

A Brief Discussion of the Spiritual Connotation in Modern Oil Painting Still Life

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Abstract:

From the independence of still life painting as a discipline to the great changes in art in the 19th century and then to the diversification of still life in oil painting now, modern painters do not focus solely on the performance of still life itself as the ultimate goal, but rather painters have begun to pay more attention to the psychological feelings of the objective object and the embodiment of emotions, through the embodiment of the spiritual connotation of this picture also makes the easel painting attached to the artistic, diversified. Artists have used objects to express their “emotions”, enriching the connotations of the objective objects themselves, and giving the static objects a “life”. This essay begins with the works of modern painters and uses them as a basis for discussing the spiritual connotations of still life painting. The essay will be divided into two chapters, the first on the manifold manifestations of spiritual connotations and the second on the spiritual expression of the content of oil paintings of still life. In this way, the embodiment of spiritual connotation in still life painting will be revealed.

Keywords:

Language of Still Life Painting, Spiritual Connotation, Painting Concept, Emotional Symbolism

1. The Manifold Expression of Spiritual Emotion in Oil Painting Still Life

1.1. Colour

For artists to express their emotions, colour is undoubtedly the fastest way to convey them. Through the purity, brightness and saturation of colour, it can cause the artist to express his emotions, and it can also allow the viewer to make different emotional associations.

The use of colour in the works of Edvard Munch, a pioneer of modern expressionism, is extremely subjective and unrestrained. The use and understanding of colour in his paintings is inseparable from Munch's own childhood environment

and experiences, which led to Munch's bold and flexible use of colour in his pictures. Yellow Wood is one of a series of works by Munch that focus on the subject of wood, and his main reason for creating this subject is to represent the trajectory of human life. A fallen tree trunk runs the length of the painting, taking the eye deeper into the forest. The use of yellow also symbolises the continuity of life and hope, and possibly a spiritual pillar of Munch's life. For Munch, painting was the only outlet for his emotions, finding a pictorial language to express his physical and mental suffering in all its glory. Even painting these static objects was for him a dialogue with his own spiritual world. We can also get a deep glimpse of his emotional expression and catharsis - a personal monologue of fear and sadness towards death [1]. His other series are painted in this way, the subjective colours, the gloomy atmosphere, the sadness and loneliness of the images are all a reflection of Munch's life. Thus we can feel the difficulty and pain of life when we view Munch's work.

1.2. The Language of Painting

Usually we choose a painting language when we work, such as realistic, realistic, abstract, figurative and so on. The use of language is the booster of our emotions in our work. Fine realistic language, bold abstract language, hazy imagery and so on all help to bring the viewer into the work and resonate with the language of the picture. The works of modern hyper-realist painter Leng Jun, for example, use extreme realism to reveal the objective objects to the public without reservation, giving them a chilling effect after viewing.

Leng Jun's "Bound Linen" is one of the works in his "Old Objects" series, in the centre of which is a chair with a bundle of linen on top. The objects are so detailed and smooth that you can recall all the traces of your past life. Leng Jun's other works, such as The Story of the Horse Lantern and The Cow's Horn, use realistic methods to convey emotions through "objects". "The Story of the Lantern" is created by Leng Jun in 1991, what the picture draws is the old kerosene lamp, rosewood chair, porcelain bowl, etc., some old objects are combined together to depict, realistic technique, warm yellow tone, overlooking composition method, a memory of the past show in people's mind. In addition to the realistic approach, the pursuit of truth and the momentary capture of one's emotions can also be felt in the abstract still life works of modern painter Yan Ping. Wu Weishan, Director of the National Art Museum of China, has commented on Yan Ping's work: "The whole picture expresses the atmosphere, overflowing with the modern expression of the meaning of oriental aesthetics. I believe that her art can convey the voice of the times." Her works reflect traces of localisation as well as democratisation, turning the idea of painting into a visual language to express it. The work "The Sting" expresses the emotional changes that arise from the constant change of the seasons. The main colour of the painting is grey, and the frantically growing branches of peach trees in the painting symbolise the arrival of spring, using abstract lines to convey the impulse that comes with the sting. Her work is always alive, with new stylistic approaches, unique colour palettes, flowing brushstrokes, etc., and her paintings always touch our hearts when we look at them. The formal meaning and the rhythm of "qi" in her works are present throughout her creation.

