

The Creation of Loneliness in Contemporary Chinese Ink Painting - Revelation from Harald Sohlberg's Paintings

Dapeng Long¹, Preechawut Apirating² and Pat Kotchapakdee³

Abstract

This research employs methods of iconography analysis to dissect the visual representation of loneliness in the paintings of Harald Sohlberg, aiming to inspire in the creation of loneliness within Contemporary Chinese ink painting. The article unfolds by delving into Sohlberg's painting style, cultural origins, and the profound meanings embedded within his works, subsequently exploring the revelations of Sohlberg's paintings for contemporary Chinese ink painting, and thereby elucidating the author's creation. By providing novel perspectives and methodologies, this paper contributes to the realm of cross-cultural research in the arts, demonstrating the existence of commonalities diverse backgrounds, cultures, and artistic genres, with the aspiration of fostering mutual understanding and exchange across different cultures and nations. Furthermore, this article serves to inspire painters in their creations and aids in enhancing the audience's appreciation and aesthetic sensibilities towards painting.

Keywords: Contemporary Chinese Ink Painting, Loneliness, Harald Solberg, Revelation

INTRODUCTION

The German philosopher Martin Heidegger once stated, "What we call emotions or moods might be more reasonable, that is, more profoundly perceptive, because the emotions open up to existence more than all that is rational." (Heidegger, 1987: 174) He argued that human existence is primarily characterized by emotional existence, with the most fundamental "being there" not being, as Descartes claimed, "thinking" but rather "feeling." Artistic creation, being an expression of emotions, and loneliness being a universal human emotion, make loneliness a significant psychological state worthy of exploration and expression.

Currently, a plethora of research on loneliness predominantly resides within the domains of psychology and sociology, while studies on loneliness from the perspective of literary studies mainly focus on literature. Research on loneliness in the field of painting is relatively scarce, with explorations into the visual representation of loneliness scattered across partial chapters of research articles in five main areas. First, case studies of artists, such as Hopper and Munch. Second, studies of individual works, such as Munch's work "The Scream." Third, studies of formal artistic language, such as the lonely colors of Van Gogh, the structural representation of loneliness in the paintings of Peter Doig, and the loneliness portrayed through light and shadow in Hopper's paintings. Fourth, comparative studies of works on similar themes by different artists, such as the comparison between Munch and Van Gogh. Fifth, studies on cultural and societal aspects, discussing the relationship between loneliness and art from the perspective of culture and society, as well as the visual representation of loneliness in artworks. This article, from a cross-cultural perspective, uses the visual representation of loneliness in oil paintings to inspire the creation of loneliness in ink paintings, a relatively uncommon approach among existing studies.

The expression of loneliness in traditional Chinese ink painting dates back to ancient times, with depictions of reclusive scholars in the mountains and serene fishermen in solitary boats evoking a sense of loneliness and desolation. Contemporary ink painting, influenced by different eras, exhibits unique expressions of loneliness.

RESEARCH METHOD

The research method of iconography, as defined by Panofsky, delineates three stages: pre-iconographical

¹ Fine and applied art Faculty, Department of visual Art, Khon Kaen University, Email: dplong963@163.com

² Fine and applied art Faculty, Khon Kaen University

³ Fine and applied art Faculty, Khon Kaen University

description, iconography, and iconology, each with its own methods and objectives. The first stage, pre-iconographical description, involves explaining the natural significance of the image. The second stage, iconography, entails discovering and interpreting the traditional significance of the image, specifically the interpretation of the work's specific themes (iconographic analysis). The third stage, iconology, involves interpreting the deeper inherent meaning or content of the work, referred to as iconological analysis or symbolic significance according to Panofsky. These three stages can be summarized as description, analysis, and interpretation. The primary concepts involve conducting comparative analysis, description and certification, and interpretive synthesis of related works, images, patterns, historical evolution, stylistic characteristics, social customs, and cultural contexts pertaining to the same theme.

From the perspective of iconography, the study of Harald Sohlberg's paintings initially involves analyzing the forms and characteristics of his works. The second step, combines his historical context, life experiences, and emotional expressions to interpret the traditional significance of his work's images. The third step is iconology analysis, which involves describing and analyzing his works to explain their deeper internal meanings, such as the underlying concepts behind the works, including the spirit of the times, ideological sentiments, and aesthetic intentions.

ANALYSIS AND ARGUMENTATION

Iconographic Analysis of Solberg's Paintings

The Style and Characteristics of Solberg's Paintings

Harald Sohlberg's artworks are imbued with profound observations of nature and romantic atmosphere. His paintings go beyond mere representations of Norwegian landscapes; they serve as reflections of his inner world, embodying an aesthetic exploration of loneliness and introspection. Often presenting dramatic landscapes, Sohlberg conveys a spiritual atmosphere through the interplay of light, shadow, and color, which his contemporaries regarded as remarkably unusual and original. Alongside Edvard Munch and Nikolai Astrup, Sohlberg is recognized as one of the leading modernist landscape painters in Norway. His works are characterized by emotional depth and mystery, capturing desolate scenes of nature such as vast snowscapes, tranquil lakes, and deep forest clearings, imbuing them with an almost tangible emotional depth through Sohlberg's unique perspective.

