

Exploring the Classification of Birds in Ceramic Flower-And-Bird Paintings and Aesthetic Value Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

The porcelain surface designs in Chinese flower-and-bird paintings reflect the deep cultural appreciation for flowers and the natural beauty of birds. Birds are not only depicted as part of nature but also celebrated for their aesthetic and symbolic value. However, there is a significant gap in understanding the classification of the bird motifs in ceramic paintings and their aesthetic value in relation to philosophical variables. This study systematically reviews research papers and electronic books from three major databases: Web of Science, Scopus, and CNKI. Additionally, fieldwork was conducted at the China Ceramic Museum, a ceramic company, and a ceramic exhibition to capture images of bird motifs on porcelain works, providing practical insights and realistic data. By combining literature analysis and field observations, the research examines the classification of bird motifs and flowers in ceramic flower-and-bird paintings, as well as their philosophical and aesthetic significance.

Keywords: Aesthetic value; Philosophy; ceramic flower and bird painting; Main motif Bird

INTRODUCTION

The aesthetic philosophy of Chinese flower-and-bird painting plays a pivotal role in shaping the intricate depiction of these motifs in ceramic art. This study delves into the classification and aesthetic philosophy that underpins Chinese flower-and-bird paintings by synthesizing existing literature and conducting field visits to the China Ceramic Museum, ceramic companies, and ceramic exhibitions. By combining an extensive literature review with on-site observations, the research seeks to elucidate the classification of the primary bird motifs featured in ceramic flower-and-bird paintings and their connection to aesthetic values. This exploration not only enhances the understanding of these art forms but also underscores their philosophical depth and aesthetic significance, revealing how they embody a harmonious interplay of cultural symbolism, artistic expression, and natural beauty.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a mixed-method approach, integrating qualitative and descriptive analyses to explore the classification and aesthetic philosophy of Chinese bird motifs in ceramic art.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A comprehensive literature review was conducted, focusing on electronic books and scholarly articles related to aesthetic values, philosophy, main motif birds, and ceramic flower-and-bird paintings. Systematic guidelines were followed to identify relevant works, using databases such as Web of Science, Scopus, and CNKI for initial searches. Keywords were carefully selected to ensure relevance. After iterative screening processes, 7 relevant papers were identified, providing critical insights into the classification and aesthetic significance of bird motifs in Chinese ceramic art.

Field Visits and Data Collection

To complement the literature review, field visits were undertaken at key locations, including the Ceramic Museum, ceramic companies, and ceramic exhibitions. These visits enabled the collection of firsthand data through direct observation and photography. A total of 288 photographs of ceramic flower-and-bird paintings and 61 ceramic bird motifs were captured during these visits. These visual materials provided valuable empirical data for analysis.

Data Analysis

Following data collection, all documents and photographs were meticulously analyzed and documented in a structured spreadsheet format. Qualitative methods, such as thematic analysis, were used to identify recurring patterns and themes in the classification and aesthetic philosophy of bird motifs. Descriptive analysis techniques further synthesized these findings, offering a holistic overview of the collected data.

Validation and Reliability

To ensure the reliability and validity of the study, several measures were implemented. Clear inclusion criteria were established for selecting literature, and a rigorous screening process was adhered to. Field visits to multiple locations offered diverse perspectives, reducing the risk of bias. The visual evidence gathered through photography reinforced the findings from the literature review. Additionally, findings were cross-referenced and triangulated with existing scholarly works to enhance accuracy and consistency.

By employing a robust mixed-methods approach and implementing rigorous data validation techniques, this study aims to provide credible and comprehensive insights into the classification and aesthetic philosophy of Chinese bird motifs in ceramic art.

RESULTS

Varieties of Chinese ceramic birds painting patterns:

Through the pictures taken in the ceramic museum, ceramic company, and ceramic exhibition, 61 ceramic paintings about the main pattern birds were found. As shown in Table 1, the species of birds are Sparrow, chicken, crane, peacock, swallow, myna, and kingfisher. Among the ceramic flower-and-bird paintings of birds in the China Ceramic Museum are six paintings of chickens. Among the ceramic flower-and-bird paintings of birds in ceramic companies, 13 were sparrows most frequently in ceramic exhibitions. As is shown in Figure 1, Among the 61 ceramic artworks about birds photographed in three places, there are 16 ceramic flower-and-bird paintings of sparrows, 12 ceramic flower-and-bird paintings of chickens, six ceramic flower-and-bird paintings of cranes, and five ceramic flower-and-bird paintings of swallows. Therefore, in ceramic flower-and-bird paintings, the main patterns of birds appear frequently in ceramic flower-and-bird paintings: sparrows, chickens, cranes, and swallows.

