

# Research on Innovative Design of Lacquered Sand Inkstone

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## ABSTRACT

This paper conducts an innovative design study of the Lacquered Sand Inkstone based on four aspects: shape, material, lacquer decoration, and aesthetics. It explores new design concepts and provides suggestions for the development of Lacquered Sand Inkstones in contemporary times.

## KEYWORDS

Lacquered Sand Inkstone; Lacquer Craft; Innovative Design

What is a Lacquered Sand Inkstone? As the name suggests, it is an inkstone made from lacquered sand. The base of the Lacquered Sand Inkstone is primarily made of wood, although materials such as paper or fabric may also be used for the base. The lacquer is mixed with abrasive materials like diamond sand or porcelain powder, which is then applied to the base to create the inkstone. The structure of the Lacquered Sand Inkstone is similar to that of other types of inkstones, including the ink basin, ink pool, and decorative patterns. Its main function is to serve as a writing tool for grinding ink, used in calligraphy and painting. The Lacquered Sand Inkstone is characterized by its light weight, ease of ink dispersion, durability, and portability, making it a combination of both practicality and artistry.

## 1 Lacquered Sand Inkstone Shape Design

Shape design is a core element of any product. Throughout history, shape has been the fundamental task of design, as form is the basic language of design, and shape and creation are closely connected<sup>[1]</sup>. Ancient creations were primarily based on imitating natural forms, resulting in many exquisitely shaped masterpieces that have stood the test of time. Therefore, the shape design of the Lacquered Sand Inkstone can extract elements from natural forms as design components. In terms of product classification, it should retain traditional shape styles while also incorporating contemporary elements, so as to adapt to modern aesthetic requirements and usage habits as the design premise. As an item in the scholar's study tools, the shape design of the Lacquered Sand Inkstone should be rooted in the spirit of the Chinese nation, and should innovate by combining practicality with aesthetic elements. Its shape design can also be integrated with modern desk accessories, allowing the Lacquered Sand Inkstone to blend into contemporary life. The shape design of contemporary products is derived from real life, with human needs as the starting point for design, emphasizing both practicality and artistry. Since the Lacquered Sand Inkstone, as a modern desk item, has specific practical functions, its shape design must start from human needs, extracting life elements as the basis for concept development. By observing objective objects in daily life, designers can apply techniques such as abstraction, refinement, exaggeration, and deformation, followed by summarizing and simplifying the design through methods like flattening, patterning, and decoration. This further refines the shape of the Lacquered Sand Inkstone,

developing it into a language of lines and blocks, making it both simple yet rich in symbolic meaning, offering space for greater imagination and thought.

For example, the Lacquered Sand Inkstone titled Lacquer Inkstone Studio created by Yu Jinhai (Figure 1) features a simple and elegant design, with strong and powerful lines. The body of the inkstone is rectangular, retaining its original wood color, and has minimal carving decorations. The ink basin is oval, and the ink pool is recessed downward. The design of this inkstone employs the contrast between square and circular shapes. Both the square and the circle, as pure forms, are fundamental elements of shape design. Their combination makes the design simpler and more refined. Therefore, the shape design of the Lacquer Inkstone Studio Lacquered Sand Inkstone still possesses a modern and designer-like feel today. As a result, with the changing perspectives on aesthetics, the shape design of the Lacquered Sand Inkstone should keep pace with the times, incorporating elements of new-era art, creating designs that are both artistic and diverse in form. At the same time, creators of Lacquered Sand Inkstones should improve their own artistic literacy, paying attention to the aesthetic needs of the public, and designing works that reflect the spirit of the times <sup>[2]</sup>.



Figure 1 Lacquer Inkstone Studio Lacquered Sand Inkstone made by Yu Jinhai Image source: Provided by Yu Junpeng

## 2 Lacquered Sand Inkstone Material Application

The exploration of materials is a key research direction for the innovative design of the Lacquered Sand Inkstone. With the advancement of technology and the continuous emergence of new materials, the combination of new materials with traditional craftsmanship has become increasingly common. The application of new materials has gradually become a highlight of design and a new avenue for designers. In this context, designers have a responsibility to innovate with Lacquered Sand Inkstones, seeking suitable contemporary materials to integrate into the design, thereby diversifying the appearance of the Lacquered Sand Inkstone.

