

# Research on Stage Makeup Design in the Art Design of Drama and Film

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**Abstract:** With the continuous development of technology and social economy, stage makeup design occupies a very important position in the background of drama and film art design in China. During the Shang and Zhou dynasties in China, the rudimentary form of stage makeup had already emerged. It was not until the last century that stage makeup further developed in our country. As for the design of modern stage makeup, there is a relatively systematic creative process in the actual makeup process. Suppose there is a significant difference between the performance stage design and the performance content. In that case, different artistic modeling methods should be adopted in the actual makeup process to ensure the orderly development of stage makeup design art. Better create classic characters and shape their images.

**Keywords:** Drama; Film and television; Art design; Stage makeup; Artistic exploration

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## 1. Introduction

As early as the Spring and Autumn and Warring States Periods, music and dance performers had begun to use simple painting, with their faces painted pink and their lips painted vermilion, reflecting the pursuit of beautification in early performances. In the Han Dynasty, actors of the Hundred Operas applied white powder and rouge on their faces, which served both decorative and exorcistic functions<sup>[1]</sup>. As the long river of history surged forward, the stage makeup art of the Tang and Song dynasties witnessed a qualitative leap, reaching a brand-new height, and spread far to neighboring regions such as Japan and South Korea along with the wave of cultural exchanges. The makeup of Japanese geishas is a typical representative influenced by this and still exudes a unique charm to this day. Entering modern society, stage makeup art continues to shine in various art forms such as film and television dramas and stage plays, and has become an indispensable and important part of the art design field.

During the stage performance, the audience not only pays attention to the performers' infectious and exquisite skills, but also gives attention and evaluation to their costume styling and makeup design. Stage makeup, with its visual artistic language, helps shape characters and enhance the performance atmosphere, and it is an important component of stage art expressiveness. Therefore, an in-depth exploration of the design principles and artistic values of stage makeup in drama and film and television is of great practical significance for enhancing the artistic expressiveness and aesthetic value of the art design of drama and film and television<sup>[2]</sup>.

## **2. The concept and function of stage makeup design**

### **2.1. Concept definition**

Stage makeup design refers to the creative activity of artistic modeling on the faces and bodies of actors based on the theme, plot, character personality, and historical background of dramas and films. It uses makeup materials and professional techniques to shape the image of characters. It is different from daily makeup and fashionable makeup. It places more emphasis on the exaggerated and typical shaping of the character's image to meet the special performance requirements of the stage and the camera.

### **2.2. Core role**

Shaping the character image, by adjusting the facial contours and the proportions of the features of the actors, as well as changing their skin color, hair color and texture, the actors are transformed into specific roles in the script, helping the audience quickly understand the identity, age, personality and other characteristics of the characters. For instance, by deepening the eye contours, using dark foundation to create the image of a weathered old man, or by applying pastel colors and smooth lines to represent an innocent and carefree young girl.

To create a dramatic atmosphere, the color and style of stage makeup are closely related to the overall atmosphere of the drama. In a tragedy, cold-toned and dark makeup can create a depressing and sad atmosphere. In comedies, bright and exaggerated makeup can help create a cheerful and humorous atmosphere.

To enhance visual effects, in stage performances, due to factors such as distance and lighting, the facial features of actors are prone to being weakened. Stage makeup, by emphasizing facial features and highlighting facial expressions, ensures that actors can display the emotions and details of their characters even from a distance in the theater, enhancing the performance's appeal.

The styling and style of stage makeup should be in line with the era and regional background of the drama or performance. For instance, the buns and facial features in costume dramas, as well as the retro curly hair and red lips in dramas set in the Republic of China era, can help the audience quickly locate the time and space where the story takes place, enhancing the authenticity and sense of identification of the work.

