

# Research on the artistic features of Xie Caihua's Paper-cut

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**Abstract.** Based on the investigation of Xie Caihua, the inheritor of Xiangshan paper-cut, this paper analyzes the artistic features of Xie Caihua's paper-cut from four aspects: space, composition, quantity and scale. At the same time, the main influencing factors are discussed. At present, the main function of paper-cut in Xiangshan has changed, and the evolution of its form of expression also presents a certain paradigm.

**Keywords:** Xie Caihua, Xiangshan paper-cutting, performance form.

## 1. Introduction

Xiangshan paper-cut was once a popular folk craft in the Xiangshan area of Ningbo, Zhejiang province. It was mainly active in Dongchen Township. It used sharp scissors as a tool, thin and stiff paper as a material, and red and blue as the main color scheme, and in the hands of Xie Caihua gradually formed a “Only cut not carved” technology. The origin of Xiangshan paper-cut is unknown, is indeed since the founding ceremony of the People's Republic of China, from the hands of peasant painter Gao Miaolan gradually flourish, orderly spread to today, in 2012 was certified as the fourth batch of provincial intangible cultural heritage. Xie Caihua is the inheritor of Xiangshan paper-cut. He was born in 1944 in Zhang Ao village of Dongchen Township, Xiangshan, Ningbo, Zhejiang province. In 1997, he was awarded the title of “Master of Chinese folk art” by five organizations including the Chinese folk calligraphers and painters research center. At the age of 6, he began to learn paper-cutting and painting with Gao Miaolan and his mother, Yu. For more than 70 years, he never put down her scissors. Xie Caihua has followed the pace of development of the times and fully developed his own characteristics on the basis of inheriting his predecessors, in the paper-cut form of change reflected in space, composition, quantity, scale and aesthetic style, are different from Gao Miaolan, different from other coastal areas of the new look. As a paper-cut artist, Xie Caihua and all the recipients of paper-cut art prefer the folk content conveyed by Xiangshan paper-cut to the art form. Therefore, even if Xie Caihua is stylized in the form, also has the performance bold breakthrough and the attempt, also does not hinder the form freedom degree expression.

## 2. Form breakthrough based on classical consciousness

### 2.1 The space pays more attention to perspective

Xie Caihua studied under the tutelage of Gao Miaolan, who was forced to make a living by cutting flowers and embroidering founding ceremony of the People's Republic of China, “In that period, she mainly shear, embroidery-based themes are mostly Fu Lu Shou Xi, flowers, birds, insects and beasts.” [1] As can be seen from Gao Miaolan's few remaining paper-cut works, her works are simple in composition, flat in space, and the subject and background are in the same dimension, the ornament and decoration are almost not arranged, the relationship between people and things or things is treated more pure, and the depiction of patterns are mostly straight lines, broken lines, zigzag patterns, similar to the effect of origami, the picture exudes an air of simplicity and naivety. Xie Caihua adopted the perspective of painting, reflecting the depth of the picture, so that the three-dimensional feeling of the picture more intense. If it is necessary to show more scenes or theme sets in the same picture, then layout different scene elements to form a frame as a means

of surrounding composition. Most of the frames are square strips. Compared with the geometric fine lines such as herringbone, ice crack and fish scale, Xie chose to use fish, flowers, butterflies and other animals and plants as the filling patterns of the blank part of the frame. For example, in Xie Caihua's work "The fisherman's Chant" (Fig.1), the painting is surrounded by a frame made up of lotus and fish, which wraps the main picture in the middle. A sea level directly pulls the distance between the front and back of the picture, Xie treated the sea surface as a large area of white space, effectively distinguishing the main image from the surrounding frames, while using perspective to reduce and simplify the background depiction, and magnifying the main characters in the image and placing them in a central position, the sail with the words "Good sailing" is also shown in a large perspective, accompanied by the cries of young fishermen and seagulls, a tension-filled "Fishing map" is presented.