Similar to contemporaneous works by Munch, Sohlberg's paintings also harbor metaphors of profound emotions, evoking strong emotional impacts on viewers. While Munch enhances emotional rendering through rapid brushstrokes, Sohlberg, drawing from his background in craftsmanship, employs a more meticulous approach in detail handling, utilizing a slower and more cautious grid for composition. Stylistically, influenced perhaps by Gauguin, he diminishes depth and three-dimensionality in the composition in a unique manner, simplifying the image by reducing unnecessary noise. (National Academy of Design (U. S.), 1995) Through Sohlberg's paintings, we witness his adeptness in creating paintings with strong regional characteristics, amalgamating various painting trends of the late 19th century, bridging the gap between tradition and modernity, combining elements of naturalism, romanticism, symbolism, and the fauvist style, resulting in works that are both elegant and mysterious. Despite the prevalence of expressionism during his time, his works may have seemed less "contemporary"; however, Sohlberg still managed to create epoch paintings based on realism.

Deeply captivated by nature, Sohlberg primarily focused on portraying landscapes. While his travels spanned across Europe, it was the sublime qualities of his native Norway that inspired his imagination. Many of his landscapes imply the presence of humanity but lack human figures—referred to as "landscapes of the soul." For instance, in his work "Fisherman's Cottage" (Figure 1), viewers are positioned as outsiders, gazing down into a fjord at dusk, drawn into a solitary landscape where subtle details balance attention with the grandeur of nature.

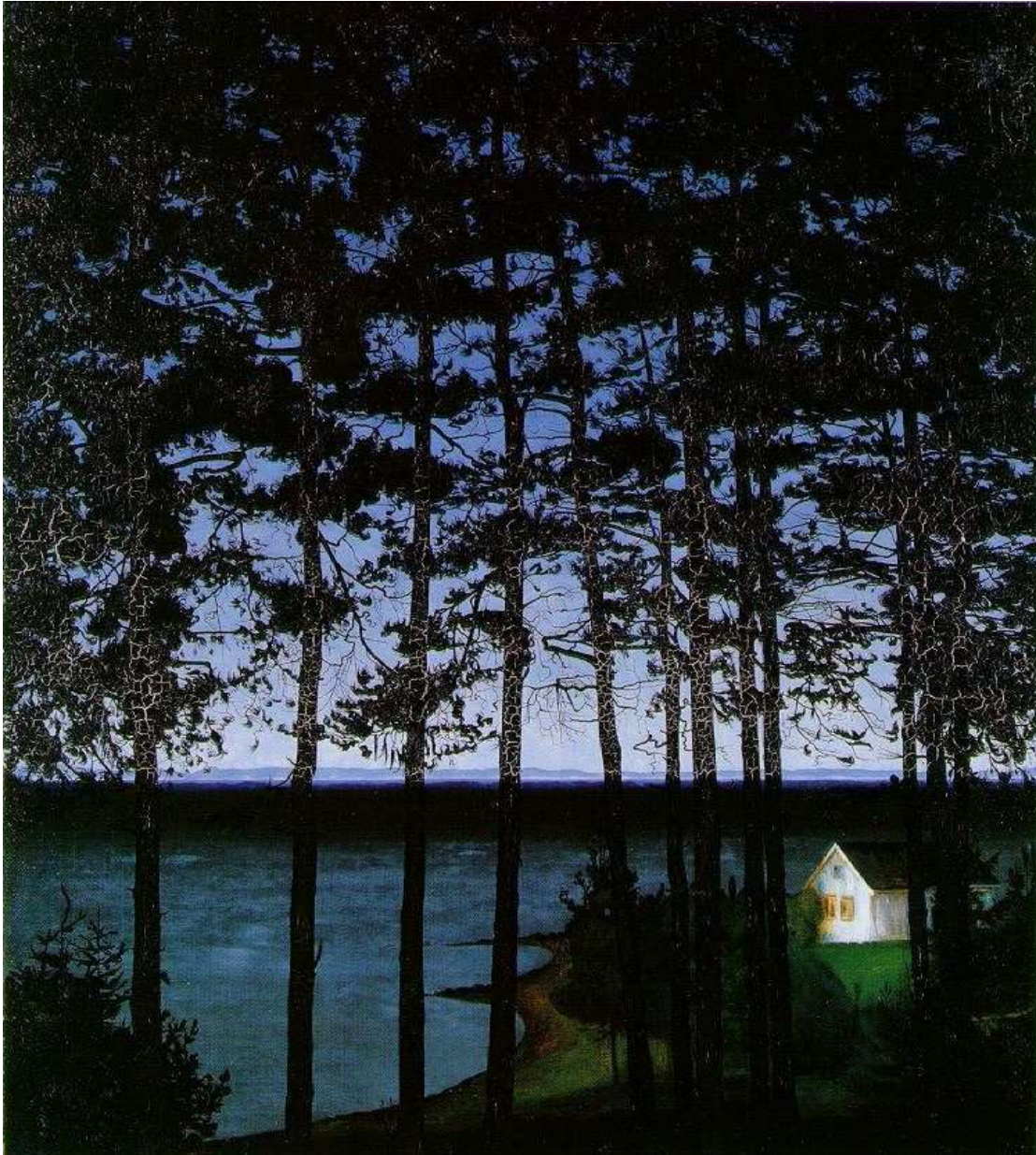


Figure 1, Fisherman's Cottage, 1906, Oil on canvas, 109 x 94cm, Art Institute of Chicago

Sohlberg's paintings carry a unique tranquility and mysterious quality inherent to Norway, seamlessly blending human contemplation with vast nature. One critic remarked that his paintings "make one believe that the whole universe lives in a dewdrop." He focused on depicting rural life and natural scenery, ranging from soft flower fields to cold winter landscapes, embodying the wildness, mystery, thoughtfulness, and even disquietude of Norwegian landscapes.

