

# Employing Poetry Culture for Creative Design With a Polyphonic Pattern

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**Abstract.** With the global village approaching a new era of aesthetic economy powered by culture creative, every country is actively seeking inspirational resources for culturally creative product design. Chinese traditional poetry, full of expression created with poets' fascinating words and still highly appreciated today, carries not only our predecessors' wisdom but also principles which correspond to those for modern creative design. This study starts with the distinctive features of our classical poetry, lays its foundation on traditional theory of Chinese poetry, consults literature regarding the feasibility of employing poetry for cultural creative design, and furthers the trend for such application through investigating current case studies. Further, by integrating related theories of the western Ingarden Phenomenology from *Cognition of the Literary Work of Art* and Chinese construction from *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons*, this study adopts the organic formation of 'level of word', 'level of phrase' and 'level of sentence' for analyses and conversion, employs the concept of 'polyphonic pattern' as a guideline, and develops a step by step concrete process for exploring how the internal meaning and external form in traditional poetry could be transferred and integrated into modern design. With further illustration of actual implemented cases, a model framework for employing poetry culture for creative design is thus completed. In addition to its being a significant and feasible reference for culture creative design, we would like to see this model cause our traditional poetry to shine with a new glamour as well.

**Keywords:** poetry, polyphonic pattern, culture creative, creative design

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, countries from all over the world have been attempting to employ their "Culture" as features in increasing the value of "Creative Design" for developing an aesthetic economy. Lin [11] indicated that "culture" is a life style, "design" is a life taste, "creative" is a sympathy from a moving experience, while 'industry' is the medium, methods or means for realizing creative cultural design. Therefore, the key to achieving culture creativity in the design industry is the innovative performance

delivered following the design concept of “initialized with culture, expressed in product and used in life”. The essence of culture creative design is extracting culture elements and converting culture symbols so as to endow new aesthetic significance into the design. Most existing Taiwanese culture creative design was inspired by observable culture resources such as natural scenery and life artifacts. Few designs originated from invisible culture resources. This study therefore, takes inspiration from our traditional culture by applying 'poetry' culture and projecting its external forms and internal meanings into creative design. The purpose of this study is to integrate Western and Chinese theories of poetry, develop a model which manifests the process for extracting invisible cultural elements from poetry, converting them into design, and illustrating the actual implementation steps. Through exploring how modern creative application of poetry culture could be achieved, this study would not only serve as an essential reference for multiplying the breadth and depth of culture creative design but also help with the conservation of our culture.

## **2. The Distinctive Features of Chinese Poetry Culture**

Hegel [5] claimed, “Poetry is the highest expression in art”. Li [10] believed that the definition of culture is: “The results of the mutual activities created by man, this includes tools, social law regulations, art creations and the mental activities of the creating process”. Inheriting five thousand years of Chinese history, the culture of “Poetry” is doubtless the most significant part of our cultural heritage. The American philosopher Langer’s [9] concept, “Art is the creation of forms symbolic of human feeling”, has created a profound impact on modern aesthetic theory. “Poetry” culture itself is the artistic performance of how poets express their feelings through concrete language symbols. The German philosopher Worringer [14] indicated in the book *Abstract and Empathy* that humans can acquire happiness from art, mainly because man can seize the constant changing possibilities from individual events of the outer world and then transform them into eternity with abstract forms. “Poetry”, just as Chu [1] claimed, originates from bitterness caused by one’s dissatisfaction of the “limitations” in life and is produced with imagination as a pursuit for “infinity”. He also stated, “Poems possess interior and exterior meanings. You will find reasoning from the interior meaning and discover phenomenon from the exterior meanings; only by including both aspects may you compose a poem.” That is, the goal is to pursue boundless imagination with limited vocabulary and construct a poetic imagery which corresponds to logic thinking.

