

Analyzing the "writing" in abstract expression oil painting

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Abstract: In order to communicate with others and express their inner thoughts, human beings invented writing, and the term "writability" triggered by writing is not only used in calligraphy, but also in painting. In painting, "writing" also shows human's feelings and emotions towards the world when painting, which is a summary of the past, a record of the current experience, as well as the expectation and speculation of the future. This paper analyzes "writability" in abstract expression oil painting, firstly introduces "writability" briefly, then talks about the relationship between "writability" and abstract expression oil painting, and finally it elaborates on the embodiment of "writability" in abstract expression oil painting. In conclusion, it shows that "writability" can be an effective way to create a mood and express emotions in paintings, as well as a dynamic way to express the emotions that the works are experiencing and their responses to things.

Key words: writing; abstract expression oil painting; emotion

1 Overview of "writing"

"Calligraphy" is extracted from oriental calligraphy, and gradually forms the aesthetic presentation of art, which contains a variety of meanings. "Calligraphy" includes the rhythm of the brush strokes, the sparseness and thickness of the lines, etc., and also shows the emotion, mood, and atmosphere of the creation in the natural state, adding fun and inspiration to the creation.

In a narrower sense, "writing" is considered to be the strokes and lines used in writing or drawing. In this case, the different tools and materials used, as well as the different methods and postures of the brush, will produce different effects. In a broader sense, "writing" includes the movements and behaviors it embodies, and also represents various unknown patterns or symbols. Since the 19th century with the cultural exchanges between the East and the West, oriental calligraphy and painting were gradually borrowed by more and more Westerners into their own paintings, among which the abstract expressionist oil paintings, in which the painters refer to the calligraphy and use the brush and the line, have become an important genre in the history of art. Therefore, "writing" is not only the pure embodiment of words, but also the movement in a specific space, which contains time, space, philosophical ideas, the sense of continuity of the line and the visual effect of abstract expression, and has excellent plasticity for painting.

2 The relationship between "writing" and abstract expression oil painting

Zhang Yanyuan put forward many ideas, such as "the origin is in the intention and the return to the use of the brush", "painting and calligraphy are the same, and painting comes from the book", "painting and calligraphy use the same brush", "bone method of using the brush", focusing on explaining the importance of using the brush, emphasizing that the bone

method of using the brush is not simply emphasizing the strokes of the brush, but more importantly, emphasizing the process of writing, using the points and paintings to express the inner thoughts. Therefore, the transformation of "bone techniques using brushes" in poetry from internal to external forms also sets higher standards for the use of brushes in painting. In traditional Chinese painting, the lines produced by the artist's brush enable the objects to be rendered in a dynamic manner. The same is true in the West, where the use of the "five strokes and seven inks" brushwork and inking techniques not only portrays the object, but also gives the line an independent aesthetic function. In modern painting schools, brushwork has become an important expressive factor in Western oil painting. Impressionism, abstract expressionism, and other art movements have seen a progression towards increasingly free and formally interesting brushstrokes, and painters express their innermost feelings through brushstrokes, which gives their works a unique temperament. The influence of calligraphy on painting can be divided vertically into spontaneous and conscious periods, and horizontally into theoretical aesthetics and practical use of the brush.

American abstract expressionism began with the drip painting method. Many American painters completely abandoned the figurative forms in favor of creating abstract expressionist paintings through unconscious movements and lines, using the drip painting technique. Their strokes vary in weight, speed, and direction, adopting a "counting white as black" approach that bears resemblance to the aesthetic interest of calligraphy. Sai Twombly, a world-renowned giant of calligraphic painting, combines poetry, mythology, history and other forms to change the boundaries of abstract expressionism with different calligraphic languages. While his early works were famous for his child-like scribbling style, his later works focused on poetic expression, where poetry and painting were intertwined, and the style of painting shifted from scribbling to natural traces. These writing styles greatly influenced later generations of artists, which shows the significance of writing to painting.

3 The embodiment of "writing" in abstract expression oil painting

3.1 The idea of white writing - Mark Tobey

In the 1940s, the economy of the United States began to recover gradually, abstract expressionism broke with tradition and created a new form of artistic expression, which was in line with the needs of the post-war economic development of the United States, and was therefore respected by the public. However, Mark Tobey, who was also an abstract expressionist, traveled to China to learn from Chinese artists and came into contact with Zen aesthetics, so his works were mainly in linear and abstract expression style, and his representative works were characterized by white lines similar to the form of words, which were extremely rich in the "written" characteristics of oriental art and were strongly opposed by American art critics, who thought that Mark Tobey was too much of an abstract expressionist. Mark Tobey was strongly opposed by American art critics, who thought that Mark Tobey was excessively "attached to the East", therefore, Mark Tobey was never recognized as a member of abstract expressionist painting art, however, it was the integration of these cultures from the East, such as calligraphy art and ink painting, that made Tobey create highly creative and impactful works of art [2].

