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## Adapting Traditional Art Decoration of Chu State Bronze to Modern Painting Decoration

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### **Abstract:**

**Purpose:** This research is a study on the uniqueness of artistic traditional decoration of Chu State bronze and how it can be adapted to modern painting decoration. This is important to highlight the rich value of Chu State bronze which is forgotten by many people in China. Interviews and case studies are used to study the application of Chu bronze decoration in modern painting. This research will contribute to new knowledge on the value of traditional decoration and preserve Chu State bronze as a national heritage of China. Findings of the research will highlight the decorations of Chu State bronze through document, art catalogue and exhibition as recommendations of the study. The research results are helpful for himself (Zhu Jing) will to extract and utilize the Chu bronze decoration and apply it to his own artistic experiment.

**Methodology:** In this study, case study and visual analysis methods were used to study the application of Chu bronze decorative patterns in modern art. Through case analysis, successful cases of Chu bronze decorative patterns in modern painting were identified, and the shortcomings of Chu bronze decorative patterns in modern painting were analyzed.

**Findings:** In the application of modern design, the patterns of Chu bronze ware have been systematically extracted and applied through the use of computer and other information data methods. Currently, they have been well applied in the fields of advertising design and product design. The application of Chu bronze decorative patterns in modern painting is still in the exploratory stage. Currently, the extraction and use of Chu bronze decorative patterns is still in the copy stage, lacking the processing and creation of Chu bronze decorative patterns, and an artistic style that meets the aesthetic needs of modern people.

**Conclusion and Recommendation:** At present, the extraction and use of bronze decorative patterns have been widely carried out and achieved good results in modern design. The application of bronze decorative patterns in modern painting is still in the experimental stage, and there are many new painting styles and styles that can be tried. This requires painters to have a deep understanding of the bronze culture of Chu, deconstruct and reconstruct the patterns of bronze vessels. This structure and reconstruction is not a random combination or separation, but should be based on an understanding of Chu's bronze culture and decorative patterns. Only by using modern painting language can they create paintings that meet contemporary aesthetic needs.

The extraction of patterns on Chu bronze vessels and their application in modern painting are conducive to the inheritance and promotion of Chu culture.

**Keywords:** Traditional art decoration; The Chu state bronzes; Modern painting decoration

### **1.Introduction**

This research is about the study of the patterns of the bronze wares of the Chu State, The traditional art decoration of Chu State Bronze has a wide range of values on artistic decoration but not many people know and have ignored it(Zhang, 2009). It has thus become a forgotten value. There is a lack of in-depth research on Chu bronze culture and creative transformation and application in contemporary art creation(Duan, 2012 ). Therefore this research will look into this gap and search on how the artistic element of traditional art decoration of Chu State can provide a valuable subject matter in art work (painting) as a creative medium to increase the appreciation towards the decoration of Chu State Bronze.

### **2. Current Status of Research on the Decorations of Bronze Wares in Chu State**

Through the efforts of many scholars at home and abroad, the study of ancient Chinese bronze decoration is gradually becoming a magnificent subject. However, the existing problems cannot be avoided :1. Compared with the breadth and depth of the research on bronze inscriptions and vessel types, the research on ornamentation is still relatively backward; 2. Chinese contemporary scholars generally ignore the research on the meaning of decoration, which is out of line with the tradition of studying bronze decoration from the perspective of philosophy in Chinese history. 3. The typology research of bronze ornamentation is still in the development stage. 4. There is an obvious deficiency in the application of theories and materials in related fields to explore the deep meaning of bronze decoration(Zhang, 2015). Therefore, as a subject closely related to the ideology of ancient human beings, the study of ancient Chinese bronze decoration needs to be advanced to a new stage.

Scholars have deeply studied the inscriptions and types of Chu State bronzes ware, and paid little attention to the decoration. Scholars generally ignore the research on the meaning of bronzes ornamentation( Zhang, 2009).The typological research on bronzes ornamentation are still in the development stage, and there is an obvious lack in the multi-disciplinary collaborative research on the deep meaning of bronzes ornamentation. The research on the modeling and decoration of Chu state bronzes can make up for the lack of research on the modeling and decoration of Chu state bronzes, and the research results are of great benefit to guide contemporary art design.