Tu [13] suggests that poetry is a world of beauty in imagination which a poet uses words to create based on language and experience. In recent days, poetry is considered an expression of spiritual vigor. The process of reading a poem is not only to be intoxicated regarding the content and the spiritual vigor of the poet, but to speculate, explore and appreciate the content and the spiritual vigor of the poet. Poetry must be an art of creation. Creation in metaphysics is a process where something spiritual is created out of nothing, while for physical techniques it means an innovative combination of material or concepts for creating new relationships, new feelings, new understanding and new realms. It could also be an original technique for expression

which results in new forms, new semantics, etc. A reader would be influenced by the process of “Associative Thinking Impact” during reading when the electro-magnetic fields of the brain waves are first altered so as to generate new sequences and produce a fresh sensation, a moving inspiration. In sum, poetry is produced with imagination, creates imagery, contains internal meaning and innovative techniques for expression, and is meant to inspire readers through a touching emotion.

In recent years, the creative industry has been actively seeking to restart interdisciplinary integration and development from various industries and levels and has thus created designs with a fresh new look. The new interpretation of traditional culture, classical literature and art are the exact sources of inspiration for the culture creative industry. The following are examples of current poetry employments in different fields. Tsai [12] has presented some case studies in transforming classical literature. For instance, Yu, Kuang-Chung’s poem *Kua Fu* adopted and modified the traditional mythology “Kua Fu, in Pursuits of the Sun” to create an innovative imagery with new ideas. Also, Chang, Man-Chuan’s modern “The River Merchant’s Wife” converts the well-known poem initially written by Lee, Po into a new imagery.

There are also application cases for art performances. The internationally renowned Cloud Gate Dance Theatre extracted culture creative elements from the classical literature *Chu Ci*, *The Dream of the Red Mansion*, and Chinese calligraphy. The first example is the play “Moon Water” which originates from the quote, “Flower reflection in the mirror and moon reflection in the water are nothing but illusions” With illusionary scenes such as the water-flowing stage together with the dancer’s reflection in the vertical mirror and in the water, poetic imagery is created for expressing how all beautiful things result in “emptiness”. A second example derives from Tsao, Hsueh-Chin’s *The Dream of the Red Mansion*. The performance began with the stone, originally located under the Qing Geng Peak in the heavenly world, coming down to earth and ended with the main character, Pao-Yu, becoming a monk and severing all links to the human world. The plot conveys the impermanence of life with the quote; “When we see fake as real, real becomes fake; when we take nihilism as existence, the actual existence becomes nihilism”.

Poetry could also be employed for product design. The work “Shui Tiao Ke Tou” produced by the company Titton extracted the essence from the well-known poem of the Sung dynasty poet, Su, Shih; “Just as the moon waxes and wanes, so do people experience sorrow and joy.” The round form of the product symbolizes the moon, while the crack on the right angle signifies the constant changes in life. Regardless of the changes, however, the relationship between two people will remain solid as the two mutually supporting poles signify. The above cases illustrate how poetry could be employed in related fields. The unique imagery creation and high popularity of these cases definitely suggests that the employment of poetry for the field of culture creative design is certainly worth exploration.

### **3. Applying “Polyphonic Pattern” as the Theoretical Basis for Creative Design**

Yu [18] once said, “Creativity is a traceable psychological process. With a series of

effective training, many people may experience the status of endless energy of creation.” Converting classical poetry provides a platform for creative ideas not only to bloom but also to be able to be put into practice. Therefore, this study has integrated Traditional Chinese Painting Aesthetic, Poetics, and *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons* as the theoretical foundation for the creative conversion of classical poetry.

### 3.1 Following Traditional Chinese Painting Aesthetics

Chinese poetry has always been the medium to convey the emotions of poets. Therefore it could also serve as the medium for designers’ creative expressions. Research (Yeh, 2010) [16], *Applying Chinese Poetry’s Form and Spirit in Culture Creativity*, has indicated that “The conversion process of transforming poetry into design is similar to that of painting. Take Cheng, Pan Chiao’s (1693~1765) experience in painting bamboo for example. The painting process went from ‘Generating Concept’ to ‘Employing Brush Strokes’; the similarity between converting emotions into painting and converting poetic emotions into product design can correspond.” Also presents, in Figure 1, is “the conversion process of transforming paintings and poetry into design and culture creative experience”, from a further theoretical combination of Painting Aesthetics, Concept of Form and Spirit, and Chinese-Western Comparative Aesthetics. The first phase of this process shows the procedure of Chinese painting. The second phase is the corresponding procedure of converting poetry into design, illustrating how a designer can read a poem (the poetic meaning), stimulating the creative thinking in one’s mind (state of mind), then converting the poet’s emotions into the process of design (scenario). The last phase is the culture creative design hands-on experience. From the left, it introduces how consumers see the product with their “eyes”, indulging themselves in the beautiful scenario of the poetic culture, leading to reflections drawn by the sentimental feelings, and eventually using it in reality. The ultimate goal for converting poetry into design is thus reached.

