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On Chinese Aesthetics of Abstract Expressionism Art

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Abstract: In the development trend of modern and contemporary art, abstract expressionism has occupied a decisive position in the history of art since its birth. As a representative art school in the 20th century in the West, it unexpectedly has a very distinctive artistic characteristic of China. In terms of objective environment, the artistic dialogue between China and the West in the 20th century was promoted to the field of metaphysical philosophy. Western artists' interest in oriental art surpassed their superficial understanding of their unique brushwork, and abstract art became the best cultural bridge to communicate between the East and the West. This paper compares the characteristics of Chinese and western artistic thoughts and the characteristics of abstract expressionism art, and explains how it has oriental artistic thoughts on the basis of world outlook.

Keywords: Abstract Expressionism; Comparison between Chinese and Western Arts; Qi.

1. Introduction

Chinese and western paintings have different cultural systems and aesthetic traditions. China's paintings pursue the image-building and artistic conception "between similarity and dissimilarity", thus expressing subjective inner feelings. Western traditional painting pays attention to the expression of structural modeling and the reproduction of objective reality. However, the art in the period of abstract expressionism in the west has changed greatly in terms of aesthetics and creative methods compared with traditional classical art. This includes the change from precise and clear aesthetics to vague and uncertain aesthetics, from objective reproduction to subjective intuition and unconsciousness in expression, and from the focus perspective observation method of subject-object opposition to scattered observation and so on. These characteristics of abstract expressionism are also the fundamental characteristics of China's art. Of course, abstraction also has the aesthetic perspective of subverting western traditional art. The difference is that abstract expressionism focuses on expression and abstraction focuses on abstraction, so in the expression of emotion, abstract expressionism is closer to the aesthetic plot of China's art.

2. Differences of Aesthetic Characteristics between Chinese and Western Arts

2.1. Differences between Chinese and Western World Views

On the model of the universe, the ancient Roman philosopher Lucretius said: "All nature that exists independently is composed of two things, namely, an object and a void, and the object is in the void and moves in it."[1] This idea shows that the western world thinks that vanity is a space place, and entities occupy space, live and move in space, and are separated from space. Compared with space, the entity is more important. Space is only a place to accommodate the entity, and the entity is the part with content. The separation of entity and void actually shows the opposition between the known and the unknown. The known is entity and the unknown is void, and the opposition between the known and the unknown also marks the opposition between man and the unknown, because the known and the unknown is centered on man's cognition, which further shows the opposition between man and nature. So, to sum up, the western culture separates the entity from the void, and there are opposites between the known and the unknown, between the subject and the object, and between man and nature. The west looks at the world from a substantive perspective and always depicts a real world. Ancient Greek civilization showed obvious scientific tendency from the beginning. The first batch of ancient Greeks were all natural scientists. Western civilization was based on rationality, and it was classified into philosophical sages such as Pythagoras and Heraclitus, who were all pursuing answers with scientific nature. Plato and Aristotle were all clearly materializing the highest spirit of the universe. Although the universe is a unity of entity and void, the most important thing in western culture is to distinguish what is void and what is entity.

The west is based on what is, while China is based on nothing. China's cosmology is born out of nothingness. China's nothingness is not nothingness in the western world, but “Qi”. He thinks that everything is born out of “Qi”: "Person, his virtue of heaven and earth, the intersection of Yin and Yang, the meeting of ghosts and gods, and the elegance of the five elements."[2] "Qi" is not the entity of western culture, nor is it "void", but the "chaos" between the two. And "nothing" and "being" in China culture are not constant, but are transformed with each other: "There is always nothing, and we want to see its wonders. Often, I want to see it, and the two are the same and have different names. They are also called Xuan, Xuan and Xuan, and the door to all wonders. "[3] Therefore, China's culture does not distinguish between entity and void, and both of them have you and me, transforming each other. The cohesion of the entity comes from the gas of the universe, and the two cannot be opposed. It can be seen that China's "world outlook" is completely different from that of the West, which is a differentiated and opposing universe, while China is a fused universe. The "Entity" in China culture is also the condensation of "Qi".

