

Research on the Cultural Creative Design of the "Indirect Eight Immortals" from the Semiotics Perspective

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ABSTRACT

The Chinese people have a keen aptitude for employing symbolism to convey the concept of "good luck" via the theme of "Eight Immortals." A notable exemplification of this is the concept of "Eight Immortals Crossing the Sea and Displaying Their Divine Skills." This term is derived from Chinese folklore, where individuals employed symbols of the objects held by the Eight Immortals as emblems, rather than the deities themselves. The "Indirect Eight Immortals" frequently materialize in folk art and are a fundamental aspect of Chinese culture that signifies good luck, embodying the trend of symbolization in Chinese auspicious art. Within the framework of semiotics, we propose to preserve the continuous legacy of Indirect Eight Immortals culture, simplifying its patterns to emphasize design focus and fostering a dialogue between traditional Indirect Eight Immortals culture and modern design. This aims to provide a guiding principle for creating an aesthetic layout with a distinctive national style, leading fashion, and promoting the inheritance and development of Chinese culture.

Keywords: Semiotics, indirect eight immortals, cultural creative design

INTRODUCTION

There has been a growing interest in the Chinese decorative motif in the last few years. This paper will first use the definition suggested by Saussure (1983), who saw it as human beings endowed with the constructive gift of integrating cultural symbols and concepts. The Chinese indirect Eight Immortals pattern not only has religious attributes but also contains a rich folk culture. However, the most widely used Chinese patterns are the dragon pattern, the phoenix pattern, and other common flower and bird patterns, and there needs to be more use of the indirect Eight Immortals pattern in modern design. There is almost no international literature on the indirect eight immortals, a traditional Chinese auspicious motif, and the Chinese literature on the indirect eight immortals mainly provides a brief account of the historical development of the motif and the auspicious symbolism it implies. More profound research must be done on the religious culture and aesthetics of the Indirect Eight Immortals. The literature on the aesthetic orientation and folk culture behind the indirect Eight Immortals pattern is limited, and the research content needs to be more profound. It is not commonly observed in popular cultural venues, resulting in a lack of awareness among the younger generation regarding the cultural significance of

traditional "Indirect Eight Immortals" patterns. This predicament is primarily due to inadequate promotion and utilization of these conventional cultural and artistic treasures, as well as a lack of integration with modern media platforms.

To address this challenge, it is imperative to explore new methods of preserving this heritage and adopting forms and carriers that are more appealing to the modern generation. By utilizing the tools of semiotics—the study of symbols and signs and their interpretation—we can gain valuable insights into the meaning and significance of the "Indirect Eight Immortals" culture (Seo, 2021). These insights can then guide people in developing effective strategies to promote this cultural practice worldwide and preserve its essence for future generations. This paper first briefly overviews the recent history of the Indirect Eight Immortals. The first chapter is concerned with preserving the continuation of the Indirect Eight Immortals' cultural lineage. The second section used the semiotics research theories, supporting highlighting the design should focus by simplifying the "Indirect Eight Immortals" pattern use. The third section explains how to establish a spiritual link between the traditional "Indirect Eight Immortals" culture and modern design. This essay provides a novel analysis of this intricate pattern, which represents a significant area of focus and challenge for future design endeavors. It is our aspiration that the insights gained from this research will serve as a source of inspiration and guidance for the advancement and evolution of Chinese traditional pattern design.

Preserve the continuation of the Indirect Eight Immortals cultural lineage

The Indirect Eight Immortals pattern is an ancient traditional auspicious pattern in China with a rich cultural heritage. Originating from Taoism, the Eight Immortals were used to propagate the teachings of Taoism through their stories, embedding religious elements into the narratives. In the Taoist stories, the Eight Immortals uphold justice, promote virtue, save the world, and advise people to cultivate themselves to escape worldly suffering and achieve immortality. The Indirect Eight Immortals, which are the magical weapons of the Eight Immortals, are derived from ordinary objects used by the people, while the portrayals of the Eight Immortals are diverse, encompassing men and women, young and old, rich and poor, making them more relatable to the masses. Taoism promotes the Eight Immortals as a means to exhort people towards goodness, eliminate disasters, and cater to the psychological needs of people from all walks of life.

