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Evoking Heritage and Culture Symbols in Design Visual Identity

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Abstract

Visual identity depends on many sources for shaping and building its identity, with its content elements often coming from original symbols within their context that present implicit meanings and indicators, such as cultural symbols and visual heritage. This article aims to read and explore these kinds of symbols and their representation to reveal the nature and mechanisms of evoking cultural symbols and visual heritage in visual identity design within a new context. It seeks to understand how to revive the past in new and modern forms that visually evoke collective memory and connect it emotionally.

Keywords: Culture, Symbols, Visual identity, Design, Heritage.

Introduction

Cultural symbols and visual heritage reflect and mirror the essence of societies, playing a functional role in artistic expression to encapsulate values and beliefs through their adaptation to multimedia. We are referring to a visual text that transcends language and offers a clever metaphor with profound meanings (Xu, 2024). This convergence of meaning and form comes together through our perception of the message and our attempt to interpret it in its new context. With this impact on visual communication, we

refer to a conscious invocation that relies on collective memory and cultural identity (Udris-Borodavko et al., 2023). Perhaps the evocation of this type of symbol and visual elements stems from nostalgia of old memories in a new context through the creation of associations and emotional arousal (Li & Liu, 2023).

This article aims to explore the relationship between visual heritage and cultural symbols through their representation in the field of visual identities. It examines whether the nature of this relationship, constitute a metaphor and revival of the past in a new formulation to give it a new identity and connection to achieve greater intellectual and aesthetic value that carries the spirit of the past?

Evoking Cultural Symbols and Visual Heritage from Their Original Textual

Symbols have hidden meanings that are significant, ideological, or even prevalent within society to varying degrees in terms of their connection to their subject matter (Griffin, 2012). Cultural symbols take on different forms alongside visual heritage, functioning as signs that carry meanings contextually linked to identity, traditions, history, and culture of a society. Based on these visual formations, objects acquire meanings that are assigned by groups of individuals. Thus, they become part of a discourse expressing collective memory, the memory may connect to history, place, or religion, capable of signifying and metaphorising, just as visual signs do (Hall, 1997; Liu & Zhao, 2024).

These symbols hold special value when used or reproduced. Therefore, when invoking or simulating them, designers must act carefully, when invoking them, as this can lead to either positive or negative results. For example, the representation of The Last Supper at the 2024 Olympics in France, which caused widespread controversy over its insult to Christianity (Örsoğlu, 2025).

Specifically referring to culture symbols that is not merely representations from the past that can be transferred or reused by removing them from their context without considering their semantic significance, which is saturated with identity and values. This may create a gap between historical values and acquired meanings, leading to a loss of authenticity or distortion of meaning. Here, it becomes the designer's responsibility to strike a balance between authenticity and revival—i.e. innovation. In this regard, Walter Benjamin discusses the loss of the aura in a work of art despite its widespread, but that recalling it may result in the emergence of a version that is devoid of content and a mechanical copy (Benjamin, 1935). As Barth mentioned, the symbol may lose its historical basis and appear empty, without content, but this does not mean that it is completely lost. Rather, it weakens its connection and distances it from its origin, forming a dual presence (Griffin, 2012).

These contextual differences are reinforced based on the time period. In the modern and postmodern era, we find that the postmodern style is completely different and reflects a profound change in society. Formal features tend to be recycled “pastiche,” to evoke the form and feel of the past within a new visual space. This creates a distortion of the original truth, with what is known as

"schizophrenia," meaning that the old design and symbolism have been reinvented with a desire for renewal, experimentation. This may be conceptually linked to the recipient, the experience maybe disconnected, isolated or successfully connected (Moszkowicz, 2013).

Using Heritage and Culture Symbols in Visual identity

Some visual identity are created by borrowing visual elements through the representation of cultural heritage or symbols. We may see that the meaning has a historical and cultural affiliation that forms a transition from the past to the present, which forms perceptions that reflect the values that institutions aim to achieve and broaden the perspective around that culture. This also helps to market and spread it (Xu, 2024).

The integration and invocation of this kind offers a unique design that carries conceptual and aesthetic significance due to the symbols they evoke (Liu & Zhao, 2024). Visual identity, in its various stages, specifically in the logo creation stage, consists of semiotic structures that rely on encoding when incorporating elements such as colour, iconic or textual signs, or symbols that may contain metaphorical or cultural associations (Udris-Borodavko et al., 2023).

A question arises: how do these visual metaphors contribute to the design of visual identity through their components? Xu (2024), notes that brands that rely on cultural symbols in their identities foster the creation of connections (evoking symbols in new version), the formation of identity, and the perception of value. This type is a

dynamic interaction between heritage and traditions in a modern and innovative image.

Maybe these symbols have the ability to transcend the boundaries of society's culture; they are not merely artistic designs but rather preserve and honour cultural heritage and enhance a sense of belonging. For example, the visual identity of the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar, specifically the logo, reflects a clear cultural identity through the use of visual symbols that reflect Qatari heritage (Kerry et al., 2024).

Qi and Sawatdee (2024) emphasises that the strategic use of cultural symbols is a clever move that summarises the form through conscious practice and consideration of the original models in the extraction process, which in turn promotes urban heritage. The researchers explained that through cultural symbols extracted from the city of Jinan, they helped revive the spirit of the old city and increased awareness and historical consciousness of it as a type of cultural narrative associated with the place. Similarly, a study by Liu and Zhao (2024) confirmed that designing products that incorporate and borrow cultural heritage and symbols enhances the perception of the metaphor, and cultural identity has a direct or indirect influence on the emotional value of the product, which in turn helps reinforce purchasing decisions.

Conclusion

Integrating cultural heritage and symbols into visual identity design is a complex task that demands sensitivity to the symbol's historical and cultural significance, as well as creativity in handling it, in order

to realise the deeper intellectual and moral value of the revival process.

Design as technique extends beyond aesthetics to play an essential role in shaping a cognitive and cultural role, showing collective memory visually. Visual identity, is a space for reviving symbols through new simulation that create dialogue between past and present, becoming intersected with cultural heritage through reconstruction and deconstruction to form new concepts that identity aims.

This representation or simulation should be carefully done; it is not a mechanical reproduction, and as a result, if misshapen will reflect a negative reputation on identity. In conclusion, I pose a reflective question: considering our contemporary circumstances and the era of fluid symbols and artificial intelligence, can cultural and visual heritage preserve its original meaning in the face of these challenges?

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