

The Interaction between the Shanghai School and the Modern Art Education System

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Received: 2 October 2025; **Accepted:** 18 October 2025; **Published:** 11 November 2025

Abstract:

This article combines Bourdieu's concepts of "cultural capital" and "field" to explore the transformation path of the brush and ink tradition of the Shanghai School in the modern art education system. The research focuses on its embedding logic at the three levels of teaching content, methodological paradigms and evaluation mechanisms, revealing the institutional trajectory of its integration from the master-apprentice system to the college system. As a specific cultural capital, the traditional Shanghai style has been endowed with new normativity and legitimacy in the educational field. Its image training, policy regulation and regional identity construction respectively reflect the transformation mechanism of teaching content, institutional guidance and cultural adaptation, promoting the transformation of traditional skills from empirical inheritance to institutionalized expression.

Keywords:

Shanghai School of Painting Modern and Contemporary Art Education, Art Education System, Tradition of Brush and Ink, Academicization

1. Introduction

The Shanghai School of Painting marked the transformation of Chinese art from tradition to modernity, exerting a profound influence on the trends of art education, educational methods, and talent cultivation models. With the establishment of the modern and contemporary art education system, the Shanghai School of Painting, with its inclusive aesthetic thought and open technical system, has become a bridge between the essence of traditional brush and ink and the modern and contemporary art academy system. Through the research on the interactive relationship between the Shanghai School of Painting and the art education system, it not only helps to understand the historical evolution logic of Chinese art education, but also provides theoretical support and practical inspiration for the localization and diversification of contemporary art education.

2. The Evolution Logic of The Shanghai School of Painting and the Generation of Its Artistic Educational Attributes

2.1. The formation background and artistic features of the Shanghai School of Painting

The development of modern cities, social construction and the formation of the Shanghai School of Painting are inseparable. In the middle of the 19th century, Shanghai was opened as a port and became a convergence center for the integration of Chinese and Western cultures, economies and ideas. It attracted a large number of literati painters and professional painters, forming a flourishing artistic scene. Unlike court paintings and literati paintings, the technical feature of the Shanghai School of Painting is to "incorporate Western painting", integrating the realistic techniques of Western painting such as focal perspective and light and shadow effects into daily life, the various aspects of the market, and the aesthetic concepts of market commerce. This gave rise to the artistic pattern of the Shanghai School, which features traditional brush and ink techniques and integrates modern aesthetic concepts. Its representative figures, such as Ren Bonian and Wu Changshuo, all demonstrated the coexistence of the spirit of brush and ink and concern for reality in their works. Figure 1 shows the logical evolution process of the formation background and artistic features of the Shanghai School of Painting:

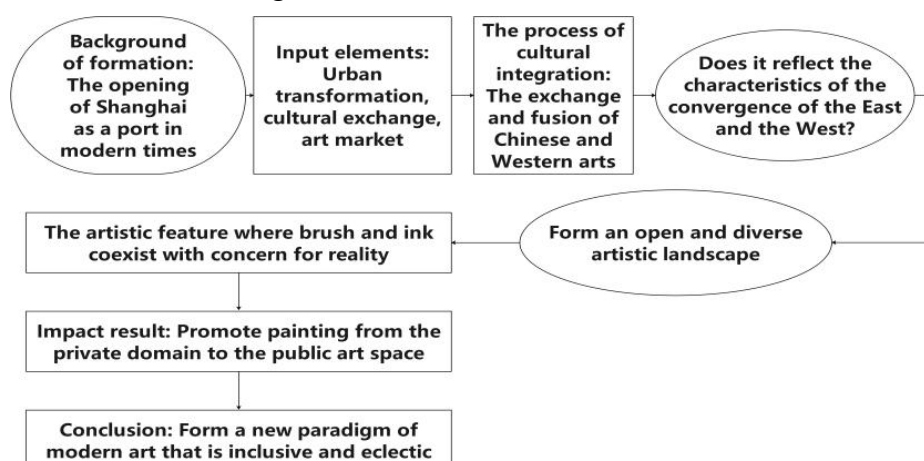


Figure 1. The logical evolution flowchart of the formation background and artistic features of the Shanghai School of Painting.

