

Exploring the Flat Form Language of Chinese Figures in Contemporary Oil Painting



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Abstract: Planarized formal language has important artistic value and cultural significance in modern Chinese oil painting. This paper discusses the development of planarized language in China, from the early European influence to the modern localization practice, analyzes its artistic characteristics in composition, color, and modeling, and demonstrates the specific application of planarized language in Chinese oil painting. On this basis, four directions for the future development of planarized language are proposed, including strengthening the integration of local culture, exploring diversified expressive techniques, focusing on emotional and spiritual expression, and promoting international exchange and cooperation. The study shows that the planarized language has enriched the expression of Chinese oil painting, and continued research in this field will bring more innovation and development opportunities to the modern art world.

Keywords: planarized formal language; contemporary Chinese oil painting; artistic characteristics; expression techniques; emotional expression

Introduction

In the context of modern art, planarized form language is an important research field. Flatness originated from Western modernism, emphasizing the two-dimensionality and visual intuition of the picture. This concept was gradually introduced into China and combined with traditional Chinese aesthetics to form a characteristic modern and contemporary artistic expression. This unique art form not only enriches the expression language of Chinese oil painting but also provides the global art world with a brand new perspective to examine and understand the fusion of Eastern and Western cultures. Discussing the application and development of planarized form language in contemporary Chinese oil painting, and analyzing how this art language affects the audience's perception and the artist's creative intention, can provide an important perspective for understanding the art form of Chinese oil painting.

1. Meaning and Characteristics of Planarized Form Language

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1.1. Definition and origin of flatness

Planarization is a kind of artistic expression, which was first put forward by American art critic Clement Greenberg in the middle of the 20th century. It emphasizes the maintenance and reinforcement of the two-dimensionality of the picture in visual art, especially in painting, to highlight the physical attributes of the picture itself, i.e., the flatness of the canvas, so that the expression of the work of art is more focused on colors, shapes, and lines than on the sense of depth or visual three-dimensionality. This concept occupies a central position in the modern art movement, influencing several art schools from Abstract Expressionism to Minimalism. After its introduction into China, the combination of planarized form language and the planar character of traditional Chinese painting has promoted the unique development of Chinese modern and contemporary oil painting style, provided artists with a brand new means of expression, and deepened the communication and fusion of Eastern and Western art (Wang, 2023).

1.2. Artistic characteristics of planarized form

language

The artistic characteristics of planarized form language are mainly manifested in composition, modeling, structure and color, and other aspects. In terms of composition, planarization allows artists to break the traditional boundaries of time, environment, and location, integrate different spatial elements into the same plane, and compose visual images with the pure relationship of points, lines, and surfaces, thus abandoning trivial external details and forms of immaterial essence. In terms of modeling, the artist usually adopts the techniques of subjective exaggeration and artificial deformation to simplify the image of the object and strengthen the sense of form on the two-dimensional plane, to express the theme and emotion intuitively and figuratively. In terms of structure, the artist consciously generalizes and summarizes the relationship between the part and the whole, highlighting the wholeness of the picture, without having to rely on the light source and the inherent color of the object, and displaying more personal subjective ideas. In terms of the use of color, planarization emphasizes the expressive power of color, and the artist subjectively processes the natural colors of objective objects, avoiding the reproduction of real colors and instead using the visual impact of color itself to convey emotions and ideas. Together, these characteristics make planarization not only a technical means but also an important artistic language that can deeply express the characteristics of modern visual culture and the personal style of the artist.

2. The Flat Form Language of Chinese Figures in Contemporary Oil Painting

2.1. The development of flat formal language in Chinese oil painting

The development of planarized form language in Chinese oil painting is a history of exchange and integration of Eastern and Western art. Initially, the concept of planarization was introduced to China by Chinese painters who returned from Europe at the beginning of the 20th century. These painters were deeply influenced by Western modernism during

their study abroad, especially the influence of Abstract Expressionism and Cubism. They brought these Western artistic concepts back to China and combined them with the already emphasized flatness of traditional Chinese painting, gradually forming a flat expression with Chinese characteristics (Zhou & Ding, 2023). Over time, especially after the mid-20th century, Chinese oil painting artists began to explore and practice the language of planarization more consciously, striving to inherit the essence of Western art while searching for the possibility of integrating it with traditional Chinese aesthetics. During this period, the application of planarization in Chinese oil painting became more diversified and in-depth. Artists not only pursued the expression of planarization in form, but also incorporated Chinese cultural elements in color, composition, and theme so that the works were full of traditional Chinese philosophical thoughts and aesthetic interests while maintaining a modern visual language. Zao Wou-ki's work 10.1.68 breaks the spatial sense of traditional oil paintings through the simplification and abstraction of colors and lines, directing the viewer's focus to the pure visual form and use of colors, demonstrating a visual effect that transcends reality and a far-reaching oriental mood. Over time, more Chinese artists began to explore the possibilities of graphic language in expressing local culture and themes of modern life. Through such a course of development, the planarized form of language has been deepened in Chinese oil painting, forming a unique artistic style and strengthening the international status and cultural self-confidence of Chinese modern and contemporary art (Yang, 2021).

