Traversing Time and Space from the Blessing Window

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Abstract. The visual graphics for the holographic artwork “Blessing Window” were created from observations of Tainan city, with a focus on the beauty of Chinese characters, their typographic. The concept of movement in the artwork is from a traditional Chinese philosophy, “When the mountain does not move, the road extends, when the road does not extend to the destination, the heart will extend”. One multiplex-hologram and an interactive installation were used to combine the visual concepts of typography and the philosophy.

Key words: Chinese typography, totem, historical symbol, holographic, interactive

1. Introduction

From the 18th Century to now, the city of Tainan has been influenced by Dutch, Portuguese, Chinese, Japanese and naive cultures. As the first developed city in early Taiwan, Tainan has distinctive characteristics from its rich history. The people who inhabit this historical city can explore elements aspects of the past from the streets, temples, and many small old corners.

Chinese characters are an old system of writing, which are still used in the modern world. The concept of “Blessing Window” combines elements observed from the city of Tainan. In the spring of 2012 I photographed Chinese characters and traditional totems from temples, buildings, monumental, and famous scrolls. These were then divided into five symbolic subjects – wisdom, love, fortune, health and wealth – and composed into a holographic work.

There is a famous traditional Chinese philosophy: “When the mountain does not move, the road extends, when the road does not extend to the destination, the heart will extend”(山不轉，路轉；路不轉，心轉). According to the philosophy, the work “Blessing Window” was designed to convey blessings from five vases that each depicted one subject – wisdom, love, fortune, health and wealth. The holographic image was digitally composed by placing the five vases within an old window (Figure 1).
Each vase is animated rotating one after each other as the viewer moves past the hologram. The movement of the viewer through different viewing angles, animating each symbolic subject symbolizes the transfer of a blessing to the viewer.

2. The historical observation in Tainan

There are at least 55 historical buildings and structures in the city of Tainan. Most of the historical architecture is related to religions, there are also a few forts, the city hall and many monuments. Windows and doors are an important elements of a building, and in a historical context, most windows and doors are only not functional but are also metaphors. The materials and techniques of windows used reveal different the periods of building, and using the materials of wood, brick, ceramics being the most common materials of Tainan’s historical architecture. The form and shape of a window represents different symbolic aspects of life. Windows were the first element observed for “Blessing Window”, the three popular historical windows in Tainan are as shown below (Figures 2–4).

Figure 2: Fan window – the fan character (扇 = 善) means nice relationship and is pronounced similar too good serendipity (善緣)
The symbol of a book with bamboo window also means knowledge, and knowledge is the invisible heirlooms for generations, and bamboo means good character of people. As Tainan is known as city of culture, a culture that is an heirloom of the people, I choose the book with bamboo window as the main element for “Blessing Window”.

Chinese characters and typography have evolved through history modern Chinese characters have a different writing style but are based on ancient hieroglyphs (Figure 5). This form of writing has allowed for the passing of knowledge and symbolic representation from one generation to the next.

According to the concept of the “Blessing Window”, my observation focused on how to convey the five topics – love, fortune, health, wealth and wisdom. The temple is always a good place to invoke different wishes, therefore, the typographic were collected from different temples. Five Chinese characters that relate to the concepts were found (Figure 6–10) and combine with different shaped five vases. The five traditional styles of vases each have a shape that resonates the concept of the character. (Figure11-15).
3. Mediums for display

The “Blessing Window” is exhibited in using two mediums—a reflection multiplex hologram (Figure 16) and an interactive installation with rear projection video and an infrared sensor (Figure 17). Both installations allowed for viewers to engage with a holographic composition of the concept.

In both cases the vases are animated, rotating one after each other, to symbolize the transfer of blessings to the viewer—wisdom, love, fortune, health and wealth. The animation design for each medium, however, was different.
For the hologram, the movement of the viewer through different viewing angles animates each symbolic subject. The spatial animation of the vases has two speeds, either 16 frames, or 30 frames across the viewing angle to consider human eye’s movement and the hologram’s angle changing. Finally, sending two fields of hologram digital fields which one is with 16 frames and the other is with 30 frames to print by Geola. The installation of this hologram is hung on the wall and the responses of viewers were observed. At the end of the viewing experiment of two holograms, the hologram with 16 frames is easier for viewers to see.

For the installation from the animation design of the interactive installation each vase rotates separately triggered by the viewer’s hand touching the vase. From observation of the interactive installation, viewers always want to touch the transparent project from the back. When the video camera catch user’s hand shadow and the vase rotating at same time. The interactive installation Blessing window is becomes a famous work during the exhibition at Chinese Culture Centre in Tainan.

4. The final works and conclusion

These works consider to design and to use the historical elements into the high-tech technology in interactive projection and stereo hologram. Each interactive Blessing Window (Figure 18) or stereo hologram (Figure 19) to symbolize the tunnel of time and space journey of the city of Tainan, from modern display to combine with the historical element. These two new materials and techniques to present these Blessing Window is also to echo with Tainan historical windows’ materials and techniques which always reveal the different periods.

Figure 18: … Photographs of interactive installation at the Chinese Culture Center, Jan. 30 to March 30, 2012, size 283cm*210cm
Figure 19, Photographs of stereo hologram installation at 3D Image Lab., Kun Shan University, May 23, 2012. size is 39cm*29cm

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