

Edvard Munch's Painting Emotion

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Abstract:

As a representative figure of expressionism in the 19th century, Edvard Munch broke through the objective representation of previous paintings and shifted its emphasis to subjective expression. The key reason why Munch's paintings shock people lies in the perfect integration of emotional expression and painting language, and the expression of art works as the carrier. Current studies on Munch at home and abroad mainly focus on painting works, style evolution and painting language. Taking his representative work *Scream* as an example, combined with the background of *The Times* and personal experience, this paper analyzes the emotions conveyed in his works, further interprets Munch's works from a new perspective, and more deeply understand the integration of visual form and emotion. Thus, the understanding of Munch's overall ideological concept and spiritual perception of art can bring more powerful evidence for the case study of artists.

Keywords:

Edvard Munch, Emotional Expression, *The Scream*

1. Introduction

Edvard Munch was a great Norwegian painter of the second half of the 19th century and a pioneer of modern expressionist painting. His paintings have a strong subjective and sad mood. His intense, evocative approach to psychological distress was a major influence on the growth of German Expressionism in the early 20th century. An artist's creation is rooted in his living environment, it can be said that Munch's suffering is the origin of his painting creation ideas, so to interpret Munch's paintings, understanding his growth experience is the most crucial. With the arrival of the Industrial Revolution, manual to machine, a large number of unemployed groups further accelerated the class division, especially the "end of the century mood" brought a series of anxiety, anxiety and decadence filled every corner of society. Many artists turn their focus to nature, hoping to find solace from nature. At the same time, rebellion and deviation from mainstream traditional concepts also appear in the paintings. Munch, as one of the most important painters at the end of the century, on the one hand, his paintings are the projection of his spiritual world, on the other hand, they also show us the spiritual crisis and cultural anxiety of the European people in the second half of the 19th century. We will focus on "*Scream*" this representative work, to explore the painter's painting emotion and expression.

2. Materials and Methods

This paper will mainly use the research method of art social history to explain the social background and cultural connotation of Edvard Munch and the *Scream*. In the analysis of specific problems, the literature research method will be used to focus on a more complete and comprehensive collection, sorting and analysis of relevant literature. For the study of Munch's paintings, the author will also appropriately choose representative case studies. In addition, the study of painting emotion in the *Scream* needs to involve history and other fields, and adopt a multidisciplinary approach.

3. Emotion forms the background in Edvard Munch's paintings

3.1. Social background

Real works of art are always closely related to The Times in which they live and are a reflection of the realities of The Times. Edvard Munch was born in Hedema, Norway in 1863. At that time, the changes in the field of art and the rapid development of the industrial revolution severely affected the traditional cultural values, which brought the impact and confusion to human thinking. Artists' subjective consciousness was activated and thus emancipated their thoughts, and artists began to be faithful to their real feelings about the world. The *Scream: a Study of the Spirit of Painting* in Edvard Munch introduces the philosophical and artistic trends of Munch's time from two perspectives: One is the influence of the Bohemian current, within which Munch developed a new visual language that sought to represent in his authentic experience the tension between this rapid urbanization and the moral dilemmas posed by a changing world. His use of bold lines and textures, unusual color combinations, and highly controversial themes coincided with a quiet shift in social attitudes. The second is the critical thought of Norwegian dramatist Ibsen, whose works pointed sharply at the bourgeois society and old social customs at that time, which provided guidance for Munch's exploration of the theme of painting. In his works, he expressed his emotions through thinking about life and death and the extreme living environment in Northern Europe [1].

The 1860s and 1870s were a time when symbolism was prevalent. In The secret history of modern art, James introduced the idealism brought by symbolism at the end of the 19th century, that is, "objectification of subjective things rather than subjectification of objective things", which had a certain influence on Munch. To be "the first to turn to idealism, to dare to subordinate nature - his model - to emotion." Munch expressed the most real aspect of society through his paintings. Especially after the First World War, people's opposition to the government became increasingly prominent. Under the pressure of spiritual crisis, Munch lived in an extremely depressed and tense state, which is fully reflected in his works [2]. Alexis in *Paris Goes Global: The Transnational Transformation of Art History in the 19th Century* introduced the relationship between the artistic atmosphere of Paris and the immigration of artists. Many Czech, Norwegian and Spanish painters were attracted by the freedom of the artistic atmosphere of Paris, and Munch was no exception. The freedom of art inspired Munch to put emotional self-expression in the first place of artistic creation. In future works of art, the purpose of "expressing emotion" [3]. On the whole, philosophy, literature and symbolist poetry all played an important role in Munch's life and artistic works, and the influence of social change and the accompanying spiritual crisis on Munch cannot be underestimated. Starting from the

age of 30, the artist began to think about the fate of mankind and tried to reflect his world view: love and death through painting [4].

