

Investigating the Image of Architecture Decoration of ShengJing Imperial Palace in LiaoNing Province, China

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Abstract: Today, throughout antiquity, myriad ethnic collectives have inhabited Liaoning Province, China, significantly shaping the historical trajectory of the nation and fostering a multitude of esteemed architectural and cultural legacies. ShengJing Imperial Palace is in Shenyang, Liaoning Province, China. ShengJing Imperial Palace is a royal building built in the early Qing Dynasty 500 years ago. The information value shown by its architectural decoration needs to be further developed. This paper takes architectural decoration images as the research content. It uses the methodology of practical aesthetics, conducts field research on ShengJing Imperial Palace, and analyzes the three elements of visual impact form, political decoration, and national practice to obtain a single evident, idealized local decoration image characteristics. In conclusion, the visual layout of the rational representation of the Shengjing Palace building decoration is clear and distinct, and the visual feeling of the subject is strong and full of impact. These characteristics can be summarized as strong qualitative architectural decoration image characteristics. Under the Qing rulers' politically strict ideology, the image experience category of architectural decoration showed ethical characteristics. This study can be a reference for adapting traditional architectural decoration to modern design.

Keywords: ShengJing imperial palace; Royal architecture; Architectural decoration; Image



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1. Introduction

Since ancient times, many ethnic groups have lived in Liaoning Province, China. These ethnic groups once played an essential role in China's history and have created many valuable cultural heritages in architecture (Lee, 2020; Sofield & Li, 1998; Zhu, 2015). Among them is the outstanding Shengjing Imperial Palace, built around 1625 and finally formed around 1783, after more than 150 years of construction, reconstruction, addition, and renovation, creating the scale today. The existing buildings of Shengjing Imperial Palace are divided into three parts: the east Courtyard, middle Courtyard, and West Courtyard,

covering an area of 60,000 square meters (Fu et al., 2019). ShengJing Imperial Palace is a group of buildings with the largest scale and the most adequate ethnic characteristics (Sepe, 2011). It is a typical symbol of the maturity of Manchu architectural culture. This paper puts forward the research content of architectural decoration images, using the method of practical aesthetics, integrating the historical background and environment.

2. Theory of Architectural Decoration Image

In the static concept, the image of architecture refers to the external expression image produced by people's idea, concept, or image scene through the architectural form (Pallasmaa, 2011). The external form of the building is an image, an image form of the architecture (Degen et al., 2017). In dynamic activities, the interaction between people and architecture stimulates the image and is endowed with the consensus meaning and emotional connotation of the creator and the recipient. Keswick (2003) and Wang (2016) mentioned that a Chinese architectural theorist explained the meaning of architectural image and architectural artistic conception. Image refers to the affection of intention and interest. Image has two states: The first is the image of the object (natural or person). It is the object of objective existence; the second, it is the image formed by the perceptual perception and the conception in the mind of the subject (Wang, 2022; Youbin, 2009).



Figure 1. Decoration features of different parts of the ShengJing Imperial Palace building (a) roof decoration 1, (b) roof decoration 2, and (c) roof decoration 3.



Figure 2. Decoration features of different parts of the ShengJing Imperial Palace building (a) door and window decoration 1, (b) door and window decoration 2, and (c) door and window decoration 3.



Figure 3. Decoration features of different parts of the ShengJing Imperial Palace building (a) bottom and railing form decoration 1, (b) bottom and railing form decoration 2, and (c) bottom and railing forms decoration 3.

This image research method, which contains both subjective and objective, is the reference basis to determine the research perspective of this paper. From the perspective of imagery theory, art is essentially a presentation of images, that is, the technical means and means of recording and expression; in other words, art mainly creates a world of images through various symbolic materials. This study of image art is not only

reflected in a two-dimensional perspective beyond "experience-expression", but also forms a two-layer structure spanning "psychology-symbol", thus breaking through the one-dimensional thinking mode from phenomenon to the essence and highlighting the image thinking character of artistic creation. The structure of "psychology-symbol" is actually the internalized structure of the relationship theory of practical aesthetic craft-social structure, culture-psychological structure, and the essence of subjective, objective, and practical activities in the category of human, object, speculation, and practical aesthetic ontology to be solved by the image theory is consistent with the correlation. Therefore, the method of practice aesthetics has guiding significance for deconstructing architectural activities and constructing architectural decoration images.

3. Materials and Methods

This paper conducted a field survey on East Courtyard, Middle Courtyard, and West Courtyard of the ShengJing Imperial Palace, and 1,753 photos were taken. According to the investigation of ShengJing Imperial Palace decoration according to the corresponding classification's architectural form, pattern, and color.

4. Results

The imperial palace continues to use the same roof form as the residential one. In ancient Chinese architecture, different roof forms are often used to mark the political status of the architecture.

