

Inter- Art Creation in Literature and Art Studies

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Abstract:

“Ekphrastic criticism” can be applied to not only literature studies but also art studies. Six Significant Landscapes by Wallace Stevens transforms and reconstructs Zen Buddhist artistic conception of the original paintings. Language and writing are not the only means of human expression; painting, music, and dance, like language, can communicate thoughts, express emotions, and persuade others. Inter-art creation can transform different forms of arts delicately to break the fence and barriers of fixed forms and style of arts to better express human beings’ ideas and feelings. Many literati and artists consciously or unconsciously apply the theory of ekphrastic criticism to their literary and artistic practice. Art forms like painting, calligraphy, and music are merely languages expressing the artist’s ideas. Artistic media can be interchanged, transcending the boundaries between them to express the artist’s inner voice. Making deep analysis of masterpieces of English poems, Chinese calligraphy and oil paintings, this research will help shed light on how inter-art creation helps literati and artists better express their thoughts and emotions thoughts.

Keywords:

Ekphrasis Criticism, Inter-art Creation, Literature and Art Studies

1. Introduction

Mr. Qian Zhaoming proposed the term “ekphrastic criticism,” which originates from the Greek word “ekphrasis” (ek, “out” + phrasis, “speak”), also meaning “to paint out,” “to play out,” “to dance out”; in short, to express through another art form. Critics engaged in inter-art research believe that: Firstly, language and writing are not the only means of human expression; painting, music, and dance, like language, can communicate thoughts, express emotions, and persuade others; Secondly, art forms can be mutually transformed and re-created. Cross-art creations arising from transformation involve both innovation and missteps, as not all the beauty of the original can be converted; Thirdly, since ancient times, writers, visual artists, musicians, and dancers have enjoyed transforming masterpieces from other arts, proving through re-creation that their own art form is more beautiful, truthful, and persuasive. [1]

Art forms like painting, calligraphy, and music are merely languages expressing the artist's ideas. By applying the concept of ekphrastic criticism to the analysis of literature, calligraphy, paintings and music, it can be seen that how literati and artists delicately cross form barriers and use multimedia to convey their ideas more vividly and heart-touching. Artistic media can be interchanged, transcending the boundaries between them to express the artist's inner voice. The perspective of ekphrastic criticism gives new insight into literature and art research.

2. Ekphrastic Criticism in Literature

Qian employed the conceptual framework of ekphrastic criticism — an emerging school of Western literary theory — to provide a detailed analysis of how *Six Significant Landscapes* by Wallace Stevens transforms and reconstructs Zen Buddhist artistic conception of the original paintings. As a modern American poem, *Six Significant Landscapes* by Wallace Stevens can transcend artistic forms, bridge Eastern and Western cultures, and crosses temporal boundaries. “Ekphrastic criticism” can be applied to not only literature studies but also art studies. From this perspective, calligraphy is music solidified on paper. While criticizing contemporary calligraphic styles in his *A Copy of Chunhuage tie*, Wang Duo, a distinguished calligrapher of Qing Dynasty, pointed out the musical character of calligraphy, and tied this quality to the work of the ancients. [2] Calligraphy shares many commonalities with music theory in terms of rhythm, tone, and other aspects. Different forms of art possess commonality, and the beauty of an artwork is the external manifestation of the artist's mind and thought.

3. Ekphrastic Criticism in Arts

Wang Sengqian, in *Praise of the Vitality of the Brush*, pointed out that the subtle essence of calligraphy lies primarily in its spirit and vitality, with form being secondary; only those who combine both can succeed the ancients. [3] The subtle essence of calligraphy lies in its spirit and vitality; form merely serves to express this spirit, pursuing the unity of form and content. Artistic beauty resides not in the material but in the idea bestowed upon it by the artist's mind, that is, imparting form to matter or material. Beauty is the manifestation of the “inner idea” in objects, soul, and mind. [4] Artists use mediums such as painting, calligraphy, and music to express their thoughts, emotions, mind, and even soul. Art forms like painting, calligraphy, and music are merely languages expressing the artist's ideas. Artistic media can directly learn from each other, even be interchanged, transcending the boundaries between them to express the artist's inner voice. Analyzing Wang Duo's cursive script works further from an inter-art perspective allows for a multidimensional understanding of the artistic language and charm with which Wang Duo creates momentum in his works.

