

## Abstract Language in Chinese Contemporary Landscape Oil Painting

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**Key words:** Abstract language; Landscape oil painting; Techniques

**Abstract:** Abstract language takes intuition and imagination as the starting point of creation, and rejects any symbolic, literary and illustrative expressions. Abstract language itself is part of painting, which is a language that cannot be avoided in painting.

This paper analyzes how Chinese contemporary landscape oil painters Hong Ling and Ren Chuanwen use abstract language extensively in oil paintings to construct pictures through abstract elements to realize the artist's self-emotional expression. At the same time, it also analyzes how abstract language and concrete language coexist, and their relationship.

### What is Abstract Language?

Painting language is the author's creative means. Painting should not only show life and nature in an extremely rich and comprehensive way, but also discard the dross and select the essential, and show life and nature in a more typical and universal way. Painting is realized through the language of painting. The painting language contains the organic integration of techniques, forms and contents., and the depth and breadth of the painting language is the standard to test the artist's artistic level. The different applications of painting language produce different styles of paintings.

The term "abstract" comes from philosophy. Its explanation in Cihai refers to the relatively independent aspects, attributes and relations extracted from specific things, which can best reflect the essential characteristics of things. Abstract language is a form of expression of painting language. It takes intuition and imagination as the starting point of creation, rejects any symbolic, literary and illustrative expressive techniques, and only integrates and organizes shapes and colors on the picture. Artists generate artistic conception through abstract language, which is an inner emotional expression that is beyond the content of the picture. This enables viewers to achieve the purpose and significance of conveying the artist's creation while generating aesthetic spiritual enjoyment. Thus, abstract language presents pure forms. When painting evokes the aesthetic emotions of human beings, what works for people is a form of language unique to painting. It uses shape, color, texture or point, line, surface or black, white, gray and other color and texture to convey the pursuit of spiritual civilization by human beings or artists.

### The Role of Abstract Language in Painting

Herbert Reed mentioned in "The Truth of Art": "All art is abstract. Because of aesthetic experience, apart from incidental decoration and association, it is only a response of the human body and brain to fictional or free harmony. Art has its inherent order, and art depends on the movement of numbers; Art is a block restricted by the scale, is a kind of thing that explores the rhythm of life and uncertainty." Thus, paintings have the intervention of abstract elements at the beginning, which is a combination of concreteness and abstraction. No matter in China or in the west, the general trend of art is from realism to abstraction and then to pluralism, and also a process from the unconsciousness of abstraction to the cognition and application of abstraction. This is an inevitable change with the cognition of society and art. There are abstract factors hidden in the concrete "form", and there are coincidences between the abstract "form" and the concrete "form", and "form" is the most basic abstract element. Shi Tao expounds the relationship between concreteness and abstraction in "Quotations from Bitter Melon Monk": "If one understands the shape and changing principle of seas, but can not understand the law of the form and structure of

the mountains, his feelings about the mountains and seas will be false. My feelings about mountains and seas is that mountains are like seas and seas are like mountains. Both the mountains and seas know that my feelings are real. This depends on one's brushstroke to show the romance of mountains and seas." Wu Guanzhong sums it up in four words as "green mountains are like seas." Although the concrete mountains and seas differ greatly, they are very similar in abstract form. In terms of abstraction, their expressions are unified. Abstract and concrete things are inseparable and organically combined.

In fact, abstraction and concreteness are cognitive problems. What we know is concreteness, and what we don't know is abstraction. Looking at life, we find that mountains are concrete, while cells under a microscope are abstract. In fact, they are all the world as it is, just because people's cognition treats them differently. In paintings, abstraction and concreteness have a highly harmonious unity, and concreteness and abstraction are interchangeable under certain conditions. Concrete paintings are also made up of abstract brushwork, and abstract works can also remind people of concrete images. Thus, the abstract painting language itself is part of the painting, and it is a language that cannot be avoided in the painting. Abstract language allows viewers to produce rich associations that make the picture open, and it is also a means to make the picture easy and flexible.

### **The Use of Abstract Language by Chinese Contemporary Landscape Oil Painters**

**Hong Ling.** Hong Ling's landscape oil painting focuses more on the compatibility between the virtual and the real, and the virtual is more than the real. In fact, the picture focuses more on the use of abstract language. When drawing, he can start from a certain place without any preset draft. Everything conforms to the feeling, and is dyed layer by layer. The trees, rocks, slopes and streams follow the strokes randomly. Hong Ling has many tools for drawing, including knives, pens, hands and paper etc.; Sometimes he would even take a piece of bamboo from his garden, soak it in a paint bucket, and throw it at the canvas. Palm leaves, rags, discarded newspapers and so on would become his drawing tools. His techniques are also very rich, including hook, pick, scrape, and point; Brushing, rubbing, expanding, printing and other ways are very rich. At first, he is free to use the method of splashing and sprinkling to create a painting vein on the flower cloth, and then add some concrete forms in accordance with the painting to guide the abstract language of the picture into the directional landscape. Hong Ling's picture pursues the reality scene and directly presents the soul scene, and the ink and brush in the oil painting is self-tillering and rising. The color block and texture are more independent, and the language gradually breaks away from the narrative function and respects the form of the picture itself. In the vast and free space diffusion, there is a kind of deliberate control. This makes his oil paintings have a beautiful view on the form itself, and abstract language becomes the most important element of the artistic expression of the picture.

