The Research on Commercial Word Design under the New Liberal Arts Framework

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ABSTRACT

Focusing on the issue of the lack of systematic methods in commercial word design in the context of the new liberal arts, this paper, based on the current situation in commercial word design practice where designers already possess software operation capabilities but have insufficient understanding of Chinese character structure and brand visual logic, constructs a six-level method system that is "progressive and interrelated". This system is based on the geometric strokes method, with subsequent layers of variations in strokes thickness, endpoint embellishments, exaggeration of strokes, curve changes and AI-assisted design. Each level gradually increases the visual dimensions layer by layer on the premise of a stable sequence structure. AI is used to expend visual effect, not replace the core design thought. This system breaks down abstract aesthetics into operable and evaluable design steps, taking into account both cognitive laws and commercial practices, providing a progressive methodological approach for commercial word design.

Keywords: *New liberal arts, Commercial word design, Design step, AI-assisted design.*

1. INTRODUCTION: THE POSITIONING AND ISSUES OF COMMERCIAL WORD DESIGN IN THE CONTEXT OF NEW LIBERAL ARTS

The new liberal arts emphasize the synergy of interdisciplinary integration, technological convergence, and humanistic values. In this context, the commercial word design not only fulfills the function of conveying brand information, but also embodies the aesthetic structure and cultural connotations of Chinese characters. It is an important part of visual communication design. This thesis bases on the commercial word design practice, and focuses on the systematic construction of the commercial word design methods. The commercial word design widely exists in the situations like brand mark, book title, cultural poster, packaging and advertisement etc. Its core is not merely about "make the word beautiful", but also establishes a visual personality that matches the brand's style and communication theme under the condition of stable structure and clear identification. This system aims to serve local economy, meets the market demand, and lets the designers quickly adapt to the industry practices. It also expends the professional boundaries and improves the communicative and expressive power of commercial word design with the help of AI technology.

2. THE CONSTRUCTION LOGIC OF THE PROGRESSIVE METHODOLOGICAL SYSTEM FOR COMMERCIAL WORD DESIGN

According to the progressive cognitive laws, a set of commercial word design method is organized, as shown in Table 1. The obvious advantage of this system, compared with the currently available design books on the market (for example, Liu Bokun's "Evolutionary Theory of Typography Design" [1]), is the logical coherence and difficulty gradient among methods. Although the latter one is rich in cases and concise in language, but there is a lack of rigorous hierarchical division and explanatory links among these various methods, and the cases in each chapter are presented separately, which is not conducive to the designers' understanding of the generation and evolution

relationships among the methods. For this purpose, this thesis, through design practice and case verification, follows the cognitive path of "from framework to skin, from structure to decoration, from static to dynamic, from artificial to intelligent", and reconstructs a six-step progressive path from basic geometric strokes to AI integration.

Table 1. Progressive Teaching System for Text Design Method

Level	Method composition	Core design target	Design control key points
1	geometric strokes method	Establish a straight and stable framework for Chinese characters	Disconnection method application, cursive script reference, balance and unity of the center of gravity
2	+ Variation in stroke thickness	Enhance visual tension and contrast	The principle of wider horizontal and thicker vertical, and the proportion control of complex structures
3	+ endpoint embellishments	Enhance the level of refinement and style characteristics	Uniformity of the same type of endpoints, adaptation to spatial changes
4	+strokes exaggeration	Create visual focal points and brand memory points	Partial enlargement, picture balance (symmetry/complementarity)
5	+ curve changes	Soften the harshness and rigidity, and add rhythm.	Straightness and curvature contrast, uniformity of curvature, parallel cutting
6	+ AI-assisted design	Efficiency improvement and scheme expansion	Visual effect expansion, multiple solution generation, human-machine division of labor

a Source: made by the author.

3. THE HIERARCHICAL ANALYSIS OF THE SIX-STEP METHOD FOR BUSINESS TEXT DESIGN

3.1 Geometric Strokes Method (The First Level)

This method is the "foundation" stage of the commercial word design, which is aimed to cultivate the designers' ability to master the basic structure of Chinese characters. By using a single uniform geometric line to construct the character shape to pursue symmetry and a sense of solidity, this "de-emotionalized" initial state forces the designer to focus on the two core parameters of the text structure and the center of gravity, rather than getting too quickly into decorative details. In practice, it is often used in combination with the "disconnection method". The general principle of the "disconnection method" is breaking the line, and connecting the adjacent strokes. The choice of disconnection is not random, but follows the traditional aesthetic principle of "reckon blank as inked": the disconnection part actually serves to "open windows" for the negative space, preventing the dullness caused by excessive enclosed areas. This dealing method embodies the basic principles of "top-bottom relationship" and "closure principle" in visual communication [2]. To enhance the cultural connotation, one can refer to the calligraphic character shapes. The smooth lines and graceful curves of the calligraphy share similarities in the unique approaches of modern geometric techniques (Figure 1).



