

THE DECORATION FORM OF CERAMIC REVOLVING CORE BOTTLES IN THE QING DYNASTY

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The ceramic revolving core bottle(CRCB) is one of the most important ceramic art varieties in the Qing Dynasty. It has an entirely different form characteristic from other Chinese ceramic varieties. This paper uses the formal analysis method to analyse the formal language features of Qing Dynasty CRCB by comparing them with other Chinese ceramic varieties, such as the differences in colour, decorative composition and structure between them and different ceramic types. The analysis shows that the Qing Dynasty CRCB has great particularity in form, such as the use of more abundant colours. Decorative painting tends to adopt the form of long scroll painting. Ceramic decoration pays attention to the expression of stereo feeling on the structure. The formation of these formal characteristics is closely related to the ruler's control over ceramic production. It benefited from applying Chinese classical garden art forms in ceramics and the revival of traditional Chinese classical painting. Through the study of the CRCB form, it is helpful to connect ceramic art research with other Chinese art forms through the characteristics of CRCB in form, and analyse the relationship between them, expand the perspective of traditional research, and promote the application of interdisciplinary research in ceramic research.

Keywords: The Qing Dynasty, Ceramics, The revolving core bottle, Decorative, Form characteristics

1. INTRODUCTION

In the history of Chinese ceramics, there have been wide, unique varieties of ceramics. The CRCB considers beauty and ingenuity, reflecting the superb production technology and particular artistic interest in Qing Dynasty ceramic art. The decorative form also reflects Chinese culture.

The creation of the revolving core bottle appeared in 18th century China, and the most exquisite works are from the Qianlong period of the Qing Dynasty. The CRCB is produced in the official kiln factory of the Qing Dynasty, which is usually referred to as the royal kiln factory in the Jingdezhen area of Jiangxi Province. The Qianlong Emperor loved art and often spent a lot of money and workforce on the production and design of ceramics. Because the firing technology of the CRCB is complicated, it is not advantageous in number. Therefore, only dozens of CRCB can be successfully fired every year, so they are very precious. CRCB in the modelling structure generally has two layers, inside and outside. The two layers can be separated. The inner layer and outer layer of the ceramic surface are painted with decorative patterns. The outer layer of the porcelain is generally left with some "windows" or unique carving hollow forms. On the one hand, it can be used as a decoration. On the other hand, it also provides a window for viewing the decorative patterns painted on the ceramic inside.

Because the inner and outer layers of the CRCB are independent of each other on the structure, it has flexibility, and the inner layer can rotate freely. It can turn because there is a rotating axis inside the CRCB, and the inner bottle and the outer bottle are connected to the internal rotating axis. By CRCB, the viewer can see the different decorative patterns on the surface of the inner ceramic through the outer "window". While CRCB, the design of the inner bottle also has "flow" and "continuity", as if it were a scroll slowly opened by the audience.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review includes three aspects: The relationship between ceramic art and state rulers, the prosperity of Chinese classical gardens in the Ming and Qing Dynasties and the revival of Chinese classical paintings in the Qing Dynasty.

When China was in feudal society, the Qing Dynasty rulers had absolute control over the official, precious ceramic art. They could use their power to urge artisans to produce complex, ornate ceramics regardless of cost (Jiang, 2015). More importantly, the decorative form includes the design elements of Chinese classical gardens and the

form of Chinese classical paintings, which together created the unique decorative form of Qing Dynasty CRCB. The literature review is as follows:

2.1 The Absolute Control of State Rulers Over the Production of Ceramic Artworks

In the Ming and Qing Dynasties, to satisfy their desire to possess ceramic artworks, the rulers set up official ceramic production institutions in Jingdezhen, Jiangxi Province, to produce precious and beautiful ceramic artworks for the royal family (Zhu, 2021). Throughout history, the Qing Dynasty's rulers showed more attention to ceramic art, often sent particular officials to Jingdezhen to supervise ceramic art production, and made strict rules (Jiang, 2015). They often put forward requirements and suggestions for the production of ceramics and even frequently added their aesthetic preferences to the decoration of ceramics. They preferred ornate works of art to plain ones, believing that only being busy enough could reflect their supreme social status. They have very high standards for ceramic art and do not allow the ceramic to be slightly defective or unsatisfactory (Zou, 2021). The rulers gathered talented craftsmen and painters and provided them with large sums of money to obtain fine ceramic works. Because of the strict requirement and control of the Qing Dynasty rulers on the production of ceramic art, precious and gorgeous CRCB was created (Li, 2012; Zhang, 2021).

