

A Study on the Influence and Application of Vase Flower Aesthetics in Lingnan Paintings in the Late Qing Dynasty

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Abstract:

There are a large number of paintings in the Lingnan region with vase flowers as the main body, which is an important carrier for the study of vase flower art. Vase flowers are not only an ornamental art form, but also common in the art of interior space display. They have a unique aesthetic effect in homes, businesses, and public spaces, and have become an indispensable element in interior decoration and display art design. Based on the analysis of Lingnan vase flower paintings in the late Qing Dynasty, this study studies the aesthetics of vase flowers in the late Qing Dynasty and summarizes the aesthetic characteristics of vase flowers: a. Natural beauty, following the shape and situation b. Harmonious colors, go with the flow c. Expression of artistic conception, varying with the times. The application strategy of vase flowers in interior space is proposed, which provides a design reference for the display of vase flower aesthetics in interior space.

Keywords:

Lingnan Painting, Vase Flower Aesthetics, Interior Space

1. Introduction

1.1. Lingnan Painting

In the late Qing Dynasty, Lingnan paintings included ** paintings and ** paintings, and there were many categories. Among them, the representative works included works with vase flower elements, which can be used as references and lessons for interior design. Most painters in this period began to try to modernize traditional art. Two painters with distinct regional characteristics, Ju Chao (1811-1865) and Ju Lian (1828-1904), emerged and were known as the “Two Jus”. They were famous for their flower and bird paintings with the method of hitting powder and hitting water. Their unique and distinctive personal style and the painting techniques of combining craftsmanship and writing not only inherited the tradition but also integrated the characteristics of Lingnan, forming a unique “Ju School”. [1] This painting style had a profound influence on the Lingnan painting world for half a century. It was unique in

the flower and bird painting world in the late Qing Dynasty and became an outstanding representative of Chinese flower and bird painting.

1.2. Vase of Flowers

China's classical flower arrangement has profound historical roots and rich connotations. [2] Today, instructors from various regions have begun to explore various representative local characteristics and their development achievements, such as Shanghai-style flower design, Zhejiang school's design concepts, and Guangdong's influence.

In the traditional Chinese art of flower arrangement, the aesthetic characteristics and practical properties of vase flower art are prominent, and it is an important part of flower arrangement. Vase flower is an artistic way of holding flower arrangement by choosing a vase. Traditional flower arrangement art includes various types of containers, such as pots, vases, basins, bottles, plates, bowls, and basins, among which basins, plates, and bottles are considered the most symbolic. [3] The use of basins and plates was more common in the Tang Dynasty, while the use of bottles became more popular during the Ming and Qing Dynasties.

Among all the works related to vase flower art in the Ming Dynasty, Gao Lian's "Three Theories on Vase Flowers", Yuan Hongdao's "Vase History" and Zhang Qiande's "Vase Flower Catalogue" are the most famous. The following books "Three Theories on Vase Flowers", "Vase History" and "Vase Flower Catalogue" were selected as the main objects. Among them, "Three Theories on Vase Flowers", "Vase History" and "Vase Flower Catalogue" explain: the types and methods of flowers suitable for display, the situations and methods that are not suitable for display, and how to properly maintain these plants.

2. Aesthetic Analysis of Vase Flowers

China's traditional flower arrangement techniques are the foundation of Lingnan flower arrangement art, and its skills are mainly based on traditional flower arrangement principles. Due to the infiltration of the customs and culture of the Lingnan region, it has gradually shaped the unique appearance of Lingnan flower arrangement art. Especially in the late Qing Dynasty, with the prosperity of business and the development of Lingnan painting, Lingnan flower arrangement art was able to further evolve into an art form with local characteristics on this basis.

2.1. Composition

The study refers to the five types of vase flower shapes of oriental flower arrangement proposed by Wang Shaoyi in his book "Artistic Flower Arrangement" - upright, inclined, drooping, symmetrical and straight-up types, and classifies and discusses the vase flower works of Lingnan paintings in the late Qing Dynasty and the Republic of China. [4]

The painting style in Guangdong mainly focuses on the depiction of bonsai, folding fans and other objects, but there are also rich forms of depiction of flowers: in addition to the common drooping style, there are also many other types, which are more free and flexible in creation.

