

Integration of Internal Structure in Ink Figure Painting

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Abstract: This paper explores the internal structural integration of ink figure painting, with a particular focus on freehand depictions of ethnic minority figures. It analyzes the organic fusion of compositional language, modeling language, brush-ink language, and personal language. By comparing compositional concepts from both Chinese and Western traditions—where traditional Chinese painting emphasizes artistic conception and scattered perspective, while Western painting prioritizes linear perspective—the study examines how modeling training and innovations in brush and ink facilitate mutual influence. Flexible compositional language can break away from outdated symmetrical or centered patterns, enabling open spatial structures and expressive brushwork that contribute to the development of personal style. The innovation of this research lies in its systematic articulation of the compositional mechanisms in ethnic minority freehand figure painting, highlighting the critical role of integrating traditional ink painting elements with personal language, thereby offering a new perspective for related theoretical exploration.

Keywords: Ink Figure Painting; Modeling Language; Compositional Language; Brush-Ink Language; Internal Structural Integration.

1. Integration of Internal Structure

What elements constitute the broader system of internal structural research in Chinese painting? This area of study focuses specifically on the internal compositional structure of ink figure painting. In *Research on Chinese Painting Creation and Composition*, Tang Xiuling notes that "the concept of composition emerged between 1913 and 1917 as one of the trends of modern art. Composition refers to the organic combination of various visual elements—such as points, lines, planes, shapes, colors, and forms—abstracted from specific forms, along with the artist's personal interpretation, to intuitively and abstractly express their inner world. Composition is often used in design and abstract painting, and is primarily a construction of visual form language."

In the context of *The Internal Structural Integration of Ink Figure Painting*, composition is a crucial concept. It refers not only to the combination of different pictorial elements, but also to the organic unification of diverse cultures, techniques, and styles. There is currently a lack of comprehensive viewpoints on how composition is defined within Chinese painting. The integration of compositional language, modeling language, and brush-ink language into a coherent personal language is fundamental to constructing the overall artistic conception.

2. Issues in Internal Structure

According to Liu Jichao's edited compilation *Lu Chen on Ink Painting*, there is no universally accepted standard for defining the structural composition of ink painting in Chinese art. This lack of consensus has led subsequent scholars to interpret the nature of ink painting composition in terms of layout, visual forms, and expressive techniques, rather than analyzing the internal structural integration to identify the essential components of Chinese painting. Lu Chen emphasized two approaches to ink composition: first,

analyzing paintings from a formal perspective, and second, producing exercises focused on ink composition. Overall, the goal was to broaden creative thinking and strengthen the application of formal principles.

However, from the perspective of internal structure research in Chinese painting, *The Internal Structural Integration of Ink Figure Painting* asserts that a clear and rational framework is required for defining compositional integration. This framework should not be based merely on reading or formally analyzing paintings, but rather on a thorough examination of the fundamental elements that constitute internal structure. If easel-based Chinese painting were to vanish, the necessity and relevance of these structural components would also be lost. Tang Xiuling points out: "Composition addresses the organization and arrangement of forms, the relationship between forms and space, and the principles, rules, and methods governing these connections. It establishes the organic linkage and unity between objects, forms, materials, and spatial relationships—transforming singular, isolated forms into richness, and chaotic arrangements into order and vitality." Therefore, in *The Internal Structural Integration of Ink Figure Painting*, internal structural integration should be tightly focused on achieving a sophisticated transformation—uniting compositional language, modeling language, and brush-ink language to form an artist's personal language. The realization of this personal language is the core of the internal structure of Chinese painting.

2.1. Internal Structure in Chinese and Western Art

The concept of composition in Western painting and the internal structure in Chinese painting are structurally related, and their path to realization lies in resource integration. The relationship between compositional language, modeling language, brush-ink language, and personal language is one of functional correlation, and thus their integration follows a

path of functional synthesis. This interrelation enables the possibility of integration. However, it is important to note that such correlations stem from the maturity of both theory and technique. Even two art forms that were originally unconnected may become linked through technical fusion or the exchange of modes of thinking—just as contemporary Chinese art has seen trends toward the Westernization of Chinese painting and the Sinicization of Western painting.