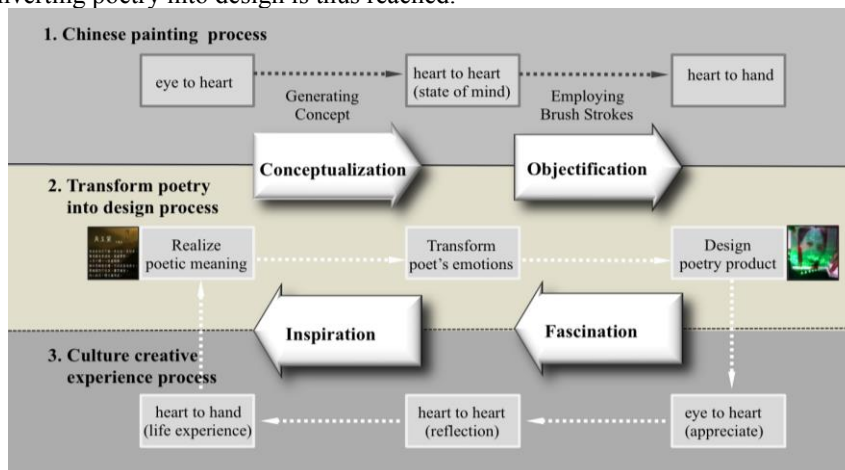


Fig. 1 The process of Chinese painting and design transforming

### 3.2 The Employment of “Six -Viewpoints” for creative design

*The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons* [17] as the integration of the domains of metaphysics and physical phenomena, such as cosmic ontology, cosmos attributes and the formation of the boundless universe, activity phenomenon, function utility, which are all-encompassed by this book. Rated as the macroscopic view of the philosophers, this master piece corresponds to the connections between literature and cosmic ontology, universal world, political society and meanings of life. To establish an objective text evaluation method, *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons – Proper Evaluation* raised the concept of “Six-Viewpoints”: “To understand the sentiments of text, you must observe the six aspects: first view position, second view writing, third view variation, fourth view means, fifth view allusion, sixth view syllable. If evaluations proceed this way, good work may reveal itself”. In general, “Position” is to see the appropriate arrangements between sentimental sense and literary form; “Writing” is the measurement of whether the literary form suits the proper aesthetic norm; “Variation” is to observe the success of the text’s inherited convention and innovation; “Means” is the adequate strategy of different writing appearances; “Allusion” is to succeed the correct use of allusion meanings; “Syllable” is to manage the most appropriate syllable for the text. Through the methodology of “Six Viewpoints”, we may explore the six aspects to objectively evaluate the written work. Hence, this research employs this method to measure the most suitable Chinese poetry and devise selecting criteria for product design.

Furthermore, to make a guideline for employing the “six-viewpoints” principle into design more comprehensive, this research also takes Teresa M. Amabile (1983)(consensus assessment technique · CAT) as another reference so as to present all of the design attributes derived from the ‘Six-Viewpoints’ principle with three descriptive indicators, as the eighteen indicators shown in Figure 2. For “position”, there are form, state analysis and time-space structure. For “writing”, symbolic expression, phrasal interrelationship and semantic attributes are considered. Design principles, representation, and neatness are indicators for “variation”. For “means”, emotional expression, aesthetic performance and creative expression are included. “Allusion”, the fifth viewpoint, includes color employment, material application and texture application. Finally, dynamic performance, situation and rhythmical variety are considered for “syllable”. In this paper, View Writing is the main application principle.