3.2. Personal experience

The loss of his mother at a young age and his own near-death experience from lung disease at the age of 13 took a toll on Munch's body and mind. In Munch's memory, his mother has always borne the financial burden and illness of the family, and his father's religious fanaticism and the successive deaths of relatives have deepened his understanding of death and hell. It wasn't until his only remaining sister also left that his personality underwent a complete transformation, he lost most of his natural joy, and his deep religious beliefs began to take on a darker, more introverted quality. Munch's "Sick Child" is based on the image of his deceased sister Sophia, and over the course of a year, he revised this painting countless times, in order to recover the lost past through the picture [5]. Lawrence believes Munch's desire to symbolically reunite with depressing, bad mothers or superegoes through newly created, aesthetically satisfying products, and in 1866, Munch's work was called "dirty and absurd", which hit him hard, but he did not give in, and the hypocrisy and ugliness of capitalism became the focus of his later artistic work. The work clearly shows the state of the bottom of society at a glance [6].

Elena studied the evolution of the concept of trauma from the perspective of psychoanalysis, and believed that visual art, as a symbolic work, was a psychological treatment for trauma. The trauma Munch experienced changed his life behavior, while artistic creation was the integration of his psychology, and trauma organized artistic activities. Munch took mental trauma as the source of creation and carried out artistic activities. At the same time, studies have proved that irritable depression and schizophrenia enable the brain's forehead to combine information creatively, which increases inspiration for artists' artistic activities. Therefore, Munch believes that her art is inseparable from pain, and treatment will destroy her art [7]. In his artistic career, he came into contact with the works of Gauguin and Van Gogh, began to develop towards simplified forms and colors, and openly declared that the purpose of art was to convey strong emotions. Later in life, he suffered from a fatal flu, and began to take up paintbrush to record his gaunt, stiff self-portrait [8]. *In the Beginning of Art*, from the perspective of Munch's early and late creation themes, Carroll believes that artists form personal aesthetic prejudice in their youth, which guides the process of searching for artistic problems. At the same time, artists in adulthood return not only to the themes and themes they pursued in their youth, but also to similar visual issues. Without the pleasure found in painting, and without the tendency to think visually and pursue specific visual problems, expressive styles, and professional skills, Munch might not have turned to expressing his ideas and emotions in metaphorical or symbolic ways as an adult [9].

3.3. The Scream and emotional Projection

3.3.1. Painting content and emotion

1806-1890 was the peak of his painting creation. In his works, we can see those deformed and exaggerated faces, as well as the anxious and suppressed emotions in the pictures. He used symbolism to reveal the inner unease of human beings, which was mainly reflected in the reduction of the depiction of shapes and details in the pictures. This is one of the reasons for the extreme simplification of the characters in

The Scream. “The *Scream* was created in 1893, in the autumn afternoon, I went for a walk with friends in the suburbs, saw the sun set, the sky was dyed blood red by the sunset, and there was a blood red fire spreading freely. Prata Fred (Prata Fred) in The Sky in Edvard Munch's The Scream combined with Munch's diary, introduced the work created in the autumn of 1983, after learning of the death of a friend while walking, watching the sun set, the sky was dyed blood red by the sunset, There is a blood-red fire spread wantonly, shocked and reacted strongly, combined with what I saw and thought to create *The Scream*” [10]. Based on the background and characters of his earlier work *Despair*, Peter believes that the contents of the two are derived from the same motif and have evolved into different versions in different periods. In addition to the very similar composition, the characters in *Despair* are looking down, the sky is also blood red, and the picture is full of anxiety. However, the Scream was completed only one year later. Although the picture is no longer a person, but a strange creature, the melancholy anxiety expressed by the expression of the figure is vividly expressed through a few strokes [11]. Combined with the creation reason, the style of the creation period and the influence of other artistic styles, *The Scream* presents a unique and powerful visual content in front of the audience.

George Baylor considered The Scream to depict the fundamentals of human psychology - love, depression, despair, fear, jealousy, and death - as emotional works in which the figures appear to be overwhelmed by some terrible personal knowledge or event, showing extreme fear [12]. Dumitrescu, starting with the selection of the theme of his work, believes that Munch's paintings evoke constant sadness, despair, fear and death. As a discussion on the theme of life, *The Scream* reflects his intention to place himself in the artistic universe and escape the status quo [13]. Landi believed that *The Scream* conveys a kind of trauma and chaos, which is the condensation and release of people's inner emotions in life [14]. *The Scream* is the product of human spirit under the rapid development of society, which is mainly manifested in the typical expression of the great themes of modernism “alienation”, “anomie” and “loneliness”, and is a symbol of the era of anxiety [15]. Dumitrescu believes that in addition to the constant sadness, despair, fear and death aroused by the Scream, it is also the painter's discussion on the theme of life under mental pressure, and his helplessness to place himself in the artistic universe and escape the status quo .

