Analysis and Comparison of the Artistic Characteristics of Isaac Levitan and Wu Guanzhong

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Abstract

The development of Chinese oil painting is inseparable from the influence of Russian realist oil painting. Isaac Levitan is an outstanding realist landscape oil painting master of the 19th century, he inherited and carried forward the fine tradition of Russian landscape painting, and his landscape oil painting through its unique creative personality and creative methods, in the use of scenery lyricism, the word of the story and other aspects to reach the peak, occupying an important position in the history of art. Wu Guanzhong is a mature representative of imagery landscape oil painting in the 20th century, he has devoted his life to the nationalization of oil painting and the exploration of the modernization of Chinese painting, adhered to the artistic concept of integrating China and the West, explored and tried in the field of landscape painting, and finally formed an imagery style with distinct regional characteristics and personal imprints. By analyzing and comparing the artistic characteristics of the two oil paintings, this paper shows the inheritance and differences between Chinese and Russian landscape oil paintings.

Keywords

Landscape oil painting, artistic characteristics, Levitan, Wu Guanzhong

1. Artistic characteristics of the oil paintings of Isaac Levitan

In the composition, Levitan has a rich imagination and the ability to master the picture. In the picture, he pursues the beauty of form, proportionality and accuracy of composition, and strives to express the perfect composition. The common forms of Levitan's compositions include radial composition, horizontal composition, panoramic composition, vertical composition, monumental composition, three-stage composition, and balanced composition. Levitan mostly uses horizontal lines to reflect the regional style. The work "The Vladimir's road" adopts a horizontal line composition, the composition of the work makes people feel depressed, the heaven and the earth are almost half, the hard road is stepped on into the distance, and the whole picture is occupied by the hazy sky and the boundless field (Zhu Aizhen, 2010). In the work "Vesper chimes", Levitan adopts a top-down perspective, and the foreground, middle and far views of the picture are properly arranged, and the picture is reasonably arranged, so that the water surface becomes wide and clear, and the sky is higher.

In terms of light and color, Levitan observes nature in detail, depicts the kaleidoscopic changes in nature, obsessed with the expression of light and air, and expresses different light effects in his works. In the work "Evening at Volga", the picture is expressed in the form of backlight, depicting the moment when the light changes at dusk of the Volga River, and the artistic conception is quiet and elegant. Levitan's paintings, the colors are elegant and soft, and he pays great attention to the integrity of the color tones of the picture (Zhu Aizhen, 2010). Levitan believed...
that the most attractive and attractive thing in nature was tone, and the basis of painting was color. The work "Lake. Rus." (shown in Figure 1-1) is based on blue, the whole picture is brilliant and colorful, in the quiet and elegant blue as the base tone of the picture can make people feel peaceful, can experience the silence and distance from the color of the picture, and at the same time give people infinite reverie.

Figure 1-1. Lake. Rus.

Levitan pays attention to the visual effect of the picture. The brushstrokes in Levitan's paintings can not only capture the texture, volume, and charm of light and shadow, but also reveal his emotions and personality characteristic and in Levitan's works, there are a large number of lines, such as the trunk of a tree that grows in a curve, the edge of the lake and the mountains, and the outline of the object. He carefully deliberately draws each line, and makes reasonable use of these lines of different lengths, thicknesses, and straightness, adding a sense of rhythm to the tranquil picture, while the strong, generalized brushstrokes convey his love of nature. The work "Golden Autumn" (shown in Figure 1-2) depicts a warm and fresh autumn landscape, with a high degree of uniformity, rich colors and elegance. The clear blue sky, golden birch trees, oak trees, blue shiny small rivers, the whole picture is cold and warm, light and dark contrast and harmony (Zhang Shenglin, 2019). The work "Church View in Autumn" also depicts a warm and fresh autumn scene, the trees in the work are full of movement, the brushstrokes are strong and free to show the state of swaying leaves, he uses transparent or translucent colors for color layer over, this excessive connection is very natural, and the middle brush is naturally loose, free to retract, such brushstrokes coincide with the shape of the leaves, which also makes his landscapes full of poetry.

Figure 1-2. Golden Autumn.