### 3.2 “Polyphonic Pattern” as the Framework for Converting in Creative Design

The guideline for conversion—the polyphonic pattern—originated from the significant Ingarden Phenomenology, which is highly prominent in the western aesthetic field as You[17] mentioned. Ingarden[7] indicated in the *New Cognition of the Literary Work of Art* that the existence of literary art creation still continues after the termination of the author’s intended expression because the physical existence of the creation makes it possible for aesthetes in various time and space to reconstruct the author’s imagery. In addition, the inner structure hierarchy of literary art is analyzed

into four independent levels yet each interconnects with one and another, penetrating deeper by each level. There are the level of words, the second level of phrases, and the third and fourth levels of sentence groups. Such a literary discourse system establishes a reciprocal relationship with Yu's[17] literature analysis system as the quote describes; "The affection of viewing the objects seems an endowment to the object, the aroused inspiration by the object were as if rewards to the viewer."

Further, the relation between the two systems has been compared and contrasted in Yu's book[17] *New philosophical aspects for The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons*. For example, "Word Deliberation", "Tonal Pattern" can be compared to the first level (Figure 3) of the tones of words and words, while "Dual Phrase", "Section/Fragment", "Resemble/Imply", "Euphuistic", "Reference" can depict the second level of meaning in the sentence group. These two levels, which constitute the words and phrases, are the most fundamental and predetermined formation in not only expressing inner significance but also presenting the external foundation of phonological beauty. The third and fourth levels concern the deep structure of the literature work, providing readers an outline or a schematic drawing of the formation to which they need apply imagination while viewing so as to represent the imagery. The chapters of "Structure", "Sentiments", "Content/Form", "Nature Influence", "Style", "Integration", and "Profound" in *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons* compare closely to these two levels.

These levels agree with Eco's[3] suggestion that a poem is the full integration of various discourses following different linguistic rules and operating on distinct meaningful levels. The purpose of the statement is mainly to examine themes on art imagination, configuration of the structure layers, the Gestalt effect in art, and the metaphysics regarding art creation. This concept also corresponds to Yu's[18] comprehensive statements on the structural framework of "Half-translucent viewing layers" and "All historical masterworks employ such structure so while ordinary readers accept the surface-layer presentation, and highest-level interpreters are able to dig into the deepest layer of the composition, transitional readers roam with wonder between the two layers, accessing a pathway to an aesthetical life." All the above presents what is most significant for poetic conversion and application.

The four hierarchy levels of the inner structure in Ingarden's theory gradually penetrates; first comes the level of words, which then composes into the second level of phrases, then the third and fourth levels of sentence groups (Figure 3), similar to the operational structure of time. Viewed vertically time-wise, an art piece possesses different sections which fall on the same time and all layers expand sequentially at the same time. From the horizontal point of chronicle time, the hierarchies of literary art, such as "Pronunciation", "Word and Phrase", "Sentence Group", "Section", and "Chapter", gradually accelerate the development of the levels in temporal progressions. A valuable piece of literary art must present diverse, sequential, and harmonious polyphonic artistic value. Such quality is similar to the musical texture of Polyphonic music in which a minimum of two choirs proceed at once. It is also parallel to the concept in visual arts that texture contains both the tactility itself as well as visual representation. Similarly, poetry possesses the attribute of calling for aesthetic harmony in its internal spirit and organic rhythm for its exterior structure. Therefore,

this study will take up the “Polyphonic Pattern” structure as the guideline for converting poetry into design.

