

# Visual Cultural Penetration: A Study on the Cultural Expression of Graphic Design in Contemporary Chinese Weddings

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## Abstract

In contemporary China, where the process of globalization continues to advance, traditional wedding customs are undergoing profound visual transformation and cultural reconstruction. This paper takes graphic design as a starting point to explore its media role in the integration of Chinese and Western wedding cultures. Through the analysis of cultural penetration theory, semiotics and typical image cases, it reveals how images in contemporary weddings reflect the influence and reshaping of Western culture on traditional Chinese rituals. The study found that graphic design not only records cultural changes, but also participates in the process of cultural negotiation, becoming an important means of modern identity construction, value translation and emotional identification. The article believes that as a reorganizer of the cultural symbol system, designers should maintain critical thinking and cultural sensitivity in visual integration, explore local contemporary expressions, and promote the innovative dissemination of Chinese wedding customs and culture at the visual level.

**Keywords:** cultural penetration, graphic design, wedding, visual culture, integration of Chinese and Western cultures, semiotics, globalization

## 1. Introduction

With the rapid development of information technology and the high degree of integration of global communication media, images have become the most intuitive, emotionally penetrating and ideologically influential core media in contemporary cultural communication. Especially in the highly ritualized cultural field of weddings, images not only bear the functions of emotional expression and social expectations, but also constitute an important mechanism for the construction of cultural identity. The visual language it presents often implies the reproduction and reconstruction of identity, value and tradition.

As a social behavior of collective participation, weddings condense the cultural logic and social structure in a specific historical context in their ritual process, visual symbol system and media reproduction. Graphic design plays an intermediary role in connecting individual aesthetics and collective consciousness in this process. Through the design intervention of color configuration, image generation, symbol translation and communication style, graphic design not only shapes the visual form of the wedding, but also participates in the generation and dissemination of cultural meaning at a deeper level.

Based on this, this paper aims to explore how Western culture penetrates the visual expression system of contemporary Chinese weddings through images, and further analyzes the role of visual translation and cultural negotiation played by graphic design. Through theoretical review and case analysis, it reveals how visual culture has become a key channel for interaction between Chinese and Western cultures, and the issues of identity construction and cultural awareness it has triggered in the context of contemporary Chinese society.

## 2. Theoretical Basis: Cultural Penetration and Visual Communication

Before analyzing the cultural transformation reflected in the graphic design of contemporary Chinese weddings,

it is necessary to clarify the theoretical background of the two core concepts of “cultural penetration” and “visual communication”. How culture spreads in different social contexts and influences ideas, aesthetics and identity through the non-verbal medium of images is the key issue behind understanding the visual transformation of weddings.

### *2.1 Concept and Mechanism of Cultural Penetration*

“Cultural infiltration” usually refers to the process by which a culture influences, changes and even reconstructs another culture in an unequal power relationship through means such as institutions, media, consumer goods, education systems, and symbol systems (Martel, 2010). Different from the two-way interaction and mutual benefit principle emphasized by “cultural exchange”, cultural infiltration is more reflected in the one-way output from the strong culture to the weak culture, with a clear ideological orientation and economic interest drive.

In the contemporary global communication pattern, cultural infiltration is mainly carried out through transnational media groups, popular culture products and visual communication strategies. Images, movies, advertisements, fashion and social media have become communication platforms, and their implicit value systems have penetrated into local cultural structures through aesthetic choices, consumer imitation and identity recognition. Martel (2010) pointed out in his research that the visual culture industry represented by Hollywood in the United States not only exports entertainment content, but also constructs a global meaning order through cultural symbols, packaging American values as a “universal” lifestyle and cultural paradigm.

W.J.T. Mitchell (1986) further pointed out that images themselves are not neutral symbols, and their production and viewing processes are deeply constrained by power structures and ideologies. Images are “containers of visual ideology” that stimulate emotions and convey values in a non-verbal way, thereby realizing the function of cultural othering or identity absorption. Therefore, cultural penetration at the visual level is not only reflected in the borrowing or imitation of visual styles, but also in the passive reorganization of social concepts, ethical structures and even belief systems.

### *2.2 Image Hegemony and Cultural Construction in the Context of Globalization*

With the establishment of the “visual turn” in the humanities and social sciences, visual culture is regarded as one of the most critical symbol construction mechanisms in modern society. French scholar Régis Debray (1993) pointed out in his “media studies” research that from stone carvings, oil paintings, photography to digital images, images, as the “history of viewing”, their transmission methods and communication structures constitute an important driving force for cultural evolution. In the context of globalization, this evolution is dominated by the West, forming a structural asymmetry between image production and meaning distribution.

