On Image-based Painting Creation

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Abstract. "Image" has a relatively broad definition. In this paper image refers to the image media vision, picture vision, etc., emerged with the development of imaging technology, that is, "photographic image" and "ready-made image", such as photos, image materials, advertising magazines, facsimile printed copies, etc.. The emergence of images seems to erase the meaning of traditional representation painting creation, and bring many challenges to the current art creation. Some people even call for the "death" of painting creation. Indeed, images are convenient, fast and even incomparable to reproduce the details of reality, compared to other artistic means. Image can also quickly capture the objective moment that our naked eye cannot detect efficiently and accurately. However, does this mean that contemporary painting creation will face the crisis of "aphasia"? According to this point of view, this paper discusses the different authenticity of images and paintings, the "translation" of images and the artistic creation of "micro images", hoping to provide reference for the current art creation colleagues when they rely on the image as the "intermediary" to build the relationship between social life and painting creation.

1. The Reality of Image and the Reality of Painting

Painting creation comes from social life, and the image reflects a part of social life. Both belong to the category of materialism thus enjoy certain similarities while still have essentially differences.

In the process of painting creation, artists observe the real life experience, discover the beauty, process the image with rational thinking, and then finally generate the aesthetic image picture in mind. It is worth noticing that such an aesthetic image picture is not a mere reproduction of the image, but a part of the creator's "performance". Though it’s "fuzzy" and uncertain, it has a concrete image compared with the abstract concept. The artist gradually forms the aesthetic image in his mind from the image he sees in his eyes, and constantly processes and transforms the aesthetic image presented in his mind according to his own unique life perception, performance techniques and creative materials, so as to make it clear and perfect, and complete the whole painting. For example, Zheng Banqiao's creative process from "the bamboo in the eyes" to "the bamboo in the chest" to "the bamboo in hand" vividly illustrates the communication steps of the creator[1]. In the painting creation under the prevalence of images, it is difficult for many creators to master the process from "the bamboo in the eyes" to "the bamboo in the chest". They just merely depict the objects, thus leads to their works of creation full of craftmanship and mediocrity. "The Bamboo in the chest" is a leap from perceptual thinking to rational thinking, that is, the deepening the process of image from perceptual to rational, which lays a vital “foundation” for the direct performance of images. "The bamboo in hand" is an important communication process to express the aesthetic
image, a result of the further deepening of "the bamboo in the chest". It can be seen that the image is not the original visual image after the continuous "aesthetic performance" of the three. It may either be simplified or deepened, but it must be "expressed" different from the former.

The use of image imaging devices to "capture" reality to achieve realistic effect can be dated back to the period of Western Classicism. For example, the study of the works of Jean-Auguste Dominique Ingres, French classicism master, reveals that the line depiction used by Ingres is the same as that of the contemporary artist, Andy Warhol. We all know that Warhol's works are created by using slide images, so some people suspect that Ingres used some kind of image imaging technology to achieve such a realistic picture. In the works of Vermeer, a representative of small Dutch painting school, there has been the use of lens dark box technology to form images to assist the completion of painting works. In his work "The Milkmaid", we can see that the author is using the principle of dark box to strengthen the single point perspective relationship, giving the painting a more realistic and authentic visual image. Moreover, when Vermeer's works are printed into black-and-white albums, it is easy to confused them with "photographic works". We find that the size of Vermeer's works is usually similar to the size of the photo paper, which also proves that Vermeer is using imaging technology to paint. But the reason why these works of art masters have such high evaluation is not only relying on image imaging technology to make the works present extremely realistic effect. Undoubtedly, their artistic value cannot be measured only by the realistic techniques, which underestimate the spiritual power of these works. The reality presented by art is just the emotional appeal and spirit atmosphere of the times permeated through the realistic surface of their works, just as Plato saw: "The beauty presented in the works is like a magnet, which can be moved and attracted people who accept him."

2. "Translation" of Images

2.1. "Translation"—The Charm of Painting Language

"Translation" is a process in which the creator chooses a certain painting vocabulary, painting form and painting material. This process also presents the subjective tendency of the artist's painting style which reflects the value of painting, such as realistic, freehand, abstract, and decorative and so on. The application of photographic machines seems to replace the significance of the traditional painting in depicting the "images" of living things, forcing the artists to rethink the art of painting. Paul Cezanne, the father of modernism, made a revolutionary "translation" of the images of social life and nature. He made a bold attempt to express the "purity" of painting. Before him, the impressionists used to depict nature as their main form, but Cezanne's attempt revolutionized the traditional way of creation, making the subject language and "spiritual connotation" of painting as the original intention of creation. The art circles call Cezanne as "the father of modernism" for his thinking on the art of painting: Should he continue to abide by the tradition or bring forth the new? Should he be a standpatter or become a progress maker? Should he stick to a rigid "translation" of images or an artistic "translation"? Clearly, Cezanne chose the latter.

To show the charm of painting language more pure and powerful, Matisse must be mentioned as the representative of Fauvism. When we appreciate Matisse's work “Dance”, we often pay more attention to his formal language of emotional expression and generalization in color instead of his use of color in quantity and the expression of objects. One of the important reasons why painting is irreplaceable lies in its purity. Through Matisse's works, we can see that under the impact of images
on traditional painting, establishing the "painting" of works is the key to distinguish them from images.

Although these art works are drawn from life, they are not aimed at depicting the objective things, and are not limited to the representation of the image paradigm. Instead, they have a new thinking in their composition, color, modeling and other languages, and thus gradually realize the charm of painting ontology language. In the process of sketching, artists have broken the concept of pure reproduction of things, which is also the artistic goal that painting creators should pursue harder under the prevalence of image creation.

