

Appreciation of Imagery Oil Painting in Contemporary Chinese Art through Cultural Context

Li Hanchen¹ and Rushana Sulaiman @ Abd Rahim²

Corresponding Author: Rushana Sulaiman @ Abd Rahim

Abstract

This article is about the appreciation of contemporary Chinese imagery oil paintings in Henan Province, and the researcher has chosen the work "Fishing in the twilight" by Li Mingwei, a painter from Henan Province, China, as the object of discussion. This work is analysed in terms of formalism, as well as being studied in terms of the concepts of culture and imagery. The objective of the research is to identify the subject and analyse the art form in the work "Fishing in the twilight" and to explain the connection between formalism in the art of painting through socio-cultural systems and the concept of imagery. The methodology for collecting written and visual data in this study utilised a descriptive qualitative approach based on empirical fieldwork. Documentation, visual records and observation methods were used to gather information relating to the painting under study. According to the results of the research, Li Mingwei's work "Fishing in the twilight" is an expression of the application of traditional Chinese cultural elements and the concept of imagery to art in oil paintings. The concept used in the research is the basis for the formation of the imagery oil painting, which is analysed using a combination of formalism, concept of imagery and cultural significance. The implications of the research suggest that contemporary Chinese oil paintings from Henan Province cannot be viewed only from the formalist perspective of art, but also through the cultural contexts and the imagery features produced in the works. This study contributes to the understanding of the meaning, concept and aim of design utilized by contemporary Chinese artists in shaping the image of their paintings.

Keywords: Art Appreciation, Socio-Cultural, Oil Painting, Formalism, Imagery

INTRODUCTION

Peng Jixiang (2019) points out that when talking about works of art, it is usually appreciated through the content and form of the artwork. When appreciating a work of art, the connoisseur should not only appreciate its artistic language and image, but also understand the profound meaning hidden behind the work of art.

Contemporary Chinese art, strictly speaking, refers to all art forms that have existed in China since the 1980s and that have a close relationship with Chinese social reality and culture. Similarly it is a new art form that has arisen within China under the strong influence of modern Western artistic thought (Shi Shengxun, 2018).

Yang Zhonghua (2013) claims that in the 1980s, after the implementation of China's "Reform and Opening Up" policy, in the context of Western-dominated globalisation, the development of Chinese contemporary art has been driven by the desire of Chinese artists to break away from Western cultural identities and establish their own, as expressed in the mechanisms for exhibiting their works. It leads to contemporary Chinese artists thinking about and paying attention to their own traditional culture and contemporary society, and using Chinese cultural resources as a reference for artistic creation.

The imagery oil painting style has gradually become a stylistic tendency studied and practised by many painters, and has become a stylistic example of the combination of Western oil painting art and traditional Chinese culture (Lu Jiachuan, 2014). In the Chinese contemporary imagery oil paintings, painters try to present the oriental aesthetics based on Chinese culture.

¹ College of Creative Arts, MARA University of Technology, Malaysia, Email: 2021667426@student.uitm.edu.my

² College of Creative Arts, MARA University of Technology, Malaysia, Email: rushana@uitm.edu.my

Imagery oil paintings are closely connected with Chinese culture, which also reflects the emphasis on culture by contemporary Chinese painters. More and more imagery oil paintings are created by painters from different regions. For example, Henan painter Li Mingwei's work "Fishing in the twilight".

This piece of work, which incorporates traditional Chinese cultural ideas, contains images that are depicted in an imagery-based manner. The significance of this work is that it inspires form and meaning based on Chinese culture.

The work of art is one of the primary ways in which culture is presented (Ma Keyao, 2016), and the imagery oil paintings are no exception to this rule, it exists within the scope of a society that reflects its culture. Since the 1990s, Li Mingwei has been creating imagery oil paintings that not only reflect the characteristics of the concept of imagery, but also contain meanings that are inextricably linked to Chinese culture.

Imagery is the reenactment or recollection in the mind of sensory or perceptual experiences about the past. This recreation and recollection may not be exclusively visual; according to the classification of aestheticians and psychologists, imagery also includes tactile imagery and auditory imagery (Warren & Wellek, 2017) .

Culture refers to the whole aspect of life including beliefs, attitudes, values, ideas, environment. It is typical of a particular society or other social specifics (Ember & Ember, 2021). Arnold sees culture as the ability to know the "best of what is", the "best of what is" itself as expressed and thought by the world, the application of the "best of what is" to one's spirit and soul, and the pursuit of the "best of what is" (Storey, 2019). Thus, culture is also related to needs.

Research Objective

The purpose of this paper is to explain the artistic design of contemporary oil paintings in Henan Province by combining the concept of imagery in the context of socio-cultural system. It is seen in the context of values, environment, needs and behaviours and the types of auditory, visual, and tactile imagery reflected in the process of creating the work as follows:

1. Identify the subject of the painting "Fishing in the twilight".
2. Categorise the art form of the artwork.
3. Analyse the connection between the formalistic aspects of the artwork of "Fishing in the twilight" through the concepts of socio-cultural systems and imagery.

Conceptual Framework

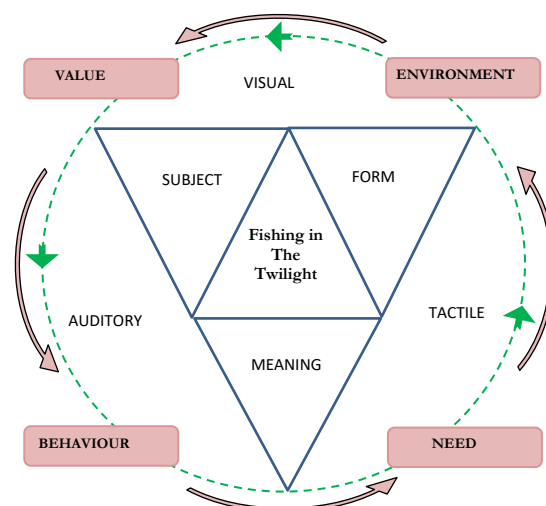


Figure 1. The theoretical framework is adapted from the concept of formalistic, imagery, cultural systems

Using the concepts of formalist frameworks of analysis, imagery and culture to view artistic design in contemporary imagery oil painting in Henan Province. The combination of these concepts was adapted to form a conceptual framework to identify an organic and unified model relevant to this study.