2. Spiritual Expression of the Content of Oil Still Life

2.1. The Transmission of the Spirit of Society in Leng Jun's Works

When it comes to “realism”, the famous contemporary Chinese painter Leng Jun is the most representative figure. In terms of composition, language of expression and visual effect, Leng Jun's works always bring great shock to people. Leng Jun's works are often presented in front of the public with intuitive images, giving the viewer a strong touch, which in turn causes human beings to reflect on the world civilisation and to question themselves. The series “Net - Designing About Nets” also speaks to the impact of industrial culture. Heritage - New Product Design, with its yellow earth wrapped around an old engine, is an image of the times and reflects the suffering brought about by the industrial revolution, another mark of history. In Monument, an engine is placed vertically in the centre of the picture, with rubble and steel beneath it, seemingly celebrating the prosperity brought about by industry, while the sadness of the picture seems to be a metaphor for the ills of industrialisation, and for the author prefers the sad metaphor in the work. Leng Jun's famous Century Landscape No. 3 is a representative work in the Century Landscape series. The theme of this work comes from the news of the collapse of a luxury building in Seoul, Korea. chaotic scenes. The image of steel and rubble and the colourful children's toys create a strong clash and give the viewer a powerful shock and impact on how weak, helpless and powerless human life is in these times of rapid development of cold industrial civilisation [2], and through the work, it also attempts to guide people to pay attention to natural ecology, protect life and live in harmony with ecology. The composition of Century View No. 4 is similar to that of Century View No. 3 in that it uses old syringes, old bed sheets and scalpels to create the shape of a world map on a tattered hospital bed, with a yellowish-green hue and a sense of loneliness and indifference, trying to convey the idea that humanity is gradually being controlled by disease. The simple and brutal form of the composition intuitively allows the viewer to grasp the main idea of the image, not for the sake of formal and linguistic beauty, but for the emotional output of the subject. The revelatory nature between these compositions can be drawn from many of his works. The decorative creative effect of *The Five-Pointed Star*, the intuitive fullness of the compositional form, the folds, welds and traces of rust vaguely evoking physical and mental scars [3], is even more of a stigma. Among Leng Jun's creations, the most intuitive methods are used to bring the viewer a powerful spiritual force and provoke deeper thoughts. Leng Jun's work is not simply a representation of an object, but a deeper excavation, a questioning of himself and society. This is a way of drawing the attention of the public and trying to find a solution to this reality, but on the other hand it is also a lamentation of reality.

2.2. The “Old Artefacts” in Duan Zhengqu’s Still Life Paintings

Born in Henan, Duan Zhengqu, like most of his contemporaries, was deeply influenced by the realism of his time. Most of his paintings are depictions of real life in the northern Central Plains. Duan Zhengqu's paintings differ from those of the artists who represent the Central Plains in that the content presented in the paintings is more of a communication of inner emotions. The simplification of objects, the distortion of lines and the thick brushstrokes are typical of his paintings, which feel loose and free. Duan Zhengqu's regional paintings are distinguished from those of his contemporaries by a distinctive approach to painting. For example, in Duan Zhengqu's Still Life from 1996, the whole picture is in brown, without any colour tendency, and the contrast between light and dark is obvious. The form, colour and brushwork of the painting meticulously reflect the simple, unpretentious appearance of the countryside, but also contain an inherent magnificent beauty. Duan Zhengqu's still life paintings always evoke memories of past lives from ordinary “old objects”. Duan Zhengqu's