## **3. The necessity of stage makeup in stage art design**

During the early development stage of traditional Chinese opera, various forms of performing arts emerged in our country. The makeup techniques corresponding to different performing arts vary, among which facial makeup and mask makeup are the most common. Mask makeup was already reflected in the songs and dances of the primitive society, featuring distinct religious characteristics and having a certain internal logical connection with later operas. During the performance of the dance, the performers will wear masks. The mask makeup is rather exaggerated<sup>[3]</sup>. It mainly involves a full-body transformation of the performer. The performer can change into different masks according to the relevant requirements of the role-playing. Through the analysis of mask makeup, the fixity of this stage makeup makes the performer's expression remain constant, directly affecting the presentation effect of the stage performance. Applying makeup on the face is a relatively typical styling technique, which can fully reflect the characteristics of masks and postures, highlighting the performer's styling expressiveness. In the process of the continuous acceleration of human civilization, people are increasingly pursuing beauty and have a higher taste in life at the same time. People no longer merely focus on the makeup of Peking Opera, but pay more attention to the development and changes of Peking Opera costumes as well as the reform and innovation of plays. At present, the repertoire of Peking Opera is becoming increasingly rich, and the costumes are also very magnificent<sup>[4]</sup>. The stage makeup artists need to pay attention to the improvement of their professional technical level to fully reflect the important value of stage makeup design in the art design of drama and film.

## **4. Principles of stage makeup design**

### **4.1. The principle of authenticity**

Stage makeup should be based on the script and conform to the true identity and life logic of the character. For example, when creating a farmer character, the makeup should reflect the rough skin texture and tanned complexion after long-term hard work, and avoid overly beautified or impractical designs. Even for fictional characters in fantasy themes, their makeup designs need to be created within the “real” logic that conforms to the work’s setting.

### **4.2. Typicality principle**

In order to make the character image more distinct, the stage makeup design needs to distill the typical characteristics of the character and enhance them. For instance, through the design of a pointed and slender face shape, prominent cheekbones and sharp eyebrows, a sinister and cunning villain character is created; The positive characters who are kind and gentle are depicted with smooth and soft lines and bright colors, enabling the audience to quickly perceive the characters’ personalities and positions <sup>[5]</sup>.

### **4.3. The principle of integrity**

Stage makeup should be in harmony with the design of costumes, props and scenes to jointly create a unified visual style. For example, in a musical, the elaborate and exaggerated stage makeup needs to be matched with equally splendid costumes and stage sets. In contrast, realistic-themed dramas require makeup and costumes to be close to the original appearance of life, creating a harmonious and unified overall artistic effect.

### **4.4. The principle of innovation**

On the basis of following the basic creative laws, stage makeup design should be courageous in innovation. Combining contemporary aesthetic trends with new technologies and materials, it injects new interpretations into traditional characters. For instance, using special effects makeup techniques to create surreal and fantastical characters, or endowing classic characters with a modern feel through unique color combinations and styling designs.

## **5. Analysis of stage makeup design art in drama and film art design**

### **5.1. Stage makeup design for traditional ethnic songs and dances in drama and film**

In drama, film, and television, and in traditional ethnic song and dance performances, when performers choose costumes, they usually select those with brighter colors and higher lightness and chroma. However, in the stage makeup design for performers, the eye makeup of the performers is mostly designed with a combination of red and yellow or an overall red three-dimensional halo eyeshadow. In actual makeup, the eyeshadow needs to be wide in area, and the exaggerated modification of the corners of the eyes also needs to pay attention to a certain angle <sup>[6]</sup>. To enable better coordination between language and form, some totems or concrete symbols can be depicted under the performer’s eyes. If false eyelashes are to be used during the stage makeup design process, it is advisable to choose thick ones with shorter fronts and longer backs. This can make the performer’s eyes look more charming and expressive as a whole. Additionally, the choice of blush and lipstick should mainly be red.

### **5.2. Design analysis of ethnic art in drama and film and television**

In contemporary drama and film, and television creation, the stage performance of the national art style pays particular attention to the visual tension of costumes and makeup. Clothing usually selects colors with high saturation and strong brightness to enhance the visual impact with bright tones. The makeup design focuses on the expressiveness of the eyes. By boldly using intense shades of eyeshadow such as bright yellow and vermilion, combined with exaggerated blurring techniques, it precisely captures and magnifies the performer’s eye movements. Meanwhile, the makeup design will be

flexibly adjusted according to the style of the play and the characteristics of the characters. Through the rich layering of colors and the outlining of lines, highly recognizable visual symbols will be created <sup>[7]</sup>.