RESEARCH METHOD

The study approach is qualitatively descriptive with inter-disciplinary implementation using case study design of work analysis on cultural elements and imagery elements in Chinese contemporary imagery oil painting. The artistic design of the paintings was categorised through the study of cultural characteristics and the study of imagery characteristics. Three methods were used to collect data, observation method, visual record method and documentary method.

Data Analysis

Analysis the art work Fishing in the twilight



Figure 2. Fishing in the twilight

Li Mingwei

Oil painting

This painting measures 90cm x 150cm

Year 2005

Fishing in the Twilight Artwork Description

This work is entitled “Fishing in the twilight”. Its Chinese name is “Mu se chui diao tu”. This work was produced by a painter named Li Mingwei. The media used in this work is a type of oil painting. This work measures 90cm x 150cm. The work was released in 2005. The artist presents this work in the stream of Chinese contemporary art imagery oil painting style. It shows a natural scene and atmosphere of a small mountain village by a river, illuminated by the setting sun, and filled with a peaceful, cosy atmosphere. A large river can be clearly seen at the bottom of the picture, with a large mountain in the middle, and the distant

mountains and sky bathed in sunset light at the top of the picture. Another key depicted aspect of the work is that in the front left of the picture, where the land meets the river, sits a man wearing a traditional Chinese mackintosh, fishing alone. The man is wearing a round straw hat, and the hat and mackintosh are made of a special type of woven plant, which is the main focus of the work, and from which it can be surmised that it must have rained earlier in the day. In addition, in order to further enhance the sense of light under the setting sun, the whole village is almost shrouded in darkness, and a closer look will reveal some unclear small houses and plants around the houses, which are scattered high and low on the mountain, and these houses have the appearance of a traditional Chinese mountain village house, and there are some planted fields and weeds hidden in front of the houses. The color of the sky is also reflected in the clear water in front of the river, which is illuminated by the setting sun. Such natural scenery cannot be seen in the Chinese cities because of all the high-rise buildings, and the traditional one-storey houses are only preserved in the mountain villages, with triangular-shaped tops covered with tiles. Therefore the artist tries to preserve this tradition, in order for the present generation to acquire such knowledge.

Subject

Ocvirk et al. (2009) state that the subject of an artwork is something visually tangible that can be reproduced by the artist. It can also be understood as the “what” that is depicted in the creation of the artwork. In depictive art, the subject involves the reproduction of things and the experience of the artist, which is the source of inspiration for the creation of the artwork.

Mountain

The below table shows the mountain-related subject in the Fishing in the twilight artwork.



Table 1. The mountain-related subject in the Fishing in the twilight artwork

Mountains are an important symbol of the cultural psychology of the Chinese people. In the process of transforming nature, people in ancient China gradually realised the value of natural life to human society, and mountains were gradually transformed from an object of appreciation to an important part of the construction of the spiritual world (He Genmin, 2013).

Mountains are one of the important subjects in the work “Fishing in the twilight” and it is arranged in the middle area of the picture. The mountain shown in this work is a mountain range in the true sense of the word, and it shows a continuous trend from left to right in the work. It can be observed that it is multilayered and the whole mountain is almost immersed in the light, which makes for a magnificent view.

Sky

The below table shows the sky-related subject in the Fishing in the twilight artwork.



Table 2. The sky-related subject in the Fishing in the twilight artwork

The sky in “Fishing in the twilight” is at the top of the piece. It presents a view of the sky at dusk after rain. The sunlight can be found shining through the fog in the middle area of the sky, while a thick fog still exists on the left and right sides of the sky. It has a minimalist appearance.

Water

The below table shows the water-related subject in the Fishing in the twilight work.



Table 3. The water-related subject in the Fishing in the twilight work

Water is an important traditional Chinese cultural element. Shen Kuiyi (2003) states that water in the art of Chinese painting is a kind of artistic subject, which also embodies the relationship between man and nature, is a symbol of Chinese culture, and is a reflection of the cultural concepts of the Chinese people. The image of water is not a reproduction of the real scene, but has been programmed and symbolised.

In “Fishing in the twilight” the water is at the bottom of the picture. By observing it one can see that it presents the appearance of a richly colored river surface, which is mapped with brilliant colors from the sky. It is very calm water without a single ripple and is very clear and transparent.

Grass

The below table shows the grass-related subject of the Fishing in the twilight artwork.



Table 4. The grass-related subject of the Fishing in the twilight artwork

Grass is the most important living material for human beings and an indispensable plant in the human living environment, which is closely related to the survival and development of human beings. Grass has extensive connotations in traditional Chinese culture and is an important element of traditional Chinese culture, often used in literature and language to express human thoughts and aspirations (Lin Yan, 2012).

The grass in “Fishing in the twilight” is located a little to the right of the centre of the picture. It is a small group of nameless weeds that often appear around houses in mountain villages and go unnoticed. It has a loose appearance. Specifically, it is portrayed in a non-specific manner, presenting a hazy appearance and no vibrant colors.

Tree

The below table shows the tree-related subject in the Fishing in the twilight work.



Table 5. The tree-related subject in the Fishing in the twilight work

Trees have been an integral part of human civilisation since ancient times and are also a central part of traditional Chinese culture. Trees have protected human breeding and evolution, and as a plant in nature they have become an important cultural carrier in the evolution of Chinese history and civilisation. Trees as a material often appear in literature and art works and are given special meanings (Zhou Tongjian, 2006).

The trees in “Fishing in the twilight” are presented in the form of a cluster of many bushes, which are located above the middle area of the picture. By observation it was found that most of these clumps were presented in clumps of heavy colors and had no specific shape. They grow on mountains and are arranged horizontally from left to right as the form of the mountain range.

The House

The below table shows the architecture-related subject of Fishing in the twilight work.



Table 6. The architecture-related subject of Fishing in the twilight work

Liu Guanju (2018) points out that architecture, as an inevitable product of the development process of human society, is an important carrier of human culture and spirit, Chinese architecture has been the main expression of human culture and spirit since ancient times. Architecture as an art subject, Chinese architecture is more likely to express the character traits of Chinese people. The creation of Chinese ancient architectural subject is different from the description of ordinary scenery, it is more practical to express the creator's own feelings, to show the inner world of the artist in a unique way of expression.