Specifically, the Western visual system represented by Hollywood films, European and American fashion advertisements, Instagram aesthetics, and luxury brand visual strategies has built a global definition of visual categories such as “beauty”, “modernity”, and “high-end” through its advantages in technology, capital, and platform control. This visual hegemony is particularly evident in cultural consumption. Images are no longer simple information carriers, but have become a stratification tool for social aesthetic standards, lifestyles, and even identity levels.

Since the reform and opening up in the 1980s, China has gradually integrated into the global market economy system. Under the intertwined effects of urbanization, consumerism and media digitization, images have gradually become the main medium for people to build “ideal life”, “happy wedding” and “modern identity”. As a complex cultural event that integrates consumption, emotion, social evaluation and family rituals, the visual expression of wedding has become one of the important fields for the infiltration of Western image hegemony.

When designers, photographers and wedding planners choose visual languages such as composition, color, props and venues, they often introduce aesthetic logic and cultural connotations in the Western context invisibly. This is not only reflected in the style transformation of the surface of the image, but also in its deep redefinition and cultural translation of core concepts such as “love”, “freedom” and “modernity”. In this process, visual communication is no longer a technical intermediary, but a key channel and practice field for cultural penetration.

## **3. Analysis of the Motivations of Western Culture Infiltrating Chinese Weddings**

Driven by the process of globalization, Western culture has penetrated into all levels of Chinese society through various media channels, especially in the highly symbolic ritual field of weddings. This cultural penetration is not an accidental phenomenon, but the result of the interweaving of multiple motivations. From economic interests to media hegemony, and then to ideological output, the influence of Western culture on the visual form and value concepts of Chinese weddings is systematic and structural.

### *3.1 Driven by Market Logic: The Global Expansion Strategy of Cultural Products*

First, the important basis for the penetration of Western culture is the logic of “cultural commodification” in the

global capital market. Cultural products (including wedding photography, wedding dresses, film and television narratives, etiquette processes, etc.) are no longer just carriers of value expression, but have become economic commodities that can be mass-produced, disseminated and consumed. As Horkheimer and Adorno said in “Dialectics of Enlightenment”, the essence of cultural industry is to incorporate individual aesthetic and emotional experience into capital logic and realize industrialized control of mass cultural life.

Wedding, as a cultural node integrating emotion, ritual and consumption, has gradually become an important growth point for visual consumption and service economy. The Western cultural industry has long regarded the global South as a potential market and has transplanted culture through standardized image output and service templates. For example, after entering the Chinese market, high-end American wedding photography brands, French custom wedding dress brands, and European wedding planning agencies not only exported products and service models, but also constructed a visual imagination of “romance”, “elegance” and “high-end” through images and stories. In their imitation of the “dream wedding”, young consumers often unconsciously accept the cultural values and class concepts behind it. This kind of cultural output with “beauty” as its guise has constructed a new visual norm and aesthetic order at the design and communication level, and has subtly replaced and reconstructed the local wedding culture system.

### *3.2 Media Discourse Hegemony: The Globalization of Western Weddings as an “Ideal Template”*

Secondly, another key mechanism for the penetration of Western culture is its monopoly on the global mainstream visual communication platform and cultural discourse. In today’s image-dominated communication system, visual language has become the core tool for the construction of social values and cultural significance. The United States, Britain, France and other countries not only dominate the film and television industry, social media platforms and fashion publications, but also establish a “Western wedding paradigm” marked by elements such as white weddings, lawn ceremonies, and church blessings by controlling communication algorithms and visual production methods.

This visual discourse power has made Western weddings not only a sample of cultural practice in Western society, but also widely constructed as a global standard of “modern”, “romantic” and “ideal”. On Chinese social platforms (such as Xiaohongshu, Weibo, and Douyin), “high-end weddings” and “ins-style weddings” have become high-frequency search terms. Visual templates based on European and American wedding images have penetrated into various links such as wedding photography, invitation design, and on-site layout, prompting graphic designers and newlyweds to use “Western weddings” as a reference for self-aesthetic positioning.

From the perspective of communication structure, media is no longer a neutral technical means, but a “visual power network” that contains ideological and cultural guidance. The global definition of the visual form of weddings in the West is not only a manifestation of aesthetic hegemony, but also an effective extension of cultural soft power. This discourse hegemony has profoundly influenced the imagination of the new generation of urban middle class in China about marriage, identity, family and happiness, and further compressed the public space and communication effectiveness of the traditional wedding visual system.

### *3.3 Ideological Penetration: Value Reshaping Mechanism in Visual Symbols*

Finally, the fundamental goal of cultural penetration is to influence and reconstruct ideology. Weddings are not only the beginning of family life, but also a stage for the concentrated expression of social and cultural values. Through the visual symbol system (such as wedding dress color, space layout, process design, etc.), weddings convey not only personal aesthetics, but also responses to a series of cultural propositions such as marriage views, gender roles, and social order.