In the late 1880s, Sohlberg wrote, "I feel the mystery and incomprehensible aspect of nature, and instinctively try to understand and comprehend it." Looking at his masterpiece, known as "Winter's Night in Rondane," (Figure 2) He builds a provocative and mysterious atmosphere, with a surrealist grotesqueness that envelops the image and draws the viewer into the mood. In the quiet mountainous regions of northern Europe during the winter, the nocturnal landscape of the high latitude countries not only conveys the natural beauty of God's creation, but at the same time evokes a sense of unease in the viewer. The rich and consistent colors on his works touch the viewer's intuition and emotions. (National Museum of Oslo, 2019)



Figure 2, Winter's Night in Rondane, 1914, Oil on canvas, 160 x 180.5cm, The National Gallery of Norway

This painting, *Winter's Night in Rondane*, is an example of the highly spiritual nature of Sohlberg's painting style, showing a snowy landscape of the Rondane Mountains in Norway at night. Sohlberg spent fourteen years creating this painting, experimenting with different versions and techniques in an attempt to capture what he wanted to express. The version now in the Norwegian National Gallery is from 1914. The foreground features a wilderness covered in snow, with bare branches intertwining to add dynamic tension to the serene scene, reminiscent of crosses and tombstones, evoking a mysterious and unsettling atmosphere. In the distance, towering snow-capped mountains stand against the night sky, their contours sharply defined. The deep blue firmament twinkles with starlight, with the prominent North Star adding a touch of dreamlike color to the entire scene. There are no figures in the painting, only a silent natural landscape. One could interpret the stars as representing dreams in people's minds, while the mountains symbolize eternity and strength. Through Sohlberg's adept manipulation of light and shadow, he creates an atmosphere that commands reverence, conveying feelings of loneliness, mystery, and unease, reflecting his awe for nature and contemplation of the universe.

Sohlberg's focus on the remote and desolate landscapes of the Nordic region intertwines the worldly with the sublime, bringing together Norway's unique tranquility and mysterious qualities, blending human contemplation with vast nature. The expansive and boundless natural landscapes of Norway, as depicted by Sohlberg, become even more mysterious and philosophical.

The Cultural Origins of Sohlberg's Work

Harald Sohlberg's Life and The Background of His Work

Harald Sohlberg (1869-1935) was born in Kristiania, Norway (now Oslo, Oslo, the capital of Norway), into a middle-class family, being the eighth of eleven children. He showed an interest in painting from an early age,

but his father insisted on him receiving a vocational education. Sohlberg began formal art education at the age of 14 but was apprenticed by his father at 16, with plans to become a decorative painter. After one semester, Sohlberg left the National Academy of Arts and Crafts and ventured alone to the Valdres region, where he created his first significant artworks. At the age of 20, with the approval of family friends, he enrolled in the Royal School of Art and Design in Christiania, where he received short-term guidance from local Norwegian painters such as Harriet Backer, Erik Werenskiold, and Eilif Peterssen. Later, under the tutelage of Johan Nordhagen, he attended the art school established by the Danish painter Kristian Zahrtmann in Copenhagen, Denmark, where he was exposed to works by symbolism and synthesis artists such as Gauguin, gaining significant inspiration. (Sotheby, (nd))

After several years of creation, Sohlberg achieved his first breakthrough at the Oslo National Exhibition in March 1894 with his landscape painting "Night Glow," (Figure 3) which was subsequently acquired by the Oslo National Gallery. From then on, he garnered attention and pursued painting as his lifelong profession.



Figure 3, Night Glow, About 1893, Oil on canvas, 79.5 x 62cm, The National Gallery of Norway

With the support of collectors and art patrons, Sohlberg traveled to the Rondane mountains before Easter in 1899, where he immersed himself in nature, away from worldly distractions, profoundly experiencing the scenery of the Rondane mountains. In a letter to a friend during this period, he wrote, "The longer I gaze at the mountain winter night, the more I feel that I am nothing but a particle in this boundless universe." A year later, Sohlberg moved to live in the Rondane mountains, an experience that inspired the creation of the "Winter's Night in Rondane" series.

From 1902 to 1905, Sohlberg and his wife lived in the mining town of Røros. The industrial environment and colorful wooden houses sparked his inspiration, leading to a prolific period of creation. In "Street in Røros" (1902), human settlements appear insignificant against the backdrop of nature, with a gray sky looming above the houses. His famous work "Fisherman's Cottage" (1906) instills awe in the grandeur of nature.

Throughout his career, Sohlberg denied being influenced by Munch. Although both followed the principles of early 20th-century Nordic art, known as "mood painting," Sohlberg's works contained less psychological elements than Munch's. Sohlberg's "Fisherman's Cottage" and several works from Munch's "Life's Frieze" series share almost identical color palettes. Nevertheless, Sohlberg's works had a certain warmth that set him apart from his compatriot. His visual world remained grounded in reality, providing symbolic comfort during difficult times. (National Academy of Design (U. S.), 1995)

The Emotion of Loneliness in Solberg's Paintings

Analysis Of the Relationship Between Historical Context and Sense Of Loneliness

Since the 19th century, the Nordic countries have successively entered a golden age of art. By the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, under the mutual collision of Romanticism, Impressionism, Expressionism and other styles, the artists in the Nordic countries even absorbed external art concepts, based on the local natural landscape and history and culture, and developed their own distinctive art style with a unique "Nordic temperament". Sohlberg formed his unique artistic style in such an environment.

