

Research on the Handicraft Healing Function of Kintsugi Restoration and Mental Health Intervention

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Abstract: As a traditional handicraft technique, Kintsugi restoration not only possesses the practical function of repairing damaged objects but also embodies profound healing philosophy. When we start from the healing philosophy of Kintsugi restoration, we can truly feel that this technique is not only a means of repair but also a source of spiritual comfort. Its unique charm lies in transforming imperfection into beauty, endowing objects with new life, and providing a multi-dimensional healing approach for mental health intervention. In addition, Kintsugi restoration also holds significant value in the fields of cultural heritage conservation and education, contributing to the inheritance of traditional craftsmanship and the enhancement of cultural identity.

Keywords: Kintsugi restoration; Handicraft healing; Mental health; Beauty of imperfection; Cultural identity

1. Introduction

Against the background of rising life pressure and mental health problems in modern society, manual healing has become a psychological intervention method that has attracted much attention. As a traditional handicraft, gold repair has emerged in the field of manual healing in recent years, but existing studies have mostly focused on its artistic and cultural dimensions, and the role of mental health intervention has been relatively underexplored. Therefore, this study comprehensively utilizes literature research method, interdisciplinary research method, and empirical methods such as questionnaires, user interviews and experimental studies to assess the specific role of gold restoration in alleviating anxiety, promoting psychological reconstruction, and enhancing cultural identity from the physiological, psychological, and socio-cultural dimensions. The study found

that gold restoration not only repairs artifacts, but also shows significant healing effects in psychological, emotional, cultural and physiological dimensions, and its core concept of "accepting defects and turning imperfection into beauty" provides a unique perspective and practical path for mental health intervention.

2. The Function of Gold Restoration: From Artifact Restoration to Spiritual Healing

Wabi-sabi aesthetics originated in Japan and was heavily influenced by Chinese Zen thought. Its core lies in the pursuit of natural, simple and austere beauty, as well as the acceptance of imperfection, mutilation and impermanence. Wabi-sabi aesthetics emphasizes the philosophical idea of "nothingness in nothingness", i.e., in the seemingly empty state of nothingness, there are infinite possibilities and profound connotations [1].

Wabi-sabi aesthetics recognizes that defects and imperfections are part of the natural state of things, and that through restoration and decoration, defects can be given a new sense of beauty. Gold repair and restoration means accepting the broken state of an object and accepting the handicap. By applying gold decorations to the broken areas, gold repair transforms the cracks into a unique beauty, and this transformation process symbolizes the acceptance and respect for the brokenness. This is not only a restoration of the artifact, but also a rebirth of the artifact. Through restoration, the artifact gains a new life and value, and at the same time conveys a positive spirit [2]. This philosophical idea of pursuing new life echoes the "nirvana silence" of Zen Buddhism, which means that through acceptance and transformation, a new and higher state is reached.

2.1 Restoration Functions of the Golden Repair

Gold repair is a traditional handicraft, the core

of which lies in the use of natural lacquer and gold powder will be broken porcelain, pottery and other artifacts re-adhesive, so that it restores the physical integrity and extends the service life. From a practical point of view, gold repair is not only a technique, but also a process of giving objects a “second life”, from the fragments to the complete gold repair, generally through the following technological process [3]:

2.1.1 Debris removal and splicing

The first step in the restoration of a gold repair is to clean up the broken fragments of the artifact. This link not only for the subsequent restoration to lay the foundation, but also reflects the respect for the artifacts and attention to detail. Cleaning needs to be carried out in stages: the first soft brush to sweep the surface dust, stubborn stains can be gently wiped with a damp cloth, but need to avoid over-wetting; small residues with a toothpick or a fine needle to gently remove, and finally alcohol cotton balls to disinfect the surface to ensure that the restoration of hygiene.

Once cleaned, the fragments need to be accurately assembled. First, use a pencil to mark the position on the back of the fragments for easy positioning; then use natural lacquer to fix them temporarily, check the alignment with the help of a magnifying glass after putting them together, and make adjustments if necessary. After checking the alignment with the help of a magnifying glass and adjusting if necessary. After confirming that there is no mistake, the lacquer is evenly applied to bond the cracks and ensure the stability of the structure, and finally placed in a ventilated place to dry.