W.J.T. Mitchell (1986) pointed out that images are not passive presentations of reality, but an ideological mechanism that actively constructs the world. In the image discourse of Western culture, weddings not only symbolize “freedom of love”, “individual sovereignty” and “sincerity of emotion”, but also convey a marriage concept that runs counter to the traditional Chinese concept of “parents’ orders and matchmaker’s words”. This concept was quickly accepted by young Chinese people through the emotional appeal of images and became a “soft identity rewrite”.

Furthermore, in many wedding photography and wedding design cases, Western culture often appears in the form of “modern”, “advanced” and “international” visual symbols, while local elements are marginalized as “folk customs”, “backward” and “rustic”, and even become a “visual burden” that needs to be modified, transformed or even erased. This cultural hierarchy is reproduced through graphic design and visual communication, so that the Western visual paradigm not only shapes aesthetic choices, but also reconstructs social identity, cultural identity and value judgments.

## **4. The Impact of Cultural Penetration**

As a typical global cultural mechanism, cultural penetration reflects profound asymmetry. Its impact is not only

reflected in the transfer of visual styles and aesthetic tastes, but also has a deeper impact on value recognition, identity construction and the reorganization of social norms. In the highly culturalized ritual scene of Chinese weddings, the penetration of Western culture has a dual effect: on the one hand, it promotes the diversification of cultural expression and the renewal of modernity, and on the other hand, it also triggers the marginalization and identity crisis of local culture.

#### *4.1 Impact on Western Countries: Extension of Soft Power and Expansion of Consumption System*

For Western countries, cultural penetration is first of all an effective way to enhance global cultural influence. Through the widespread dissemination of cultural products, Western countries have constructed cultural standards with their own value system as the core in the world. This “soft power” acts on the cultural system of other countries in a non-violent and non-compulsory way, making them accept, imitate and even internalize Western lifestyles and social concepts in a subtle way (Nye, 2004).

Wedding culture is an important part of it. With the expansion of the global wedding consumption industry chain, Western countries have transformed their visual paradigms (such as white wedding dresses, priests witnessing marriages, wedding rings, lawn ceremonies, etc.) into a global aesthetic consensus. This visual output not only forms an imaginary control of “romance”, “purity” and “ideal marriage”, but also drives the international expansion of related industries. For example, the American wedding photography industry exports standardized shooting styles, French high-end custom clothing brands extend to the high-end wedding market in China through luxury wedding dresses, and Italian church-style weddings are replicated at weddings in luxury hotels in Asia.

More importantly, this cultural penetration is not limited to the output of products and styles, but through visual consumption activities, it has completed the redefinition of core social values such as “love”, “freedom” and “happiness”, making Western culture a benchmark for judging the quality of modern life and strengthening its cultural dominance in the minds of global consumers.

#### *4.2 Impact on China: The Tension of Cultural Modernization and the Renegotiation of Local Identity*

The penetration of Western culture in Chinese society is particularly sensitive and complex in the context of weddings. On the one hand, this infiltration has brought about the renewal of concepts and the diversification of expression methods. On the other hand, it has also aggravated the risk of marginalization and rupture of traditional culture, presenting a structural tension of “cultural modernization” and “cultural rootlessness”.

First, the introduction of Western wedding visual culture has indeed broken the closed nature of Chinese wedding customs, transforming weddings from traditional family order rituals to a space for personal emotional expression and lifestyle display. The younger generation is more inclined to express personality, aesthetics and emotional identity through weddings. Western wedding elements (such as vow exchange, live kissing, wedding parties) meet this modernization demand to a certain extent, and also reflect the overall shift in the social and cultural atmosphere.

However, this change is not entirely positive. Behind it lies the weakening or even disintegration of the traditional wedding structure. Chinese traditional weddings carry rich social symbolic meanings. For example, the use of red symbolizes joy and family reproduction, stepping on the fire basin means exorcising evil spirits and praying for blessings, and the wedding ceremony emphasizes the unity of husband and wife and family identity. These cultural symbols are gradually replaced by Western models such as “white wedding”, “exchanging rings” and “father giving away the bride” in visual replacement, resulting in the decoupling and hollowing out of the local wedding symbol system.

In addition, in wedding graphic design and visual communication, Western elements are often given positive evaluations such as “modern”, “high-end” and “elegant”, while traditional images are labeled as “old”, “rustic” and “outdated”. The repeated reproduction of this value shift in visual language has exacerbated the alienation and even misunderstanding of traditional wedding customs among young Chinese people. For example, many design works use red elements only as decorative embellishments, rather than inheriting deep cultural significance. This superficial treatment of the traditional visual system turns the image into a “shell of symbols” rather than a medium that truly carries cultural memory. Therefore, the impact of cultural penetration on Chinese wedding culture is both structural and emotional. It is not just a formal replacement, but also a process in which cultural identity, social values and historical continuity are challenged.

