

On the Innovation of Spatial Composition of Contemporary Oil Painting from the Perspective of Freehand Brushwork and Blank Space

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Abstract: Freehand brushwork with blank space originates from Confucianism and Taoism. After thousands of years of painting, it has established a mature aesthetic paradigm of the coexistence of reality and falsehood, which continues to deliver high-quality traditional cultural nutrients for domestic oil painting localization and innovation. With the renewal of the local oil painting creation concept, freehand brushwork breaks through the limitation of exclusive ink painting techniques, and is deeply integrated into oil painting space planning, color spreading, and artistic conception shaping, creating a spirit full of oriental poetry. Freehand brushwork and blank space recombine the rhythm of the picture by virtue of the unique virtual and real order, so that the oil painting space has both visual beauty and spiritual connotation. Based on the aesthetic essence of freehand brushwork and the logic of space construction, this paper analyzes the reasons why it adapts to oil painting media, explores the innovative path of composition from multiple dimensions, and explains the application value with examples to provide theoretical support for the nationalization of oil painting creation.

Keywords: Freehand brushwork and blank space; Contemporary oil painting; Spatial composition; Virtual and real; Localization innovation

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1. Introduction

At present, the two-way communication and integration of Chinese and Western arts is an inevitable trend in the development of visual arts. Since oil painting was introduced to China more than a hundred years ago, it has been developing in a running-in way between foreign art paradigms and local aesthetics. For a long time, the Western focus perspective and full composition logic have been the main ways to build space for domestic oil paintings, forming a classic aesthetic model that emphasizes objective reproduction and full pictures. With the acceleration of traditional culture, the concept of space in traditional freehand brushwork

painting has re-entered the artist's field of vision. Different from the Western space concept of filling the picture, the essence of freehand brushwork in blank space is whether there is interaction or not, which makes blank space have a unique charm and ideographic function. In recent years, domestic oil painting creation has paid more attention to artistic conception. Many creators combine the characteristics of oil painting and canvas to improve the composition, and many works with both oil painting texture and oriental artistic conception are born, which promotes the diversified development of oil painting spatial expression.

2. Aesthetic core and spatial composition logic of freehand brushwork and blank space.

2.1. The philosophical foundation and aesthetic characteristics of freehand brushwork and blank space

Freehand brushwork and blank space come from the philosophical concept of “whether there is or not” in Taoism and the aesthetic orientation of Zen ethereal. After the repeated tempering of landscape painting creation in the Song and Yuan Dynasties, it formed the creative gist of shaping in reality and expressing in emptiness. In traditional freehand brushwork Chinese painting, blank space is not a meaningless blank in the picture, but an important element to promote the flow of charm and expand the artistic conception of the picture. Ma Yuan's “corner” landscape and Xia Gui's “half-edge” composition are typical examples. The painter condensed the real scene in a corner of the picture, leaving the rest of the space blank as images such as rivers and clouds, and linking the whole charm through the contrast between reality and reality, constructing the unique rules of painting in the East.

Different from the way of filling the picture with shapes and color blocks, blank space achieves the unity of objective images and spiritual artistic conception by deleting redundant images and reserving blank space. In creation, the blank space is the materialization of the painter's subjective feelings. By using the density of the blank space, the picture is condensed, the complicated details are abandoned, the aesthetic feelings are entrusted with the blank space, and the freehand brushwork concept of “nature from outside, heart from inside” is practiced. From the form of expression, traditional blank space can be divided into two types: original blank space on rice paper and blank space in light color. The former creates a pure, empty artistic conception based on the true color of paper, while the latter weakens the edges of objects and images with light ink, realizing the natural transition between real and virtual environments. After long-term precipitation, the two form a complete aesthetic system of oriental space, which lays a solid aesthetic foundation for the integration of blank space into oil painting creation ^[1].

2.2. Freehand brushwork and western-style composition of blank space thinking are different

Western classical oil paintings construct space with a focused perspective, expand the depth of the picture with a fixed single viewpoint, fill the image in order from foreground to distant view, simulate the real space with the help of body size and light and dark changes, and pursue a full picture. In traditional western-style composition, the canvas space is mostly filled with colors and shapes, and the blank space is mostly used as an aid for the transition between light and shadow, serving for the shaping of the body, lacking an independent aesthetic ideographic function, and the space construction pays attention to science, authenticity, and visual fullness.

