

A Study on the Application of Cultural Semiotics
in the Attractive Factor of Flower

Primary Author : Chia-Hui, Huang

Tung Fang Design of University Institute of Cultural and Creative Design, Assistant Professor

Part Author : Wen-Hui, Chen

Tung Fang Design of University Graduate Institute of Cultural and Creative Design

Corresponding Author : Kim, Young Sam

Dong-Eui University, Dept. of Industrial Design, Professor
kysam25@hanmail.net

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(Abstract)

The purpose of this study is to explore the application of cultural semiotics in the attractiveness factor of flower arrangement. In addition, the study also applies the evaluation grid method of Miryoku Engineering to summarize the attractiveness factor of flower arrangement. After conducting an interview with the use of 14 originally-invented flower arrangement cards, we have found that the applications of cultural semiotics in the attractive factors of flower arrangement can be mainly subdivided into the following categories: "floral style", "field space", "food culture", "local feature", "nostalgic memory", "spiritual aspect", and "installation art". From the evaluation grid method of Miryoku Engineering, we know that the first three keynotes to the applications of cultural semiotics in the attractive factors of flower arrangement are "color design", "focus contrast", and "artwork size". On the other hand, creative factors such as "beautified", "serene", "modern", "leisure", and "situated" are also

widely applied to the abstract cause. This study is mainly designed to summarize the application of cultural semiotics in the attractive factor of flower arrangement, which provides future flower arrangement with an improvement standard and application criteria to refer to.

Keyword : Field Aesthetics, Miryoku Engineering

1. Introduction

Floral innovative industry is provided with a favorable condition in Taiwan due to its rich geographical landscape, beautiful natural spots, bountiful local culture, and fertile land that nurtures all kinds of flowers and trees (Huang, 2002). Due to its superior climate, natural landscape, warm weather, abundant rainfall, and a great variety of plant species such as alpine plants, rain forest plants, etc., Taiwan is widely known as the "Kingdom of Flower Arrangement". Under the joint effort of crop improvement researcher and mass general public, imported plants are able to survive and grow smoothly under the temperate climate and tropical climate of Taiwan. By cross-breeding local plants with imported plants, a wide array of floral species are successfully developed to provide domestic flower arrangement industry with a rich source of inspiration.

Under the evaluation grid method of Miryoku Engineering, this study is mainly designed to evaluate the applications of cultural semiotics in the attractive factor of flower arrangement. Through public experience survey, we have summarized the attractive factors of the flower arrangement to better understand customer's acceptance and satisfaction towards the flower arrangement.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Application of Flower Arrangement

Zhou(2006) quotes a beautiful literary legend. After Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the Tree of Life, they were banished to the mortal realm. Under the situation where they could not find anything to cover up their bodies, they picked up the fig leaves to cover their nudities and use wild flowers to dress themselves. From this legendary source, the artistic realm of "flower arrangement" was thus developed. In the far east, the long history of flower arrangement can

be traced back all the way to the Western Han Dynasty, during which the Buddhism religion was first spread from India to China, which in turn passed on the religion to nearby countries such as Japan and Northern Korean peninsula. In the beginning, people used to pay homage to the Buddhas by placing flower before their statues. During the Tang Dynasty, the flower arrangement became widely popular among the imperial palace. It was not until the Song Dynasty that the flower arrangement was introduced to the scholastic community and general public. During the Ming Dynasty, there are also specialized books completely talking about the topic of flower arrangement (Zhang, 1595; Wu, 2015).

Under overall environmental transition and ethnic cultural infusion, there is a wider array of flower applications in Taiwan. In the early days, flowers are mainly picked for medical use, food materials, life rituals, and religious practices. Later on, some new trends such as Japanese flower arrangement, Western flower commodification, Chinese flower arrangement, European flower arrangement, and the 21st-century flower arrangement have all given rise to a wider array of flower applications in Taiwan (Zhou, 2006). According to a study conducted by Zhou (2006), major applications of flower arrangement can be further subdivided into a total of 8 categories including (1) home flower arrangement, (2) religious flower arrangement, (3) wedding flower arrangement, (4) bouquet flower arrangement, (5) dress flower arrangement, (6) festival flower arrangement, (7) funeral flower arrangement, and (8) DIY flower arrangement.