2.2 Building Classical Gardens Became Fashionable During the Ming and Qing Dynasties

The decorative form of the "window" on the CRCB originated from the element of the "window" in classical Chinese gardens in terms of a design concept. This is closely related to the construction and prosperity of Chinese classical gardens in the Ming and Qing Dynasties (Zhou, 2020). During the Ming and Qing Dynasties, the trend of building Chinese classical gardens rose in the whole country, which was the peak period of Chinese garden construction (Du, 2019). Two classical garden systems were formed: private gardens in the south and royal gardens in the north. The leading builders of private gardens in south China are wealthy businessmen and local officials, such as the Zhuo Zheng Garden and Shizi Lin Garden in Suzhou. In addition, there are Chengde Summer Resort, Beihai Park, Summer Palace, Yuanmingyuan, specially built for the royal family (Yao, 2021).

Chinese classical garden architecture, rockery, water, trees, flowers, and beautiful scenery are lovely places to live. The designer put the Chinese classical garden design into a natural landscape, habitant as if place oneself in nature, mountains, on the one hand, to meet the requirements of the owner for the beautiful living environment, on the other hand, it also satisfies their desire to enjoy the natural scenery without leaving their homes (Wan, 2019; Zhang, 2021). Chinese classical gardens exist with classical architecture. Private gardens, with their unique natural environment, are simpler and more elegant than royal gardens. The garden is full of scenery, with pavilions, terraces, small buildings, lofts, water pavilions and other classical Chinese architectural forms, and various "windows" (Yao, 2021) which can be seen in Figure 1.



Figure 1: Elements in Chinese classical garden - windows of architecture.
(Source: Researcher's photograph, 2021)

The design of Chinese classical gardens pays special attention to borrowing scenery, using various buildings to construct and separate different spaces and views. Among them, the role of the "window" cannot be ignored. In the garden, we can see all kinds of "windows" each "window" is like a camera "viewfinder", not only can separate countless small scenes but also add to the garden in the sense of hierarchy in space (Qui, 2011). In addition to the famous extensive classical gardens, the construction of the small garden is also widespread. Officials and business people are to build a beautiful garden for themselves as a place to live. The official involved in ceramic supervision and creation of officials is no exception. They applied the "window" element of classical Chinese gardens to ceramics, copied to the ceramic design and production, and increased new design elements for the ceramic decoration (Liang, 2020).

2.2 The Revival of the Classical Art Form of Chinese Painting in the Qing Dynasty

The history of ancient Chinese art includes many categories of art, such as painting, sculpture, calligraphy, and crafts, among which painting occupies a vital position in Chinese art history. Traditional Chinese painting was first painted on cloth. When paper was invented in China's Han Dynasty, painters began to use brushes, ink, and pigments

to draw on paper. Due to the large picture area, there was a unique form of Chinese painting – long- scroll paintings. Long-scroll painting has been in existence for as long as 2,000 years (Sun, 2022). The composition of the long-scroll painting is that after the painting is completed, two wooden poles are installed at each end of the picture, and then the painting can be rolled up on the wood pole and tied with a rope. This can not only reduce the space occupied by the painting but also protect the surface of the painting from being damaged (Peng, 2022). When the viewer wants to appreciate the painting, the scroll can be slowly opened from one side, and the painting is gradually presented. Extending the long-scroll is also a process of appreciating the painting because the content of Chinese long-scroll paintings is usually fluid and story-oriented (Yang, 2021).

