

# The Subversion and Reconstruction of Visual Design Concepts by Contemporary Artistic Trends

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**Abstract:** Throughout its development, design has been influenced by artistic trends of the time. This article explores how the contemporary art movement challenges and redefines the ideas, methods, visual expression, and language of visual design by discussing the subversion of aesthetic concepts, visual language, and new media in contemporary art.

**Keywords:** Contemporary Art, Artistic Trends, Visual Design

## 1. Introduction

As contemporary art trends continue to evolve, a plethora of subversive art forms have emerged, challenging traditional art forms and profoundly impacting visual design. With the influence of these contemporary art movements, visual design ideas have been subverted and reconstructed, prompting designers to prioritize emotional expression, experiential sensation, and the efficacy of conveying information. By exploring and studying these artistic trends, designers are given new inspiration and ideas, ultimately driving the evolution and growth of visual design[1-2].

## 2. An Overview of Contemporary Artistic Trends

### 2.1 Definition and Characteristics of Contemporary Art

Contemporary art refers to the art created in the current era, characterized by a modern spirit and language. It reflects the contemporary social life as perceived by the artists, embodying both modernity and contemporaneity. It encompasses various art forms and expressions that have emerged since the mid to late 20th century, breaking through the limitations of materials and media, and offering diverse modes of expression. In addition to traditional media such as painting, sculpture, drama, and photography, contemporary art includes cross-media art forms like new media, installation, and performance art. It incorporates different elements from different periods and regions, integrating contemporary creation techniques with rich ethnic cultures. In essence, contemporary art uses non-traditional forms and media to express the ideas of modern artists, representing a platform for the expression of social concepts. It seeks to break the shackles of traditional art, redefine artistic forms and language, and explore new artistic expressions and connotations. The characteristics of contemporary art are anti-traditional and diverse. Artists break through traditional art forms and concepts, using multiple symbols like time, space, body, material, and narrative to express their reflections on the natural environment, their own thoughts and feelings, and to stimulate viewers' thoughts. Through unique visual language and forms, they challenge traditional aesthetic standards and concepts, leading the trend and direction of art development.

### 2.2 Introduction to Major Schools and Styles

Contemporary art has given rise to numerous genres and styles, which can be seen as a subversion and reconstruction of traditional artistic expression. Among them, postmodernism is one of the most representative genres in contemporary art. It attempts to deconstruct modernism from a philosophical perspective, emphasizing subjectivity, relativism, and multiculturalism. In addition to postmodernism, there are other genres and styles such as conceptual art, performance art, installation art, and digital art that have disrupted traditional artistic modes of expression and aesthetic standards, presenting more diverse and avant-garde forms of art and creative methods. Conceptual art moves away from the focus on

material form and instead emphasizes ideas, concepts, and notions behind the work. Performance art places greater emphasis on the process and sensations of artistic behavior and interaction between the artist and audience. Digital art utilizes digital technology to create works with interactive and multimedia properties. The emergence of these genres and styles has made contemporary art more diverse and liberated in terms of its creation and expression, challenging traditional artistic conventions and pushing the boundaries of what art can be.

### **3. The Subversion of Visual Design by Contemporary Artistic**

#### ***3.1 The Challenge of Conceptual Art to Traditional Aesthetics***

Conceptual art is an important genre in contemporary art movements, emerging as a trend in the late 1960s from minimalist reductionism and eventually becoming known as the "art of negation". Traditional aesthetics hold that the beauty of art is formed by the combination of its form and material elements. However, conceptual art challenges this view by emphasizing the concepts and ideas conveyed by artworks and advocating for thoughts and creativity to be the soul and core of art. Conceptual artists prioritize the expression of ideas and concepts over the pursuit of formal beauty.

This form of artistic expression challenges traditional aesthetic views by linking aesthetic experience with the form and material of art pieces. It has led people to rethink and question the concept and value of beauty, making them aware that beauty is not an inherent attribute of artworks, but rather a subjective feeling and understanding of the audience. Conceptual artists can use any material and technique, including text, images, sound, and video, to explore the relationship between art and society, politics, culture, and other issues. This breaks the limits and definitions of art media in traditional aesthetics, making the form and aesthetic value of art more free and open.

