

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

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Abstract: Ma's sugar blowing art in Huaxian County, Henan Province is a typical representative of sugar sculpture art in the Central Plains. It is an important part of intangible cultural heritage and an indispensable part of local folk activities. In the long process of historical development, such art truly expresses local folk customs and living habits and uses simple blowing, pulling, kneading, and sculpture to create various themes. The creative content of the sugar blowing art is the animals and plants that can be seen everywhere in life, which is closely related to the life of the working people.

Keywords: Ma's Sugar Blowing art ; Manufacturing Process ; Subject Content

1. Manufacturing Technology of Ma's Sugar Blowing Art

The raw material in Ma's sugar blowing art is maltose, which is boiled with corn and is yellowish-brown. Some materials will add red edible pigment for standby. In making progress, heat the sugar to soften and shape it through blowing, molding, kneading, pulling and other operations. In the production process of sugar blowing, attention is paid to the cooperation of hands, eyes, heart and spirit. The inheritance of sugar blowing technology depends on word of mouth and understanding.

1.1 Fabrication Materials and Tools

Maltose is the preferred material for sugar blowing. The production of maltose should go through several procedures, such as material selection, boiling sugar dilution, heat, and so on. In the early days, sweet potato powder was used to boil maltose. Because of its dark color and bitter taste, most of the current raw materials are corn and barley mixed. The corn is ground into powder, and the barley is sprouted. It will have the function of fermentation after growing into buds. It is mixed with corn grits, stirred, steamed at high temperature, fermented in a water tank, and converted into sugar for about ten hours. After boiling into thin sugar, it also needs secondary processing. And it can be mixed with water, white sugar and honey to increase sweetness, and then boiled and mixed. The cooking process must master the fire and keep stirring. After boiling, the temperature can reach 80 or 90 degrees. Different regions, seasons and temperature differences between morning and evening directly affect the consistency of thin sugar with flexible operations.

The biggest tool used in such blowing art is the furnace for heating sugar syrup. Mr. Ma Jinle recalled: "In the 1960s and 1970s, they were all sugar blowers walking around the streets with a burden. At that time, the tools were relatively simple. They usually carried a rectangular cabinet with a small stove on it, and then supported a pot with syrup. Under the cabinet, there were several small drawers for raw materials, tools and charcoal, and a wooden frame with many small holes on it for inserting and blowing sugar figurines. In the 1980s and 1990s, with bicycles, these tools were put on bicycles, and we rode around. "[1] The current equipment is simpler than before. It is a small electric stove with a pot for boiling sugar syrup. It is generally divided into two parts. Because some sugar works only have the natural color of raw materials, both parts are placed with the boiled sugar syrup; Some sugar people add other colors, so some of them put boiled sugar syrup and some with pigment. Now, this tool is easy to heat and more portable.

1.2 Manufacturing Skills and Processes

Sugar blowers pay attention to the cooperation of hands, eyes, heart, spirit, fire and other essentials. The speed should be fast, the temperature should be moderate in the blowing process, and the trick of pores is to knead sugar evenly. It is easy to knead without force. The key technology of the sugar blower is blowing and pinching. The craftsman uses a small wooden stick to wrap a little sugar syrup, pinches a simple shape with his hand, and then blows it gently. The sugar syrup blows more and more like a balloon. With the cooperation of hand pulling, pinching and pulling, he shapes various shapes while blowing. Soon, a lifelike animal or plant shape appears. The production of marshmallow blowing sugar generally has the following processes: 1 First stir the sugar syrup with appropriate temperature evenly, then wrap a little sugar syrup with a small wooden stick, put it in your hand and knead it back and forth like noodles to form a ball, then gently press a pit with your thumb, then close the small pit, finally pull out the slender tube and pinch out the hollow "tail"; 2. Blow evenly inward through the hollow tail to form a thin hollow oblate ball, and then gradually shape it with both hands; 3. To be blow-molded, you can use bamboo sticks, scissors and other tools to make animal eyes, mouths and noses; 4. After the sugar man solidifies and hardens, break the blowing tail, and finally stick it on a bamboo stick or stick with sugar.