Tilted flower patterns, such as the vase flowers in Ju Lian's Sui Chao Qing Gong Tu (Figure 5), have the first main branch on the left side of the vase tilted to the left,

and the second main branch tilted slightly to the right, slightly angled with the first main branch, with flowers and leaves filling in between. Upright flower patterns are also common, such as Ju Lian's Sui Chao Tu (Figure 6), where the first main branch stands upright in the center of the vase, and the other two branches tilt slightly to the left and right, respectively. The flowers are arranged in a staggered and interesting way. Perhaps influenced by Western flower arrangement works, in addition to conventional vase flower patterns, there are also some relatively free-form matching methods in Lingnan paintings, such as Ju Chao's Flower and Fruit Axis (Figure 7), where the first main branch tilts to the upper left, the second main branch hangs downward, and another branch sticks out to the right, forming a cluster from the overall perspective. Different types of plants are cleverly combined to form a vibrant picture.

In general, the main part of the vase flowers in Lingnan literati paintings is often lower, only slightly higher than the mouth of the vase, and the flower shape is relatively plump, showing a prosperous and warm atmosphere.

2.2. Flowers

In the late Qing Dynasty, traditional flowers still attracted the attention and creative enthusiasm of many painters, especially the praise of peonies and plum blossoms; these bright flowers are not only an important part of Chinese traditional culture, but also deeply loved by poets since ancient times, especially from the poems and songs popular in ancient China. In addition, chrysanthemums, pine trees, red camellias, peaches, pomegranates, etc. also have profound culture and rich meanings. They are often used by painters to express idealized lifestyles or noble quality symbols, which fully reflects the spiritual core of the unique artistic aesthetics of Chinese literati.

At the same time, influenced by the geographical environment and local culture, the flowers of Lingnan emphasize their regional adaptability and practical characteristics, mainly including ornamental flowers, fruits and edible varieties, such as lily, canna, carambola, lychee, sugarcane, etc. Due to their wide range of practical applications and importance, they have become an indispensable part of local life in Guangdong and are favored by painters.

2.3. Matching

As for the flower vase works in Lingnan paintings, they are not limited by tradition, but show a stronger market characteristic. Traditional Chinese flower vase paintings emphasize a single flower theme creation method, but artists in Guangdong have made breakthrough attempts to break this rule: for example, Ju Lian paired plum blossoms, chrysanthemums and peonies in "New Year's Day Offerings" (Figure 1), and paired daffodils, peach blossoms and peonies in "New Year's Day" (Figure 2). [2] The number of flowers is also not fixed, one or two branches are interesting, or multiple flowers are clustered together. In the paintings of Ju Lian and Ju Chao, more than three or four kinds of flowers can be seen, and the overall appearance is rich and full, which is in sharp contrast to the aesthetic view of "one color per vase, not two colors" in Jiangsu and Zhejiang. Vase flowers are often paired with ornamental stones, vegetables and fruits, and common subtropical fruits such as lychees, longans, mangoes, olives, pineapples, and even must-have foods for Guangdong folk New Year such as cured duck (Figure 4), which are very characteristic of Lingnan folk life.

In addition to the Lingnan characteristics of flower materials, the selection of vases is also quite ingenious. First of all, the materials of the vases are different: porcelain vases, jade vases, copper vases, pottery vases, etc. From the different vase shapes, they can be divided into plum vases, jade pot spring vases, gall vases, zun vases, etc. Vases of different materials and shapes are generally matched with different flowers. For example, porcelain vases are usually matched with elegant flowers such as plum blossoms and orchids; jade vases are delicate in texture and lustrous, and are usually matched with rich flowers such as peonies and azaleas; pottery vases, as simple and natural flower containers, are usually matched with natural and noble flowers such as bamboo, wild flowers, and orchids. (Table 1)

Table 1. Vase flowers seen in Lingnan paintings.

Serial number	Flower Type	Flowers	vase	Applications	Example
Figure 1: Ju Lian New Year's Day Offerings	Inclined	Plum blossom, chrysanthemum, peony	White porcelain plum vase	public space living room hall waiting area rest area	
Figure 2: Ju Lian 《New Year Picture》	Upright	Narcissus, peach, peony	Celadon plum vase	Workspace office meeting room forum laboratory	
Figure 3: Juchao Flower and Fruit Axis	irregular	peony persimmon Wintersweet banana	White porcelain vase	Cultural Space Reading area study museum gallery	

Figure 4: Ju Lian 《New Year Picture》	Drooping type	Peony, Persimmon, Wintersweet and Narcissus Cured Duck	Ceramic Basin	Dining Space Chinese Restaurant Tea Area	
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3. Application of Vase Flowers

As a form of art, vase flowers are also very important in matching with the interior space. A harmonious environment can better play the decorative role of vase flowers. Different occasions and spaces require different flower materials. The color, shape and size of the flower vase determine the success or failure of this work.

