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Analysis of Ukiyo-e's Painting Style and Characteristics

Qianhui Hou*, Changchang Qian

College of Art, Zhejiang Normal University, Jinhua, Zhejiang, China.

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***Corresponding author:** Qianhui Hou, College of Art, Zhejiang Normal University, Jinhua, Zhejiang, China.

Abstract

Ukiyo-e is a genre painting that reflects secular life in Japan. "Ukiyo" means "secular" in Japanese, while "ukiyo" means "to live in the moment" in English. Ukiyo-e is not only the most representative painting art of the Edo period in the history of Japanese art, but also the art of oriental art that has had the most profound influence on world art. Therefore, after research, it can be found that the painting style of Japanese ukiyo-e not only has its own national characteristics, but also absorbs the artistic characteristics of Chinese painting and the techniques of Western artists, adopts the scattered perspective of Chinese painting, expresses the relationship between space and characters by separating distance, emphasizes the characteristics of line and flat painting, and draws on the focus perspective method and the contrast between light and shadow that is not like Western painting. Ukiyo-e has a special artistic charm, including his theme style, aesthetic meaning, emotional expression, and artistic language, and its unique artistic atmosphere has great inspiration and reference value for painting creation.

Keywords

Ukiyo-e, painting style, sculpture

1. Introduction

The aesthetic characteristics of ukiyo-e art form have obvious expression in the decorative sense, mainly describing that the aesthetic characteristics of ukiyo-e are mostly reflected in the decorative space composition art, highly decorative expression techniques and symbolic treatment of landscape figures. Ukiyo-e art is a perfect combination of perceptual thinking and rational thinking, and has achieved harmony and unity in perceptual thinking and rational thinking; ukiyo-e art has a strong artistic charm and strong spiritual injection, thus revealing the inner qualities and aesthetic pursuit of the Japanese nation.

The so-called "ukiyo", that is, the future "cynical" attitude to life, there is a sense of drifting, floating and sinking, compared with the exploration of the future, the current worldly is more cared about by people, "worried" is gradually replaced by "ukiyo", because of the change of people's views, ukiyo-e painters also have a stronger focus on the real-time hot spots of daily life, and form a series of painting styles, under the passage of the tide of the technique to update, actively pour, have their own thinking and perception.

2. The germination of Ukiyo-e's artistic style

Ukiyo-e prints, whether in terms of style or the size of the picture, are very in line with the aesthetic taste of the Japanese people, and most of the Japanese people like small and exquisite works and crafts, which fully expresses the change and development of the aesthetic taste from the nobles to the common people. Through the study of the history of Japanese art, Yamato-e is the source of ukiyo-e painting, the famous "Rinpai" style represented by two

painters (Kang Xinru, 2023), Tsutsuya Soda and Ogata Mitsurin, are two artists who have a profound influence on modern Japanese painting, most of their paintings depict the customs and pleasures of Japanese life comfortably, mostly the daily life of the aristocracy, genre painting is actually just the concept of subject matter, often using the expression of Yamato-e, for example, Yamato-e absorbed Western painting techniques and perspectives, and gradually became a factor in Japanese painting. However, in the process of development and change, Japanese painting also discovered its own painting style. In this way, we can not only explore the localization of Japanese art, but also better understand the development of Japanese art, but also understand the evolution and development of ukiyo-e in depth, and further explore the Japanese painting style and integration with other regions and other important painting knowledge.

Figure 1. Drum Bridge and Sunset Mountain in Meguro.

2.1 The asymmetry of ukiyo-e composition

"The compositional ability of ukiyo-e painters can be said to be unprecedented" (Pan Li, 2021). The artistic charm of ukiyo-e painting lies in its truncated composition. It is a kind of non-artificial pursuit of naturalism with a national consciousness with life force, containing the component of left and right imbalance and the sense of flexible jumping of the picture. Japanese art, represented by ukiyo-e, pioneered "asymmetrical" compositions in stylistic characteristics, and the concept of asymmetry was not just to destroy harmony and imitate the inequality of nature, but to achieve unity in the whole and break the stereotypical way of painting.

