

# Application of the Beauty of Meaning in Chinese Sculpture Art

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**Abstract:** Chinese sculpturing is a significant form of expression in traditional Chinese art. Like other traditional art forms, Chinese sculpture art is also deeply influenced by the philosophical ideas of its predecessors, striving for the beauty of subtle and implicit meaning in artistic expression. This article provides a brief interpretation of the beauty of meaning in Chinese sculpture art, with a focus on analyzing its application in Chinese sculpture art. This article analyzes the role of the beauty of meaning in the development of Chinese sculpture art from the fields of lines, blocks, surfaces, spatial patterns, and freehand brushwork, to provide reference and inspiration for relevant artists and sculpture designers.

**Keywords:** Beauty of meaning; Chinese sculpture art; Integrated applications

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## 1. Introduction

The beauty of meaning is an essential component of traditional Chinese aesthetics, and it is the artistic aesthetic ideal realm gradually formed by the Chinese nation's thousands of years of artistic aesthetic exploration<sup>[1]</sup>. According to historical records, the beauty of meaning first appeared during the Wei, Jin, Southern, and Northern Dynasties, and was officially established in the Tang Dynasty. The so-called beauty of meaning is a manifestation of the blending of emotions and scenery. Specifically, it utilizes the imagery of objective things to depict and convey the artist's thoughts and emotions embedded in the work. The beauty of meaning is an abstract form of thought and emotion manifested through various artistic works. Applying the beauty of meaning to Chinese sculpture art can deepen the ideological connotation of sculpture works through lines, blocks, surfaces, structural spatial distribution, freehand brushwork, and so on, triggering emotional resonance among viewers, and thus deepening the artistic appeal and value of sculpture works.

## 2. Beauty of meaning in Chinese sculpture art

Chinese traditional art has gone through thousands of years of practical exploration and has formed its system, with significant differences from Western art categories, among which the pursuit of the beauty of meaning is

one of the typical differences <sup>[2]</sup>. Chinese art creators and theorists throughout history have developed unique insights into the beauty of meaning. Taking Sikong Tu in the Tang Dynasty as an example, he fully showcases the beauty of elegance and meaning without using a single character. Chinese sculpture, as a significant carrier of traditional Chinese art, has a consistent pursuit of beauty and art, and the beauty of meaning is also an important characteristic of Chinese sculpture art. Artists strive for the beauty of meaning in both ideological communication and artistic creation techniques. By using implicit techniques to express the unique beauty of sculpture art, it brings viewers a unique aesthetic experience.

### **3. Application of the beauty of meaning in Chinese sculpture art**

#### **3.1. Applications in lines**

In traditional Chinese sculpture art, lines play a crucial role and are the basic constituent elements of sculpture design <sup>[3]</sup>. Therefore, sculpture art is also known as static line art. Through careful observation, it can be seen that lines can be seen everywhere in Chinese sculpture works, and the reasonable use of lines can also convey the thoughts and emotions of creators. As an example, Zhou Guozhen's sculpture of Old Yuan plays a role in blending emotions and scenes, using lines to convey the author's thoughts and emotions to the audience perfectly <sup>[4]</sup>. The author uses simple lines to carve the shape of apes, forming a more natural texture. Long or short and thick or thin lines convey emotions such as masculinity, feminine beauty, and boldness. In addition, in terms of facial depiction, the author adopts a technique of contrasting with the torso, using detailed lines to make the expressions of apes more vivid, showcasing the weathered demeanor of apes to the viewers. At the same time, utilizing the beauty of meaning in the use of lines in Chinese sculpture art also conveys the author's lament for the short duration of life.

#### **3.2. Application in blocks and surfaces**

Chinese sculpture art belongs to three-dimensional art, which is a sculpture with a sense of volume. By finely dividing and combining sculpture blocks and surfaces, artistic connotations and aesthetic values are expressed, such as the majestic mountains and rivers in the sculpture, the gentle and peaceful lake water, and so on. Artists weave the beauty of meaning in Chinese sculpture art and use the technique of freehand brushwork for sculpting <sup>[5]</sup>. The beauty of the meaning conveyed in Chinese sculpture blocks and surfaces, also known as the meaning of objects, belongs to an indirect artistic expression technique. Creators convey themes through things with similar characteristics and use exaggeration, deformation, personification, and other techniques to enhance the artistic appeal of sculptural works. For example, the stone lion sculpture is a typical representative. The image of Chinese stone lions is often depicted as holding their heads and chests high, striding confidently, and being placed at the entrance of the imperial palace and in official attire. These stone lions are used to reflect the authority of these places. Taking Yao Yongkang's Century Children as an example, the use of block and surface combinations enriches the overall sense of hierarchy in the work <sup>[6]</sup>.

