

Handmade Trend: Dual Pursuit of Personality and Emotion

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ABSTRACT

Since the agricultural era, the practicality of traditional handicrafts has gradually highlighted the importance of handicrafts in daily life. Handicrafts, as practical items and works of art, have become specialized for craftsmen and artists through the gap in skills. In recent years, with the flourishing development of various handicraft production experiences, handicrafts have gradually dissolved the boundary between "craft" and "art", transformed into the form of "handmade", and integrated and healed daily life. This article explores the essence of the transformation from handicrafts to handmade, and analyzes how the phenomenon of handmade not only meets the emotional needs of modern people, but also helps to promote and inherit handicrafts, achieving their sustainable development.

Keywords: *Handicrafts, Handmade, Emotional experiences, Cultural heritage.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Handicrafts refer to industry-specific handicraft techniques that rely on manual labor to create unique artistic styles. Arts and crafts Handmade literally means making items by hand. The term "handmade" originates from the Chinese transliteration of the Japanese word "手作り", meaning "made by hand". In a broad sense, it encompasses all actions and handmade creations created with hands. In modern online expressions, it can also be simply understood as "DIY" (Do It Yourself). Although handicrafts and handmade have overlapping meanings and involve physical labor skills, that is, the productive expression of the interaction between "hands" and "objects", the biggest difference between the two is "craft". Skills have become the essential characteristic that distinguishes between manual handicrafts and handmade. Handicrafts emphasize exquisite craftsmanship and aesthetic art, while the original intention of handmade is more grassroots and autonomous. "Handmade" focuses more on the production process rather than the quality and beauty of the results. With the development of the times, the definition of "handmade" is also constantly changing. Nowadays, "handmade" encompasses a wider range of fields and is widely used in the form of everyone can do it by hand and everything can be done by hand.

The short cycle, fragmented, and personalized aesthetic expression characteristics of handmade are full of daily and modern significance in the context of modern society.

2. CONTEMPORARY TRANSFORMATION OF HANDICRAFTS

Handicrafts, as an important carrier of cultural identity and national rejuvenation, "are both material and spiritual".[1]¹⁷ Their core lies in the word "craft", emphasizing the technical threshold of "craft" and the aesthetic pursuit of "art". The time-consuming, professional, and aesthetic characteristics of handicrafts make them incompatible with modern fast-paced life. Although contemporary handicrafts are no longer as unattainable as before industrial civilization, only a few people can truly explore them. The value creed of "independence", "focus", and "completeness" pursued by craftsmen for their handmade crafts poses a serious challenge to the persistent values of "group", "novelty", and "division of labor" held by social consumers.[2] In the cultural atmosphere of people's admiration for crafting tools and the spirit of craftsmanship, and the contradiction between modern convenient and diverse digital

generation and quick feedback, "handmade" has emerged.

Zhang Zhidong mentioned in his work "Advice on Learning": "There are ways of work. One is called craftsmen, who specialize in explaining machine science, physics, and chemistry, comprehending new principles, and transforming new styles. Only scholars who are educated can do it. The so-called wise create things. The other is called the top craftsmen, they must learn the tools, observe the methods, understand the mind, have clear vision, and operate the fingers. The so-called skillful ones are described." [3] It can be seen that proficient professional skills are the foundation of judging craftsmanship. The agricultural society of natural economy emphasizes the unchanged craftsmanship, which has always existed as a means of livelihood for a long time, and technology is the employment threshold for craftsmen. The conceptual category of art gradually formed in the 18th century, with a clear distinction between pure art and practical art (including handicrafts). Handicrafts gradually lost their aesthetic value, marking the gradual deprivation of the spiritual realm and discourse power of craftsmen in the process of modern art concept formation, and the boundary between handicrafts and art became clear. In the wave of industrialization, handicrafts gradually withdrew from people's daily lives due to their inability to compete with machine production in terms of output, quality standards, and material costs, and became a "backstory" in the field of modern design (including architecture). In the face of the separation of art and craftsmanship, Heidegger, in his works such as "The Origin of the Work of Art", expounded the view of things from an ontological perspective through phenomenology existentialism, pointing out that "whether it is the creation of works or the creation of instruments, they all occur in production, and this production from the beginning makes the existent appear in its presence with its appearance.[4]⁶⁰ "Productivity[5]" is the foundation for rebuilding the relationship between art and craftsmanship. Creators engage in productive labor solely for the simple needs of life, rather than pursuing art. With the development of industrial society, the convenience of machines has prompted handicraft practitioners to seek more efficient tools and methods. This mentality of "seeking benefits and avoiding harm" has gradually broken the boundaries of skills, and the development of modern technology has further blurred the boundary between handicrafts and industrial production. The transformation of artificial intelligence has brought unprecedented possibilities to professional disciplines and fields, and

