

Study on Impressionist Color Expression from the Perspective of East Asian Aesthetics

Guoliang Mu^{1*}, Xiaofei Lyu²

¹ Department of Modern Art, Graduate School of Arts, Gunsan National University of Korea, Korea

² China University of Mining and Technology, Xuzhou, China

Email Address

1160616485@qq.com (Guoliang Mu), 791479671@qq.com (Xiaofei Lyu)

*Correspondence: 1160616485@qq.com

Received: 10 August 2023; **Accepted:** 31 August 2023; **Published:** 22 September 2023

Abstract:

The expression of Impressionist colors is mainly reflected in Impressionist paintings and Impressionist music. This paper chooses Impressionist and painting colors as the research objects to analyze and study the expression of Impressionist colors from the perspective of East Asian aesthetics. First, it studies the related concepts of Impressionist colors and analyzes the Asianization of Impressionism from the perspective of East Asian aesthetics. Then, it puts forward the expression theory of Impressionist colors in the East Asian aesthetic perspective, and further interprets the expression of Impressionist colors in the East Asian aesthetic perspective, in order to provide an effective reference for the study of related arts.

Keywords:

East Asian Aesthetics, Impressionist Colors. Performance Study

1. Introduction

East Asian aesthetics has three different aesthetic landscapes. The first one is traditional East Asian aesthetics, which appeared before Western aesthetics was introduced into East Asia and manifested as traditional East Asian aesthetics. The second kind of aesthetics came into being after the Western aesthetics entered East Asia. It summarized and analyzed the traditional East Asian aesthetics in the framework of Western aesthetics, and formed the aesthetic theory with the special texture of East Asia. The third kind regards western aesthetics as universal aesthetics, and tells Western aesthetics based on the universality of aesthetics. Impressionist paintings mainly pursue natural light and color, and depict highly artistic pictures through superb techniques, which is an important content of modern art aesthetics. The study of the color expression of Impressionist painting under the East Asian aesthetic vision provides important aesthetic reference value for Chinese art creators, and further promotes the progress of Chinese traditional painting art.

2. Impressionist colors

2.1. Overview of Impressionist colors

Impressionism grew out of modernism in the 19th century. The Impressionist painters combined the essence of realistic painting to further study the expression of outdoor natural light in painting. Impressionist painters sought to show the changes of light through the picture and brush strokes in their paintings. At the same time, this is also consistent with the color theory in natural science in the 19th century, which believes that the color change of objects is mainly generated by light, and the same object will form different colors under the influence of light in different external environments [1]. In this context, Impressionist painters in order to seek the wisdom of the true expression of “light”, the use of color blocks to show the effect of light in the colorful color picture[1]. At the same time, he also has a unique view on the color expression of shadows under the light, and believes that shadows actually have color changes, negating the painting theory of inherent colors under the traditional painting concept, and forming a unique artistic expression form.

1.2. Features of Impressionist painting

First of all, Impressionist painting emphasizes sketching, emphasizing that the focus of painting is the change of outdoor sunlight and nature, so Impressionist painters often need to quickly complete the painting within a fixed time, so Impressionist paintings have the characteristics of bold and decisive. Secondly, Impressionist painting theory emphasizes the change of painting color, and does not pay attention to the shape and outline of the object. In order to pursue a pure color other than black to the artist's vision of light and color expression, Impressionist painters often used to paint in nature. Finally, in order to better represent the image of light and color, the Impressionist painters integrated the study of optics and color into the painting, emphasizing that color comes from and is produced in the light line, the study will be unified performance of color and light, and use the change of color to show the change of light, creating the change of color in the reflected light. For color, the Impressionists created a new color spectrum: red, orange, yellow, green, cyan, blue, and purple. Black, brown and red colors in the traditional painting spectrum are excluded, and blue, dark green and deep purple are used as dark colors. In addition, compared with traditional paintings, Impressionist paintings put more emphasis on the sensory and light color depiction of realistic scenery, and contained subjective feelings in objective phenomena.



Figure 1. *Naked Woman in the Sun.*

For example, *Naked Woman in the Sun* shows the change of light and color through the transformation of strokes (Figure 1). It shows the mottled light with different strokes, and paints the background of the painting with strong contrast colors such as yellow, green and blue, which shows the abstractness of the background while not affecting the performance of the main task. At the same time, the color changes of the figures in the shadows are rich. The spots on the figures in the painting echo with the bright colors in the background of the picture, so that the background and figures achieve a high correlation, showing the sense of rhythm and change between light and color [2].