Hong Ling's oil painting *The Song of Heaven* (Fig. 3-1) does not present a specific picture of snow scenery. It has no specific description of snow-covered mountains and snow-covered trees, but an image expression. Large and small strokes run "at will" on the picture, mottled layers of colors are interlaced, different depths of white and different shades of gray are interlocked, which creates a snowy and misty scenery in the south of the Yangtze River. The picture takes points and lines as elements, paying close attention to the abstract beauty that can be produced by sparseness. In terms of technique, it is not a careful depiction, but a creative use of a variety of tools, using sprinkling, smashing, printing and other means to get a special aesthetic texture. A small number of guiding lines are added to the large-area abstract picture to make the abstract picture enter the scene of woods. By controlling the shape of the upper and lower parts of the picture, the audience is attracted to understand it as a mountain. The picture reasonably combines abstraction and concreteness, so that the picture has clear weather conditions and location, and presents an abstract aesthetic feeling.



Fig. 3-1 The Song of Heaven

**Ren Chuanwen.** Ren Chuanwen's landscape oil painting creation is characterized by remote and ethereal space construction, the character modelling of the point-view type and the mysterious feeling of the simple tone, which shows a narrative dream feeling. In the construction of space sense, he uses the combination of objective image state and subjective construction to construct a virtual space by using abstract color blocks of different sizes and shapes. Then, the concrete trees or mountains are inserted between the abstract color blocks to complete the space construction, so as to achieve the remote and ethereal sense. His works are inserted with point-view characters, combined with other images to achieve narrative effect. The character who seems to be concrete is actually an abstract expression, and the character is not depicted concretely, but presented in a vague and symbolic way. Moreover, the characters in the picture have no specific directivity, so gender, age and identity are not clear. Different viewers have different associations when watching. In addition, the tone of primitive picture is very important to the construction of dream. For the treatment of primitive tone, in addition to the reasonable choice of color, the abstract texture produced by techniques is a key element. Through repetitive painting, the flat scraping of the painting knife produces a mottled color layer, and the cloth is used as a brush to knead and drag on the canvas to produce uneven color and obvious texture. These texture effects greatly enhance the tone of the sense of simplicity, just like the texture of ancient painting in front of us.

In Ren Chuanwen's oil painting *A Silent Day* (Fig. 3-2), we can see that the concrete elements are only two characters in the middle, a tree in the back and a cloud in the sky. These three elements appear before and after, which creates an objective spatial relationship. The painter creates a subjective spatial relationship by alternating several abstract color blocks from front to back, as well as smooth and complex strokes, which work together to create an ethereal picture environment. Two obscure characters are in the center of the picture, without any information introduction. They are always young, men and women are not clear, and what they are doing is not clear. We don't know if they're young or old, male or female or what they're doing, which expresses a more imaginative scene in an abstract language. In the whole picture, the construction of the structure depends on the sense of space. What enriches the picture is not the accumulation of details, but a variety of abstract textures. These abstract languages make the picture full and ethereal. What's more, it strengthens the sense of simplicity in the color of the picture. This painting realizes the painter's expression of dream by the reasonable use of large area of abstract language.

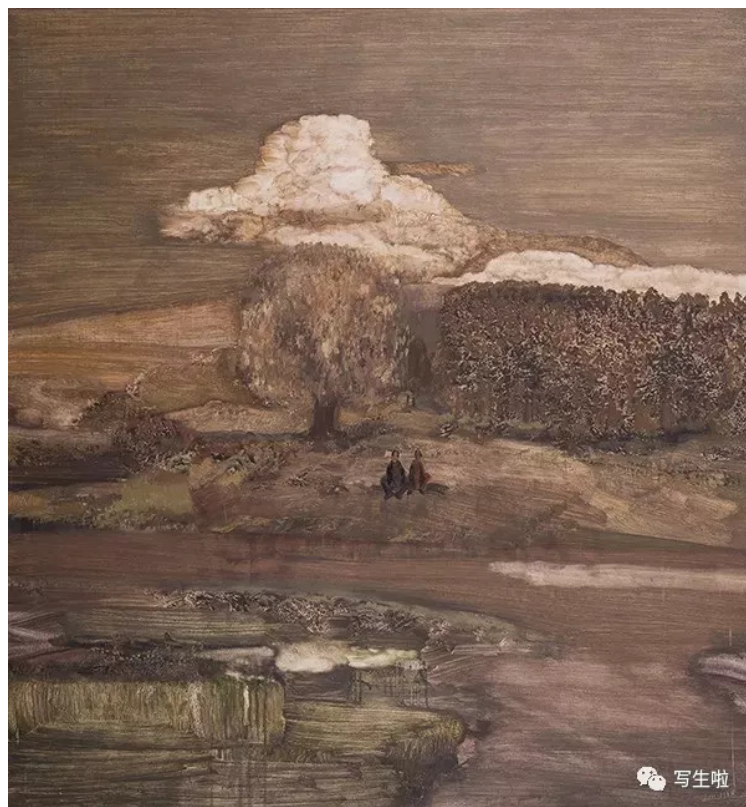


Fig. 3-2 A Silent Day

## Conclusion

In the real landscape, the images are complex. In the creation of landscape oil painting, painting and piling up details in the creation of landscape painting can not make a good work. The rational use of abstract language plays an important role in landscape painting. It not only enables painters to grasp the key points and clues in the complicated images, but also is a means of expressing their own feelings and forming their personal styles.

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