For example, the base material of the Lacquered Sand Inkstones from Yangzhou is primarily made from aged Jin Si Nan wood. To make these inkstones, the lacquerware factory must first collect the aged Jin Si Nan wood. Due to the scarcity and high price of old wood, the production of Lacquered Sand Inkstones has steadily decreased, with most being made to order. Therefore, the exploration of materials for Lacquered Sand Inkstones can start with the base material and lacquer decoration materials. These are new avenues for innovative design. Different materials evoke

different tactile, visual, associative, psychological, and aesthetic responses. People experience the beauty of materials through visual, tactile, and associative perceptions.

The use of new materials is not intended to replace traditional materials but rather to combine them in a way that offers multiple choices for the development of Lacquered Sand Inkstones, breaking the limitations of materials. By maintaining traditional elements while incorporating practical features and appropriately integrating new materials, designers can create new creative spaces and lacquer expressions for the Lacquered Sand Inkstone.

For instance, the application of modern 3D printing technology has provided convenient conditions for traditional lacquer art creation. The base bodies made using 3D printing are typically crafted from materials such as plastic, resin, metal, and fiber. Using modern technology, complex shapes can be precisely manufactured, which saves time, reduces production costs, and enables mass production. The use of 3D printing technology has made it possible for traditional craft techniques to be expressed through modern technology. Therefore, the exploration of material application in Lacquered Sand Inkstones can attempt to combine with 3D printing technology to develop more diversified Lacquered Sand Inkstone products <sup>[3]</sup>.

### 3 Lacquered Sand Inkstone Lacquer Decoration Design

Lacquer art, as a unique form of artistic expression, has evolved alongside the changing history of human culture. It is a product of social, artistic, and ideological transformations. The Lacquered Sand Inkstone has a history of several thousand years, and the lacquer decoration techniques used on these inkstones throughout the dynasties have been diverse, each with its own distinctive features. However, compared to ancient lacquered Sand Inkstones, the lacquer decoration on modern Lacquered Sand Inkstones has become simpler and more uniform. Looking at the overall appearance of contemporary Lacquered Sand Inkstones, there is still a lack of research on lacquer decoration techniques. In the production of Yangzhou Lacquered Sand Inkstones, Nan wood carvings are commonly used for decoration, with themes primarily revolving around traditional subjects such as flowers, birds, landscapes, and figures. These are often paired with inkstone boxes featuring the "dot shell" (dian luo) technique, a traditional craft unique to Yangzhou. With the advancement of society, the trend toward modernization and the continuous improvement of people's aesthetic standards, the variety of designs for Yangzhou Lacquered Sand Inkstones has become quite limited. If research on lacquer decoration design can step outside the traditional framework and incorporate the artistic qualities of the new era, expanding aesthetic vision and integrating multiple design elements, it will be beneficial for the development of the Lacquered Sand Inkstone industry, helping to preserve the excellence of traditional culture for the long term.

Lacquer Decoration Craft is an art form primarily based on Chinese lacquer, serving as a bearer of Chinese culture. Lacquer decoration craft belongs to Chinese cultural heritage. It is evident that lacquer decoration carries artistic characteristics and cultural significance, witnessing the growth of traditional craftsmanship <sup>[4]</sup>. The research into lacquer decoration design for modern Lacquered Sand Inkstones will promote the continuous development of the inkstone, but some techniques still require adherence to tradition, such as the inheritance of the inkstone's lacquer and sand ratio. The materials and proportions of lacquer sand have been tested and refined by predecessors through countless experiments and explorations. This ratio is the best material for ink grinding without damaging the brush, so no changes are needed in the lacquer sand mixture for the inkstone. Therefore, the lacquer decoration of the Lacquered Sand Inkstone can be researched from the perspective of color. For example, the round Lacquered Sand Inkstone made by Yu Jinhai (Figure 2) features a red-brown lacquer sand for the ink basin, giving it an ancient and deep color tone. The

inkstone box is made using the pineapple lacquer technique, and after lacquering with yellow, black, light blue, and other colors, it forms a vibrant, multi-colored effect. Additionally, research and design can also be done on the combination of the inkstone's shape and color. For example, the Lacquered Sand Inkstone designed by Yu Junpeng (Figure 3) has a "copy hand" inkstone shape, with a simple lacquer technique used for both the body and the ink basin. The tone is a uniform black, paired with a polished black inkstone box, creating a simple and elegant overall look.