The final criterion for determining whether the internal structural elements of Chinese painting have achieved integration is whether the compositional language, modeling language, and brush-ink language have converged to form a personal artistic language within a work. For instance, at major national exhibitions such as the National Art Exhibition held every five years—organized by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the People’s Republic of China, the China Federation of Literary and Art Circles, and the China Artists Association—or other national exhibitions co-hosted by the China Artists Association and local governments or academic institutions, the artistic creation process often reflects this very progression. Artists’ works move from the foundational stages of compositional, modeling, and brush-ink language toward the formation of a distinct personal language. This transformation represents the very process of structural integration.

Hence, the process of integration is one of mutual overlap and permeation. The ultimate standard for judging integration lies in whether the compositional, modeling, and brush-ink languages have formed a personal language with clearly defined or richly developed boundaries. The rational logic for defining compositional integration should center on the development of each artist’s unique compositional, modeling, brush-ink, and personal languages into an independent philosophical and aesthetic system. This, in turn, fosters new modes of artistic creation and theoretical exploration in the study of Chinese painting’s internal structure—contributing to a flourishing artistic landscape characterized by diversity and open dialogue.

2.2. Internal Structure of Ink Figure Painting

Structural integration refers to the mutual permeation and intersection between the study of internal structure in Chinese painting and ink figure painting, ultimately leading to the formation of an artist’s individual compositional elements and the gradual emergence of a new, dynamic theory of composition. This integration process involves the interplay among three creative elements. By examining previous scholars’ discussions on the concept, motivations, and realization of compositional theories, it becomes clear that the prerequisite for integrating the internal structure of Chinese painting with the expressive qualities of ink figure painting lies in the flexible application of these elements in artistic practice. The criterion for judging whether integration has been achieved is whether, in the creative process, the internal structural components have developed into a personal compositional language, modeling language, brush-ink language, and ultimately, a personal artistic language.

The fundamental prerequisite for defining whether two elements can be integrated is their internal correlation. Only when an artist successfully transforms their compositional, modeling, and brush-ink languages into a unique personal language can true integration be said to occur.

Structural integration is not only the synthesis of pictorial creation and artistic culture, but also the fusion of artistic

theory and painting techniques. In today’s globalized world, artistic creation must draw from the strengths of diverse cultures while remaining rooted in local traditions in order to innovate and evolve. As Xu Beihong once stated: “Preserve the excellence of the old methods, revive those on the verge of extinction, improve what is flawed, supplement what is lacking, and assimilate what is valuable from Western painting.” Only through this approach can artworks of both cultural depth and contemporary relevance be created.

In summary, structural integration is a vital path for the innovative development of Chinese painting. Through the organic fusion of various compositional elements, it is possible to preserve the essence of traditional art while endowing artworks with new vitality. In this process, artists must continually explore and experiment to find the compositional integration method that best suits their individual expression, ultimately creating artworks with distinctive character and artistic value.

Would you like a visual diagram illustrating the relationships between the four key languages (compositional, modeling, brush-ink, and personal)?

3. The Issues of Internal Structure in Ink Figure Painting

Pan Tianshou, in his discussion on composition, famously stated, “‘Know the white, preserve the black.’ This means that black emerges from white. One must understand the white parts in order to handle the black properly. However, most people only focus on what is physically present in the painting but fail to grasp how to create voids. In reality, placing the solid is the same as creating the void; creating the void is the same as placing the solid. This is the principle outlined in the *Analects of Confucius*, where it says, ‘When the mind is not in focus, the eyes may look but do not see.’ Is this not the power of perception itself?”

In the context of *The Internal Structure Fusion of Ink Figure Painting*, this paper takes composition as the main thread to examine the interplay of personal language, compositional language, modeling language, and brush-ink language in the creative process of Chinese painting’s internal structure. The terms composition and structure are used here, and while they share some commonalities, they also differ significantly. Their overlap lies in the shared goal of organizing visual elements, but they diverge in that design composition can be three-dimensional, whereas the internal structure of Chinese painting operates in a two-dimensional space. Lu Chen on *Ink Painting* addresses the distinctions and overlaps between composition and structure, but it does not discuss how modeling and brush-ink elements are arranged in the re-composition process.