2.1.2 Sanding and finishing

Sanding is the core element that determines the flatness and smoothness of the restored area. The restorer uses different grits of sandpaper in sequence, from coarse to fine, in order to create a smooth texture on the surface of the object. In the initial sanding stage, the sandpaper is placed on top of the cork, and the excess filling material is quickly removed by pressing the object and making a circular motion; then, finer sandpaper is used to further refine the surface texture and ensure a natural transition between the restored part and the original object.

The finishing process further optimizes the

results. The restorers need to comprehensively review the overall effect of the restored parts, focusing on checking the surface imperfections and unevenness. For any defects found, a mixture of lacquer and gold powder is used to fill them in, and the area is polished again until it blends in perfectly with the surrounding area. In addition, the restorer will also polish the restored area to enhance the surface gloss and visual aesthetics of the object.

In the final processing, the restorer needs to carefully inspect the restored area to ensure that the surface is smooth and the gold decoration is even, and then use a soft cloth to thoroughly clean the residual dust and polish, and finally apply a thin layer of protective lacquer as needed to enhance durability and ensure that the restoration effect is long-lasting and stable.

2.1.3 Applying gold powder or gold foil

In gold restoration, applying gold powder or gold foil is the core process to determine the restoration effect, which is directly related to the beauty of the artifacts after restoration. This link needs to use high-quality materials: gold powder should be pure color, fine particles, gold foil should be light and good toughness, and prepare natural lacquer as the adhesive. Construction, first in the restoration of parts evenly coated with a layer of thin and thick lacquer. When the lacquer is semi-dry and slightly sticky, the key operations can be carried out: when applying gold powder, use a soft-bristle brush lightly dipped in gold powder, evenly spread and repeatedly swept to ensure that the coverage is complete; sticking the gold foil needs to be slowly paved with the help of tweezers from one end, to avoid air bubbles or wrinkles. After completion, it should be left to dry naturally for at least 24 hours until the paint is fully cured, so that the gold powder or gold leaf can be firmly attached. After drying, gently wipe the repair with a soft cloth to remove excess material and keep the surface clean. Finally, a layer of transparent protective lacquer is applied to the restored area to prevent oxidation and to enhance the durability and gloss of the object.

2.1.4 Final polishing and conservation

Final polishing and conservation are key steps in ensuring that the restoration is long-lasting and aesthetically pleasing. This not only enhances the appearance of the object, but also

strengthens its durability, so that it will always remain in good condition in subsequent use. When polishing, you need to use fine sandpaper or polishing cloth to repair parts of the meticulous treatment. During the operation, even force should be exerted to gently polish in a circular motion, so as to make the surface of the gold powder or gold foil smooth and bright, and at the same time, extra care should be taken to avoid damaging the restoration layer. During this period, the surface gloss and uniformity should be checked regularly to ensure that the restored part is in harmony with the object as a whole. In this way, the gold decoration of the restored parts will be more dazzling, and the overall beauty of the artifacts will be significantly enhanced [4].

2.2 The Aesthetic Function of Gold Restoration

Gold repair repair, both a repair technique, but also a unique art form. From an aesthetic point of view, the gold repair restoration with the help of gold lines reconstructing the visual effect, giving the damaged porcelain a new aesthetic value, showing the unique charm of the “beauty of the broken” in the best possible way. It will be damaged traces into a unique artistic expression, so that the restored artifacts not only restore physical integrity, but also add a unique sense of beauty and deep cultural connotations [5].

The “beauty of the broken” promoted by gold restoration aims to find beauty in imperfection. Traditional concepts tend to regard breakage and imperfection as defects, but gold restoration does the opposite, shaping them into unique beauty [6]. With gold decoration, broken porcelain is no longer viewed as defective, but transformed into a unique work of art. This aesthetic concept stems from the respect for nature and time, upholding the concept of things imperfect and change is its natural state. Gold restoration uses artistic techniques to transform imperfections into unique aesthetics, allowing the viewer to perceive the history and story behind the artifacts as they are being appreciated. This unique aesthetic value not only enhances the ornamental properties of the artifacts, but also deepens their cultural connotations.

2.3 The Healing Function of Gold Restoration

Gold restoration is not just a technique for repairing broken objects, but also carries a profound healing meaning. From a psychological point of view, it helps restorers metaphorically repair their own traumas in the process of restoring artifacts by means of handwork and psychological projection mechanisms, thus promoting mental health.