People are good at incorporating the "meaning" into the Indirect Eight Immortals pattern to send their good wishes. Not only does it have the function of praying for good luck and eliminating disasters, but it also has the function of good luck, peace, and longevity, eliminating diseases and disasters, and sending the people's wishes for a better life. Tie Qiao Li's primary magic weapon is the gourd, which contains the elixir of immortality, which stores blessings and provides relief to all living beings. Zhong Li Quan, often holding a banana fan, uses wisdom to subdue the demons of the heart. Zhang Guolao rode a donkey upside down and used a fishing drum in his arms as his magic weapon to predict the future and divine right and wrong. Lv Dongbin,

carrying a sword, can subdue evils and drive away demons. He Xian Nun's magic weapon is usually a lotus flower, used to cultivate one's body and mind. Cao Guoyu's magical treasure is a jade board, which can calm the mind, make one naturally pure, and purify the environment. Lan Caihe often carries a flower basket, which can communicate with people's hearts and cure human feelings. Han Xiangzi's magic weapon is a horizontal flute, which can make flowers and plants bloom in winter, signifying the growth of all things. Indirect Eight Immortals is one of the traditional auspicious patterns; the auspicious symbolism not only reflects the characteristics of a particular era and aesthetic interest but also contains religious beliefs and folk culture, which represents that the Indirect Eight Immortals pattern has a cultural value exceeded the design itself (Chen,2012).



Figure 1 Indirect Eight Immortals in White

The traditional Chinese auspicious motifs combine the Chinese nation's long history and culture and have wealthy connotations. The bright motifs of different historical periods cover ethical morals, ritual norms, philosophical concepts, folk customs, and other historical factors. The aesthetic value of the Indirect Eight Immortals has far exceeded the pattern itself. To integrate traditional auspicious practices with modern design concepts, we need to compromise with current design concepts and pay attention to retaining and continuing the historical and cultural aspects of the traditional Indirect Eight Immortals patterns.

Highlighting the design focus by simplifying the "Indirect Eight Immortals" pattern

The adaptation of auspicious motifs to contemporary aesthetics, while intrinsically appealing, has become increasingly crucial. Moreover, intangible cultural heritage, including auspicious motifs, is currently undergoing unprecedented threats of extinction or substitution. These factors suggest that auspicious motifs may no longer be congruous with modern tastes and are thus susceptible to gradual elimination. As modern design continues to predominate, the majority of people prefer a simplified, contemporary aesthetic. Hence, it is imperative to re-evaluate auspicious motifs in light of these trends and ensure their relevance to modern society.

The "Indirect Eight Immortals" is a decorative motif that uses flowers as the primary decoration, instead of simply placing the symbols of the Eight Immortals. Through artistic processing, the emblems of the Eight Immortals are connected through knots and flowers to form a regimental floral motif, enhancing the decorative effect. In some cases, seawater is used as the overall background, and the symbols of the Eight Immortals are floated on the seawater. There are two types of Indirect Eight Immortals motifs: complex compositions that twist and curl flowers and ribbons to increase the layers and variations of the motifs, and the use of motifs to make otherwise monotonous objects visually rich and complete. Through the clever combination of things, ribbons, and motifs, the eight different objects become a unified system.

Although the decorative details of the "Indirect Eight Immortals" pattern are more complicated and cumbersome, and not quite in line with modern design requirements, it can be simplified and refined by highlighting the characteristics of the practice and the focus of the design. For example, a simple design with only a single layer or a single branch of bands and flowers showing the markings, it is better adapted to the needs of modern design and decoration. A good rhythm and decorative effect can be achieved by exaggerating the deformation, stereotyping and regularising the eight vessels, or letting the eight vessels form a rhythm.

The simplified method has several advantages. Firstly, it provides greater clarity by emphasizing the essential elements while omitting the less important ones. This approach enhances the visual impact and allows for quicker comprehension. Secondly, the symbolic qualities of particular objects are refined, enhancing their respective characteristics. These eight symbols possess immense power and can transform evil into good luck. Thirdly, the simplified method allows for imagination among viewers, making it more inclusive. Finally, the simplification improves the adaptability of the "Indirect Eight Immortals" pattern design. As a decorative technique in arts and crafts, the simplified design caters to the requirements of diverse decorative components of a product. It also circumvents restrictions imposed by modern industrial production materials and techniques (Yang, 2013). Therefore, it allows for a wider application of traditional patterns in product design and a more extensive promotion of the "Indirect Eight Immortals" culture.

Establishing a spiritual link between the traditional "Indirect Eight Immortals" culture and modern design

Traditional "Indirect Eight Immortals" motifs are subtle and elegant, conveying traditional Chinese auspicious symbolism. From colored pottery, bronze, porcelain, and jade to delicate fabrics, the pattern of the Eight Immortals has changed with the change of dynasties and history. Researchers believe updating traditional auspicious patterns is necessary to make them more appealing to modern audiences. Over time, aesthetic preferences have changed alongside societal shifts (Yang, 2013). To effectively apply these patterns in the present day, it is crucial to ensure they align with the aesthetic sensibilities of contemporary individuals. This may involve reconstructing, mutating, or innovating the graphic symbols used within these patterns. To reconstruct and redesign auspicious patterns, innovation is essential. To truly comprehend their original meaning and cultural significance, the encouraging routine must be revamped using innovative design principles that consider the evolution of the times, people's aesthetic preferences, and the attributes of design projects. This approach can prevent the mindless application of auspicious patterns while enhancing their practicality for daily use through increased rationality and precision. Innovation is necessary to reconstruct and redesign bright patterns. To fully understand their original meaning and cultural connotation, the encouraging routine needs to be redesigned based on innovative design principles that consider the development of the times, people's aesthetic characteristics, and the attributes of design projects. This approach can help avoid the rote application of auspicious patterns while making them more practical for everyday use through improved rationality and accuracy.