Figure 1 Geometric stroke method + Disconnection method + Seal character.

a Source: Liang Lizhu.

The operating steps:

1. Seek ancient calligraphy characters as a reference and adopt its strokes

Key point: When referring to seal characters, one should follow the principle of maintaining the readability of the characters and not simply copy everything wholesale.

2. Use the horizontal and vertical geometric stroke method and establish the basic structure of the text

Key point: Use geometric lines to harden the text. The lines should not have any variation in thickness. Try to use horizontal and vertical lines, and combine them with the disconnect method. Use diagonal lines when necessary, because using only horizontal and vertical lines in the text will make it look very stiff.

3. Change the 90-degree right angle to a rounded corner

Key point: When setting the rounded corners, the degree of roundness used for right angles of different lengths will vary. One can visually determine whether the sizes of the different rounded corners have a unified appearance.

4. Expand and integrate the lines of the words to create a unified design work. At the intersections of the lines, rounded corners can be appropriately added to enhance the softness of the text.

In the design of the words, “micro-layout” can be added, which means adding simple pinyin on the right side of the text as an embellishment to enrich the overall picture.



Figure 2 The poster of the film “Fengshen”.

a Source: Internet

The words design of the poster of the film “Fengshen” is a typical application of this method. It refers to the characteristics of seal character strokes, and uses simple single lines combined with disconnect techniques to showcase the ancient and mythological charm. It is a model of modern traditional-themed commercial fonts. This method is widely applicable in the design situations like brand mark, book title and cultural posters etc. that need to balance modernity with cultural depth.

3.2 Geometric Strokes Method+ Variation in Stroke Thickness(the Second Level)

3.2.1 The Low-level Method

The variation of stroke thickness is realized on the foundation of geometric strokes. Compared with the single-line geometric stroke method, the words with various stroke thicknesses have more powerful visual impact and are more likely to draw the attention of the audience. As shown in Figure 3, the common design principle of the variation in stroke thickness is “horizontal thin, vertical thick”, which means use thin lines for horizontal lines and thick lines for vertical lines. For designers with less experience, the easy method of application is respectively unifying the thickness of words’ horizontal lines and vertical lines; this method is suitable for characters with few strokes and simple structures. If the characters has many strokes and complex structures, its thickness of lines cannot be simply unified. Another key design point is that when using thick and thin lines to reconstruct the characters, the tilted lines will form prominent triangles. When the design process is not finished, the lines should not be expanded into surfaces. To facilitate the observation of the words effect, white squares should be used to cover the excess and prominent strokes, maintaining the horizontal and vertical effect of the character strokes.



Figure 3 Variation in stroke thickness at low-levels.

a Source: Liang Lizhu.

The operating steps:

1. Use the geometric stroke method, re-construct the text with geometric lines.

2. Adopt the rule of “thinner horizontally and thicker vertically” to unify the thickness of the strokes in the characters and unify the center of gravity of the characters.
3. Use the white blocks to cover the slanted angles produced by the diagonal lines. The disconnections of the strokes should be concentrated in the middle and lower part of the words. This can reduce the impact of the disconnected strokes on words recognition.
4. Convert the lines into shapes, use the “Path Finder” to merge the words, and add rounded corners at the intersections of the lines.

3.2.2 The High-level Method

When dealing with characters with many strokes, the simple method of unifying the variation of the thickness cannot be used any longer. As shown in Figure 4, both vertical lines and diagonal lines of the character “赛” use thick strokes. If it is simply and mechanically proceeded by following the uniform thick and thin strokes, then there will be no gaps between the strokes of the character “赛”. So the thick lines of the character “赛” is thinner than those of the character “联”. But overall, it does not affect the contrast between the thick lines and the thin lines. The variation of the character strokes’ thickness does not have a specific method of calculation. It can only be judged through vision and should be smooth and not abrupt without affecting the overall effect. The words design of the method of stroke thickness variation is typically used to express themes of speed, strength, or neutrality.



