

Research on the Expression of Artistic Visual Characteristics in Painting

Taking the Works of Cecily Brown as Examples

Yaqing Xie¹

¹*Hubei Institute of Fine Arts, Wuhan, Hubei, China*

ABSTRACT

With the rapid development of the times, the visual effects presented by more painting methods are becoming increasingly diverse. This article aims to explore the specific expression of artistic visual characteristics in painting by studying the works of contemporary artist Cecily Brown as the cases. By analyzing visual elements such as color application, line composition, spatial processing, and material exploration in Brown's works, this study reveals how he uniquely integrates traditional and modern art techniques to create artistic effects that are both emotionally profound and visually impactful. This research not only studies the surface level of external form innovation in Brown's works, but also aims to explore his deeper visual perception concepts, emotional communication methods, and cultural identity. The goal is to open up new horizons for exploring and understanding the visual characteristics of contemporary painting art, and provide profound thinking and inspiration.

Keywords: *Visual characteristics, Color application, Oil paintings.*

1. INTRODUCTION

In the vast universe of visual art, painting, as a long-standing and vibrant art form, continues to touch the hearts of audiences with its unique visual vocabulary. It not only relies on materials to shape intuitive images, but also deeply conveys the artist's emotional world and philosophical thinking through the fusion of colorful, smooth lines, and exquisite composition. Exploring the visual characteristics in painting not only deepens people's understanding of the essence of painting, but also opens up new perspectives and sources of inspiration for contemporary art creation.

Cecily Brown's works are vivid examples of this exploration. She not only inherits the essence of traditional painting, but also dares to break through, blending concreteness and abstraction to create visual narratives that cross boundaries. Her works are colorful like brocade, with lively and vibrant brushstrokes, showcasing extraordinary innovation. Through in-depth analysis of her, it is found that she skillfully integrated Eastern and Western aesthetics in the context of globalization,

challenging and reconstructing the framework of traditional visual language.

This cross-cultural visual experiment not only broadens the boundaries of artistic expression, bringing unprecedented aesthetic shock and thinking opportunities to the audience, but also profoundly reveals the power of art as a cultural mirror, and the way it reflects multidimensional issues such as social emotions and identity recognition. This research is not only a profound exploration of visual art, but also an encouragement for future artistic exploration and practice, pushing it towards more diverse and profound directions.

2. THEORETICAL BASIS OF ARTISTIC VISUAL CHARACTERISTICS

2.1 Definition and Connotation of Artistic Visual Characteristics

Visual art, as an art form that conveys ideas, emotions, and information through visual elements, has extremely rich characteristics and connotations,

covering multiple aspects such as color, light and shadow, composition, spatial sense, lines and shapes.

The interaction between color and light and shadow constitutes the most charming visual effect in visual art. They can not only create rich visual layers and delicate emotional changes, but also make the picture full of vitality and dynamism, allowing viewers to feel the deep meaning that the artist wants to convey while enjoying the visual experience. The creation of composition and spatial sense is an indispensable part of visual art, which together determine the overall structure and visual effect of the painting.¹ By cleverly creating a sense of space, artists can create works of art that not only conform to visual aesthetic laws, but also deeply express thematic ideas. Lines and shapes are highly expressive elements in visual art. They can not only directly depict the external features of objects, but also convey deeper thoughts and emotions through abstract and symbolic techniques. Artists create works of art with unique charm and profound connotations through the smoothness and abruptness of lines, contrast and harmony of shapes.

Art is the focus and concentration of life, but also the amplification and sublimation of life. The characteristics and connotations of visual art are reflected in various aspects such as the visual effects of color and light and shadow, the creation of spatial sense in the picture, and the expressive power of lines and shapes. Visual perception occupies the majority of human body's perception of external information. Due to the infiltration of art into people's lives, to some extent, visual perception determines people's lives. Therefore, it can also be said that people's mood, psychological pressure, and personal emotions can be regulated by the visual art environment.²

The researchers can visually feel the balance and imbalance in artistic works, and feel the balance and impact of the image in terms of color intensity, blank space, etc. This is also the visual tension display of art. The standards and methods for the visual external expression of artistic works need people to start from the essence of art,

appreciate and create the value of art through visual organs and corresponding aesthetic means, objectify aesthetic psychology from composition, light and shadow, color and other aspects, create works of art, and convey true experience.