3.1. Tea Room Space

Teahouse is the best place to show traditional culture. As the saying goes, simplicity is the best way. The environment of teahouse does not need to be too complicated. Only in a simple and plain space can the pure elegance of tea and the open-mindedness of the mind be reflected. The vase flowers in the teahouse or tea-tasting environment are generally called camellia. Since the Song Dynasty, one of the most elegant things for literati is to taste tea and appreciate flowers. Although the proportion of vase flowers in the space is small, it is actually an important part of the space atmosphere and decoration. Vase flowers are an external manifestation of traditional tea culture, which can reflect the aesthetics and state of mind of the teahouse owner. Therefore, the vase flowers in the teahouse space should also reflect the ethereal, elegant, simple and pure interest. There is no need to stick to a specific style, and elegance and tranquility should be the main temperament.

First, camellia should avoid using flowers and vases with strong colors to avoid giving people a feeling of irritation. Secondly, it is not advisable to use a variety of flowers to avoid confusion and disorder. You can choose, for example, Ju Lian's "Fragrant Bulbophyllum" (Figure 5), which has a sweet fragrance, adding fragrance to the tea room without being too pungent; only two flowers, one long and one short, are selected, and the naturally curved long branch extends outward, which is simple and rustic under the premise of primary and secondary contrast; stones are used instead of vases, which is in line with the simple and calm temperament of orchids.

3.2. Living Space

Living space is a space for family members to relax and rest. As a component of the living environment, vase flower art can break through the limitations of space, introduce natural elements, and integrate natural characteristics into the interior space. [5] It can not only enhance the comfort of the interior space, but also increase the vitality of the living place.

The living space is mainly composed of the living room, bedroom, dining room, study and balcony. The flower decoration combines the characteristics of rooms with different functions to decorate them reasonably, beautifully and skillfully, becoming a symbol of people's happiness. It requires certain requirements and considerations in terms of flower selection, design matching, environmental atmosphere, etc.

3.2.1. Entrance

The porch is a special term for Chinese Taoist practice. It was first mentioned in the Tao Te Ching, “Mysterious and Mysterious, the Door to Wonders”. [6] It specifically refers to the transitional space between the indoor and outdoor areas of a residence. As a transitional space when entering a home, the porch is also a place where a living space gives people the first impression. The porch space is small, but as the first visual impact, it should have a relaxing and comfortable atmosphere. The decoration of the porch can quickly enhance the beauty and goodwill of the living space.

When choosing vase flowers, first of all, you should pay attention to the size. Thinner vase flowers can easily give people a sense of tranquility and security. Secondly, when choosing colors, you should try to choose low-saturation colors to avoid visual fatigue. You can choose, for example, Ju Lian's “Flowers and Cordyceps Album” (Figure 3.2), choose small-sized flowers, and match them with simple flower vases. The square flower vases give people a sense of stability and security, and the combination of flowers can make people relax quickly.

3.2.2. Living Room

The living room is an open space for receiving guests and also serves as a place for family communication, leisure and entertainment. [7,8,9,10] The vase flower decoration in the living room should be able to show the host's enthusiasm and aesthetic cultivation, and show an open, inclusive and relaxed atmosphere through decoration.

When choosing vase flowers, the size of the living room should be considered first. Generally speaking, the living room, as the largest space, should choose works with larger volumes, and the flower shapes should be optimistic, vigorous, and enterprising. At the same time, the vase flowers in the living room also symbolize a better life. For example, Ju Lian's “Vase Peony Picture” (Figure 7) can be selected, with peony as the main flower material. Peony represents auspiciousness and wealth, and the fragrance is gentle and comfortable. Pairing with a larger flower vase is suitable for the open space temperament of the living room. Placing two persimmons is a homophonic meaning of “everything goes well” in the traditional Lingnan culture. It has Lingnan characteristics and can convey the owner's good expectations for life.

3.3. Commercial Space

“Menglianglu” says “put flowers of the four seasons, hang paintings of famous people, and decorate the facade”. With the development of the economy and the improvement of people's purchasing power, the single function of products can no longer meet the needs of customers, and the quality of consumption places has become an important factor in people's choice. This change in concept demand has also promoted the improvement of commercial space. In some large shopping malls or high-end hotels, merchants are also paying more and more attention to the introduction of natural elements.