Freehand brushwork leaves blank space based on the spatial perspective of the oriental scattered view, breaks through the fixed viewpoint limitation, does not stick to the objective spatial scale, and reorganizes the picture space through the virtual and real layout. There are obvious differences in spatial function positioning between the two, and the blank of western-style picture is attached to the solid modeling; Freehand brushwork and blank space can independently extend artistic conception and promote the flow of charm, create a sense of visual breathing by reserving blank space, guide the viewer's line of sight to flow between reality and reality, and expand the imagination space outside the screen. This different logic of spatial construction enriches the dimension of spatial expression of oil painting, makes up for the western-style full composition with oriental vanity aesthetics, and provides mature ideas for diversified innovation of oil painting composition ^[2].

3. Freehand brushwork with blank space empowers the internal motivation of the innovation of contemporary oil painting spatial composition

3.1. Cultural empowerment demands in the process of oil painting localization

In the context of global art blending, domestic oil painting is deeply promoting the localization process, and it is the general trend of the industry to build an oil painting discourse system with national characteristics. Mining traditional aesthetics and promoting the deep blending of Chinese and Western arts have become the key direction of creation. Long-term use of the western composition paradigm makes it difficult to highlight the aesthetic appreciation of local culture and meet the needs of nationalization of art in the new era.

Freehand brushwork with blank space embodies the spatial essence of Chinese painting for thousands of years and is a typical representative of oriental aesthetics. Integrating blank thinking into oil painting composition can optimize the creative system at the spatial logic level and enrich the cultural connotation of local oil painting. The field of fine arts in colleges and universities and the first-line creators actively carry out research on the transformation of traditional freehand brushwork elements in oil paintings, and take blank space as the starting point to promote the cultural integration of Chinese and Western art from the technical level, so that oil paintings not only retain the characteristics of oil painting, but also contain oriental freehand brushwork poetry. Strong demand for local culture construction, promoting the integration of traditional blank aesthetics into contemporary oil painting creation, has become the core driving force for composition language innovation ^[3].

3.2. Contemporary mass simple poetic aesthetic fashion help

At present, the social aesthetics is constantly upgrading, and the mass aesthetics is gradually changing from a complicated and meticulous realistic style to a simple and ethereal artistic expression, preferring artworks with proper density and reverie. Traditional realistic oil paintings, which rely on high-density details to shape the picture, appear compact and heavy, and the visual information is complicated, which makes it difficult to fit the aesthetic trend of pursuing relaxation, elegance, and artistic conception.

Blank space can adjust the rhythm of the picture by streamlining the picture elements, reasonably reserving blank space, reducing the sense of visual oppression, and accurately fitting the trend of contemporary aesthetic lightness and poeticization. From the national large-scale art exhibition to the regional oil painting exhibition, the number of oil paintings that use blank space to optimize composition is increasing, and high-quality achievements have emerged in various themes such as landscapes and figures.

The promotion of national aesthetics and the orientation of exhibition art promote each other, promote the wide application of blank composition in the oil painting field, and make freehand brushwork blank become an important aesthetic carrier of contemporary oil painting innovation.

3.3. Oil painting media material compatibility brings technical support

Oil painting pigments have many characteristics, such as thick pile, thin cover, superposition, through dyeing, and so on. They are extremely artistic and can transform the two blank forms of traditional Chinese painting flexibly. Creators can use thick coating to shape the texture of real-life objects, and use low-saturation light-colored Bo Tu to cover and dye to create a blurred blank effect. They can also directly retain the background color of the canvas to form a large area of original blank, which overcomes the problem that oil painting media can hardly present the transparent blank texture of rice paper, and let the virtual and real space naturally show.

In addition, various painting tools, such as brushes and scrapers, can not only stack heavy oil paints to enhance the real-life texture and shape the three-dimensional texture, but also flatly apply light colors to weaken the physical boundary and create a hazy virtual environment. The strong plasticity and compatibility of oil painting media enable the freehand brushwork of blank space, virtual and real logic, and spatial order to land smoothly, which technically ensures the feasibility and stability of transforming oil painting spatial composition with blank space and provides a solid media foundation for the integration of Chinese and Western spatial aesthetics ^[4].