This exceptional long-scroll painting form is inseparable from the particularity of the content and form of Chinese paintings. The Tang Dynasty, the Five Dynasties and the Song Dynasty were the popular periods of Chinese scroll painting. At that time, figure, flower, bird, and animal paintings occupied the mainstream (Lin, 2021). These paintings are mainly in the form of long-scrolls. Long lengths and small widths characterize long-scroll paintings. The painter will paint on long paper, creating long-scroll paintings. In addition, Chinese long-scrolls paintings have "continuity" in content because the story of each painting has a theme and the content of each part of the painting does not deviate from the theme (Lin, 2021). The picture cannot be fully seen in a moment but must undergo a fluid process of "being opened". As seen from the picture below, Figure 4 is the painting of Washing Clothes by Zhang Xuan, a famous figure painter in the Tang Dynasty. It shows the labor scene of women in the Tang Dynasty washing and sewing clothes. The picture is also in the form of a long-scroll. There are 12 images of women in the picture, showing three groups of washing, sewing, and ironing successively, which is also one of the paintings with "fluidity" (Peng, 2022) .



Figure 4: Tang Dynasty era by Zhang Xuan on the “women washing clothes” picture (Source: Palace Museum website, 2022)

In the Qing Dynasty, an arose trend of reviving ancient art in the art circle. Therefore, the painting circle in the Qing Dynasty was divided into two different styles according to various painting styles. One was innovative style. The painters who advocate creative painting are mostly folk painters who support the innovation of painting form (Sun, 2022). The other was a group of painters close to the rulers, who advocated a revival of classical painting and studying its methods and forms. Official drawing in the system, for the position, is higher, more closely associated with the ruler of the officials, they can participate in art activities, including those involved in the design of ceramic, their obsession and preference of classical art also has been applied to the ceramic decoration form, formed on ceramic decoration similar to the ancient painting, flow and continuous forms of painting (Peng, 2022) .

3. RESEARCH METHOD

Currently, the research on the CRCB is mainly carried out from two aspects: one is the research on decorative patterns of the CRCB, such as tracing the origin of some specific decorative designs. The second is the research on the modeling and technological characteristics of the CRCB, and the corresponding research results have been obtained. However, on the whole, these studies are still within the research scope of the history of traditional Chinese ceramics.

This study uses the formal analysis method and is based on the data of the CRCB art in the Qing Dynasty. According to the research method of Heinrich Wölfflin's (1864—1945) formal analysis, it is believed that art not only represents the background of its time but also should start from the art itself and study its internal laws and forms. Therefore, this paper uses the method of formal analysis to analyse the formal characteristics reflected in the Qing Dynasty CRCB. The specific form of the CRCB analysis process is as follows:

- i. Define the research object of the formal analysis method: for example, the line, colour, composition, space and other formal elements of the artwork.
- ii. Make a formal analysis of the CRCB art of the Qing Dynasty, such as the characteristics of colour application, the composition of painting decoration and structural attributes of ceramic decoration.
- iii. Make a comparative analysis of the form characteristics of the CRCB and the ceramic art of the previous age, and analyses the differences with the ceramic art of the last era: for example, in the Qing Dynasty, more colours were used in the decoration of CRCB, the use of three-dimensional sense was noted in the structure of decoration, and the use of long-roll form painting was emphasized in the layout of decorative paintings.

4. ANALYSIS OF DECORATION FORM OF THE CRCB IN THE QING DYNASTY

The analysis of the decorative form of the CRCB in the Qing Dynasty is the key to solving the problem of the characteristics and origin of the decorative form. By analysing the decorative form of a CRCB, it is helpful to comb out the source of the decorative form of the CRCB. In the past, the research methods used in art research can be broadly divided into two types: focusing on the content outside the artwork (history, society, science, technology, art trend, author, or other external influencing factors) and focusing on the artwork itself (formal analysis of the work itself).

Before the emergence of formalism art theory, the study of art history has experienced a complex process, but it is generally the influence factors beyond works. With the awakening of formalism, the study of art, significant changes have taken place, no longer limited to discussing effect factors of many works of art, began by paying attention to the form of art itself, the study of art form analysis, such as the famous art theorist Wölfflin and his form analysis method, the five groups of concepts proposed by him in *The Basic Concepts of Art History* provide a rigorous and clear formal analysis path for researchers. The research method of formalism is one of the critical research methods of art history in the 20th century, among which the representative formalism theorists are Alois Riegl (1858-1905) and Heinrich Wölfflin (1864—1945), Clive Bell (1881—1964) and so on. Among them, the five groups of concepts proposed by Heinrich Wölfflin in his book *Basic Concepts of Art History* provide researchers with a rigorous and straightforward path to formal analysis and a new research direction. Each work of art is composed of specific form elements such as point, line, and surface. The combination of different form elements and different combination methods of the same form elements will constitute a new art form, which is a unique way of reflecting the aesthetic feeling of artworks. Formal analysis, its core from the artwork itself, from the visual form, the purpose is to grasp the composition of the artwork, such as the combination of lines, colour, structure, space, rhythm and other content, instead of just focusing on the external environmental factors that form specific works of art.

