

Study on the Modeling Characteristics of Ma's Sugar Blowing Art in Hua County of Henan Province

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Abstract: Sugar sculpture is not only influenced by regional characteristics, but also followed the traditional folk culture. The modeling theme of sugar sculpture is often based on people's daily life. And its theme is rich and diverse, the model characteristics are various. According to the different production process and regional characteristics, the modeling theme of blow modeling is also very different. The sugar blowing art works of Ma have a wide range of theme and diverse shapes, which can be seen everywhere in daily life. However, after the handicrafts people deal with them by means of simplification, generalization and exaggeration, they has become the work with great artistic charm. Although the modeling characteristics of Ma's sugar blowing are diverse, they can be summarized into several categories, such as concise image, profound meaning, simple color and so on.

Keywords: Ma Sugar Blowing art; Modeling Characteristics

1. Concise image

The handicrafts of Ma sugar blowing do not directly simulate and copy what they see when they work, but observe life on the basis of the practice of daily life, refine and summarize by relying on their own experiences, and create their own aesthetics via their hands. Their way of expression is simple, images are concise and summarized. There is no other decoration with very few colors. Sugar blowing art attracts people with its material and modeling characteristics. Craftsmen highlight the main features of shaping the image through perception and appeal, and embody excellent creativity and expressiveness in their works at same time. Among the modeling features of Ma sugar blowing, the most prominent is the similarity of shape. The image will not have many red tape details, it is bold to simplify and omit, highlight its main features and perfectly reproduce the blow molding objects. For example, the most important feature of deer is its antlers. The body of deer should not be too fat or thinner, because deer are very dexterous; the spine and horn are also the prominent features of cattle; the most important features of pigs are mouth, ears and tail; the beard and horn are same important to sheep, etc. Due to the factors of materials, the modeling characteristics of Ma sugar blowing must be completed in a short time, and then form the characteristics of concise generalization, which makes the works pay more attention to shape and charm. Their shapes are exaggerated at will, vigorous and simple, each shape is lively and vivid. Some of them take an animal as the theme and can shape different, such as cattle, bull, buffalo, yellow cattle, running cattle, pulling cattle, twisting cattle, etc., and horses, galloping horses, war horses, flying horses, etc. The sugar blowers must know these characteristics of animals clearly and ensure that the proportion of body and limbs is coordinated in order to show the works' essence and spirit. The shape is changeable, reaching the realm of lifelike and vivid image. What's more incredible is that skilled sugar blower can still blow magical works with their eyes covered or even hands on back.



Figure 1 Cattle

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doi: 10.18282/l-e.v10i4.2504

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In common cognition, cattle are mostly cultivated which symbolizing hard work. In order to war people to combine hands with brains, they often match mice and cattle. In the sugar blowing art, the combined image of “God mouse riding cattle” often appears. In this image, the theme modeling of cattle also includes images of barbarian cow, bull, buffalo and so on. The more common image in Ma sugar blowing is “barbarian cattle”, which is simple and honest in shape. Its main features are spine, horn, mouth and so on. Its image is shaped by the convex spine of the cattle, the strong horn and the big mouth. The two legs in front are parallel and the two legs in back are curved with the dynamic of hard work. This description vividly shapes the image of the cow with diligence, simplicity without regrets (in Figure 1).

Another famous animal dragon is not only a zodiac sign, but also a symbol of auspiciousness in Chinese traditional culture. It is a legendary animal image without unified standard. Its main features are scales, dragon claws, dragon whiskers, etc. The dragon symbolizes power, status, success and honor in Chinese traditional culture. It is closely connected with everything in China and is expressed in most art forms. The image of the dragon is exaggerated, concise in the Ma sugar blowing art. The sugar blow molding of the Dragon uses two pieces of sugar with different color, one is red, the other is the primary color of maltose. Make a long dragon body with the primary color of maltose, then make a long scale like a horse’s mane with red maltose, stick the scale on the back. Add two thin and long whiskers on the faucet, and finally a long dragon mouth extending to the distance. A flying dragon appeared vividly. The overall shape is lively and its image is very realistic (shown in Figure 2).

