

# Application Research on Graphic Language in the Innovative Design of Modern Suzhou Embroidery Patterns

Jinsong Yu

*The School of Art and Design  
Wuhan University of Science and  
Technology  
Hubei, Wuhan  
526669114@qq.com*

Xiaoyan Zheng

*The School of Art and Design  
Wuhan University of Science and  
Technology  
Hubei, Wuhan  
1355220129@qq.com*

Qizheng Cao

*The School of Art and Design  
Wuhan University of Science and  
Technology  
Hubei, Wuhan  
1639464734@qq.com*

**Abstract**—Using the principles and methods of graphic creativity design, combining with the modern Suzhou embroidery works, the paper discusses the role and significance of graphic creativity in terms of composition, modeling and color, and reveals that traditional folk art needs to inject new vitality to get heritage. The analysis of graphic language in modern Suzhou embroidery is conducive to the innovation of Chinese traditional Suzhou embroidery, and plays an important role in breaking the mindset of graphics. It also provides a reference for the combination of modern graphics and traditional Chinese art forms.

**Keywords**—Principles and methods, Graphic creativity, Suzhou embroidery, Performance method, Visual breakthrough

## I. INTRODUCTION

Chinese folk art is rich and colorful and has a world-famous reputation for a long time. As the folk art of Suzhou, Suzhou embroidery is an important business card and characteristic economic industry of Suzhou, but with the development of the times, the traditional arts and crafts represented by traditional farming culture have been separated from the needs of the contemporary people. Moreover, most folk art is based on Word of Mouth, and many folk arts is now lost. At the same time, modern life and changes in production methods, most traditional arts and crafts in the product form, style, aesthetic taste and other aspects are no longer able to adapt to the needs of contemporary daily life and aesthetic needs. Traditional handicrafts are urgently needed to be combined with modern civilization. Only by adapting to the development of the times while retaining the original cultural elements can we go further.

### A. Graphics

Graphics is a way to show common things in life by means of planes, emoticons, inductions, generalizations, decorations, etc. At the same time, creators can use their special expressions and forms to convey their thinking and what they see and hear. Unlike other art designs, although the graphics uses a “plane” representation, the content it expresses, the requirements it meets in the design, and the specific application process are not constrained by the concept of “plane”. It is this feature that makes the graphics have the characteristics of modern design. In the transmission of information, graphics have direct, vivid and accurate characteristics, and it’s easy to identify, easy to remember, crossing race and language barriers. Language is a relatively rational way of transmitting information. The transmission of information requires the participation of organs such as eyes, ears, and brain. Information processing can be completed in multiple steps. The communication of graphics for information simplifies these steps. Graphics themselves are visually intuitive, vivid, and feature-rich. These features make graphics easy to recognize and easy for people to remember. Language is restricted by region and nation. Different countries have different languages, and the existence of graphics breaks these restrictions. Whether the same nationality or different nationalities can accurately accept the information conveyed in graphics. This feature of graphics is determined by the visual elements it forms. The visual elements are derived from life, and people’s daily life and living environment are similar. Excellent graphics not only accurately convey information but also have visual impact, unique performance, individuality and artistry.

### B. Pattern

The pattern is a decorative graphics and texture, or a graphic design. It is a design created by the designer through his own artistic conception. Figure - graphics, pattern, including the three-dimensional shape and flat sculpture, the case - design scheme. The pattern design contains two concepts, generalized and narrow. The generalized pattern design is a pre-designed scheme on the structure, color, decoration, etc. The narrow pattern design refers to the color and decorative pattern for the beautification of artifact. The pattern design of China has appeared its embryonic form from the primitive period. The development from human face fish-painted pottery to mural painting shows that the pattern design has a long history in China and has achieved high artistic achievements. With the development history, Chinese pattern design has gradually formed an art form with ethnic characteristics.

### C. Suzhou Embroidery Pattern

The word “Suzhou embroidery” is not from ancient times. It was born out of the ordinary embroidery skills in Wu region.