Most of the houses in the work are located in the area in the middle of the work, a small village that exists on the side of a mountain that is unique to China. Due to its distance, it is not particularly clear in the picture. These houses are spread horizontally from left to right underneath a large hill. Through careful observation one can find that the top of the house is a triangle-like structure, while the bottom is a rectangular structure. This is a characteristic feature of the shape of houses unique to ancient Chinese villages.

Angler

The below table shows the subject related to Angler in the Fishing in the twilight work.



Table 7. The subject related to angler in the Fishing in the twilight work

Dr Wei Hui (2017) pointed out that figure is another main content of the subject in Chinese paintings and art. The figures in art works not only directly reflect the aesthetic creative ideas of painters, but to a certain extent, they also reflect the state of social life in different periods.

“Fishing in the twilight” shows an angler in the centre of the picture to the left. Through careful observation, we can find that the angler is wearing a hat, wearing a straw raincoat, sitting on the river bank, his body movements show a kind of huddled state.

He is holding a fishing rod, and at the other end of the rod there is a curved and delicate fishing line going into the river.

The hat worn by the angler is a hat made of woven bamboo material, and the straw raincoat is a rainproof coat made of straw. These are the costumes used by ancient Chinese anglers.

Form

Ocvirk et al. (2009) suggest that there are two main aspects contained in the formal concept of art, which are the artistic elements and the intrinsic organisation.

Art Element

Within the art of painting, the appearance of the work is presented through artistic elements, which include line, shape, light and dark, color, and space (Yi Jingrong, 2018). The elements of art are an important formalistic aspect in producing a work. The next part that will be highlighted is the analysis that will touch on the elements.

Line

The below table shows the lines in the Fishing in the twilight artwork.



Table 8. The lines in the Fishing in the twilight artwork

Chen Luo (2003) believes that line is a slender image with length and direction in space. In painting, line is the most expressive and carries a strong emotional tendency, and it is also an important factor in the composition of a painting work.

Turning to Li Mingwei's work, there are several types of lines, namely thin lines, straight lines, dotted lines and dashed lines. Specifically, dashed lines were presented in the edge area where the mountain peaks meet the sky. Solid and dotted lines are used in the land edge area where the river meets the water, and thin lines are found in the angler's hand and on the fishing rod. Dotted lines appear in front of the house in the middle area below the big hill, and short straight lines are found on the small house on the right side below the big hill.

Shape

The below table shows the shapes in the Fishing in the twilight artwork.



Table 9. The shapes in the Fishing in the twilight artwork

As for the element of form, the shape refers to a closed area linked by lines, the shape of an object in an artwork is a shape, a piece of color has a shape, a brushstroke has a shape. Artwork is a plane formed by combining different shapes, and shape is the most basic visual component of artwork (Liu Yue, 2020).

There are various forms that can be seen from the above work. You can see the forms of the mountains, the water and the sky, as well as the forms of the traditional Chinese buildings in the mountain villages and the forms of the ground in front of the houses, there are also some forms of the plants, and finally there are the forms of the figures of the anglers. In order to give a more detailed description, the mountain is composed of some dotted lines and some small irregularly shaped planes, while the sky and the water are formed by a plane of larger area, the house is composed of some triangles and rectangles, and the field in front of the house is composed of some different lines and planes. The tree from is composed of a mass of fan-like shapes, and the grass is composed of a number of short, thick threads. The angler's hat is a polka dot and his body is a larger dot shape.

Color

The below table shows the colors in Fishing in the twilight artwork.

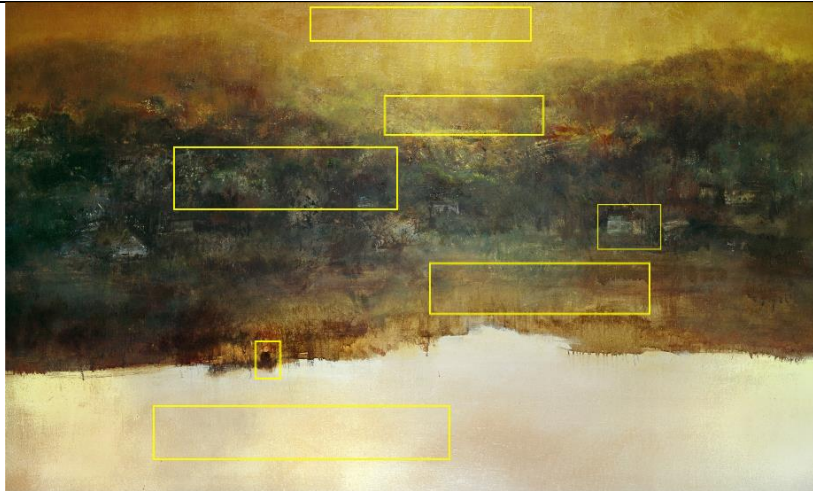


Table 10. The colors in Fishing in the twilight artwork

Following from the art elements of line and form is the art element that plays an important role i.e., color. color is a kind of visual information, which is one of the most infectious elements in the artistic language of painting. Each individual has his or her own favourite color preference, which has the richest and most subtle variations, and is also the most emotionally meaningful (Hong Fudan et al, 2016). There are different types of colors, namely primary colors, secondary colors, tertiary colors, warm colors and cool colors.

The primary colors found in this work are not almost absent, the scenery is basically represented by secondary and tertiary colors. The colors of the sky are white, yellow and some brown, the plants on the hills are a mixture of brown and dark green, and the areas caught in the light are a mixture of yellow, white and a little green. The white walls of the house were a mixture of white, blue and brown, while the field in front of the house was yellow with brown and some green. The colors of the river are a mixture of white, yellow and a small amount of purple. The angler's hat makes yellow with a small amount of white, and his clothes are brown.

The cold colors in the work are mainly found on the right side of the water and in the darker parts of the plants on the hill. The warm colors are mainly in the sky, the mountains in the distance, the field in front of the house and part of the water.

Space

The following figure shows the space in the Fishing in the twilight work.



Table 11. The space in the Fishing in the twilight work

Zhang Daoyi (2006) points out that space is an objective form of material existence, expressed through height, width and length. In the painting art, the arrangement of objects creates differences in distance and position, resulting in near, middle and far spaces. Space can be formed with apply elements of color, line and even shape.

