

# Research on the Spatial Art Spirit of Chinese Painting

Xu Jieqiong

Shanxi University, Taiyuan, 030024, China

**Abstract:** *The spatial expression form of Chinese painting adopts blank space processing and scattered perspective to manage the relationship between images, and generates an image space through perceptual association. The images emphasize charm and pursue artistic conception, which has high artistic research value and occupies a pivotal position in the field of world painting. Looking back at the development process of Chinese painting, under the influence of social factors and cultural backgrounds in different dynasties and historical periods, the spatial expression forms of Chinese painting have shown different characteristics, and are still constantly exploring and advancing on the path of inheritance and development. Aesthetician Wolfli once said, "Viewing is not a static mirror, but a vibrant understanding that has its own inherent history and has gone through many stages." Based on the above analysis, this article will sort out and summarize the historical context of Chinese painting, starting from the spatial expression forms of Chinese painting art, explore the aesthetic ideological foundation and visual expression techniques, as well as the national cultural value contained behind its form composition.*

**Keywords:** *Chinese painting, spatial expression forms, composition, aesthetics*

## 1. Introduction

This study will start with the spatial expression forms of Chinese painting, searching for the ideological logic and value connotations behind the images. It is hoped that through research, starting from the perspective of the inheritance of Chinese painting art, with spatial expression as the main direction, we can explore the origins of enriching the forms of artistic spatial expression. Analyze the pursuit of beauty, truth, and goodness reflected in Eastern aesthetic thought, and use it as a reference inspiration to find new creative directions and possible paths for contemporary art.

## 2. The relationship between space and painting art

Space as a medium that carries all things, is the foundation of all material existence. With the of the times and the development of human society, people's understanding of space is also constantly deepening.

In real life, people's definition of natural space is an objective form of material existence, which constitutes the place on which all objects rely for life. Its three-dimensional characteristics are through length, width, and height. In addition to the rational definition of the objective form of natural space, people's understanding of space also includes a certain degree of perceptual cognition. It is a conceptual space formed by the combination of subjectivity and objectivity in people's minds, and it is also an intuitive spatial experience that people have had since their birth. To trace the origin and the initial cognitive source of human beings for the concept of space, it is the consciousness gradually generated by people through a long process of social practice, which includes rational cognition and thinking about their living environment, it is a comprehensive analysis of the current environment obtained from a series of complex thinking activities such as observation, comparison, imagination, and abstract judgment conducted by the human brain.

The space of painting is different from that of nature. It is a unique way for humans to express the world. The construction of painting space often requires artists to transform the natural space. Through artistic processing, people extract the objects they depict from the natural space, and project them onto two-dimensional plane space to create an illusory world for visual aesthetics.<sup>[1]</sup> Overall, painting originates from the real world, the visual space is the active reflection of human beings on the natural space. Although the painting space is the abstract recreation of the world in the subjective thinking of human brain, it is always reflected in the picture and cannot shake off the shadow of the natural space.

constantly reproduces things in the natural space. Ultimately, the painting space is based on the objective real world, which is built on the basis of the natural space, the subjective spatial visualization product obtained through observation and experience is the artistic language expression of human spatial experience. In other words, there is no artistic creation that is completely detached from natural space in this world. Artists must refer to reality in shaping the object objects in the picture.

At the same time, the space of painting is a sensory space, which although originating from natural space, is also the expression of the artist's personal aesthetic space form reality. In the time and space of art, the visual space is often built on the artist's emotional experience. From this perspective, the process of painting creation is also a process of personal aesthetic deconstruction and reconstruction of real space. People often need to use certain modeling techniques to transform and shape the concept of space in their paintings. In general, artists need to master certain painting perspective rules for the construction of picture space, and combine visual elements such as lines, colors, and time to organize various parts of the picture appropriately, creating a spatial effect with a certain depth and three-dimensional sense. This kind of use of pen and ink to shape spatial relationships pursues the expression of a coordinated and balanced state within the picture space, with the ultimate goal of highlighting the theme of the painting, enhancing the aesthetic effect and artistic appeal of the picture space. Similarly, this is also what Arnheim emphasized in the field of visual perception as the "hidden visual power within the picture".

In summary, painting space is an abstract world built through painting techniques, with a real foundation and the artist's subjective emotions as the starting point. This unique expression of space is a visual art work with aesthetic value that is reorganized and presented by people using the language form of painting after combining the external world and the inner world.

### **3. The origin and development of the spatial concept in Chinese painting**

Looking back at the history of the development of Chinese painting, it began in the Han Dynasty and matured from the Wei and Jin dynasties. It went through different periods such as Tang, Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing, and formed different spatial characteristics in the inheritance and development process of each era. Later, in the late Ming and early Qing dynasties, with the introduction of Western learning, traditional Chinese painting was baptized by Western aesthetic ideas. Under the collision and fusion of two different cultures, the spatial expression forms of modern and contemporary Chinese painting are also constantly exploring and advancing on the path of inheritance and development. At the same time, many excellent artists have emerged during this period, such as Wu Guanzhong, Lin Fengmian, Li Keran, and others. These artists are not only inheriting traditional Chinese aesthetic ideas, but also constantly absorbing and accepting Western aesthetic ideas, and through the brush, they combine the natural space they observe with subjective artistic ideas to present them in a world on the canvas. The traditional concept of space in the East has gradually formed after thousands of years of development and the impact of various cultural ideas.