It has two very important tricks in the production process of blowing sugar. First, the raw materials should be good enough with the appropriate temperature. The best maltose shall be selected for further progress. The temperature in the production process shall not be too high or too low. When the temperature is high, the maltose is soft and can not be shaped, and when the temperature is low, the maltose is too hard and can not be shaped. Therefore, it is very important to boil the dilute sugar. Sugar blowing pays attention to both seasons and regions. The best season for sugar blowing is generally from October to April of the next year. During this period, the temperature is low, it is easy to set, and the weather is dry and not easy to melt. Compared with the south, sugar blowing is more suitable in the north. The weather in the south is humid and the sugar is easy to melt. The environment of sugar blowing people in the north is good. What is more difficult for sugar blowers to master is that the sugar pulled out each time should be soft and hard, and the degree of soft and hard should be determined by the difficulty of modeling. There is no fixed number. People who have been engaged in this craft for a long time know the soft and hard as the back of their hands. Second, blow while molding and use gas properly. When blowing, we should grasp the strength, pay attention to the priorities, cooperate with the different actions of both hands, and quickly complete the modeling before the sugar hardens. This is the key to the production of sugar blowing man, which can not be taught by language, and the producer needs to ponder and experience through practice. The sugar blower is not simple as looks. It takes years of practice for craftsmen to have very skilled techniques and skills. Because the temperature of the sugar syrup is very high, sugar blowers often have thick calluses on their fingers, and sometimes a piece of skin will be burned off^[2].

Therefore, the manufacturing technology and process of Ma's sugar blowing are very particular. Due to the characteristics of the material sugar syrup, the manufacturing process should not be long. It has to be completed in about a minute, and some times are even shorter. Once it is not completed in a short time, the sugar syrup will slowly harden due to the change of temperature, so there is no way to shape it. The production process of Ma's sugar blowing man mainly focuses on the hand (the hand should be fast, accurate and skillful), the eye (the eye should see the position), the heart (the heart should be peaceful and know well), the gas (the gas should be uniform, and the hand and gas should be well grasped), the fire (the fire should be stable), and the temperature (the temperature of the sugar should be well matched with the temperature and humidity of the weather). This is the uniqueness of Ma's sugar blowing technology.

2. Subject matter and content

The subjects of Ma's sugar blowing are animals and plants. Animal Themes mainly include the twelve zodiac series and animals with auspicious meanings. Plants include gourd, pepper, corn, radish, apple, pomegranate and other simple themes. There are two forms of these themes: single form and combined form. Some animals can shape a variety of images, such as cattle, bullfighting, buffalo, yellow bull, etc; Another example is the horse, including galloping horse, warhorse, flying horse, etc.

2.1 Animal Theme

Animal themes are mainly the common shapes of birds and animals, deer, elephants, camels and dinosaurs in our life, among which the most representative is the zodiac series. The animal modeling is vivid and highly generalized to blow out the three-dimensional image of animals. Its modeling is exaggerated and generalized. The freehand brushwork shows the different personalities of animals, which are lifelike, lively and simple, and contains rich folk characteristics. In addition to the single animal image with a simple shape, there are many combined images with complex plots and shapes, such as bullfight, rat stealing elixir, horse stepping on flying swallow, Shuanglu offering treasure, mouse stealing oil, above the moon, etc.

