

Research on The Application and Expression of Mixed media in Oil Painting

¹Su Xinyuan

¹*Prof., Dept. of Global Fine Art, Kyonggi Univ., Korea*
E-mail 356710981@qq.com

Abstract

With the diversified development of modern art, the application of mixed media in painting has become increasingly prominent, which not only provides artistic creators with new creative ideas, but also magnifies the creators' emotions and re endows the media with meaning and value. This paper systematically introduces the definition, features and connotation of mixed media painting, and expounds three aspects of the aesthetic function of multimedia in oil painting creation, the embodiment of painting individuality, and the combination and application of materials and technique to demonstrate that mixed media presents different understanding and expression in Chinese oil painting, no longer constrained by traditional oil painting materials, which promotes more development possibilities of the art expression form of Chinese oil painting, enhances its international influence, and bring new vitality to the creation and development of Chinese oil painting.

Keywords: *Mixed media, Oil painting creation, Materials and technique, Application, expression*

1. INTRODUCTION

In the wake of the high development of Western Renaissance and the constant invasion of humanistic ideas, European painting art was gradually introduced to China, and China began to absorb and learn this western art that had never been known before. Therefore, as an art expression form, oil painting has been included into the Chinese art system and gradually evolved into an art discipline. In the early days, the system that Chinese oil painting learned from was still focused on the knowledge of western painting. Although some Chinese painters continued to combine the eastern art expression concept with it, the creations resembled their western counterparts. They always created paintings in accordance with the traditional easel art form, and the creation materials of oil painting were simply dominated by pigments. With the rapid development of science and technology in the 20th century, the painting ideas have also changed, and the diversified creation concepts of the artists have gradually formed, enriching the forms of art expression with the emergence of new themes and different elements. By constantly learning from western painting concepts, Chinese oil painting creators have quickly opened their minds, and the single material form of traditional Chinese oil painting could no longer satisfy the emotional expression of the creators at this time. Until the infiltration of the concept of painting with multi mixed media, it has broken through the material limitations of the original painting, provided a broader space for the art creation of Chinese oil painting, and extended the scope of art expression. This paper analyzed the application of mixed media technique in oil painting, and clearly explained the application features and expression connotation of mixed media.

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Corresponding Author: 356710981@qq.com

Tel:*** - **** - ****

Ph.d.program, Dept. of Global Fine Art, Kyonggi Univ., Korea

2. OVERVIEW OF MIXED MEDIA TECHNIQUE

2.1 Generation of mixed media technique

Due to the rapid evolution and development of European industry since the middle of the 20th century, western art and thinking have made a leap beyond the times, and the abstract art style has gradually dominated the field of paintings, becoming popular. The gorgeous texture expression in abstract art is appreciated by people from all walks of life, attracting special attention from the artists. At that time, in virtue of combining real life with art, Spanish artists began to constantly add and try material media other than oil paint in the creation process of art works, such as pasting shredded paper, cloth, wood on the painting, or throwing paint and pigment on the canvas to form novel visual sensory effect. The artists first to combine materials with works were Pablo Picasso from Spain, Pollock from the United States, Antonio Tapies and Manolo Valdez from Spain. At that time, such an innovative creation technique was constantly learned and spread by painters, and gradually evolved into a mixed media painting technique. Artist Anthony Tapies often mixed gypsum powder, clay and sand in his creation. He integrated and concluded the added materials, completed the innovation of his works, and made the viewers perceive the new meaning of material.

According to Christian De Quincy, "matter is a kind of feeling with perception, and matter is a kind of experience full of adventure, which explores and guides its own path through a long and tortuous path of evolution".[1] It is proved through this sentence that matter bears a attribute of perception. Through such an expression as painting, which can convey the emotional value of the creator, and can also enhance the expressiveness of the work. Therefore, works of art combined with material media are closely related to daily life.