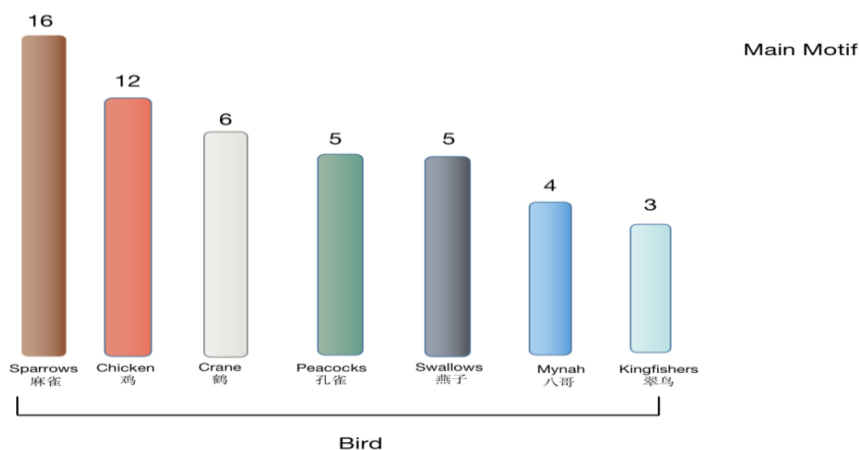


Figure 1 The number of different types of Bird motifs in three places

Table 1 Species of birds in three places *Birds*

Photo taken at China Ceramic Museum				
Rooster 6	crane 5	swallows 2	Peacock 2	myna 1
Photo taken at Ceramics Company				
Sparrows 13	Chick 4	Mynah 3	Kingfishers 3	Peacocks 3
Photo taken at China Ceramic Exhibition				
sparrow 3	swallow 3	chick 2	crane 1	

There is only one ceramic flower-and-bird painting of sparrow patterns in the Chinese Ceramic Museum, in the style of traditional pastels on the glaze. However, the ceramic company has 12 ceramic flower-and-bird paintings with sparrow patterns, which can be divided into three styles. The first style is nine traditional glazed meticulous ceramic bird paintings, the second style is two freehand ceramic bird paintings combining blue and white with enameled red, and the third style is one freehand blue and white style ceramic bird painting. Lastly, the ceramic exhibition had four ceramic flower-and-bird paintings with sparrow patterns, which were divided into two styles. The first style was three ceramic bird paintings with sparrow patterns drawn in the modern meticulous style, and the second style was one ceramic bird painting with sparrow patterns drawn in the combination of freehand brushwork and meticulous brushwork.

Five ceramic flower-and-bird paintings about chicken patterns in the China Ceramic Museum are divided into three styles. The first style is two fine brushworks with a single chicken pattern, the second is two freehand brushworks with a group of chickens, and the third is one colorful brushwork of chicken paintings on the glaze. Moreover, the ceramic company has four ceramic flower-and-bird paintings with chicken patterns, which can be divided into two styles. The first is one freehand ceramic painting of blue and white combined with underglaze red, and the second is three traditional ceramic works of refined brushwork style on the glaze. Lastly, two ceramic flower-and-bird paintings with chicken patterns appeared in the ceramic exhibition, divided into two styles. The first style was a ceramic bird painting with a sparrow pattern painted in the style of Western oil painting, and the second was like the first style but was inconsistent in the shape and composition of chickens.

There are six ceramic flower-and-bird paintings about crane patterns in the China Ceramic Museum, divided into three styles. The first style is two fine brushwork works with a single blue and white crane as the pattern; the second is freehand brushwork cranes; and the third is a colorful brushwork painting crane on the glaze. Moreover, the ceramic company has four ceramic flower-and-bird paintings with chicken patterns, which can be divided into two styles. The first style is one ceramic crane painting in the color glaze freehand style, and the second style is one ceramic crane painting in the traditional style of colorful glaze. In addition, a ceramic flower-and-bird painting about crane patterns appeared at the ceramic exhibition, a freehand style crane painting with a color glaze.