The mouse is a common animal image in sugar blowing art. It mostly appears in the form of a combination. A single mouse image mostly expresses the zodiac signs. Most of the images of mice in Ma's sugar blowing are inherited. They are based on folk stories that are both interesting and auspicious, and deeply loved by people. Their shapes are simple and summarized without cumbersome details. Their main characteristics are prominent. For example, the prominent characteristics of mice are tail, beard, eyes, etc. The combined images dominated by mice include mice stealing oil, the divine mouse riding the cow, the divine mouse stealing the elixir, the mouse dragging the gourd, five mice making trouble in Kaifeng, two mice making trouble in spring, etc. among them, the most typical is mice stealing oil. Chinese folklore tells people the truth of doing things. Mice often move frequently at midnight, so they are also called mice, It symbolizes intelligence. "Mice stealing oil" depicts a mouse with its head stuck into the oil tank because of greedy eating. This image is divided into two parts. Below is a red oil tank with a round high neck and small mouth. A mouse is lying on the top, standing on its back with two feet, its tail tilted high, and its head is deeply buried in the small mouth, which vividly shows the image of mouse greedy eating. The whole shape is concise and interesting.

The zodiac is the most representative theme of Ma's sugar blowing art. The zodiac is a symbol of Chinese traditional culture. Every sign and every work has its symbolic significance. Mice symbolize intelligence; Cattle symbolize diligence; The tiger symbolizes majesty and grandeur; The rabbit symbolizes caution; The dragon symbolizes strength; The snake symbolizes softness; Horses symbolize progress; Sheep symbolize tolerance; Monkeys symbolize flexibility; Chicken symbolizes stability; Dogs symbolize loyalty; Pigs symbolize freedom^[3]. The twelve animals in Ma's sugar blowing not only represent the zodiac signs, but also represent people's personalities. They are not only an indispensable theme element in the sugar blowing art, but also an indispensable image in other folk arts. In addition, there are other animal images, such as giraffe, sika deer, elephant, camel, and so on.

2.2 Plant Theme

There are not many plant themes in marshmallow sugar blowing. They are common fruits and vegetables in life, such as gourd, pepper, radish, apple, pomegranate, etc. the most typical plant shape is the gourd, which is often combined with other animals. The images created in combination with mice include "God mouse stealing fairy pill", "double mouse holding gourd", and the images created in combination with deer include "double deer offering treasure", etc. Recently, Mr. Ma Diankun, the inheritor of Ma's sugar blowing, made a new creation by combining the magic mouse stealing the elixir with the double deer offering treasure. Mr. Ma made up an interesting story for him. The deer offered treasure to the fairy, carrying a gourd. Halfway, the little mouse saw the gourd and

thought there was an elixir in it, so the little mouse wanted to steal it, Then the deer looked back and found the little mouse. He said to the little mouse, this is not what you eat. This is my treasure. As soon as the little mouse listened, he came down obediently. Among them, the gourd is an auspicious symbol. The deer presents the gourd as a treasure. When the little mouse sees the gourd, he wants to steal it. He vividly depicts the greedy and interesting image of the little mouse, which expresses people's longing for a better life. The creation of this image consists of three parts. The first part is the image of the deer, jumping forward one by one and hastily offering treasure. Its most prominent feature is the antlers; The second part is the gourd, which is held on the back by the deer. The shape of the gourd is very similar to the Arabic numeral 8. It is convex up and down, deep and concave in the middle, and the long branches and stems are towering; The third part is the image of the mouse, wrapped around the gourd with the whole body. The whole shape is simple and clear, but each image is lifelike, lively and interesting.

The subject matter of marsh blowing sugar is mostly animals and plants. So far, there is no subject matter form of characters. I believe that with the development of the times, the subject matter of marsh blowing sugar will be more colorful. Hua county has a profound accumulation of traditional culture and carries the essence of cultural connotation. These themes and contents are often seen and heard by craftsmen in life. They shape them with simple images, without affectation, red tape and complexity. They are just simple shapes, but they shape each image vividly.

3. Conclusion

The art of Ma's sugar blowing in Hua county, Henan province comes from the folk, and its inheritance and development are rooted in the folk. It is an art created by the working people. Therefore, its theme is attached to the common animal and plant modeling in natural life. A wide variety of themes have created the rich and changeable modeling of such art. Its unique production techniques add different artistic charm. Ma's sugar blowing art has profound meaning, flexibility and changeability, and the overall shape is concise, general and lively.

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