### **3. Introduction and Classification of the Decorations of Bronze Wares in Chu State**

The State of Chu was a slave country from 1046 BC to 256 BC. The bronze wares in the State of Chu were mainly made of copper and tin, including ritual vessels, food vessels, wine vessels, water vessels, musical instruments, bronze mirrors, weapons and tools( Zhang, 2010). Liu Binhui proposed unique viewpoints on the study of bronze artifacts in the Chu state. In order to make clear the casting time and region of the objects in the study of the shape and decoration of Chu bronze, it must rely on a large

number of historical materials of Chu bronze found in archaeology. First of all, it is necessary to identify the evolution time of the pattern style of the bronzes and the change time period of the shape of the artifacts. The shape and pattern of the bronzes will change significantly every 50 years or so, and find out the typical group of Chu bronzes as a reference for the division and standard of the production process, shape and pattern age. At present, through the excavation of Chu tombs and the definition of the development of Chu bronze ware, the academia defines the time period of Chu bronze ware and typical bronze ware groups, which are divided into 6 or 7 periods(Liu, 1995). At present, it is widely accepted and recognized that Liu Binhui proposed to divide the Chu series bronze ware into seven periods, based on the following: first, the evolution of Chu series bronze ware and the study of artifacts; Second, the bronze wares unearthed from typical tombs of Chu system; Third, the social and historical development and major events of Chu State; Fourth, the evidence obtained from the comparison with the staging of bronze tombs in Central Plains.

The designs and decoration of the bronze wares of Chu State shoulder the responsibility and mission of decoration, religion and politics. The bronze ware design artists adopt the method of vertical and horizontal absorption in the design of patterns and decoration, drawing on the strengths of previous and contemporary vassal arts(Ma, 2014). On the basis of absorb the characteristics of the Central Plains decoration of the Zhou Dynasty, and combining the unique regional and cultural characteristics of the Chu State, especially the love of phoenix decorative patterns, the patterns reflect the inheritance of the artistic characteristics of the ancestors(Ma, 2014).The decoration of the bronze wares of the Chu State can be divided into geometric decoration, animal decoration and figure decoration. The decoration is mostly in line shape and expression, full of dynamic beauty, including both realistic and abstract decoration.

#### **4. The Application of Chu State Bronze Ware Decoration in Modern Art**

The patterns of Chu bronze ware are currently widely used in modern design, and many cases of extraction and use of Chu bronze ware patterns can be found in advertising design and product design(Zhang, 2015). The application of Chu bronze decoration in modern painting is relatively weak. Currently, painters have a one-sided approach to the extraction and use of Chu bronze decorative patterns, without a systematic extraction of Chu bronze decorative patterns, a lack of processing and creation of Chu bronze decorative patterns, and a lack of personal painting style expression.

##### **4.1 The Application of Chu Bronze Ware Decoration in Modern Design**

The Application of Chu Bronze Ware Patterns in Modern Design The shape and patterns of Chu bronze ware are refined and redesigned through the use of modern technological means in modern design research in China(Zhang, 2019). The current application of Chu bronze ware in the field of modern design mainly involves the extraction and processing of shapes and patterns. The most representative product design is the extraction of shapes and patterns from Chu bronze ware nobles. The design inspiration of Chu bronze ware nobles is applied to the design of chairs. The three legs of the bronze ware nobles are just enough to keep the bronze ware stable and upright. In the design of the bottom of the chair, the three legs are used to show a certain tilt, with the upper and lower legs being large and small, This can maintain the stability of

the chair. The opening part on the bronze ware is designed as the seating surface of the chair, and the entire design is full of a modern sense. From Figure 1 and Figure 2, it can be intuitively seen that the design of the chair is a reference for bronze Jue ware.

