

Digital Calligraphy in Asia: New Approaches to Chinese calligraphy¹

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Abstract

Chinese calligraphy is one of the most important arts in the world. It could also be said it is the vital to Chinese culture. However, as brush writing has gradually become obsolete, Chinese calligraphy has lost its most practical and basic function. Many Asian calligraphers, artists and scholars have dedicated themselves to modernize traditional calligraphy. Because of their efforts, Chinese calligraphy now has a new life. Its functions and role have changed: from the usual “depiction” to that of strong “expression”. Calligraphy is not only a way for Asian people to record, exchange and transmit knowledge, but also has become a visual form of cultural signification. It has also gained many different visual expressions: people use different materials, modern skills and digital techniques to reproduce or display this traditional art. Now, Chinese calligraphy, once a remote and dying art, has come to re-appear

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in various new forms in everyday life. In this paper, firstly the modern trends of Chinese calligraphy are depicted in order to show a panorama of Chinese calligraphy today. Then there are two new aspects included to demonstrate how Chinese calligraphy is applied in the modern design fields, and also, how these new concepts have emerged in contemporary art. Finally, three new features are listed to illustrate how digital calligraphy differs from traditional methods. Digitalization is an inevitable trend in the future. However, from these fresh approaches in calligraphy described in this paper, it can be seen that via the power of digital technology, this ancient art still thrives in these digital times.

Introduction

Since computers generated ‘digits’ to function, digitalization is almost inevitable in many areas of daily life. From digital telephone lines, digital printings to digital television, many areas involved in information, communication and design have been digitalized (Gordon 2002, 307; Skopec 2003). After being digitized, all data, whether it is in the form of words, numbers, images, can be stored, recorded, transmitted and utilized through a broad range of technologies more widely and efficiently. It is obvious that “digitalize your life” is not just an advertising slogan any more. In the design field, more and more designers have discovered this irresistible trend and computerized their design work in order to survive. Calligraphy, in 2-dimensional graphics, web sites and other design media, has been digitalized, too. This “digital calligraphy”, which is defined as both creating via computer technology, using such means as software and digital panels/brushes, and recording/transferring, by using scanner or other devices, these ancient calligraphy works into digital data, are consequently closer to modern life than the traditional calligraphy that only existed in museums. However, these new applications do not just transfer calligraphy from paper to screen without any change, but rather encompass all traditional values, contemporary thinking and modern technology. Designers need to dedicate themselves to a more thorough historical and fundamental

understanding of calligraphy in order to adapt the traditional aesthetics and skills accordingly to meet the demands of this modern technology.

Modern Trends in Chinese calligraphy

Chinese calligraphy, the most revered form of traditional Chinese art, has been threatened by new writing instruments, improvement of typing and copying processes and different concept of education. Modern people use the fountain pen, ball-pen and digital writing tools that are far more portable than the traditional brush, ink-stick and ink-stone. The Chinese typewriter is also good enough to be used for all commercial, political and personal needs now. Meanwhile, the modern mass education system nowadays aims to give children multifarious knowledge instead of only concentrating on practicing calligraphy for several years. These significant changes have extremely threatened the survival of traditional calligraphy. However, many calligraphers, scholars and artists have been loath to relinquish tradition. They have used different ways to modernize this ancient art in order to maintain it. Because of their dedication, Chinese calligraphy now shows modern tendencies, which in turn offers some insights into civilization today. This section lists three modern trends in Chinese calligraphy existing today.

1. Using modern tools or technology to present calligraphy

Some scholars believe that even with the use of modern writing instruments the beauty of traditional calligraphy can still survive. The Hong Kong calligrapher and artist, Wang, Chih po, stated that with a fountain-pen or ball-pen, it is quite possible for us to compose characters and calligraphic pieces suggestive of the styles of the old masters, if we are familiar with their formal aspects (Chen 1966, 272). There is no reason to abandon a standard of good calligraphy, such as notable stroke arrangements and character structures, when using modern writing tools. Wang Chih-po has published a calligraphic manual teaching people how to

execute Chinese characters correctly and artistically with a pen (Chen 1966, 272). In addition, calligraphic type form, such as *Li Shu*, *Chen Shu*, *Hsing Shu*, is now available for use in conjunction with digital typewriters. When people use a computer to produce words or browse the Internet, traditional sense or aesthetic is still available on a digital screen. It is both convenient and practical for modern people to utilize traditional calligraphy and it can also provide good taste to the populace in these digital times.