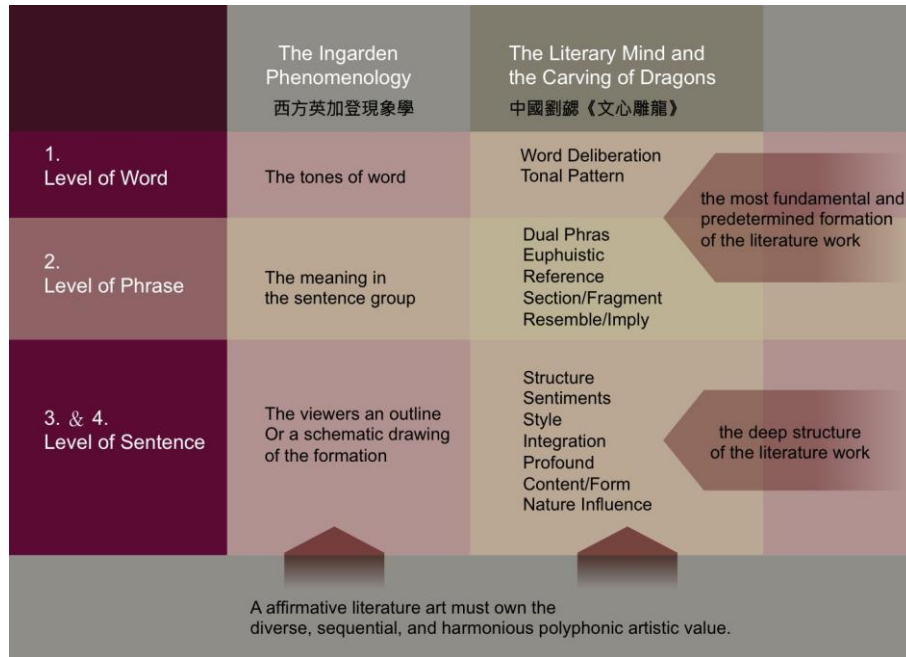


Figure 2 “Polyphonic Pattern” as the Framework for Converting in Creative Design

#### 4. Developmental Model of “Polyphonic Pattern” Design and implementation examples

In this section, an actual implementation example is presented for illustrating the development of an application model of “Polyphonic Pattern” design employing poetry. Kao[8] has suggested that insisting on applying western syntax for analyzing Chinese poetry could be fruitless. He indicated that Chinese parsing should not be limited by subject-predicate analysis from the west; “topic-comment” analysis could be adopted to allow various structural combinations and greater possibilities of unrestricted development. As Hsieh[6] stated, linguistic research methodology has turned to a dynamic study of language development and comprehension, shifting towards the development of Interdisciplinary Linguistics, an Applied Science. This study has thus synthesized related theories of the western Ingarden Phenomenology from *Cognition of the Literary Work of Art* and the Chinese construction from *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons*, adopting the structure of “Polyphonic Pattern”, and developed a significant model for converting poetry culture into design, with the organic formation concept of “Level of keyword”, “Level of Phrase”, and “Level of Sentence”. The illustration presented here is the Ching Ping Melody, written by Tang dynasty poet Lee, Po, “the clouds want to become the garment of the royal beauty and flowers would like to become her beautiful face”. The original meaning of

the poem states, “Royal Lady Young is a fair lady, people associate her garments with colorful clouds and her delicate face with flowers.” By applying the affection association process and recombining the organic composition of words, poetic rhythm and comprehensive imagery in the mind of the viewer could be displayed.

The first step is to extract the main keyword meaning, here in this poem we will take “think” (want to/would like to) as an example, as in Figure 3. Wu and Wiu[15] has explored near-synonyms and has discovered five basic modules in depicting an event--process, state, stage, punctuality and boundary--which are referenced by time tense and provide sample linguistic information.

**“Think”**

1. Miss, yearn . Example: Miss you.
2. Ponder, deliberate. Example: Thinking of solutions.
3. Dream, Desire, intend, hope. Example: Want to get married
4. Consider, feel. Examples: What do you think of this?
5. Speculate, surmise. Examples: Expect, reckon, guess.