Six ceramic flower-and-bird paintings about the swallow pattern in the Chinese Ceramic Museum are divided into two styles. The first style is a new color swallow work on the glaze combined with meticulous and freehand brushwork; the second is a pastel freehand style work on the glaze. Moreover, there is a ceramic flower-and-bird painting work about the swallow pattern in the ceramic company, and the swallow is painted with a colorful glaze. In addition, there are three ceramic flower-and-bird paintings of swallow patterns in the ceramic exhibition, which are divided into three styles. The first style is a swallow pattern ceramic work painted in the style of imitating Western oil painting; the second style is an enamel pastel swallow drawing combined with meticulous brushwork and freehand brushwork; the third style is a swallow drawing in the style of decorative painting.

In summary, as shown in figure 2, in the 61 pictures of bird-related ceramic works taken in the China Ceramic Museum, ceramic company, and ceramic exhibition, it is found that the classification of ceramic flower-and-bird paintings contains the classification of the main pattern birds. Birds that often appear are sparrows, chickens,

cranes, and swallows. Among them, sparrows and chickens appear the most frequently in ceramic paintings. Secondly, the ceramic works of sparrows, chickens, cranes, and swallows also show different styles. For example, Sparrow has one style in the ceramic museum, three in the ceramic company, and two in the ceramic exhibition. Some are traditional freehand styles, and some are modern freehand styles. However, it can be found that the pattern style of the ceramic bird in the Chinese Ceramic Museum is more traditional than the pattern of the bird in the ceramic company and the ceramic exhibition.