2. Communication between Western and Eastern art

Western modern art supports some of the resources that today modernize Chinese calligraphy. Because of the various impacts that western abstract art, Surrealism and Constructionism, modern calligraphers have become more enterprising, daring and confident when they explore new calligraphic creation. This influence not only extends the possibility of expressing traditional calligraphy, but also globalizes this Chinese ancient art. Now, new forms of calligraphy, such as 'abstract calligraphy', are attracting the interest of a much wider international audience, most of whom are unable to read Chinese (Barrass 2003). This has resulted from the fact that some traditional rules of calligraphy have been broken and it has become an independent form of art in its own right instead of a communications tool. Even though most people do not understand the language of the Chinese characters, they do understand the language of art, that is, the quality of line, brushwork, construction, applications of ink, rhythm and composition. On the other hand, Chinese calligraphy also has its very own influence on western art. Many western artists have been inspired by Chinese calligraphy. Spanish painter Tapias said, "thanks to Chinese calligraphers who let us know this kind of emotional language from the way of writing". He came to realize Chinese calligraphy in the 1980's and paid special attention to the emotional catharsis from free movement(Cao 2001, 12). The art critic, Herbert(Cao 2001, 12), in his famous work "A Brief History of Modern Painting", claims that as an artistic movement, abstract expressionism is

only the expansion and elaboration of calligraphy”(Cao 2001). In a word, communication between western and eastern art evidently moves artists to inspire each other and helps narrow the gap in artistic taste. Combining western/eastern aesthetics is a significant trend in creating modern calligraphy today.

3. Trends in Chinese today

In China, from the extraordinary upheavals and reforms during the past fifty years, calligraphy has re-emerged with new vitality (Barrass 2003, 11). There are four distinct points of view broadly present the main styles of calligraphy practiced in China today- the Classical, Modernist, Neo-Classical and Avant-Garde (Barrass 2003, 15). Although these terms are not widely used and the appellations are not mutually exclusive, they are helpful tools in understanding the current trends in Chinese calligraphy.

Classical calligraphers advocate the continuation of ‘Grand Tradition’. They regard Chinese calligraphy as an art of exquisite refinement and the ultimate expression of Chinese culture. They admire the antiquarian flavor and erudite forms of expression. Therefore, they believe that calligraphers in the past provide a rich variety of themes on which the talented can perform endless variations. Practitioners should work within a recognized style then combine an excellence of technique with a mastery of poetry (Barrass 2003, 25).

The modernist movement emerged in the mid-1980s resulting from the change in society and political reform. The modernists believed that breaking free from the rigorous traditional rules of Chinese calligraphy could also become a means of creative expression. The exponents of Modernism had more painterly styles, including the way they structured words, the effects they used with ink and the compositions they created for whole pictures. It also be encouraged to draw inspiration from western countries (Barrass 2003, p). Although the movement itself only emerged in the mid-1980s, it created an entirely new genre in this art (Barrass 2003, 11).

Just like the Renaissance was inspired by the Romans, Neo-Classicists who worship tradition, seek to breathe life into classical ideas by setting them within a modern context. Although at the end of the twentieth century there still remained a good handful of Classical calligraphers in China, it was extremely difficult to maintain the tradition of this ancient art. Therefore, the decline in the number of truly Classical calligraphers was offset by the rise of many Neo-Classicists. They keep following the style of traditional calligraphy but utilize more modern skills. They particularly use the poetry of the Tang and Song dynasties to show emotion (Barrass 2003, 36).

