



Modular Production: Unique Display and Integration of Chinese and Western Artistic Personalities

Yichun Li, Yuting Fu, Yiyue Tu, Leqi Han

College of Art, Zhejiang Normal University, Jinhua, China
Email: 2576704209@qq.com

How to cite this paper: Li, Y.C., Fu, Y.T., Tu, Y.Y. and Han, L.Q. (2025) Modular Production: Unique Display and Integration of Chinese and Western Artistic Personalities. *Open Access Library Journal*, 12: e12754. <https://doi.org/10.4236/oalib.1112754>

Received: December 2, 2024

Accepted: January 24, 2025

Published: January 27, 2025

Copyright © 2025 by author(s) and Open Access Library Inc.

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0).

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>



Open Access

Abstract

In “Everything”, Lei Dehou argues that the “modular system” was a relatively common mode of production in ancient China. In the field of contemporary art, modular production is a unique production mode created by artists, which is different from “original creation” in traditional art. In this production mode, artists no longer create on the basis of “original” works. Instead, they transform their works and concepts into different modules. Different from the “original” artistic forms in traditional art, modular production has unique forms of expression and aesthetic values. In the art field, this production mode has not only influenced the forms and techniques of artistic creation, but also promoted the exchange and integration of the characteristics of Chinese and Western art. Moreover, this article also focuses on the bridging role of modular production in facilitating cross-cultural exchanges between Chinese and Western art and on how it has driven artistic innovation and individualized expression. By deeply analyzing the application and influence of modular production in Chinese and Western art, this article reveals the changes in artistic production modes under the background of globalization and their significant importance for the display and integration of artistic individuality.

Subject Areas

Art

Keywords

Modular Production, Chinese and Western Art, Personality Display, Integration, Globalization, Transformation of Production Methods, Artistic Innovation

1. Introduction

Lei Dehou was an important art historian, critic, and educator of the 20th century,

and also the earliest scholar in China to propose the concept of “modular production”. He published the book “All Things”, which is an inheritance and development of ancient Chinese artistic thought. In “All Things”, Red Marquis traced the development trajectory of traditional Chinese art from the modular system of ancient China, and deeply explained the significance of modular production [1], as shown in **Figure 1**, the most important abstract modular factor of modularization—the theme.

In contemporary art, modular production is a commonly existing art production method. It exists not only in traditional Chinese art, but also widely in contemporary art. Modular production demonstrates in a unique way the individualized spirit and cultural connotations that artists have infused into their works.

Modular production is a typical Western contemporary art creation model. It establishes connections between artists’ personal thoughts and ideas and modules, and forms works with certain significance and value. It has exerted a huge influence on traditional Chinese art and also demonstrated unique aesthetic values and aesthetic pursuits in the field of contemporary art (see **Figure 1**).

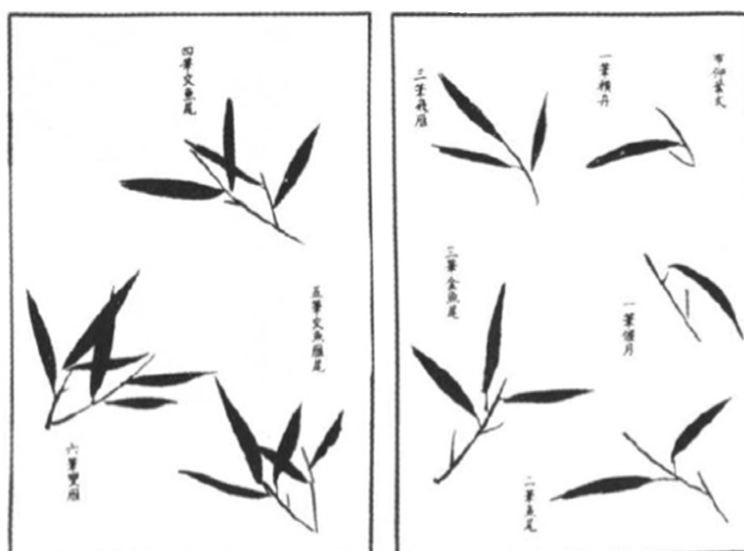


Figure 1. Bamboo grove (two pages select edition from *Manual of Painting and Calligraphy*, compiled in 1679), woodblock printing, 25.5 × 30 cm.

2. The Origin and Development of Modular Art: Tracing the Historical Origins of Modular Art in Both Eastern and Western Art

The modular art in China [2] can be traced back to the Xia, Shang and Zhou Dynasties and had become quite mature by the Qin and Han Dynasties. During this period, bronze craftsmen had already used the modular system to produce a large number of products and displayed the status of the nobility through differences in quality. A large number of modular decorations also appeared on bronze wares, lacquer wares and other artifacts. From the 11th to the 13th century, with the invention of large-scale woodblock printing and movable type, the modular system of

architecture was further standardized and improved. For example, the “Yingzao Fashi” (Treatise on Architectural Methods) provided detailed regulations and explanations on the modular system of architecture.

In ancient Western society, a complete modular production system like that in ancient China did not come into being. Before the 17th and 18th centuries, the shadow of the modular system was rarely seen in Western architecture and other art forms. However, with the advent of the Industrial Revolution and the rise of machine production, Westerners began to draw on and develop the modular production method. In the field of architecture, the concrete houses with “square box” volumes in Western modern functionalist architecture, which were simply combined in the way of Cartesian coordinates, already showed the influence of the modular system on architecture. This influence was not only reflected in the forms and styles of architecture, but also more profoundly manifested in the production and organizational modes of architecture.