Many artists consciously or unconsciously apply the theory of ekphrastic criticism to their artistic practice. Piet Mondrian, a famous painter, used painting to express jazz music in his classic work *Broadway Boogie Woogie*. The renowned oil painting, *Broadway Boogie Woogie*, draws on the rhythms of American Black jazz music in 1930s. It is widely recognized as a representative work using lines and color blocks to express musical melody; clues to the musical melody as a decorative element can be found in this painting. [5] During the economically transformative and changing 1930s in the United States, jazz was a cultural symbol reflecting American society. In the process of development, jazz both inherited Black traditions and drew from White

classical music, becoming an element stabilizing the American economic condition during its fluctuations. Mondrian used visual elements to express auditory elements, transforming the invisible art of sound into the visible art of painting, solidifying the Broadway jazz music representing the zeitgeist of 1930s America onto the canvas, creating a classic masterpiece of modern art.

On the base the theory of ekphrastic criticism, it can be seen that Mondrian used the picture to express sound in interpreting Mondrian's influential masterpiece Broadway Boogie Woogie (Figure 1). Jazz involves left and right-hand syncopation; the accents of this music are steady, the rhythm rocking. The horizontal lines in the painting can be seen as the left hand, the vertical lines as the right hand, representing the two tracks of the music. Red dots are peaks; green dots are troughs; one can see the musical undulations in the painting. From another perspective, Mondrian also used the picture to express the urban atmosphere of New York; its grid-like composition also resembles the street plan of Manhattan Island, using the plane to express space.

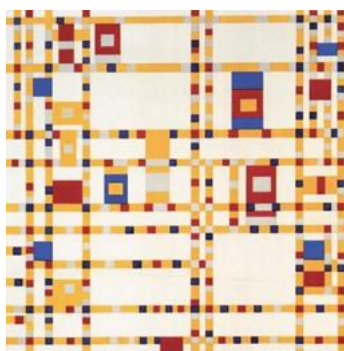


Figure 1. Broadway Boogie Woogie by Piet.

Music can be recreated to painting by applying the theory of ekphrastic criticism to interpret the influential masterpiece, Broadway Boogie Woogie. Mondrian had transcended the surface level of art, turning towards the internal connections within art. Mondrian entered a breakthrough period, changing the view that eyes see reality, turning towards the idea that reality exists in the inner essence beneath appearances, a natural force interrelated with human sensation and thought. [6] Mondrian skillfully and ingeniously expressed the Broadway jazz music, which was the most representative of the contemporary American social atmosphere using the language of painting, transcending the boundaries and limitations of artistic media, touching upon the commonality and essence of art, showing the audience the sense of reality beneath the artistic surface, profoundly influencing later generations.

From the perspective of inter-art, it can be seen that Wang Duo used strong rhythm to create powerful momentum in his works. "Calligraphy inherently possesses the emotional quality of music." [2] Every musical work has a main key, and so does a calligraphic work. The various elements in a calligraphic work should be unified under the main theme. When imitating Wang Duo's Model Letter for "Bao Nu" (Bao Nu Tie) (Figure 2), it can be seen that if the first stroke of Wang Duo's work is very heavy, it sets a relatively heavy tone for the entire piece; various strokes throughout the piece will echo and unify with each other. If the strokes in Wang Duo's work are generally thin throughout, then the strokes overall tend to be thin. It rarely happens that the first and second strokes are very heavy, with thick and spreading ink, while the lines of other characters are all thin, with no other strokes echoing the thick ink of the first and second strokes. Simply put, if the initial strokes are thick and heavy while others are thin, then these initial strokes appear out of place, inconsistent with the

overall tone of the piece, seeming abrupt. One could say, the work is like a piece of music: if it starts with the heavy accent of a gong or drum strike, and then continues like a serenade from a violin without any recurring heavy accents echoing the beginning, then the tone of such a work is not unified.

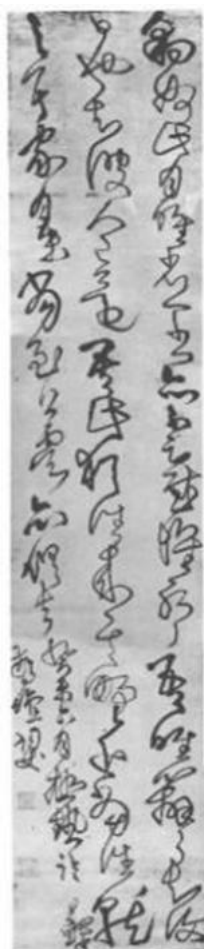


Figure 2. Wang Duo's Model Letter for "Bao Nu" (Bao Nu Tie).

