

On the Use of Preconceptions in Wu Guanzhong's Paintings

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Abstract:

Presupposition is an important element in the creation of paintings, and it is embedded in the whole process of the artist's creation. The article focuses on Wu Guanzhong's paintings from various periods and analyses the use of preconception. It is hoped that through the study of presuppositions, it will provide some practical value and reference to current painting creation.

Keywords:

Presuppositional, Wu Guanzhong, Painting

1. The Use of "Primary Colours"

Wu Guanzhong's works from the 1950s are few and far between, with Zashlunbu Monastery being the most representative. The creation of Zashlunbu Monastery is a direct manifestation of Wu Guanzhong's most typical preconceived element, the 'transposition of flowers'. In Wu Guanzhong's words: "Snow-capped mountains, waterfalls, tall trees, wild flowers and so on in different directions and locations were moved at speed, creating an unusual scene in my illusion. Since then, I have often used this organic law of moving flowers and mountains to create images." [2] It was from this stage onwards that this pre-determined approach became the dominant way in which Wu Guanzhong created his paintings. It was out of this self-consciousness that the main pre-determined elements of Wu Guanzhong's painting were established.

In addition, Wu Guanzhong attaches particular importance to the role of illusion, he believes that "illusion, is driven by feelings and presented the true form, is the gods of art", [8] also advised students "when operating the picture is never pieced together, so that Mount Lu and Mount Tai do not distinguish, West Lake and Taihu Lake one colour. The main purpose is to highlight the theme idea and the characteristics of the object, emphasizing the aspects of the author's own feelings." [9] After all, it is precisely this feeling that inspired the idea of moving the flowers around, and it is no wonder that Wu Guanzhong exclaims that "illusion is the mother of painting, illusion awakens the author's feelings, revealing the tendencies of his taste and its qualities." [7] However, illusion is not an element of chance, an element that is beyond the artist's control, indefinable. As has already been mentioned, nothing that is within the artist's control, nothing that reflects subjective initiative, should be interpreted as

accidental, and it is not rigorous or objective enough to classify words such as “feelings” and “sensations” as accidental. It is clear from the above that the ‘illusion’ Wu Guanzhong refers to serves to inspire and refine the composition of the picture, unlike the superficial preconception of the idea, and is deeply rooted in the artist’s heart, acting in some invisible form on the picture, influencing and even dictating its conceptual layout. This ‘illusion’ is similar to the ‘critical senses’ mentioned by Francis Bacon, in other words, it is intrinsic to the artist, subjective and active, a concentrated expression of the artist’s knowledge of what he is doing and what he is not doing.

2. The Use of the “Silver And Grey Period”

In the 1970s, as the social environment of the Cultural Revolution became more relaxed, Wu Guanzhong’s painting entered the ‘silver and grey period’. At this time, his works were mainly in silvery-grey tones, mainly representing the scenery of the south of the Yangtze River, finding a suitable intermediary for the nationalisation of oil painting. During this period, Wu Guanzhong produced a number of works of formal beauty, which were also more prominent in their pre-determined expression.

When confronted with a flock of geese on Taihu Lake, Wu Guanzhong recalls Li Gonglin’s painting of a horse, which was exquisitely rigorous but lost its overall effect, so he learned a lesson: “He strives to capture the variation of the white colour, but must also outline the demeanour of the geese. Although he is not concerned with detail, he must firmly grasp the gathering and scattering of the white blocks on the silvery lake, and their collision. The abstract rhythm in between. The black fishing boat is the lever, the scale, holding down the smoothness of the picture; the red dot is the key stroke to the white into the geese, although the point is hurried, the stroke is actually a thousand pounds” [3]. It is through the self-consciousness of formal beauty that ‘Taihu Geese’ grasps the overall concept, and mobilises the feeling of illusion to abstract the overall rhythm, so that the picture achieves a relaxed and joyful effect that can be felt but not expressed. The creation of Qingdao Red House (1975) is similar to that of Taihu Geese, in that one is a group of buildings and the other a flock of geese, both of which attach importance to overall layout and visual perception. Wu Guanzhong borrows from Utrillo’s approach to the Red Building, using ‘a combination of large and small blocks and the sparseness of lines to create a sense of space and depth’. [3]

When Wu Guanzhong came to Jiangnan in 1980 to sketch, his sense of abstraction gradually awakened, and the abstract elements become more and more evident in “The House in Jiangnan”. Through the densely packed houses of Jiangnan, Wu Guanzhong distils the formal structure of ‘horizontal, straight, wide, narrow, rising, falling, entering and exiting’. Wu Guanzhong began to move away from the representation of the objects themselves and instead intensified the compositional relationships, as the strings of the kites began to become thinner and longer. The mainstream position of pre-determination in his work has not changed substantially, but the removal of concrete objects has shifted to a greater emphasis on subjective feelings, and the picture is still essentially based on formal composition, only the figurative component has been reduced.

Generally speaking, the “primary colour period” and the “silver and grey period” tend to be more superficial in their use of preconceptions, based on the preconceptions of specific objects. Whether it is “moving and sketching” or “moving and sketching”,

to a certain extent it is still bound to objects. From the 1980s onwards, however, the intervention of ink and wash and an increased sense of abstraction led to a greater depth of prefiguration in Wu Guanzhong's paintings.

