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**INTERNATIONAL PRESENCE AS A FACTOR OF INFLUENCE  
ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF VISUAL COMMUNICATION DESIGN  
IN CHINA AT THE END OF THE XX CENTURY**

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**Abstract.** The purpose of the article is to reveal the features of the development of visual communication design in China at the end of the 20th century in the context of the policy of openness and active interaction with international professional communities. **Research methodology.** To achieve the goal, general scientific and special research methods were used. Complex and analytical methods were effective, which made it possible to conduct research in various aspects holistically and consistently. **The main results of the study.** China experienced a difficult period of political and social transformations, which significantly influenced the content and image in the design of visual communications during the 20th century. It was the changes in the political arena in the country that allowed visual communication design in the 1980s and 1990s to gain new development and establish itself as an important professional field in the last three decades. International communication, economic growth, technological development, inspired by the policy of reforms and openness, activated all modern directions of graphic design, contributed to the formation of industry associations and institutions. It was found that the openness of Chinese designers to Western practices in the context of globalization creates conditions for direct borrowing of universally accepted approaches and solutions, reducing the value of their own traditions. Therefore, the intention to fill the visual language of design with national local content becomes noticeable. **Conclusions.** It was revealed that the intensification of the development of visual communication design in China at the end of the 20th century, inspired by changes in the political arena in the conditions of reforms and openness, contributed to the expression of the industry at the national and international levels, strengthening its status and influence. From the early 1980s to today, the gradual standardization of graphic design at the level of academic organization, scientific discourse and other disciplines has accumulated professional reserves for a new stage and created an important platform for further development.

**Key words:** China, visual communication design, designer, development, globalization.

**Introduction.** Today, visual communicative design is a key tool in solving various tasks related to the transformation of information in space into understandable, accessible, aesthetically attractive effective messages. The dynamics of the development of this direction of design is of significant importance at the local and global levels, especially in the context of the growing volume of information and the rapid spread of technologies. Therefore, China's visual communication design is of particular interest, as this country combines an ancient cultural heritage with modern trends and innovations. This article is devoted to the study of the peculiarities of the formation of Chinese visual communication design at the end of the 20th century, and demonstrates an attempt to identify key trends and factors that determine the dynamics of its development in the future.

**The purpose of the study** is to reveal the features of the development of visual communication design in China at the end of the 20th century in the context of the policy of openness and active interaction with international professional communities.

**Methodology and analysis of the research source base.** A comprehensive approach allowed to collect and systematize information on the development of Chinese visual communication design, including its history and interaction with global trends. Analytical and systematic methods made it possible to synthesize the obtained data, to reveal patterns of design development in the context of cultural, political, social and economic changes of the late 20th century. The scientific base of the study was made up of publications by Chinese and European authors who raised the problem of the development of visual communication design in China in the 20th century. The question of the interaction of individual schools and names, traced in the articles of Wang, S. Z. (1989), Minick, S. and Jiao P. (1990); Turner, M. (1993), Wong, W.S. (1999; 2001; 2007), Knight, N. (2006), Feifei, F. (2006). The development of the "Chinese factor" in international graphic design is examined by W.S. Wong (2003). The question of preserving national identity in the design of visual communications is considered by researchers Knight, N. (2006), Feifei, F. (2006). Albums and catalogs that accompanied organizational professional events in the field of design – exhibitions, competitions, professional forums (Catalog of Graphic Design, 1996; Exhibition Catalog, 1999) contain valuable factual material. Monographic explorations and interviews with leading designers, in particular, Wang Yuefei, Chen Shaohua, expand the understanding of processes from the inside, clarify the signs of professional trajectories of individual personalities and communities in recent decades (Wang, 2019; Chen Shaohua).