A sense of space is presented between the distant mountains and the sky in the work, which is visually described as appearing to be further away in scope and looking less defined. In particular, the distant mountains at the end are almost becoming less clear and blending into the sky, which is a sense of space created by being at the far end of the picture.

In addition, the house in the village below the big hill and the open space in front of the house present a sense of space, and it can be visualised that there is a distance between them. This is the space that appears in the middle area of the picture.

Finally, the angler and the water in front of him present a sense of space, and the angler can be found sitting farther away from the area in the water. This is the nearer space in the work.

Value

The below table shows the light and dark in the Fishing in the twilight work.



Table 12. The value in the Fishing in the twilight work

The last part is value. Laino (2016) claimed that value refers to the use of one or more colors to show the bright lights and shadows in a picture. The variation of value in a painting gives a three-dimensional look to the object. The treatment of the value is used to show the layering of the image in the work.

The artwork shows the value in some different places. On the left and right sides of the sky the colors are darker, while the middle is brighter. In the middle of the mountain, the sunlight is bright at the top and dark at the bottom, on the ground in front of the house, the left and right sides are dark and the middle is bright, the angler's hat is bright and his body is in the dark part.

Artistic Principle

Huang Chunping (2020) suggests that the intrinsic organisation of the work is the design principle, which includes harmony, contrast, emphasis, balance and unity. The form of a pictorial artwork is the combination of artistic elements through certain rules to form an art form. The next section will analyse the design principles of the work, which is another important formalistic aspect of artistic creation.

Balance

The below table shows the principle of balance in the Fishing in the twilight work.



Table 13. The principle of balance in the Fishing in the twilight work

Dong Ziyuan (2022) points out that visual balance mainly refers to the visual elements in the left and right parts of the visual range have the same visual weight, which gives a balanced and stable visual feeling when viewing the artwork, and the resulting balance is the result of the subjective arrangement of the artistic elements of lines, shapes, colors, intertwining, appearance, and space.

The balance found in this image is not completely symmetrical, a situation that can be found directly in the work. The artist has added more weight to the left side of the picture, which means that the left side of the picture has more heavy color components than the right side of the picture, which visually shows more weight, and the figure, which is the key element in the picture, is also placed on the left side of the picture piece. However, the area of the sky and water on the right side of the work has been intentionally enlarged in order to balance the visual weight of the right side of the picture. This is to balance the visual weight of the right side of the picture.

Contrast

The below table shows the principle of contrast in the Fishing in the twilight work.

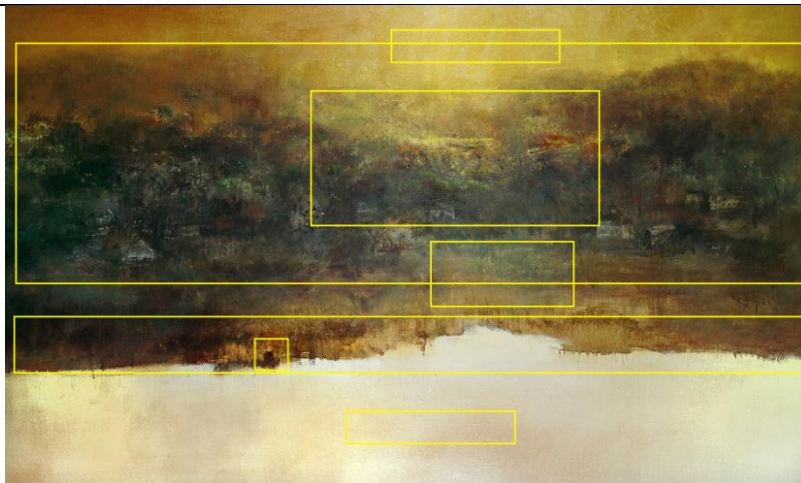


Table 14. The principle of contrast in the Fishing in the twilight work

Next is the principle of contrast design. Huang Chunping (2020) suggests that contrast is the use of elements of opposite or different nature in the picture to produce contrast, this opposite or different nature of the artistic

elements appear in the shape, but also in the color, the use of the principle of contrast can enrich the effect of the picture.

The work presents a contrast of various artistic elements, which are color, value, shape and line. The use of yellow in the sky and purple in the water create a contrast between warm and cool colors. The color of the weeds in front of the building also contrasts with the brown of its surroundings. The sunlit area in the middle of the mountain creates a strong contrast between light and dark in anticipation of the shadows below. The shape of the mountain and the shape of the angler create a stark contrast between the sizes, i.e. the mountain is very tall and the figure is small. The lines shown where the land meets the river use dashed and solid lines to create a contrast between the real and the virtual.

Emphasis

The below table shows the principle of emphasis in the Fishing in the twilight work.



Table 15. The principle of emphasis in the Fishing in the twilight work

The next design principle is that emphasis refers to something that is the focus. The principle of emphasis exists to focus attention on the main message to be conveyed in the production of an artwork when the idea or subject in the design stands out, the principle of emphasis can be produced through the use of contrast or isolation of the artistic elements of the emphasised object (Dong Ziyuan, 2022).

Obviously in this work the parts that are emphasised are the shapes and the colors. In terms of the emphasis on color, the first is the contrast between the cool and warm colors produced by the sky and water colors, which are large and clearly contrasted. Then there is the area above the middle of the frame where the light from the setting sun makes contact with the nearer mountains, an area of rich and contrasting colors.

The main emphasis in terms of shape is on the appearance of the angler and the mountain in the work. The artist uses contrast to set off the smallness of the figure by depicting the image of a tall mountain range, and this effect is very evident in the work.

Harmony

The below table shows the principle of harmony in the Fishing in the twilight work.



Table 16. The principle of harmony in the Fishing in the twilight work

There is a principle of harmony in this work. Zhou Yi (2005) points out that the principle of harmony refers to the visual coherence of various elements in a work of art. Harmony can be achieved through the configuration of colors or the combination of similar lines, as well as through a neat and perfect layout and proper proportions. Harmony can also be achieved through the contrast of artistic elements, such as the contrast between the size of shapes and the contrast between cool and warm colors, as long as the arrangement is reasonable, a sense of harmony can be produced.