The concept of "unity of heaven and man" is the most core spatial concept in ancient Chinese philosophical thought. The proposal of this theory has a long history, and various schools of thought have their own explanations for it. Although there are certain differences in their discussions on this issue, fundamentally speaking, the concept of "unity of heaven and man" in traditional Chinese culture is basically similar in understanding, their spiritual realm will ultimately lead to the path of artistic aesthetics in similar ways.

In general, the "unity of heaven and man" explores what is the origin of nature and the basic relationship between humans and nature. Zhuangzi once said, "If there are people, the sky is also; if there are days, the sky is also the sky. He believes that humans and nature are inherently an organic whole, because with the emergence of human society and the emergence of classes, various laws and regulations have constrained people, breaking the original stable and harmonious state between humans and nature. Therefore Taoism emphasizes the liberation of human nature and advocates for people to experience and comprehend the beauty of nature in a way of "observing and doing nothing", taking this as a starting point, guiding people to return to the most authentic mode of coexistence with nature, 'everything is one with me' is the highest spiritual realm advocated in the Taoist ideology and the ultimate aesthetic ideal pursued in Chinese classical aesthetic thought.

In modern times, Mr. Zong Baihua has made a new interpretation of this issue from the perspective of cultural comparison between East and West. Mr. Zong believes that the origin of the concept of space in Chinese painting is the pursuit of the unity of time and space, which is a form of painting

expression that connects space, time, and life.<sup>[2]</sup> The beauty of this space reflects a rhythmic sense, which is a "spiritual space" obtained by integrating oneself into all things, such spatial art is often reflected in the fields of painting, calligraphy, and music; Western art, on the other hand, is different from us. They emphasize the rationality and sense of order in spatial expression, and their spatial consciousness is rooted in the philosophical foundation of the opposition between humans and nature. They focus on the rational perception of the externalized form of nature, and the images are constructed with authenticity and rigor. In contrast, the origins of spatial understanding between the East and the West are vastly different. The West's way of understanding the world can be more often referred to as "cognition", while in our Eastern culture, we often approach the world through "experiential knowledge".

In summary, under the care of such philosophical ideas, the spatial concept of Eastern painting has always pursued the integration of subjective consciousness and natural things. Artists consciously create a state of life flow in the visual space to achieve a "as natural as though it were living" artistic effect. Due to the influence of the "unity of heaven and man" spatial philosophy, Chinese painting has integrated this idea into the creation of painting works over thousands of years of practice, created a unique perspective on painting space in Chinese painting.

#### **4. The spatial aesthetic characteristics of Chinese painting**

Painting is a form of plastic arts where artists create idealized spaces through visual symbols such as lines, colors, and light and shadow to convey their aesthetic emotions to the viewer. The spatial aesthetics of Chinese painting exist in the creation of painting, which is hidden and inexplicable. When we unconsciously appreciate works, it subtly conveys a specific ethnic aesthetic idea to us. Its existence is not easily perceived by viewers, but it is the deepest perception of beauty engraved in the bone marrow of the Chinese nation. Below, I will analyze the aesthetic characteristics of this painting space, from the perspective of visual characteristics, analyze the formation of this spatial aesthetics.

##### **4.1. Sporty feeling**

In traditional Chinese painting, the composition of space is often comprehensive, and Chinese artists love to walk and paint in a free way, using a sense of spatial movement to organically connect numerous different perspectives. The high and distant realm pursued in Chinese painting, which is characterized by the use of this "scattered perspective" observation method to view nature, is created in the visual space.<sup>[3]</sup> From an abstract perspective, this observation method can also be said to be a visual experience of "swimming". It eliminates the constraints of any viewpoint on the painter's painting, combining various objects in one image, big and small, close and far, and creating an illusion like spatial world in a two-dimensional plane. At the same time, it precisely reflects the multifaceted characteristics of things, which is the result of painters repeatedly observing and getting close to nature.

In Su Shi's poem "Inscription of the Western Forest Wall", it was once written: "From a distance, one can see mountains and peaks on both sides, with different heights and heights. They do not know the true face of mount, but only because they are in this mountain. The interweaving of different scenes in the same space, from inside and outside the mountains, up and down the mountains, in front of and behind the mountains, is a psychological understanding of nature that Chinese artists have gained through their exposure to nature, understanding nature, and having the whole mountain in their hearts. It involves moving step by step, observing from all sides, and seeing from left to right, and looking up at the universe from multiple angles to activate the landscape and the heart, and a sigh of admiration for the insignificance of human life.