[Chart 1] Classification of Flower Arrangement

Item	Developmental Stage of Flower Arrangement	
I	Popular Flower Culture	
	Style	Fresh flowers are mainly cultivated for the purpose of daily necessity.
	Function	Encompassing every aspect of life.

II	Flower Arrangement for Life Ritual and Traditional Customs	
	Style	Fresh flowers are mainly cultivated to make worship flower vase, flower pots, flower strings, and flower baskets.
	Function	Worship for a smooth and peaceful life.
III	Japanese Flower Arrangement	
	Style	(1) Ikenobo: Exhibiting the connection between plant ecology, natural ecology, and human. (2) Ohararyu: Exhibiting the natural landscape through miniature flower arrangement. (3) Sogetus: Exhibiting a modern style through natural plant colors. (4) Mami : Exhibiting a modern life space through simplistic design.
	Function	(1) reflection of heart and connotation (2) home decoration (3) presentation of aesthetic space
IV	Western Flower Product (Flower Gift Product)	
	Style	Great number of colorful flowers are arranged in a geometrical pattern to complete the final product.
	Function	Business, festival, or worshipping.
V	Chinese Flower Arrangement	
	Style	Six major flower containers are used in the Chinese flower arrangement i.e., dish, vase, bowl, tank, roll, and basket to present different styles of (1) landscaping, (2) ideology, (3) emotion, (4) style, (5) festivity, (6) tea flower, (7) and daily life.
	Function	(1) cultural symbolism and heredity (2) life setting description (3) floral beauty exploration and realization (4) artistic connection between land and environment
VI	European Flower Arrangement	
	Style	Under experienced skills and innovative arrangement methods, flowering plants are used to reveal the historical aspect and humanistic aspect of the European culture.
	Function	(1) Entertainment and Aesthetic Connotation (2) Cultivate floral arrangement talent, business purpose and artistic design.
VII	Modern Flower Arrangement (DIY)	
	Style	Home decoration and flower gift.
	Function	Arrange flowers and containers in a creative way without following a given set of rules.

Source : Zhou(2006)

2.2. Meaning of Modeling Study

To better understand the word “modeling”, we must first look into the German word “Gestaltung”, which is “Gestaltung” in noun and “Gestalten” in verb. The root of this word is Gestalt, or “Gestaltism” as widely discussed in the Gestalt psychology, a philosophy of mind that attempts to understand the laws behind the ability to acquire and maintain meaningful perceptions in an apparently chaotic world(Lu, Ching-fu, 1984). Therefore, “modeling” is different from “form” in that a form is the first element to modeling, which includes organic form and geometrical form. More elements such as color, dynamic, texture and space must be further integrated to the form to contribute to the word “modeling” (Lu, 1984). Final results generated from modeling processes based on the visible and touchable textures or creative activities related to the color and shape can also be referred to as a modeling(Wang, 1955). In other words, modeling is a conscious, well-planned, and connotative activity for which the external aspect is revealed through superficial material, color, or texture while the internal aspect is revealed through organizational structure, connotation, or spirit. Hence, the imagery combination of internal aspect and external aspect is the highest form of creative modeling(Lin Chong-hong, 2009). In other words, gestalt principle must be tactfully applied to the creative modeling process to reveal the hidden connotation. Gestalt principle mainly includes gestalt elements, gestalt grammar, gestalt factor, and other 9 items as presented in chart 2.