Levitan is a lyricist singer of nature, he feels nature with his heart, and creates emotionally rich Russian realist landscape oil paintings, which give people a shock to the soul. For example, the work "March" shows the scenery of early spring in Russia, the blue of the sky, the cold of snow, the shadow of the tree, and the saddle of the horse, which constitutes the melody of color, which just depicts the scenery of the Russian suburbs (Zhang Shenglin, 2019). In his work "Village by the River", he depicts the scenery of the village by the river, he often chooses the ordinary scenery of the countryside as the theme, the picture is smooth and quiet, and the green and yellow on the river bank are depicted in rich colors, and the sky is depicted open and far-reaching, and nature is integrated. The picture shows a strong poetry, which comes from his unique inner feelings and love for every corner of the motherland (Zhu Aizhen, 2010). He incorporates his own emotions into his works, which not only reflects his personal...
mentality, but also expresses social reality. He established the so-called "emotional landscape", which is fully represented in his work. He also looks at nature with a poetic eye, like a landscape poet, and his pictures are full of poetry. His works embody "poetry in painting", and integrate his own emotions, do not copy nature, and reach the level of scene blending, which is very infectious.

2. Artistic characteristics of Wu Guanzhong's oil paintings

Mr. Wu Guanzhong is deeply influenced by Western art, and he has a deep understanding of the connotation of traditional Chinese culture, which has formed a unique oil painting art form that combines Eastern aesthetics. Wu Guanzhong's exploration of landscape oil painting has gone through the process of sketching to creation, from figurative to semi-abstract, from realism to freehand, which has always been accompanied by experimental creation of ink freehand, trying to find a way to express the oriental meaning of oil painting materials through ink experiments. His landscape oil painting creation uses a large number of unique rural scenes as the theme to realize the localization of landscape oil painting, based on Western oil painting techniques, absorbing the ink method and line technique of Chinese painting into the creation of landscape oil painting. This fusion of traditional ink painting with Western modern expressive painting gives his works a bright and simple modernity, while permeated with Chinese tranquility and poetry (Tan Hongmei, 2015). In his work "Guilin Mountain Village" (shown in Figure 2-1), Wu Guanzhong perfectly combines the texture of oil painting with the smooth meaning of Chinese painting, so that the beauty of form and artistic conception can achieve the best unity.

![Figure 2-1. Guilin Mountain Village.](image)

Points, lines, surfaces, and colors are the most basic visual elements to express the beauty of the form. In the process of manipulating the picture, Wu Guanzhong is good at using these basic elements, extracting the formal elements from the complex natural elements, simplifying the complex, turning the concrete into abstraction, and giving it emotions, making it a "meaningful form", so as to form a unique formal beauty (Tan Hongmei, 2015).

In his oil paintings, "dots" are like elves, adding spirit, interest and artistic conception to his paintings. Wu Guanzhong's use of "dots" not only inherits from his predecessors but also has his own creations, combining traditional Chinese brush and ink with Western forms to create a unique and meaningful "point" of his own. Traditional Chinese painting emphasizes "line modeling". Wu Guanzhong is also a master of using "line", his "line" is different from the "line" in traditional ink painting, his "line" is the embodiment of emotions, the abstraction of nature, the enthusiasm of the subjective world stimulated by the beauty of the objective world, rich in decoration and freehand (Bu Ling, 2012). In "Kulangsu" (shown in Figure 2-2), the picture is full of lines with ink pen interest, smooth, free and unrestrained, with a sense of rhythm and rhythm, and the lines of Chinese calligraphy and the meaning of ink painting are vividly played in oil painting. The flatness of Western modern art has had a profound impact on Wu Guanzhong, in creating the composition of the picture form, Wu Guanzhong flexibly draws on the Western modern plane composition rules, and divides and combines the objects with black, white and gray blocks to form a visual balance, so as to achieve the overall composition of the picture or the decorative formal beauty. In the specific application, he first injects the spirit attached importance to traditional Chinese painting into the visual effect of the plane, creating a sense of imagery "between the like and the unlike"; The other is to draw on the flat colors of Western modern painting masters such as Matisse and Gauguin to express subjective feelings, creating flexible and flowing line cutting and dividing blocks, which enhances the sense of heaviness, composition and artistic conception of the picture (Zhong Yan, 2011). For example, in the work "Former Residence of Qiu Jin", the formal beauty
created by the geometric composition in the picture makes the picture shape both summarized and condensed, dense and balanced, reflecting the composition beauty of Western modernity and the beauty of traditional Chinese artistic conception.