2. Profound implication

Every work created by sugar blowing artists has a certain good meaning more or less. A seemingly ordinary piece of sugar is presented before shown for people with the process of being blown, pulled, kneaded and modeled by craftsmen. A sugar blowing work is not only edible, but also its ornamental ability can not be ignored. It can even be said that its ornamental ability is much greater than its edible function. When people watch these works, they often think about what the moral they represent. Although they simply express the modeling characteristics of the creative object at the time of creation, people will naturally associate the moral with folk customs after seeing them. For example, the Chinese zodiac, as a long-standing folk symbol, is often regarded as a mascot and expresses good wishes. It is an auspicious animal with symbolic color. Deer is often called Xuanlu, which means good luck and longevity (Fig.3). Pigs often express golden pig to send treasure; Gourd mostly express longevity and well-being; Pomegranates often express happiness and auspiciousness with the meaning of more children and blessings, etc.



Figure 2 Dragon



Figure 3 Deer

Deer is the homonymous word with Lu in Chinese, symbolizes auspiciousness, longevity and well-being. It is often combined with plant gourd in Ma sugar blowing, indicating prosperity and longevity. Common shapes include “Double deer offering treasure” and “Xuanlu giving fortune” (Fig.3). The dragon in the Chinese zodiac is a symbol of auspiciousness in Chinese traditional culture and also is a symbol of power, status and honor. People often regard the dragon as a scared, auspicious object. The shape of dragon in Ma sugar blowing often represents the beautiful meaning of supreme authority and prosperity. The dragon is tightly related to everything in the world of China, it is reflected in the shape of Ma sugar blowing, and it also expresses the artistic charm of Chinese traditional dragon culture. The traditional sugar blowing art comes from folk culture and reflects folk life. The yearning of people for a better life and their piety to the gods all affect the theme and shape of sugar blowing art with strong traditional folk color. These themes and shapes represent the simple and pious wishes of the artists and the spiritual sustenance of the working people. The modeling characteristics of Ma sugar blowing are closely connected with folk life, carrying people’s good wishes and representing people’s longing for future life. Each work has its own good moral, representing hope, auspiciousness and wishes.

3. Simple color

The color of Ma sugar blowing is very simple, but it is also very particular. This is because the color of maltose is yellow, so it is only simply matched with red. Its color forms are mainly divided into two types: one is the yellow color of raw, and the other is based on the primary color, supplemented by red. The latter form is used in combination, which is changeable and in sharp contrast. The raw color of maltose is simple yellow, which can shape the works bright and strong integrity. Except these it focuses on capturing the image of animal. The shape is lively, simple and lovely. With the primary color of maltose as the main color and red as ornament, the color will be particularly bright and dazzling. This collocation makes the color very full and creates an eye-catching and harmonious color effect. The sugar blowing arts pay great attention to the application of color and are good at skillfully using color. Red and yellow form a sharp contrast, which is rich, colorful and attractive^[1].

The color in Ma sugar blowing is used with edible pigment, also known as rouge powder and food additives. Any color can be adjusted by it. However, due to the particularity of sugar blowing art materials, it is not necessary to have too many colors. It is bright enough to match red with the primary color of the materials. The color matching of Ma sugar blowing is mainly red. First, because of the brightness of red, matching with the natural color of raw materials gives people a simple sense of hierarchy. The matching of black, green and yellow is neither bright nor good-looking. Second, red is often called "Chain Red". This color represents optimism and enthusiasm since ancient times. It is a festive and auspicious color and belongs to Chinese customs. Ma sugar blowing is decorated with red color. The combination of red and yellow makes the color of sugar figurine much more bright, fresh, rich and changeable, giving people a natural and simple visual beauty. For example, the image of the dragon, the blow molding of the dragon uses two pieces of sugar in different colors, one is red, the other is the raw color of maltose. The primary color of maltose is used to make a long dragon body, and the red is used to make a long scale like a horse's mane, which is pasted in the back of the dragon. Then two thin and long dragon whiskers are added to the head, and finally a long dragon mouth extending to the distance. At last a flying dragon appeared vividly. The overall shape is lively and vivid and the image is very realistic.^[2]

4. Conclusion

The Ma sugar blowing art in Hua county of Henan province comes from the folk and its inheritance and development is rooted in the folk. It is an art created by the working people. Ma sugar blowing has profound meaning, flexibility and changeability. The overall shape is concise, simple and lively. It has obtained a new height in the shape with clear dynamic, static and lifelike at the same time.

References:

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[2] Shujuan Liu. Sweet Memory: The Artistic Features of Tianmen Sugar Sculpture and Its Transmission. *Art & Design*. 2012 (4) : 119.

Images source: Figure 1 (left) and 2 are got from *Henan impression*, the other pictures all are provided by author or the interviewees.