**Research results.** The practice of visual communication design in China, which has deep historical roots and largely reflects the historical and cultural context of the country's life, during the 20th century was significantly adjusted and limited in development by political events and rigid state ideology. Only after the death of Mao Zedong in 1976, when the Cultural Revolution ended and the strict rules of ideological visual propaganda were relaxed, did the opportunity to restore traditional advertising and communicative visual practices under new political conditions with new legislative, organizational, and technical possibilities appear. The state decisions of 1978, which initiated the policy of reforms and openness, were decisive in the recent history of China. Since the policy of economic isolation was replaced by interaction with world markets, China began to rapidly increase its economic potential, the urbanization of the country intensified, and radical changes took place in the cultural and artistic sphere, connected, in particular, with the transformation of experience among artists. Discussions begin regarding the restoration and legitimization of commercial advertising as a tool for building a rich socialist economy (Kraemer, 2008). Thanks to the introduction of reform and openness, the graphic design industry begins to actively develop in all areas, the main of which is advertising design. Advertising companies are being created all over the country, among which the most successful were Beijing Advertising Art Company, China Advertising United Corporation, and others. There are publications that justify advertising as a concept and a communicative phenomenon. In particular, Shanghai-based advertiser Ding Yuncheng, in his article "The Rationale of Advertising" in "Wengui Slope", argues that it is a discipline that promotes domestic and foreign trade, provides people with knowledge and convenience, and connects society and the consumer with the production and marketing departments (Kraemer, 2008). Advertising is beginning to be interpreted not as a business model of Western culture, but also as a mandatory useful link of communication with the consumer. An outstanding date is January 4, 1979, when a commercial advertisement ("Blue Sky" toothpaste) was published in the "Tianjin Daily" newspaper for the first time after the "Cultural Revolution". And in Shanghai in the same year, the first outdoor billboard appeared.

China's economic growth in the 1980s was accompanied by visual advertising. Along with purely commercial offers of consumer goods that began to fill the subject-spatial environment, there were

messages of a propaganda nature, in particular, banners with quotes from Deng Xiaoping explaining the processes of the modern Chinese economy (with slogans – “Development is a rigid principle” or “Get rich is wonderful”). Today, China's leading designers recall this period as a significant time for the birth of the national graphic design industry. Chen Shaohua, a well-known Chinese graphic designer and executive director of the Shenzhen Graphic Design Association, believes that the development of graphic design would be impossible without commercial significance, competition or innovation, when the product style and advertising communication remained unchanged for decades. Instead, he sees the greatest value in the integration of human culture, wisdom, creativity and other aspects into market competition, combining the spiritual and material components. And this factor he considers the basis of the development of the industry graphic design (Chen Shaohua. Interview).

Changes in the awareness of the profession of a graphic designer were also reflected in practice. There was more creative freedom in the style, colors and principles of forming visual advertising messages. In the field of the poster, the overall style and visual content were as clear and easy to understand as possible – product images, explanatory text, sometimes – characters or elements of traditional Chinese ornaments. Advertisements and shop windows, despite acquiring commercial content, continued to function as internal propaganda for the socialist economy (Zaqian, 2023b). Reflecting a more commercial and consumerist focus, the posters often featured images in the style of European aesthetics and imagery and promoted Western products, reflecting China's growing interest in globalization and consumer culture. The focus of the message on the poster began to shift from the official description of the product to explaining how to use it. It is worth noting that in addition to the novelty value of the advertised goods, the posters began to demonstrate additional values related to lifestyle. Advertisements promised an idealized, romantic, traditional life in the midst of Chinese nature, just like the dreamed urbanized, modern, dynamic, progressive world of the West (Kraemer, 2008). Also, advertisers began to use images of famous people in visual messages – athletes, actors, that is, instead of communist leaders and heroic abstract characters of the middle of the 20th century real generally respected successful representatives of society came. But also the visual language of propaganda were deeply rooted in the experience of developers. Often lacking specialists, state-owned companies continued to develop already commercial advertising by in-house propaganda departments (Zaqian, 2023b).

Changes in the political and economic course also affected the development of brand identity design in China. In 1982, the Trademark Law of the People's Republic of China was adopted to control and strengthen the management of logos, protect the legal and commercial rights of trademark owners, encourage manufacturers and operators to ensure the quality of goods and services, as well as support the reputation of manufacturers and organizations and promote development of the socialist market economy (Trademark Law of the People's Republic of China). This law also regulates the requirements for the visual characteristics of trademarks and logos, the main of which are the difference from already existing ones, ease of identification, and the absence of double or false interpretations, the presence of text, graphic images, numbers, three-dimensional signs, as well as a combination of the above elements in a specific composite field and defined color gamut. Also, the adoption of the law shows the importance of visual identification of manufacturers and the formation of special approaches to its creation at the state level. Therefore, the concept of a corporate style system is being actively implemented among entrepreneurs and designers, because national enterprises “Haier”, “Konka”, “Changhong”, “Bank of China”, “Midea”, etc., must withstand competition with more than 500 world-famous companies, which entered the Chinese market – “Coca-Cola”, “Marlboro”, “McDonald's”, “Pierre Cardin”, “Panasonic”, etc. China is becoming a training ground for business competition, which creates new opportunities for Chinese companies, as well as Chinese designers (The history of the development of the advertising industry).