**Figure 1.** Bronze Jue 475-433 BC, The period of the Chu state  
Source:Jiang, hanJijin. (2012)



**Figure 1.** Jue chair Designed in 2007

Source:<https://www.51miz.com/>



The most representative application of Chu bronze decorative patterns in the field of modern design is the use of Chu bronze elements as performance props at the opening ceremony of the 2008 Beijing Olympics in China. The instruments used in the performance square at the opening ceremony are imitations of Chu bronze fou. The bronze vessel Fou of Chu is a wine vessel. At the 2008 Olympic Games, the designer designed the bronze vessel Fou as an instrument, borrowing the shape and decoration of the bronze vessel Fou. In addition to differences in usage functions, it is similar to the bronze vessel in shape and decoration, showcasing the charm of Chinese bronze culture to the world. From Figure 3 and Figure 4, it is very intuitive to see the reference to the bronze ware and decorative patterns of the Chu state.

**Figure 3.** Bronze fou 475-433BC,the period of the Chu state  
Source:Jiang, hanJijin. (2012)



**Figure 4.** Musical instruments designed for the opening ceremony of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games

Source:<https://www.51miz.com/>



#### 4.2 The Application of Chu Bronze Ware Decoration in Realistic Painting

In the case analysis of traditional realistic painting, three realistic painters, Liu Yongsong, Yang Changbi, and Liu Yingzhao, were selected as representatives of realistic painting. The common feature of these three painters is that they use realistic techniques to create and express themselves. They objectively depict and reproduce the shapes and patterns of bronze vessels in their painting creations. Bronze vessels, as an important part of the still life composition of the painting, are generally placed in the center of the painting. The language and techniques of painting are mainly realistic, and the color expression is relatively simple, using the fixed color of bronze ware for description. This form of painting is mainly objective and realistic, and the subjective emotions of artists are less integrated. The main emotions of artists cannot be expressed through bronze art works. This type of realistic painting is more about the objective record of bronze vessels and arouses people's attention to the history and culture of bronze. Although these three artists all use bronze as the material for oil painting creation, their techniques and expressions are different. The following is an analysis of the oil painting works created by these three artists using bronze.

Liu Yongsong's oil paintings focus on the realistic and objective expression of bronze vessels, placing them in specific spaces for expression. Figure 5 is his oil painting still life work on bronze vessels. The number of bronze vessels he painted is not very large, and he mainly selected one bronze vessel for depiction. In the painting, a realistic painting technique was adopted, emphasizing the shaping of bronze objects and the expression of light and shadow. The use of color in the screen is relatively simple, and the screen mainly uses grayish brown tones to express the sense of time and history of the bronze ware. This form of expression emphasizes the expression of structure while

neglecting the expression of color. It is relatively calm and objective in artistic creation, lacking the integration of the author's subjective emotions, the extraction and processing of bronze ware, and the innovation of painting style.

**Figure 5.** Name of Artis: Liu Yongsong

Year: 2021

Title: Bronze Decorative Elements oil Painting Works

Size: 60x100cm

Source: Liu Yongsong's personal oil painting webpage.



Yang Changbi's still life oil painting is a realistic oil painting based on bronze. Her bronze still life oil painting combines the artist's subjective emotions and artistic processing on the basis of realism. The bronze vessels used in her still life oil paintings are all grouped together, consisting of several bronze vessels, which is different from Liu Yongsong's still life oil paintings on bronze vessels. Figure 6 is a picture of seven bronze vessels, and the composition of the picture is carefully designed by the artist. The staggered arrangement of the bronze vessels creates a clear sense of space between the primary and secondary aspects. In terms of color expression, painters follow objective realism and use yellow and green tones to express the inherent color and texture of bronze ware. In terms of light processing, light is concentrated on the main objects, further emphasizing the primary and secondary relationship of the picture through light processing. In the treatment of bronze decorative patterns, the painter still objectively depicts the details of bronze decorative patterns in a realistic manner, and even objectively depicts some broken parts of the bronze.

**Figure 6.** Name of Artis: Yang Changbi

Year: 2017

Title: Bronze Decorative Elements oil Painting

Size: 80x100cm

Source: Yang Changbi's personal oil painting webpage.