Through the long process of development in the course of thousands of years, through the infiltration of Wu culture, the influence of painting art, the integration of various embroidery techniques, etc. it finally formed in the Ming and Qing Dynasties with the combination of these factors. With the development of time, Suzhou embroidery has evolved from the traditional Suzhou embroidery model to the modern Suzhou embroidery model that adapts to the development of modern life. The artistic effect of Suzhou embroidery mainly depends on the pattern of embroidery. The initial theme of Suzhou embroidery is mainly simple patterns and simple forms of various flowers, birds, beasts, insects and other simple patterns. Modern Suzhou embroidery patterns are deeply influenced by contemporary art trends. In order to adapt to the new aesthetic needs of people today, they incorporate a variety of contemporary art elements.

## II. GRAPHICS AND PATTERN INNOVATION DESIGN

Traditional graphic language is the embodiment of history and culture, reflecting to a certain extent the cultural mainstream in different historical periods, people's thinking and people's life experience. With the evolution of history, these graphics languages have changed in color, shape and line according to the aesthetic changes of people in different periods. Traditional graphics language is accompanied by the change and inheritance of history and culture. After thousands of years of evolution, it has gradually formed a unique regional, contemporary and artistic, and has become an important part of traditional culture. The inheritance and learning of traditional graphics language are the preservation and development of traditional culture.

Traditional graphics language not only has unique styling and color matching, but also has the characteristics of symbol and meaning. This feature embodies national cultural charm, national life concept and aesthetic concept, so it is not only consistent with traditional cultural connotation, but also has a close connection with life. Today's graphics design pursues connotation and depth. The shallow design can't meet the needs of today's design, so it is hard to wait for absorb nutrients in traditional graphics. The application of traditional graphics requires trade-offs, that is, absorbing the outstanding elements of traditional graphics, innovating based on excellent traditional culture, and displaying the meanings contained in excellent traditional graphic elements. This is the essence of excellent traditional culture. This is not only the key to the unique charm of graphic design, but also an important step in integrating ethnic characteristics into the design. The application of excellent traditional graphics is not simply to apply traditional graphics directly to the design, but requires the designer to deconstruct and reorganize it, giving it a new meaning according to its own design, making it a rich and different new symbol.

## III. GRAPHICS LANGUAGE AND SUZHOU EMBROIDERY

In modern design, the figure of graphics almost summarizes all areas of visual design. In many excellent design works, most of them are expressed by graphics. Speaking with graphics, this is the declaration of a confident designer. Graphics creativity is widely used in various fields of visual communication with its unique thinking characteristics, thinking mode, thinking orientation and rich performance skills. Therefore, graphic creativity also plays an important role in Suzhou embroidery, and the Suzhou embroidery that is finally displayed through graphics creativity is worth a thousand words. Recalling those excellent Suzhou embroidery works, in addition to their embroidered work in our plaint, the one finally brings us visual enjoyment is still the design of patterns. It is the patterns that impress us that make the viewers and the authors have a spiritual exchange. The bridge of communication of this soul is built by patterns. Therefore, for the success of a piece of work, the graphics creative part is very crucial.

### A. Modeling of Suzhou Embroidery



Fig. 1. Traditional double-side embroidery Harmony and Kindness



Fig. 2. Part of traditional double-side embroidery Harmony and Kindness

The picture below shows the classic embroidery double-side embroidered works of Suzhou embroidery Harmony and Kindness (Figure 1). The double-side embroidery is also called two-sided embroidery. In the same embroidering process, two sides of image are embroidered on the same piece of bottom material. The silhouette of the embroidery is exactly the same, the pattern is equally beautiful, and is available for people to enjoy. This piece of embroidery uses a lighter shade of gray tones, which makes the work bright and ambiguous. In the composition part, the embroidery uses a modern geometric circular frame to select the main body pattern, which makes the main part more eye-catching and makes the work more modern. The most prominent feature of the styling part is that the overlapping of three faces constitutes a part of a complete personal face (Figure 2), which is similar to the positive and negative graphics design in the modern graphic design method. The positive and negative graphics is also called inversion graphics, which refers to borrowing from each other and depending on each other for

both positive graphics and negative graphics. The graphics as a positive shape and negative shape can be reversed to each other. Positive and negative graphics design pursues full use of visual effects, interaction of various elements, rational development of negative space, enabling each gap of the picture to speak, and fully adjusting each element of the animation surface through positive and effective relationship between them, which makes the unique semantics be vividly expressed. In this piece of embroidery, the use of positive and negative graphics is used quite thorough.