### **5. Wedding: A Typical Place for Cultural Penetration**

Among all social rituals, weddings have become a concentrated place for cultural dissemination and value construction due to their high symbolism, emotionality and publicity. As a cross-temporal and cross-cultural social system, weddings are not only an opportunity for personal emotional union, but also a visual manifestation of family ethical structure, gender role order and social identity norms. Therefore, the visual

expression of wedding scenes often becomes a “sensor” of cultural change. Especially in the social context of fierce collision between globalization and localization, weddings have become the most direct and symbolic space for cultural penetration.

### *5.1 The Social Symbolic Meaning of Weddings: From Family Rituals to Individual Performances*

Chinese traditional weddings have always carried strong social functional attributes. Their essence is not limited to the conclusion of a contract between the newlyweds, but a ceremony for the reorganization of social relations between two families. A series of visual elements in the wedding — such as the scene layout with red as the main color, the dragon and phoenix patterns symbolizing fertility and prosperity, the setting off of firecrackers to drive away evil and bring good luck, and the drinking of wedding wine symbolizing the unity of husband and wife — together constitute a symbolic system centered on “family continuation”. These visual symbols not only convey blessings, but also solidify the social structure and cultural order.

In contrast, Western weddings reflect a high degree of individualism and emotional expression in terms of visual language and cultural orientation. Western weddings, with white wedding dresses, ring exchange, floral decorations, and kissing ceremonies as the core, emphasize the “sacredness of love” and “freedom of individual choice”, and build wedding scenes into a performance space for individual lifestyles and aesthetic preferences. The bride is no longer the “medium” of family continuation, but the “protagonist” of romantic narratives; weddings are no longer a re-enactment of public ethics, but a stage for individual tastes.

In contemporary Chinese society, especially against the backdrop of the rise of the urban middle class, this modern concept of “wedding as self-expression” has gradually gained recognition, prompting the cultural function of weddings to shift from “social integration” to “self-narrative”. Professional intervention methods such as graphic design, wedding planning, and photography have strengthened the characteristics of weddings as “visual consumer goods”, transforming them into cultural events that can be viewed, spread, and imitated.

### *5.2 Visual Confrontation and Integration of Weddings: The Blending and Reconciliation of Chinese and Western Elements*

With the continuous collision and integration of Chinese and Western cultures in the wedding field, contemporary Chinese weddings show a state of high “visual mixing”. For example, in a typical urban wedding, the bride walks on the red carpet in a white veil, and the groom holds flowers but still wears a traditional hydrangea when toasting; the church-style background is decorated with the word “囍”, and the MC plays the “Wedding March” while setting off firecrackers; after the Chinese tea ceremony, the couple continues with the Western oath. The juxtaposition of these visual symbols is not a simple collage, but constitutes an intertwined network of cultural meanings and visual languages.

This visual scene of juxtaposition of Chinese and Western cultures not only reflects the openness and inclusiveness of culture in the context of globalization, but also reveals deep cultural tensions and structural tensions. On the one hand, it responds to the needs of the new generation of individuals to seek identity and multiple self-expression in globalization; on the other hand, it also exposes the imbalance in cultural mixing, that is, the hollowing out of visual symbols and the absence of local cultural context.

For graphic designers, this visual confrontation and integration poses a higher challenge and responsibility. In the design of wedding scenes, designers need to deal with the visual bearing of traditional culture and the reconstruction of modern semantics. They should neither apply Western image forms “as is” to the Chinese context, nor just integrate traditional elements as decorative embellishments. For example, how to integrate the rhythm of traditional calligraphy with modern typography when designing wedding invitations? How to make red not just a color symbol in scene layout, but regain its cultural roots of blessing and order? These issues are not only technical aspects of design practice, but also involve the ethics of visual culture and the strategy of identity construction. Weddings have become a typical field for the mixing of contemporary Chinese visual culture, negotiation of cultural identity and design ethics practice. It is not only a mirror of cultural change, but also an important platform for graphic designers to participate in the construction of social significance.

## **6. The Role of Graphic Design and Visual Media**

Under the dual effects of the global context and media transformation, graphic design, as a coding and translation system of visual culture, has a social function that goes far beyond the scope of visual beautification and decorative expression. Especially in the highly symbolic field of weddings, which integrates emotions, rituals and cultural significance, graphic design not only shapes the visual language system of weddings, but also participates in the construction of cultural identity, the continuation of historical memory and the cross-negotiation of values.

In modern wedding visual practice, the role of graphic design is undergoing a structural transformation. It is no longer just a maker of surface forms, but a mediator of cultural significance and organizer of visual narratives,

becoming an important bridge between individual emotions, cultural traditions and social contexts.