Under the influence of western art, China also began to absorb and learn from the western art. In 2010, the China Artists Association affiliated to the China Federation of Literary and Art Circles began to officially establish the Art Committee for the Preservation and Restoration of Mixed Media Painting and Fine Arts Works. Thus, the mixed media painting has adapted to the development needs of contemporary international art, and is bound to become a new development platform for Chinese art and easel art.[2] Only when the innovative status of Chinese easel painting art is integrated into the vision of international art development era can mixed media painting develops in China in an all-round way and quickly get the impetus and catalyst of social concerns. The expression form of mixed media art is the "pacesetter" and "pioneer" in the development team of Chinese contemporary art, with the fundamental purpose of all the efforts and artistic exploration it has contributed to promote the overall development of Chinese easel art in the contemporary era.[3]

2.2 Definition of mixed media technique

As the name suggests, mixed media painting refers to the application of different kinds of materials mixed together to conduct a new painting experiment. The mixture of materials broadens the expression approaches of artist, increases the techniques of painting, and makes it diversified and mysterious. Therefore, art works are no longer limited by traditional materials at this time, and are more impactful, presenting unprecedented visual feast to the viewers. In terms of material selection, the ready-made products, semi-finished products and wastes in our daily life can all be used as expression elements for artistic transmutation, which can finally break the boundaries of different art categories by combining these materials not found in traditional painting categories through modeling.[4] As a result, increasingly more "media materials" are used in oil painting art creation in the contemporary era.

2.3 Important features of multiple media in oil painting

Throughout the profound history of oil painting, the combination of mixed media and oil painting is the "rising star". The Chinese painters have chosen to actively accept and learn the introduction of mixed media in the process of Chinese oil painting creation, and are naturally inspired by western culture. The features of

the media itself have been gradually excavated, which have two major features, namely, "dominant features" and "recessive features". The dominant features refer to rich texture language and strong painting expressiveness, while the recessive features highlight the emotional expression. These two features have empowered a new judgment scale for mixed media oil painting, which is to boldly express its own inner "monologue", instead of being confined by traditional painting materials.

First, we have analyzed the rich texture language in the dominant features. The addition of multiple media in the mixed media oil painting has strengthened the visual expression of the creative theme of artist. Especially when painting the mottled walls or mountains with natural like effects, the effect produced by the superposition of the media texture layers is highly unified with the physical image, which brings a strong sense of freshness with the unique texture, and makes the details of the art works become more abundant and durable with the painting process, undoubtedly and greatly improving the appeal of the overall art works. For example, regarding the mottled effect reflected by the painting, we can use the technique of oil-water separation to make the corresponding texture. Or when we need the effect of time erosion, we can use styrene acrylic emulsion mixed with propylene, and use a sander to selectively polish the upper layer of color while rendering layer by layer, showing the layered mottled texture (as shown in Figure 1). Therefore, the texture expression of mixed media can not only broaden the creative thinking, but also improve the aesthetic value of the overall art works.



Figure 1. Su Xinyuan, Traces, 2022

Second, we have studied the strong expressiveness of dominant features. The media material itself is of rich expressiveness, which is reflected in the form, texture, quality and other factors of the material. Through rational screening and repeated experiments, the artists can ultimately master the features of the relative materials, so as to blend and match them with the basic composition and theme of the painting, strengthen the spiritual connotation of the works, figure out the balance point between the media and the theme of oil painting, reasonably apply the uniqueness of material, and finally create a refreshing new look of the works.

The last is the prominent emotional expression in the recessive features. It is drawn from the study of the strong expressiveness of the dominant features that media can enhance the expressiveness of the painting. The artist subjectively treats the objective objects and images in combination with media to reflect the emotion, which has transformed the meaning attribute of media its own at this time, and endowed a new theme highly unified with the theme of the work. Just like Anselm Kiefer, a famous artist, his works often add straw, mercury, lead, metal, sand and other materials to the corresponding positions on the surface of his works in a stacking or arrangement way, reflecting the sense of ruin and decay in the post war history. This spirit of expressing darkness, pain, redemption, reflection and inquiry can also be regarded as an inspiration and warning to the modern and contemporary times, which is so heavy and depressive.