3. Impressionist Colors in East Asian Aesthetics

3.1. *East Asian aesthetics and Impressionist colors*

The concept of “aesthetics” originated in modern Western Europe. It is a philosophy of the integration of art, perceptual cognition and understanding of beauty. The current understanding of aesthetics should be combined with Western European aesthetics. However, in Western Europe, people’s perceptual understanding of beauty and art is not consistent with the understanding of Oriental people. Meanwhile, with the development of society and the deepening of aesthetics, the concept of beauty in Western Europe aesthetics will also change with the changes of history. Therefore, to study the development of Impressionism in East Asia, it is necessary to study the history of its introduction and analyze its influence on the color of Chinese art.

Taking China’s expressive oil painting as an example, China’s expressive oil painting has experienced three stages of development, which is the process of continuous learning, integration and innovation of Western impressionist oil painting by Chinese optimized artists, reflecting the changes and development of The Times. The first stage is the 20th century Chinese oil painting artists, such as Xu Beihong and so on. They combined the artistic conception of ink painting in Chinese painting with western expressive oil painting, and formed expressive oil painting with Chinese characteristics, such as Lin Fengmian’s *Chinese Opera Series*, *The Legend of the White Snake*, etc. (Figure 2). Oil painting in this period used traditional Chinese ink painting techniques to depict the thick color structure of Western oil painting, with full colors and characters with Chinese style [3]. Through the application of western colors, the dynamic sense of the opera stage is displayed in the picture, while the beauty of the lines of the characters is displayed in the painting with the help of Chinese ink painting style, which vividly interprets the emotional colors in the painting. The second stage of the development of Chinese expressive oil painting came into being in the middle of the 20th century. Chinese artists studied the development of Chinese expressive oil painting deeply while drawing lessons from predecessors’ artistic painting methods, taking Wu Guanzhong’s *Lotus Flower* as an example (Figure 3). In the first stage of the integration of oil painting, the color further shows the conflict and combination between the traditional Chinese freehand painting and the western Impressionist expressive language. Combining local feeling in traditional Chinese aesthetics with optimized color and line in Western Impressionism, it fully expresses the charm of eastern aesthetics and creates a new way of artistic expression in Chinese oil painting. In the third stage, while integrating the color expression form and subjective expression language of Eastern and Western Impressionist paintings, Chinese optimization artists combined with the current situation of the development of The Times to show the overall performance

optimization with Chinese characteristics, highlighting the freehand characteristics of traditional Chinese painting with the performance of colors.



Figure 2. *The Legend of the White Snake in Chinese Opera Series*



Figure 3. *Lotus.*

It is worth noting that Chinese Impressionist paintings' recognition of Western Impressionist paintings in terms of painting style and techniques does not mean that Impressionist paintings in East Asian aesthetics have been completely "westernized". The development of Impressionist paintings in East Asian aesthetics has the unique knowledge and understanding of East Asian aesthetic artists on things, forming Impressionist art with East Asian aesthetic characteristics. With the development of global economy, East Asian aesthetic artists observe the development of world art from a global perspective. The stylistic characteristics and color characteristics of Impressionism art promote the development and reform of East Asian aesthetic painting art, forming a painting system with East Asian aesthetic art style, which reflects the innovation and development of East Asian aesthetic painting art.

2.2. Chinese oil painting and Impressionist color expression

The development of Chinese traditional oil painting peaked in the late 20th century. With the rise of the market economy at that time, the development of Chinese art also entered an active period. The increasing demand for oil painting in the market promotes the continuous development of oil painting, and Chinese oil painting gradually transforms from a single realistic painting style into a personalized and diversified form of artistic expression. Through the diversified painting styles, the pursuit of impressionist art is expressed, and the deeper understanding of Impressionist painting art is gradually entered, which greatly promotes the development of contemporary art in China. Through the analysis of the history of modern optimization development in China, it is not difficult to find that contemporary painters have more or less displayed the characteristics of impressionism in oil painting [4], for example, Pan Yuliang's "Song of Spring" and "Beside the Suzhou River" (Figure 4 and Figure 5) use Impressionist external light techniques to express the operation and maintenance of eastern emotions in the paintings; Qin Xuafu's "Chongqing Terraces" shows the change of light levels with color (Figure 6), which has a strong form of impressionist painting expression. This shows the influence of Impressionist painting art on modern painting in China, and reflects the emphasis of Impressionist painting art on color sense in recent years.



Figure 4. *Song of Spring.*



Figure 5. *Beside the Suzhou River.*



Figure 6. *Chongqing Rice Terraces.*

In terms of color painting techniques, Chinese artists not only learned from the rich brushstroke expression techniques of Impressionism, but also combined the color mixing methods of Impressionism in the arrangement of colors, directly mixing colors on canvas, using the principle of complementary colors to improve the richness and layering of paintings, and showing the characteristics of planarity and decorative painting of Impressionism paintings. Under the guidance of Impressionist painting art, Chinese and Impressionist painting advocated painting in nature and captured the characteristics of instant changes of things.