3. The Use of the “Plain White Period”

In the 1980s Wu Guanzhong's work gradually shifted from oil painting to ink and colour, and his images became more abstract in appearance.

One of Wu Guanzhong's most satisfying works is “Two Swallows”, which he made in 1981 when he and his postgraduate student Zhong Shuheng were sketching in the Zhoushan Islands and were attracted by the nearby houses, but time was short and they were only sketched in a hurry. These dwellings are the parent of The Two Swallows. So it is true that chance is sometimes magical, but it is hard to explain, but it does inspire the artist. Wu Guanzhong recorded the following after completing Double Swallow: “Double Swallow focuses on flat divisions and geometric combinations, with strong contrasts between the long horizontal lines and white blocks and the short vertical black blocks. The geometry of Mondrian's picture seeks simplicity and simplicity, but its emotional disclosure is too vague, or even zero. The Double Swallow is a clear expression of oriental sentiment; even though the swallows have flown away, the feeling of home remains.” It is evident that Wu Guanzhong has a strong preconception, which is expressed in the conscious formal conception and purposeful emotional expression. At the same time, Wu Guanzhong borrows from Mondrian's geometric compositions, but in a way that differs greatly from his conception of art. Mondrian believed that ‘universal beauty is not expressed through nature itself, but through pure relations’ [4]. His emphasis on purely stylised relationships, purely rational thinking, and the rejection of all emotional components, clearly runs counter to Wu Guanzhong's conception of art. Wu Guanzhong gives Double Swallow an ethnic, oriental sensibility, expressing an oriental poetry within a western formal pursuit. Although the formal language is almost abstract, all three works are derived from the concrete images of the dwellings in Jiangnan and the genuine feelings of the countryside, and the pre-determined elements in them are like the strings of a kite, long and thin with depth.

4. The Use of the “Black Period”

In the 1990s, Wu Guanzhong's ‘kites’ flew higher and higher, and their ‘pre-determined nature’ became less and less obvious.

At this point in his career, Wu Guanzhong no longer confined himself to the objects in his sketches. “The sturdy standing figure gives a strong impression to the eye, and the sturdy figure falling to the ground gives an even stronger impression, even almost a thrill. People often cry out when they see a wrestling warrior suddenly fall to the ground. From standing to prone, there is movement; from vertical to horizontal, there are intricate lines that suggest movement. One of the four cypresses lies like a reclining dragon, and without it, the picture is loose. It is the cornerstone of the composition. It is not straight, but twisted and turned throughout; it is a reclining dragon, but at times it leaps with its head held high. So the branches on the high side summon the branches on the low side, the branches on the left climb with the branches on the right, thick and thin, sparse and dense, and the lines of thick ink then unfold first of all in the eight formations, occupying the entire landscape - the Xuan paper world of two feet. In order to strengthen the sense of movement, the lines of

heavy grey are then interlaced, overlapped or supplemented by the ink lines, which at the same time reveal the texture and volume of the old trees, both as a framework for the lines and with splashes of colour. [3] This is a very detailed account of Wu Guanzhong's preconceived ideas at the time of the creation of Chinese Cypress, recorded after its creation. In his later work, *Awakening*, Wu Guanzhong "no longer confines himself to the clear, strange, ancient and monstrous masters, but rather expresses the rising of the fallen, the awakening of the sleeping, with thick lines rising and thin lines flowing through, coloured blocks and dots flying, the late spring and early spring, trying his best to express the awakening of life" [3]. The presentation of the painting is indeed more abstract than that of *The Chinese Cypress*, and the image of the cypress is concealed, in order to highlight the 'awakening of life', which is, of course, Wu Guanzhong's intentional aim.

It is clear that the abstract images are not accidental, but rather a deliberate effort on Wu Guanzhong's part, focusing on the expression of emotion and feeling in the overall conception, full of pre-determined elements. Wu Guanzhong was always highly self-conscious in the creation of his paintings, knowing exactly what he was pursuing, perhaps in a process full of spiralling movements of 'negation and negation', but inevitably without his overall control, which was no longer focused on scientific, figurative compositions, but rather on more complex internal factors such as emotion and This control is no longer focused on scientific, figurative compositions, but on more complex internal factors such as emotions, feelings, etc., which are "the mother of inspiration for the work, that is, the feelings of the people" [1].

5. Conclusions

Through a specific analysis of Wu Guanzhong's four artistic periods, it can be seen that Wu Guanzhong's paintings were always characterised by preconceptions and manifested in multiple forms. The preconceptions of the Primary Colour Period and the Silver Grey Period were mainly conceptual compositions in pursuit of formal beauty and tended towards superficial preconceptions, while the preconceptions of the Plain White Period and the The pre-determinations of the "Plain White Period" and the "Brilliant Black Period" began to gradually turn to the inner factors, simplifying and purifying the formal composition on the basis of not departing from formal beauty, and expressing inner feelings in a more pure language of points, lines and surfaces. Thus, it seems that pre-determination still plays a role in controlling the overall situation.

Conflicts of Interest

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