2.2. Journal Style

Use American English when writing your paper. The serial comma should be used (“a, b, and c” not “a, b and c”). In

American English, periods and commas are within quotation marks, like “this period.” Other punctuation is “outside”! The use of technical jargon, slang, and vague or informal English should be avoided. Generic technical terms should instead be used.

2.3. Vagueness and Clarity: Cultural Characteristics of China and the West

The physical world must be a clear world, and "clarity" has become the dominant feature of western culture. In science and technology, philosophy, religion and art, all westerners explore an eternal truth with a clear attitude. The limitation of human cognition leads to the necessity to rely on tools for the rational study of the objective world. The measurable boundary of tools is the boundary of the world observed by human beings. As a result, with the continuous development of science and technology, the ability of tools to measure and observe has been continuously improved, and the "objective" world recognized by human beings has been constantly overthrown and developed. From geocentric theory to Heliocentrism, from Newton's classical mechanics to Einstein's theory of relativity, from Plato's absolute truth to Nietzsche's death. In the clear pursuit of understanding the objective world, the West did not discover the purely objective world, but created a cultural world with "rationality and objectivity" as the core idea.

The world of qi must be a fuzzy world. The expressions in the works of ancient sages such as ZhouYi and Tao Te Ching are vague and uncertain, and Confucius' definition of "benevolence" is still controversial. Therefore, China's cultural China has no formal expression such as formula theorem. The universe in China culture is "Tao", but the definition of "Tao" is unclear. China's cultural feature is that he grasped the whole fuzzy universe with the idea of "fuzziness", that is, he understood the universe as a universe of qi. Fuzzy culture also leads to China culture neglecting tools and attaching importance to the mind, while China culture advocates experience intuition. China explained everything such as science, art and medicine with the thought of "Yin-Yang and Five Elements" and "Qi". This has caused all aspects of China culture, including science and technology and medicine, to be artistic. Therefore, China culture is intuitive culture, fuzzy culture and artistic culture; Western culture is rational culture, clear culture and scientific culture.

2.4. Far and Near Pitch and Focus Perspective

Because the world of Chinese culture is a world of “Qi”, a vague universe, and people and the universe are integrated, the way. Chinese people to observe the world is "sightseeing". This observation method is the observation method of people's movement in nature. Looking up at the sky, looking down at the earth, wandering far and near, people's position is not fixed, wandering to watch. "Sightseeing" is actually an experience of things as a whole, not a specific measurement from a certain angle. For example, the Preface to Lanting wrote: "Looking up at the universe, we can see the richness of categories, so it is enough to be extremely entertaining and believe in cola." Tour includes human wandering and eye wandering. China's unique scroll painting is to let the viewer wander or swim. The perspective of China's art is not only the present, but the whole. China's painting is not the observation at this moment, but the breadth of space and the length of time.

The realistic and clear western worldview guides artists to treat nature with a rational attitude of opposition, fixation and analysis, and treat art with an experimental spirit. As a result, the observation method of focus perspective appeared in the west. This observation method is that the artist observes the object to be depicted from a certain unchanging position and angle, which is the case with sketching the scene. Essentially, this is the result of a scientific research attitude. The object depicted is based on the fixed person's perspective, and the observed object is measured, so a "scientific theory" based on optical principles, such as "focus perspective", is produced. This makes western art have a scientific and rational evaluation of "accuracy".

3. Fuzzy Aesthetics in Abstract Expressionism

With the development of science and technology in the western world, under modern civilization, the originally unclear universe has been clearly understood. The emergence of quantum mechanics and relativity has led to the shaking or even disappearance of God and absolute truth, which has shaken the traditional western world outlook. With the orientalization of western philosophy, art has also turned to eastern thought, and the most sensitive artists have also taken the lead in expressing their views on the universe through their works. Abstract expressionism is the product of this context. Clarity in the field of art gave way to ambiguity. Fuzzy uncertainty is a characteristic of abstract expressionism. Abstract expressionist artists never plan shapes and colors carefully, and there is no fixed creative formula to follow in abstract Expressionism painting, and artists do not aim at summing up creative programs.