depictions of the landscape of northern Shaanxi are also very striking. For example, in Duan Zhengqu's 1992 painting "Burning in the North", a table, a pot of wine, a wine goblet and a plate of vegetables are depicted in large areas of reddish-brown, with clumsy brushstrokes that express the rustic nature of the people of northern Shaanxi and their simple living environment, and the use of colour and light in the painting shows the deep regional temperament of northern Shaanxi, conveying an evocative spiritual meaning. This work is very different from previous still life paintings in terms of colour and subject matter. The picture portrays the culture of the opera troupe in Henan, with a predominantly grey palette, naturally revealing the image on the canvas and showing the high artistic beauty of the still life. The use of red in several places in the scene enlivens the atmosphere and one can feel Duan Zhengqu's nostalgia and love for the Chinese culture. The form of this corner of the table creates an infinite association for the viewer. Duan Zhengqu's still life paintings are not just about the painting of still life, but also about the social phenomena behind the still life, which he uses to convey his thoughts on society and his aesthetic feelings. He uses still life paintings to appeal to the simplicity and goodness of people's hearts [4]. For example, Duan Zhengqu's series of paintings of northern Shaanxi are generalised, surreal and crude, showing the distinctive characteristics of the people of northern Shaanxi. Duan Zhengqu's works use a different approach to figurative realism, incorporating the language of expression into his paintings, portraying the simple image of the peasant with subtlety and individuality, and with a colour palette that is very much in keeping with the connotations of his work.

2.3. Anselm Kiefer's "Ruin" Art

A ruin is literally the desolation of a place after it has been damaged or destroyed. The cultural situation in Germany after the Second World War and the experiences of his childhood led to the creation of Kiefer's "ruin" art. The ruins in Kiefer's art formed a unique artistic form in which desolation, loneliness, dilapidation and desolation are expressed in Kiefer's images. "The art form of the ruin rises to a philosophical level in Kiefer's pictures and is a medium for expressing the spirit of tragedy [5]. Kiefer's work is not a subjective creation, but a reflection of reality and a foretaste of the future, and a sense of loneliness and desolation is felt after viewing his work. Nuremberg" uses hay, bark and iron in combination with oil paint, and the surrounding landscape is very desolate, using this form of presentation to denounce the hazards of war and to suggest the misery of people's lives and the pain of life. The painting *Flowers of Ashes* presents a Nazi site, a reminder of the Second World War. A bit of perspective is used to enhance the depth of the image, and a cool grey tone is depressing and heavy, with off-white tones enveloping the image, graphically portraying the tragic aftermath of the war, the dilapidated, drab and tattered ruins, a reminder of history, a record of its cruelty and grief. In the midst of the deadly silence, Kiefer's compositions can also be seen to offer hope for life. In *Opus 6*, the painting adopts the abstract expression method to express it. Several pinks, blues and reds in the gray tone are more bright, showing the solemn and grand atmosphere in the picture in a simple way, and a powerful spiritual power fills the whole picture. For example, *Margrethe* is based on the story of the Nazi concentration camps, combining wheat straw and oil paint in an effort to create a desolate scene. The dazzling fire candles flickering on the grey and white dead grass in the picture symbolise the women of Germany, and the rising wheat straw is a metaphor for hope after the war, not giving up the desire for life and the nation's will to never give up in the grey environment.

Ankim Kiefer's still life works are a break from the concept of still life. Rather than just copying the objective object, he incorporates the powerful spiritual force of the human heart into his images, giving them a strong national character and a historical dimension [6]. For example, Kiefer also created many works about sunflowers, which grow vigorously against a cold white background, transforming the positive power of the heart into an image on the canvas, achieving a high degree of integration of form and emotion, and further enriching the allegorical meaning of the creation.

3. Conclusions

With the continuous development of painting, the development of still life painting has not stopped, and the content of the picture, the language of expression, and the conveyance of emotion have also been changing in line with the development of the times. 17th and 18th century still life painting focused on the portrayal of objects, delicate and delicate descriptions, and the reproduction of objective objects, a series of painting formulas that made still life painting lack spiritual connotation. Modern painting, on the other hand, has steadily evolved in a way that allows for a fuller expression of the connotations of the painting, and for the purely spiritual output of the painting, bringing the static still life object "to life". This essay focuses on an analysis of individual examples to demonstrate that the spiritual connotations of still life painting have been conveyed since the modern era, and that contemporary painters have generally placed the conveyance of emotion above all else, raising the status of painting. It also allows painting to be less for the group and more for the public. Through the use of painting, social phenomena are conveyed, resonating with the public and conveying some spiritual connotations. Contemporary still life painting's varied compositions, linguistic forms and content have also broadened our understanding and exploration of art. Today we still need to be humble and patient in our approach to art, constantly learning to understand and create, enriching our own artistic cultivation and aesthetic vision, improving our own understanding of the discovery of beauty, and still developing art with a critical eye, so that we can create even more outstanding and dazzling works.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is not conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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