The Avant-Garde genre, as the term suggests, explore new frontiers for their art ie a new artistic possibilities. Through the use of novel techniques, the creation of adventurous compositions and the expression of contemporary ideas, they seek to produce words that command attention in order to make people reflect upon a subject, or to challenge conventional thinking(Barrass 2003, 36). This Avant-Garde genre has remained controversial ever since its emergence in 1988. One of points of argument is that in general, the Avant-Gardists reject the use of legible characters. This arouses much debate amongst calligraphers. The critique from more traditionally-minded critics claims that works based on unreadable characters cannot, by definition, be calligraphy, but are instead abstract works of art. The artists of the Avant-Garde responded to this by asserting that the techniques and effects of calligraphy vary in many ways from those of Western abstract art and insisting that illegible characters should still be considered calligraphy(Barrass 2003, 36). The challenge that this kind of experimental calligraphy faces revolves around the nature of calligraphy itself.

New aspects of digital calligraphy application

1. Graphic design

In graphic design, letterforms play the most significant role in communication. They not only convey verbal information but also carry emotional and aesthetic information that has an

impact on how the verbal message is read(Neuenschwander 1993, 25). Resulting from certain developments in computer technology, various type forms are available. However, the uniform, stiff and routine type forms used in software now are insufficient for varied requirements in modern graphic design. Many designers make their own special letterforms to achieve particular effects.

1.1 Why designers apply calligraphy in graphic design

In graphic design, typefaces are considered as the voices of words and can determine visual tone of the text. Especially when pictorial images are inappropriate or do not exist, a heading, single word or letterform can be inventively used as a graphic focal point to create interest, evoke mood or set the scene for the rest of the design scheme(Gordon 2002,39). Calligraphy is one of the best letterforms to achieve this requirement because of its high-indivisibility. Modern people are keen to utilize calligraphy, the earliest ancestor of writing systems, because they oppose the unitary type-face(JAGDA 1997, 46). According to Neuenschwander's research(Neuenschwander 1993), hand-written letters have become more important in modern graphic design. "Hand-lettering can provide a sense of movement that is alien to type. It can be tailor-made to fill spaces in layouts that type could never satisfactorily occupy". Compared to machine-made type forms, "hand-writing letters can be designed and made to suit particular styles and can be conceived to contrast in style, weight and texture with any typeface"(Neuenschwander 1993, 13). Modern life is filled with diverse visual images. For the requirements of outstanding graphic design, designers started to tailor-make special letterforms to give their design works variety, and calligraphy is one of the essential type forms most frequently used today.

Secondly, from a cultural point of view, calligraphy integrates rich information. It exceeds the limits of merely serving as a communication tool. Modern designers use it as a symbol of culture or an image signifying tradition. Ever since Japanese graphic designers first used the

format structure of Latin letterforms for reference in their adoption of Chinese characters, Chinese designers have been encouraged to apply calligraphy in modern methods to project Chinese culture(Cao 2001, 8). Meanwhile, Japanese designers using calligraphy of katakana aroused in Chinese designers the desire to represent their own traditional writing. For example, for the last ten years now, many designers in Shenhen, the most international and modern city in China, were keen to use contemporary Western design concepts to rediscover beautiful and authentic aspects of China's past, and calligraphy is one of the most commonly used elements (Wang 1994). In addition, calligraphy in visual arts is widely practiced for the last ten years or so. As Boling Shao, the chief designer at Central Chinese Post Office, stated, "Unlike Western art, traditional Chinese painting has always had inscriptions in the form of calligraphy attached to it. In the end, the calligraphy became a part of the art form, inseparable from the painting itself". This tradition has influenced Shao in his stamps designs. "This gives me freedom to add inscription (in proper length and clear type) to stamp design, while at the same time not disrupting the visual balance and harmony of the whole piece", says Shao(Wang 1994). Because of both traditional and foreign impacts, calligraphy is now regarded as not only a letterform but also a cultural/traditional symbol.