the pattern of "professional technology" as the threshold has quietly changed. Although some people still devote themselves to traditional handicrafts after the 21st century, their goal is no longer to fill the gap in industrial products or serve as substitutes, but rather to be seen more as a pursuit of aesthetic and emotional experiences as income and consumption power increase. The popularization of this phenomenon has accelerated the process of "handicrafts" breaking down the barriers of "skills".

The emergence of handmade has continued the productive creation behavior of handicrafts, while downplaying the strict distinction between "craft" and "art". Compared to handicrafts that focus on presenting results, handmade emphasizes more on the experience and emotional investment in the creative process. The practical value of objects takes a back seat, while spiritual value and emotional satisfaction become the top priority. Their artistic quality is also integrated into creative behavior, and even deeply into daily life. That is to say, no matter when, where, or by whom, regardless of the production purpose, aesthetic skills, or results, handicrafts are reflected in productive behavior. In this case, handmade is better able to cover non-professional handmade activities in modern society than handicrafts. The daily, modern expression, and universal dissemination of hand as a handicraft have created more possibilities.

3. THE TIME DRIVING FORCE OF THE HANDMADE

The popularity of handmade in modern society reflects people's admiration for the spirit of craftsmanship, as well as their pursuit of personalization, emotional experience, and self-expression. The increasing demand for social connections and the transformation of consumption patterns have further promoted handmade to become a common and important cultural phenomenon.

3.1 Worship and Imitation of Craftsmanship Spirit

Firstly, the popularity of handmade can be seen as a cultural worship and formal imitation of the spirit of craftsmanship. From the perspective of cultural sociology, the phenomenon of handmade is a reproduction of cultural capital. Pierre Bourdieu believed in his work "Cultural Capital and Social Alchemy"[6] that cultural capital is not only reflected in knowledge, education, and skills, but also in participation and appreciation of certain cultural activities. The craftsmanship spirit's pursuit of

exquisite technique, focused attitude, and adherence to quality, as well as the exquisite handicrafts and works created, and the reproduction passed down between generations, all reflect the value of its cultural capital, becoming an internalization and objective expression of cultural capital.

However, the process of creating handicrafts requires a high degree of focus on work, a pursuit of excellence in skills, and a strict adherence to quality. This means that craftsmen need to invest a lot of time and energy to achieve excellence in their skills and perfection in their works. The fast-paced life and high degree of division of labor in modern society make it difficult for most people to invest a lot of time and energy to master and proficiently apply complex manual skills like traditional craftsmen. Therefore, despite people's inner reverence for crafting like craftsmen, it is increasingly difficult to truly achieve this ideal in modern life. Handmade, as a modern alternative to handicrafts, allows more people to experience the joy and sense of achievement of creation through simplified production processes and low threshold participation methods, satisfying people's formal imitation of the spirit of craftsmanship. This experience is not only a tribute to the spirit of craftsmanship, but also a pursuit and accumulation of cultural capital.

3.2 Return of Individual Identity

The abundance of material resources, accelerated pace of life, and intensified social competition pressure in modern society have led to the prominent phenomenon of alienation. The prevalence of symbolic consumption, commodification, and popularization implies the transformation of human subjectivity in a consumer society. Lefebvre's research on daily life [7] suggests that modern daily life has been fully organized and integrated into the overall process of production and consumption, and has been completely alienated and infiltrated by capitalist political rule and ideology. However, he believes that there is still a hidden potential for resistance in daily life, especially the innate ability to express and perceive human authenticity through the body, which constitutes the true starting point for resisting the objectification and quantification of the ruling power of modernity. The popularity of handmade and even becoming a way of life is essentially about people seeking stability and patience through manual labor to heal themselves. Handmade differ from traditional handicrafts in terms of professionalism, and continue the craftsmanship spirit, cultural connotation, and historical value of

handicrafts with grassroots and people-oriented characteristics. Everyone can cope with the rational dilemma of modern society at low cost through simple labor and achieve inner stability. This type of handmade activity helps people temporarily escape reality, release stress, seek emotional comfort, and pursue the emotional needs of self-awareness. Handmade products differ from pure art forms due to their unique production purpose, appearing in the form of "objects" within the scope of productivity; At the same time, in the specific relationship between "hands" and people and tools, the beauty of sensibility is conveyed in the form of "intangible". The externalization of handmade art is a body aesthetic that blends human and life experiences, while internalization is a resistance to the alienation of daily life under modern forms and urban transformation.