Born in 1890 in Wisconsin, Mark Tobey was a commercial painter of some note. Influenced by Asian culture, Mark Tobey is highly favored by Europe, but at the same time, he is often coldly rejected by the American art circle because of his "subordination to the East". Mark Tobey's travels to China to meet the Chinese painter Teng Bai also had a great influence on his works. He has made many attempts to integrate calligraphic elements into Western painting forms. In the creation of paintings, Tobey consciously use the calligraphy techniques of art, such as writing, ink, and the chapter of the law. He created a series of "white writing" and his "white writing" series not only reflected different materials, but also included the way change of using the brush; controlling line thickness and length according to need while predominantly utilizing white lines intertwined with black ones - aesthetic qualities reminiscent of calligraphy. The lines intertwined with

a lot of black and white are very much in the rhythm of "counting white as black" in Chinese calligraphy.

3.2 Abstract expression of writing and mood - Zao Wou-ki

Zao Wou-ki, as one of the most recognized masters of contemporary Chinese art in the world, has a traditional Chinese temperament in his works and integrates writing into his works. He studied under Lin Fengmian in his early years, and took western art courses in drawing and oil painting, and Chinese painting was also a very important part of his learning process. He uses Western painting methods and materials, combined with the mood of traditional Chinese culture, to create a sense of light and rhythm of nature. In his paintings, he seems to be immersed in the realm of nature's infinite beauty, and is also known as "the representative of the Western modern lyrical abstract expressionism". His painting style underwent many changes, gradually transforming from figurative to abstract expression with oriental writing and mood. During the mature period of Zao Wou-ki's creation, he skillfully expressed the wet and dry changes of water with oil-based pigments, creating subtle effects in the picture. Zao Wou-ki's immersion into the realm of abstract expression was inspired by hieroglyphics and prehistoric art. This led him to a period of creating characters, during which his representative work *Wind* was created, and the characters in his works in the following years became even more obscure and difficult to recognize [3].

Zao Wou-ki's work, *Homage to Edgard Valles*, employs wild and powerful brushstrokes, like a dragon entering the sea to roam freely in the picture, which is wild and at the same time has a rigorous organization plan [4]. The light yellow color of the painting is excessive from the center to the surroundings, with a lot of white space at the upper end of the picture, and white brush marks and black lines depicting a majestic momentum, which is Zao Wou-ki's unique expression. The many evolutions of Zao Wou-ki's picture have made his strokes more and more full of life rhythm, and this kind of picture matches with Zao Wou-ki's innermost being. He expresses his own innermost feelings, and at the same time, he can also let the viewer feel the infinite emotions.

From 1971 onwards, Zao Wou-ki utilized the ink technique, turning the brush with his wrist, and the strokes became more varied, creating paintings with a poetic flavor and mood, reaching a state of celestial unity and forgetfulness of the world. The layers of the picture are richer and the colors are brighter, adopting the circular view composition of Chinese painting, and finally forming his own unique style of painting, creating oil paintings with oriental ink and brush interest and writing mood, and standing in this way with the boundary of Western painting.

3.3 Minimalist emotional expression - Willem De Kooning

Willem De Kooning, as a representative of the abstract expressionist school, used crayon, oil brush and other tools to write out the extraordinary power of the picture lines with strong explosive force painting techniques and lines with a certain aggression. De Kooning's work "Pink Angels" uses a lot of charcoal to outline the pink angels, and combines the method of graphic marking with the ecological image, reflecting the relationship between lines, which is close to the symbolic character of the "written" relationship. Simplicity is an important point in De Kooning's paintings, but the simplicity of the picture does not mean the simplicity of the process. De Kooning's painting process is to sketch the shape first, then use pigments and paints to color, then continue to paint on the pigments, and then scrape off the pigments in a series of repeated modifications and smearing painting steps. The picture embodies different textures, lines and strokes that can express the picture's mood and emotions.

De Kooning's "writing" in his paintings also draws on the characteristics of "writing" in Chinese calligraphy paintings, combining Western painting tools with Chinese calligraphy to express the picture in the way of using brushes and ink, forming an interesting art form, which is the result of the mutual infiltration of Eastern and Western cultures and arts. This is the result of the mutual penetration of East and West.

4 Conclusion

With its deep cultural connotation, heritage and unique way of expression, "writing" not only makes Chinese painting emit dazzling luster, but also exerts a significant influence on Western painting. In oil painting, the unique coloring style of writing and the composition of ink and brushwork in the picture are similar to the expressionism and abstract expressionism in Western oil painting. The common point is that they emphasize the use of dots, lines and surfaces to form a rich effect in the picture, thus expressing the artist's emotion. The difference is that Western painting is more detached from the figurative, while Chinese painting is based on the transformation of real objects into inner objects, and then expresses the real emotion with the picture. The term "writing" originated in Chinese calligraphy, which was gradually introduced to the West and then influenced local Chinese oil painting.

With the contemporary fusion of Chinese and Western culture and art, and the multiple values of tradition and modernity, "writing" in abstract expression oil painting, on the one hand, penetrates into Chinese traditional art and culture, and on the other hand, faces to modernity, accepts and absorbs contemporary art, and gives the writing of Chinese contemporary art creation a contemporary and innovative character, and provides a solid force for localized development of oil painting in China.

Conflicts of interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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