Conceptual art challenges not only traditional aesthetics, but also the traditional role of the audience in relation to artworks. While traditional art is often created with the viewer's aesthetic experience in mind, conceptual art prioritizes the ideas and messages behind the work, as well as the interaction and communication between the viewer and the artwork. Through various methods, artists can guide the audience to engage with the work in a more active and reflective way, turning them from passive viewers into active participants and thinkers. This interactive and reflective art experience poses new challenges and inspirations for traditional aesthetics and aesthetic experiences.

The rise of conceptual art not only challenges traditional aesthetics, but also prompts a rethinking and subversion of traditional aesthetic concepts in contemporary visual design.

#### ***3.2 Postmodernism's Critique of Visual Language***

Postmodernism is a cultural and philosophical movement popular in the late twentieth century that criticized and satirized modernism's rationalism and standardization, and offered criticism of traditional visual language. Postmodern artists emphasized the instability, ambiguity, and relativity of visual language, emphasizing the artist's subjective experience and cultural background rather than the presentation of objective facts. In addition, postmodernism emphasized the interaction and dialogue between the artist and the audience, believing that the audience's interpretation and understanding of the artwork were equally important. This critical movement had a profound impact on traditional visual language, leading to the diversification and personalization of artists' expression, and promoting deeper thinking and interpretation of art by the audience. This critical attitude triggered people to rethink and reconstruct visual language, and raised higher demands and challenges for visual design.

Designer David Carson is renowned for his innovative design approach that challenged traditional design norms and established new design orders. Carson's design style is characterized by freedom, randomness, and non-linearity, in which he introduced accidental elements in layout design and used computer technology to freely arrange text. This unconventional style resulted in the dissolution of traditional layouts and the establishment of new design orders through reorganization. Carson's design style is marked by his frequent use of handwritten fonts, fragmented text, and non-traditional layout methods. He employs techniques such as tilting, misalignment, deformation, intersection, overlap, splitting, and whitespace to create new connections and interactions between text and images. Moreover, he extensively uses symbols, logos, and visual elements from popular culture, recombining and arranging them to make designs more modern and trendy. Carson's design language presents a high

degree of personalization and uniqueness, often leaving a strong visual impact and an unforgettable impression. His designs mix and blend different cultural elements and artistic styles, presenting a very diverse and inclusive design language. Carson's visual language emphasizes the designer's personal sensibility and aesthetics, highlighting the designer's subjective role in design. While emphasizing emotional expression, he also challenges and breaks through traditional visual norms, making his design style a completely new visual language. Carson's design work for the *Ray Gun* magazine in the early 1990s using bold typography and unique graphic elements, successfully attracted young readers' attention and became a source of inspiration for later designers. His design methods were considered revolutionary and had a huge impact on the graphic design industry at that time, overturning tradition and rebuilding visual orders.

### ***3.3 The Subversion of Traditional Media by New Media Art***

New media art refers to an art form that utilizes digital technology and emerging media such as the internet for creative expression and art-making. It includes digital art, computer graphics, computer animation, virtual art, internet art, interactive art, electronic games, computer robotics, 3D printing, robot art, and biotechnology, among others. The digitization of new media art has fundamentally changed the ways in which artworks are created, exhibited, and preserved. The production processes and technologies of traditional media have been reformed and improved, and art forms such as digital painting and digital sculpture are realized through digital technology, breaking the limitations of traditional art production and preservation. Compared to traditional media such as painting and sculpture, new media art offers more flexible forms of expression and a broader creative space. It is no longer a continuation and development of traditional art but a completely new visual expression. The emergence and development of new media art has greatly impacted and subverted the position of traditional media. Video art has subverted traditional media such as film and television and created more complex artistic language and visual effects. Virtual reality art utilizes digital technology and human-computer interaction to bring audiences into virtual spaces and achieve the reproduction and extension of the real world.

Furthermore, the emergence of new media art has changed the audience structure and dissemination methods of traditional art, making art works more widely spread and accepted. The interdisciplinary and interactive nature of new media art makes art works not only a visual experience but also an immersive experience. Audiences can participate in the creation and performance of art works interactively and become a part of the art work. This participatory characteristic has greatly subverted the relationship between audiences and art works in traditional art and challenged and reconstructed the essence and values of art, refreshing our understanding of art.