Although not as famous as his contemporary, the painter Edvard Munch, Sohlberg was one of the most popular artists in Norway. In a society undergoing frequent transformations in politics, culture, and economics due to the rise of new capitalism and industrial civilization, old beliefs remained unsettled while new ideologies had not yet been established. As a result, people became as indifferent and callous as machines. For instance, Munch's use of the combination of blood red and deep blue in his work "The Despair" expresses a sense of solitary suffering. The suffering and loneliness accompanied everyone in that era of economic depression and social upheaval, constituting a spiritual characteristic of the times. This sense of loneliness is also reflected in Sohlberg's works, with their dim blue hues, absence of figures, desolate and vast spaces, and quiet, mysterious atmosphere, all highlighting loneliness and mystery.

Techniques of Image Representation

Careful observers will notice that in Sohlberg's paintings, figures are always absent, yet the scenes include many traces of human activity in houses, roads, and power poles, imparting a sense of extension to the painting, allowing us to unwittingly assume the roles of the people in the painting and truly feel the loneliness of being isolated from the world. From the summer evening balcony shared with his new bride to the meadows full of ox-eye daisies, his paintings combine poetic quality and romance, soothing the soul.

In the work "Summer Night" (1899), Sohlberg's interest in depicting people through landscapes is revealed. Although there are no figures in the scenes painted by the artist, the content vividly tells the stories of people, reflecting his narrative ability as an observer in a "resonant" and uninhabited environment. This painting depicts the scene of a summer night as seen from the balcony of a small apartment in the North Beach residential area of Oslo, where the artist resided. The depicted scene is from the artist's engagement night. The empty balcony features a table with chairs pushed aside haphazardly, indicating that people have already returned indoors. Traces of just-concluded dinner, with half-empty cups and bottles, and a pair of women's gloves and a hat resting on a flowerpot are visible. The balcony door is half-open, reflecting the scenery outside the window. Colorful flowers are distributed diagonally across the foreground, enhancing the perspective, directing the

viewer's attention to the distant night sky and undulating hillside landscape, where the islands in the Oslo Fjord and the hills of Baerum can be seen. The richly detailed foreground elements and vibrant colors, contrasted with the simple contours and dark tones of the distant landscape, create a sense of tension, highlighting the loneliness and tranquility of the Nordic night sky, almost like the universe. Considering that the background of the painting is about the joy and anticipation of love and family life, this richly layered summer night scene evokes infinite imagination and sentiment.



Figure 4, Summer Night, 1899, Oil on canvas, 114.5 x 135.5cm, The National Gallery of Norway

In his works, Sohlberg does not need to create overly dramatic scenes; only the ordinary objects of everyday life, such as inconspicuous tree branches, rural cottages, ordinary roads, and the endless and monotonous sky, are needed. However, Sohlberg's ability to twist tension in vacant spaces between traditional and modern painting concepts makes his visual language outstanding in both the world and the art history of Norway. His choice of themes and emphasis on painting concepts distinguish him from contemporary artists. Sohlberg was devoted to pursuing lyrical meanings with natural landscapes as backgrounds, away from the hustle and bustle but still filled with a sense of peace and tranquility.

The Association Between Color and Sense of Loneliness

Sohlberg's works often depict typical Nordic landscapes such as snowy mountains, wilderness, and flower fields, reflecting the author's thoughts and memories. He works with a simplified color palette (usually white, black, blue, red, or green), which helps capture the specific Nordic light, atmosphere, and mood. He also insists that each painting must have a "dominant" color, and he exaggerates this feeling. He skillfully uses lines to express emotions, behind which are feelings of loneliness, melancholy, or persistence. The main axis of his lifelong creation lies in constantly pondering the core of individual colors and symbolism and injecting profound

Nordic landscape characteristics to create purely artistic works. From the age of 20 until the end of his life, this artist constantly adjusted and reconciled among various trends such as naturalism, symbolism, and romanticism, ultimately establishing timeless images that integrate these various trends in harmony.

The colors in Sohlberg's works are mostly dim, which is related to the time periods he depicts. Many of his works depict moonlit nights, dusk, or dawn scenes, which make it easier for people to feel lonely. Additionally, the use of dim colors conveys a downcast emotion. His paintings mostly consist of low-value, low-purity blue-gray, green-gray, and brown tones, giving a sense of tranquility and severity. Deep colors are often associated with introspection and a sense of loneliness, because they can create a profound, introspective atmosphere. Loneliness is often associated with calm and downcast emotions. In painting, cool tones such as blue, gray, and purple are usually seen as colors that convey a sense of loneliness. These colors can create a cold, distant atmosphere, making viewers feel a sense of isolation. Blue is a very cold color that creates a sense of distance. "In terms of transformed symbolism, cold blue is a color of rejection, representing ruthlessness, arrogance and hardness." (Eva, H. 2016:12) Rejection is the beginning of self-isolation and self-alienation.

On the other hand, the sense of loneliness can also be expressed through color contrast. In a painting, the theme of loneliness is often highlighted by the contrast between isolated, bright colors and the surrounding dull colors. This contrast can emphasize the separation and estrangement between the lonely individual and the surrounding environment, enhancing the viewer's resonance with the emotion of loneliness. Sohlberg's handling of "dominant" colors in his works is the best example of this, such as the bright stars in "Winter's Night in Rondane" and the shining houses in "Fisherman's Cottage." Overall, by choosing appropriate color tones and contrasts, artists can create contemplative works that provoke viewers to reflect on and experience loneliness.

Formation of the Style

Sohlberg is renowned for his depictions of the Rondane Mountains and the town of Røros. Located in southern Norway, the Rondane Mountains remain one of Norway's most popular destinations for hiking and skiing, boasting magnificent natural scenery including towering peaks, glacier lakes, dense forests, and vast wilderness. Røros is a historically significant town known for its copper mining industry. It is home to many well-preserved historical buildings, including wooden churches, miner's houses, and smelting works, reflecting Norway's rich history and culture. The vibrant wooden houses against the pristine white snow in the town deeply inspired Sohlberg, leading him to conduct extensive research and create works, such as "Winter's Street in Røros" in 1903.