For instance, in some works, even if each character is written excellently, if the characters stand independently, the harmonious and unified artistic effect is not achieved. In art, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. For example, in Wang Duo's Transcription of Zhang zhi's "Champion Tie" (Figure 3), the lines throughout the piece lack the strong contrast in ink tone and line thickness seen in Wang Duo's Model Letter for "Bao Nu" (Bao Nu Tie). The contrast between thick and thin strokes in the entire work is less pronounced, resembling a musical piece with slightly gentler undulations. The style of Wang Duo's Model Letter for "Bao Nu" (Bao Nu Tie) is completely different. The first stroke of "Bao" (leopard) is extremely heavy and thick, which is characteristic of Wang Duo's calligraphy – the first stroke is often very thick and heavy, much like how Beethoven's Fifth Symphony awakens the soul with several heavy notes. These heavy notes are also like Beethoven's inner sigh and lament in the face of fate. Beethoven, in Fifth Symphony, sought to express feelings of pain and entanglement facing destiny, and the surging passion within his heart, transcending time and space to resonate with the calligrapher Wang Duo's expression of the sorrow of impermanent fate and heavy oppression in his calligraphic works – only the medium of expression differed. If Wang Duo's large-scale cursive script works are likened to modern symphonies, then the handwritten letters by Two Wangs

(Wang Xizhi and Wang Xianzhi) are elegant classical music. Beethoven chose heavy notes in music to express heavy, sorrowful emotions aurally; Wang Duo used heavy ink, centered-tip lines, and thick strokes in calligraphy to express similar emotions. The thickly-inked character “Bao” at the beginning sets the tone for the entire work. If there are other characters with thick, heavy ink elsewhere in the piece echoing it, then Wang Duo’s Model Letter for “Bao Nu” (Bao Nu Tie) would be a song with a strong rhythm instead of a melody with a gentle tempo.

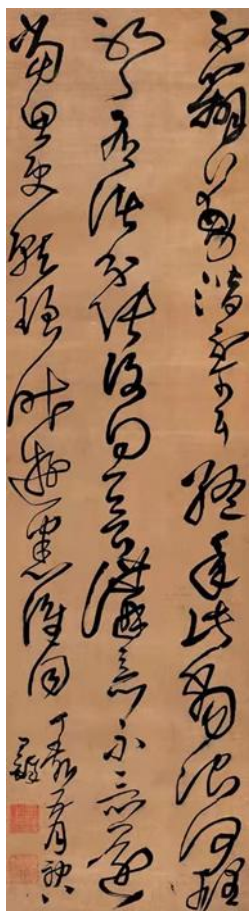


Figure 3. Wang Duo’s Transcription of Zhang zhi’s “Champion Tie”.

Therefore, during imitating and creation, by understanding the musicality and overall tone of the work, sensing the emotion the calligrapher intends to express and the power presented by the lines, it becomes easier to grasp the rhythmic sense of the entire piece, as well as the thickness and texture of the lines, thereby presenting the spirit and charm of the work. During the creative process, according to the content and the emotions to be expressed, artists can select corresponding calligraphic artistic languages such as the lightness/darkness, dryness/wetness of the ink, the texture of the lines, the thickness of the lines, the strength of the momentum, etc., to express them.

Wang Duo's conscious use of ink continuity in Model Letter for “Bao Nu” (Bao Nu Tie), such as its duration, number of characters, and length, produces different rhythmic sensations, enhancing the musicality of the work. Wang Duo’s Model Letter for “Bao Nu” (Bao Nu Tie) by starting with thick, dark ink and then gradually changing, forming an ink sequence. Using strong rhythm is one of Wang Duo’s artistic languages for creating momentum, and it is also a method for creating momentum that later generations can learn from his works. Calligraphy serves as a vehicle for Dao. Calligraphy becomes a medium through which literati expressed their

profound emotions in response to the transformations of their era. The formal evolution from hand scrolls to hanging scrolls—more visually striking and allowing greater freedom for expressive brushwork—enabled calligraphy to transcend its status as a minor art form, offering more freedom and space for inter-art creation.

4. Conclusions

Inter-art Studies, an emerging discipline in Western humanities and social sciences, has given rise to ekphrastic criticism, which represents the latest school of thought in Western literary theory. [1] Inter-art creation can transform different forms of arts delicately to break the fence and barriers of fixed forms and style of arts to better express human beings' ideas and feelings. By applying the concept of ekphrastic criticism to the analysis of literature, calligraphy, paintings and music, it can be seen that the commonalities of artistic forms and the universal resonance of humanity. The perspective of ekphrastic criticism gives new insight into literature and art criticism broadening the scope of creation and imagination of human beings.

Conflicts of Interest

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

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