Figure 2 Pineapple Lacquer Lacquered Sand Inkstone made by Yu Junpeng Image source: Provided by Yu Junpeng



Figure 3 Plain Black Lacquered Sand Inkstone made by Yu Junpeng Image source: Provided by Yu Junpeng

The inkstone, as a traditional Chinese writing tool, significantly influences the artistic atmosphere and visual experience of human habitation. Therefore, the research into lacquer decoration design for Lacquered Sand Inkstones is highly necessary in today's context. Only by redefining the lacquer decoration design of Lacquered Sand Inkstones and emphasizing the exploration of this aspect, can the future development of the Lacquered Sand Inkstone become increasingly diverse and enriched.

#### 4 Aesthetic Expression of Lacquered Sand Inkstone

Since ancient times, lacquer art has embodied China's humanistic spirit and philosophy of creation. It is a craft that is full of warmth and artistic conception. Thus, the inclusivity of lacquer art has become the foundation for exploring the aesthetic expression of Lacquered Sand Inkstones, elevating their beauty, touching the soul, and generating unique aesthetic value. The aesthetic expression of Lacquered Sand Inkstones lies in the manifestation of the product's beauty. This beauty naturally emanates from the inkstone itself, showcasing its grace and style, creating an artistic atmosphere, and expressing humanistic spirit and cultural imagery.

Traditional Lacquered Sand Inkstones were designed based on the aesthetic standards and lifestyles of their time, reflecting the aesthetic tastes and needs of their respective eras. If the

traditional designs of Lacquered Sand Inkstones are maintained without incorporating the developments of the present time, the products will lack modern aesthetic expression. Therefore, it is necessary for designers to engage in the creation and production of Lacquered Sand Inkstones, actively searching for both the inheritance and innovation of traditional craftsmanship in terms of aesthetic expression. In this process, the deeper connotations of the craft itself should be continuously explored, and the insights gained should be applied to the product, offering a comprehensive visual and spiritual experience to modern people. For example, the plain black Lacquered Sand Inkstone designed by Yu Jinhai (Figure 4) features a simple, elegant tone and a minimalist shape with a full, rich lacquer finish<sup>[5]</sup>. Its aesthetic expresses simplicity and grandeur; though devoid of excessive decorative patterns, its artistic style emanates a humble beauty, embodying the character of a scholar. The Xuzhou Lacquered Sand Inkstone, designed with the style of the Qianlong-era antique six inkstones, is warm to the touch like jade, with an ancient and refined shape. It represents a new breakthrough for modern Lacquered Sand Inkstones. Its artistic conception is moving, the craftsmanship is exquisite, and it successfully conveys the essence of the inkstone's artistic atmosphere, providing new ideas for contemporary Lacquered Sand Inkstones.

Therefore, the aesthetic expression of Lacquered Sand Inkstones should align with current times, absorbing outstanding design concepts with an inclusive perspective. The essence of traditional Lacquered Sand Inkstones should be preserved, while also exploring modern aesthetic styles. Constantly creating Lacquered Sand Inkstones with distinctive characteristics of the era will meet the diverse cultural needs of people.



Figure 4 Lacquered Sand Inkstone made by Yu Jinhai

Image source: Baidu Images

## 5 Conclusion

Through the study of the innovative design of Lacquered Sand Inkstones, combining the aesthetic tastes of modern people, this research explores aspects such as the shape design, lacquer decoration design, and aesthetic expression of Lacquered Sand Inkstones. This leads to the development of a diverse artistic style for the inkstone, infusing it with new connotations and creating new images. At the same time, it provides fresh perspectives for the innovative development of Lacquered Sand Inkstones, catering to the diverse needs of contemporary society.

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