4.1 Rich Colour Performance Effect

Colour is an element found in every object in nature, and different colours constitute the other objects, the same kind of material can have completely different colours. At heart, we can't find two colours in the same things, these other colour features, colour can be used as a basis we distinguish between different objects. Similarly, it is the same in works of art. Colour is one of the most important elements of an artwork. We

can judge which artist's work a piece of art belongs to by the habit of using colour, and we can also consider which period a piece of art belongs to by analysing colour.

Before the Qing Dynasty, the use of colour in ceramics went through a long process, from coloured pottery (only red, brown, and black) in the primitive period to green and white pottery in the Qin and Han Dynasties, and tri-coloured pottery popular in the Tang Dynasty. In the Song and Yuan Dynasties, green porcelain, blue and white ceramic, and coloured porcelain became popular and used in China. Each era had different colour usage habits based on the continuous development of colour production technology. Colour also became a kind of basis that people named for pottery and porcelain. We are used to the name that uses colour to call pottery and ceramic, for example, green ceramic, white ceramic, blue and white ceramic.

In the use of colour, the Qing Dynasty ceramic spinning bottle art showed very different artistic characteristics from the previous generation. Through observation, it can be seen that the decoration form of the Qing Dynasty CRCB has apparent diversified and gorgeous features, which is the combination of various precious colours. Beautiful colour, exquisite painting decoration, diverse composition, and complex colour combination. Bid farewell to the past ceramic monochrome or only the use of individual colour decoration history. At the same time, various colours and plain, simple folk ceramics form a sharp contrast, showing utterly different colour decoration characteristics from folk ceramics. Folk ceramics is famous for the simple use of colour because the use of a large number of high-quality colours is to need a certain economic basis. In the process of decoration, the pigments used are precious. Based on the initial molding of ceramics, the creator used precious mineral pigments, special pigments imported from abroad, gold powder and other painting decorations, regardless of cost, using a lot of money to create some suitable for the ruler's aesthetic, representing the ruler's authority and status of ceramic art. the study of the colour application of the CRCB, not only shows the colour of the revolving bottle to the audience but also can take the colour as a symbol. It conveys the aesthetic habit and colour pursuit of the period, creator and owner of the CRCB.

4.2 Space Shaping with Stereoscopic Characteristics

Planar feature and stereoscopic feature are a group of relative concepts and two different viewing forms. For artworks, painting can be regarded as a form of artistic expression with planar characteristics, while sculpture can be regarded as a form of artistic expression with three-dimensional characteristics. Planarization pays attention to the use of point, line, surface, and other formal elements, on the plane in the form of

tiling painting creation, with the outline of painting, modeling win. On the contrary, stereoscopic features focus on the viewer's stereoscopic viewing perspective, which requires a certain sense of space, inward or outward visual extension. Plane and three-dimensional features to the viewer present a different view of appreciation, is also the creator of varying creation methods, will achieve completely different artistic effects.

For the CRCB, its three-dimensional characteristics of decoration and the sense of space are mainly displayed in the bottle body "window", these hollow "window" shapes present geometric shapes, and some also carved various decorative patterns. The design of the form has plenty circular, with plenty of squares, and plenty of polygons, have plenty of the shapes of the petals. In addition to this, the windows of these basic shapes add complex carving decoration, such as trees, flowers, animals, characters, and other forms of sculpture, to realize the revolving bottle "window" in the form of diversification and complication (Refer Figure 5 – Figure 7).



Figure 5: Qing Dynasty ceramic revolving core bottle vase with the gold fish painting in window
(Source: Complete Collection of Chinese Ceramics, 2022)



Figure 6: Qing Dynasty ceramic revolving core bottle vase with the fish painting in window
(Source: Complete Collection of Chinese Ceramics, 2022)



Figure 7: Qing Dynasty ceramic revolving core bottle vase with flower pattern window
(Source: Complete Collection of Chinese Ceramics, 2022)

"Window" decoration makes people want to "peep" the impulse of the window interior scenery. Therefore, outside ceramic painting and inner painting decoration are formed by the outside, with a sense of space and special decoration form. These "windows" can be said to be the "eyes" of ceramic. Through these "eyes", you can see the different decorations in the window, which is the finishing touch of the decoration of the CRCB.