In these years many pioneers and leading representatives of Chinese graphic design – Chen Shaohua, Wang Xu, Wang Yuefei tried to realize the transformation of the latest Chinese design by introducing and implementing international systems. This was facilitated by the contacts of mainland China, first of all, with representatives of Hong Kong. One of them was the practitioner and theoretician Wang Wuxi, the author of the fundamental works “Graphic Design Principles” (平面设计原理) and “Principles of Solid Design”, inspired by the design methodology of the Bauhaus school. Also, Chinese designers began to gain practical experience by cooperating with international companies in Hong Kong. Designer Wang Xu gets to know international design while working for the import-export corporation Guangdong Group Packaging Company (粤海集团包装公司). He shares his new experience in the pages of “Design Exchange”, a magazine he founded to gain professional knowledge that was lacking in mainland China, as well as to establish international connections (Wang Yun, 2021: 123). Wang Yuefei cooperates with the joint venture Shenzhen Jiamei Design (深圳嘉美电视有限公司), established in Shenzhen in the business and design-friendly market conditions of this special economic zone, where many new local companies have begun to pay attention to their image through competition.

These conditions, as well as the insufficient understanding of the design industry at that time, prompted the professional community to justify the professional value of the design profession, in particular, the introduction of a system of exhibitions and forums, traditional for Western countries. In this context, in 1996, the Shenzhen Graphic Design Association (founder Chen Shaohua), the first graphic design association in China, was formed, following the example of the New York Club of Art Directors. This institution is designed to form the standards of graphic design, to distinguish it from the fine arts and crafts of that time (Wang Yun, 2021: 124).

The process of discovering international design standards changed the vector of design perception as a purely technical applied process in the conditions of market competition to a deeper understanding of its cultural value. Also, in the conditions of reforms and openness, globalization trends and the influence of Western ideas on the local market exacerbate the issue of preserving one's own cultural identity.

As for professional graphic design magazines, in 1979 the Shanghai People's Fine Arts Publishing House published Practical Art magazine. This magazine played an important role in the education and popularization of design during this historical period of its professional formation. In 1980, the magazine “Decoration” of the Central Academy of Arts and Crafts, in which theoretical research in the field of graphic design was published, resumed periodicity. In 1981, the first professional advertising magazine in New China, “China Advertising”, was published, and the first advertising organization of the foreign trade system in China, “China Foreign Trade Association”, was created. In 1983, the China Advertising Association was founded, and in parallel, national and local industrial organizations, associations and societies were organized in the fields of packaging, poster and cover design, providing a platform for exchange and professional communication in the field of graphic design.

Since the 1980s, design exhibitions of various categories, such as bookbinding art, advertising, publication design, have been held across the country. In 1981, the “National Packaging Exhibition” sponsored by the China Packaging Technology Association and the China Packaging Corporation was held in Beijing, and in 1982 the first “National Advertising Decoration Design Exhibition” was held, which for almost a year visited Shenyang, Wuhan, Guangzhou, Shanghai, Chongqing and Xi'an, attracting 425,000 visitors. In 1983, the China Artists Association and the China Publishing Association jointly held the “National Poster Exhibition”, which was exhibited in Beijing, Shanghai and other places. After ten years of the Cultural Revolution, when there were no books to read, China's publishing industry flourished and produced a large number of local Chinese cover designers. Unlike today's book designers who use computers to create covers, the ability to draw illustrations by hand was a special skill of the “art editors” of publishing houses at that time (Zhu Shuai Zhang Mengqiu, 2019). In 1987, the first in China “Third World Conference on Advertising” started in the House of

People's Assembly in Beijing. For China's visual communication and advertising design industry, it was a conference of unprecedented scale. The main theme of this conference, organized by the China Association of Foreign Economic and Trade Advertising and the British magazine "South", was the use of advertising as a connecting link to strengthen the unity of third world countries and strengthen cultural exchange and cooperation between them. Graphic designers and advertisers were introduced to the world's most advanced concepts of the advertising industry, and consumers were directly able to see the important role of advertising in international exchanges and in people's daily lives (Wang Yun, 2021).