Similar to Munch, Sohlberg vehemently denied the influence of other contemporary artists and dissociated himself from discussions regarding his position in art history. Instead, Sohlberg attributed the origins of his artistic awakening to his own psyche and the intense stories and myths of the Norwegian landscape. Therefore, Sohlberg's paintings depict a world that is both fantastical and familiar.

Regardless of whether Sohlberg acknowledged it, his painting style was evidently influenced by the Norwegian naturalism and symbolism movements. Naturalism advocates for a return to nature, using scientific methods to observe and depict landscapes realistically. Symbolism was a literary movement that emerged in late 19th-century France. The Franco-Prussian War, the Paris Commune, and the Industrial Revolution plunged the French people into a pessimistic, uncertain mood, leading to the spread of anti-modern, passive, and irrational thoughts. People yearned for an imaginary ideal world and believed it could be achieved through mysterious natural forces, reflecting the popular mysticism of the time.

Symbolism emphasizes metaphors beyond expression and is imbued with the creator's subjective emotions. In the field of painting, it manifests as a rejection of Impressionism and Realism. "Symbolist painting" is characterized by an emphasis on detail, the depiction of fantastical objects, and abstract expression of emotions and dreamlike scenes. It often conveys a "turn-of-the-century sentiment" – melancholy, decadence, melancholy, loneliness, and confusion.

It is evident that Symbolist art and thinking played an important role in Sohlberg's artistic creation, especially in his exploration of popular mystical themes in the 19th century. The exhibition "Harald Sohlberg: Painting

Norway" (2019.2.13/6.2), curated by Kathleen Soriano, she said: "His work blends the ordinariness of life with the mystical spirit of a dirge." (Art Daily, 2019) Effectively demonstrates how Sohlberg evolved from literal forms attached to Symbolism (influenced by Nabi Synthesis methods) in the early 1890s to highly original and engaging forms of naturalism and Symbolist landscape painting. Around 1893, Sohlberg completely abandoned traditional wet-on-wet techniques in favor of meticulous layering combined with glazes to create a mysterious translucent effect, a characteristic feature of his subsequent works.

Sohlberg integrated Symbolist elements into landscape painting, imbuing his works with strong personal emotions and mystical colors. He seamlessly merged the serene natural landscapes with the star-studded night sky, wherein nature in his paintings not only touches the heart but also serves as a confessional space for the artist's lonely soul, imparting profound humanistic significance to the natural scenery. His artistic style influenced many subsequent Norwegian artists and paved the way for the development of Norwegian landscape painting.

The Deeper Meaning of Sohlberg's Work

Danish philosopher Kierkegaard pointed out in "Fear and Trembling" that the individual's "experience of loneliness" leads people toward faith. It is precisely the solitary painters who elevate their personal sense of loneliness, providing later generations with glimpses of the intellectual's sense of responsibility and national consciousness. The expression of loneliness in art possesses rich layers and textures, and the more sensitive the artist's soul, the more intense the loneliness they feel. (Kierkegaard, S., 2014)

Sohlberg once wrote in his notebook: "Everything must have elements of the nation, Norwegian elements. If there is not a single trace of Norwegian elements, it is nothing." Norwegians consider him unusual, primitive, while foreigners see him as a representative of traditional Norwegian art. In Sohlberg's works, we do not see passionate or unilaterally excited clamor, but rather the silent voice based on local characteristics without any nationalist implications, which truly lays a long and solid foundation for Norwegian art on the world stage, with far-reaching influence.

Sohlberg's paintings are both a tribute to the serene beauty of nature and an artistic expression of the silent call of the human inner world. Sohlberg did not want other artists to influence his work, so he always dug for creativity from within himself to achieve artistic awakening.

Sohlberg's works emphasize the local natural scenery of Norway. Through his works, viewers not only see and feel the specific landscapes but also perceive the spirit, thoughts, and pursuit of the eternal behind the artist's creation. Some critics suggest that perhaps amidst the tide of the machine age, Sohlberg felt a gradual estrangement from God. His paintings often convey a sense of loneliness and separation, emanating images that possess both spiritual aura and a mysterious sublime quality.

The Inspiration of Sohlberg's Paintings for Contemporary Chinese Ink Painting

Based on the comprehensive analysis of Sohlberg's art presented above, the following insights can be derived:

Firstly, Sohlberg integrates the background of his time and cultural context into his creative process. He does not chase trends but maintains a distance from the zeitgeist. Instead, he seeks inspiration from ethnic traditions such as folk tales and myths, combining various artistic styles and ideologies, particularly synthesizing elements of naturalism and symbolism to develop his own unique artistic style.

Secondly, through meticulous depiction and the reduction of brightness and purity in color, Sohlberg creates a tranquil and mysterious atmosphere, highlighting feelings of loneliness and separation within vast and silent landscapes. By portraying dreamlike scenery, he metaphorically conveys emotions of unease and loneliness.

Thirdly, Sohlberg depicts familiar subjects from his surroundings, infused with his own national character. He channels his strong emotions into his work, employing concise composition and rich colors to evoke a sense of tranquility, mystery, and surrealism for the audience, creatively expressing his observations and thoughts.