With the change of time, Suzhou embroidery is not only rich in its stitching, but also its presentation method has been derived from the original single ornament to other fields, such as silver jewelry products with creative Suzhou embroidery as the main design element. A large part of the soul of the ring (Figure 3) lies in the inlaid treasure on it, and the shape of this ring does not adopt pearls or gems, but embed a finely crafted embroidery in it. The orange-red flowers and the royal blue leaves are embroidered on the antique satin. The whole product style is simple and innocent. Although it is not swanking, it reveals ingenuity. The luster and color of silver will set off this small and exquisite embroidery. It is particularly eye-catching. In the design of the bracelet (Figure 4), an elliptical-shaped Suzhou embroidery pattern is embedded in a bright silver bracelet, surrounded by a silver frame, just like a painting. Embroidered pink flowers on it, under the royal blue silk lining, the beautiful and exquisite Suzhou embroidery and the silver bracelet set off each other, which has rich sense of design and fashion. Rings and bracelets are all innovations in the presentation ways of Suzhou embroidery. In the styling presentation, such as the mixed-dimension graphics in graphic design, the mixed-dimension graphics is to intertwine two individuals without intersection, and pursue unexpected performance through curious idea, to break the viewers' inherent imagination, thus deepening the visual experience. Before this style, people have their own stereotypes about Suzhou embroidery and silver ornaments. The combination of them not only breaks the inherent imagination, but also has perfect creative scores, beautiful appearance and unique visual impact.



Fig. 3. Ring design



Fig. 4. Bracelet design

### B. The Color Used for Suzhou Embroidery

Han Mengxi's masterpiece "Washing Horse" (Figure 5) is a traditional embroidered material. The horses, weeping willows, and revetments in the picture (Figure 6) use light color rendering technique, but sometimes they are limited by stitching and techniques. When the effect of painting sketch is not achieved, the embroiderer will use pen to connect the color where the needle is not in the place. The so-called "complementary color" means to achieve the virtual and real corresponding, highlighting the main body, and saving the embroidery work, which can serve multiple purposes. Just as irrational graphics in modern graphic design methods, irrational graphics is also known as paradox graphics, using unnatural methods to shift the familiar, rational and fixed order of the objective world to the absurd and abnormal picture world with logic of chaos. The purpose is to break the physical and psychological barriers between the real and the illusory, subjective and objective worlds, and reveal the meaning hidden in the depths of the object in unreasonable, irregular and re-recognized objects. The whole work adopts the gray tone. When the theme is created, the contrasting black and white color is used to make the visual impact stronger and highlight the subject. The large amount of white space in the picture makes the picture simple and highlight the main object, and the picture is full of far-reaching meaning, and there is a comfortable feeling of peaceful time.



Fig. 5. Washing Horse of Han Mengxi



Fig. 6. Part of Washing Horse of Han Mengxi

The Mid-Autumn Mooncake Gift Box launched by China Shangri-La Groggery Group (Figure 7) incorporates the idea of Suzhou embroidery. In the packaging design of the product, the traditional material is discarded. The outer packaging of satin is embroidered with auspicious clouds, southern magnolia and text combining with the stitching, such as swiftach and trocar. It is especially elegant in the color part, and auspicious clouds use the collage of simple color blocks to express the festive atmosphere with bright colors. The Chinese character part uses red to symbolize joy and self-confidence. Chinese characters (Figure 8) originate from pictographic ideograms, which are the crystallization of people’s long-term experience and sentiment. Chinese characters can not only express the shape, but also have both phonological and ideographic function, with a full expression of the contents of meaning. The font part of the work “香” stands for Shangri-La, and it’s symbolic. “传” has the meaning of inheritance and traditional culture, and the font design between “香” and “传” makes the combination of Shangri-La and traditional culture. The line connecting “香” and “传” also reflects the sense of mission of cultural heritage. Combining the sense of mission of cultural heritage with red color makes the product more appealing, and has a stronger ability to express the festive atmosphere and the spirit of the product itself. The paintings are bright and the colors used are all of high purity, which makes the picture visually appealing and attractive. The works use a lot of red and yellow, which is full of the sense of fashion and design under the collision of red and yellow. The representative characters “香” and “传” are the main elements of design and the main objects, and the picture has a lot of white space, so that the emotions and spirits that the works want to convey are clear at a glance.