### *6.1 The Multiple Identities of Graphic Designers: From Executors to Cultural Narrative Constructors*

Traditionally, graphic designers are mostly positioned as technical executors, and their work mainly revolves around the unification of visual style, the realization of aesthetics and the realization of customer needs. However, in the current social environment where culture is highly mobile and diverse, the identity of graphic designers has changed, and they are increasingly tending to be “context constructors”, “cultural translators” and “visual narrators”.

First, at the level of context construction, a wedding is not only a visual project, but also a stage for social context. Designers need to understand the dynamic relationship between venues, ethnic groups, wedding roles and cultural backgrounds, and make the visual environment and the emotional logic of the wedding work together through space planning, color management and symbol design.

Second, as cultural translators, designers bear the responsibility of visual mediation in weddings where Chinese and Western cultures are intertwined. They should not only understand Western aesthetic grammar, such as minimalism, American romance, French high-end, etc., but also master the symbolic language implied in traditional Chinese wedding customs, such as “red” for prosperity, “囍” for reunion, and “dragon and phoenix totem” for power and blessing. This “cross-context encoding” ability is an indispensable cultural quality for contemporary wedding designers.

Thirdly, at the level of visual narrative, designers use images as narrative media to tell a visual story about individual identity, emotional relationship and cultural choice through graphic language, layout structure, material selection and detail symbols. Weddings are no longer just “happening” in visual space, but “narrated” in vision.

### *6.2 Cultural Reconciliation Strategy of Visual Symbols: Design Judgment in the Integration of Chinese and Western Cultures*

The key task of graphic design in the penetration of wedding culture is to find visual coordination and accurate expression between differences in symbol systems and conflicts in cultural semantics. This cultural reconciliation is not only a formal integration, but also a semantic integration. The core lies in how to make visual elements maintain the integrity and recognition of meaning in different cultural contexts.

On the one hand, designers need to deal with the coding conflicts between Chinese and Western visual symbols. For example, how can the white wedding dress, which represents purity and individualism, and the red envelope, which symbolizes reunion, prosperity and family ethics, achieve a visual symbiosis with semantic non-conflict and functional complementarity in the same wedding visual system? How to cleverly embed culturally rich calligraphy fonts or traditional patterns in the modern minimalist style invitation layout, rather than reducing them to formal decoration?

On the other hand, the challenges often faced in design are “dislocation of aesthetic levels” and “barriers in cultural perception”. Western visual language often carries implicit symbols of “modernity” and “high-end feeling”, while traditional visual elements are easily labeled as “outdated” or “rustic”. In this regard, designers should have a keen understanding of the symbolic hierarchy and adopt multi-dimensional visual strategies for reconstruction, such as material selection (silk, rice paper), font experiments (translation of official script, reorganization of seal carving), spatial rhythm (ritual sequence arrangement) and other methods to make traditional elements glow with new meaning in the modern context.

### *6.3 The Social Fate of Images and the Risk of Misinterpretation: From Communication Logic to Cultural Responsibility*

As image communication enters the era of “high speed, high density, and high exposure” dominated by social media, the visual products generated by graphic design face unprecedented communication complexity and interpretation risks. Images are not only viewed, liked, forwarded, and imitated within seconds, but are also easily cut off from context, misinterpreted, and even tampered with.

When creating wedding images, designers often focus on their visual impact and communication efficiency, but may ignore whether the cultural meaning behind the images can be properly understood and accepted. If this “form first” creative logic lacks cultural judgment, it is very easy to cause “cultural misplacement” and “visual appropriation”. For example, using religious symbols for commercial settings and using symbolic totems of specific ethnic groups in entertainment contexts will cause misunderstandings and even disputes in communication.

Therefore, graphic designers should have a sense of “image ethics” and think about the “social fate” of images while pursuing communication power — that is, how it will be viewed, how it will be quoted, and how it will be understood and reproduced in a specific culture. This ethical awareness will make design not only an aesthetic

act but also a cultural action.

## 7. Evolution of Wedding Customs After Reform and Opening Up

Reform and opening up is not only a transformation of economic policies, but also a deep reconstruction of China's social structure and cultural mechanism. From family organization to consumption mode, from values to visual expression, individual daily life has undergone systematic changes in this process. Weddings, as an important ritual field that connects individuals and collectives, traditions and modernity, private emotions and social expectations, have also undergone profound and complex evolution in the more than 40 years since reform and opening up. This change is not only reflected in the changes in wedding processes and styles, but also deeply reflected in the reorganization of its visual expression system and the reconstruction of the role of graphic design.

### 7.1 From Political Rituals to Consumer Landscapes: The Functional Shift of Wedding Customs

In the 1980s, at the beginning of reform and opening up, Chinese weddings generally continued the collectivist color of the planned economy era. Weddings are often held in the canteen of the unit. The newlyweds wear Zhongshan suits and hold marriage certificates. A red banner with the words "Warm congratulations to Comrade So-and-so on his happy marriage" is hung on the scene. This form of wedding customs essentially continues the social norms under the national discourse system. Marriage is regarded as part of "organizational behavior" rather than a self-performance of individual emotions.

