

Color Expression and Mood Creation in Imagery Oil Painting

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Abstract: Oil painting is a traditional Western painting form. With the introduction of China and the influence of China's traditional painting and aesthetics, the painting style became more distinctive, expanding a new development direction of oil painting, and thus imagery oil painting came into being. Color, as the most important element in imagery oil painting, mainly plays the role of mood creation and emotional expression. Many creators are good at injecting their thoughts and emotions into the paintings through color matching, so as to enhance the artistic expression of the paintings. This paper analyzes the color expression characteristics of imagery oil painting and explores the color expression techniques in imagery oil painting and mood creation of imagery oil painting from several aspects.

Keywords: Imagery oil painting; Color expression; Mood creation

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1. Introduction

Works of art are the products of a particular era, which contains a wealth of ideas and emotions. Through works of art, not only the traces of the past form of law can be observed, but the results of the development of history can also be glimpsed^[1]. The introduction of oil painting to China has a history of a hundred years. In its early days, it was considered a foreign and strange art form. Later, it gradually became an integral part of Chinese art. This phenomenon deeply reflects the process of collision and fusion between Chinese and Western cultures, with mutual reference and influence. It is precisely because of this that only on the basis of color expression can it express the meaning.

2. Color expression characteristics of imagery oil painting

2.1. Vividness

In addition to the appreciation value, oil painting also serves as a carrier for spreading thoughts and feelings. Imagery oil painting is a continuation of the Western way of expression. Its innovation involves the integration of Chinese cultural traditions, with ancient aesthetics as the basic proposition, emphasizing the unity of man

and heaven, and the wisdom of life of the holistic mind. To achieve such a state in their works, many creators of imagery oil paintings usually draw on the expression forms of traditional paintings and emphasize the harmony and unity of the overall effect of the works. Compared with Western traditional oil painting, imagery oil painting does not overly pursue the realistic effect of character expression, background light, and shadow effects. Instead, it focuses on the charm with the painting object as the core, through the refinement of the “charm” of the object, giving the color expression the characteristics of the vivid rhythm, creating a seemingly imaginary situation on the canvas, to achieve an intangible effect for the tangible objects. The purpose of using tangible objects to express intangible feelings is highly visually appealing to the majority of viewers. The color layer of many imagery oil paintings has no obvious boundary, and the creators apply the neighboring colors and similar colors for color mixing. Although the color is single, it renders a world full of artistic charm. Additionally, there is a subtle sense of poetry, which really realizes the organic combination of color and emotion, rendering people obsessed with the effect of the picture for a long time.

2.2. Color with emotion

Color is one of the most important artistic languages in oil painting, and the color element not only greatly enhances the visual impact of the work but also plays a role in expressing emotion and presenting the theme, thus creating the mood of the work. The most significant feature in imagery oil painting is the writing and lyricism. Creators have a general understanding of specific things before the creation of the painting, and then develop artistic ideas based on their own objective cognition. Through a variety of color mixing methods, they present either exaggerated or abstract forms of color expression, expressing emotional lyricism, and thus imagery oil paintings are said to have the characteristics of the colors of the mood. In the process of expressing emotions, many artistic creators also present the theme by applying sharp and strong hues. Through the clever combination of colors or color contrast, the picture has more visual impact as a whole. Therefore, it can deepen the viewer’s visual impression and allow intuitive appreciation of the thought and emotion and the deeper connotation conveyed through the work. It can be said that color plays a vital role in the creation of imagery oil painting, not only to strengthen the emotional elements but also to guide the viewer into the inner world of the art creators, resulting in a strong emotional resonance ^[2].

2.3. Simplicity and condensation

In the application of colors, Chinese traditional painting advocates “less is more” and the pursuit of natural scenery. The color expression of imagery oil painting also draws on this essence, forming a highly condensed color with extreme simplicity. In the process of artistic creation, some creators generally use colors as a bridge of emotional communication in order to create an infinite charm and poetic quality; for example, bright green reminds people of the vibrant spring, golden yellow reminds people of the joy of harvest, the color of the sunrise makes people calm and full of hope, and the dark clouds before the storm make people gloomy, demonstrating the power of colors ^[3]. Skillful and flexible application of color tones can not only express the rich color changes and the overall atmosphere of the scenery but also achieve the effect of expressing emotions with color, realizing the perfect combination of form, color, and emotion. Taking the work “Crop Field” by Keju Wang as an example, the entire work is mainly created in yellow tone, with a little bit of green, showing a vibrant scene in the crop field. This extremely simple color scheme expresses the lofty respect for life, so that the viewer is infected, evoking associations and entering the aesthetic realm created by the creator.