2.2. The Educational Practice Foundation and Knowledge Production Model of Shanghai-style Painting

The educational attribute of Shanghai-style painting stems from its open mechanism that emphasizes the inheritance of skills and the sharing of knowledge. Early painters often carried out art education activities through forms such as master-apprentice teaching, book societies, and art club lectures, forming an unrestrained mechanism of master-apprentice transmission. They attached great importance to the understanding of individualized feelings and the needs of market application. Art learning was no longer the old-fashioned study activities but deeply integrated into social culture and met the demands of the city. Through means such as compiling and printing art albums, holding exhibitions and establishing schools, Shanghai School painters systematically and openly disseminated their skills, laying a folk foundation for modern art education. Its educational philosophy emphasizes the training of

techniques and life experience, neither deviating from the old traditions of calligraphy and painting, nor highlighting the critical significance of art to society and the novelty of aesthetic styles. The educational philosophy of "technicalism as the orientation" provides a methodological reference for the construction of the Chinese art curriculum system.

2.3. The connection nodes between the early Shanghai School and modern picture education institutions

In the process of the institutionalized development of modern art education, there was a clear communication and influence relationship between the Shanghai School and the emerging painting institutions. From the late 19th century to the early 20th century, with the establishment of new-style schools such as Shanghai Nanyang Public School and Shanghai Academy of Painting and Fine Arts, these schools invited Shanghai-style painters to teach or preside over art education, and also integrated traditional brush and ink techniques into art education. Under the influence of their mentors, artists such as Wu Changshuo and Hu Cuizhong advocated emphasizing the realism of life, layout and expression of emotions in painting, thus promoting the exchange between the academic style and traditional craftsmanship. Figure 2 below shows the connection path between the Shanghai School of Painting and modern graphic education institutions:

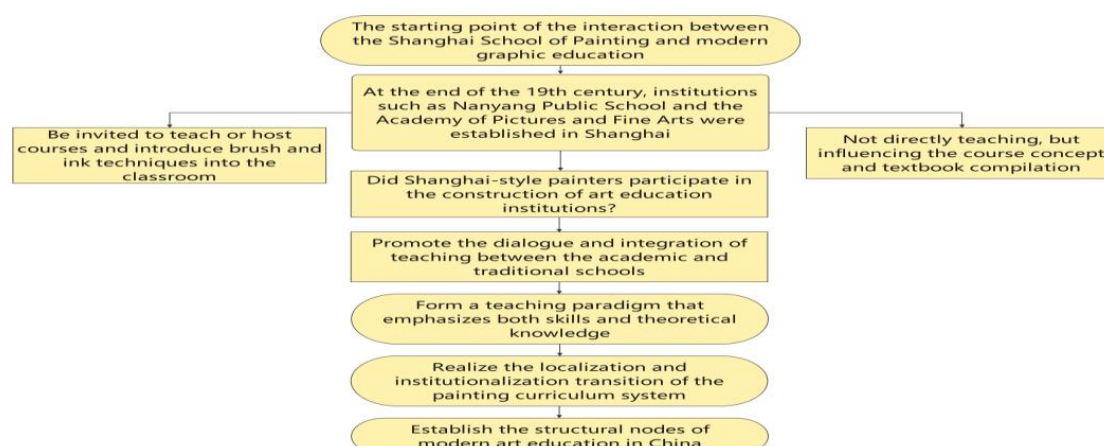


Figure 2. Schematic Diagram of the connection path between the Shanghai School of Painting and modern graphic education institutions.

3. The Structural Influence of the Shanghai School on the Modern and Contemporary Art Education System

3.1. Input of traditional brush and ink systems and subject matter paradigms in teaching content

The contribution of the Shanghai School of Painting to the teaching content of modern and contemporary art mainly lies in the introduction and improvement of the traditional brush and ink system and the traditional thematic model. Its teaching philosophy advocates integrating the concept of “the inheritance of calligraphy and painting” into the curriculum system, enabling students not only to master the forms of techniques but also to appreciate the aesthetic relationship between lines and scenes. Shanghai School painters often used the methods of copying ancient paintings and imitating figures in teaching, striving to resolve the contradiction between proficient application and showcasing their own characteristics. This kind of painting method

training eventually became an important part of the early Chinese painting teaching in the fine arts major, and had an impact on the curriculum system and teaching evaluation in teaching. In terms of theme selection, the Shanghai School of Painting advocated practical themes, incorporating urban life, human features, and still life of flowers and birds into teaching activities. This shifted painting education from “the self-entertainment of scholars” to a “social perspective”, thereby gradually breaking through traditional limitations in the content of Chinese painting courses and moving towards a direction with Chinese characteristics and modern aesthetics. It laid a deep foundation for the subsequent reform of the art education curriculum system.