Therefore, firstly, we should strive to grasp the spiritual characteristics of our time and find suitable methods

of expression to convey our unique cognition and aesthetics, thus forming a personalized artistic style. Secondly, the treatment of specific imagery in our artworks should be guided by the thematic spirit. For instance, in portraying feelings of loneliness, Sohlberg's paintings often depict dim scenes devoid of figures, with vast, quiet, and mysterious spaces, evoking a sense of loneliness, mystery, and unease. Additionally, the use of low saturation and brightness colors, such as blue-gray and green-gray cool tones, further accentuates the sense of loneliness. Finally, the subjects we depict must be familiar and evoke strong emotional experiences for us.

The Author's Contemporary Ink Painting Creation

In modern society, the emergence of mass production through social industrialization, assembly-line division of labor, and mechanized work methods have led to a sense of alienation in interpersonal relationships, resulting in the emergence of indifferent human connections, thus leading people to a state of loneliness. At the same time, the rapid development and urbanization process in contemporary China have trapped people in a dilemma—consumer culture and the explosion of information have prevented individuals from pausing to reflect on themselves, making life dull, lacking communication and understanding between people, and causing people to rarely stop to perceive their surroundings. Especially among the post-80s and post-90s generations, feelings of loneliness, numbness, and indifference have become symbols of our generation. The author has experienced the spiritual expression of loneliness in today's era. Therefore, the creation mainly focuses on expressing feelings of loneliness, aiming to convey some understanding and attitudes towards contemporary society and life through a cold and quiet form of painting expression. The artwork aims to lead those who feel lonely to find a feeling of returning to the depths of the soul, similar to the emotional bridge between Roscoe's works and the audience, starting from the emotional perspective. The sense of loneliness in our lives is constructed from the inner world and external environment, which can be expressed through the language of painting.

To express the feeling of loneliness, the author has created a unique painting technique called "thin and ethereal painting." What is thin and ethereal painting? It involves using thin and transparent rice paper (Figure 5) to depict and color on both sides. The deeper and thicker colors on the surface of the painting are mostly drawn from the back of the paper. Particularly, the use of white is crucial because it needs to appear soft for depicting snowy scenes at night. The white should not reveal the details of the snow, but the thickness should be felt, so coloring from the back of the paper is just right. Meanwhile, dark-colored backing paper (Figure 5) is used to contrast with the painting, utilizing the transparency of the paper to present the image. This method results in the front of the painting appearing minimal but rich in layers, a unique brushstroke language created by the author. The use of thin and ethereal painting aims to better create a sense of loneliness. This ethereal, elegant, and quiet atmosphere in the painting not only continues tradition but also innovates. It effectively expresses the author's individual experience of existence, namely, loneliness. Reflecting the widespread anxiety and loneliness of modern people under industrial civilization, it not only innovates in form but also possesses spiritual depth.



Figure 5, Left: Thin and transparent rice paper, Right: dark blue colored backing paper

In terms of visual treatment, the author's creations mostly involve dim scenes with weakened contrasts. Symbolically, animals are used to represent people. The color scheme mainly consists of black and gray, supplemented by cool tones of blue-gray and green-gray to highlight the sense of loneliness. Black symbolizes death and termination. "All matter ends up black: rotten flesh is black, decaying plants, and dead teeth all turn black." (Eva, H., 2016: 111) "Gray is the ashes of all dead things. Brown is temporary rust." (Eva, H., 2016: 300) Brown signifies decay, desolation, withering, and passing away. With the disappearance of things comes loneliness. As Kandinsky once said, "In contrast, the black tone is a hopeless silence." (V. Kandinsky, 1987: 51) Simultaneously, the picture is exquisite and subtle, with vast space, creating a quiet mystery and a sense of loneliness and unease.

"Big fish", (Figure 6) this picture depicts a fictional scene where the large fish symbolizes food, and the female body symbolizes sexuality. Both the fish and the woman in the painting are blurry and gradually disappearing. In the vast expanse of time and space, mountains and water can interchange, and everything becomes unpredictable, filled with the unknown. With these thoughts in mind, a sense of loneliness emerges.