4. Practical strategies for the innovation of contemporary oil painting spatial composition from the perspective of freehand brushwork and blank space

4.1. Reconstruct the spatial pattern of the picture with white corners

Contemporary oil painting creation can learn from the essence of traditional landscape painting, break the traditional pattern of centered composition and full-picture presentation, and rebuild the overall spatial structure of the picture. The creator can focus the core real scene of the picture on the corner of the picture, abandon the layout of the center and the whole floor, treat the canvas space with a large area of blank space, adjust the overall space ratio through the strong contrast between the actual and virtual areas, and enhance the sense of depth of the picture by using the contrast of density, thus creating a sparse and elegant oriental aesthetic pattern.

In the creation of landscape oil paintings, the creators often put concrete scenery such as trees, cottages and rocks at the bottom of the picture to depict the close-up details in detail; At the top of the picture, the clouds, fog and distant mountains are represented by light white and light gray Bo Tu, and the details of clouds are omitted to express the vision in a minimalist way. A large area of blank space expands the psychological space of the picture upwards, which makes the limited canvas produce infinite visual effects. This composition, while retaining the advantages of accurate modeling and rich texture of realistic oil paintings, integrates the ethereal artistic conception of traditional landscape paintings and realizes the aesthetic transformation of the picture space from closed enrichment to open and spacious.

Oil paintings with characters are also widely used with white edges and corners. The creator placed the main character in one corner of the screen to ensure the outstanding visual focus, and the rest were treated with light tones and blank spaces, so as to avoid redundant environmental scenery and decorative elements

from interfering with the main character, focusing on the expression of the character's demeanor, posture, and emotions, and strengthening the spiritual core of the screen. The creator can flexibly adjust the proportion of blank space according to the theme of the work: appropriately increase the blank space for lyrical and freehand works to create an ethereal and quiet atmosphere; Life documentary works reduce the blank space, balance the heavy feeling of the picture, stabilize the gas field, and realize the refined upgrade of oil painting composition through corner white space ^[5].

4.2. The gradient depth space is constructed by layering virtual reality and leaving blank space

The space innovation of contemporary oil painting can deeply draw lessons from the concept of the coexistence of reality and reality in freehand brushwork aesthetics, and flexibly arrange blank areas according to the level differences of near, medium, and long-term perspective. This move breaks through the limitation that the western-style focus perspective only depends on the scale of the body and the change of light and shade to create depth. Through the gradient of reality and reality, it creates a new space with multi-layer compound and coherent charm, and realizes the organic integration of western-style realistic modeling and oriental freehand brushwork space.

In the close-range description, we pay attention to real painting, and depict the texture, texture, and details of objects with thick piles of oil paints, so that the modeling outline is clear and the color levels are rich, laying a solid visual foundation for the picture. In the middle scene, the figurative modeling is gradually weakened, and the color contrast is reduced. Semi-transparent and light-colored multi-layer cover dyeing is adopted, and finely divided white space is interspersed to realize the natural transition from real scene to virtual scene. In the future, a large area is blurred and left blank, giving up fine body shaping, relying on the fusion of light color gradient and blank, expanding the spatial distance, replacing the traditional perspective level with blank level, and creating a long and profound sense of space.

In the creation of landscape-themed oil paintings, this composition advantage is particularly remarkable. Close-up waterfront vegetation and stone steps vegetation are thick in color and rich in details; The river surface and water color in the middle scene are smudged with light colors, interspersed with fine pieces and blank spaces, forming a flexible middle level; The distant peaks and clouds gradually blend into a large area of blank space. The three layers of virtual reality and blank space are gradually and naturally connected, getting rid of the shackles of Western-style vanishing point perspective and creating a landscape space with rich levels and distant artistic conception. The creator uses the permeability of oil painting pigments to connect the virtual and the real with multi-layer transparent cover dyeing to ensure the natural transition and enhance the aesthetic charm of the oil painting space ^[6].

4.3. Structural blank space can expand the inner smart space of the picture

The innovation of contemporary oil painting composition should break through the limitation of leaving blank at the edge of the picture and optimize the internal layout through structural blank. Setting local blank spaces at the junction of objects and images, the turning point of shapes, and the gap between groups can effectively alleviate the compactness of solid stacking, embed void in the picture, enhance the permeability and agility of the work, and make the picture properly dense and harmonious in rhythm.