With the popularization of the concept of "handmade" in social life, personalized and experiential vocabulary such as handmade cuisine and handmade design are gradually permeating into daily life. The rise of many "handmade" experiential consumption methods indicates that modern people are more inclined to experience the process of "making" and "learning" rather than simply creating "things" or learning "art". The core of creative activities lies in the expression of individual life experiences, emotions, and feelings, which is precisely the pursuit of "symbolic value" and "peak experience" mentioned by Maslow. Handmade healing is an action oriented experiential mode, through which individuals can deeply experience the comfort of the soul and the repair of life through manual creation activities.

3.3 Transformation of Consumption Patterns

The popularity of modern handmade from the transformation of consumer patterns. Personalized needs and self-expression drive people to enjoy the creative process more than consuming a perfect product in the production process. This transformation has given rise to the rise of the experience economy, with traditional product-oriented consumption shifting towards an experience centered consumption model. Consumers are no longer satisfied with purchasing generic industrial products, but crave to create unique personalized items through hands-on participation, and experience fun and satisfaction in the creative process. Pine and Gilmore pointed out in "The Experience Economy"[8] that experience refers to the beautiful feelings that

individuals experience when they reach a certain height in terms of emotions, physical strength, intelligence, and spirit. At the same time, experience is the result of the interaction between individuals and events, and this experience has uniqueness and irreplicability. Positive psychologist Michael F. Steger's view on "meaningful living" can also well illustrate the rise of the experience economy. He believes that the pursuit of meaning and goals in life is a fundamental psychological need for humans, and by imbuing experiences and events with meaning, people can achieve higher levels of happiness and mental health. Handmade activities (such as painting, weaving, pottery, etc.) typically require investment of time, energy, and emotion. Creative activities can bring about a sense of achievement-based happiness, which stems from the individual's self-realization and spiritual gains during the process, rather than just temporary sensory enjoyment. People create, express, and share their own meaning through personal participation and creation.

The consumption of handicrafts is not only about acquiring material goods, but also about pursuing experience and spiritual satisfaction, which is highly consistent with the changing trend of consumption patterns in modern society. This trend not only changes the way the market operates, but also reflects people's pursuit of personalization, uniqueness, and spiritual satisfaction in modern society, promoting handicrafts as an important cultural and economic phenomenon.

3.4 Strengthening of Social Connections

The development of modern technology has made life closer and more convenient, and it has also brought about the problem of alienation in interactions between people. The phenomenon of handmade emerged in this context, becoming a way for people to re-establish social connections. Albert Borgmann's philosophy of technology[9] provides profound insights into this. He believes that the main problem with machines is the cancellation of participation in specific scenarios, which leads to the fragmentation of human experience and alienation of social relationships. However, Borgmann has also proposed that by focusing on objects and activities, life can be given renewed depth and meaning, helping people rebuild social connections. Handmade is such a focused activity. In the process of making and sharing handicrafts, people not only find meaning in the specific material production process, but also establish new social and support networks through shared interests and hobbies. This interaction and

participation enhance people's value as "creators" and thus strengthen their sense of social connection. The production process of handicrafts is not only a display of craftsmanship, but also a social behavior. Handmade activities, through their own technicality, enable individuals to engage deeply in a specific scene, achieving Borgmann's active participation in the real world. As "creators", individuals are not only creating goods, but also rebuilding social relationships and personal identity. Handmade allows people to rediscover the deep connections between people and objects through interaction with materials and techniques. American sociologist Richard Sennett once said in his book "The Craftsman"[10] that "as long as we have the desire to do things well in order to do them well, each of us is a craftsman." The emotional rewards brought by handmade are mainly reflected in the establishment of an individual's sense of belonging to reality and pride in their own work. The output of emotions and creativity not only enhances personal subjectivity, but also provides motivation for craftsmen to showcase and share. By sharing handmade achievements, people not only convey emotions and stories, but also establish closer social bonds in the process of common production and communication. This kind of activity not only gives participants a sense of belonging and support for each other, but also to some extent dissolves the loneliness and alienation of modern life. Through the transmission of skills, cultural and emotional exchange, the sense of social connection that was alienated by modern technology has been rediscovered. This social interaction not only enhances mental health and happiness, but also builds a strong social support system, finding a path back to oneself in the modern technological environment, reflecting on one's own value and meaning of existence.