These "windows", act as viewfinder frames in which the ceramic interiors are gathered. Before the Qing Dynasty, there was a flat "viewfinder" form before the appearance of ceramic "window" decoration, which we call the ceramic "open-light" decoration form. This decorative form had appeared since the Yuan Dynasty when creators used brushes to outline shapes such as circles, squares, and diamonds. Then fill all kinds of decorative patterns in the plane frame, draw the landscape pictures, character story pictures, flower and bird pictures, and other decorative patterns, and draw some auxiliary designs outside the frame according to the specific situation, the role of the frame is like the camera "viewfinder", play the role of highlighting the theme (Figure 8).



Figure 8: Yuan Dynasty, Cizhou kiln open-light figure flower pot
(Source: Complete Collection of Chinese Ceramics, 2022)

Before the Qing Dynasty, the planar "viewfinder frame" on ceramics was the planar frame form drawn by pigments. The "viewfinder frame" itself did not have a three-dimensional sense but was used as the frame to separate the picture. The form of the structure was also elementary but appeared in a simple geometric form, without complex decoration.

The decoration is different from the hollow-out, three-dimensional "window" decoration form popular in the Qing Dynasty. It is closely associated with the prevalence of Chinese classical gardens in the Qing Dynasty. When the designers applied the "windows" elements of Chinese classical garden in ceramics, ceramic decoration in the plane form of "window" began to appear as a "three-dimensional" trend, in the visual with inward with depth, spatial and multi-level three-dimensional decorative effect, this is an important embodiment of the aesthetic and technological progress of The Times.

4.3 Flowing and Continuous Picture Structure

The composition of the picture can be in a variety of ways. Some prefer symmetrical forms, some prefer repetition, and some prefer chaotic beauty. Different picture forms can present different artistic feelings and reflect the aesthetic pursuit of different times. This part will focus on the composition form of the main decorative pattern inside the CRCB, that is, the flowing and continuous picture structure expression form of the interior decorative painting surface. Through observing the painting inside the CRCB, it can be found that the picture inside the CRCB presents the characteristics of flow and continuity. When we look at the interior decorative patterns, the interior decorative patterns are drawn and exist in a flowing and continuous form. On the whole, they are spread out around a complete theme picture, with obvious continuity. For example, in Figure 9, we can appreciate the interior decorative pattern through the window on the ceramic. The interior fish pattern will be presented to the audience as fragments through the window. Another decorative fish pattern will appear when we rotate the ceramic bottle again.



Figure 9: Qing Dynasty, Qianlong period, fish picture decoration
(Source: Complete Collection of Chinese Ceramics, 2022)



Figure 10: Qing Dynasty, Qianlong period, children's game picture decoration
(Source: Complete Collection of Chinese Ceramics, 2022)

In Figure 10, through a complex form of hollow out "window", see the inside of the bottle which transforms the mind of decorative painting, painting in the performance of the things about children play scene, respectively mapped the six children, the children dressed in gorgeous clothing, they play and chase each other, some holding a kite running forward, some followed by a warm, humorous screen showing the scene of children playing in spring. The painting as a whole take on a fluid form, and images and paintings are sequentially depicted on the ceramic while at the same time having obvious continuity.

5. CONCLUSION

After analyzing and studying the decorative forms of CRCB in the Qing Dynasty, this paper summarizes the decorative forms of CRCB in the Qing Dynasty: rich and varied colors, three-dimensional spatial structure, flow, and continuous picture structure. At the same time, the root of the formation of many decorative forms can be attributed to the following three aspects: the ruler's control over official ceramic production, and the use of unique elements in Chinese classical gardens, the use of Chinese classical painting has a close connection. It was because of the Qing Dynasty rulers' absolute control over ceramic production, the popularity of classical gardens, and the revival and study of ancient Chinese painting forms. The unique decorative form of the Qing Dynasty CRCB was formed by the joint action of various factors, which provided precious artworks for Chinese ceramic art.

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