3.1. Internal Structure Analysis

In September 2016, Beijing Arts and Crafts Publishing House published *The Internal Structure Fusion of Ink Figure Painting* by Tang Xiuling, which combined research and development with traditional composition theories, including Liu Jichao’s edited *Lu Chen on Ink Painting* (published in October 1990 by Anhui Fine Arts Publishing House). *Lu Chen on Ink Painting* does not present a clear theory on composition; it is more like a course. In contrast, *The Internal Structure Fusion of Ink Figure Painting* mainly focuses on composition theory, with composition as the primary focus and structural theory as a secondary one. Both works are

lacking in their research on the composition of ink figure painting and freehand figure painting, and currently, there is almost no theoretical research on the composition of ink figure painting and freehand figure painting in China.

The Internal Structure Fusion of Ink Figure Painting addresses the theoretical research gaps in the composition of ink figure painting and freehand figure painting. The value of such research is considerable and worth exploring by Chinese artists.

Through analyzing the compositions of Lu Chen and Tang Xiuling from the perspective of ink figure painting, I have summarized the previous understandings of composition and developed a composition theory for The Internal Structure Fusion of Ink Figure Painting. I propose four major elements—personal language, compositional language, modeling language, and brush and ink language—and explore how these elements merge with the composition of ink figure and freehand figure painting. The analysis focuses on how these elements form the artist's personal language and how that language is used to express the spirit of the artwork.

This analysis emphasizes the fusion of theoretical perspectives with practical creative processes in ink figure painting, aiming to provide a deeper understanding of the complex relationships between different elements within the painting's internal structure.

3.2. Internal Structure Correlation

The Internal Structure Fusion of Ink Figure Painting focuses on the formation of personal language through the study of modeling language, brush-and-ink language, and compositional language in ink figure painting. The modeling language is studied through the creation of freehand figure painting in terms of structure, gesture, texture, and decorative expression. The analysis of form examines how the figure in ink figure painting transforms into the structure of freehand figure painting and its relationship with brush-and-ink language. Brush-and-ink language, being one of the most important aspects of traditional Chinese painting, is analyzed through the knowledge of brush and ink techniques. The research explores how traditional brush-and-ink language can be fused and innovated in contemporary practice, balancing the traditional ink spirit with modern aesthetic tastes.

Compositional language is studied through structure, the division of black-and-white space, and the design of figures, particularly in how they relate to the creation of ink figure and freehand figure paintings. This breaks traditional composition models, moving away from the rigid use of T-shapes, triangles, S-shapes, C-shapes, and Z-shapes, and instead integrates modeling language, brush-and-ink language, and compositional language into complex, contemporary compositions. Compositional language is the fusion of

modeling, brush-and-ink, and composition, forming the backbone of personal language. It serves as both the structural framework for the figure and brush-and-ink arrangement and the theme of modeling and brush-and-ink language.

In this analogy, compositional language functions as the skeleton, while modeling language and brush-and-ink language are its flesh and skin. Personal language, formed by the integration of compositional, modeling, and brush-and-ink languages, is like the "person" that emerges from this fusion—distinct and identifiable, yet unified. It represents the inseparable part of the artist's style, demonstrating how these elements come together in a coherent artistic identity.

4. Conclusion

Ink Figure Painting and the Integration of Its Internal Structure systematically explores the internal structural mechanisms within ink figure painting, especially focusing on freehand depictions of ethnic minorities. Centered around the four key elements—compositional language, modeling language, brush-ink language, and personal language—the article offers both theoretical analysis and practical insight. It argues that compositional integration is not merely a formal combination of visual elements, but also a synthesis of artistic technique, cultural ideology, and the artist's aesthetic consciousness. In the context of cross-cultural exchange between Chinese and Western art traditions, ink figure painting breaks away from conventional compositional patterns, enabling a transformation from structural components to a mature personal language. Building on the foundational theories of predecessors like Lu Chen and Tang Xiuling, this study proposes a contemporary framework for understanding compositional fusion, emphasizing the central role of compositional language as the "skeleton," with modeling and brush-ink languages as its "flesh and blood." The personal language, then, becomes the fully formed artistic identity. This integration not only advances the theoretical development of ink figure painting but also offers a robust foundation for contemporary expression and stylistic individualization within Chinese painting, holding significant academic and practical value.

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