2.4 Attribute connotation of mixed media

The media mainly has two attributes: ontological attribute and virtual attribute in the creation of painting works.

1. Ontology attribute

The ontological attribute of painting media refers to the original features such as quality, color and texture produced by the media itself. The artists can skillfully arrange or use the ontological attribute of media materials to bring more strong impact to the viewer through re-integration with oil paintings, playing a huge role of this form of visual expression, and giving the viewer an ideological inspiration at the same time, such as the feeling of richness and vicissitudes brought by sediment, and the sense of misty and raining charm with rendering of ink, the plainness and coarseness expressed by hemp cloth and rope can, while some brightly colored chemical materials can bring people a feeling of cheerfulness and relaxation.

2. Virtual attribute

At present, there are many forms of combined use of mixed medias and oil painting in the platform of world oil painting art, which has generated diversified creative techniques. When artists want to seek an outlet for their inner spirit and emotions through their works, the media materials they choose have not only born their own ontological attribute, but also been endowed with the "emotional voice" expressed by the creators, which is usually called the virtual attribute of media. For the viewers, they should not only simply review the works in the form of viewing, but also feel the inner monologue of the creator from the arrangement of the medias. Therefore, the art of mixed medias should be felt not only by viewing, but also by "listening".

3. EXPRESSION AND EMBODIMENT OF MIXED MEDIA IN OIL PAINTING ART

3.1 Formal expression of mixed media oil painting

When considering the form of the painting, every oil painting creator will first take the basic points, lines and surfaces as the basic factors, and then add texture details and painting effects. In an excellent work, the unique embodiment of the sense of form runs throughout the nature, and this sense of visual presentation is very important. We can find this out from the landscape oil painting series "The Bare Mountain" by the Xinjiang painter Qin Tianxing. Qin Tianxing uses a variety of media materials, such as propylene, mud and sand, ink, paint, etc. in his oil paintings, and pay attention to the form of virtual-reality combination and texture layout, which endows his paintings with a sense of rhythm and space, and makes the viewers feel the magnificence of mountains. With strong rhythm and bold and direct expression technique in the landscape oil painting "The Resounding Land of the Xinjiang Mountains", he used the techniques of brushing, scraping, rubbing, kneading, and washing to express the heroic feelings of the vast mountains in northwest China with the combination of different Chinese and Western artistic concepts. The whole work is vigorous, powerful and magnificent, maximizing the expression of artistic conception, which is undoubtedly a visual feast for the viewers. (As shown in Figure 2)



Figure 2. Qin Tianxing, The Land of Mountains in Xinjiang, 2019

Xu Bingtun, a professional oil painter, also focuses on the formal expression of media texture in his mixed media oil paintings "Hundred-Year Hometown of Overseas Chinese" series, "Warm Wind and Sunshine" series, and "South Wind" series. As can be seen from his paintings, the saturation is very high, the color contrast is extremely strong, and the color matching is simple. The scraper is used to repeatedly scrape the paints and materials on the canvas to show the vicissitudes and mystery of the passage of time, showing a strong spatial contrast by the virtual and solid color blocks. His works also use quartz sand mixed with clay to highlight the corresponding details and thickness of the painting. For example, he highlights the mottled texture form effect of the land and building walls, which is more expressive than the simple use of paints. These particles and materials not only bring visual contrast, but also present the ancient flavor, revealing a simple sense of eternity in the grand landscapes.

It can be seen through examples that the media itself can transform the intention and sentiment of the creators, turn the objective existence into a unique image, making relatively "subtraction" instead of more complicated realistic depictions, which pursues the concentration and simplicity of art, and the sense of simple design, so as to be more intriguing. Therefore, it is found that artists can express their unique emotions and feelings through a variety of forms and techniques in the creation of oil painting works with the introduction of mixed medias, and effectively complete the communication with the viewers.