The restorer’s attention to detail is required in all aspects of cleaning up fragments, assembling parts, filling in gaps, and decorating objects. In this state, the restorer is immersed in the restoration activity and forgets the worries and stresses of life. During the restoration process, restorers often project their own emotions onto the objects. Broken objects symbolize the traumas and imperfections of life, and the restoration process signifies the repair and acceptance of these traumas. When the restorer decorates the broken areas with gold, the act expresses the acceptance of imperfection and the pursuit of beauty on a psychological level. Through this emotional expression, the restorers are able to release their inner pressure and gain psychological comfort. This healing effect is not only reflected in the restoration process, but also in the psychological experience after the restoration is completed.

3. Methods and Tools for Manual Healing in Gold Restoration

3.1 Focused and Immersive Handwork

Gold restoration requires the operator to maintain a high level of concentration and to achieve psychological conditioning through immersive craft practices. During the restoration process, the individual needs to concentrate on every detail of the operation, thus effectively blocking out external interference. This kind of concentration can help restorers enter a state of “mind flow”, temporarily forgetting the worries and pressures of life, and obtaining inner peace [7].

Flow Theory (Flow Theory) [8] Proposed by psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi in 1975, flow is a highly focused state of mind. In this state, the individual will be completely immersed in the current activity, forgetting the passage of time and self-consciousness, and at the same time experiencing an inner sense of satisfaction and pleasure. Gold restoration,

due to the complexity of the process and the requirement for delicate operation, can effectively guide the restorer into this special psychological state, thus exerting potential psychological healing functions.

3.2 Perception and Experience of Physical Materials

The technique of gold restoration offers the practitioner a unique sensory healing through both tactile and visual stimulation. The restorer interacts directly with the materials, such as perceiving the viscous texture of lacquer, the delicate touch of gold dust, and the tactile contrast of different materials (e.g., rough sandpaper versus smooth porcelain tiles). It not only enhances the mastery of material properties, but also transfers anxiety through sensory stimulation and achieves a relaxing effect.

On the visual level, the restored golden cracks form a unique aesthetic expression. The golden pattern glistens in the light, transforming the original breakage into a decoration of great aesthetic value. This visual presentation of “turning wreckage into art” is not only a visual affirmation of the restoration results, but also a profound psychological implication - cracks can also be a bearer of beauty [9]. Repeatedly appreciating this aesthetic transformation created by themselves, restorers can not only obtain visual pleasure, but also internalize the healing concept of “accepting imperfection” and realize the enhancement of psychological state.

3.3 Accommodating the Disabled and Reconstructing Values

This technique breaks away from the traditional concept of perfectionism and advocates a dialectical view of breakage. Restorers need to carefully observe the morphological characteristics of each crack and deeply understand the nature of the damage through tactile contact, so as to truly accept the imperfect appearance of the object at the moment. Accepting the defects is only the first step, but the more subtle part of gold repair is to transform the defects into a unique beauty and realize the reconstruction of value. After completing the basic steps of cleaning, splicing, and polishing the pieces, the restorer will carefully apply gold dust or gold leaf to the broken areas. The gold lines meander

across the surface of the object, skillfully outlining the cracks and making the originally broken area an instant visual focal point. This process of reconstructing value on the artifacts profoundly affects the restorer’s perception of life.

3.4 Psychological Projection and Emotional Expression

In the process of gold restoration, handwork and golden cracks play an important role in helping restorers to project their inner feelings onto the objects, realizing the expression and catharsis of emotions. The splicing of the pieces symbolizes the reorganization of a chaotic life, while the drawing of the golden lines represents the expression of hope in a difficult situation. This artistic way of externalizing emotions provides the restorer with a safe channel for emotional release. In a state of focused restoration, restorers release their inner pressure without reservation. As they meticulously apply the gold paint with their brushes, their inner emotions such as anger, anxiety, and sadness are incorporated into the artifacts along with their brush strokes. The restoration of the broken artifacts brings them back to life, and the restorers’ hearts are purified in the process.