4. Impressionist Color Expression Theory

4.1. Manifestation of tone

Light and color are the core requirements of Impressionist painting. Impressionist painters express the changes of light rod and color with the help of tone changes in color, forming a harmonious unity between color and the picture, and creating a sense of atmosphere for the picture. In the theory of Impressionist artists, when the object is exposed to light, due to changes in Angle and environment, there will be certain changes and differences in the color of the picture. Therefore, Impressionist painters emphasized the brightness, purity and hue of the color, and took the application of color as the main body of painting, changing the traditional painting form of cold and warm colors, and using a variety of color changes to show the dynamic and hierarchical picture. For example, in Monet's Rouen Cathedral series (Figure 7), the tonal changes of churches at different time periods reflect the spatial and practical changes of churches.

At the same time, for the same hue, the colors of different Spaces also have the difference between cool colors and warm colors. The Impressionist painters have different ways of applying cool and warm colors in the same tone, and the painting atmosphere is also different. For example, Monet used warm and cold tones to show

the changes of light and shadow under subjective feelings, combined with his own perception and understanding of the object, and did not use specific painting objects as the main content of the color arrangement. Pissarro uses complementary and warm and cold colors, reflecting a strong contrast color, the use of color and hue contrast and unity, showing a strong sense of space in the picture. In the paintings of Impressionist artists, the change of light and shadow is usually expressed by the use of tone, reflecting the change of the environment, light source and the inherent color of the object, through the change of tone purity, brightness, etc., to show the richness and hierarchy of the picture, reflecting the change of the picture space.



Figure 7. Rouen Cathedral.

4.2. The expression of color

In traditional painting, the application of color expression is usually to blend and harmonize colors in the picture, combining the artist's own understanding of color and the law of color to adjust the color that matches the painting object. With the rise of Impressionism, Impressionist painters paid more attention to the integrity of color, and expressed specific objects with different brushstrokes and different color levels. Through the Impressionist painter's rich color block expression, with a variety of color layout and superposition so that the viewer can intuitively feel the three-dimensional sense of the painting in the picture.

When depicting the space of the picture, Impressionist artists often use different spatial expressions to reproduce the color strokes, and in the process of expressing the color space feelings, they also mostly use intuitive color feelings to express. Impressionist painters usually use contrasting colors to express the contrast of the relationship between the distance and the distance in the picture. The painter's main focus is not on the color change and color feeling of a certain object, but also on the overall spiritual feeling of the whole work. Therefore, when viewing Impressionist paintings, the viewer needs to appreciate the connotation and significance of the painting at a certain distance.

4.3. The emotional expression of color

Artistic conception mainly refers to the painting form in which artists in literary and artistic works connect their subjective feelings and understanding of objective objects when describing them. In Impressionist paintings, there is a certain relationship between subjective color and objective intention, and subjective color expresses the creator's subjective view of things. The artistic conception mainly refers to the subjective feelings in the creator's heart. There is a certain connection between subjective color and artistic conception, and the combination between the two is the basis of artists' oil painting creation, and also promotes the development of Impressionist oil painting. The author mainly interprets the artistic conception in his

works through subjective colors, so when using colors, artists often organize the application of colors according to the expressed needs. The use of a certain intensity, with divergent colors to express their own strong subjective spiritual power, the use of relatively soft subjective colors to express the ethereal artistic conception, further improve the artistic appeal of the work [5]. For example, in Van Gogh's work *Self-Portrait After Ears Cut Off*, exaggerated colors are used to express the characters' thick coats, thin bodies and high cheekbones. Such weird colors and shapes actually reflect Van Gogh's true emotions.

Generally speaking, subjective color is essentially the external expression of artistic conception, and the principle of subjective color is used to study the essence of artistic language and the perception of life and aesthetics. Artists mainly use the blend and penetration of subjective colors to feel the artistic conception in the inner world, and the use of subjective colors has been contained in artistic works, which can greatly improve the artistic value of the works. For example, in the work *Sick Child* by the artist Munch (Figure 9), white shadows and faded roses are used to express the intention of death and sadness.



Figure 8. Self-Portrait After Cutting off Ears



Figure 9. Sick Child.