2.2 Importance of Artistic Visual Characteristics in Painting

In the art of painting, the visual characteristics of art are crucial to the artwork. The visual world characteristics promote emotional resonance among viewers, greatly enhancing the infectious power of the work. Artists create captivating visual experiences by delicately depicting or boldly innovating the art world, making viewers feel as if they are immersed in it and experiencing the emotions and stories conveyed by the work. This immersion directly enhances the attractiveness and influence of the work.

The artistic world constructed by works often touches upon common human emotions and experiences, such as love, sadness, hope, etc. The expression of these emotions crosses the boundaries of language and culture, allowing viewers to find resonance points in the works, stimulate deep emotional reactions, and achieve a spiritual dialogue with the artist.

The characteristics of the art world deeply reflect the personal style of artists. Every artist has their unique perspective, emotional expression, and artistic language, which are fully demonstrated in constructing the art world. Through unique treatments such as color application, composition layout, and subject selection, artists not only convey their personal emotions and thoughts, but also showcase their artistic pursuits and style characteristics, making their works a unique imprint of their artistic identity and personality.

3. OVERVIEW OF CECILY BROWN'S ARTISTIC CAREER AND STYLE

3.1 Cecily Brown's Life and Creation Background

Cecily Brown was born in London, England in 1969, into a family with a strong artistic atmosphere - her mother was a renowned novelist and her father was an art critic and early supporter of the artist Francis Bacon. This family background undoubtedly laid a fertile soil for her future artistic

1. Nie Xiaoxiong, Research on the Visual and Narrative of Oilpainting — Take the Series Creation of "Lifestory-casting Soul" as an Example [D]. Wenzhou University, 2022. DOI:10.27781/d.cnki.gwzdx.2022.000380.

2. Cheng Xiangzhan, Wang Yifan, Cognition and Perception in Natural Aesthetics: The Advancement of Aesthetic Theory by Environmental Aesthetics [J]. Journal of Jiangsu University (Social Science Edition), 2021, 23(04): 49-61. DOI:10.13317/j.cnki.jdskxb.2021.37.

creation.³ In the 1990s, she studied at the Slade School of Fine Art, where conceptual and abstract painting was prevalent in the art world. However, she stood out and focused on figurative painting, which quietly shaped the foundation of her unique artistic style. Subsequently, Brown embarked on a journey to New York, a city that presented both opportunities and challenges. This city not only provided her with rich creative materials and inspiration, but also encouraged her to diversify her ideas and broaden her artistic horizons. Over time, her paintings gradually caught the world's attention and her reputation grew stronger. Brown continues to expand his career on the international art stage, and has successfully host multiple influential art exhibitions. In the field of 'living female artists', extraordinary artistic achievements and potential have been demonstrated.

Brown often emphasizes the freedom and openness of artistic creation, firmly believing that art should not be bound by any established style or label. She encourages people to break free from frameworks and explore the infinite potential of painting art. This concept is not only reflected in her works, but also inspires more people to rediscover and appreciate painting art through her interviews and articles.

3.2 Formation and Characteristics of Artistic Style

Cecily Brown's creations not only deeply respect classical art, but also cleverly cross the boundary between concrete and abstract art. Using the brush as a medium, she fearlessly shuttles between various social issues, using her unique artistic language to convey soul stirring resonance to the world. Her works are not only the interweaving of colors and lines, but also a profound interpretation of life attitude and a passionate declaration of spiritual pursuit, indicating that art is far more than expression, and it is a mirror of life attitude and an eternal pursuit in the depths of the soul.

Cecily Brown's works often use bold and contrasting colors that are not only highly saturated, but also often combined in non-traditional or unexpected ways to create an atmosphere that is both vibrant and slightly dreamy. Her color choices often challenge the audience's visual habits,

triggering a re-examination of color perception. Brown's composition often breaks the traditional principles of perspective and balance, using fragmented, overlapping, or distorted image elements to construct the picture. This composition not only increases the sense of hierarchy in the picture, but also strengthens the uncertainty and ambiguity of the work.

Brown's works often focus on the body, especially the female body, exploring the desires, beauty, and related social and cultural issues of the body through distortion, deformation, or abstraction techniques. Works often convey challenges to traditional aesthetic concepts and reveal the complexity of the body as a carrier of emotions, power, and desires. Her works often involve blurred boundaries between dreams and reality, using surrealist elements and symbolic techniques to construct a world that is both familiar and unfamiliar. This theme not only reflects the artist's profound insight into the inner world, but also triggers the audience's reflection on self-awareness, and the relationship between reality and illusion.

Cecily Brown's artistic style is unique for its bold use of colors, non-traditional semi-abstract approach, and profound thematic exploration. Her works are not only innovative contributions to visual art, but also profound reflections on human emotions and cognitive world.