Furthermore, linguistic issues have been emphasized when designers deal with global commercial design. Research into East Asian CIS' (corporate identity systems) reveals (Schmitt 1995), "because most consumers are not familiar with the English language, the names and symbols that businesses use to represent them in East Asia must be defined differently than in the West in order to appeal to regional clients and consumers". As for the booming and tough business competition in Asian countries in recent years, the research asserts, "a corporate identity must be sensitive to linguistic and cultural factors". More and more global companies research Asian's special linguistic writing system and consumer thought-perception and correspondingly re-name their products or renew their CIS before they launch their products and services into Asian markets. After reworking with special

Asian grammar, semantics, pragmatics and homonyms, designers need to integrate the name, logo and other elements of advertising in order to create a memorable image, and calligraphic lettering is one of the type forms they inevitably choose to attain this result. These designers acknowledge that, “calligraphy is a tradition all over Asia”(Schmitt 1995).

1.2 How designers use calligraphy in graphic design

Because of the varieties in modern people’s taste and the improvements in design tools, graphic designers can now develop their unrestrained design ideas more conveniently and freely. No matter whether they’re using computer-generated letters, geometric letters or calligraphic letters, designers need to manipulate all of these forms to catch people’s attention. There are three methods listed below that depict how designers apply calligraphy in graphic design.

1.2-1 Reproduction

For varying reasons, designers choose spontaneous calligraphy, usually as titles or main parts in layout, to convey messages. The subtle form and high-indivisibility of Chinese calligraphy easily creates dynamic and powerful compositions. Besides, because of its cultural/traditional image, calligraphy not only transmits verbal information in a legible way but also can be read on other, more intuitive and emotional levels. It can be adapted to create many sophisticated and exquisite visual effects in graphic design. For example, different calligraphic forms stimulate in the reader different feelings: *kai Shu*, *Li Shu* and *zhuan Shu* are essentially basic with classical, elegant, harmonious and symmetrical visual feelings. *xing shu*, *cao Shu* display active, lively and emotional images. Moreover, designers also develop various textures into calligraphic forms to evoke readers’ feelings or memories. For example, the uneven impression of wood evokes the feeling of early block-printed posters, whilst roughness in characters’ outlines suggests a stamped or sealed quality. Even merely formatting calligraphy as a typeface or adding only subtle variations can produce vivid effects

in graphic design.

Furthermore, calligraphy is used to represent the special characteristics in some unique languages in Asia. Chinese, for instant, has complex writing systems. Being an ideographic language, each character, the basic unit of Chinese, signifies an individual meaning. There are many homonyms present and similar characters with different meanings are also plentiful. Because visual patterns are essential in understanding this language, designers utilize calligraphy to present meaningful ideas. This is typically characteristic of this language. If design ideas based on this point can be developed well, the work can enable readers, especially who understand this language, to connect with the designer's insight.

1.2-2 Abstract and illegibility

Calligraphic letterforms are also used primarily as elements in modern graphic design. They are designed with greater freedom or used as images without verbal meaning. As was described previously, calligraphic letterforms communicate their literal content and emotional content at the same time. Here, designers can expand the illegible and intuitive aspects of calligraphy in an abstract way. From an historic point of view, the modernist design movement has had a significant impact on this design evolution (Neuenschwander 1993, 71; Cao 2001, 8; Gordon 2002,9): Modernism has abandoned revived historical styles. For example, the members of the Bauhaus School saw history as dead convention and preferred instead to redefine those conventions by rejecting them; Futurist poets and designers started to compound different typeface for added sentence imagery and apply free graphic composition; French Cassandre of the 1930s stressed the symbolic and recapitulative meanings of graphics, and integrated the characters with graphics; Swiss designers Amin-Hoffman stressed the basic elements of composition, such as dots and threads' arrangement. These various experiments in

Latin letterforms stimulated Chinese designers who broke the square characters into abstract and illegible expressions. Regardless whereby using a stroke of characters, compounding strokes, playing with the fixed language to adjust the readability between recognition and non-recognition, or applying traditional brush and ink effects in their graphics, calligraphy is an infinitely changeable method for modern designers.