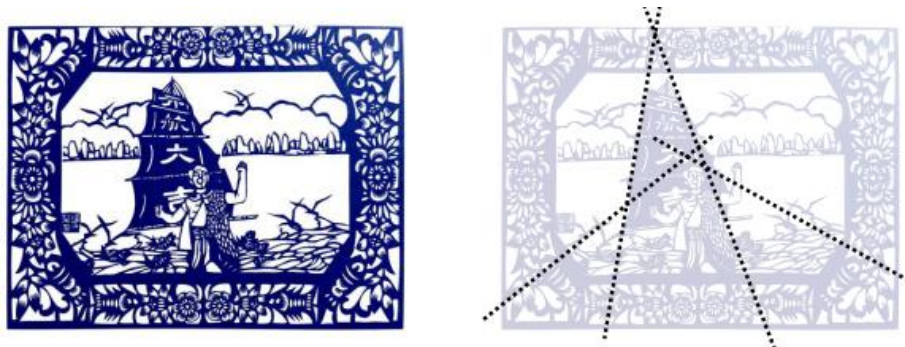


Fig. 1 Xie Caihua's paper-cut work "Fishermen's chant" and its spatial analysis

## 2.2 The composition is centered on the characters

In the image composition, Xie Caihua to form a character as the core of the paper-cut image structure model. First, Xie will combine different elements, such as flowers, birds, insects, fish, trees, landscapes and also have exclusive classification in his works collection. However, from the structural model of Gao Miaolan's character paper-cutting with the image of workers, peasants and soldiers as the core element, to the structural model of Xie Caihua's character paper-cutting with the image of Xiangshan fishermen, legendary figures, kings and celebrities as the core element, Xie still places the character in the center of the picture, and the non-character elements become the symbol of the character's identity, the object of behavior control or the background decoration plays the role of setting off the atmosphere. For example, in "Fishing on the sea" (Fig. 2), a combination of yin and yang is used to create a figure with the silhouette of a Yang shear. The white space in the figure's clothing contrasts with the surrounding rocks in black and white, thus highlighting the middle figure. Second, in the figure paper-cut, the head faces to the positive side are all, but mostly to the positive side or 3/4 side-based, and the traditional paper-cut of the positive figure in the form of symmetry, accompanied by the exaggerated proportion of modeling, shape changing characteristics, in enhancing the stability of the screen and the sense of thickness, but also highlight Xie Caihua close to nature, simple and lovely nature.



Fig. 2 Xie Caihua's paper-cut work "Xiangshan Haidiao" and composition analysis

### 2.3 Quantity serialization

Serialization is the inevitable trend of Xie's creative works. The increase in the frequency of people seeking pictures and the increase in the number of creations helped push the Xie Caihua's paper-cut creation into its heyday. In addition, he already had the consciousness of collecting, so he compiled as he created until now, to date, there are 1,200 pieces of “Fu Lu Shou Xi”, 1,200 pieces of “Chinese zodiac”, 1,200 pieces of “Pictures of Chinese kings” (454th), 1,200 pieces of “Women in ancient and modern times” (100th) in the 20-square-metre storage room of the studio, “Chinese celebrities through the ages” (1500), “A hundred honest officials through the ages” (100), “Four famous works in China” (554), and “100 builders” and “100 meritorious feats of the founding of the People's Republic of China”, written to celebrate the 80th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China, or the creation of propositions during major festivals, Xie will also collect materials related to the same theme with different designs and patterns, such as 2008 paper-cuts for the Beijing Olympic bid, 2023 for the Asian Games, and the year of the Tiger for the 2010 World Expo in Shanghai, Xie Caihua then cut 240 tiger pictures and gave them to the World Expo organization ... over the years has formed a series of 98, over 26,000 works [2]. Series of works reflect Xie's self-awareness of paper-cut art, his strong work consciousness and historical consciousness made him hope to create important works. In addition, the paper-cut itself has the advantages of quick creation speed and simple form, serialization is an appropriate approach.

### 2.4 scale beyond small

The transformation of the function of folk paper-cut and the change of the aesthetic psychology of the creative subject directly cause the change of the art form of folk paper-cut [3]. With the increase in the number of competitions and exhibitions, to highlight the uniqueness of paper-cutting in Xiangshan, Xie has gradually broken through the tradition of small size in his works. On the important day of the return of Hong Kong and Macao, Xie Caihua created a 50-meter-long “Auspicious” and an equally long one, as a precious gift, the 100 “A hundred Xi”, with different shapes of male and female dolls, was presented to the two special administrative regions. In 2000, his work harmony reached 47 square meters (Fig. 3), with 8-9 people standing on one side. With the establishment of new organizations and new exhibitions, it is difficult for the fragmented paper-cut works to capture the attention of the audience. At the same time, Xie's creative style is becoming more mature and distinctive, and his material accumulation is also increasingly rich, it is an inevitable trend in the development of paper-cut in Xiangshan and a reflection of the folk art of paper-cut as an independent art form.



Fig. 3 Xie Caihua paper-cut work “Harmony”, 47 square meters, 2000

### 3. Summary

Compared with Gao Miaolan's flat works, Xie Caihua pays more attention to the perspective of space, using the perspective of art language to open up the distance between the front and the back of the scene; Using the combination of yin and yang to form a sharp black-and-white contrast, while, in order to adapt to the requirements of today's communication environment, more pursuit of serialization and large-scale creation. The formation of these characteristics, first, depends on the orderly transmission of skills, and secondly, in the context of the protection and transmission of non-heritage, Xie Caihua's Xiangshan paper-cutting skills to re-excavate and confirm the characteristics of what is Xiangshan paper-cutting, Xie has his own ideas, which is why he emphasizes the scale of his works in order to meet the needs of today's communication environment and exhibition. From the case of Xie Caihua's paper-cut, we can see that although the context of traditional folk paper-cut has changed, its cultural space has not completely disappeared, to ensure the integrity and independence of folk crafts is also the meaning of non-legacy paper-cut protection.

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