[Chart 2] Gestalt Principle

Gestalt Principle	Gestalt Grammar
Gestalt Element	Point, Line, Plane, Area, and Space
Gestalt Constitution	Form, Material, Pattern, Color, Function, and Density
Concept of Form	Time, Space, Balance, and Force

Rules of Modeling	Proportion, Arrangement, Sequence, Imitation, Direction, Concentration, Transformation, and Deformation
Form of Beauty	Repetitiveness, Progressiveness, Rhythm, Contrast, Balance, Coordination, Spotlight, and Proportion
Contrast of Form	Abstract / Concrete ; Enclosed / Open ; Order / Chaotic ; Extension / Pressure ; Dynamic / Static ; Rational / Sentimental
Expressions of Form	symbol (language structure, language connotation, and language usage), color, form, and word
Type of Form	Natural Modeling, Artificial Modeling (Organic Modeling, Geometrical Modeling, Abstract Modeling, and Concrete Modeling)
Classification of Form	Space, Scale (length, width, height), and Proportion
Concept of Form	Social, Culture, History, Governance, and Economic.

Source : Lin, Chong-hong(2009)

Modeling can be either practical or artistic. Practical and artistic modeling can be combined to generate a humanistic or natural modeling. Humanistic and natural modeling can also be combined to generate a conscious, unconscious, life or lifeless modeling. In terms of artistic aspect, modeling can be further subdivided into concrete, abstract, and geometrical modeling (Lin, Ping-chang). Therefore, the scope of modeling not only covers the entire modeling art (painting, sculpture, architecture, and craft) but also any other beautiful objects. We can see that modeling includes artificial, natural, pure and practical objects such as pyramids, pebbles, Picasso's artworks and streamlined automobiles. We can also see that modeling includes the creation of artwork and the artwork of creation, such as sky-scraper and primitive stone fence. Hence, modeling covers the entire precise, primitive, theoretical and practical aspects(Lu, 1984).

According to the painter and art theorist Wassily Kandinsky (Russian: В а с и л и й К а н д и н с к и й, English: Wassily Kandinsky, 1866 ~ 1944), the basic elements of modeling can be subdivided into three parts: point, line,

and plane which formulate the two-dimensional space of modeling.

(1) Point is the smallest unit element of all modeling, which can be concentrated on the drawing composition with a cohesive visual effect. Formation of the point is mostly based on the abstract concept.

(2) Line is composed of multiple points to formulate various linear patterns. Line is mainly used to constitute a plane, solid, curve, or space on the scope area of a column, area, and length to present the most perfect elements of rhythm.

(3) Plane includes positional concept of a point and extension concept of a line, and it is also a complex that contains elements of direction and length after tactful reconstruction, contemplation, and conversion . In the process of modeling design, the source of form can be used to master the goals and directions of a design. Through the developmental stage of source elements, modeling aesthetic can be further improved while element source connotation can be further studied(Lin, 2009).

In terms of the discussion on gestalt form and aesthetic form, ever since Greek Philosopher Aristotle (Greek: Α ρ ι σ τ ο τ έ λ η ς, English: Aristotle, 384 ~ 322 BC), there are Immanuel Kant (German: Immanuel Kant, English: Immanuel Kant, 1724-1804) who was a German philosopher considered as a central figure in modern philosophy and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel(1770 ~ 1831) who was a German philosopher and an important figure of German idealism, both of whom have significant research in the realm of gestalt form and aesthetic form. After extensive review and analysis, modern researchers of gestalt psychology and aesthetics have rearranged aesthetic forms into a total of 11 subtypes including repetition, alteration, gradation, rhythm, symmetry, contrast, balance, proportion, harmony, dominance and subordination, and unity. These aesthetic forms are suitable for

the presentation of literature, dance, drama, music, and other forms of arts, which are all basic knowledge for artists who specialize in the realm of design and modeling(Lin, 2009).

2.3. Meaning of Imagery Symbol

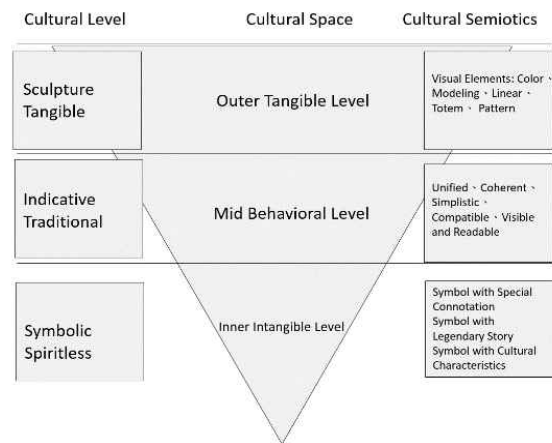
Image is a sign that connects to the indicator through a similar form or direct approach, indication is a sign which connects to the referent through the cause & effect and an indirect approach, while symbol is a sign which connects to the referent through a dissimilar and indirect approach. Hence, semiology is a term derived from the linguistics of the 19th century.