To deepen the unique charm of ethnic art, makeup design often incorporates iconic elements such as totem patterns and traditional decorations, presenting ethnic cultural symbols on the face in an artistic way. For stage designs with strong regional characteristics, thick false eyelashes or special styles that are shorter in the front and longer in the back are often used, combined with costume masks, effectively enhancing the dramatic tension of the eye expressions. The lips and cheeks are painted in rich, bright red tones, echoing the vivid colors of ethnic costumes. Combined with distinctive hair accessories such as upsets, beaded ornaments, and headbands, a complete and unified visual system is formed. This makes the stage design not only highlight the ethnic customs but also meet the artistic expression needs of drama and film, fully ensuring the artistic appeal and visual presentation effect of the performance.

### **5.3. Design analysis of modern art in drama and film**

Modern dance, as a highly expressive performance form in the field of contemporary art, occupies an important position in the creation of drama and film. To enhance artistic expression, the costume design of modern dance performers particularly emphasizes the uniqueness of materials and colors. They often choose fabrics with special textures or reflective effects, and pair them with bold and bright tones to create a strong visual memory point.

In stage makeup design, to echo the overall artistic effect of the costumes and stage Settings, pearlescent or sparkling eyeshadow is often used for focused embellishment, enhancing the three-dimensional effect of the eyes through delicate light and shadow changes. Makeup techniques often combine internal and external rendering, creating a visual effect with a sense of layering and weight through the superimposition of multiple layers of colors. According to different performance themes and emotional tones, designers will flexibly use high-saturation colors to focus on depicting the eyes. Through exaggerated lines and intense color contrasts, they highlight the drama and emotional tension of the dance performance, fully exerting the unique value of makeup in artistic expression <sup>[8]</sup>.

It is worth emphasizing that professional makeup designers need to deeply interpret the connotation of the work during the performance preparation stage, accurately grasp the dance style, character traits and emotional context, and carry out personalized design based on the facial features of the performers to ensure the perfect integration of makeup and dance performance, bringing an immersive artistic experience to the audience.

### **5.4. Analysis of performance costume selection**

The performance costumes will directly affect the overall effect of the stage makeup, and at the same time, the costumes are also part of the stage makeup design. When performing some traditional plays, the influence of performance costumes is more significant. Generally speaking, the color and style of the performer's costume and makeup should be in harmony to form a unified visual logic. Form a complete visual symbol system. For instance, in traditional Chinese opera, the red color of Peking Opera facial makeup symbolizes loyalty and righteousness, while the black color represents uprightness. It needs to be combined with the dragon patterns of the python robe and the metallic texture of the armor. In stage plays, traditional costumes are often paired with bright red lip makeup and deep eye shadows, enhancing the dramatic tension through the contrast of red and green colors. This kind of coordination not only conveys the identities of the characters but also forms a coherent expression of cultural symbols, enabling the audience to quickly understand the traits of the characters and the background of the drama. In addition, pay attention to exaggerated embellishment and the selection of roles. According to the actual performance content, keep the colors of the performer's eyeshadow, blush, lipstick, accessories, etc., consistent with the costume. This can better achieve a perfect match between the costume design and makeup. Only by carefully choosing the performance costumes and striving to achieve a perfect match between the costumes and makeup can the charm of the entire performance be better presented. Performance costumes and makeup form an artistic community of "the unity of form and spirit". Costumes build the framework of characters, while makeup endows them with the soul. Through symbolic intertextuality, dynamic adaptation and cultural innovation, the two

transform the text into a perceptible stage presence, ultimately achieving the visual shock and emotional resonance of the drama.

## 6. Conclusion

Stage makeup design, as a key link in the art design of drama and film, shoulders the important mission of shaping characters, creating an atmosphere, and enhancing artistic expressiveness. It is both a technique and requires a proficient grasp of makeup materials and techniques. It is also an art that requires designers to have an acute aesthetic sense and rich creativity. With the development of technology and the renewal of artistic concepts, stage makeup design will constantly break through tradition, integrate new technologies and new thinking, bring more wonderful visual presentations to drama and film art, and continuously promote the innovation and development of the industry. In the future, stage makeup designers need to keep pace with the era, inherit the classics while actively exploring, and bring more infectious and visually appealing artistic works to the audience.

## Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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