3.2. The Dual-track Integration Mechanism in the Teaching Method Paradigm

The “Shanghai-style dual-track system integration Model” is a combination of the ancient “master system” and the modern “academy system”, which not only emphasizes specialized training in calligraphy and painting skills but also focuses on the cultivation of individual artistic styles and ways of thinking. From a traditional perspective, the main channel for Shanghai-style painters is master-apprentice transmission. They place more emphasis on comprehension, copying, and private instruction, mainly focusing on the refinement of abilities and the development of individuality. After the establishment of the modern art academy system, teaching methods have become more standardized and stylized, emphasizing the stylized processing of basic theories, composition principles, and theoretical strategies. After integrating into the new education system, Shanghai-style artists did not completely deny their previous experiences. Instead, they attempted to complement their apprenticeship experiences with course teaching, gradually forming a teaching system mainly composed of “classroom teaching + individual instruction + studio practical operation”. The advantage of this integration mechanism lies in its ability to balance the learning goals of “skill acquisition” and “artistic creativity”, enabling students to carry out innovative practices within the scope permitted by the rules.

3.3. Transformation of the Role of Shanghai-style Painters in the Composition of the Educational Team

With the establishment of art education institutions, the social identity of Shanghai-style painters has transformed from artists to educators and academic leaders. In the early days, many painters of the Shanghai School were hired as masters of techniques to teach and educate students, mainly responsible for imparting painting skills and the spirit of brush and ink. After entering the 20th century, with the changes of The Times, Shanghai-style painters gradually entered the fields of academy management and discipline construction, participating in the setting of courses, textbook compilation, teaching evaluation and other work, promoting the professionalization and systematization of art education. Some painters also undertake academic research tasks, combining traditional painting theories with modern pedagogy to construct a teaching system of certain academic value. Wu Changshuo, Feng Zikai and others all emphasized personal moral cultivation and social responsibility, and vigorously advocated the art teaching concept of “learning and cultivating talents” to strengthen the aesthetic infiltration function of art education.

3.4. Public Perception Construction of the Shanghai School Style by the Art Exhibition and Evaluation System

Shanghai School painters have played a substantive role in promoting the construction of the modern and contemporary art exhibition and evaluation system. As Shanghai has become an important hub for art exchange in China, exhibition and evaluation activities have gradually moved away from a loose form and developed towards institutionalization and normalization, forming a composite mechanism integrating art creation, social recognition and educational guidance. The Shanghai School of Painting advocated an evaluation criterion centered on brush and ink techniques, composition and layout, and the expression of artistic conception. These standards not only carry profound technical traditions but also reflect unique judgments on artistic value. The exhibition and evaluation mechanism is no longer confined to a simple comparison of the quality of works, but has transformed into an important bridge connecting the education system and social aesthetics. To a certain extent, it has guided the evolution of art teaching from closed training to open communication, public display and social interaction. The continuous spread of this aesthetic standard has gradually and steadily recognized the Shanghai style in the art education system, and has also profoundly influenced the course content and evaluation methods.

4. The Development Adjustment and Paradigm Reconstruction of the Shanghai School in the Art Education System

4.1. The modern educational structure reconstructs the academic form of Shanghai-style art

The development of the higher art college system (especially the establishment of higher professional art schools starting from the Shanghai Art Specialized School) is a sign of the maturity of modern professional art education. They have created an “educational field” centered on the academic system, full-time teachers, and overall evaluation. The brushwork and ink techniques carried by the Shanghai School of painting can be regarded as a highly integrated cultural capital within the framework of what Bourdieu calls “field - capital - habit”, and it faces screening, transformation and reproduction in the emerging system.

Since 1920, the Shanghai Art School has offered courses such as “Chinese Painting Techniques”, “Landscape Copying”, and “Freehand Figure Painting”, and has formulated specific regulations and assessment standards to control the time for coloring and the scoring method. Thus, it has incorporated traditional master-apprentice transmission techniques into the system of “observation - sketching - composition - perspective - creation”, completing the transformation from experiential techniques to systematic courses. [11]

In this transformation, the standards of brush and ink have been transformed from individual insights into quantifiable teaching goals, and at the same time, they have a reverse effect on the curriculum system, promoting the integration of the traditional Shanghai school's emphasis on artistic conception, composition and techniques into academic norms. This is not merely a process of cultural resources adapting to the institutional environment, but also demonstrates the selective integration and transformation of traditional craftsmanship by education itself, revealing the profound influence of artistic inheritance on the content, methods and structure of the curriculum. The Shanghai School did not enter the education system as an individual, but through its overall concept and practice of brush and ink, systematically embedded and changed the structural logic of academic art education.