This paper mainly explores the meaning of imagery signs and applies them to the flower arrangement and the visual communication. In terms of visual communication, visual design also lists the structural modeling and meaning as one of the most important factor for performance. In other words, an image can also be reinterpreted as an appearance shaping, or from a linguistics point of view, a symbolic sign that reconstruct phenomenon into a two-dimensional space(Han, 2005).

The main purpose of cultural product design is to guide the designer's conceptual positioning, for which the definition can be broadly subdivided into the following two categories: (1) Conceptual design method at the earlier stage is mainly focused on the conceptual divergence and convergence while (2) systematic approach is mostly applied during the process of cultural product design to bring out the right standard procedure(Xu Qi-xian , 2004). According to Leong and Clark(2003), a framework for the cultural product design was fully proposed as indicated in the upsidedown triangle of chart 2-7 which broadly separates cultural space into three main categories including outer tangible level, mid behavioral level, and inner intangible level. Separated by cultural levels, the middle level refers to the ritual custom, the outer level

refers to the material and tangible behaviors, and the inner level refers to the ideological and intangible behavior to form a three-level cultural integration of the design argument. Based on this structure, Lin(2007) further distinguishes all consideration factors as required by the product design according to the three cultural levels. Product design is mainly taken as a research object in relevant cultural design study, with less discussion concentrated on the systematic approaches for cultural innovation regarding graphic design. Therefore, cultural product design model as proposed by Lin(2007) is taken as a basic structure for this creation. Storytelling and semiotics concepts are also integrated into concretization and planning of visual design to create cultural innovation procedure for visual design, as indicated in chart 3.

[Chart 3] Conversion Model of Cultural Semiotics



Source : Adaptation from Lin(2007)

The general categories of semiotics mainly include image symbols, binary theory, cultural symbol transformation, and cultural symbol design. By applying the grammatical structure of the aforementioned semiotics to the image of flower arrangement, you'll find that the image language structure of the flower arrangement greatly interrelated to the image language structure of the semiotics. To study what transform text, image or sound into message, it

is necessary to learn about the semiotics, which is a study of different symbols and how to put these symbols into actual practices (written by John Fiske and translated by Zhang, Jin-hua, 1995).

3. Creative Design Element Analysis

3.1. Miryoku Engineering

The term "Miryoku Engineering" was first developed by the Japanese scholars Junichiro Sanui and Masao Inui in 1985 by reference to the study as developed by clinical psychologist Kelly based on the concept of "The Psychology of Personal Constructs", which mainly captures personal cognitive and list it in an organized way (Zheng, 2007). Charm is a great catalyst that promotes human civilization, activates lives, improves social development, and touches soul (Zheng, 2007). The subjective preferences of consumers mainly come from their value judging system including the consumer's sensory reception, sociology, psychological decision-making and art evaluation (Ujigawa, 2000).

EGM provides a concrete way to analyze the charm of the underlying material. In order to understand the true feelings of the respondents towards the product charm, in-depth interviews were conducted to provide respondents with certain stimulation and incentive according to the different themes. Through the respondent's different feeling towards the subject matters, we know the respondent's primitive concept of the subjective stimulation. To access respondent's true feeling, respondents are guided to make a more concrete analysis on their personal concepts which give rise to the subsequent concrete reasons and abstract feelings (Ma, Zeng, Hong, 2005).

Operation Flow Chart for Structure Evaluation Method:

(1) For preparatory work of the interview, associated cards for the interview are fully prepared.

(2) Start the interview.

(3) Ask each respondent to pick out the cards that he/she likes.

(4) According to the preferences of the subjects, please put the selected cards into groups. The more groups the better.

(5) Respondents are asked to explain the reason for this classification based on the group's sequential in order to create an original evaluation detail.