1.2-3 Combination

In order to satisfy international tastes and attract universal audience, both Western and Eastern designers tend to create a fusion of styles. Combination is one of the most common design methods used for this purpose. Whether combining calligraphic characters with English words or utilizing representational imagery, designers build a bridge between western and eastern, aesthetics and function. Subtle combinations not only provide legibility to readers of different languages, but also indirect clues for approaching the meaning of design work. It captivates the readers' attention, arouses their curiosity, then provokes thought and allows them to discover the interesting meaning by themselves.

2. Web design

Several years ago, because HTML (Hypertext Mark-up Language) was the only tool for designers to take their works to the Web, and broadband access was not widely available, Web designers' scope for creating artistic ideas was very restrictive. They were forced to reduce the file size of images by shrinking them, reducing the number of colors and limiting visual effects in order to quicken the connections(DiNucci 1996). During this period, simple, easy and clear were the main characteristics that designers and users emphasized. People believed that the most successful sites on the Internet are also some of the ugliest, but were also the most user-friendly(Brock 2002, 53). However, this situation is now changing with the dramatic growth of using the Internet for commercial, daily life, academic and manifold other

purposes. Users care about the pleasing visual images and the enjoyment factor when they browse the Internet as well as user-friendliness. After the launching of DHTML (Dynamic Hypertext Mark-up Language) and other new software and tools, such as Shockwave, Dreamweaver, Firework, Flash and so on, designers are able to create a site with artistic images and smoothly animated, quick loading, moving, interactive works for the web. In this way, calligraphy and other Eastern aesthetics are applied to Web design and become accessible to readers from all over the world. The ability to influence the world is open to all(Brock 2002, 35).

2.1 Why designers apply calligraphy in web design

In the field of Web design, the using of calligraphic letterforms provides designers with two advantages. Firstly, with its vivid shapes and characteristics, calligraphy can be distinguished from other text forms easily. According to research(Skopec 2003, 135), the perception of text from a display screen is different than that of traditional media. In a display screen format, text is more often selectively glanced over, rather than read linearly. Therefore text needs to compete considerably more with visual impressions than is the case with print media. Using calligraphic letterforms as titles or main parts of content, can appropriately easily draw attention while the eyes scan the texts and are on the look out for prominent points.

Secondly, “experience” is one of the most important issues pertain to Web design world (Brock 2002). A well designed website does not need any explanation. Web designers, so-called “experience designers” or “interaction designers”, create a friendly environment and allow their visitors feel free to move around it with ease and the ability to get information, products and services or whatever else they want. This friendly environment is not only built on its physical usability, i.e. obvious functions and well-organized structure, but also on mental experience. As was described previously, calligraphic letterforms contain high cultural/traditional imagery. This allows designers to create an evocative, emotional or poetic

experience for the browser.

2.2 How designers use calligraphy in web design

The application of calligraphy in web design is different from that of in print media. Understanding the possibilities and limitations of Web design is vital. In a web site, because of the multidimensional presentation of contents, hyperlink and other dynamic functions, text layout is more complex than print media and involves developing an ordered, functional and user-friendly navigation to take the viewers through the various pages(Gordon 2002, 50). Typographical elements within a digital layout may be divided into two groups: organizational typography and content typography(Skopec 2003,28). Organizational typography serves the organization of the interface, such as page headings, navigational elements, labels and so on. This group carries the responsibility to display the function and characteristics of the site, therefore it tends to be more static and fixed. Content typography is used to convey the contents and is usually treated as flexible, adaptable and dynamic text. Many designers use HTML types, such as Times New Roman and Arial, as content texts to place the ultimate control of presentation of information in the hands of the end-user(Gordon 2002, 149). However, designers generally do not like the lack of typographic control available using HTML. One of the options of this issue is to create graphic images of text, such as calligraphic letterforms, to preserve exact typographic detail and artistic images for organizational typography in order to stress the individual characteristics of the site.