4. THE SPECIFIC EXPRESSION OF ARTISTIC VISUAL CHARACTERISTICS IN CECILY BROWN'S WORKS

4.1 Unique Visual Applications and Emotional Expression

Brown's painting color choices are vivid and bold, highly recognizable, while his bold brushstrokes blend elements of abstract expressionism. The distribution and contrast of his colors in the painting create a strong visual impact. She injects her emotions and power into colors and strokes, forming her own unique visual language and creating layered and lifelike visual effects.

Brown is also willing to imitate the complex paintings of painters such as Greco, Bruegel, and Pollock. She can extract artistic symbols from others and combine them with her own artistic language. She has not only painted one painting at a time, but even painted two or more paintings at the same time. This painting style has fixed her

3. Qiao Yuexian, Guo Qian, A Study of Visual Language in Cecily Brown's Paintings [J]. Art Market, 2024, (03): 68-69.

painting style to a certain extent and can bring a dual element visual illusion to her paintings. The rough yet delicate techniques are also reflected in

her paintings, and viewers can also infer the visual characteristics used in her works.



Figure 1 "Untitled (Vanity)" Oil on canvas painting by Cecily Brown, created in 2005, measuring 195.6 x 139.7 cm.

The above picture is Cecily Brown's 2005 work "Untitled (Vanity)" ("Figure 1"), which uses visual illusion. The picture appears to be two women sitting opposite each other, but in reality, it is the woman facing herself in the mirror in front of the dressing table. The contrast between light and dark in the picture is strong, and the brushstrokes are unrestrained. The overall color seems to be mainly black and white, but upon closer observation, there is a lot of hidden color. The blurry face of the woman contrasts with the slender neck depicted, which conveys a sense of order in the dreamlike chaos of the picture. The woman facing the mirror in the composition also conveys Brown's self-examination of herself. Her early works are mostly based on rabbits, but later shift to crowded and twisted bodies as the main elements. The colors in the images are bright and vivid, and the color distribution is crowded like a cluster of flowers, which can remind people of vibrant life and

powerful reproductive ability.⁴ Various elements such as ambiguous color expression, rough and bold brushstrokes, distorted and deformed female bodies, and abstract shape patterns are displayed in Brown's works. At the same time, there are also a considerable amount of hints of carnal desire and expressions of reproductive worship with distinct female characteristics. It is not difficult to see that she is a feminist painter.

Brown's creation constitutes a unique artistic expression, cleverly interweaving classical charm with modern style. In Brown's paintings, there is not only the profound influence of classical master Rubens, but also the inspiration of modern pioneer William de Kooning. This cross era artistic fusion is actually a natural expression of her deep love for

4. Li Xinfeng, Representation of Female Images in Abstract Expressionist Paintings: The Similarities and Differences between de Kooning and Cecily Brown's Paintings [J]. Journal of Honghe University, 2024, 22(02): 107-111. DOI:10.13963/j.cnki.hhxb.2024.02.022.

art history since childhood. In multiple interviews, she has admitted that her creations are not simply imitations or reproductions, but rather based on a personal perspective and deep understanding of recreation. Her works wander between classical and modern, creating a unique visual narrative that showcases extraordinary artistic language. She cleverly uses color to convey complex emotional states, such as desire, anxiety, the interweaving of dreams and reality. The choice of different tones and color combinations often guides the audience into a specific emotional experience.

4.2 Abstract and Concrete Innovation and the Creation of Spatial Sense

"People always talk about abstraction and concreteness, but the problem is how to integrate the two." Brown once said that he began to imitate the "crowded feeling" in "The Funeral of Count Olgas" as a reference, with the crowded body covered with heavy paint, but there were also some facial, character, and body parts. In Brown's philosophy of art, concreteness and abstraction are not opposing poles, but complementary and mutually reinforcing. She believes that figurative painting, with its unique narrative and symbolic qualities, can directly express emotions and convey profound insights; Abstract painting, on the other hand, focuses on exploring shapes, colors, and textures, inspiring viewers' infinite imagination and interpretation. Brown cleverly integrates these two into one, creating works of art with rich layers and profound connotations. In some of her works, concrete characters or objects complement abstract colors and lines, creating a visual experience that is both concrete and abstract. This combination not only enhances the visual impact of the work, but also leaves a vast space for viewers to imagine and feel.