Therefore, the popularity of the handmade phenomenon is not only a response to modern technology, but also an important way for people to seek social connections and self-realization. Through manual creation, people not only create objects, but also create a new activity of rediscovering human warmth and social interaction in the technological age, providing more possibilities for enhancing individual social presence, understanding and resonance between groups, humanistic care, and enhancing social assistance.

4. THE ESSENCE AND CHALLENGES OF HANDMADE

The essence of the trend of handmade phenomenon is people's strong pursuit of emotional experience and personalization. The "Flow Experience" theory proposed by Hungarian psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi describes that when people engage in an activity and achieve a balance between their skills and challenges, they enter a highly focused and pleasurable psychological state called "flow". In this state, the individual's self-awareness decreases or even disappears, and they fully immerse themselves in the activity, feeling a great sense of satisfaction and pleasure. Handmade activities, due to their clear goals and challenges, can spark individual interest and engagement, leading them into a state of flow. This state not only enhances focus and confidence, but also effectively relieves stress, soothes emotions, and thus improves mental health. At the same time, the charm of handmade lies in their unique expression of personality. Every handmade work is the crystallization of the creator's emotions and hard work, carrying the creator's personality and emotional expression. This not only gives handmade works unique artistic value, but also endows them with profound emotional significance. In the production process, creators integrate their emotions, memories, and life experiences into their works, making each piece a unique existence that reflects their personal aesthetic taste and emotional world. As Donald Norman wrote in design psychology, "What we are truly obsessed with is not something, but the meaning and feelings it represents." [11]³⁴ Handmade activities are particularly prominent in this regard. Through handicrafts, people can not only create unique works, but also regain a sense of control and self-identity over life in the process.

The essence of the thriving handmade phenomenon today lies in its satisfaction of people's pursuit of personalization and emotional experience. Handmade is not only a way of creating personalized and emotional pursuits, but also a way to return to oneself and relieve stress. However, with the widespread spread of the handmade phenomenon, it has also brought some problems. For example, the low threshold and high demand in the handmade process has led to uneven quality in the market; The trend towards fast and simple production methods has led to a neglect of exquisite craftsmanship, which may result in the loss of traditional crafts. Therefore, it is necessary to be vigilant about the dual problems brought about by the handicraft craze and formulate

effective policies and measures to protect and inherit traditional exquisite skills, in order to maintain the continuity of cultural heritage and the sustainable development of the handicraft industry. Faced with the problems caused by handmade phenomenon, there is a must to take comprehensive measures from multiple aspects to ensure its healthy and sustainable development. For example, by establishing strict market access standards and implementing effective quality control measures, the proliferation of low-quality handmade products can be prevented, ensuring the uniqueness and artistic value of handmade products. Traditional handicraft skills are not only an important part of cultural heritage, but also carry rich historical and cultural values. Protecting and inheriting traditional exquisite skills is the key to ensuring the healthy development of handmade phenomena. Therefore, it is necessary to take on the trend of handmade, establish and improve a handicraft training and inheritance system, and attract more people to participate in the inheritance and dissemination of handicrafts relying on the experience of handmade crafts, while ensuring the healthy and sustainable development of the handicraft industry, promoting the protection and inheritance of handicraft cultural heritage.

5. CONCLUSION

In short, handmade is not just a simple creative activity, nor is it an unattainable artistic act. It originated from traditional handicrafts, emphasizing simplification and experiential characteristics, as a counterattack against the alienation of consumer culture and daily life, full of emotional expression. Handmade has the potential to become a continuation and new form of handicrafts through nationwide practice. Under the emotional needs of the times, there will be a must to transform handmade from individual behavior to social behavior, utilize the healing power of "tangible" and "intangible" contained in handmade, and establish a behavioral framework for the sustainable development of handmade crafts.

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