This artwork kind of uses the principle of harmony. There is consistency in the use of lines in the work, such as the similar curved dotted lines that appear on the distant peaks in the picture. In terms of the shapes of the work, shadows of similarly shaped clumps of trees appear on the mountain, and they are all close to fan shaped. On the other hand, images of tall mountains and images of small figures are presented in a reasonable visual way in terms of shape. In terms of colors, the yellow in the air and the purple in the water are in a complementary relationship, which creates a comfortable and harmonious feeling in the visual sense. All these reflect the principle of harmony in the work.

Unity

The below table shows the principle of unity in the Fishing in the twilight work.

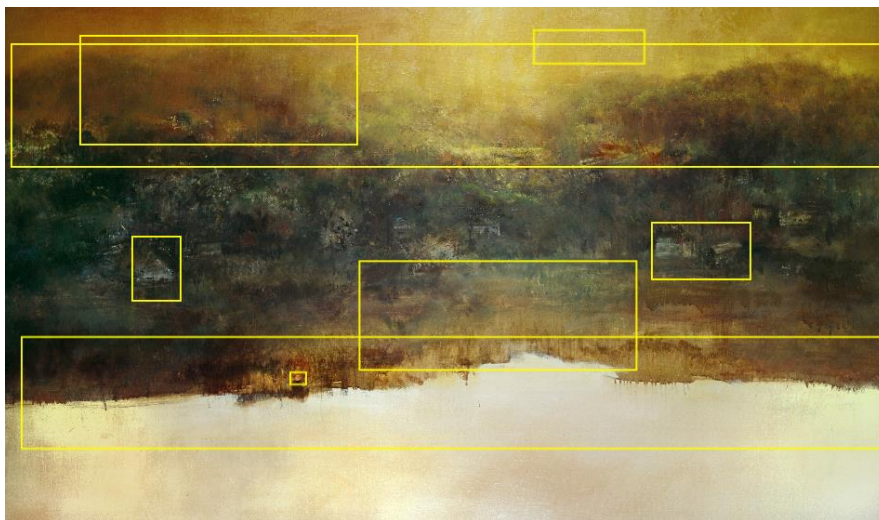


Table 17. The principle of unity in the Fishing in the twilight work

The principle of unity is the harmonious treatment of artistic elements in the design process, which means that different or similar artistic elements are placed in the artwork at the same time to form a visual effect that is consistent or has a consistent trend; unity is not the simplification of artistic elements, but refers to the seeking of consistency and commonality in the differences, and the achievement of a unified artistic effect in the whole (Zhang Haibo, 2009).

This principle of unity can be seen in the paintings painted by Li Mingwei. The shape of the sky is different from the shape on the angler's hat, but they both use the color yellow. The shape of the mountain on the left side of the picture and the ground in front of the house are also different, but they both use the color brown. The buildings to the left of the mountain and the buildings to the right have different shapes, but they both use the same blue-grey color. The edge line of the mountain shown in the sky and the edge line of the ground shown behind the water show different curvatures, but both use dashed lines.

Imagery

Visual Imagery

Visual imagery is a feeling or a perception, but it also represents or suggests something invisible, something internal. At the same time, visual imagery can be the presentation and reproduction of something. Visual imagery can exist as a description or as a metaphor (Wang Yaojin, 1989). Visual imagery is mainly expressed in terms of color, size, shape and other physical features. When visual imagery occurs, it creates a picture in our mind (Harliani, 2014).

color

The following table shows the visual imagery in terms of color in the Fishing in the twilight work



	
--	---

Table 18. The visual imagery in terms of color in the Fishing in the twilight work

“Fishing in the twilight” work uses a range of yellows in the sky as well as a mixture of yellows and whites, such as golden yellow and pale yellow. This is similar to the colors of the natural landscape in the sky at sunrise after a rainy day. This reminds the viewer of a real scene in the sky of a sunrise after rain, and then presents a picture in the brain of the colors in that sky. Thus the visual imagery is created.

At the bottom of the screen, the water surface presents bright colors, which are a mixture of light purple, white and light yellow. These colors vividly represent the reality of the river's surface in the twilight light, and they bring visual imagery to the viewer, reminding them of the beauty of the river as it appears in nature, and thus presenting a scene in their minds reflecting the surface of the river with aerial colors.

Shape

The following table shows the visual imagery in terms of shape in the Fishing in the twilight work


--



Table 19. The visual imagery in terms of shape in the Fishing in the twilight work

The work takes the form of rolling and looming mountains. It brings visual imagery to the viewer, reminding them of the reality of the spectacular mountain ranges that appear behind the fog after a heavy rain, thus creating an image of the mountain shapes in that scenario in their minds.

The figure in “Fishing in the twilight” work is composed of irregular dots and lines. Despite its tiny proportions, it accurately represents the hunched-over movement of a real angler, dressed in the costume of a traditional Chinese fisherman. This gives the viewer a clear mental image of the external shape of a Chinese angler fishing on a river.

The house in the work is made up of triangles and squares, which appear at the top and bottom of the house respectively. This is an architectural style characteristic of a traditional Chinese village, which immediately reminds the viewer of a traditional Chinese mountain village, and the shape of the house in that context appears in their minds, thus creating visual imagery.

Size

The following table shows the visual imagery in terms of size in the Fishing in the twilight work



Table 20. The visual imagery in terms of size in the Fishing in the twilight work

In this work the figures are composed of irregular and tiny dots, while the image of the mountain occupies the largest area of the picture. This creates a strong contrast about the size of the picture. The contrast used by the artist creates a visual image in the viewer's mind, that is, the image of a very tall mountain and the figure of a very small size.

Auditory Imagery

Auditory imagery describes something that can be heard. It can be used on a large scale, such as describing the sound of an earthquake in literature, or it can be used in more subtle ways, such as describing the sound of footsteps on a raft. (Harliani, 2014).

Sounds in auditory imagery include music, noise, and silence, and this imagery approach appeals to the viewer's sense of hearing and provides the viewer with auditory imagery (Trisnawaty, 2010). Auditory imagery in paintings is conveyed through its form.