(6) Based on this original evaluation detail, we are in a better position to make further investigation into the concrete form and abstract concept.

(7) Evaluation structure chart is completed.

3.2. Study Methods and Steps

(1) Study Methods

This study is mainly conducted to assess how the floral experts and consumers with different level of expertise, professional background, and intrinsic property may hold different preference towards an artwork. In-depth interview is also conducted to access different visual cognitions towards an artwork and how the personal judgement towards a flower arrangement may differ based on some variables such as age, gender, proficiency and background. The results are summarized and analyzed by the study of the EGM structural evaluation, which ultimately decides how a flower arrangement may be carried out.

Before an interview is formally started, the respondents are provided with different images of the flower arrangement. Through the flower arrangement image and interview structure, respondents are asked to talk about their true thinking and feeling towards the cards to generate an original evaluation detail. Objective concrete matter as suggested by the respondents is considered as a subordinate concept while abstract value judgement as suggested by the respondents is considered as a superordinate concept. Finally, the information

is further induced and analyzed based on the interview result.

The selection of the floral figure card is based on the artworks of regular teaching or art exhibition. During the floral figure card selection process, flower arrangement is taken as a basic standard while minor differences in materials and styles are the taken as target objects for further investigation. Different flower arrangements are made into floral figure cards to assess customer's personal understanding and preference towards the flower arrangements.



[Fig. 1] Floral Design Card Setting

Source : Arrangement from Given Artwork Creations

(2) Respondents

Respondents from the age group of 20~60 are selected for the interview, including 2 senior flower arrangement teachers and 5 college professors, instructors, and teaching assistants.

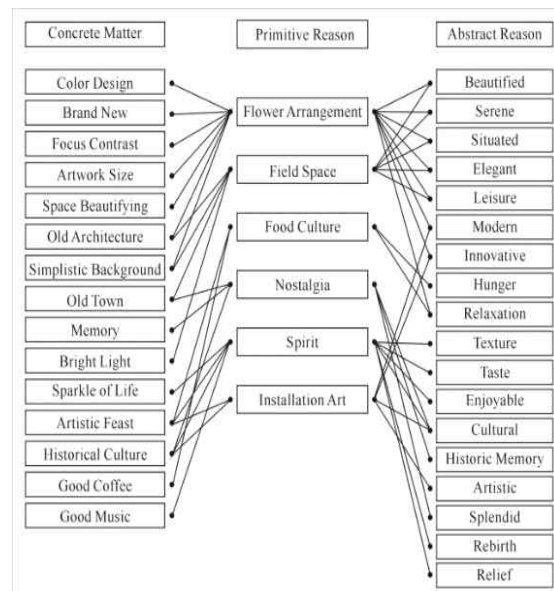
4. The Creative Concept

4.1. Application of Cultural Semiotics in the Attractive Factor of Flower Arrangement

The purpose of this study is to explore the application of cultural semiotics in the attractiveness factor of flower arrangement. By analyzing the interview result, we can obtain the original reason for the respondents to be

attracted to a certain kind of flower arrangement. Respondents are also asked to provide concrete matters and abstract reasons for the specific combination between flower arrangement and exhibition site. Afterward, EGM evaluation structure chart 4 is constructed to assess different flower attractiveness factors.

[Chart 4] EGM Evaluation Structural Chart



Source : Arrangement from Given Artwork Creations

After conducting an interview with the use of 14 originally-invented flower pattern cards, we have found that the applications of cultural semiotics in the attractive factors of flower arrangement can be mainly subdivided into the following categories: "floral style", "field space", "food culture", "local feature", "nostalgic memory", "spiritual aspect", and "installation art". From the evaluation grid method of Miryoku Engineering, we know that the first three keynotes to the applications of cultural semiotics in the attractive factors of flower arrangement are "color design", "focus contrast", and "artwork size". On the other hand, creative factors such as "beautified", "serene", "modern", "leisure", and "situated" are also widely applied to the abstract cause. This study is mainly designed to summarize the application of cultural semiotics in the attractive factor of

flower arrangement, which provides future flower arrangement with an improvement standard and application criteria to refer to.