For example, De Cunin's creation, the most famous is the female body. He believes that painting is a process of experiencing, expressing and achieving freedom. He is engaged in painting with a passionate attitude that is almost exaggerated by others as a dance performance. In this respect, he is the same as pollock in skipping rope. In his paintings, no matter the image or abstract content, there is no constraint, and the traditional painting techniques and aesthetic concepts such as composition, space, perspective and balance are swept away. He hates all the shackles imposed on painting. He is extremely bold, decisive, swift and powerful. De Cunin's typical painting method is to sketch first, then paint, then continue to paint on the pigment, then scrape off the surface, and then paint some images transformed from other places. Sometimes, these steps are repeated more than a dozen times. On the screen, taking the female human body as the description object, almost no objective, true and clear human body image can be seen, and the picture is blurred, see Figure 1.



Figure 1. Women(part)-Willem de Kooning

4. Intuition and Unconsciousness of Abstract Expressionism

Abstract expressionism art broke away from the rational rules of western traditional art, and took the creative way based on intuition to the extreme and developed into unconscious painting. Among them, Pollock's dripping painting can best reflect this intuition and unconsciousness. Pollock began to use the "drop painting method" in 1947, canceling the easel, laying a huge canvas flat on the ground, splashing paint on the canvas with a box, stick or brush with holes drilled, and using a sprayer to spray thin paint; When painting, the contact with the canvas is not fixed in one position, but walks around the canvas or crosses the past, making the composition without center and the structure unrecognizable; Draw a complex and confusing net with repeated unconscious movements; The lines on the picture are twisted and twisted, and the colors are changeable. Pollock even got rid of the control of the artist's opponent, and achieved further uncontrollable by dropping, which made the artistic creation only initiated by the artist, and in the process, the artist was not only the participant of the artwork, but also the witness of the result. The artist does not have a perfect creative intention, but is more casual, and eliminates consciousness by giving up control and entering the work. Even the unconscious realization is achieved by rubbing the female body covered with ink on the canvas. At this time, western philosophers think that consciousness hinders the generation of inspiration, and inspiration and creativity are the products of getting rid of human consciousness, and only when they enjoy the pleasure of freedom and liberation can they create good works of art. The inspiration in China culture comes from "understanding", which is as sudden as God's help, and the instantaneous between man and Tao.



Figure 2. Ten Thousand Points of Evil Ink Volume(part)-Shi Tao (Qing)



Figure 3. Autumn Rhythm (Number 30)-Jackson Pollock

The fit between them achieves "the unity of heaven and man". In the western world view, human consciousness is opposed to emptiness, and unconsciousness means letting go of human consciousness, that is, giving up the state of opposition between man and nature, and entering a state similar to "the unity of man and nature" to create. Siegfried Wichmann, a German art historian, believes that Pollock was influenced by Japanese Zen artists: "In the face of blank canvas, he concentrated on meditation and gathered inner energy, which must be released." And we know that Japanese Zen thought comes from China, and Japanese painters' painting treatment also comes from China's painting, see Figure 2,3.

Another representative figure of abstract expressionism, Kandinsky's paintings include two styles, one is composed of geometric figures, and the other is a combination of pastoral and romantic colors and lines. The latter is classified as "abstract expressionism", and neither of them has a clear theme, and both of them focus on rhythm. He thinks that art is like a walking corpse, without inner spirit. His "inner spirit" can also be understood as "vivid charm" in China's art, and Kandinsky's series of paintings "Improvisation" is a classic that embodies the content of music creation. He said that his paintings "are mostly spontaneous and unconscious improvisations, so they are immaterial", which also reminds people of the concept of Zen painting, similar to China's freehand brushwork concept. Roger fry, a critic, called his paintings "pure visual music, see Figure4.



Figure 4: Improvisation 28-Wassily Kandinsky

5. The Care Mode of Abstract Expressionism

Expressionism painting is different from traditional western painting, and the basic norm of western painting is perspective of focus. Abstract expressionist artists do not observe objects from a fixed perspective, but show a scattered perspective. Artists sometimes don't even draw objects, scribble, and lose ink. The picture has no rules such as perspective, and it is as chaotic as the "Qi" universe. This makes the abstract Expressionism painting unrepeatable, but the work exists. After this moment, the same work will never appear again, and it will become eternal.