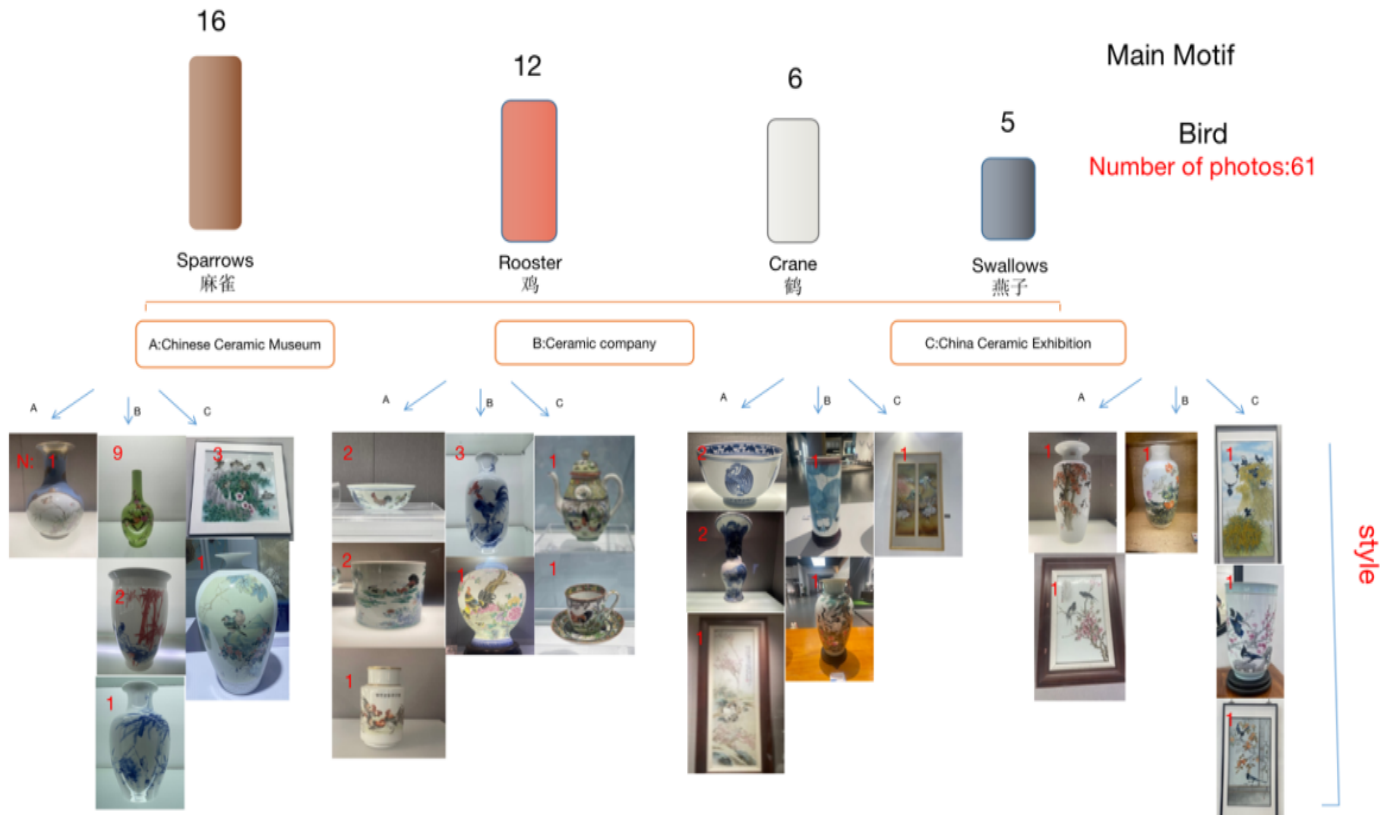


Figure 2 Different styles of four bird's motifs in three places

The relationship between aesthetic value Philosophy Creative Inspiration and the main Motif Birds of Ceramic Flower and Bird Painting

After analyzing the works of ceramic birds in three places, a ceramic company, a ceramic exhibition, and the China Ceramic Museum, influenced by the aesthetic value of different periods, the styles of ceramic birds are different. After analysis, it is found that the sparrows in the Chinese Ceramic Museum have the most works, among which the ceramic sparrows in the Chinese Ceramic Museum are primarily in traditional style, influenced by the ancient aesthetic value philosophy, and the painter likes to draw auspicious patterns in the bottleneck and the bottom of the bottle. However, with the change of aesthetic value philosophy, the ceramic sparrow works of today's ceramic companies and ceramic exhibitions are mostly modern style, not only painting traditional patterns but also combining the content of Chinese painting, and the picture is more novel and fuller of life.

There are works about cranes in the Chinese Ceramic Museum, which are also in the traditional style. The ceramic crane works of the ceramic company are in a modern decorative style, often expressing the image of the crane abstractly. The ceramic crane works in the Ceramic exhibition are painted in a contemporary abstract style, with innovations in technique and composition, such as the combination of color glaze techniques and pastel techniques. Composition adopts the cutting method to combine two pieces of work into one piece. The swallow works of the China Ceramic Museum are mainly in traditional style, the ceramic swallow works of the ceramic company are mainly in modern freehand style, and the ceramic swallow works of the ceramic exhibition have integrated Western painting techniques and culture and began to pay attention to the relationship between light and dark, presenting different styles. In addition, the ceramic swallow works of ceramic companies and exhibitions have removed complex and regular patterns compared with ceramic museums, and the painting

techniques have also changed from traditional meticulous brushwork to the combination of meticulous brushwork and freehand brushwork. The picture is no longer just a simple pattern; the style is modern.

In terms of painting techniques, ceramic companies, ceramic exhibitions, and the China Ceramic Museum use different painting techniques. The painting techniques of the ceramic bird work in the Chinese Ceramic Museum are commonly used in fine brushwork techniques and traditional decorative techniques of "Kaiguang" (painting in the "Kaiguang" area). "Kaiguang" is the Open light decoration is one of the unique decoration methods in ceramic decoration, it refers to the surface decoration of ceramic objects, with contour lines to divide a certain shape of the area, the area depicts the theme decoration, the area is painted outside the pattern background. In the same ceramic ware, it can take one open light form or multiple open light forms. Open light decoration in all kinds of ceramics, widely used, including blue and white open light, pastel open light, color glaze open light, ancient color open light, underglaze multicolored open light. For a long time, Kaiguang decoration has formed a unique development track, with distinct form characteristics and profound aesthetic implications.[1]

The ceramic bird works of the ceramic company have two forms of expression. The first is to spray glaze on the ceramic blank so that the color of the blank strongly contrasts with the color of the flower and bird. The color has a blue-red contrast in the second combination of blue and white and red glaze techniques. Ceramic exhibition learned the Western surreal style and oil painting techniques. Ceramic flower and bird paintings focus more on light, shade, and structural relations. For example, the ceramic sparrow works of the ceramic exhibition are also innovative, combining painting and carving technology to form a stronger decorative. In addition, the colored glaze is sprayed on the part of the painting to create a color contrast with the white glaze.

