socialism and revolution, and the five-pointed star in emblems and logos symbolized the continents united in one socialist world. The style of propaganda posters and brochures until the 1970s often imitated the style of Soviet socialist realism and appealed to heavy text messages (with a dominant red color), portraits of communist leaders, realistic images of handsome, courageous men holding red books or doing manual labor (Langfitt, 2012). In the 1970s, the policy of openness, which provided for the strengthening of economic and cultural communication, also influenced graphic design. Posters became more experimental in style and even ideological content was interpreted through more diverse forms (landscapes, mythological creatures, surrealist motifs, anime, European styles).

It is important to note that before World War II, graphic design in Shanghai gained intensive development. In the 1930s, it was the largest city in China, where elements of traditional folk and fine arts, as well as European and Japanese graphic styles, were combined in the commercial works of designers (Wong, 2003). They adopted world trends in art and design, art deco style, cubism, used geometry and ornamentation in the formation of messages, experimented with composition and colors, significantly expanding and enriching their professional toolkit. In 1949, commercial graphic design began to be perceived as a symbol of Western life and the harmful culture of consumerism, therefore, the development was somewhat slowed down and received a complex vector. At the same time, the achievements of Shanghai graphic designers survived under the capitalist economic system in Hong Kong and after the war. Hong Kong, which was under the rule of Great Britain from the 1850s to 1997, was the first Chinese city to develop international trade and ties with the West, therefore, the design of visual communications developed here much more intensively than in China. In the 1960s, the designer H. Steiner (a graduate of Yale University) opened a practice here – one of the first foreign designers and one of the most influential designers of Chinese graphic design. His creative individuality was built on a combination of European design and Asian elements and symbols. Steiner introduced the concepts of international design. He adapt conventional Western design principle to the context of Hong Kong and China (Wong, 2007).

The introduction of the policy of openness for China, which was cut off from the outside world for three decades, led to changes in the creative sphere as well. Designers from Hong Kong and Europe presented a new perspective on design in China. Thanks to a calmer political climate, they were able to demonstrate their own achievements and export specific design methods and approaches through exhibitions, events, and competitions. Designers from China also increased their presence on the international scene, thereby strengthening the internal standards of the profession. In 1992, the first interregional competition Graphic Design in China '92 was held in Shenzhen, and in 1996, the first professional community was formed in this city – the Shenzhen Association of Graphic Design in China (1996). Modeled after the New York Art Directors Club, the association sought a way to define the boundaries of professions, to standardize areas of activity to avoid identifying design with fine arts or crafts. This association organized two important national events – Graphic Design in China '96 (1996) and the poster exhibition «Communication» (1997). In this exhibition, the designers rethought the state and prospects of graphic design in China through the

elaboration of traditional symbols and images in the context of the relationship with Western influences. The mentioned exhibitions became an example for further organizational steps in the field of design. In the following years, exhibitions in the field of poster art are held timed to specific dates important for China – the reunification of Hong Kong with China in 1997, the founding of the Shanghai Graphic Design Association in 1998, the reunification of Macao with China in 1999. In 1999 The Design Museum opened in Beijing – a clear message about the importance of the development of the design sphere in China. In addition to the poster, the field of commercial graphic design is actively developing. There is an understanding of the importance of quality design in the competitive international goods market. Because often the «first-class quality» of Chinese goods had an average price and third-rate «packaging» (Wang, 2019). For example, Guangdong Packaging Import and Export Corporation designers Wang Yuefei and Wang Xu tried to reverse this trend with commercial projects, as the PRC needed to expand its export market. A certain disadvantage of this process was the distancing from the local visual tradition in favor of internationally recognized solutions and, often, the imitation of Western models.

Overall, over the past three decades, organizational developments have allowed designers from China to demonstrate their potential on the international stage. All poster exhibitions help Chinese designers accumulate quality work and gain international attention and feedback for their work. A new aesthetic in the design of visual communications is formed from the combination of two positions: 1. The desire to restore the new Chinese graphic identity with the help of obvious traditional images and elements (which can be traced in the designers Alan Chan, Kang Tai-keung, Chen Shaohua); 2. Intentions to use new Western theories and cross-cultural approaches to design (Wang Xu, Wang Yuefei, Chen Fan are adepts of this trend). Increasing contacts in the international arena and the opportunity to bring new knowledge for adaptation in local design (including through the development of professional education) forms a powerful system of influence on the new generation of designers.

Conclusions. China in the 20th century experienced a complex period of transformations that significantly affected the content and image in the design of visual communications. Socio-political processes taking place in the country changed the nomenclature and content of projects, approaches to creating graphic images and forming a message. Also, it was the political processes in the country that allowed the design of visual communications to gain a new development and establish itself during the last three decades as an important professional field. International communication, economic growth, technological development have activated all modern areas of graphic design – from commercial packaging and identification graphics to poster and web design. It was found that the appeal of leading Chinese designers to Western practices often demonstrates the direct borrowing of universally accepted approaches and solutions, leveling off the value of their own traditions. But also the intention to fill the visual language of design with national local content is becoming more and more noticeable. Traditional elements and styles, which have been formed during several millennia of Chinese cultural development, are being updated again today in projects and can become valuable resources for designers in all areas of visual communication. The synthesis of these two approaches and the rejection of stereotyped images of the past is a promising direction in the creation of unique and original graphic design, which, while paying tribute to China's cultural heritage, will meet world standards.

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