After the middle of the 20th century, many Western artists were influenced by China's calligraphy and ink painting. Mark toby, henri michaux, Bradley Walker Tomlin, Franz Klein, etc. They learned the new painting methods from the lines of calligraphy, or from the brushwork of ink and wash, or simply wrote "calligraphy" with utilitarian. It's just that the tools they use are not the tools and materials used in China's painting and calligraphy, and most of them still use oil painting pigments and pens. Due to the limitation of materials, the painting looks heavy and straight, which is far from the "twists and turns" and "five-color ink" of China's art, but the overall aesthetic foundation is quite close to the thinking of Chinese painting.

Michaud went to the East in 1933. His job is to spill ink and pigment on canvas, so that it can produce some magical accidental effects and create a mysterious and passionate picture. Although his works like to use China's materials and abstract expression techniques, the visual effect is completely different from the elegant and implicit feeling of China's ink painting.

Before 1948, Walker Tomlin immersed himself in cubism. After 1948, I began to try to create with China's calligraphy lines, and it was basically a black-and-white picture. The flat bottom layer and the black lines make up the picture, which absorbs some basic and superficial spirits of China's calligraphy picture-conciseness and abstraction, see Figure 5.

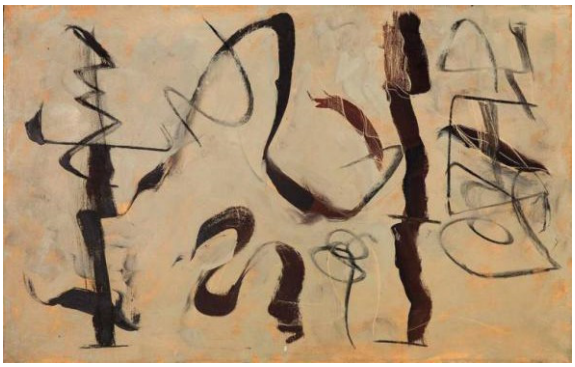


Figure 5. No. 16-Bradley Walker Tomlin

Klein, on the other hand, combined China's calligraphy with the character of a stout cowboys in the United States. If Toby looks at China's calligraphy from a distance, Klein looks at China's local characteristics with a magnifying glass.

He has created many large-scale black-and-white abstract paintings, each of which looks like a partial enlargement of Chinese characters in China. He used a black pen to paint a white canvas with almost the same regrets as China's calligraphy. His works look like Chinese characters, but they are incomprehensible. His works are also different from the rhythm and realm of China's calligraphy, and are simply inspired by China's artistic style. However, the artistic spirit conveyed by his works is not the same as that pursued by China's art. But the difference in aesthetic taste between them is still smaller than that between western classical art and abstract expressionism.

6. Conclusion

Due to the different understanding of the universe between the East and the West, there are differences in thinking in all aspects of the real world, including art, and China's "Qi" and "five lines of gossip" cosmology is a chaotic and harmonious cosmology, which is relatively stable without strong contradictions as the driving force, so it has continued to this day. However, the western world outlook is full of affirmation and doubt, and its internal contradictions drive it to develop constantly in constant self-denial and construction. We can see this process of overthrow and re-establishment in science and technology and art, and with the scientific and technological revolution again and again, there are also artistic movements again and again. The uncertainty of the universe, such as "quantum mechanics" and "theory of relativity", has gradually led to the exploration of "intuition" and "philosophy of life" in western cultural thought. With the improvement of global transportation convenience, scholars and ideas from the East meet with the West in due course. Under this historical background, keen western artists involuntarily accepted the oriental aesthetic thought. Abstract expressionism is completely divorced from the stylized rules of traditional western painting under such a background. Although the core foundation of these changes is still caused by the internal contradictions of the cosmology in the western world, we have to admit that under the trigger of this internal contradictions, the eastern culture has attracted enough to it, which has greatly influenced western art, so western painting has the aesthetic characteristics of China's painting.

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