Figure 4 Variation in stroke thickness at high-levels.

a Source: Internet

3.3 Variation in Stroke Thickness+ Endpoint Embellishments (the Third Level)

3.3.1 The Low-level Method

The endpoint embellishments are realized on the foundation of the variation in stroke thickness. The design principle of the endpoint embellishments is adding the same endpoint to the same type of strokes, for example, the endpoint of vertical lines is different from its of horizontal lines. In the initial stage of practice, it is recommended to use only one endpoint at first. Once the designers have become proficient, then they can use two or more endpoints for modification. The low-level’s endpoint embellishments will use the same unchanging endpoint embellishments. As shown in figure 5, the endpoints of vertical lines are unified. The comparatively common mistake in practice is using one or two similar endpoints in different kinds of strokes, making the strokes lack contrast with each other.



Figure 5 Stroke thickness variation + low-level endpoint embellishments.

a Source: Liang Lizhu.

The operating steps:

1. Reconstruct characters with the geometric stroke method.
2. Use the stroke thickness variation to change the characters’ stroke thickness according to the principle of “thicker vertical lines, thinner horizontal lines”.
3. Add graphic element in the character “蛙”. Use frog’s eye to enhance the fluidity of the text.
4. Above the thick strokes, uniformly add endpoints.
5. Expand and combine the lines, and add rounded corners at the intersecting corners.

3.3.2 The High-level Method

The high-level endpoint embellishments mean using the endpoints of same style to embellish. Its endpoints have changes in size and shape, which is determined by the spatial extent of the endpoint's location. As shown in figure 6, if the space where the endpoint is located is large, then the endpoint will be large; if the space where the endpoint is located is small, then the endpoint will be smaller. This method requires the designer's higher overall words comprehension ability. The endpoints are requested to have unified style. The size of the endpoints should not influence the structural stabilization of words.



Figure 6 Stroke thickness variation + high-level endpoint embellishments.

a Source: Internet

3.4 Stroke Thickness Variation + Endpoint Embellishments + Strokes Exaggeration(the Fourth Level)

3.4.1 The Low-level Method

The exaggeration of strokes is realized on the foundation of the endpoint embellishment. It is similar with enlarged endpoints. The biggest difference between it and the endpoint embellishment is that the endpoint embellishment is generally evenly distributed throughout the words, while stroke exaggeration usually occurs only at one or two places. The large and small exaggerated strokes play a role in balancing the overall composition. As shown is figure 7, the vertical lines at the top of the words use endpoint embellishments. The two sides use the strokes exaggeration, which plays a role in balancing the composition of the picture. The strokes exaggeration in initial stage all use the same type and style of exaggerated strokes. The main difference lies in the size and position of the strokes.



Figure 7 Stroke thickness variation + endpoint embellishments + strokes exaggeration.

a Source: Liang Lizhu.

The operating steps:

1. Reconstruct characters with the geometric stroke method.
2. Use the stroke thickness variation to reshape the strokes.
3. Use the disconnection method. The positions of disconnection only focus on the middle and lower part of the words.
4. Add endpoints above the vertical lines. Add exaggerated strokes in the two sides of words.
5. Expand and combine the lines, and add rounded corners at the intersection points of the lines.

3.4.2 The High-level Method

The high-level strokes exaggeration will integrate various elements to achieve a balanced composition of the picture. As shown in figure 8, "星星" and the elongated triangular strokes in "点亮星空" all belong to the strokes exaggeration, which reach the balance in the picture. The usage of high-level strokes exaggeration also emphasizes the balance of the picture, but its strokes are more changeable. Using exaggerated strokes-based words design, common themes such as fast-paced, intensity, flamboyance, and vitality are presented. This type of font is usually used as the main font in advertisements, posters, etc.



Figure 8 Stroke thickness variation + strokes exaggeration.

a Source: Internet

3.5 Stroke Thickness Variation + Endpoint Embellishments + Curve Changes (the Fifth Level)

The common point of “curve changes” and “strokes exaggeration” is that both the curves and exaggerated strokes in the layout of words pursue the balance of the picture. But the “characters of words” expressed by the two methods are widely divergent. The curves often express the themes like love, romance etc., which are often used in the brands like wedding planning, flower shop, cake shop etc. Conducting this method is more challenging. It is mainly because the drawing of curves is more difficult than that of straight lines. The designers usually do not know the right way when conducting practice in initial stage. They cannot draw the smooth lines with changing perspectives and curves. The mainly problem is that the designers directly use “surface” to draw curves in Adobe Illustrator. Although “surface” can shape the perspective changes of the curves, but it also greatly increases the difficulty of drawing. The real shortcut is using “lines” to draw curves: determine the basic shape of the curve through “lines”, then transform the “lines” into “surface”, and shape its perspective changes. This approach can make half the work with double results. Besides, there is a design characteristic of curve changes, that is the parallel cutting between the curve and the strokes of the word. Looking at the fourth step in Figure 9, this parallel cutting can reduce the influence of the curve on the main words, and also has a certain aesthetic appeal.