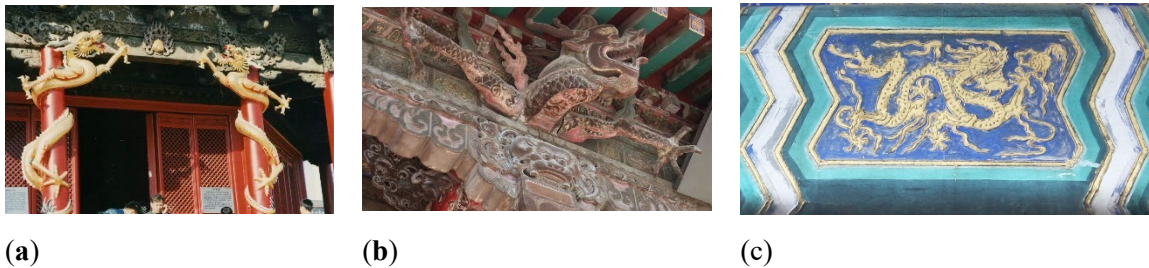


Figure 4. The decorative pattern of the ShengJing Imperial Palace architecture (a) pattern of dragon 1, (b) pattern of dragon 2, and (c) pattern of dragon 3

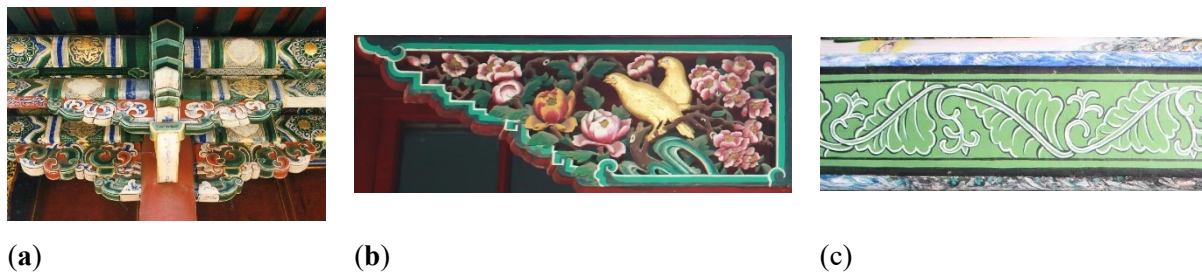


Figure 5. The decorative pattern of the ShengJing Imperial Palace architecture (a) pattern of plants 1, (b) pattern of plants 2, and (c) pattern of plants 3.



Figure 6. The decorative pattern of the ShengJing Imperial Palace architecture (a) pattern of animal 1, (b) pattern of animal 2 and (c) pattern of animal 3.

However, the two early buildings in the east and middle courtyards of the Shenyang Imperial Palace did not adopt the highest-grade roof form. They use the current form to follow the camping tents that the

Manchu ancestors mainly relied on for nomadic life and military life, and the residential form is used because it is the main form of Manchu residence. The Manchu people built their palaces by implementing their own national culture (Figure 1, Figure 2, and Figure 3). The styles of doors and Windows selected in the architecture of the Shenyang Imperial Palace are very different in proportion and structural decoration, mainly because the function of the building is different from the construction period. It can also see the opaque wooden doors. The practice of the wooden door originates from the national style of the northern dwellings, which is a form of transition from the wooden door to the partition door.

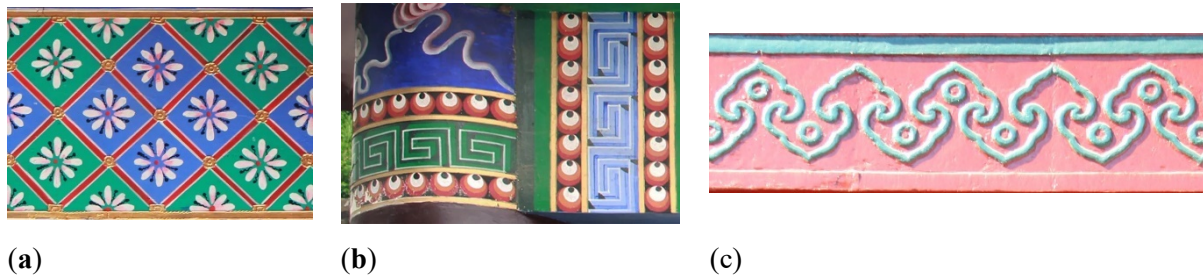


Figure 7. The decorative pattern of the ShengJing Imperial Palace architecture (a) pattern of geometrical 1, (b) pattern of geometrical 2, and (c) pattern of geometrical 3.

The platform foundations and railings of the Shenyang Palace Museum are in various forms, mainly drawing on the style of Chinese Buddhist architecture, and the materials are mainly brick and stone. Animal patterns occupy a large proportion of the architectural decorative patterns of the whole Shenyang Imperial Palace. There are mainly dragons, lions, sheep, dogs, cranes, bats, etc. These animal patterns are different from the traditional forms of architectural decoration in other parts of China, clearly reflecting the development of Manchu culture and strong ethnic characteristics. The dragon symbolizes imperial power, so the dragon pattern of ShengJing Imperial Palace architecture accounts for a large proportion of the decoration, which can be said to be everywhere. The cattle, horses, and sheep patterns represent blessing and auspiciousness, indicating the Manchu's love for them. The appearance of many of these animals embodies the developed Manchu animal husbandry (Figure 6).