Three new features of digital calligraphy

1. Abundant visual imagery

The digital power readily available to designers is now immense in many different fields. Via this power, traditional calligraphy, once an art which only existed on delicate paper or cloth, using inconvenient materials, with simple colors, now can be created with more abundant

images and provides people with more visual experiences, aesthetic and emotional stimulations. Digitization has created a new method of recording and transmitting calligraphy, by allowing a high level of interactivity across many forms of media to display this ancient art. Digital calligraphy, compared to its traditional counterpart, is created with vivid colors, various textures, innovative composition and layout, and other experimental visual effects. All of these fresh expressions are essential for attracting modern and universal audiences. It can be seen that these new digital developments are some of the best tools for realizing, enriching and exploring traditional calligraphy.

2. Abilities of motion, interaction and other multi-effects

Today, people exist in an environment where their senses are constantly bombarded with sound, light, words, images and other exciting stimulations. Digital calligraphy, especially in Web or multimedia design, can be created with a high-quality sensory experience by using dynamic video and audio techniques, and satisfies readers' desires for exploration. For example, using digital techniques to animate calligraphic characters is the way to visualize "qi", the important concept in traditional calligraphy. By the image of calligraphy in motion, it becomes easy and "friendly" for modern people to approach and sense what calligraphers stress as "the flow of line". Beside this point, interactivity of digital calligraphy in Web or multimedia design is the other characteristic that makes it differ from the traditional. Interactivity is a key element in making the design dynamic and encouraging the user to stay and look around(Gordon 2002, 156). Interactive calligraphy, i.e. with "clickable" links, allows modern people to not only appreciate its visual beauty but also to understand it more widely and deeply. It creates a huge information bank for users, generating their interest in individual exploration and sometimes motivating them to learn more about this ancient art. The influence in this educational aspect of calligraphy is enormous.

3. Expansion of traditional calligraphic aesthetics.

Digital flexibility has enabled the new concept of traditional calligraphy, in which the user can manipulate a calligraphic character into many variable changes. This wide trial and experimentation has resulted in the breaking of some ancient rules and gives new calligraphy few constraints. For example, traditional calligraphy emphasized the balance and harmony between the parts of the whole within a character and a piece of work as well. However, new calligraphy, with the flexibility of digital technology, sometimes deliberately breaks the balance or uses “anti-harmony” ways to structure characters in order to stress the power images of conflicts or avant-garde aesthetic thinking. This difference, which originally came from using different tools and materials, might annoy some traditionally minded people. However, every age possesses its distinguishing aesthetics. Digital calligraphy could be the one art form that by purely inheriting its traditional treasures and blending these with contemporary thinking, can then pave the way for future generations.

Examples

1. Commercial design



F1.

F2.

(F1) Exhibition Poster, Katsumi Asaba, 1998

It can readily be seen above that by the structure of the characters, the signature and the seal stamp that this poster is generally composed in traditional Chinese calligraphic form. The whole image conveys a strong Eastern aesthetic and feeling i.e. neat, clean and simple. Interestingly enough, in a traditional image thus, the characters are in themselves do not convey the essential meaning. They are only strokes produced using calligraphic methods but without any meaning. According to the application methods mentioned previously, the designer used calligraphy as an abstract and illegible element. The main idea behind this

design is humor but it also illustrates a concept i.e. calligraphic word forms could completely in themselves be a sample of Eastern culture/tradition even though they do not convey any meaning literally. People still can “catch the message” the image possessed. Besides this fact, the designer also used the methods of combination in this work. For example, the interpretation on the bottom left-hand side is composed by modern type forms and structured vertically. Also, the way the small illustration on the right side is located is not of the traditional method in common use. Because of these design manners, this poster possesses not only both traditional and modern aesthetics, but also some contemporary and creative thinking.

(F2) Poster in Korea, Kan Tai-Keung.