The subversion of traditional media by new media art has promoted the integration of traditional and new media, greatly expanding people's visual space and scope, and allowing designers to fully utilize the advantages of multiple media, creating more creative and expressive works[3].

## **4. The Reconstruction of Visual Design by Contemporary Art Movements**

### ***4.1 The transformation of the concepts and methods in visual design***

Contemporary art has not only challenged traditional aesthetics and criticized visual language, but also transformed the concepts and methods of visual design. In the past, visual design focused mainly on aesthetic expression and form, emphasizing the beauty of visual effects and the clarity of visual communication. However, influenced by contemporary art trends, the concepts and methods of visual design have shifted from traditional expressionism and decorationism to a more content-oriented, expressive, and emotional direction. Designers no longer simply create visual effects for clients but instead focus on expressing the ideas, emotions, and values that the work aims to convey. In terms of visual design methods, multimedia, interactive design, and other techniques are increasingly used to make visual communication more dimensional, diverse, and interactive. The influence of contemporary art has led to a more profound integration of art and design, encouraging designers to incorporate more artistic elements into their work, thus enhancing the emotional appeal and creative value of visual communication.

Under the influence of contemporary art movements, designers began to focus on the intellectual and expressive aspects of their works. Paul Rand's logo design for IBM completely overturned traditional

corporate identity design concepts by introducing abstract geometric shapes and elements of color contrast in the logo. Through this simple design style, Paul Rand successfully expressed IBM's brand image as a high-tech company with modernity and futurism, breaking traditional logo design patterns and making the logo design more widely applicable and repeatable. Paul Rand believed that designers should engage in "visual communication," which is the process of conveying meaning and emotions through visual language. His design philosophy emphasized the close integration of visual elements and concepts to allow design works to convey more information. The IBM logo is considered one of the masterpieces of modern graphic design, demonstrating how the concept art ideas can be integrated into graphic design. It also proved that emphasizing the close integration of concepts and visual elements in design is crucial for successful visual communication. Paul Rand is also considered one of the most influential designers in the history of graphic design[4].

#### ***4.2 The Diversity of Visual Expression.***

Visual design as an art form reflects the diversity of expression seen in contemporary art trends. While traditional visual design primarily involves graphic design, illustration, photography, and other similar mediums, designers are increasingly using more media and technology to advance diverse visual expressions. Installation art, for instance, creates visual impact by treating artwork as a constituent element of space, distinguishing it from graphic design and traditional sculpture. Video art employs photography, video, and other media to convey specific concepts and emotions through images and sound. Interactive design emphasizes the interactive relationship between the design work and the audience, breaking away from the traditional one-way relationship between the audience and the artwork. Virtual reality technology further expands the possibilities of visual design by immersing the audience into a virtual world and engaging them in an immersive interactive experience with the artwork. By utilizing various media and technology, contemporary designers can create more diverse and immersive experiences for their audiences, advancing the development of visual expression.

New forms of expression not only enrich the forms and means of visual design, but also provide more possibilities for the communicative effects of visual design. Design has moved beyond traditional static design to form a comprehensive expression that combines various elements such as images, sound, and text, and is no longer confined to print media. The National Palace Museum in Taipei extracted inscriptions from the Mao Gong Ding and used digital media to create interactive design works. Viewers in a digital environment can select any character in the inscriptions, and the digital interactive system will provide a detailed interpretation and demonstrate its historical evolution. Under the influence of contemporary art trends, the expressive forms of visual design are constantly developing towards diversification and integration.

#### ***4.3. The Redefinition of Visual Language***

The visual language serves as the fundamental language for visual communication, providing an essential tool for expressing design intentions, conveying information, and shaping images. As visual expression diversifies, visual design has taken on a new appearance, and the definition of visual language has continuously evolved. The emergence of conceptual art challenged traditional aesthetics, postmodernism critiqued visual language, and new media art subverted the limits of traditional media. These factors redefined visual language to various extents, presenting a more diverse and enriching array of expressions. Contemporary art trends place emphasis on the reflexivity and criticality of visual artworks and aim to explore major issues such as social phenomena, cultural values, and human destiny through artistic works. This trend's influence is not limited to the form and content of artworks; it also affects the expression of the visual communication field. More reflexive and critical works gradually emerged in visual design, conveying designers' perspectives and opinions on social phenomena through visual symbols, images, and colors. The contemporary art trend stresses cultural diversity and inclusivity, promoting the diversification and openness of visual language. When conveying design intentions, designers began to incorporate artistic elements and symbols from various cultures, resulting in a more diverse visual language. Consequently, the redefinition of visual language through contemporary art trends has impacted the concepts and methods of visual design, compelling designers to pay more attention to diverse expressions and a more comprehensive definition of visual language. This development drives the continuous innovation and advancement of the visual design field.