4.2.1 Balance Between Abstract and Concrete: Fragmentation of Frames

In modern and contemporary art, artists abstract or semi-abstract concrete objects to create new imagery and carry a certain connotation. This connotation requires one or more carriers, and the character images, mirrors, animals, etc. that appear multiple times in Cecily Brown's works are all carriers of expressing the connotation of the

picture.⁵ These carriers are arranged and combined through fragmentation processing in the picture as the final presentation of the picture. After learning that Brown is a puzzle enthusiast and combining her images, it can be seen that her fragmented processing method and the process fragments of the puzzle lead to the same destination. The process of the puzzle has given her some inspiration for the images, making them show an incomplete abstract characteristic.

Most of Brown's paintings retain a summary of reproductive worship and sexual attitudes, which are fragmented and combined through a semi-abstract approach. In the painting, a single-color tone is generally used, such as brown, ochre, pink, flesh, and red, which are linked together with carnal colors. In "Purple Brown Moment" ("Figure 2"), when the gaze is focused on this painting, a large amount of red and pink occupy the image, incomplete human organs are scattered everywhere, and the specific facial features are still unclear, without any regularity. However, this incomplete and semi-abstract image allows us to infinitely narrow our gaze or randomly enlarge it in a certain place, while also having a strong visual impact. This allows people to realize that images may not necessarily be complete, concrete, or abstract, and that huge talents have visual impact. fragmented, semi abstract, and fragmented images like Brown can still display considerable visual impact.

5. Liu Lisha, A Study of "Visual Metaphor" in Cecily Brown's Works [D]. Southwest University, 2021. DOI:10.27684/d.cnki.gxndx.2021.001686.



Figure 2 “Purple Brown Moment” Oil on canvas painting by Cecily Brown, 142.2 x 193 cm, created in 1997.

4.2.2 *Flexible Application of View and Perspective: Overlay and Collage*

The process fragments of the puzzle not only gave Cecily Brown semi-abstract inspiration, but also inspired her in the expression of spatial sense in the picture. In the rapidly developing process of modernization, many artists' scope of material extraction will expand to new media such as videos, photography, online images, magazines, etc. Brown is no exception. She applies collage techniques to

painting, repeatedly overlaying the characters in the picture to create inexplicable and reasonable perspectives with a sense of space. Most of the characters chosen by Brown are fragmented and dynamic, giving people a sense of conflict and unease with order amidst chaos. This semi-abstractness provides viewers with space to think and also gives Brown the desire to continue exploring. She believes that this feeling is also what attracts her to other works' ideas.



Figure 3 “A Game Of Gin”, Oil on canvas painting by Cecily Brown, created in 2013, measuring 170.2 x 210.8 cm.

In Cecily Brown's 2013 work "A Game of Gin" ("Figure 3"), it can be seen that the women in the painting are scattered and crowded together, while each person's face is abstracted and blurred. In addition, the overlapping and squeezing of limbs between people creates a dynamic and changing state in the entire visual space. All the combinations and hiding in the picture are crowded into a ball on the canvas, creating a chaotic and orderly sense of space. At the same time, the traditional realistic perspective effect of near large and far small is adopted, and diagonal extensions are made from the bottom left to the top right corner. This composition method allows the audience to feel an inner power and conflict when appreciating the work.

4.3 Symbolic Significance and Expressiveness of Lines and Shapes

The symbolic meaning and expressive power of lines and shapes are extremely rich, deeply influencing the viewer's perception and emotional resonance. Their combination and application constitute the unique emotional language of visual art works. They jointly construct the unique charm and profound connotation of visual art works through the contrast of fluency and tension, the interweaving of abstraction and concreteness, and the precise grasp of emotional transmission.⁶

Line, as one of the fundamental languages of artistic expression, presents a completely different visual and psychological experience through its fluidity and tension. Unlike the orderly and regular lines such as Vasily Kandinsky's rhythmic lines and Pierre Mondrian's calculated lines, Cecily Brown's visual presentation features many flowing lines. Therefore, this disordered distribution of lines separates Brown's style from the abstraction of geometric shapes, expressing the abstraction of emotions. From Brown's 2012 work "Untitled (Banquet)" ("Figure 4"), it can be seen that the distribution of lines in the picture is disordered, presenting a free, unrestrained, and bold state. The lines are vertically and horizontally distributed in the picture, but upon closer inspection, it can be seen that there are two vertical lines on each quarter of the left and right sides of the picture, dividing the picture into three parts. According to the segmentation, the color tone changes from yellow to gray and then to orange from left to right. In the middle of the picture, there are upright figures with

blurred faces and twisted bodies, presenting a strong tension in the picture. Brown seems to be venting his inner anxiety and confusion in the painting, coupled with the abstract figure in the center shouting loudly as if looking up and opening his mouth, giving a hint of panic and fear. These lines may distort or break, displaying strong dynamics and visual impact, as well as evoking inner turmoil and resonance in the viewer.