3. Color expression techniques in imagery oil painting

3.1. High-purity colors

Although imagery oil painting is created from reality, and the actual shape of certain objects will change out of consideration of specific needs, objective laws exist in the use of color. With the creator's careful consideration, the color combinations on the canvas complement each other and harmoniously express the creator's true inner emotions. In the creation of imagery oil painting, creators tend to apply bright, full, and strong high-purity colors. This color expression has many similarities with the splash-ink and thick-ink techniques in traditional ink paintings. According to the main emotion or atmosphere of the work, the creators select the appropriate color as the primary color of the painting, and then choose a high-purity color that can express this emotion or atmosphere. For example, red color can be used for the expression of passion, vitality, anger, and tension; blue can be used to express sadness, loneliness, and calmness ^[4]. Then, on the basis of controlling the shape, size, and color intensity of the color blocks, the color is painted on the canvas, highlighting the contrast between complementary colors and neighboring colors, which presents a more layered and three-dimensional painting, leaving the viewer with a rich space for aesthetic imagination. The application of high-purity colors in the creation of imagery optimization is not arbitrary. Instead, attention must be paid to the control of color saturation and brightness. If the saturation is too high and the brightness is too low, the picture will become dull and depressing, thus flexible adjustment is necessary to make the picture more vivid and balanced. Imagery oil paintings that take the form of high-purity color expression can be both figurative and abstract. Taking "Sea Rhythm No. 2" as an example, the creator Peili Zhang did not apply figurative blue-green when depicting the seascape but innovatively chose high-purity red and yellow. With the help of abstract expression of the color, the beauty of the ocean and the grandeur of the scene were expressed in the best possible way, creating a strong visual impact and making the painting more vivid and balanced, allowing the viewers to experience the power and beauty of nature.

3.2. Low-purity colors

The expression of low-purity colors is very similar to the light-ink technique in traditional ink painting. When low-purity colors are applied in imagery oil paintings, the objects on the canvas usually look flat, but they are actually three-dimensional. A variety of colors in a large area of the canvas are blended into low-purity, pastel hues with minimal strokes of shadows and highlights. While these mid-tones seem gray, after skillful treatment of color layers, they do not appear messy and boring, but rather glittering and extraordinarily delicate and elegant, subtly bringing the viewer delight ^[5]. The masterpieces of the famous comic book artist Duoling He, such as "Spring Breeze Has Awakened," "Youth", etc., all express poetic qualities with low-purity colors, presenting an elegant, sentimental, and aesthetic mood, and every brush stroke expresses the vitality of the characters or scenery. This form of color language exhibits subtlety in simplicity, and complexity in simplicity, which expresses the creator's own spirit of transcending mundanity and being at peace with nature. Another example is the works of contemporary painter Dalin Zhang, who is good at applying soft and simple colors to imitate or reproduce objective objects when creating paintings, so as to complete the expression of emotions. Although the tone of the whole picture is elegant and simple, there is no lack of splendor, and the brushstrokes are rough yet rigorous and spontaneous yet organized. In addition, he pays great attention to capturing the instantaneous inspiration, and every spot of light and color on the canvas is the result of careful consideration, which expresses a kind of natural spirituality in the final presentation of the paintings.

3.3. Skillful application of black color

In an imagery oil painting, the clever application of black can highlight the vividness of other colors in the picture and further enhance the brightness of the color, so that the expressive power is greatly strengthened. Black has been studied and applied since ancient times to the present. Applying black to the creation of imagery oil paintings is in fact borrowing experience from the use of ink in traditional Chinese ink paintings, so that the interest of ink and brushwork can be reproduced in contemporary oil paintings, which in turn creates an atmosphere that enhances the expressive power of the picture. Black is a neutral color composed of a variety of colors. It can be blended with any tone and achieve the transformation of cold and warm. When drawing the character's skin, adding black appropriately will make the skin color look more natural, as if the sun is shining under the reflection of the natural light; black can also be used for blending when drawing cold effects, which looks warmer compared to the greenish-blue tones, it is very suitable for matching with warm colors on dark surfaces^[6]. One point worth emphasizing is that when applying black to oil painting, it is necessary to highlight the color tendency, that is, presenting other colors through color blending. Taking Guanzhong Wu's oil paintings as an example, he creatively combines traditional Chinese painting with Western oil painting techniques in the process of artistic creation. In addition to color, he also focuses on the clever use of visual elements, light and shadow, and modeling, which creates a unique mood atmosphere. Particularly in the creation of landscapes, the natural scenery is depicted by adjusting the shades of light and shadow. The birds, tiles, and mountains and rocks in the picture are all vivid, and the deep emotional connotation is abstractly conveyed to the viewers, allowing multi-level associations and interpretations.