This poster can be viewed two ways by turning it upside down, revealing the two Chinese characters “*han*” and “*chao*”. Since both “*han*”(South Korea) and “*chao xian*”(North Korea) are the Chinese names of Korea, this depicts the unification of Korea, which is the theme of this paper(Cao 2001). In this case, the designer utilized the special characteristic of Chinese characters i.e. some words with the same radicals or shapes but that have very different meanings. The designer found the same shape of these two characters, “South Korea” and “North Korea”, and combined them within one word but in an opposite direction. It adequately illustrates that both South Korea and North Korea are an undetached whole which is the main idea in this design. Evidently, the combination method has been used in this case. The designer chose the two dissimilar type forms of boldface and calligraphic form with ink variation, for this two-word combination. It gives sharp contrast and makes a strong impression on the observer. Also, using calligraphic forms to create this piece distinctly conveys more cultural rather than political tones. Kan remarked, (the designer of this poster) “I regard Chinese characters not only as language signs, but also as an art language(Cao 2001, 15). In this design work, he displayed the interesting characteristic of Chinese language, and successfully utilized calligraphy to highlight his ideas.

2. Packaging design



F3

(F3) Sapporo Beer Can, 1988

Sapporo is the oldest surviving Japanese beer on the market today. This beer can was launched in the UK in 1988 and quickly became the choice of the design-conscious consumer (McDermott 2001, 307). In this case, the designer utilized the method of reproduction and simply placed a big character written in *xing shu* on the can. Although its manner is not complex, the effect is significant. The whole image, i.e. using the neat black and limited graphics on a waist-shaped can, reflects the minimalist aesthetics of Japanese culture. According to one report, the well-designed image transformed this can from a simple functional container to a product that now evoked more style and elegance in drinking tastes (McDermott 2001, 307). In this successful packaging design, calligraphic character stresses the cultural image and cooperates with the package shape, color and graphics to create vivid minimalist aesthetics.

3. Corporate identity design



F4

(F4) Newspaper Title, Kan Tai-Keung

This is a logo belonging to a Sunday supplement whose contents expound the art of living and that of traditional art. It is also another example of this method of calligraphic combination. The designer utilized both *xing shu* and modern type form in one single character (this Chinese character compose three parts) and used different colors. The whole image of this logo is vivid and reflects a harmonic fusion of both old and contemporary style typography.

Conclusion

Digitalization is an irresistible trend and is constantly developing. Calligraphy, one of the most ancient arts of all in human civilization, cannot also be irrelevant to this modern challenge. Thus, digital calligraphy, which is created by using digital techniques or digitalizing traditional works, has become an important method of reproducing, expressing and exploring traditional calligraphy. Because of various motives, such as commercial, cultural, linguistic and aesthetic needs, designers apply calligraphy to advertising, packaging, corporate identity, multimedia, web design and other forms of design. Thanks to the immense function of digital technology, calligraphy now can be displayed with vivid colors and textures, various compositions and layout, and other innovative visual effects. Digitalization of calligraphy realizes many fresh expressions and modern aesthetic concepts that cannot be demonstrated via traditional brush and ink.

Some people tend to defend this digitalization because they fear that digital calligraphy might entirely replace the traditional works in the future. Maybe it is still too early to predict this, however, it is fairly certain that the joy of brush writing will survive. From an historical point of view, humans have been relying on writing to record, transfer and develop civilizations for thousands of years, no matter that the tools have morphed from chisels to reeds, to pens and now, to computers. Undoubtedly, traditional calligraphy will not disappear on this planet. There will always be a remnant of traditionally minded people that insist on using traditional tools to perform this ancient art. This is also the most valuable way of protecting this “property of humanity”.

It is believed that every tool is no more than a kind of form. The capital value that exists in concepts and aesthetics can transcend this limit of form and maintain timelessness. Calligraphy is not only an art form past peoples wrote with but also an aggregate that combined all the essence of Chinese writing culture. Renewing it by using digital technology brings calligraphy closer to modern people and with more available educational function. It could be a significant way to extend this ancient respected writing tradition in these digital

times.

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