This type of composition is characterized by a wandering space. The multi-dimensional spatial effect created is, in a sense, more in line with people's visual and psychological feelings. So in terms of creative methods, Westerners tend to emphasize on-site sketching, while Chinese people have the habit of traveling through mountains and rivers, accumulating in their hearts, and then silently painting. In the Chinese philosophical thinking system, it is believed that the universe, heaven and earth, is a complete living entity that is constantly moving and changing at all times. Therefore, in traditional Chinese cultural and aesthetic ideas, it is required that an excellent artist should not be limited by time and space in the creation of paintings, and should express the full picture of the universe as much as possible in a single picture. Therefore, this requires the artist to free their gaze from the constraints of nature during creation, guide the picture with a wandering observation method, and present the artist's infinite ideological understanding of nature in the limited painting space.

#### 4.2. Imagery

Chinese painting emphasizes imagery and traces its origins. It is clearly pointed out that artists should combine objective images with subjective interests when creating ideas. "Image" is an important aesthetic feature in Chinese spatial aesthetics. When disassembled, "meaning" has the meaning of ideas, meanings, and artistic conception, which belongs to the painter's emotions and concepts in artistic creation. "Image" refers to the meaning of images, objects, and scenes, which can be perceived by the viewer as tangible parts of the painting.

The aesthetic characteristics of imagery in space belong to the unique artistic expression form of Eastern painters. It requires creators to combine the "meaning" and "image" of things, and place them orderly and flat in a limited two-dimensional space, so that the picture generates a distant and profound artistic space. At the same time, the creation of this imagery based space also requires painters to use various artistic techniques to establish visual levels, so that viewers can form a sense of artistic conception from first to last, from the surface to the inside, and from shallow to deep when interpreting the painting. American scholar Bryson believes that from a comparative perspective of Eastern and Western art, Chinese people follow the logic of "Glance" in painting, rather than the logic of "Gaze" in Western painting, because Chinese painters focus on "reading" painting, which is very different from Western painting that uses "seeing" as a way. This also reveals to us from a lateral perspective the unique aesthetic characteristics of imagery in Chinese painting.

In summary, this unique imagery based spatial aesthetics in China pursues the expression of a subjective and idealized artistic world that reflects the emotions of the subject. Viewers can interpret the images of each part of the painting one by one according to the arrangement of the creator, and understand the inherent image connotation of its composition. Although the painting itself is a representation of things in nature, it does not pursue the restoration of the true appearance of objective objects.

From ancient times to the present, throughout the history of Chinese art, the influence of imagery based spatial aesthetics on Chinese culture has been profound and extensive. Since the emergence of complete painting theories during the Wei, Jin, Northern and Southern Dynasties, imagery based aesthetics have been engraved in the deepest hearts of every Chinese painter. This concept of spatial aesthetics has also gradually penetrated into the marrow of Chinese culture over time. Therefore, classical Eastern painting has a common characteristic of imagery in spatial creation. The imagery created in their works on a limited flat space has the characteristic of transcending the specific forms of limited things, thus allowing the painting to enter an infinite time and space. This is also a philosophical understanding that artists obtain through painting of the world.

#### 4.3. Vitalization

In the composition system of the spatial aesthetic characteristics of Chinese painting, in addition to the observation of external spatial objects and the shaping of images, there is also a very important part, which is the care for the internal space of the painting, the artist's life realm, and aesthetic value.

Chinese painting emphasizes the connection between art and life, and this unique aesthetic pursuit is unified with China's inherent cultural values. In China's philosophical system, it is believed that the world is a whole of life, and artists should completely place themselves in nature and fully understand the meaning of life with their hearts. Painting is essentially a fundamental means and necessary path for artists to comprehend life and improve their cultivation. Ultimately, our ultimate goal in artistic creation is to achieve a high degree of unity between the external experience of life and the internal realm.

At the same time, traditional Chinese aesthetic ideology believes that a person's personal cultivation can be reflected in their painting creations. Therefore, Chinese intellectuals have been enhancing their spiritual realm through artistic creation since ancient times. "Cultivating oneself, regulating the family, governing the country, and leveling the world" has been the pursuit of Chinese literati for generations, and it is also reflected in the field of art. Self cultivation "is the prerequisite and foundation for all artists to create works, while" governing the family, governing the country, and leveling the world "is based on personal cultivation and higher standards proposed by artists. <sup>[4]</sup>This spiritual pursuit of art may be to some extent intertwined between China and the West, as German philosopher Susan Lange once said: "The more you delve into the structure of art, the clearer you will discover the similarities between the structure of art and the structure of life".

## 5. Conclusion

In summary, if there is a certain degree of similarity between art and life, then the shaping of art space precisely reflects the painter's understanding of life space. Chinese people bring art to life, and the art space created in Chinese painting is also a three-dimensional expression of free life by painters. The creation of Chinese painting is not just a pile of ink visual symbols, this kind of creation is actually too superficial. The expressive characteristics of spatial aesthetics in Chinese painting are deep and substantial, and the spiritual connotations it conveys are what we should learn and inherit the most.

## References

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