Entering the 1990s, with the deepening of the market economy mechanism and the rapid expansion of urban consumption space, weddings gradually separated from the scope of political rituals and turned to commercial and personalized consumption landscapes. The traditional "unit collective wedding" withdrew, replaced by a full set of customized services provided by wedding companies. From planning process to venue layout, from wedding photography to on-site audio-visual design, the wedding visual system gradually evolved in the direction of specialization and media, marking that the private life field has officially become an important position for capital operation.

This change also profoundly affected the visual language of weddings. The red cloth banners and hand-painted slogans of early weddings were gradually replaced by lighting scenery, electronic projection, and theme stage design. The design language transitioned from extensive political expression to exquisite aesthetic consumption, and the color system changed from high-saturation red and yellow to Western color matching systems such as pink, white, gold and silver, showing visual "de-collectivization" and "re-individualization" characteristics.

This visual transformation is essentially a process of "aestheticization of life" (Featherstone, 1991), which means that weddings are no longer the end of ritual completion, but the starting point of self-expression, social display and cultural reconstruction. The wedding space has become a symbolic landscape where consumer culture and media culture interweave, rather than a place of clan ethics in the traditional sense.

### 7.2 Social Media and Wedding Image Communication: Reproduction Mechanism of Visual Individuals

In the second decade of the 21st century, with the rapid popularization of digital media, the visual attributes of weddings have been greatly magnified. Social platforms represented by WeChat, Weibo, Douyin, Xiaohongshu, etc. have become the main channels for the dissemination of wedding images, and "showing weddings", "sending wedding invitations", and "recording Vlogs" have become a new social ritual. Weddings are no longer only seen by relatives and friends, but have become "public events" — a "visual product" that can be viewed, shared, imitated, and even evaluated.

In this process, wedding images have become a tool for the emerging middle class to accumulate aesthetic capital and socially differentiate. The degree of planning sophistication of a wedding, the style of the venue, the texture of clothing, and even whether the wedding photographer "produces" are all transformed into a public presentation of personal taste, consumption ability, and cultural literacy at the image level. This "class reproduction mechanism with vision as the medium" has also changed the identity of graphic designers — they are no longer just the executors of the wedding scene behind the scenes, but are placed at the front end of the "visual communication chain" and become "content makers" and "visual nodes in social algorithms."

This mechanism also forces graphic design to enter a "social media adaptation" logic: images must be "photogenic", "eye-catching" and "repostable" enough; the composition must cater to the vertical screen browsing experience, the color must adapt to the filter style, and the layout must conform to the platform's aesthetic trend. In this process, graphic design no longer focuses only on the ceremony itself, but serves the communication efficiency and social feedback, becoming part of "design for algorithms" (Bucher, 2018).

Although this change has expanded the accessibility and discourse space of wedding images, it has also brought some cultural concerns. On the one hand, the "spreadability" of images has replaced "memorability", and wedding vision has shifted from "design for memory" to "design for sharing"; on the other hand, the

standardization of content logic has made wedding design tend to be templated and homogenized, resulting in the “delocalization” and “de-culturalization” of visual culture.

Therefore, in the face of the new wedding ecology dominated by social media, graphic designers should maintain cultural judgment and visual creativity while catering to the logic of the media, so as to avoid falling into the monotony of algorithmic aesthetics and explore wedding image narrative paths with more cultural depth and visual diversity.

## 8. Case Analysis: Cultural Penetration in Film and Television and Design Practice

In visual culture research, case analysis is an important practical test method. Through specific film and television works and graphic design practices, we can more intuitively reveal how cultural penetration occurs, evolves and intervenes in individual experience at the image level. In the specific context of weddings, images are not only containers for emotional narratives, but also battlefields for cultural confrontation and integration. The following selects three representative practical cases — classic film and television works, contemporary wedding images, and commercial design operations, to present the manifestations and cultural implications of cultural penetration in different media systems.

### 8.1 *The Last Emperor: Visual Transition in Historical Rupture*

*The Last Emperor* (1987), directed by Bernardo Bertolucci, is set in the late Qing Dynasty and the early Republic of China. It tells the story of Puyi's transformation from emperor to citizen. The two wedding scenes shown in the film are very symbolic. One is Puyi's court wedding, which is extremely traditional; the other is a civilian wedding in the Republic of China, full of modern elements. The former shows a Chinese visual system dominated by red, dragon and phoenix, and royal ceremonial guards, emphasizing hierarchy, ancestral system, and family authority; the latter shows new customs such as Western-style clothing, photography, and guests and hosts sitting together, reflecting the rapid replacement of social structure and cultural identity.