Yang Changbi's bronze oil painting series not only focuses on objective realism, but also includes a portion of bronze oil painting works with the artist's subjective treatment. Figure 7 on the basis of realism, the artist made subjective treatment on the color of bronzes, especially on the solid color of bronzes. Warm colors were used to change the cool Teal tone of bronzes, making the picture full of temperature. Figure 7 in this artwork, the artist depicts a total of 4 bronzes, with 3 smaller bronzes arranged in an orderly manner around the main bronzes in the middle. The painters of these 4 bronzes mainly focus on realistic expression, and on the basis of realism, the artist boldly handles the colors of the screen, integrating the artist's subjective emotions into the artwork. The painter painted the main bronze ware in the middle in red, while the other three bronze ware were painted according to their inherent colors. One red bronze ware and three yellow green bronze ware formed a clear contrast of warm and cold colors. This form of expression integrates the artist's subjective emotions on the basis of realism, and processes the colors of the picture, especially the bold and creative transformation of bronze color. The painter uses warm colors to change the cold Teal color of the bronzes, making the picture full of temperature. Yang Changbi's portrayal and depiction of bronze ware is unique, using warm colors to depict bronze ware, giving the painting a sense of warmth and familiarity. Bronze ware is full of interesting life.

**Figure 7.** Name of Artis: Yang Changbi

Year: 2017

Title: Bronze Decorative Elements oil Painting

Size: 80x100cm

Source: Yang Changbi's personal oil painting webpage.



Liu Yingzhao's bronze still life oil painting emphasizes there creation of light on the

basis of realism, creating the atmosphere of the painting through light. In the selection of materials for oil painting Still life, there are bronzes as well as other objects, and the bronzes are taken as the main objects for painting. Figure 8 selected oil painting still life materials are bronzes, fruits and shells. Triangle composition is used in the composition of the picture to determine the stability of the picture. Different objects are combined through the design of light. In the color performance of the picture, objective and realistic colors are used to express the solid color of the object. The picture uses Classicism painting techniques. The most unique aspect of his bronze oil painting still life is the subjective design of light, which creates a sense of mystery. He did not express himself according to objective light sources but created light based on realism. The painter subjectively designs light and projection, focusing them on the bronze ware representing the subject. Through the expression of light and shadow, it reflects the sense of spatiotemporal interweaving in different spaces. Liu Yingzhao's bronze still life oil painting incorporates a modern sense of design on the basis of realism. The composition and light and shadow effects of the painting are subjectively designed by the artist, giving it a sense of modernity and mystery.

**Figure 8.** Name of Artis: Liu Yingzhao

Year: 2013

Title: Bronze painting of scenery

Size: 120x100cm

Source: Liu Yingzhao's personal oil painting webpage.



#### 4.3 Application of Chu Bronze Ware Decoration in Abstract Painting

The application of bronze decorative patterns in abstract painting in the state of Chu is not widespread, with the main representative painters being Pang Tao and Li Jing.

Pang Tao's paintings decompose and reconstruct the shape and decorative elements of bronze vessels. Figure 9 is Pang Tao's work on the decomposition and reconstruction of the Bronze Baron. While retaining the fuzzy appearance of the Bronze Baron, she decomposed the Bronze Baron. In order to preserve the recognition of the Bronze Baron, she preserved the top and bottom of the Bronze Baron, and extensively reconstructed the middle part. In composition, she uses geometric shapes for segmentation, which is influenced by Cubism. The color performance of the picture focuses on the middle part of the object, and small squares are used for color filling and color segmentation. In spatial performance, the picture does not pursue the spatial effect of solids, but pays more attention to the plane segmentation of the picture. The painter reasonably divided and designed the bronze ware, incorporating the painter's understanding and re creation



of the bronze ware. The painting uses the points, lines, and surfaces in the design elements as the expressive language. The painting expression of bronze ware emphasizes the contrast between light and dark, the size of color blocks, and the changes in temperature. The painting has a strong sense of decoration and modernity, and the decorative elements of bronze have become the carrier and symbol for artists to express their emotions.