Figure 2-2. Kulangsu.

Wu Guanzhong's picture is full of artistic beauty. Artistic conception is an aesthetic principle emphasized by traditional Chinese painting theory and poetry, and it is also the highest state of aesthetics in Chinese painting art. Artistic conception contains two opposing factors: subjective affection and objective situation. Wu Guanzhong believes that only when Eastern and Western art learn from each other's strengths and weaknesses, and the organic combination of the two can achieve the realm of "being born outside the elephant" (Bu Ling, 2012). In order to achieve this realm, Wu Guanzhong has expressed his artistic conception throughout his life in the exploration and excavation of formal beauty. On the one hand, he writes love in the scene, and sketching is only a means for him, and his purpose is to capture and excavate the "beauty of image and artistic conception" on the basis of sketching. On the other hand, Wu Guanzhong uses the technique of simplifying the complex to organize the picture and create interest.

3. Comparison of the art of Isaac Levitan and Wu Guanzhong

Both artists have high achievements in landscape oil painting, as a 20th-century artist, Wu Guanzhong must have been influenced by the 19th century landscape master Levitan, and the two were more or less deeply influenced by Russian realist oil painting in artistic creation, so there are similarities between the two in painting techniques, styles, aesthetic concepts, etc (Li Chuyang, 2020). First, pay great attention to the formal composition and formal beauty of the picture, and pay attention to the composition arrangement of the picture. Second, deeply influenced by national culture and customs, the artworks of the two artists profoundly reflect the cultural and spiritual connotations of their own people. Third, the artistic styles of both are full of poetry and painting, very beautiful in artistic conception, and embody the artistic concept of scene blending.

The differences between the two painters in their artistic exploration and Chinese and Western art have led to differences in their artistic styles and views. First of all, Levitan inherits the artistic characteristics of realist painting, follows the laws of scientific perspective and realistic depiction principles, while Wu Guanzhong's artistic characteristics more present the virtual and real space and freehand elements of Chinese landscape painting, and combines traditional Chinese art with Western modern art to make its art more flat, decorative and interesting. Secondly, Levitan follows a realistic depiction technique, the brushstrokes are more rigorous and rational, and the color is used to make it more elegant and harmonious while depicting nature. Wu Guanzhong pays attention to the experiment and exploration of oil painting techniques and ink techniques, simplifying the plane in brushstrokes and reflecting the artist's subjective understanding and use of objective objects in color. Wu Guanzhong combined Chinese painting and oil painting to form an imagery oil painting style with a unique imprint.

4. Summary

Isaac Levitan, the greatest Russian master of lyrical landscape painting of the 19th century, inherited and developed the fine tradition of Russian landscape painting, integrating his sincere and deep emotions into nature, making his works poetic and far-reaching. His landscape oil paintings sincerely express his local love and patriotism, have
a true Russian spirit, and are a treasure of all human culture. He fused his attachment to life and nature with his love for his country to create unattainable artistic achievements full of realism and romanticism. Wu Guanzhong is the most famous artist in China in the 20th century, and his art has a high pioneering spirit and characteristics of the times and is exemplary. He has devoted his life to the nationalization of oil painting and the exploration of the modernization of Chinese painting, successfully combining the artistic conception in traditional Chinese painting with the expression techniques of Western modern art, expressing the meaning of the East in the form of oil painting, and creating a visual image that combines Chinese and Western, modern and form. Wu Guanzhong's art has both external formal beauty, inner artistic conception and true love beauty, and he has made great contributions to modern Chinese painting. The two artists use the unique culture and art of the nation to integrate into the painting, making the painting full of oil painting characteristics, unique personal style and national spirit. Levitan and Wu Guanzhong, two outstanding painters, integrate subjective spirit and objective objects, portraying shocking landscape oil paintings, and also reflecting the creator's personal emotional experience and aesthetic concepts.

References