This contrast is not only a symbolic arrangement in narrative, but also presents the transition of wedding visual language from ritual community to modern individual narrative. The court wedding symbolizes the imperial order and traditional power, while the new wedding opens up the modern image paradigm of “free marriage” and “personal happiness”. In terms of design, traditional weddings emphasize symmetry, central axis, and order logic; while Western weddings emphasize light and shadow romance, spatial openness, and individual focus. This case shows that cultural penetration is not completed overnight, but is gradually realized in the image structure, visual logic, and spatial layout.

### 8.2 *The Movie the Wedding Banquet: Identity Negotiation in Cross-Cultural Weddings*

*The Wedding Banquet* (1993) directed by Ang Lee takes a “fake marriage” as the main line, showing the cultural gap between Chinese homosexuals in American families and traditional parents. The climax of the film is a wedding held in New York by the protagonist that combines Chinese and Western elements: the venue uses Western-style scenery, the process includes Chinese toasts and Western-style vows, and the guests include parents in cheongsam and American friends in suits.

This wedding is not only a turning point in the story, but also a visual hybrid space between Chinese and Western cultures, same-sex and heterosexual marriage views, traditional ethics and contemporary expressions. The film presents the complexity of cultural negotiation through the design of lighting, costumes, and camera angles. As researchers point out, *The Wedding Banquet* is not a complete rejection of tradition, but a narrative practice of “strategic hybridization”.

From a design perspective, this cultural hybrid requires extremely high visual judgment: How to make red and white not conflict? How to make Chinese etiquette and Western rhythms not cover each other in the field? The film provides cultural strategic inspiration for wedding graphic designers, that is, to maintain sensitivity at the symbolic level and achieve cross-context integration in formal language.

### 8.3 *Contemporary Wedding Photography and Graphic Design: Cultural Shell in the Context of Consumerism*

In recent years, Chinese wedding photography and graphic design have gradually been integrated with the international wedding industry, and the style has become closer to the “Western ideal template”. Many wedding images directly borrow from the advertising language of European and American fashion magazines or luxury brands, using visual techniques such as cold colors, retro filters, symmetrical composition, and shallow depth of field to create a “high-end” scene. The newlyweds are photographed as characters in a movie, and the background is often European palace buildings, marble spiral staircases or English gardens, forming a picture of “othered ideal life”.

At the graphic design level, wedding invitations, guide systems, seat cards and other visual materials have introduced a large number of Latin letters, British calligraphy, minimalist typography, ivory white and metallic gray color systems, and traditional elements appear only as embellishments, such as converting the word “囍”



into geometric shapes, or simplifying the auspicious cloud pattern into a single line graphic. While serving the “international taste” of their clients, designers also decouple visual language from cultural significance, making Western forms “shelled” in the Chinese context, but it is difficult to build a local emotional connection.

This phenomenon reveals an important issue: the penetration of images is not just a style imitation, but also a redistribution of cultural discourse power. Behind the aesthetic trend of “looking like the West” is the social expectation of “making oneself Western”. Therefore, when designers accept visual trends, they should reflect on the cultural logic behind them, avoid becoming a tool of “image colonization”, and use images as a medium to create visual narratives with cultural depth and local subjectivity.

## 9. Strategic Reflection in Graphic Design

The previous article has demonstrated that graphic design plays multiple roles in the production of wedding images. It is not only an organizer of visual styles, but also deeply involved in the expression of cultural values and the construction of identity. In the context of the intersection of Chinese and Western cultures, the challenge faced by graphic designers is not only how to be “beautiful”, but also how to convey cultural semantics “truly” and “accurately” to avoid shallow imitation and meaning drift. Therefore, it is necessary to reflect on the possible misunderstandings in current design practice and put forward strategic suggestions to promote the formation of a design language with cultural sensitivity and innovation.

### 9.1 Risk of “Cultural Castration”: Semantic Loss under Form Migration

Driven by the trend of visual globalization, many designers choose to directly adopt Western visual languages in the construction of wedding images — such as ivory wedding dresses, English handwriting, church vault patterns, etc. — to quickly establish the so-called “high-end” and “modern” sense. However, if there is a lack of understanding and transformation of cultural context, this superficial form “migration” can easily lead to cultural “emasculatation”, that is, the foreignness of the image form obscures the generation space of local cultural semantics, and even forms a visual tendency of “cultural self-denial”.

For example, some wedding invitation designs greatly simplify the “Fu” or “Xi” characters into geometric patterns, which exist only as decorations and lose their original folk blessing and symbolic functions; another example is that a large number of European court styles are used as wedding backgrounds, but the hierarchical aesthetics and religious culture behind them are not recontextualized. Although these images seem gorgeous, they are often not truly “understood” or “empathized” by the audience, but instead create a sense of cultural dislocation and identity alienation.

Therefore, if designers only rely on Western visual templates and ignore the symbolic structure and social semantics of local culture, they may make wedding images “out-of-context art samples” and lose their narrative power and emotional foundation in a specific cultural system.