3.5 Cultural Identity and Psychological Reconstruction

Gold restoration is not just a handcraft, it has deep cultural roots, carrying hundreds or even thousands of years of historical memory and cultural connotations. The application of natural lacquer embodies the ecological view of the unity of man and nature, while the use of gold material symbolizes the cultural imagery of transformation and renewal. In the process of contacting these cultural symbols, the restorers not only obtain the satisfaction of passing on their skills, but also build up the psychological resilience to cope with the challenges of reality through the practical path of “breakage - restoration - sublimation”. This process of restoration, which combines cultural identity and self-reconstruction, ultimately realizes the dual recovery of artifact value and psychological state.

4. Evaluation of the effectiveness of manual healing for gold restoration

4.1 Evaluation of the Physiological Effects of Manual Healing in Gold Repair Restoration

The gold repair process can effectively improve neuromuscular coordination and produce significant stress reduction through delicate manual operations. In the specific restoration practice, the operator needs to complete a series of precision actions: clean-up phase requires the precision of visual and tactile coordination, splicing link relies on the motor cortex of the brain on the precise regulation of body movements, and later decorative process needs to be adjusted according to the real-time feedback of the operating strength. This continuous nerve - muscle synergistic training, can promote the functional integration of the sensorimotor system.

In addition, the repetitive and focused nature of the manual operation of gold restoration can activate the parasympathetic nervous system, helping the restorer to obtain physical and mental relaxation. For example, the repetitive operations such as polishing and applying gold powder can make the restorer concentrate on them and gradually calm the brain. The activation of the parasympathetic nervous system increases the variability of the heart rate and decreases the blood pressure and respiratory rate, thus promoting the transformation of the body from a state of stress to a state of recovery.

4.2 Evaluation of the Psychological Effects of Manual Healing in Gold Restoration

The gold restoration process has unique advantages for emotional regulation. The deeply engaged restoration state can produce an attentional narrowing effect, allowing individuals to temporarily break away from the vicious cycle of anxious thinking. This immersive experience allows them to temporarily forget about external worries and no longer be plagued by anxiety. Focusing on restorative work in the present moment restores inner peace and a sense of stress, providing the mind with a moment's breathing space [10].

Each action in the restoration process holds the emotions of the restorer. Broken objects are akin to traumas in life, and the restoration process becomes a metaphor for repairing inner wounds. The artistic treatment of the

golden cracks is not only a repair of the physical damage, but also a metaphor for the acceptance and transformation of the psychological scars. The “beauty of imperfection” embedded in the process helps the restorer to accept the imperfections of life and promotes psychological reconstruction.

4.3 Evaluation of the Socio-Cultural Effects of Manual Healing in Gold Repair Restoration

Gold restoration has deep roots in wabi-sabi aesthetics, which embodies the pursuit of naturalness, simplicity, and beauty of the broken, and can help restorers gain cultural identity and psychological comfort. When restorers come into contact with materials such as lacquer and gold dust, and restore objects according to traditional procedures, they can deeply feel the heritage of history and culture. This cultural connection makes the restorers find a sense of belonging, filling their hearts with warmth and stability, and then obtaining psychological comfort. As a means of cultural heritage and artistic healing, gold restoration can provide restorers with social support and opportunities for psychological recovery, as restorers exchange skills and share experiences with their peers, and feel the collective strength in mutual encouragement and support.

5. Summary

As a traditional technique with both artistic and healing qualities, gold repair and restoration shows remarkable effectiveness and feasibility in the field of mental health intervention: its complex craft system of cleaning, splicing, polishing, decorating, etc., can guide restorers to enter the “heart flow” state, effectively alleviating anxiety and stress; restorers project their personal emotions onto the objects to The restorers project their personal emotions onto the artifacts to realize emotional catharsis and expression, obtain psychological comfort, and under the concept of “beauty of the broken”, accept the imperfections of life, cultivate a positive and tolerant attitude, and enhance psychological resilience; from the cultural dimension, the wabi-sabi aesthetics carried by the restorer gives the restorer a sense of cultural identity and a sense of belonging, and provides spiritual support; on the physiological level,

the fine operation and repetitive movements coordinated by the hand and brain activate the parasympathetic function of the hand and brain. Physiologically, the delicate hand-cerebral coordination and repetitive movements activate the parasympathetic nervous system and promote physical relaxation; in addition, gold repair and restoration is of great significance in the protection of cultural heritage, and its extension to the field of education not only improves the public's mental health literacy, but also promotes the inheritance and innovation of traditional crafts.

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