German designer Helmut Schmid once famously stated, "Design is an attitude( Gestaltung ist Haltung)." Design arises from thoughtful insights and requires creative expression during its

presentation. Artist Li Binyuan excels at adapting to his surroundings and improvising with available tools and materials. His choice of inexpensive materials highlights the strength of his artistic behavior. In designing the poster for *the Heavenly Cinema: Li Binyuan Solo Exhibition*, He Jianping utilized affordable industrial building materials, like foam glue, to inscribe unstructured characters that convey Li Binyuan's wild artistic energy. The poster employs non-traditional visual elements by incorporating industrial materials commonly used in architecture, echoing the artist's creative proposition. The use of materials creates a visually tense and dynamic effect, producing a sense of three-dimensionality and imbuing the entire poster with a contemporary and spacious feel. The poster's innovative and unique visual elements represent a significant departure from traditional visual language.

## **5. The Inspiration of Contemporary Artistic Trends on Visual Design**

The impact of contemporary artistic trends on the concept of visual design is complex and multifaceted. It emphasizes innovation, experimentation, diversity, inclusivity, redefinition of visual language, and the connection between visual elements and society. These influences are gradually transforming the ways and methods of visual design, making it more profound and meaningful.

### ***5.1 Encouraging Innovation and Experimentation***

In contemporary art, artists frequently employ non-traditional materials and media in their creations, such as recycled materials, electronic media, and digital technology, among others. These unconventional materials and media allow artists to experiment with a range of techniques and approaches, breaking free from the constraints of traditional aesthetics. Designers can derive inspiration from these works, breaking away from traditional visual expressions and boldly exploring new design languages and creative methods. Moreover, contemporary art fosters experimentation and risk-taking. While traditional visual design often adheres to established rules and standards in pursuit of stable and predictable results, the experimental and daring works in contemporary art encourage designers to explore new ideas and solutions in the design process, seeking more unique and exceptional outcomes. The innovative and experimental spirit of contemporary art provides visual design with greater freedom and possibility, emboldening designers to explore new materials, media, techniques, and approaches, redefine visual language, and expand into new design realms.

### ***5.2 Promote Diversity and Inclusivity***

In the field of visual design, an increasing number of designers are using non-traditional materials and forms, blurring the boundaries between art and design. In addition, designers are incorporating diverse cultural elements into their designs, paying attention to the expression of different cultures and groups in order to increase inclusivity and diversity. The impact of contemporary art trends has made visual design more open and diverse, with designers placing greater emphasis on innovation and self-expression. This trend towards diversity and inclusivity has brought about more possibilities and creativity in the field of visual design.

### ***5.3 Emphasizing the Connection between Visual Design and Society***

In visual design, the purpose is no longer solely to pursue aesthetics, but also to use design to convey thoughts and concerns about social issues. Designers employ various techniques, such as visual symbols, color, layout, and photography, to express their views and attitudes towards society. Influenced by contemporary art trends, visual design is no longer just a tool, but a powerful force that can guide and influence society. The emphasis on diversity and inclusivity in contemporary art trends has also had an impact on the field of visual design. Designers are increasingly paying attention to diversity in areas such as culture, race, and gender, and incorporating these elements into their designs. This inclusive design concept can better meet the needs of different groups, making designs more inclusive and sustainable.

## **6. Conclusion**

Contemporary art trends and movements have had a significant impact on visual design, challenging traditional aesthetics, critiquing visual language, subverting traditional media, encouraging innovation and experimentation, advocating for diversity and inclusivity, and emphasizing the connection between

visual design and society. These influences have led to a transformation of visual design concepts and methods, promoting diverse visual expression and redefining visual language. As contemporary art continues to evolve, designers must continuously refine their design thinking and language from an artistic perspective, promoting the diversification and innovative development of visual design and imbuing it with a new contemporary spirit.

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