#### **3.3. Application in spatial patterns**

Chinese sculpture art also emphasizes spatial sense. As a form of three-dimensional space modeling art, applying the beauty of meaning requires attention to handling the relationship between entities and the environment well and handling the internal spatial relationships of entities well. Taking Meng Qingqing's work Pot God as an example, this work breaks people's common sense understanding of the shape of pots and integrates it with the surrounding environment in art <sup>[7]</sup>. By utilizing the natural twisting state of the handle and the hollow circle formed by the pot body, as well as the upward-sloping part of the spout, an inverted triangular structure is formed. The effect of combining reality and virtuality between the entire pot and the surrounding

spatial environment is thought-provoking <sup>[8]</sup>.

### **3.4. Application in artistic expression techniques**

In the pursuit of the beauty of meaning, Chinese sculpture art is not only reflected in artistic ideas but also various artistic techniques <sup>[9]</sup>. Through a variety of artistic expression techniques, vivid sculpture artworks have been created, presenting unique artistic connotations of traditional Chinese aesthetics. Applying the beauty of meaning to the expression techniques of Chinese sculpture art mainly includes the below.

#### **3.4.1. Application of symbolic techniques in Chinese sculpture art**

Symbolic techniques mainly rely on the correlation between objects to convey abstract thoughts and emotions, making sculpture works more meaningful and triggering emotional resonance among viewers <sup>[10]</sup>. In Chinese sculpture art, the use of symbolic techniques can achieve the effect of conveying great truths through small events. Taking the tomb of Huo Qubing as an example, it is an important embodiment of traditional Chinese sculpture art <sup>[11]</sup>. The designer uses fierce beasts such as tigers and wild boars to express the atmosphere of mountains and wilderness, integrating artistic connotations with natural scenery. The beauty of the meaning is condensed and implicit <sup>[12]</sup>.

#### **3.4.2. Application of contrast techniques in Chinese sculpture art**

The technique of contrast is an indirect portrayal, which is more implicit than a direct portrayal and more persuasive when compared to things. The technique of contrast is often applied in Buddhist sculpture, such as the contrast between one Buddha and two Bodhisattvas, highlighting the solemnity and authority of the Buddha and effectively conveying the image of the Buddha to the viewers <sup>[13]</sup>.

#### **3.4.3. Application of indirect descriptive techniques in Chinese sculpture art**

The so-called indirect descriptive technique is an artistic expression method opposite to the direct descriptive technique <sup>[14]</sup>. In the process of depicting things, it does not take things as the starting point, but highlights the characteristics of things through portrayal, playing a role in setting off the subject <sup>[15]</sup>. The application of indirect descriptive techniques of the beauty of meaning in Chinese sculpture art does not lead to the problem of dominance but also evokes associations <sup>[16]</sup>. Taking the Terracotta Warriors as an example, although the Terracotta Warriors do not show the image of Qin Shi Huang, viewers can imagine the image of him through the huge Terracotta Warriors army <sup>[17]</sup>. The beauty contained is more subtle and emotionally impactful.

## **4. Conclusion**

In summary, Chinese sculpture works are not only an important manifestation of beautifying urban environments and enhancing social and cultural atmosphere, but also the expression of thoughts and emotions of sculpture artists. They are a concrete manifestation of historical events and ideological concepts <sup>[18]</sup>. Reasonable use of sculpture's modeling language, material properties, and so on, can achieve ideal artistic presentation effects. However, due to the influence of Western architectural aesthetics, the current sculpture field in China has encountered the problem of innovative development constraints. Some artists, to pursue the beauty of meaning, magnify their aesthetic concepts, and ultimately present artistic effects that are counterproductive, making it difficult for viewers to understand the artistic connotations involved <sup>[19]</sup>. Reasonably applying the beauty of meaning to Chinese sculpture art is not only an important path to inherit and develop traditional aesthetic art but also can express the authors' thoughts and emotions contained in the work more vividly

through traditional craftsmanship and techniques. Only in this way can Chinese sculpture remain relevant in the field of art <sup>[20]</sup>.

## Disclosure statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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