Quiet

The following table shows the auditory imagery in terms of quiet in the Fishing in the twilight work



Table 21. The auditory imagery in terms of quiet in the Fishing in the twilight work

The piece creates auditory imagery by depicting the movement of an angler squatting by the river without moving. Because in reality, the environment of fishing activities is often quiet. By watching the scene in the picture, the viewer can even feel the quiet atmosphere without any noise in the environment around the angler, and thus feel the feeling of no sound in his mind.

The water in the work takes the form of a neat and flat surface, which has no ripples at all, and which contributes to the aural imagery. The viewer feels a sense of calmness through this form of water. Therefore, this also allows the viewer to have a silent feeling in their mind.

Tactile Imagery

Tactile imagery engages our sense of touch. It describes a part of the story that you can feel on your skin. Good tactile imagery should make you feel something as if it were really there. For instance when a cold wind is described in literature blowing across the cheek, the reader feels the tactile imagery of cold and flowing (Harliani, 2014). Tactile imagery includes the senses of temperature, texture and flow.

Flow

The following table shows the tactile imagery in terms of flow in the Fishing in the twilight work.



Table 22. The tactile imagery in terms of flow in the Fishing in the twilight work.

The water form in the work shows the surface of the river, which shows a gentle state. It can remind the viewer of the speed and state of the river's slow flow in reality. Thus, presenting in the mind the sense of softness and flow that is felt when the skin touches the slow flow of water.

A closer look reveals that the fishing line used on the angler's rod, which is deep in the water, moves to the right slightly in the direction of the current. This form also promotes the creation of tactile imagery, allowing the viewer to feel the slow flow of the river.

Temperature

The following table shows the tactile imagery in terms of temperature in the Fishing in the twilight work.



Table 23. The tactile imagery in terms of temperature in the Fishing in the twilight work.

“Fishing in the twilight” work uses different colors of yellow and a few browns for the sky and the top of the mountain. They depict the sunlight after the rain and the colors of the sunlight on the mountain peaks, and they all belong to the category of warm colors. This gives the viewer tactile imagery of the warmth of the sun, which creates a sensation in the brain of the sun on the skin..

Cultural Significance

Value

Williams considers culture to be ideal, meaning some state or process of human perfection that exists in some state of absolute truth or universal value. Therefore, values are an important part of the analysis of the concept of culture (storey, 2019).

Bagby (2018) points out that value is often considered to style a common factor in some object of experience, to which the observer has a sustained, emotional response, or one that is easily moved, and which is presented in an enduring way.

The value in a work of art is the embodiment of the spiritual and philosophical concepts to which the artist aspires in the society and culture. Its existence is guided by the local social culture. The art of painting in China permeates and reflects traditional Chinese cultural thoughts, philosophical ideas as well as aesthetics (Han Wei, 2021).

Painter Li Mingwei chose the images of mountains and water as the subject of his work, which implies the virtues revered by the Chinese race. In Chinese cultural thought, mountain represents kindness and water represents wisdom, and these symbols are more prominent in paintings (Jiang Xiubi, 2007).

The artist's choice of the image of a weed as the subject of his artwork also reflects a traditional idea. As an aesthetic object, weeds do not need a good natural environment to survive. Such attributes reflect the spirit of tenacity, freedom and self (Wang Luyan, 2015).

The lines shown on the mountain peaks and the shore in this work are a combination of dotted and solid lines, which reflects the Chinese Taoist philosophy of “the combining of nihility and reality”. The idea is that the world is a unity of the real and the imaginary, and with this unity, everything in the universe can be born without end. This concept in art is that artistic images must use a combination of real and unreal in order to represent the living world (Deng Zhuhong, 2010).

Many of the shapes in the work are presented in a vague way, for example the shape of the tree is blurred, the appearance of the grass is unclear, and the shape of the angler is not finely and specifically depicted but only shows a huddled movement using dots. These all imply a Taoist philosophical point of view. Chinese Taoist philosophy believes that the laws in the universe are invisible and can only be comprehended. This notion

influenced painting, resulting in Chinese paintings that place less emphasis on depicting the precise shape of the object and more on the combination of abstract and figurative forms (Liu Ye, 2016).

The work arranges the forms of human beings and the various forms of objects in nature in the same picture at the same time, reflecting the concept of “harmony between the heaven and human” in Chinese philosophical thought. The concept of "harmony between the heaven and human" emphasises the need for man and nature to coexist harmoniously, to give human feelings and life to all things in nature, and to make all things in nature possess the human way of thinking. It also takes the harmony with the spirit of nature as the ideal pursuit of aesthetics (Chen Chen et al., 2022).

The fishing scene in this painting shows a man fishing alone in a quiet mountain village, surrounded by the beauty of the rain, which is the painter's ideal state of life. This is the artist's ideal state of life, which embodies the idea of “seclusion”. "Seclusion" refers to a way of existence and philosophy of ancient Chinese people with a certain degree of learning, who sought pleasure in life in nature, took the initiative to stay away from the distractions of real life, and pursued peace of mind and freedom of spirit. Painters try to express this idea through art forms (Shi Dongqing, 2017).

Finally, the artistic principle of contrast is prominently emphasised in the work. For example, the strong dimensional disparity between the mountain and the angler's form, the use of yellow and purple in a complementary relationship between the sky and the water, are shown in the most obvious way in the work. Yet the picture displays a visual effect of harmony, balance and unity. All of these expressions imply the concept of “Harmony and Integration” in the Chinese philosophy of “yin and yang”. Dang Shengyuan (2017) points out that "Harmony and Integration" refers to two or more conflicting aspects, which are combined with each other to form a harmonious, dialectical and unified organic whole. This point of view is reflected in art, which refers to the harmony, unity and balance in the overall art work through the emergence of opposite attributes or the combination of opposing elements of art together to form a sense of beauty in the form.

Environment

Fang Wei (2004) points out that the environment is a generalisation and summary of mankind’s understanding of the world around them. Its connotation is constantly enriched and expanded with the overall development and progress of human society and civilisation.

Wang Hongjian (2010) claims that art usually reflects the life of an era and people’s spiritual outlook through typical artistic images, and appreciators can recognise the specific and vivid living environment of different times, countries and nations from different art works.