In fact, China has always had the custom of arranging flowers in halls to express grand celebrations on major festivals or important anniversaries. As flowers for public spaces, first of all, they should be full and magnificent in shape, and secondly, they should be large and bright flowers that can be admired from all sides. For example, Ju Lian's “Wealthy and White-haired” (Figure 8) is tall and stable overall, with peonies scattered in an orderly manner, which is complex but not messy.

Table 2. *Application of vase flowers in Lingnan paintings.*

Serial number	Space	Example
Figure 5: Ju Lian: “Fragrant Bulbophyllum”	Free time 1. Tea Space 2. Cafe 3. bookstore	
Figure 6: Ju Lian’s “Flowers and Cordyceps Album”	Transition Space 1. Entrance 2. balcony 3. porch 4. corridor	
Figure 7: Ju Lian's “Peony on a Vase”	Open Space 1. living room 2. patio 3. reception area 4. Large conference room 5. Outdoor dining area	
Figure 8: Ju Lian: “Wealth and White Hair”	Commercial Space 1. hotel room 2. Banking Hall 3. Exhibition Center 4. Commercial Plaza 5. shopping center	

4. Conclusions and Limitations

4.1. Conclusion

By studying the vase flower paintings in Lingnan paintings, we can better understand and explain the expression forms and artistic characteristics of Lingnan flower arrangement, as well as the decorative effect of vase flowers on interior space . We can also discover some vase flower decoration strategies corresponding to interior space. Based on the traditional Lingnan culture and from the perspective of Lingnan

paintings, we can comprehensively analyze the artistic characteristics of Lingnan vase flowers. We can provide new design ideas for indoor vase flower decoration in Lingnan, promote the application of traditional vase flowers with Lingnan characteristics in interior space, and also provide more possibilities and creativity for future interior space decoration.

4.1.1. Vase Application

(1) Porcelain vase

Blue and white porcelain vases are known for their elegant blue and white tones, while white porcelain vases are characterized by their pure and flawless appearance. Blue and white porcelain vases are suitable for elegant flowers such as plum blossoms and orchids, while white porcelain vases are suitable for all kinds of flowers, especially brightly colored flowers such as peonies and chrysanthemums.

(2) Jade bottle

The jade vase has a warm and delicate texture, rich and varied colors, and has a very high artistic value. It is suitable for matching with elegant flowers such as orchids and daffodils, and placed in the study or bedroom to create a quiet and elegant atmosphere.

(3) Copper bottle

Bronze bottles are simple and heavy, with a strong sense of history and cultural heritage. They are suitable for matching with flowers with classical temperament such as chrysanthemums and plum blossoms, and are suitable for important occasions or festivals.

(4) Lacquer bottle

The red lacquer bottle is bright red, while the black lacquer bottle is deep in color and has a steady texture. The red lacquer bottle is suitable for festive flowers such as roses and peonies, while the black lacquer bottle is suitable for solemn flowers such as lilies and chrysanthemums. It is suitable for weddings, festivals and formal occasions.

4.1.2. Space Applications

(1) Humanistic Space

Porcelain vase: paired with plum blossoms, orchids, and daffodils, it is suitable for creating a fresh and elegant atmosphere.

Copper vase: Paired with chrysanthemums, plum blossoms and orchids, it is suitable for creating a classic and elegant atmosphere.

(2) Transitional Space

Tall vases: Pair with large flowers such as lilies and sunflowers and place them in a corner or next to the sofa to add a visual focus.

Short vase: Pair it with colorful flowers such as roses and tulips, and place it on a coffee table or TV cabinet to add a warm feeling.

(3) Entrance space

Ceramic vase: Paired with sunflowers, wheat ears, and dried flowers. The rusticity of the rough ceramic vase contrasts with the bright color of the sunflower, which is suitable for creating a natural and friendly entrance atmosphere.

(4) Public Space

Large vase: Pair it with grand flowers such as lilies and gentians to attract guests' attention.

Retro vase: Paired with classical flowers such as peonies and chrysanthemums to enhance the cultural atmosphere.

4.2. Limitations

As a form of interior decoration, vase flower art is found to involve a wide range during the research process. It not only designs Chinese traditional culture and historical development, but also involves the development and current situation of European and Japanese vase flowers. There is a lack of overall development history of vase flowers. Secondly, there are many functions of indoor spaces, and the analysis of vase flowers and different indoor spaces is still lacking. There are deficiencies and omissions that need to be made up. The design methods and design principles of vase flower art in interior space decoration design still need more in-depth discussion and analysis.

Conflicts of Interest

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

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