Fig. 7. Shangri-La Mid-Autumn Mooncake Gift Box



Fig. 8. Part of the Mid-Autumn Mooncake Gift Box

### C. Composition of Suzhou Embroidery Pattern

Liang Xuefang’s masterpiece “Lotus Rhyme” (Figure 9), frames a heap of winter lotus on the side of Taihu Lake. On a clear winter morning, the birds scream on the branch, and the waterfowl swims on the lake, making ripples. The quiet lotus stands in the water with different postures. In the composition part, the author uses partial winter lotus roots (Figure 10) to reflect the simple and rich beauty that can be felt from it, and creates a series of lotus rhyme and striped screen series for the author. In graphic design, we can also use a single or similar elemental pattern repeatedly to form another visual new image, creating a new collection of graphics to express ideas. The unit morphological elements that make up the graphics are mostly used to reflect the characteristics and enhance the meaning of the graphics itself. The composition of the work should be based on the overall situation, and the arrangement of individual elements should be subject to the overall needs. In the case of an object with a light source, there must be a real or imaginary shadow. It echoes directly with the object, which is a constant natural phenomenon. Through the master-hand of the embroiderers, the works reflect the inverted image and ripples in the lake, making the works full of realism. The lotus rhyme series has a darker tone, which makes it easier to embody the sensation and simplicity of the picture, so that it creates a deep artistic conception, thereby expressing the feelings of the picture. The picture intercepts the dead branche as the main body of the picture, fully embodying the rushing of time, returning to the simple and rich connotation of beauty, and containing the main idea of power.



Fig. 9. Lotus Rhyme Striped Screen Series



Fig. 10. Part of *If You Flourishing • Winter*

In the *My Eyes* (Figure 11) created by Suzhou embroidery artist Zou Yingzi, the sketch painting is presented by means of embroidery. The work adopts the initiative embroidery method of “Drip Embroidery”, in which the texture of carbon powder and the texture of misty eyes in carbon powder sketch are perfectly presented by the “Drip Embroidery”. In the composition part, the reduced graphics form in the modern graphic method is applied, that is, the reduced graphics can still fully reflect its modeling characteristics in the form of reduction, and use the reduction, incompleteness to strengthen the thematic features that want to be highlighted, inspiring the viewer’s imagination to reveal new meanings. Only the eyes in the works highlight the theme, and the rest are cut off, making the work concise without losing its meaning. The color of this work selects gray, which runs between black and white. It is really like a human heart, which is constantly changing. So, it is the most human-like color. Due to the single color, for the depth transition of the picture in embroidering, visual effect can only be strengthened by superimposing the embroidery thread, which in turn makes the picture more stereoscopic and the details are more vivid.



Fig. 11. My Eyes

#### IV. VALUE AND SIGNIFICANCE

Standing at the new historical starting point, Suzhou embroidery art faces a new development opportunity. The art of Suzhou embroidery condenses the wisdom of the people of Wu region, and also contains the cultural genes of Chinese nation. It is the precious material and spiritual cultural wealth left by our ancestors. In the “market state” environment, to achieve sustainable development in the contemporary era, it is inseparable from the continuous improvement of embroidery industry, keeping pace with the times, restoring its own “hematopoietic” function through inheritance and innovation, and relying on its own strength to seek development opportunities.

Most of the traditional Suzhou embroidery is created directly based on daily life, traditional culture, paintings, etc. Although it has unique techniques, it is slightly more artistic. The graphic language has the easy-to-understand and scientific characteristics. The combination of graphics language and traditional Suzhou embroidery makes the pattern of Suzhou embroidery advance with the times, and at the same time increases the artistry of Suzhou embroidery. Graphics language participating in the creation of Suzhou embroidery, on the one hand, highlights the creative intentions and creative themes of the creators, as well as their own characteristics; on the other hand, it combines traditional techniques with modern art theories, injecting new blood into Suzhou embroidery and extending the vitality of Suzhou embroidery.

With the development of the times, the inheritance of traditional culture has encountered many difficulties. As one of the traditional cultures, Suzhou embroidery must not stick to the convention to maintain its vitality. The wide application of graphics language in Suzhou embroidery has promoted the birth of new techniques and the emergence of new forms of expression. This is the theoretical basis for Suzhou embroidery and the integration of tradition and modernity. It is also the key for the continued success of Suzhou embroidery.

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