Figure 9 Stroke thickness variation + curve changes.

a Source: Liang Lizhu.

The operating steps:

1. Reconstruct characters with the geometric stroke method.
2. Use the stroke thickness variation to reshape the strokes.
3. Try to add endpoints at the vertical lines of the words.
4. Add curves, and pay attention to the mutual horizontal cutting of the curve and the strokes of the characters.
5. Expand and combine the lines, and add rounded corners at the intersection points of the lines.

3.6 AI-assisted Design: The Effect Expansion and Human-computer Collaboration (the Sixth Level)

The design process is carried out first by following the aforementioned method to create a black-and-white line drawing (using Adobe Illustrator), and then the image is imported into the AI platform (Ji Meng) to generate the effect picture. AI-assisted design is not independent font styles, but the expansion of the effects and comparison tools for plans on the foundation of the first five levels of structural training. The logic of its division of work is: the designer directs the “shape” (structure, proportion, the relationship between black and white), and AI takes charge of the “quality” (material, light and shadow relationship, ambience). The two are clearly distinguished in their importance.

3.6.1 Stroke Thickness Variation + Endpoint Embellishments + Strokes Exaggeration + AI

The effect produced by AI obviously enhanced the image layers and the theme Relevance. The retro battlefield atmosphere strengthens the meaning of the words. The same type colors are unified, and the main part is prominent (figure 10). This shows the design and division of work logic of "man-computer coordination". The designer should clearly distinguish the core elements that "remain the same" and the atmospheric elements that "can be freely expressed" in the prompts. The exercise of "control the weight" itself is an important part of the contemporary design quality. At present, while AI-assisted design enhances efficiency, it also triggers profound reflections on originality, copyright ownership, and design ethics [3].So this thesis propose that AI should be regarded as the auxiliary tool for content extend and quick plan comparison, not the "black box" that replacing core design thinking.



Figure 10 Stroke thickness variation + endpoint embellishments + strokes exaggeration + AI.

a Source: Neusoft Institute Guangdong, Wang Xiaotong.

3.7 Stroke Thickness Variation + Endpoint Embellishments + Curve Changes + AI.

In another practice case picture, the designer uses "love" as the theme, imported the black-and-white draft into AI after completion. The prompts are: "Realistic 3D rendering, maintaining the original text design, with a romantic Valentine's Day background featuring a gradient blue sky, floating clouds, pink hearts, etc." At last, a huge heart appears on the pink clods as the background. It sets off the white gilded letters. The colors were soft, the main and secondary elements were clearly distinguished, the picture effect was rich, and it also highlighted the theme of love. Compared with the black-and-white draft, the design effect of text has been elevated and expanded with the application of AI.



Figure 11 Stroke thickness variation + endpoint embellishments + curve changes + AI.

a Source: Neusoft Institute Guangdong, Luo Weirong.

4. CONCLUSION: INTEGRATION AND REFLECTION ON THE METHODS OF BUSINESS TEXT DESIGN FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF NEW LIBERAL ARTS

From the perspective of the new liberal arts, this article systematically restructured the methods of commercial text design and established a progressive methodological system applicable to commercial text design practice. This system takes the traditional design methods as the foundation, layers in the order of "geometry → thickness → endpoints → exaggeration/curves → AI", while takes into account both cognitive laws and commercial practice requirements, decomposes the abstract aesthetic judgment into specific design actions that can be broken down and evaluated.

Faced with the current industry craze for AI-generated fonts, this thesis proposes that the practice of commercial text design should consists the core value of handcraft and thinking training, use AI as an auxiliary tool for enhancing the effect and expanding the solution, rather than replacing it, on the basis of strengthening the design capabilities. It is hoped that this thesis will stimulate more professionals in the field to engage in discussions and reflections on the methods of commercial text design in the context of the new liberal arts, and provide references for the future development of commercial text design.

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