3.2 Aesthetic function of mixed media oil painting

The aesthetic function of mixed media refers to the expressive function reflected by materials, which includes the ontological features of various materials and the visual sensitivity given to people, and also covers the proper definition and expressive ability of the materials given again in the creation after being reasonably arranged by the artist. The media itself is an objective inanimate substance, which is endowed with a "virtual attribute" through the secondary creation of artists. This attribute is unique in the works at this time, and selectively strengthens the original hardness, solid color, function and other elements, so as to further display the unique beauty of the media. In the end, both the "ontological attribute" of materials and the "virtual attribute" re-endowed by creators should be unified with the theme of the art work, and greatly enhance the aesthetic feeling of the work by constantly strengthening the features of the media. Therefore, the aesthetic feeling of this expression proposes more stringent requirements of theories and practices for creators, requiring great creativity, rigorous logic ability, strong hands-on experiment ability and rich imagination. Through the control of multiple media by art creators, these abilities are deeply restructured and analyzed to study how to make the expression more intense, the theme clearer and the details more accurate. When a piece of art work shows its distinctive features and profound connotation, its aesthetic function will naturally reach its peak.

3.3 Expression of texture form of mixed media oil painting

It can be drawn that the word "texture" is constantly mentioned in the previous paragraphs. Whether it is the media itself or the embodiment after the recombination of multiple media, texture is expressed as the key feature of mixed media painting. So how to embody the expression form of texture? In the creation of traditional oil paintings, the texture is always smooth and bright, without ups and downs. In such a realistic and natural like state, it is difficult for the viewer to perceive the painting strokes. However, the texture of media materials is not only flat, but also three-dimensional, which can increase the sense of depth of the work, enrich the details of the painting, and enhance the appeal. Sometimes, the effect of texture form produced under the control of rhythm and strength can cause emotional resonance after the materials are used by stacking, destroying, collaging, rubbing and other techniques in oil painting. At present, the texture of oil painting can be divided into plane form, three-dimensional form and abstract form. However, the artists should not blindly pursue the form of texture and ignore subjective expression. An excellent oil painting art work should not only grasp the bottom line of creation, but also reflect innovation, remove its dross and take its essence, and make rational use of the formal beauty of texture to show unique artistic value and ornamental charm.

3.4 Contingency factor in mixed media oil painting

In the process of creation, mixed media oil painting is also a process of exploring the integration of various types of materials, which will obviously produce more contingent effects compared with other traditional paintings. Under the interaction of various materials, forms and techniques, the process of practice is as interesting and mysterious as making experiments. Any object appearing in the sight of artists can be used as a media element for secondary creation, such as sand, cloth, hemp rope, toilet paper, plastics, branches, etc., or styrene acrylic emulsion, latex, potassium permanganate, lithopone, quartz sand trichloromethane and other chemicals and building materials. Therefore, upon the utilization of a wide range of medias in oil painting, it will increase the contingent effects several times and vary greatly due to different order and proportion of various combinations. With the rapid development of modern scientific and technological approaches, the emergence of new material media is likely to subvert the nature of the concept of innovation in painting art, pose new challenges, present new forms of expression, and inject fresh blood.[5]

In the previous paragraph, we have mentioned that there are various kinds of accidental phenomena in the media. Then there is another kind of contingent factor due to the different artistic knowledge, cultivation or experience of artists, the different feelings, and the influence on the choice of media and materials, that is, the contingent factor of conceptual differences in creation. In terms of techniques, artists often create works by approaches they are used to and good at. No matter by polishing, cutting, rubbing, burning, flushing, sprinkling, or cover-staining, stacking, pasting, inlaying and other techniques, they are all intentional ideas of the creators. The contingent effect produced at this time can be used to transform the contradiction, and make the combination of contingency and inevitability, finally sublimating the painting upon completion.