2.2. The concrete embodiment of the planarized form language of Chinese oil painting characters in the works

In modern and contemporary Chinese oil painting, Jin Shangyi's work "Young Female Singer" shows how Chinese artists integrate the planarized language into traditional Chinese aesthetics. The figures' shapes and color treatments in the painting embody the artistic characteristics of planarization. The facial lines of the figures are simplified, and

contrasts of light and dark are used to enhance the visual effect of the image rather than the traditional three-dimensionality. The choice of background in the painting is also part of Jin's exploration of the language of planarization. The use of the Song Dynasty landscape painting *Snow Scene and Cold Forest* as a background not only demonstrates Jin's deep understanding of and respect for traditional Chinese culture but also creates a visual unity with the figures in the foreground through the flatness of the background, further emphasizing the flatness of the overall work. "Young Female Singer" not only demonstrates Jin Shangyi's artistic practice of skillfully integrating the language of planarization with traditional Chinese aesthetics but also reflects how contemporary Chinese oil painting while absorbing the influence of Western modernism, develops a unique artistic style through localized innovation. This planarized expression not only provides a novel aesthetic experience visually but also culturally expresses a deep exploration of the fusion of Eastern and Western art (Liu, 2009).

2.3. The significance of planarized formal language in Chinese Oil Paintings of figures

The introduction and application of planarized form language in Chinese oil paintings of figures is not only a visual innovation, but also profoundly affects the way of artistic expression and the transmission of cultural meaning. First of all, by emphasizing the two-dimensionality of the picture, planarization breaks the pursuit of perspective and three-dimensionality in traditional oil painting, which enables artists to liberate themselves from Western visual rules and explore forms of expression that are more in line with Eastern aesthetics (Zhang, 2017). In Chinese oil painting, the application of planarization is often combined with the flatness of traditional Chinese painting to create a new visual language, which pays more attention to the rhythmic beauty of lines and colors rather than mere imitation of forms. Secondly, the use of planarized formal language in Chinese oil paintings of figures also reflects the efforts of modern Chinese artists to seek cultural confidence and express their self-identity in

the global cultural context. Through this form, the artist not only presents the uniqueness of Chinese society and culture but also demonstrates the independence and innovation of Chinese art in the context of globalization. The planarized treatment makes the works visually easy to convey deeper cultural symbols and social meanings, such as a profound exploration and expression of themes such as the conflict between tradition and modernity, and the fusion of Eastern and Western cultures. Finally, the use of planarized formal language opens up a new space of expression for the creation of Chinese oil figures, allowing artists to give free play to a broader field of artistic exploration and promoting the diversified development of Chinese modern art. The exploration and application of this art form not only enriches the artistic expression of Chinese oil painting but also provides a new window for the global art world to understand and appreciate Chinese modern art.

3. Future Development Direction of Flat Form Language of Modern Chinese Oil Painting

3.1. Strengthen the integration of local culture

Strengthening the integration of local culture and graphic form language is not only the inheritance and innovation of traditional Chinese culture but also an important driving force for the development of modern art. First of all, artists should dig deep into the elements of traditional Chinese culture, such as calligraphy, landscape painting, folk crafts, etc., and re-create these elements with modern graphic techniques, to make them not only retain the traditional charm but also have a modern visual impact. For example, integrating traditional line aesthetics and modern color treatment in painting, reinterpreting the classic Chinese painting mood through simplification and abstraction, to make the works more visually tense and culturally deep (Du, 2024). Secondly, artists should actively explore the modern transformation of traditional cultural symbols and give them new vitality through the language of planarized forms. This not only includes the use of visual elements but also involves the

expression of the spiritual connotation of traditional culture. For example, the use of planarized composition and color expression conveys the concept of simplicity and balance in Chinese philosophy, so that the audience can feel the deep cultural meaning and depth of thought while enjoying the works. Once again, strengthening the integration of local culture and planarized formal language also requires promoting theoretical innovation and practical exploration in this field through the combination of academic research and creative practice. Art education institutions should emphasize research in this direction, and cultivate a new generation of artists with a vision of local culture and the ability to innovate in modern art. Through exhibitions, seminars, and international exchanges, they should display and promote the excellent results of the integration of planarized language and local culture, and enhance the influence and competitiveness of Chinese oil painting on the international art stage. Ultimately, this will help to form a planarized art language with Chinese characteristics and the spirit of the times and open up a new path for the development of Chinese oil painting.