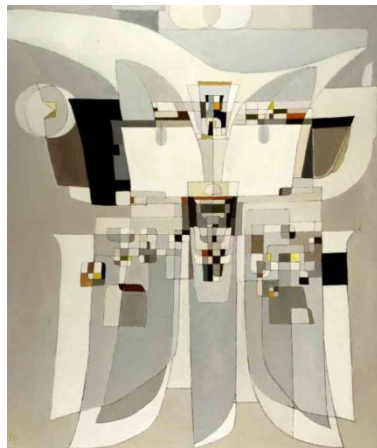
**Figure 9.** Name of Artis: Pang Tao's

Year: 1987

Title: "Inspiration of Bronze - Pink Bottom" cloth acrylic

Size: 180x150cm

Source: Pang Tao's personal oil painting webpage.



Li Jing's abstract paintings pay more attention to the expression of color emotions. Figure 10 is a vertical composition, with the main object placed on the left side of the canvas, presenting a wait-and-see attitude. Completed through bold choices and exaggeration. From the perspective of the shape of the bronze ware in the picture, the reasonable combination of the shapes displayed from different angles weakens its three-dimensional sense, and even destroys the original complete shape structure, resulting in a new combination. Highlighting the main parts of the bronze ware while ignoring specific details, from the perspective of the bronze ware patterns in the painting, this work exaggerates and enlarges the decorative parts, but does not depict them in detail. It is only a combination of color blocks formed due to the needs of the painting. The overall color in the picture is clear, and colors are selected based on the painter's perception of the bronze ware and the requirements of the overall picture, as well as the original color relationship of the bronze ware, to handle the color effect of the picture. This painting is more abstract. The painter uses the shape of bronze ware to express the artist's artistic creation experience through color, and the entire picture conveys a sense of dream.

**Figure 10.** Name of Artis: Li Jing

Year: 2019

Title: Bronze Impression

Size: 80x50cm

Source: Discussion on the Form Expression Method of Bronze

## Aesthetic Image in Oil Painting, 2020



Figure 11 is Li Jing's work using a vertical composition, with a left and right structure. The two parts use two different perspectives to see the external structure, exaggerating the original decorative patterns on the bronze ware, and adding these decorative patterns appropriately in the background. Placing the main object in the center of the screen further emphasizes the theme, and the main image is composed of elements from different angles. It is no longer exaggerated or marginalized by some elements of the original bronze shape, with the intention of connecting with the space outside the screen. In terms of color, the basic use of cold tones is mainly green, blue, and purple gray, combined with the texture effect of sand particles, making the color more visually impactful. The bronze patterns were added to the background and the extracted elements were simplified to make it more in line with contemporary aesthetics. The image does not pursue spatial sense and should be as flat as possible, highlighting the visual effect of the color of the image. This form of expression incorporates the artist's artistic emotions, using the shapes and patterns of bronze vessels to express the artist's emotions.

**Figure 10.** Name of Artis: Li Jing

Year: 2019

Title: Bronze Impression

Size: 80x50cm

Source: Discussion on the Form Expression Method of Bronze  
Aesthetic Image in Oil Painting, 2020



### **5. Shortcomings in the Application of Chu Bronze Decoration in Modern Painting**

At present, the application of Chu bronze decorative patterns in modern painting is still in the exploratory stage, and the painting style of objectively reproducing Chu bronze decorative patterns through realistic painting has achieved certain results. The expressive painting of extracting and processing the patterns of Chu bronze vessels is currently in the exploratory stage, especially the expressive painting that integrates the artist's emotions and personal style is relatively rare, and there is a lack of painting works with personal style and recognition. The Chinese painters' extraction and use of the decorative patterns of the Chu bronze ware is a direct copy, lacking the deconstruction and reconstruction of the decorative patterns of the Chu bronze ware, the understanding and processing of the decorative patterns of the Chu bronze ware, and the simple imitation of the decorative patterns of the Chu bronze ware cannot meet the needs of modern painting and people's aesthetic feelings. The times need to call for paintings with decorative style and painter's emotional integration. This puts forward higher requirements for painters, who cannot simply imitate the patterns and shapes of Chu bronze vessels. They must have a profound understanding of the culture and aesthetics carried by Chu bronze vessels, and on this basis, they can combine with modern painting to create vibrant painting works.

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