3. In-Depth Analysis of the Unique Forms of Modularity in Different Cultural Backgrounds, Such as the Modular Production of Chinese Painting and the Modular Replication of Western Sculpture

3.1. Chinese Modular Art

In China, modular production is a common creative method among artists and has a close connection with “modularization” and “modular art” [3] in traditional Chinese culture. This has already had a fairly high degree of recognition in traditional Chinese culture. Ceramics, as an important part of traditional Chinese art, is also the main carrier [4] of modular production. In traditional Chinese ceramics, a module refers to utensils of various shapes made from clay through the processes of shaping and firing, such as bowls, plates, dishes, cups and so on.

3.2. Western Modular Art

There was also modular production in Western traditional art. For example, artists during the Renaissance often took sculpture as the main form of their creation. The modular art of Western sculpture is reflected in the inheritance and innovation of artistic styles and the enrichment of the expressive power of sculpture art by replicating and spreading classic sculptural works from ancient Greece and Rome, such as replicas of “The Discus Thrower”, and by adopting modular design in modern sculptures, for instance, decomposing sculptures into multiple independent modules and then recombining them (see **Figure 2**).

4. Exploration of the Principles and Laws That Modularity Follows in Both Eastern and Western Art

Modular art is a unique form of artistic language created by both Chinese and Western artists under the guidance of their respective artistic concepts through the exploration of different materials and various technical means. In this process,



Figure 2. Discobolus Myron.

artists do not have unified standards or aesthetic criteria, nor do they have a unified style or school. The principles and rules they follow are all aimed at creating more individualized modular works. During this process, both Chinese and Western artists give full play to their individuality and creativity, fully demonstrating the unique aesthetic values contained in their respective artistic concepts.

Through the comparative study [5] of the principles and rules followed by Chinese and Western artists in modular art, it can be found that there are numerous commonalities in the principles and rules followed and embodied in modular art. These commonalities are manifested and developed in the creation of modular art. And these commonalities also provide more possibilities for modularization to be commonly followed and embodied in Chinese and Western art.

5. Modern Application and Integration of Modular Art

The application of the modular concept in modern art and design [6] is mainly reflected in the fact that modular design is an innovative application of modern art and design. In the field of contemporary art, modular design is not only an inheritance and promotion of traditional art but also an exploration of new technologies, new materials and new forms. For example, the concept of “module” is used to refer to prefabricated parts of different shapes and sizes used in sculptures. This new design method has changed the production mode of single material and single shape in traditional sculptures. For instance, the size and shape of materials have a certain impact on the overall effect of sculptures. If not handled properly, it will cause the works to deform and lose their original effects [7]. Therefore, how to introduce the modular concept into modern design and make innovative applications of it is a question worthy of consideration.

Taking the modular interactive design of the “Jieziyuan Huapu” App as an example [8], this application integrates the concept of “modularization” in art theory with

digital interactive technologies, realizing an interactive way of “module” reconstruction. Users can freely combine and reconstruct the painting elements in the “Jieziyuan Huapu” within the App through interactive means such as touch gestures, thus creating works with their own personal styles. This design approach not only enhances users’ participation and creative enthusiasm but also provides a new path for the digital inheritance and innovation of traditional art.

6. Reflection on the Inspiration of Modular Art for the Exchange and Integration of Chinese and Western Cultures

Modular art has unique forms of expression and aesthetic values in contemporary art. It is an innovation of traditional art by artists during the inheritance and development of traditional art. It reflects the unique artistic individuality of artists. Meanwhile, modular art is also a kind of creative thinking. It liberates the traditional “original” art from “imitation” and realizes the re-creation of “original” art. The modular creation mode is a kind of inheritance and promotion of traditional art by contemporary artists and represents their pursuit of self-identity and individuality in creation.

The modular creation mode has brought us many inspirations. Against the background of the coexistence of multiple cultures in today’s world, the exchange and integration of Chinese and Western cultures have become an inevitable trend. The modular creation mode in Western modern art provides us with a reference and enriches us with numerous inspirations. We should promote this creation mode to a wider range of fields and create more outstanding modular works. At the same time, we should also realize that the modular creation mode is just something “new” and it can not completely replace the “original” art forms in traditional art.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

References

- [1] Wu, X.P., Wang, Z.N., Yang, Y.Q., *et al.* (2024) Research on the Translation of Traditional Chinese Wooden Architecture Construction Logic Based on “Modularization”. *Architecture and Culture*, No. 6, 220-222.
- [2] Zhang, M. (2023) Exploration of Modular Design System for Qihe Black Pottery. Master’s Thesis, Shandong University of Arts.
- [3] Xi, T.L. and Li, Y.G. (2021) Comparative Study on Architectural Module Systems between China and the West. *Journal of Nanjing University of Arts (Fine Arts and Design)*, No. 5, 102-106.
- [4] Huang, Z. (2018) A Comparative Study of “Modules” and “Order” in Chinese and Western Cultures. *Media and Education*, No. Z1, 99-103.
- [5] Huang, J. (2022) Based on the Red Hou Modular Theory: An Analysis of Communism and Individuality in Chinese Art and Design. *Youth Years*, No. 11, 50-52.
- [6] Teng, X.M. and Chen, Z. (2009) Exploration of Module System—From the Perspective

of VI Design. *Art and Design (Theory)*, **2**, 59-61.

- [7] Zhu, X.Y. (2021) Exploring the Application of Modular Theory and Personalized Approach in Interface Design. *Ginseng Flower (Part 2)*, No. 10, 102-103.
- [8] Xu, J. (2016) Research on the “Modular” Interactive Design of the “Mustard Seed Garden Painting Manual” App. Master’s Thesis, Shanghai University.