4.2. Flower Arrangement Creation

Based on the main structure of aesthetic floral modeling in this artwork creation, basic constitute elements such as points, lines, and plane are skillfully applied to the construction of drawings according to the geometrical pattern and mathematical conceptual design. Based on the mathematical concept of rational and geometrical principles, solid modeling is successfully created through several skillful design approaches such as arrangement, subdivision, and design. Under further processing of natural materials, the artists are able to bring their artworks into full play. For example, some artists may destroy the intrinsic nature of the wooden materials to make their artworks look even more solid in appearance. Other artists may apply the basic principle of embedding to fix some natural materials onto their artworks. In a nutshell, artistic approach for the artwork creation is never restricted to a certain type. For example, some artists may fix some coffee beans on to round polystyrene structure add some special touch to the otherwise plain solid artwork structure.

Artwork Creation I: creative ideology and technical procedure for the artwork "Perfection".

Artwork Creation: "Perfection"

Creative Concept: Basic geometric pattern of roundness is mainly applied to this artwork to create a cultural connotation of success and perfection. By integrating coffee beans into the floral design, the artwork is successfully created to deliver the cultural concept that we must always open our heart to accept new people and new things in life to achieve final success and perfection.

Creation techniques:

(1) Apply brown acrylic paint onto the polystyrene ball.







(2) After the paint is dried out, use a hot-melt adhesive gun to fix all coffee bean onto the polystyrene ball.

(3) Fix the polystyrene ball onto the Y-shaped tree branch and combine a total 2 pieces of wooden structures to formulate a solid base. Afterward, the Y-shaped tree branch is attached to the solid base through nails.



(4) A glass tube is inserted right behind the finished artwork to make flower arrangement.

(5) Place the finished artwork at a corner of the coffee shop.

[Chart 5] Creative Skill for the Artwork "Perfection"

		
Apply brown acrylic paint onto the polystyrene ball..	After the paint is dried out, use a hot-melt adhesive gun to fix all coffee bean onto the polystyrene ball..	Fix the polystyrene ball onto the Y-shaped tree branch and combine a total 2 pieces of wooden structures to formulate a solid base. Afterward, the Y-shaped tree branch is attached to the solid base through nails.
		
A glass tube is inserted right behind the finished artwork to make flower arrangement.	Artwork structure completed..	Insert a beautiful flower into the glass tube to add a final touch..

Source : Arranged from Given Artwork Creations

	
Artwork Title	Perfection
Creation Ideologies	By integrating coffee beans into the floral design, the artwork is successfully created to deliver the cultural concept that we must always open our heart to accept

		new people and new things in life to achieve final success and perfection.	
CreationMedia		Coffee Beans, Polystyrene Ball, Wooden Branch, Wooden Board, Iron Nail, and Red Moth Orchid	
Cultural Symbol Connotation	Double Meaning	Symbol	Combination between flower arrangement and food culture.
		Ideology	Use an open heart to create compatibility.
Model Design Analysis	Element	Texture Modeling	Sticky coffees been and natural woods are fully integrated into the artwork to create a rough texture.
	Principle	Balance Modeling	Under balance modeling, the final artwork creation is successfully developed to be viewed from the 4 sides.
	Form	Geometrical Modeling	Solid & round modeling.

Source : Arrangement from Given Artwork Creations

5. Conclusion and Suggestions

Through the Miryoku Engineering, evaluation structure method, and in-depth investigational analysis, we have found that the creation has great potential for modernity, innovation, design element and spatial theme in the future.

Study result of this artwork not only provides future floral designers with a benchmark to refer to, but also create an artistic and cultural environment for the general public to better understand and participate in the spatial aesthetic under "Art Intervention Program" as promoted by the Ministry of Culture. Cultural tourist attraction should be integrated with local cultural activities to promote local sightseeing industries. Flower arrangement should also be applied to the cultural industries and floral industries, so that cultural semiotics are further integrated into the flower arrangement to provide business with a benchmark to refer to.

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email: kysam25@hanmail.net

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