4. Mood creation of imagery oil painting

Imagery oil painting, as the name suggests, takes imagery as the core. In order to give the work itself a stronger infectious force, the creation of mood is also essential. The fusion of imagery and mood expresses people and things perfectly, and with the skillful integration into the inner thoughts and feelings, the viewer can appreciate the unique artistic charm of the work.

4.1. Formal order

In the creation of imagery oil painting, form is one of the indispensable artistic languages, and whether the form is in order or not is directly related to the final presentation effect of the oil painting. Before painting, many creators usually choose a specific image, which will be skillfully laid out and expressed in a suitable external "form," so that the picture looks complete and harmonious as a whole, and smoothly creates the mood of the picture, bringing the viewer a good viewing experience. The formal order of the picture is often expressed through the following aspects. The first aspect is perspective and proportion, using the principle of perspective and proportionality to express the distance, nearness, or size of the object, giving the viewer a sense of three-dimensional space in depth. The second aspect is lines and strokes, by changing the thickness of the lines, the direction of the curvature of the brush, the lightness of the brush strokes, the contour of the object, and the texture of the painting, the sense of form and texture of the object can be further enhanced. The third aspect is texture expression. In order to make the objects in the paintings more textured and clearer in texture, many oil painting creators often use sponges, scrapers, brushes, and other tools to assist in painting to express the subtle changes on the surface of the objects^[7]. In addition, other aspects such as the overlap and sparseness of the picture, contrast and harmony, hierarchical intersection, symmetry and balance, rhythm and rhyme, warm and cold tones, etc., also belong to the more commonly used rules of the oil painting form of expression. According to the creator's own feelings and novel ideas, the most authentic visual expression is used to lead the viewer

into the world of art.

4.2. Color expression

Color is the most important element in any form of painting. From the level of imagery oil painting, color also plays the role of constructing the mood, compared with the shape of the picture and lines, the viewer's emotional impact is more significant. Color is not merely a description of the intrinsic color of the object. Everything in the world has its own category, "category" not only covers the physical properties of objective things but also covers the scope of human emotions, which also means that the application of color in imagery oil painting has unlimited flexibility. Imagery oil painting emphasizes reproducing nature and presenting imagery with color. In the process of dealing with the picture, the creator does not need to follow the color of the object itself, but rather exaggerates the contrast of colors from the perspective of character emotion and mood creation. In terms of modeling, the descriptive nature of modeling is weakened to ensure the exaggeration and planarization of color expression, so that the color is free from the constraints of narrative and the linguistic meaning of color is enriched. Taking "Summer Fragrance" as an example, to create a mood and give the painting vitality, the creator weakened the volume of modeling, using a large area of dark tones for character rendering and blurring the color of the character's face and head. Plus, the character's clothes were colored brown, forming a strong contrast with the background of the picture, which makes the viewers feel as if they can experience the summer sunshine through the paintings.

4.3. Spatial structure

The combination of reality and imaginary is one of the characteristics of traditional Chinese aesthetics. It emphasizes seeking the imaginary from the reality and putting the feelings in the scenery, so that the expression of emotions is as natural as flowing water, and the artwork expresses a far-reaching mood and infinite meanings. Western oil paintings are characterized by thick brushstrokes and rich compositions, in contrast, traditional Chinese paintings emphasize the beauty of "emptiness" and create a wonderful environment where nothing is painted. Imagery oil painting integrates the dual characteristics of Western oil painting and traditional Chinese painting. In the process of artistic creation, the medium is used as the basic method of transforming reality into imaginary, using the flowing characteristics of turpentine to paint. Through the use or retention of incidental factors, the brushstrokes and color blocks can be perfectly combined to form a characteristic texture of contrasting thinness and thickness, so that the overall picture will have the effect of light and dark contrast. This spatial construction method is based on the language expression of Western oil painting, realizing the openness of self-consciousness, expressing one's position and viewpoints, and interpreting the different meanings of art.

5. Conclusion

To sum up, imagery oil painting is a product of the fusion of Western oil painting and traditional Chinese painting. This new art form emphasizes the core of traditional Chinese aesthetics, that is, the artistic processing of reality. Through the clever application of high-purity colors, low-purity colors, and black, it highlights the formal order, color expression, and spatial structure of the paintings, giving them a profound meaning. Therefore, the viewers can appreciate the spirit of imagery contained in the works, enhance their personality with the realm, and indirectly resonate with the creator's emotions.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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