5. The Reference Significance of Impressionist Colors in East Asian Aesthetics

5.1. Draw on painting expression techniques with expressive colors

The important features of Impressionist paintings are the grasp of “impression” in vision and perception, and the use of color to depict light and color. It is a breakthrough of the “perceptual” cognition in the works of art in the Western aesthetics, and has extremely important significance to the development of Western aesthetics. When appreciating Impressionist works, it is often necessary to break through the specific works, learn to feel the connotation of the works from the surface of the works, and resonate with the emotions contained in the paintings of the authors. The way of finding constant natural objects and resonating with the creator's aesthetic thoughts in Impressionism is of great significance to East Asian aesthetic creation. Impressionism fixed the changing light color in the picture with certain painting skills and perception ability, which had certain enlightenment significance for the creation of East Asian aesthetics. Japanese Ukiyo-e, Chinese ink painting and meticulous painting did not form a certain system of interpretation of light color. For example, in Monet's *Water Lilies* series (Figure 10), viewers can not only feel the specific cool water surface in the oil painting, but also feel the color atmosphere in different

weather environments through color changes, which has a high reference significance for East Asian aesthetics.



Figure 10. Water Lilies.

5.2. Draw on the effect of hazy colors

Some Impressionist painters expressed the objects they depicted in a vague way. This kind of color expression is fluid, and viewers cannot confirm the intention expressed by the works at the first time when they appreciate the paintings. To a certain extent, hazy colors can stimulate people's inner curiosity and imagination. This hazy form of expression has certain similarities with the "vacuity" in Chinese paintings. In traditional paintings, East Asian works, especially Chinese ones, pay more attention to the vagueness and implication of artistic conception. The way Impressionist artists create a hazy mood is to blur the edges and contours of specific objects, making multiple objects appear as a whole. The pursuit of hazy artistic conception in East Asian aesthetic works has a long history, but it is usually in the form of pen and ink, and is not good at creating hazy artistic conception with color. Therefore, in East Asian painting, blur, fusion and other color processing methods can be used to blend colors, express the creator's inner hazy intention, and further promote the development of painting art in East Asian aesthetics.

5.3. The reference significance of Impressionist painting to color light and shadow

In the process of creation, Impressionist paintings paid great attention to the application of color changes, and analyzed the sensory cognition of the depicted objects with the help of modern painting ideas and methods, so as to obtain a certain sense of expression. In impressionist painting, color is not the expression form of the picture, but the expression content of the artist in the painting, seeking emotional resonance with the audience with rich color expression. East Asian oil painting was influenced by Impressionism in terms of color. For example, the use of color in paintings can make viewers feel the warm and cold mood in the picture. Influenced by the application of color in Impressionist creation, Chinese optimization creation often uses rich and hierarchical color expression techniques in its works, seeking the collocation between light and color, creating a harmonious artistic conception in color, and making viewers feel the charm of the picture.

Through the analysis of oil painting exhibitions in East Asia in recent years, it can be found that artists still emphasize the application of oil painting colors and pursue the layers of colors in the creation process. For example, Luo Ercun, a Chinese oil painting artist, integrates the treatment of light and shadow by color into the traditional artistic expression context in his oil painting creation. He uses a variety of

color expression techniques, such as large color blocks and contrasting colors, and combines the stacking of colors and the changes of color blocks in his strokes to create a gorgeous and rich landscape and show a sunny mood.

6. Conclusions

The application of color in Impressionist painting has a certain development history from the objective light and shadow, space expression to the subjective intention expression, and it is also an important reason for the high influence of Impressionist painting in the world. East Asian aesthetics is greatly influenced by the West, so it is of great significance to study the expression techniques of western Impressionist colors to promote the further development of East Asian aesthetics. East Asian modern oil painting artists have gradually realized the change of color sense, especially the application of color in painting, which has distinct characteristics of Impressionist painting. The application of Impressionist colors in East Asian aesthetics more or less absorbs and draws on the artistic expression techniques of Western Impressionism. In recent years, the diversity and vigorous development of East Asian Impressionist painting art cannot be separated from the study and research of Western Impressionist consciousness. Therefore, it is of great significance to study the color expression techniques of Western Impressionism under East Asian aesthetics, which can further promote the development and progress of East Asian aesthetics.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

Funding

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

References

- [1] Xu, J.S. Study on the spatial expression of color in Impressionist works. *Ceramic Science and Art*, 2022, 56(3), 54-55.
- [2] Zhu, H.Y. Analysis on the color of Impressionism. *Art Review*, 2021, 10, 4-6.
- [3] Meng, Y.; Deng, K.F. Aesthetic Research on Color design -- Taking Impressionist Painting as an example. *Art Education Research*, 2022, 10, 46-48.
- [4] Zhang, H.S. On the artistic connotation and characteristics of Impressionist Painting. *Journal of Gansu Higher Normal Universities*, 2014, 19(1), 109-110.
- [5] Meng, Y.; Deng, K.F. Aesthetic Research on Color design -- Taking Impressionist Painting as an example. *Art Education Research*, 2022, 10, 46-48.



© 2023 by the author(s); licensee International Technology and Science Publications (ITS), this work for open access publication is under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0). (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)