Traditional freehand brushwork painting often leaves a blank, a gap reserved, in order to run through the charm of the picture. After this idea was integrated into contemporary oil painting creation, a mature

structural white cloth system was formed. The creator reserved irregular blank spaces at the joints of trees, buildings, or people groups, filled them with canvas background color or light color blocks, split the heavy color blocks, broke the sense of occlusion, optimized the rhythm of body arrangement, and made the picture locally elastic.

Garden-themed oil paintings are good at using natural structures, such as architectural doorways and windows, to create structural blank spaces. A large area of white space is left in the depths of the doorway and window view, which forms a virtual contrast with the real scene outside the door and window, enriching the picture level and deepening the spatial meaning of the work. In abstract oil painting, the application of structural white space is more diverse. The gaps between geometric color blocks and texture color blocks are transformed into white space areas, and scattered white spaces are connected in series to form fragmented shapes, so that the original independent color blocks form a unified spatial field. Although this kind of blank space is not large in area, it refines the spatial structure from the micro level, enriches the expression form of the internal space of oil painting, and endows contemporary oil painting composition with a more distinctive oriental aesthetic rhythm ^[7].

4.4. Blank artistic conception can expand the spiritual space outside the painting

Contemporary oil painting can learn from the concept of freehand brushwork art, meaning outside painting, and break through the physical limitations of canvas with a large area of artistic conception. Through the pure blank area, the viewer's association and empathy are stimulated, and the composite composition of the linkage between the real scene inside the painting and the imagination outside the painting is constructed to promote the sublimation of the oil painting space from visual modeling to spiritual artistic conception. Different from functional blank space, artistic blank space does not pursue regular layout, but transforms a limited canvas into an infinite spiritual space by expanding aesthetic boundaries, giving works a long artistic aftertaste.

Blank artistic conception is especially common in landscape oil paintings, such as wilderness, wasteland, and mountains and rivers. The picture spreads most areas in light gray-white tones, representing the sky, wilderness, or floating clouds, and only depicts a small number of real scenes, such as solitary trees, land, or rocks below, and the composition is extremely simple. A large area of blank space conveys a vast and quiet atmosphere, which makes the artistic conception of the work break through the limitation of canvas and creates an ethereal and detached aesthetic effect.

In the creation of figure oil painting, the creator often simplifies the details, such as the background of the times and environmental props, and replaces the complex scenes with uniform light-tone blanks, so that the main body of the figure is independent of the pure picture. At this point, the blank space becomes the externalized carrier of the character's mood, temperament, and atmosphere, making the picture clean, pure, and concise. Through the blank and empty atmosphere, the viewer independently supplements the mood of the picture and the artistic conception of the story, and participates in the secondary aesthetic construction of the work. Blank artistic conception promotes the transformation of oil painting composition from physical space to spiritual space, which is an important embodiment of freehand brushwork aesthetics to innovate the spatial connotation of contemporary oil painting ^[8].

5. Conclusion

Freehand brushwork with blank space embodies the spatial wisdom of Chinese traditional painting for thousands of years, and its unique aesthetic logic, which combines reality with reality and treats white as black, provides profound cultural nutrients for the innovation of contemporary oil painting spatial composition. Against the backdrop of the deep blending of Chinese and Western arts, blank space breaks through the limitation of ink and wash media, and perfectly fits with the material characteristics of oil painting and contemporary aesthetics. Through four kinds of blank techniques: corner, layering, structure, and artistic conception, the spatial language of oil painting has been reshaped in all directions, from the overall structure, depth level, internal rhythm, to off-site artistic conception. The integration of traditional freehand brushwork aesthetics has freed contemporary oil paintings from the shackles of Western-style single-perspective composition, realized the harmonious unity of realistic modeling and oriental poetry, and strengthened the local characteristics of Chinese oil paintings. Today, with the continuous innovation of art, freehand brushwork and blank space will continue to inject vitality into oil painting composition, promote local oil painting to keep improving while inheriting the essence of traditional aesthetics, and help Chinese oil painting to form an artistic style with a sense of the times and national charm.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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