In the first two paragraphs, the author has introduced the occurrence of contingency, described the important position of the "contingency" factor, and the application of mixed media technique compared with the traditional single painting, and the more features of "contingency" effect. In conclusion: 1. Due to the different quantity, type and proportion of media, the contingent effect is different, which is unpredictable. 2. Because of different knowledges, feelings, and favorite colors and use of techniques, artists will finally create different works. 3. The combination of medias will be slightly deviated, just like "there can be no two identical leaves in the world". In the case of differences in color flow, temperature change and viscosity, "contingency" bears the nature of irreproducibility, which may make the best of an error without rectifying it, or may make the wrong by trying to make the test. Therefore, the final work also bears the inevitability of irreproducibility. 4. The contingency of creation is polarized. No matter which stroke or step produces the contingency, it will be a "double-edged sword", either playing a role in promoting the final presentation of the painting, or missing the right time and leaving an obstacle because of excessive pursuit of expression, which requires the creator to maintain a pure mind in the process of painting, maintain a unified mood in a period of time, show artistic accomplishment, adjust the painting in time, and balance the "trade-off" from beginning to end. 5. The of

"contingency" and "inevitability" are opposed and unified. "Contingency" shows rich expressiveness and imagination, and enhances the appeal of works. If "contingency" is ignored, the painting will be rigid, losing its soul and interest. "Inevitability" reflects the artistic accomplishment of the creator and the cultural connotation in the work. If "inevitability" is ignored, the painting will be empty and disorderly. Thus, the painting approach of media art is actually the aesthetic logic of constantly balancing various contingencies and rational inevitabilities.

3.5 Application of individuality in mixed media oil painting

This paper has been emphasizing various expressions of mixed media from beginning to end, among which it is often mentioned that media can express the individuality and spirit of artists in the creation of paintings, and play a significant role through the utilization of accidental use, formal expression, texture expression and other attributes. For example, Huang Yi, a professional artist in Guangdong Province, often uses propylene, oil paint, oil stick, charcoal stick and other materials in his work "Lunch Break of Advanced Study Class" to express the daily life of art lovers, and the courage to pursue spiritual sublimation and abandon the comfortable life. This good atmosphere of happiness, enjoyment and concentration during creation was timely recorded in the painting. The seemingly random linear strokes in the work integrate with the loose sense of color blocks, forming the unique vague modeling language of Huang Yi. The expression of "lines" is very important, guiding and extending the thinking and consciousness of viewers, even making the vague part be clearly imagined by the brain to create a specific image of the modeling. In order to express strong impact and individuality, this painting uses oil painting stick and acrylic material to present the differences in texture and color purity. The form of round composition weakens the colors around the painting and highlights the middle part, which clarifies the overall relationship, highlights the elegance in wildness and expresses the individuality in elegance. (As shown in Figure 3)



Figure 3. Huang Yi, Lunch Break Time of Advanced Study Class, 2017

4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the aesthetic attribute of mixed media refers to the expression of materials, the aesthetic feeling of materials, and the shape and function of materials, and analyzed in terms of the texture of materials, the cultural expression of materials, and the sentiment expression of materials, which has concluded that the use of mixed media has epoch-making significance for the extension of oil painting creation. This form of expression is not only an important manifestation of the development of modern painting, but also the best way to integrate with the future era of science and technology. The addition of multiple media has broadened the expression approaches of artists, enriched the techniques of painting, and endowed the original ordinary

materials with brand new meaning, which sublimates the texture and beauty of the materials in the creation and expression of oil painting, and accurately displays the intuitive feelings of the creators with the heavy features of oil paints. The use of mixed media makes it easier for creators to obtain common painting materials, such as cloth, plastic, sand, etc. Therefore, the introduction of mixed media in oil painting has developed rapidly and diversified, making the expression form of modern oil painting more innovative and changeable, and making the creation of oil painting, a traditional art, more untrammelled, no longer being "bound" as before. It is hoped that all painting workers uphold their original aspirations, exert full play to their own feelings, make bold attempts and innovations, express their own creativity, make a contribution to the prosperity of the Chinese oil painting industry, and boost the Chinese oil painting art further in the international development.

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