This work of art was created by the author in 2005, after the implementation of China’s “reform and opening up” policy in 1978. The participation of Chinese culture in international cultural exchanges led to the weakening of traditional culture. As a result, those intellectuals who sought the spirit of Chinese culture in the 1990s returned to classical Chinese philosophy for ultimate care and ethical paradigms (Tao Dongfeng et al., 2016). Based on the influence of such a social and cultural environment, painters are motivated to create. When Li Mingwei carries out his artistic creation, he constantly absorbs traditional culture and incorporates various artistic ideas, consciously linking his artistic creation with social and cultural development.

Traditional villages appear in the works as an architectural landscape, anglers are sights seen in life, and mountains, water, sky, grass and trees are common natural landscapes. These scenes appeared in the Taihang Mountains region in the northern part of Henan Province, which the painter often visited for sketching, and they attracted the painter's eyes. The forms shown in the beautiful scenery inspired the painter's desire to create and formed the basis for the artist to create the work “Fishing in the Twilight”.

In the work “Fishing in the Twilight”, the desire for freedom and quiet life is expressed through the form of weeds and anglers. This is the ideal state of life that the artist aspires to, and at the same time reflects the busy and noisy real-life environment of the artist as a member of society.

Behaviour

Behaviour in culture can be understood in various ways. The study is based on his attitudes in terms of religious life, personal community and relationship with nature. Every nation has its own attitude in facing the challenges of life in its environment (sulaiman, 2022).

The concept of behaviour of a certain society always has to be reflected through the subject, content and ideas of art works. Any art is always a reflection of the social life of a certain era, and people's behaviour and ethical concepts are the main components of social life. Therefore, art works mostly contain the content of people's behaviour (Peng Jixiang, 2019).

The forms in the artwork present a magnificent sense of beauty, the result of the artist's heartfelt appreciation of the beauty of nature. In particular, the main use of color and light and dark elements accurately depicts the view of the sun shining on the river after the rain, and the use of these elements produces a strong contrasting effect that makes the work more attractive. This shows that the artist is good at observing nature in real life and reflects his love for nature.

Anglers, traditional mountain villages and beautiful natural scenery and quiet atmosphere appear in the presentation of Li Mingwei's artworks. This presents a picture of a leisurely idyllic life, which at the same time reflects the artist's desire for a quiet idyllic life.

Behaviour is something inherent in the painter, who tries to create his own form to convey a message. The idea of freedom and ego in traditional Chinese culture, embodied by the image of grass in the work, is formed on the basis of the painter's behaviour, reflecting the painter's pursuit of the spirit of freedom and ego.

Painter Li Mingwei uses the principle of contrast to differentiate the shapes of the mountain and the man, creating a stark contrast of size. By doing so, he illustrates that mountains are tall and people are small. This expresses the artist's respect for nature.

The artist has metaphorically expressed the qualities of goodness and wisdom through the form of mountains and water, which relates to his point of view on life. It reflects his attitude and character as an artist in social life.

The works reflect the philosophical idea of harmonious coexistence between human and nature by combining human forms with natural forms of mountains, water, trees, grass and sky. This shows that the painter pays attention to his own cultural cultivation and the pursuit of philosophical spirit.

Li Mingwei highlights traditional Chinese cultural elements and philosophical values in his artworks, demonstrating a unique cultural value, which is also determined by the painter's behaviour. It also proves the artist's esteem and recognition of his country's culture.

Need

Mustapha points out that culture relates to a society's endeavour to meet its basic needs. In order to fulfil these needs, culture must correspond to the needs of a complex evolving human group in line with current needs (Sulaiman, 2022).

Zhang Yanguo (2000) states that psychologists believe that need is desire. It is usually expressed in material aspects, such as living conditions, and in spiritual aspects, such as art, literature and morality. Spiritual needs are the reflection and product of the cultural activities of a particular era.

In the context of the development of contemporary art in China, the demands embodied in artists' works can be divided into three types: the first is aesthetic demand, the second is emotional demand, and the third is cultural demand.

The works present three levels of space: near, middle and far, the combination of dotted and solid lines, and the vague shape of the subject. The forms in these artworks clearly show the aesthetic expression of the painter Li Mingwei, which is based on the aesthetic needs of the artist and also satisfies the aesthetic needs of some members of the society. Hong Yan (2020) claims that art is a kind of spiritual product that creates aesthetic objects, which takes the creation of aesthetic objects and the satisfaction of people's aesthetic needs as its unique purposes and pursuits.

Artwork is a carrier for artists to express their emotions. Li Mingwei's works show his desire for a quiet idyllic life and the pursuit of freedom due to the formal design, which is his emotional need. At the same time, art works are a reflection of the current state of life, and their emotional tendencies will also touch other social groups in society. Artworks can simultaneously satisfy the psychological needs of different groups of people, and art makes life better and more meaningful because it satisfies the psychological needs of human beings (Hong Fudan et al., 2016).

Art as a form of social and cultural expression. It is indispensable in the process of meeting social and cultural needs. In the process of creating the artwork "Fishing in the Twilight", the cultural ideas symbolised by the subject of mountains, water and grass, as well as the existence and philosophical value of the art form are a continuation of the traditional Chinese culture.

SUMMARY

Li Mingwei's paintings are interpreted by means of imagery. The forms presented in the works are not randomly arranged; the artist uses a variety of artistic elements and conforms to the laws of the principles of artistic forms. All the arrangements and combinations of artistic elements in the works are the result of the artist's careful layout and thinking. It has its own uniqueness beauty.

By analysing Li Mingwei's paintings, it is proved that the theory of imagery can be applied not only to literary and poetic works, but also to contemporary oil paintings. It is mainly presented through the artistic form of the picture. Therefore, the form in paintings and the words in literature are both a way of description and they exist in order to express the author's thoughts.

In the process of creating the "Fishing in the Twilight" painting, the choice of the subject image and the use of forms in the work take place on the core foundation of Chinese culture. The subject images of the work are mainly influenced by the elements of traditional Chinese culture, while the artistic forms are mainly influenced by philosophical ideas. At the same time, they are also influenced by the contemporary social and natural environment.

Art is an expression of culture and they all come from the human mind. The appreciation of works of art can be explored not only from a formalist perspective, but also from a cultural and imagery perspective. It is embodied in the creative processes and modes in painting, as well as in the meanings expressed and implied in the artwork itself.