4.2. Style Selection and Concept Transformation under the Guidance of Educational Policies

Educational policies have played a crucial leading role in the development process of the maritime art style. Educational policies at all stages mostly focus on art learning, emphasizing that art learning must serve values and society, and advocating that students should consider cultural and realistic concerns in their artistic creation. Specific policy guidance has shifted from a skills-oriented approach to stimulating thinking and construction. Since the 20th century, the national education policy has linked art education with social responsibility, gradually integrating it with the previous teaching of the Shanghai School of Painting, which mainly focused on skills, into a system that emphasizes the cultivation of thought and cultural refinement.

In the teaching of the painting major in the educational reform, the themes of art courses are more realistic and contemporary, which mobilizes teachers to inspire students to extract creative themes from social and real life, broadens their aesthetic vision of real life, enriches art classroom teaching and leads the aesthetic approach to shift from the previous “internal seeking” to “external seeking”. Furthermore, in terms of teaching objectives, the policy impact is not limited to updating teaching content; it has also deeply transformed the teaching structure and conceptual logic. The institutional inertia formed under the long-term influence of policies has led to a continuous and growth-oriented tendency in the change of concepts, providing a long-term leading role for the teaching reform of Shanghai-style art.

4.3. Marginalization and Reinterpretation of the Shanghai School Heritage in Contemporary Art Education

Facing the diversified and media-oriented development trend of contemporary art education, the influence of the Shanghai School of Painting in the field of university teaching is on the decline. The curriculum design focuses more on visual communication, design, and the use of digital media, while the class hours and proportion of traditional calligraphy and painting courses are being compressed. However, this does not mean discarding the traditional Shanghai style, but rather introducing it into the modern educational landscape with a new attitude. In teaching practice, the cultural spirit and aesthetic style of the Shanghai School have been reinterpreted. By means of various media to present the images of calligraphy and painting, “brush and ink life” has become a medium with the ability to activate and shape elements in the contemporary image dissemination system. This shift not only promotes the innovation of transformation of teaching methods but also facilitates the integration and dialogue between tradition and modernity. To present the relationship between Shanghai’s style elements and the transformation of the teaching system more intuitively and comprehensively, this paper employs the “media recombination” theory, which holds that the interaction between the media environment and educational and teaching concepts will have an impact on the re-creation of outdated media.

4.4. Exploration of the Re-education Path of Shanghai School from the Perspective of Regional Cultural Identity

Based on regional cultural identity, the teaching of Shanghai-style art should achieve a coexistence of “localization” and “broad coverage”. The sea is the birthplace of mainstream Chinese culture in modern times. In art teaching, it is

necessary to not only reflect its own characteristics and continuity, but also have the ability to embrace different new cultures and adapt to ideological changes.

In the clubs of colleges and universities or professional departments, theme units with topics such as “The History of Shanghai School of Art” and “The Inheritance of Techniques of Shanghai School of Painting” can be set up to guide students to understand how Shanghai School of art takes root in the local cultural context while learning technical skills. This educational content strategy based on native culture not only enhances the local connection of teaching content but also provides students with a way to understand their own cultural background and build artistic expression awareness. The strengthening of regional cultural identity is not only reflected in the design of textbook content, but also in the selection of teachers’ teaching behaviors and the evolution of their approaches. The higher the degree of openness of a cultural system, the easier it is to absorb heterogeneous cultural elements and utilize them to recreate and rewrite the traditional cultural landscape. The art of the maritime school, which has been socialized through education, is rooted in the local cultural soil and constantly innovates and reforms in educational approaches, promoting the continuation of the essence of traditional culture in modern times.

5. Conclusions

This article, from the perspective of Bourdieu’s “cultural capital - field” theory, explores the institutional transformation path of the brush and ink tradition of the Shanghai School in modern art education. Research indicates that their technical experience has been incorporated into the curriculum norms, and the teaching methods present a parallel integration pattern of “master-apprentice and academy”. The evaluation criteria have also shifted from traditional aesthetics to institutional assessment. The Shanghai School has embedded an overall concept into the teaching system, deeply involved in the adjustment of courses, methods and evaluation mechanisms, and has become an indispensable structural force in the evolution of Chinese painting teaching.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares 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.

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