Due to the phenomena and things that are common in nature, the concept of symmetry has been widely used. When people see an imbalanced component, they will automatically experience the imbalance of their own body by analogy due to the symmetrical balance and equilibrium conditions of things, but in fact there is no absolute symmetry, which usually includes some differences and complementary factors. In people's visual psychology, the pursuit of symmetry usually manifests itself as incomplete symmetry or partial symmetry. It can be seen that the asymmetrical composition in Japanese art is not a simple surface pattern, unlike Europe and the United States, the church streets in the West are symmetrical, but the accidental asymmetrical architecture is also unintentional, so in the Japanese aesthetic concept, asymmetry is a characteristic of beauty, and even becomes the standard of beauty. In Japan, "incompleteness" is worshipped for its potential for change. In order for the imagination to complete it

freely, it is deliberately left with mutilation (Zhang Ya, 2021). Another feature of Japanese painting is the "partial magnification" technique, which pushes the subject of the picture so close that the image is cut off. Under the psychological meaning of the entire subject, the expressive space transcends the picture. In contrast to the realist principles of Western painting, Japanese painting did not follow these principles.

Broadly speaking, asymmetry also includes the concept of "balance between amorphous and fixed". After the Renaissance, traditional European culture, based on ancient Greek civilization, promoted a philosophy of scientific reason. Based on the modeling principle of the golden ratio, both flat painting and architectural design advocate symmetry and balance, so vertical and horizontal lines become the main body of composition. In contrast, the modeling of Japanese art advocates the principle of "informity", excluding the encircled inorganic square. "The delicate balance of amorphous and stereotyped" and "asymmetrical composition" are important features of the Japanese style, reflecting the four seasons and the rich sense of natural plants, all of which have the formal characteristics of "amorphous". "The shapes contained in nature are treasures of amorphousness, and plastic arts that take nature as a teacher are inevitably presented as amorphous", and "the ingenious combination of the main body and the ornamental nature of the pattern and the composition of a high sense of balance are not available in art outside Japan."

2.2 Abstraction and flat decoration of ukiyo-e images

Japanese art excels at abstracting from everyday life and expressing it in a comprehensive, stylized way. When observing and transmitting the other party, fully exaggerate its modeling characteristics, further simplify it, and abstract it as a "form". In the general design decoration, first use diamonds, angular corners, scales and other geometric shapes, and then simplify the design, more decorative, convenient for the use of bottom shadows. "Abstractness" and "spirituality" are important elements of Japanese arts and crafts.

In the "Picture of Xuanwa": The country of Japan, the ancient country of Wa, and the country of slaves, changed its name because it thought it was close to the land of the sunrise. Some paintings do not know their names, and they describe their national scenery and landscapes, with heavy colors and more gold. Considering the truth, it may not be so, and the first wants to paint brilliantly in order to see the beauty. This is an intuitive evaluation of Japanese screens and scrolls at that time. The "winds, landscapes, and small scenes" mentioned in the "Xuanwa Picture Score" are also Yamato-e, and the evaluation of "Jinbi is used but not true" in the article also clearly points out that Japanese painting is characterized by its beauty, flatness, and pleasing painting characteristics. The artistic development of Yamato-e is not only about the subject matter and pictures, but also worth mentioning its flat decorative and abstract meaning. Comparing the Southern Song Dynasty "Peacock Ming King Statue" at Ninwaji Temple in Kyoto with the "Peacock Ming King Statue" at the Tokyo National Museum, the two works share the same theme and composition. The former has a strong realism color, while the latter has a gorgeous flat decoration, which just illustrates the difference in the artistic senses of China and Japan, which causes the difference in shape.

From the point of view of modern painting, the latter is a kind of handicraft, as the album of Xuanhe Painting says, paying attention to beauty and despising truth. Ink painting is the result of the separation of late Tang Chinese painting from decoration and technology, such as the Northern Song Dynasty ink painting, which pursues naturalism as the painting characteristic and the flexibility of the picture as the highest realm. Secondly, the use of gold pigments was also transmitted to Japan, and the latter directly transplanted gold clay into the picture. There are also many flattening and decorative techniques of painting that are also clearly represented in the sessions of the compound angle. Different from the realistic technique of European painting and the accurate reproduction of natural appearance, through a certain pattern and limited shape, it does not need more depiction to convey an infinite view of nature and a sense of life. It not only showcases the artist's skill, but also combines the Japanese artist's creative concept with the flattened style features, which is similar to the freehand line drawing of The Tale of Genji Scroll, which is a beautiful combination of artistry, craftsmanship and decorative style.