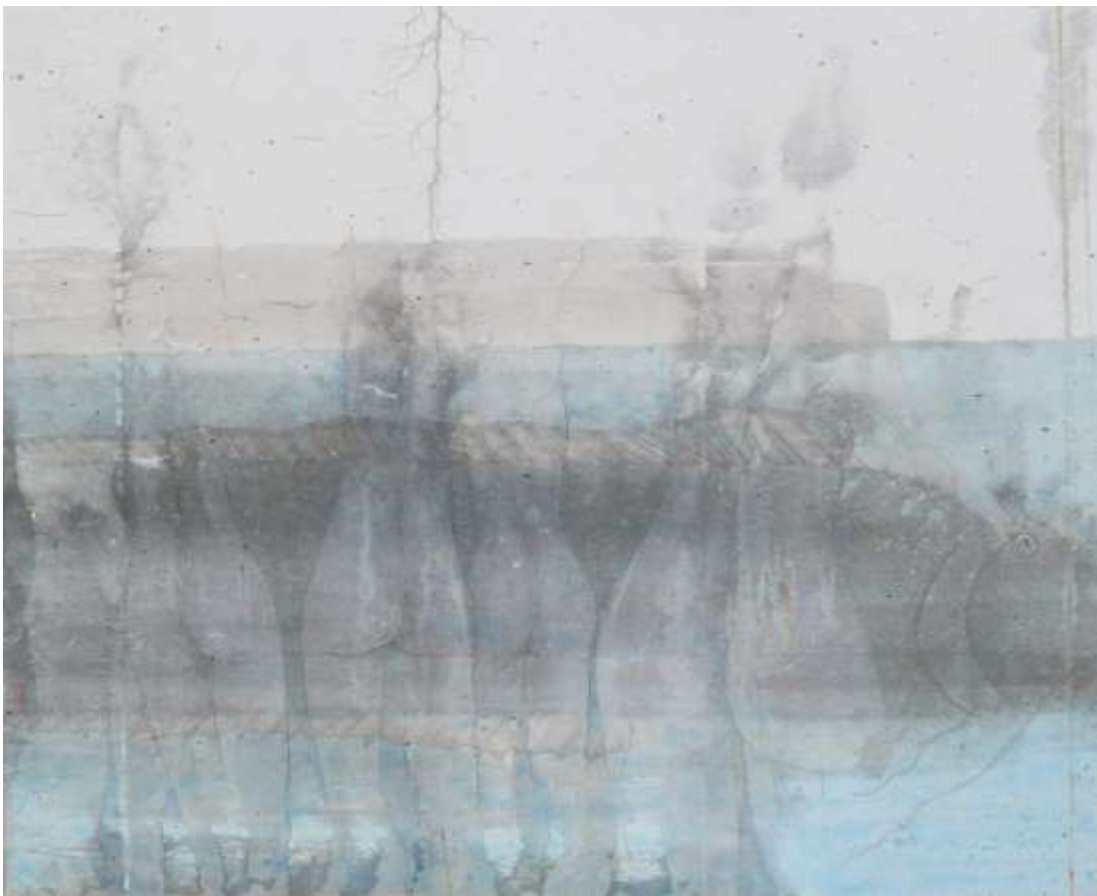


Figure 6, Big Fish, 77 x 95cm, color on paper, 2020

"Walk alone - Fox" (Figure 7) , the atmosphere and all elements of this painting are designed to express the theme of solitude. Firstly, the painting depicts a night in the wilderness, covered in ice and snow, with withered grass and trees, and sparse human activity, evoking a sense of desolation. A stream flows quietly from far to near, not only to give the still image a sense of movement but also to highlight the silent atmosphere, allowing viewers to imagine hearing the murmuring of the water. Secondly, the central theme of the painting depicts a fox. Foxes are inherently associated with alertness, mystery, and loneliness. It hides behind a tree, with only one eye visible, staring directly at the viewer. This is intended to evoke a psychological response or dialogue between the viewer and the fox. Finally, the composition of the painting is arranged to emphasize the theme, with the contours of the mountainside, the direction of the trees and shadows all leading to the fox, emphasizing the

emotion of solitude.



Figure 7, Walk Alone-Fox, 34 x 34cm, color on paper, 2022

The image "Walk Alone - Deer" (Figure 8) also depicts a snowy scene at night. The lake slopes down on the left side of the image to create a sense of unease and tension, and a slender, bare tree trunk in the near distance also appears to be extraordinarily silent. The moonlight is bright, the lake is swaying, the grass stands silently, and only a plum deer walks alone along the lake shore, leaving a long trail of footprints, suggesting silence and loneliness, while the plum deer looks back as if expecting something or just silently dawdling, thus highlighting the sense of loneliness even more. The elongated shadows also serve to reinforce the feeling of loneliness.



Figure 8, Walk Alone-deer, 34 x 34cm, color on paper, 2022

The image of "Walking Alone - Wolf" (Figure 9) is showing a negative and depressing feeling through the woods with open teeth and claws, the overgrown grass, the huge shadows, and the whole dark atmosphere. On the left edge of the picture, a wolf is depicted, thin and forlorn, appearing abnormally small in the whole environment, with only itself in the vast space and a long road ahead, walking helplessly with its head bowed, towards the distance, towards the desolation, towards the darkness...a sense of loneliness arose.



Figure 9, Walk Alone-Wolf, 34 x 34cm, color on paper, 2022

The painting "Solitary Shadow on a Cold Night" (Figure 10) uses a novel sense of form to express the feeling of loneliness. The still frozen rocks and the flowing stream express the serenity and coldness of the snowy night. The egret in the picture is shivering in the cold wind, its eyes lost and helpless, showing loneliness. In addition, the elongated shadow of the egret adds to the atmosphere of loneliness.



Figure 10, Solitary shadow on a cold night, 69.5 x 34.5cm, color on paper, 2022

The image of "Cold Crow on a Snowy Night" (Figure 11) exudes a sense of silence, loneliness, and death. The scene captures a snowy field, with snowflakes fluttering, at a chaotic, twisted, and bare forest, a pool of water lies, greenish and turbid, like solidified deathly stillness. The foreground grass adds a touch of desolation and coldness. In the middle of the picture, a crow crosses the scene, seemingly intent on breaking the silence, but one can imagine that after the crow flies away, what remains is stillness akin to death, withered grass, snow-covered trees, and stagnant water, thus evoking a sense of loneliness.



Figure 11, Cold Opium on a Snowy Night, 138 x 69cm, color on paper, 2022

"Only Shadows Float and Sink"(Figure 12), the painting expresses loneliness and mystery. People often feel lonely for no reason, and this sense of loneliness follows them like a shadow, yet we do not know why. Human emotions are unpredictable and full of mystery. In "Only Shadows Float and Sink," a small, lonely fish symbolizes the human condition, expressing a sense of helplessness in facing the chaotic and unknown sea of destiny, floating with the waves, resigned to fate. The picture uses the horizontal composition, this brings expansiveness, which evokes a sense of loneliness, helplessness, and insignificance in the viewer.(Jinkai, H., 2021)



Figure 12, Only Shadows Floating and Sinking, 27.5 x 137cm, ink on paper, 2021

This image is borrowed from the Tang Dynasty poem "Fishing alone on a snowy river". The poem uses imagery to summarize the scene, depicting a snowy, cold landscape. The scene is typical of the coldness of the mountains and fields, with no birds or people in sight, and then the image of a fisherman fishing alone on the cold river is chosen to express the loneliness. The difference is that this picture depicts a night view, the moon is in the sky, the night is long, there is no one to accompany you, and you are fishing in despair, emphasizing a lonely and lost emotion.(Figure 13)



Figure 13, Fishing Alone on a Snowy Night, 45 x 69cm, color on paper, 2021

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This paper takes the visual presentation of loneliness in the works of Solberg as the main thread, combining factors such as his painting style, growth experience, and the social environment of the time, to trace the roots and find the causes of loneliness. Furthermore, it systematically analyzes the artistic techniques used in Solberg's works to visually present the feeling of loneliness, aiming to inspire contemporary ink painting creation.