3.2. Exploring diversified expression techniques

In the development of contemporary Chinese oil painting, exploring diversified expression techniques expands the creative space of artists and brings audiences a richer and more diversified visual experience. By integrating modern technology and new materials, artists can break through the boundaries of traditional oil painting and create more innovative and personalized works of art. The application of digital technology brings new means of creation to the flat language. Artists can use digital painting software to create on a virtual canvas, experimenting with different compositions, colors, and texture effects, breaking through the physical limitations of traditional media. This technology not only enhances creative flexibility and efficiency but also allows artists to share and communicate their works with a global audience on a digital platform. The use of mixed media further enriches the

expressive power of flat language. Artists can combine oil painting with other art forms, such as printmaking, collage, and installation art, to create multi-layered and multi-dimensional visual effects. For example, by adding different materials such as metal, fabric, or paper to oil paintings, the texture and materiality of the works are enhanced, making the planarized works more vivid and compelling. The use of new materials also provides a broad space for innovation in the language of planarization (Lu, 2023). Artists can explore the use of different materials such as acrylic, ink, and resin to create unique visual effects through various techniques such as splashing, dripping, and scraping. These new materials and techniques not only enhance the expressive power of the works but also make the graphic language more diversified and personalized. By constantly exploring and experimenting with diversified expression techniques, the planarized formal language of contemporary Chinese oil painting will continue to develop and innovate, injecting new vitality into artistic creation and enhancing the artistic value and viewability of the works. In the globalized art environment, this diversified exploration will also further enhance the international influence and competitiveness of Chinese oil painting.

3.3. Emotional and spiritual expression

In future development, focusing on emotional and spiritual expression will become one of the important directions of the planarized language of contemporary Chinese oil painting. Flat language is not only a visual art form but also an important medium for artists to convey emotions and thoughts. In creation, the artist conveys complex emotions and profound thoughts to the audience through simple and powerful lines, color blocks, and compositions, realizing the resonance of the heart and spiritual communication. The simplicity and directness of planarized language make the expression of emotion more pure and strong. Artists can visualize their inner emotional fluctuations and depth of thought through minimalist forms. For example, through bold color contrasts and strong line changes, an artist can

convey a wide range of emotions such as passion, anger, sadness, etc., so that the audience will be visually impacted and resonate in their hearts. Planarized language emphasizes spiritual expression, which makes the works not only visual enjoyment but also a spiritual exploration. Through abstract forms and symbols, artists can explore the meaning of human existence, social issues, cultural conflicts, and other deep-seated themes. For example, in a graphic work, an artist can use simple geometric shapes and color blocks to symbolize the complexity and contradictions of life, thus triggering the viewer's reflection on self and society. In addition, the flexibility and openness of the planarized language allow for more diverse emotional and spiritual expressions. Artists can freely choose and combine different visual elements to create a unique artistic language according to their emotional and ideological needs. This freedom and diversity not only enriches the expressive power of artworks but also makes each work a unique expression of the artist's inner world. By focusing on emotional and spiritual expression, the flat formal language of modern Chinese oil painting will become more deeply rooted in people's hearts and become a bridge for viewers to understand and feel art. This expression not only enhances the artistic value and cultural connotation of the works but also wins more recognition and respect for Chinese oil painting on the global art stage.

3.4. Promoting international exchange and cooperation

In the development of modern Chinese oil painting, promoting international exchanges and cooperation helps Chinese artists absorb and learn from the advanced concepts and techniques of global art, and also enhances the status and influence of Chinese oil painting on the international art stage. International exchanges provide artists with a broad vision and a rich source of inspiration. By participating in international exhibitions, art residency programs, and academic symposiums, Chinese artists can exchange creative experiences and artistic concepts with their counterparts around

the world (Lei, 2022). Such exchanges not only promote the integration of artistic techniques and styles but also enable artists to better understand and express the language of planarized forms in a global cultural context. International cooperation has brought new development opportunities for Chinese oil painting. Through cooperation with international art institutions, galleries, and museums, more Chinese planarized oil paintings have the opportunity to be displayed and promoted overseas. This not only increases the exposure of Chinese oil painting in the international market, but also provides artists with more platforms for creation and display, and promotes the innovation and dissemination of graphic language. International exchanges and cooperation help to improve the level of Chinese art education. Through the introduction of international advanced art education concepts and teaching methods, a new generation of artists with international vision and innovative ability is cultivated. This enhancement of education not only helps to inherit and develop the language of planarization but also lays a solid foundation for the future development of Chinese oil painting. By promoting international exchanges and cooperation, the graphic form language of Chinese oil painting will become more diversified and internationalized. In this open and inclusive creative environment, artists can constantly break through themselves and create richer and more profound artworks. At the same time, this kind of globalized artistic interaction will also promote the mutual understanding and integration of Chinese and Western cultures, injecting new vitality and power into the development of global art.

Summary

Planarized formal language shows its unique artistic charm and far-reaching cultural significance in modern Chinese oil painting. Through the study of planarized language, artists have not only successfully fused the essence of Chinese and Western art, but also created an art form with distinctive characteristics of the times and national

style. The simplicity and directness of this language make the expression of emotion purer and the conveyance of spirit more profound, bringing strong visual impact and spiritual resonance to the audience. At the same time, the research and application of planarized form language still need to be deepened. The modern art world is in a stage of rapid development, and as an art form with great potential, planarized language can bring more possibilities and innovative space for art creation. Continuing to study this field will not only help to enrich the expression of Chinese oil painting but also promote artists to find new inspirations and creative impetus in global cultural exchanges. This continuous exploration will inject new vitality into the modern art world, promote the diversified development of art forms, and enhance the influence and status of Chinese oil painting on the international art stage.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that he has no conflicts of interest to this work.

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