For graphic designers of that time, the 11th Asian Games (第十一届亚运会), hosted by Beijing in 1990, became an important event. The logo with the image of the Great Wall, designed by Shanghai artist Zhu Dexian, was chosen as the emblem of the Asian Games. The image of the Great Wall on the emblem forms the Roman numeral eleven and the letter "A" (Asia). These two metaphors and the formal composition of the image demonstrate a successful and modern graphic idea and its solution. The Panda Panpan games mascot, designed by Liu Zhongzheng, allowed a huge number of viewers to see first-hand the effectiveness of graphic design in the coverage and promotion of international and domestic events of various scales (Zhu Shuai Zhang Mengqiu, 2019).

In general, 1978–1991 was a period of renewal of the Chinese economy and the beginning of the revival of graphic design through the development of the advertising industry, professional education, and the scientific academic community. Since 1992, graphic design has been developing intensively. Young and older generations of designers analyze international experience and look for ways to popularize and introduce modern concepts into the national design model. Translations of classic publications on graphic design by H. Reid "A Brief History of Modern Painting" and F. Maggs "History of Visual Communication Design in the Twentieth Century" are published and become an important enlightening theoretical and practical source for a new generation of designers.

Since the beginning of the 1990s to today, graphic design in China has experienced the official naming of the industry, the creation of professional platforms, the widespread use of computer-aided design software, the development of higher education, and popularization among the general public. Through a series of major events, it has become an important part of the "creative industry" and has gained an unprecedented international reputation. In 1992, on the initiative of already recognized designers Wang Yuefei, Wang Xu and others, the first major professional exhibition "Graphic Design in China" was held in Shenzhen. At the same time, the term itself was officially adopted, and 1992 is considered the first year of Chinese graphic design (Wang Yun, 2021).

In addition to Shenzhen, cities such as Beijing, Guangzhou, Shanghai, Hangzhou, Ningbo, Xi'an and others play an important role in the history of Chinese graphic design. Ningbo Poster Biennale, Hangzhou China International Poster Biennale and other graphic exhibitions are displayed in various cities in China. Among them, the development of graphic design in Beijing especially attracts attention. In 1995, the Department of Design of the Central Academy of Fine Arts was officially founded. In 1997, the industry magazine "Art and Design" was founded here. Since the 2000s, Beijing has hosted the annual meeting of the Alliance for Graphic Design International (AGI) (since 2004), the World Design Congress (since 2009), the Beijing International Design Week, the Beijing International Triennial, etc. An important event was the organization and holding of the Icofrada congress in Beijing in 2009, which brought together leading designers and industry experts from around the world to discuss the most modern trends and problems of modern design. The congress created a platform for exchanging ideas, exploring new approaches and considering progressive technologies in the field of graphic design. It allowed participants to see the latest developments in the industry and learn new skills and knowledge. In addition, this congress made a significant contribution to the deepening of international cooperation, promoting the exchange of cultural values and experiences between participants from different countries.

International and domestic interest in these events, as well as their high level of implementation, demonstrate the active development and powerful influence of Chinese graphic design on the international arena.

All the noted aspects point to a period of significant changes and transformations in Chinese visual communication design over the past decades. Organizational improvements and participation in international exhibitions allowed Chinese designers to reveal their talent and potential on the world stage. Increasing contacts at the international level opens up the opportunity for them to accumulate quality works and receive important international recognition and feedback. A new aesthetic in the design of visual communications is being formed from the amalgamation of two positions: 1. The intention to use new Western theories and cross-cultural approaches to design (adepts of this direction are Wang Xu, Wang Yuefei, Chen Fan); 2. Interest in establishing a new Chinese graphic identity with the help of obvious traditional images and elements (which can be traced in the designers Alan Chan, Kang Tai-keung, Chen Shaohua). Increasing contacts in the international arena and the opportunity to bring new knowledge for adaptation in local design (including through the development of professional education) forms a powerful system of influence on the new generation of designers of the 21st century.

**Conclusions.** It was revealed that during the last decades, international communication, economic growth, technological development, inspired by the policy of reforms and openness, activated all modern directions of visual communication design in China, contributing to the formation of industry associations and institutions. It was found that in the conditions of globalization, direct borrowing of universally accepted approaches and solutions nullifies the value of local traditions. Therefore, the intention to fill the visual language of design with national local content becomes noticeable. Traditional visual and design practices, elements and styles that have been formed during several millennia of Chinese cultural development are being re-actualized in projects today and can become valuable resources for designers in all areas of visual communication. In general, from the early 1980s to today, the gradual standardization of graphic design at the level of academic organization, scientific discourse and other disciplines has accumulated professional reserves for a new stage in the history of graphic design and created an important platform for its further development.

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