The bird pattern on the ceramic painting contains the aesthetic value philosophy, such as sparrow. In ancient China, there was an official title called "Lord" and a sparrow homonym, so the sparrow also means the significance of official prosperity. The sparrow also represents diligence and steadfastness. The sparrow can also become a noble phoenix if the effort is made [2]. Two cocks belong to a kind of poultry, which is a very important poultry; chicken symbolizes loyalty, punctuality, selflessness, and bravery [2], so it is often painted on the blank of the ceramic, which is a symbol of luck. Chinese ceramic museums usually exhibit ceramic chicken works, such as the famous Ming Dynasty Chenghua bucket color chicken cup. The design of ceramic chicken works is said to be inspired by the Chinese Song Dynasty painting "Hen Map," which expresses the hen's care for chickens and the great love of parents [3]. "Chicken" and "auspicious" homophonic "ji." Chicken has martial arts, virtue, and trustworthiness, which are the excellent characteristics of many children, so a world is often painted in ceramic pictures. Three cranes are one of the noble animals in ancient China. It symbolizes holiness, grace, and longevity [4]. The four swallows symbolize the coming of spring and herald spring blossoms as they fly from the south to the north to nest in spring. It also means hard work and frugality for swallows to pick up things to build their nests. It means love and symbolizes the beauty of love because swallows usually come in pairs [5].

The aesthetic value philosophy of Chinese ceramic bird painting is reflected in many aspects. First, the bird pattern aesthetic on ceramic painting is influenced by royal preferences, such as "cockfighting," the game loved by the emperor will be painted on ceramic. This classic theme also continues to this day and to be innovative. This is because the picture of the independence of the golden rooster reflects the longing for inner peace in addition to the busy life of modern people. In addition, the composition of the ceramic bird painting also reflects the careful design of the top court painters at that time, using the feng shui pattern in aesthetic philosophy and the content of Zhouyi mathematics to carefully design every composition position of each bird in the picture. For example, in Zhouyi mathematics, the ancient people liked to draw three birds in the composition because one lives two, two produces three, and three produces all things, meaning more children and more blessings [6].

Feng shui pattern, usually painted birds with not only a bird but also a peony (representing wealth), an orchid (representing quality), a lake (representing financial resources), and a Shou Shan stone (longevity), the whole combination together represents auspice and wealth, noble quality, more than good fortune aesthetic philosophy. Finally, China's contemporary philosophy of aesthetic value is influenced by Western aesthetic value. For example, China's export of ceramics is increasing, and Chinese ceramics are also integrated into Western culture. To cater to Western aesthetic value, a batch of Western ceramic orders are designed based on transforming traditional ceramic shapes and patterns. The shape of the coffee cup began to appear, and the pattern often painted the picture of the British rural landscape and the European life scene—painting techniques from the traditional meticulous brushwork to oil painting techniques, colorful retro [7].

CONCLUSION

This study critically examines the classification of birds in ceramic flower-and-bird paintings and their aesthetic value within the framework of Chinese philosophical thought. Through comprehensive fieldwork conducted at the China Ceramic Museum, a ceramic production company, and a Chinese ceramic exhibition, a total of 288 photographs were documented, capturing the diversity of flower-and-bird motifs on ceramic surfaces.

Horizontal Analysis revealed distinct variations in the patterns across the three sources, reflecting diverse interpretations of aesthetic value philosophies. These differences underscore the interplay between artistic expression and the socio-cultural values of the creators, offering insights into how context and purpose influence design choices.

Vertical Analysis focused on the main motif of birds in flower-and-bird paintings. The patterns were classified into multiple styles, each embodying the unique aesthetic sensibilities of different Chinese dynasties. For example, intricate designs, color palettes, and bird species preferences reveal the cultural and symbolic significance of specific historical periods.

Main Motif Birds identified across the sources include species such as the sparrow, chicken, crane, peacock, swallow, myna, and kingfisher. Among these, the sparrow, chicken, crane, and swallow emerged as the four most recurrent motifs, often paired with lotus flowers to evoke themes of harmony, prosperity, and longevity.

By synthesizing horizontal and vertical analyses, this study illuminates the evolution of Chinese aesthetic values and the philosophical depth embedded in flower-and-bird motifs on ceramics. It highlights the intricate relationship between art, culture, and philosophy, demonstrating how ceramic art serves as a dynamic medium for expressing and preserving the cultural identity of Chinese civilization. This research not only advances our understanding of traditional Chinese ceramic art but also contributes a systematic classification framework for bird motifs, which can serve as a foundation for further studies in art history and philosophy.

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Disclosure Statement

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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