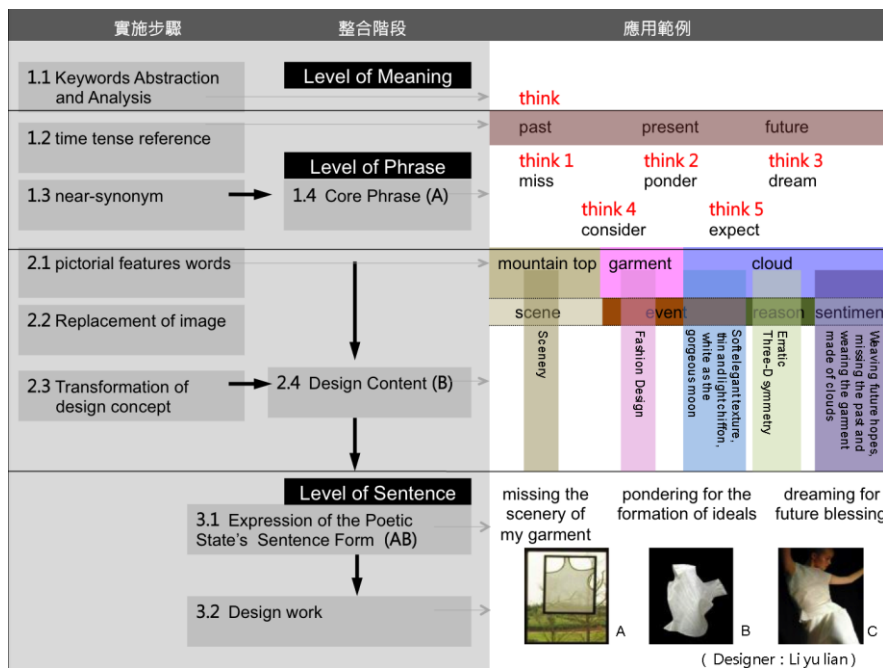


Figure 3 Developmental Model of “Polyphonic Pattern” Design and implementation

Considering the meaning of the poem with the timeline features, we choose “past-present-future” as the reference point--“Think 1” is the major meaning of the verb “Think”, “Think 2” signifies intention and hope, often resembles things which have not happened. By repeating this process, various near-synonym phrases will be generated, and the appropriate “Core Phrase” can be selected, as seen in Figure 4.



The second step is to retrieve the “pictorial features” in the word definitions, taking, for instance, the words in the figure “cloud”, “garment”, “mountain top”, and “fence”. Replace them within the image domains of “Sentiment/Reason/Scene/Event”, convert them to a design concept and then the relevant “Design Content” can emerge. Via “Sentiment”, the word “cloud” could symbolize “Weaving future hopes, missing the past and wearing the garment made of clouds”. Via “Reason”, it is analyzed as “Erratic”, which then is interpreted as “three-dimensional asymmetry”. Within the domain of “event”, it can be manifested as “Soft elegant texture, thin and light chiffon, white as the gorgeous moon”. The word “garment”, via “Event”, can be seen as “Fashion Design”. “Mountain top” and “fence”, via “Scene”, are grouped as “Scenery”.

The third step is to continue converting the “Core Phrase” and “Design Content”, which are extended from “Keyword Definition” and “Pictorial Features” in word level, into an expressive Sentence Form of the Poetic State. For instance, “Missing the scenery of my garment” combines 2-dimensional garment and scenery to become item A; “pondering for the formation of ideals” converts into item B with the idealistic three-dimensional asymmetrical tailoring; “dreaming for future blessing” turns into item C forming a white-chiffon cloud-like garment. The model framework for the conversion into a substantial design series is completed as presented in Figure 3.

## 5. Conclusion

Poets and artists both possess the ability of “thoughtfulness” and “observation”. As a result, readers will enter the poet’s heart and enjoy in person their life and affection while reading a poem. Since art is about creation, creative imagination is required; creation does not reveal itself out of thin air, however, it is an innovative recombination of existing imageries. The inspiration for art creation is identical to that for design; it is never creating something out of nothing. Thus, to represent poetic imagery through design, a designer must first convert the original emotional experience of the poet, analyze the content of the poem next, and then employ the ‘polyphonic’ pattern for analyses of the organic formation of word meaning, phrases and sentences to develop a concrete process for converting poetry into creative design. There is no doubt that the process of a poet’s converting his feelings into a poem is artistic creation. Creative design with poetry is just as well a re-creation of creation. Applying poetry for creative design also requires inventiveness, poetic sensitivity, and superior techniques from a designer, as poetry does from poets. Creative ability and sensitivity enable a designer to fully appreciate the “poetic meaning” of the original poem, while superior techniques make the recreation of “poetic imagery” possible for providing consumers with opportunities for experiencing the expressions of “poetry” through design products and verifying the emotional experience of “poetry” from the new generation. Along the long lasting history, we sincerely hope that classical Chinese poetry will rise and shine with a new glamour with the dialogue between the present and the past.

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