6. Dai Siyu, Lines in Modern Painting: Three Views Influenced by Phenomenology [J]. Journal of Aesthetic Education, 2022, 13(03): 50-57.



Figure 4 “Untitled (Banquet)” Oil on canvas painting by Cecily Brown, created in 2012, measuring 276.9 x 434.3 cm.



Figure 5 “Untitled (The Beautiful and Damned)” Oil on canvas painting by Cecily Brown, created in 2013, measuring 276.9 x 434.3 cm.

Shape, as an extension and combination of lines, also carries rich symbolic meanings. Cecily Brown's works are often filled with dynamic lines and shapes, which interweave and collide with each other on the canvas, creating a strong visual pull. The characters in Brown's paintings are always blurry, full of fantasy, and humanoid shapes. This blurry and hidden shape always makes Brown's paintings catch people's attention. "Untitled (The Beautiful and Damned)" ("Figure 5") was created by Cecily Brown in 2013, and the faces of the characters in the back are quickly swept by a brush, weakening their facial expressions. The characters blend into the background in a strip or ribbon shape,

and the most prominent one in the picture is the figure curled up in a semicircle at the bottom of the picture. The contrast in shape gives the image a sense of jerkiness and dynamism, despite the overall gentle green and flesh tones, people can still sense the unease beneath the tranquility in her artwork. The emotional transmission of lines and shapes is subtle and profound, as they can cross the boundaries of language and directly touch the depths of the viewer's soul, inspiring resonance and insight.

5. CONCLUSION

The visual effects presented by artistic works in abstract expression have their unique significance, which includes the subjective thoughts of the creators themselves. The visual effect of a picture is not only influenced by the subjective thinking of the creator, but also by social objectivity, which can reflect the creator's thinking on the picture. However, it is inevitable that the public's final analysis and presentation of ideas conveyed by the picture are greatly influenced by social comments and the subjective thoughts of others. Therefore, the visual quality and evaluation of a work are generally determined by the subjective factors of the creator, social objectivity, and the subjective factors of others.

Regarding feminism and reproductive worship, the author need to give her personal understanding that social status is determined by whether a person has extremely high productivity and reproductive ability. In ancient times, women had the ability to produce and reproduce, and like rabbits, they maximized their abilities. However, nowadays, this ability has declined, and their social status has also declined. If one wants to improve their social status in such a situation, it is necessary to make up for it in terms of labor capacity and production and reproduction capacity. Women need to actively participate in various production and labor activities in society. If artists want to express feminism, they need to reflect and encourage women to engage in production and reproduction in their paintings. Even more extreme is to criticize women's cowardice, laziness, responsibility shifting and other bad habits. Any feminism that disregards "labor" and only talks about "women" is false feminism.

The ultimate inspiration of artistic visual characteristics for modern painting is profound and multidimensional. The guiding significance for artists' creative practice lies in encouraging them to explore and break through the boundaries of traditional visual expression. Modern painting is no longer limited to a single perspective or color application, but emphasizes individual expression, emotional transmission, and formal innovation. Artists create unique and meaningful works by deconstructing and reconstructing visual elements such as color, lines, shape, and space. This practice not only enriches the language of painting, but also promotes the diversified development of artistic styles, providing artists with broad creative space.

In the field of education, the visual characteristics of art emphasize the importance of visual perception and aesthetic education. Art education should attach importance to guiding students to observe, analyze, and understand the visual characteristics of art works, such as color matching, composition techniques, and emotional expression, in order to enhance students' aesthetic literacy and creativity. At the same time, when appreciating modern painting, there is a must to encourage the audience to capture the deep meaning and emotional resonance behind the work with an open mind and keen intuition, and deepen their understanding and experience of art.

In addition, the continuous evolution of artistic visual characteristics has profoundly influenced the development trajectory of contemporary art, promoting a wave of cross-border integration and experimental exploration in art. It encourages artists to break free from the constraints of traditional media and integrate and coexist with emerging art forms such as installation art and digital media, creating unprecedented artistic experiences. This cross-border integration not only enriches the forms of artistic expression, but also promotes dialogue and exchange between art and other fields, injecting new vitality and possibilities into the development of contemporary art.

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