2.3 The use and matching of subjective colors

Ukiyo-e paintings are characterized by the Japanese national feeling in the use of subjective colors that distinguish them from other paintings, which of course is inseparable from the local terroir and culture of Japan (You Mengdi, 2022). However, the characteristics of Japanese scenery are not static, but have gentle changes in the warm atmosphere, giving people a unique aesthetic taste, so in Japanese painting, the combination of subjective colors for the painter has the ultimate sensory experience.

Figure 2. Edo Hyakkei Kamei Umaya Shop.

The word "color" in Japanese basically includes five aspects: first, color, the different sensations determined by the difference in the spectrum in vision, that is, the factors of hue, chroma and brightness; Second, the timbre, the tone of the voice; Third, musical color, decorative tunes in Japanese folk music, etc.; Fourth, the posture, the feeling of appearance; Fifth, the feeling of love, in Japanese, the lover is called a lustful man and a woman. In terms of color, white, blue, red, and black are the main sources of Japanese color and the basic colors of Japanese color.

Some Japanese concepts and views on color are mentioned in the book "Color Dye and Color": the word "red" is extracted from "bright", and the word "red" represents warm color, for example, the word "red" is mostly used to describe "red, orange, orange-red or pink". Then the opposite of the word "red" "dark" is the color of the cool color, then it means "black", another quite important color is "white", "white" gives people a mysterious, Spring Festival and tsundere atmosphere, "white" gives people more meaning of creation and imagination, more can give people imagination and creation, in addition to the above "red", "black", "white", all other colors are expressed in "green", generally including "green, blue-green, blue-violet, purple and the intermediate color of these colors" so, In subsequent Japanese paintings, the color "blue" was often quoted to represent those broader colors.

Since ancient times, white in conversation has not only represented the meaning of color but also the moral tendency of the nation. In Japanese, the character "su" can also replace "white", which symbolizes whiteness and simplicity, and in the ancient mythology of the Kojiki and Nihon Shoki, there is a word for "clear heart" (clean and bright heart). Since the Heian period, white powder has been introduced from the mainland by Japan, but the use of white powder is mostly on women's makeup (Liu Jiaxin, 2023). The Japanese worship of white is not only in painting, but also in all aspects of their lives. Shintoism, a traditional Japanese religion, promotes white and uses white as a color that connects people and gods. Unlike Chinese temples, which are heavily colored, Japanese shrines largely retain the original colors of the building materials. The surrounding environment and related facilities also minimize human traces, reflecting pure natural scenery everywhere. The Japanese team also had a deep knowledge of white paper, creating paper with toughness and thickness, and they believed that paper was the closest way they were to the gods, and that there was a divine meaning in it. The tradition of Japanese art is to depict silhouettes without shadows on flat surfaces, so bolder and abstract techniques are used to represent two-dimensional space, such as the subjective use of color combinations. Ukiyo-e prints are more transparent, pure, and moist than heavy latex paint painted with a brush on the surface, which was also influenced by later painting,

and it was called the "Land of Light". The clear blue sky, light purple, and simple and emotional ink lines are interwoven into a music-like rhythm, making full use of the advocated colors of the Japanese nation.

3. Summary

Ukiyo-e is mostly made with plant pigments that are carefully stretched and dyed by printers and penetrate onto the paper to reveal the texture. Ukiyo-e prints are more transparent, pure, and moist than heavy latex paint painted with a brush on the surface, which was also influenced by later painting, and it was called the "Land of Light". The clear blue sky, light purple, and simple and emotional ink lines are interwoven into a music-like rhythm, making full use of the advocated colors of the Japanese nation. Although Japanese art has many characteristics, if it is placed in the world of art, the most prominent feature is the color produced by the bright sunlight. The influence of Japanese art on the world is also mainly from this direction, at the same time, plant pigments are not tolerant to sunlight, the disappearance of bright white light, and Japanese "Ukiyo" believes that this is a general life depiction of the human figure, but also reflects the Japanese national sigh, life is short, cherish the good opportunity "mourning" aesthetic complex emotions, ukiyo-e is a vivid portrayal of human life.

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