Figure 2 Qing Daoguang famille-rose enamelled 'Eight Immortals' dish

Incorporating the "Indirect Eight Immortals" pattern into traditional designs helps people understand its significance in everyday life. Combining traditional auspicious

patterns' symbolism with modern trends can create a code that bridges the gap between the two worlds. For example, by using harmonic stems in the design, people can more easily comprehend the meaning behind the gourd pattern, which symbolizes fortune and longevity in Chinese culture. However, decoding the symbolism of the "Indirect Eight Immortals" pattern is more complex, as the eight objects on their own hold no particular significance. Only when they are arranged together do their specific symbols emerge, associated with health, longevity, and good fortune. Therefore, understanding these symbols requires linking the figures to their meanings, making interpreting them more challenging than other auspicious motifs. Effective communication between traditional and modern life is crucial to ensure that the intention behind conventional designs like the "Indirect Eight Immortals" pattern is understood by everyday people. It's essential to consider the contemporary way of life and thought trends to establish a link with modern life. A code combining traditional auspicious patterns' symbolism with the new era of harmonic terrain can help modern people understand and appreciate them more easily. Combining harmonic stems makes it easier for everyday people to understand and appreciate the significance of the pattern of the gourd. This pattern symbolizes fortune and longevity in Chinese culture. However, understanding the symbolism of the "Indirect Eight Immortals" pattern is not as straightforward because the eight objects on their own do not have any special features. When they are organized together, they produce specific symbols linked to health, longevity, and good fortune. Understanding these symbols requires linking the eight figures to their respective meanings, making interpreting them more challenging than other auspicious motifs.

The Indirect Eight Immortals pattern is a traditional Chinese design that carries significant symbolic meaning. Understanding this pattern's composition and symbolism is essential to grasping its conventions. The symbolic meanings of the pattern represent the aspirations and expectations of contemporary society, making it a visual element that can be utilized to identify a corresponding traditional pattern. The fusion of traditional and contemporary design forms results in a profound appreciation of conventional culture among people.

Designers can create various styles by rearranging and composing traditional patterns using innovative design techniques. By incorporating conventional ways with solutions from visual aesthetics, product functionality, production technology, and more, designers can imbue the traditional "Indirect Eight Immortals" pattern with a rich cultural significance in modern product design. Individuals better accept this amalgamation of traditional and modern design forms, and it deepens their sense of identity with conventional culture. The composition of traditional patterns is actively borrowed, and different ways of rearranging them using various decorative techniques combined with innovative design practices result in different combinations of the same patterns and colors that renew a different style.

In conclusion, the "Indirect Eight Immortals" pattern is an integral component of

Chinese traditional culture with significant symbolic significance. By integrating this pattern with modern design techniques, designers can create innovative products with a profound cultural connotation while appealing to modern consumers.

Conclusion

The present study provides additional evidence concerning the creative design of the "Indirect Eight Immortals" culture based on the semiotics vision, which presents the culture in the form of symbols and uses the "Indirect Eight Immortals" culture to carry out creative design. The innovative design of the "Indirect Eight Immortals" culture based on semiotic vision is to present the culture in the form of symbols. When the creative design of "Indirect Eight Immortals" culture is carried out, it is necessary to combine "form-meaning-word", retain the continuity of the cultural vein of "Indirect Eight Immortals", simplify the "Indirect Eight Immortals" pattern to highlight the focus of the design, and establish the spiritual link between the traditional culture of "Indirect Eight Immortals" and the modern design, so that we can create the excellent creative design products with a distinctive national style, a deep cultural heritage, and a leading fashion concept. Finally, several important limitations need to be considered; firstly, the collection of "Indirect Eight Immortals" patterns needs to find the most typical symbols with precise characteristics; secondly, in simplifying the "Indirect Eight Immortals" symbols and giving them modern meanings, we need to find the most distinctive symbols with clear characteristics. The evidence from this study suggests that the future modern design of traditional Chinese "Indirect Eight Immortals" motifs should start from the basic theory of semiotics and promote the development of traditional Chinese culture.

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