2.2. The "Translator" of Images—The Creative Subject

When we study an artist and look at his techniques and colors, we are looking for the unique connotation given by the artist. When appreciating Picasso's Cubism period works, the picture presents a kind of distortion. Many people pursue his painting style. Notably, the early Picasso's works show a conventional realistic expression rather than pursuing a "Cubism" form. Therefore, many art scholars believe that Picasso's late achievements result from his breakthrough in the consolidation of basic skills of painting art and the sublimation of reappearance of realistic techniques and thinking.

Firstly, as a special spiritual producer, artists are required to have a high sensitivity, outstanding aesthetic feeling and rich creative emotions to external things. Only with these qualities can they create artistic works with rich emotions, vivid and moving feelings and thus transcend the image paradigm. Secondly, the painting creation subject must go through hard study and profound cultivation, and be excellent in skills. Thirdly, the artists should have the ability to interpret the creative materials beyond the ordinary people, and keep the creative thinking and enterprising spirit all the time. Finally, as one of the producers of spiritual products, artists should provide the recipients with the enjoyment of "beauty", and the works must have the corresponding artistic appeal, which requires the artist to obtain a basic knowledge structure as well as cultural and ideological cultivation[4].

3. Artistic Creation under "Micro Image"

Generally, artists use what the human eye can directly get from the world material as image materials for artistic creation. With the exchange of disciplines, many scientists have derived into the study of art, while artists also utilize science and technology to explore new art forms. With the application of microscope, the images that can't be directly observed by human eyes, that is, "microscopic images", cannot be seen. Under the light, such “micro images” present the same characteristics of shape, color, and body structure, which is no less than the works of contemporary painting artists. This undoubtedly opens a new door for artists in the creation based on image materials[5].

At present, there is a lack of research on the use of "micro image" for artistic creation at home and abroad. So far, there is no recognized definition on such creative direction. Some artists and scientists have made artistic attempts in the field of "micro image", bringing its artistic beauty to the audience.

Among the art creation in the micro world, Wu Quande, Shen Haijun, Shi Donglu, Li Yiheng and etc. have carried out exploratory research on nanotechnology and nano art in China. The successful
holding of the first international nano art science exhibition and the first international nano art forum in Suzhou has brought a new perspective to the audience. Professor Shi Donglu also explained the definition of nano art on the day of the exhibition: "Nano art is the use of artistic imagination to recreate and illustrate the results presented by nanoscience... As long as the artistic creation is using scientific elements in these fields on the nanoscale scale can be defined as nano art..." In the exhibition, we can see many excellent works with various expression forms.

In addition to the exploration of nano art, American artist Annupton uses a unique painting method, namely "fluid" technique. By observing the color, shape and structure of micro images, such a painting is called "fluid painting". In her works, she did not use brushes and other painting tools, but used painting pigments, and other comprehensive materials through natural flow and artificial shaking to form a random picture. When we observe her works, the colors are rich and natural. There are a lot of micro images and material beauty in her paintings, which give people a mysterious feeling and are no less than the visual impact of contemporary decorative paintings. In recent years, people are paying more and more attention to the visual feeling of "fluid painting" under the condition of aesthetic fatigue for some traditional paintings.

In the use of micro images to create, some micro material can be used directly as a "brush" for artistic creation. In her representative works, Maria Penil, an artist from England, directly implants bacteria from the micro world into a Petri dish. The Petri dish is used as a "drawing board" to create a breeding environment in a suitable temperature and space, so that the bacteria can grow naturally until the desired picture is made and bring the audience a feeling of "beauty". The "micro art" creation introduced by Penil is generally completed by scientists and artists, which is a reflection of the integration of disciplines.

With the integration of disciplines, the art world began to seek inspiration in the micro world, explore the future, rely on the means of scientific and technological progress, broaden people's perspective of observing the material world, and excavate the "micro image" art creation mode. It is likely that with the joint efforts of artists, designers or scientists, an independent and recognized art category will be formed. However, the author believes that whether it is the creation of "traditional images" or the attempt of art to intervene in "micro images", it is of vital importance to grasp the subject language of art which cannot be neglect even with an inclusive acceptance attitude. The creation based on the "micro image" is not the mere representation of the micro world, it gives us a wonderful visual experience that artist should use their "magic wand" of art to better show the audiences.

With the collision of science and art, the development of image is bound to be affected by the development of painting, vice versa. How to deal with the relationship between the two is inseparable from the main body of creation. The author thinks that contemporary artists, besides the above mentioned requirements for traditional artists, shall equip with the creative concept and aesthetic view keeping pace with the times: First, they should be familiar with the technology and equipment needed for creation in the era of science and technology, and have the creative means that keep pace with the times; Second, they should be involved in the knowledge related to contemporary art creation and accumulate related experience. Third, they should always pay attention to the current social living environment, excavate the truth, goodness and beauty of human society, and combine these feelings with the quality of works, so as to have the creative theme of keeping pace with the times. Finally, when treating other art works, they should have an inclusive reception attitude, so that artists can go further.
4. Conclusion

In the era of "image" prevailing, we may inevitably use images to create paintings. The key to interpret the differences between art works and images, and show the unique charm of the subject language of painting lies in the understanding of the differences between images and painting and showing the unique charm of painting subjective language. That is also the way to return language to the painting creation which is on the verge of losing-language crisis.

References