Building upon the analysis of Solberg's paintings and incorporating the author's creative practice, this paper delves into the expression and creation of loneliness in contemporary Chinese ink painting. Through the handling of light, color, space, and overall atmosphere, the loneliness of the picture is constructed.

In conclusion, the following conclusions can be drawn: Solberg's paintings have enlightening significance for contemporary Chinese ink painting, especially in terms of artistic techniques for creating a sense of loneliness in images, which can be referenced. Dim light gives people a sense of loneliness; low-purity and low-luminance colors such as black, brown, blue, and purple can convey a sense of loneliness; horizontal composition can bring expansiveness and openness, making viewers feel lonely, helpless, and insignificant; a silent, mysterious atmosphere helps to reflect a sense of loneliness. Solberg only depicts familiar and emotionally charged objects, and his unique artistic style, which distances himself from the times and integrates various artistic styles, also holds valuable reference value.

This paper provides a new perspective and method for cross-cultural research in the field of art, aiming to demonstrate that different backgrounds, cultures, and painting genres also have commonalities. It hopes to promote understanding and communication between different cultures and countries. The expression of loneliness in painting is actually influenced by a series of factors such as the artist's life experience, the era background, and their psychological state, and the exploration of the expression of loneliness is the exploration of the factors that influence the artist's creative sources and the deeper meanings behind artistic works. As Feng Youlan said, studying the various forms of loneliness in art can also explore the development and changes of national spirit, subject consciousness, and independent personality. The concept of loneliness contains the cultural memory and spiritual symbols of the nation.(Feng Youlan, 2001) Reflecting on the living conditions and life ideals of the lonely can help to promote humanistic spirit and counteract individual nihilism with rich and noble aesthetic experiences, enabling modern people to better understand and cherish loneliness. Because the consciousness of loneliness is so important, Deng Xiaomang said, "The first premise of personality is the consciousness of loneliness."(Xiaomang, D., 2005) Only by perceiving loneliness can one prove the existence of "I" and claim: I am alive, I feel longing, I am lonely.

This paper also provides inspiration for painting creators and promotes the improvement of the author's own creation. In addition, this study helps to enhance the audience's appreciation and aesthetic ability in painting, understand the deep emotions of the creator, grasp their artistic spirit and life value appeals, and enhance the sensitivity to the aesthetic mood of painting works.

The study of loneliness in contemporary Chinese ink painting can further compare Chinese contemporary ink painting with artistic forms from other cultural backgrounds, such as Western modern painting, Japanese painting, etc., to explore the similarities and differences in the expression of loneliness in different cultural backgrounds, as well as the influence of cultural factors on artists' creation. It can also combine theories from sociology, cultural studies, and other fields to explore the cultural interpretation and social significance of loneliness in different historical periods and social backgrounds, as well as the influence of artistic works in specific social environments. Further enriching the understanding of the expression of loneliness in contemporary Chinese ink painting, promoting interdisciplinary communication and cooperation, and advancing the integrated development of art and humanities.

NOTE

Introduction to Ink Painting

Ink painting was first born in China, broadly traced to the Neolithic period (10000 years ago to 2000 B.C.E.) painted pottery ornaments, Han Dynasty (206 C.E. ~220 C.E.) silk paintings and tomb murals are also reflected. Narrow meaning, The ink painting is presented by Wang Wei, appeared in the mid-late Tang Dynasty (618~907C.E.), development of Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms(907~979C.E.), flourished in the Song(960~1279C.E.)and Yuan Dynasty(1206~1368C.E.), Ming (1368~1644C.E.)and Qing Dynasty (1616~1911C.E.) and Modern Times (1840~1949C.E.)and Modern Era(1949~1978C.E.)Continuous development, until the 'New Wave of 85'(1985C.E.), the reform of traditional literati painting and the reference to western modern painting, into the contemporary period of ink painting, continues to this day.

Definition Of Contemporary Chinese Ink Painting

In the past 40 years, the theoretical community has used several concepts: Modern Ink Art, Experimental Ink Art, Expressive Ink Art, Urban Ink Art, Conceptual Ink Art, and Abstract Ink Art. The connotations and extensions of these concepts vary greatly due to their different grounding points. The concept of "Contemporary Ink Art" has expanded with the times, and it is generally believed that it was named along with the contemporary art market and a large number of "Contemporary Ink Art" art exhibitions. It is understood to be formed within a multi-pattern art, which is both indigenous to traditional Chinese culture and Contemporary. Contemporary Ink Art refers to the ink creation in the past 40 years, which is different from the traditional ink creation paradigm and evaluation standard, and has a modern style and cultural modernity, including traditional easel painting in two dimensions, "ink+" integrated painting or fusion installation, or "+ ink" in other media. ", etc.(Guiyan, H., 2011) The Contemporary Ink Painting discussed in this paper is the flat easel painting part of Contemporary Ink Art.

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