Corresponding Author

Rushana Sulaiman @ Abd Rahim, Senior Lecturer

Fine Art Department, College of Creative Arts, MARA University of Technology, Kampus Machang, Kelantan, Malaysia

Email: rushana@uitm.edu.my

REFERENCE

- Peng, J. X. (2019). Introduction to art. Peking University Press.
- Shi, S. X. (2018). Historical clues and restrictive powers of the localization discourses of Chinese contemporary. *Social Sciences in Yunnan*, (3), 171-177.
- Yang, Z. H. (2013). Current situation and analysis of contemporary Chinese painting. *Journal of Huizhou University*, 33(4), 78-82.

Appreciation of Imagery Oil Painting in Contemporary Chinese Art through Cultural Context

- Lu, J. C. (2014). The style composition of Chinese contemporary oil painting in the contrast of Chinese art and Western art. *Journal Fuyang Teachers College*, (2), 140-144.
- Ma, K. Y. (2016). *History of civilizations*. Peking University Press.
- Wellek, R., & Warren, A. (2017). *Theory of literature* (Liu Xiangyu Jingzhong, Trans.).
- Ember, R. C., & Ember, M. (2021). *Cultural anthropology: Thirteen edition* (Wang Qingfeng, Trans.). The Commercial Press. (Original work publish 1973)
- Storey, J. (2019). *Culture theory and popular culture: An introduction* (Chang Jiang, Trans.). Peking University Press. (Original work publish 1997)
- Ocvirk, O. G., Stinson, R. E., Wigg, P. R., Bone, R. O., & Cayton, D. L. (2009). *Art fundamentals: Theory and practice* (ninth edition) (Niu Hongbao, Trans.). Peking University Press. (Original work publish 2002).
- He, G. M. (2013). Natural landscape: the cultural bearer of the evolution of the relationship between ancient literature and morality. *New Horizons from Tianfu*, (5), 145-158.
- Shen, K. Y. (2003). Reinterpretation and reconstruct: Landscape themes in contemporary art. *Art Magazine*, (2), 91-95
- Lin, Y. (2012). Grass culture in traditional Chinese culture. *Journal of Beijing Forestry University (Social sciences)*, 11(2), 13-23.
- Zhou, T. J. (2006). Thoughts on cultivating and developing Chinese tree culture. *Forestry of China*, (20), 40-41
- Liu, G. J. (2018). Analysis on the value of Chinese ancient architecture theme painting: Taking Longmen city sketching as an example. *Journal of Changzhi University*, 35(1), 33-35
- Wei, H. (2017). *A study on the themes of ancient landscape painting*, Ph. D. Dissertation. Shaanxi Normal University.
- Yi, J. R. (Ed.). (2018). *Fine Art Appreciation*. Tsinghua University Press.
- Chen, L. J. (Ed.). (2003). *Fine Art Appreciation*. Peking University Press.
- Liu, Y. (2020). *Analysis of painting form language*. Tianjin People's Fine Art Publishing house.
- Hong, F. D., Ma, X. Y., & Han, X. Z. (2016). *Appreciation of arts*. Shanghai Education Publishing House
- Zhang, D. Y. (2006). *Fine art appreciation*. High Education Press.
- Laino, I. (2016). *Painting appreciation method* (Sun Yang Shandan, Trans.). Beijing Publishing Group Co., Ltd. (Original work publish 2009).
- Huang, C. P. (2020). *Form design basics*. Chemical Industry Press
- Dong, Z. Y. (2022). *Everyone is a designer: Principles and methods of visual design*. Post & Telecom Press.
- Zhou, Y. (2005). An analysis of painting form and formal beauty. *Art Research*, (4), 64-65
- Zhang, H. B. (2009). The principles of formal beauty in modern constitutive art. *Shaanxi Education*, (4), 83.
- Wang, Y. J. (1989). *Imagery criticism*. Sichuan Literature and Art Press
- Harliani, I. (2014). *Analysis of the power of imagery in Suzanne Collins's Novel "catching fire"*. M. A. Thesis. Alauddin Islamic State University.
- Trisnawaty, N. (2014) *Imagery in the journals written by the writing i students of the English department of Widya Mandali Catholic University Surabaya*. *Magister Scientiae*, (28), 122-131
- Bagby, P. (2018). *Culture and history: Prolegomena to the comparative study of civilization* (Xia Ke, Li Tiangang & Chen Jianglan, Trans.). The Commercial Press. (Original work publish 1958).
- Han, W. (2021). *Chinese painting composition art*. Shandong Fine Art Publishing House.
- Jiang, X. B. (2007). On landscape culture and landscape spirit of our country. *Qinghai Social Sciences*, (5), 22-25
- Wang, L. Y. (2015). Analyze the artistic conception beauty of idle flowers and weeds in the poems of the Whole Tang Dynasty. *Aesthetics*, (9), 48-52
- Deng, Z. H. (2010). Analyzes the combining of nihility and reality of traditional Chinese art and its cultural implications. *Journal of Changchun University of Science and Technology*, 5(3), 88-89
- Liu, Y. (2016). The artistic expression of traditional Chinese thought. *Journal of Hunan Administration Institute*, (5), 64-66
- Chen, C., Ren, K. T., & Zhang, Y. J. (2022). Analyze of the application of the thought of the harmony between the heaven and human. *Media & Art Studies*, (1), 104-112
- Shi, D. Q. (2017). On hermits and Chinese recluse culture. *Shandong Social Sciences*, (6), 177-181
- Dang, S. Y. (2017). The theory of yin and yang in Zhou Yi and the aesthetic ideology of "harmony and integration". *Journal of Shaanxi Normal University (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition)*, 46(5), 77-84
- Fang, W. (2004). *Environmental value theory*. Ph. D. Dissertation. Fudan University
- Wang, H. J. (2010). *Perspective*. Culture and Art Publishing House.
- Tao, D. F., He, L., & He, Y. G. (2016). *The history of cultural studies in China*. China Social Sciences Press
- Sulaiman, R. B. (2022). *Formalistic Analysis Of Siri Dungun Artworks In Cultural Context*. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 12(10), 2437-2446
- Zhang, Y. G. (2000). On spiritual needs. *Tianjing Social Science*, (5), 36-40
- Hong, Y. (Ed.). (2020). *Fine art and art appreciation*. Fudan University Press. Hong, Z. X. (2010). *History of Chinese Art*. China Academy of Art Press.