3.3.2. Formal language

Munch developed his “symbolist” style around 1892, that is, eliminating shapes and minor details in favor of rhythmic Outlines and contours. Above all, it means surrendering the technology to the subject and then painting the subject itself into a memorable image. In *Edvard Munch and The Scream: A Cry for Help*, Linda believes that Munch gives viewers a strong visual impact through simple and slender brushstrokes, slender faces and extended torsos of characters, which also deepends the anxiety in the picture [17]. The formal language of his works is deeply influenced by impressionism. In composition, a face alone occupies the central position of the picture and shouts to “us” with his hands covering his face, which makes his emotions have a special connection with people outside the picture. In terms of color, the main tone is red, yellow and blue primary colors, of which red represents enthusiasm, but also represents the warm and uneasy heart, blue represents the melancholy reason, the two emotions in the inner confrontation, and finally the application of a very small amount of yellow synthesis. Alfred believes that Munch's expression of emotion is mainly due to the fact that The Scream does not sacrifice the form for reason, but uses

condensed and simplified shapes to suppress the details of the face and landscape, and the expression of the characters in the picturesque is also condensed to only four points and one circle, which makes the work more shocking [18]. Munch integrated the meaning of his work into the design of formal language and the use of color, into the posture and expression of the entire human body, whose posture and contours flow and merge into a larger composition, thus giving his work the mood and substance of a direct expression of the subject.

In terms of lines, Munch began to imitate the curly and distorted lines in Van Gogh's works, and gave strong vitality to the lines. The curved lines in *The Scream* are in sharp contrast to the strong and straight bridge, and the more lonely, anxious and dreary emotions in the picture are expressed to an extreme. The thin and thick brushstrokes in the picture form a deep space, which is not difficult to see that Munch has a powerful visual effect through the change of brushstrokes, and creates a melancholy mood of fear of death and confusion. Munch completed four versions of *The Scream* between 1893 and 1910, using painting materials in different media such as oil, tempera, and prints on cardboard. Among them, different prints made with the theme of *Scream* have important artistic value, and make full use of the texture effect and the original effect of the carving knife to draw a picture with strong visual impact [19].

3.4. The influence of emotional expression in Edvard Munch's oil paintings

The expression of emotion in Munch's oil paintings has had a profound influence both at the same time and later. *The Scream* has become an iconic symbol of modern anxiety and uncertainty, in which lonely and alienated individuals appear alone in pairs or groups, shadows and circles emphasize fear and threat, and become the expression of the artist's anxiety and pessimism about human survival. At the end of the 19th century, Munch led a revolt against the academic painting that dominated European art, with its emphasis on the simplification of form and the expressiveness of color, themes explored and exploited by later expressionist artists, who saw Munch's art as their own goal. In 1905, the overseas Chinese Society organized by the Dresden Academy of Fine Arts emphasized the color implication of the picture and the characteristics of subjective emotional expression, and pursued strong visual effects in modeling, such as the beauty of distortion. Munch always insisted that the directness of emotional expression was conducive to the construction of spiritual space in his works, and this view was followed by foreign painters, such as the French painter Rouault, whose shadow can be seen in his early paintings, especially the multiple use of emotional colors, which everywhere revealed the helplessness and pessimism of social unrest under the wave of reform [20].

From the perspective of Chinese painting, traditional painting has a strong expression of freehand brushwork, which is very similar to Western expressionism. Many artists strengthen the strength of emotional expression by learning Western painting methods. For example, Wang Zhen in the Ming Dynasty is a good practitioner. Through continuous research and practice, he integrates the painting spirit of Munch into traditional culture and directly expresses his creative will and concept, which creates a strong emotional tension in traditional Chinese painting, which has always been reserved and reserved. Attempts to interpret the psychological mentality of contemporary Chinese grassroots civilians. The influence of emotional expression in Munch's works is also reflected in other artistic fields. Through exaggerated character description, the emotional expression is unobstructed .

Throughout his life, Munch explored human passions and emotions, and his paintings represented universal themes such as death, love, sexuality, and human fragility. Compared with the traditional painting's emphasis on perspective and three-dimensional sense, Edvard Munch broke this tradition and paid attention to the depiction of the inner world. Every painting is a reflection of the inner world. While simplifying the object, he exaggerates the subjective emotion.

4. Conclusions

Art and The Times are always interrelated, and the most important thing about Munch's painting achievements is that he does not shy away from the true feelings of his heart, even if they may not be beautiful, let alone "noble". At the same time, the direct "beauty" in his works has been questioned, and it is believed that his shape, especially color, has almost nothing to do with "beauty", but this is only because he wants to achieve a real expression. *Scream* is the product of The Times, in addition to showing the anguish of people's hearts in that century, it is also the pursuit and expression of ideal beauty, the perfect presentation of personal emotional expression and sensory stimulation.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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