There are also many decorations of plant themes in ShengJing Imperial Palace, including plums, orchids, chrysanthemums, lotus, and other plants (Figure 5). The themes used have ideological connotations and always have a certain comparison and symbolic significance. For example, lotus decoration is widely used in Buddhist palaces and residential buildings. Rice or grain as decorative subjects was uncommon in royal architecture. However, it has been applied in the architecture of ShengJing Imperial Palace, which is related to the production and living characteristics of the Manchu people. Figure 7 shows the geometric patterns of Shengjing Imperial Palace buildings, mainly from the patterns of many ethnic minorities. After certain artistic processing, they align with the nation's folk customs and aesthetic characteristics, with strong characteristics of The Times. From the decorative patterns of the ShengJing Palace Museum, we can see the process of the gradual integration and absorption of foreign culture and its patterns by the local culture represented by the Manchu people.

The overall color of Shengjing Imperial Palace is as follows: the main buildings are bright, the secondary buildings are mainly gray, and at the same time, it is stable and harmonious, with remarkable residential characteristics (Figure 1, Figure 2, and Figure 3). The roof of the main buildings in Shengjing Imperial Palace uses a large area of yellow tiles, green color paintings, red doors and Windows, gray brick and stone base, and gray and black ground, forming a strong contrast between blue and yellow, green and red, white, gray and black, forming a very bright overall color effect of the palace building. The secondary building adopts color adjustment to coordinate the main buildings, gray tile, gray wall, gray platform, and ground, green leaves, and a few red doors and Windows columns. The overall color is monotonous, to weaken itself to highlight the main building.

4.1. Particularity Analysis of the Architectural Decoration Image

Liaoning province is the Qing Dynasty's birthplace and the Manchu people's prosperity. In the control of state power, in the face of strong han culture, the manchu is not forced to assimilation, but actively learn to accept han culture, also consciously against the influence of han culture, to keep the manchu character and use the political advantage, according to the ethnic consciousness, to the influence of manchu culture into the han culture, the manchu han culture in a new level, new connotation to achieve the final fusion. In

many parts of the Shengjing Imperial Palace, the original appearance of the very precious Qing Dynasty color paintings is preserved (Figure 8). The theme of this color painting comes from the respect and love of nomads for natural plants. Such color characteristics are very consistent with the color styles in most buildings in the Manchu and Mongolian ethnic areas of China (Guangquan, 2002). Because of the color used in this kind of color painting, this kind of color painting can give people a strong feeling of prosperity. The value of color information carried by such color paintings relates to the color intention reflected. All colors express visual information; in a narrow sense, color undertakes the task of conveying images.



Figure 8. Qing Dynasty Color Painting Original Appearance

The color painting of Shengjing Palace does not exclude the coordinating role of form and structure in communicating the overall discourse of color information. On the contrary, as the transmission carrier of specific information, color can realize the aesthetic description of visual function more effectively with the help of the connection of form and structure.

4.2. Political decoration

As a symbol of the royal family, the dragon pattern accounts for a large proportion of the decorative patterns of Shengjing Palace in Shenyang (Figure 4). Compared with the previous generation, the dragon shape in the Shengjing Imperial Palace is more prominent, powerful, widely used, and closely combined with the architecture. The dragon pattern image has become an important part of the building and a symbol of the building. The extensive use of dragon images in architectural decoration is also one of the manifestations of the Manchu primitive society to feudal society. Under the impact of the Han culture in the Central Plains, the manchu society just in power must formulate etiquette regulations compatible with its feudal rule (Weihe, 2019). Therefore, the Qing Dynasty gradually organized and revised the etiquette identified the dragon pattern as the special ornament for the monarch, and included it in the etiquette system and regulations. The dragon culture became a symbol used by the Manchu aristocracy to flaunt its supreme ruler and reflected the supreme majesty of the ruler with the dragon pattern. In fact, as a form of concept, the human ethics order and a series of ritual norms involve almost every aspect of feudal social life (Xiaofeng, 2005). This practice of arranging its position in the order of superiority and inferiority and limiting the scale of the palace building, the height of the platform, the color of beams and columns, roof shape, decorative patterns, as well as the hats, clothing, colors, cars and horses and other specifications related to daily life, has been continued in the ritual norms of the past dynasties.

5. Conclusions

The visual form of the rational representation of the Shengjing Palace building decoration is clear and distinct, and the visual feeling of the subject is strong and full of impact. These characteristics can be summarized as strong qualitative architectural decoration image characteristics. Under the Qing rulers' politically strict ideology, the image experience category of architectural decoration showed ethical characteristics. It is also the expression of a strong architectural decoration image, and the construction of the continuous construction activities is the image information aesthetic and information processing. The building construction activities convey the characteristics of a national concept and are deeply influenced by the concept of local, forming the characteristics of a weak image. To sum up, the clear and idealized form of the visual impact of Shengjing Palace's architectural decoration makes people impressive. In contrast, the national and regional styles make the architectural decorations sensitive and shocking. Therefore, the architectural decoration image reflects the dual characteristics of strong and weak images.

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