### 9.2 Contemporary Expression of Regional Elements: Re-Semanticization Strategy of Cultural Symbols

Compared with replicative application, the fundamental task of design should be translation and reconstruction. In a visual environment with multiple cultures, how to present the symbolic language in traditional Chinese culture in a contemporary expression form is an important proposition that graphic design should consider. This not only involves the renewal of aesthetic language, but also concerns the embodiment of cultural continuity and innovation ability.

For example, traditional Chinese window lattice patterns can be transformed into modern background graphic systems, retaining cultural texture without destroying the overall visual simplicity; characters such as “Fu”, “Shou”, and “Xi” can be used as the basis for font design experiments. Through structural reconstruction, material superposition, layer gradient and other design techniques, it not only presents the unique modeling tension of Chinese characters, but also expands its application dimension in the modern visual context. For example, auspicious images in traditional Chinese weddings such as peony, pomegranate, and persimmon can be embedded in the design through flat patterns, totem elements or abstract composition. It is no longer just a picture book-style reproduction, but a communication of “meaning”.

The key to this type of design strategy lies in “semantic renewal”: it is not to conservatively reproduce tradition, but to deconstruct and recreate contemporary language based on the understanding of its cultural etymology, so as to achieve visual cultural continuity and identity resonance.

### 9.3 Visual Strategy of Multicultural Integration: “Soft Hybridization” and Visual Transition Mechanism

Facing the coexistence of Chinese and Western cultural image resources, the goal of graphic design is not to create a “collage sense”, but to find a more flexible fusion path. Different from the rigid juxtaposition of “hard juxtaposition”, “soft hybridization” emphasizes the logical transition and perceptual continuity between visual elements, and through the regulation of multi-dimensional factors such as proportional relationship, spatial rhythm, material texture and light and shadow contrast, the organic coexistence of different cultural visual

symbols in the design system is achieved.

For example, in wedding visuals, Chinese vermilion and Western ivory can be combined in a 5:2 ratio to retain the main color structure of Chinese culture while introducing Western romantic temperament; or warm light layers can be used in lighting design to blur the cultural dividing line and create a soft transition between Western dresses and Chinese backgrounds; or the delicate distinction of cultural levels can be achieved through material contrast (silk and silk paper, woodcut and gold stamping).

The core concept of this strategy is that cultural integration should not be a “compressed” replacement or overlap, but a “rhythmic” coexistence and translation. When integrating cultural vision, designers should pay more attention to the semantic logic of symbols and the cognitive rhythm of the audience, so that images become a “channel” connecting different cultural experiences, rather than the combination of visual puzzles.

## 10. Conclusion

As the “emotional theater” and “visual map” of culture, wedding images not only condense individual emotional memories and ritual experiences, but also carry complex social symbols and cultural significance. In the context of long-term interaction between Chinese and Western cultures, wedding vision has become a cross-cultural coding practice, and the production, dissemination and acceptance of images have gradually evolved into a key mechanism of cultural penetration. As the core force involved in this visual ecosystem, graphic designers are not only image makers, but also organizers and translators of cultural significance.

Starting from the theory of “cultural penetration”, combined with the analysis of image hegemony in the context of global communication, this paper systematically explores how Western culture influences the image system of contemporary Chinese weddings through visual elements, media mechanisms and consumption logic. In the multi-dimensional investigation of the social symbolic significance of weddings, visual confrontation structures, graphic design practices, and film and television and photography cases, it can be clearly seen that wedding images have become a complex visual text of cultural negotiation, value choice and identity expression.

The role of design in this process has long exceeded the scope of “formal aesthetics”, but has deeply intervened in the construction practice of cultural expression and social structure. The role of graphic designers has shifted from executors to situation builders and cultural mediators. When dealing with visual language, they must not only respond to individual aesthetic and commercial needs, but also have cultural judgment and historical awareness to avoid visual expression from slipping into the trap of “hollowing out”, “template” or “cultural appropriation”.

Today, as global cultures continue to converge and visual communication accelerates, the Chinese design context is facing dual challenges: on the one hand, it needs to respond to the technical standards and communication logic of international design discourse, and on the other hand, it must respond to the position and fate of local cultural traditions in modern society. Therefore, the future development of graphic design should not only achieve strategic innovation of “integration of Chinese and Western” at the level of visual language, but also pursue the reconstruction of “locality” and “subjectivity” at the level of cultural semantics.

In short, images are not only objects for viewing, but also ways to think, express and negotiate cultural meanings. As an important carrier of this expression mechanism, graphic design should assume more cultural responsibilities and social missions. Future design education, practice and theoretical research should further expand the understanding of cultural visual expression, so that design work not only serves the form, but also speaks for culture, asks questions for society, and guides the future.

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