

A Preliminary Analysis on the Painting "Death in the Ward" by Edvard Munch

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Abstract: *As an expressionist oil painter and printmaker in the 20th century, the works of Edward Monk (Edvard Munch) (1863.12.12-1944.1.23) are always full of elusive depression, negative sentiment from the brush strokes and colors, but this does not represent his ideological and spiritual decadence. As for death, Munch constantly explores in his own life, and he explores the "different paths" of life, trying to find a conceptual state of "the same return". His true records of his real mental state and inner appeal. This paper takes the work "Death in the Ward" as the starting point, analyzes and explains the reality of human fear, expresses his struggle directly, and at the same time shows the yearning for the eternal spirit of "life".*

Keywords: *Monk; Death; Self-awareness; Truth*

1. Introduction

For Norwegian painter Edward Munch in the wandering of the world, the inner feelings with the "impression" of the way of complete expression can not let him fully dripping. Edward Munch expresses the inner world of subjective spirit through the analysis of self-relationship and life. The substances that touch his soul will eventually accompany him throughout his life. "Death" has always been an important theme in Munch's work, and this kind of questioning and reflection on the ultimate return of life comes from the concept of hellish horror instilled by his father, as well as from his unfortunate experience of facing the illness and death of his loved ones one after another when he was growing up. Throughout his life, the fear of "death" followed him, and Munch once said, "Sickness, madness and death are the angels that surround my cradle and continue to accompany me throughout my life." So depicting death in the form of painting became an outlet for him to express his fear and anxiety of death. The first works were influenced by the French painters of the time and were painted in an impressionistic style, but by the time of "Death in the Ward", Edward Munch had gradually explored an expressionistic style of painting that was in line with his own inner expression, blending post-impressionism and symbolism. See Figure 1.



Figure 1: Sick children.

2. "Death in the Ward"

The oil painting was created by Edward Munch in 1893 for the death of his sister Sophia, measuring 134.5*160.0cm. It had been 17 years since his sister's death, and he remembers it as clear even for years. The people in the picture look like him 17 years later, and he grew from 14 to 31, while only his sister stayed at that age. Behind that chair, the 15-year-old sister turned her back with the desire to live. In recalling the scene, Munch says that his sister's last request was to sit in the chair, saying she wanted to live, yet she died in that chair. In this painting, all of Munch's family members are brought back to the scene of his sister's death, even his mother Laura, who died in 1868, expressing not only the memory of his sister, but also the memory and love of all his family members in one time and space.

The simple outline outlines the reactions of all people when this event happened, and the dull tone is also trying to explain the situation at that time. People's expressions are not clear, but their form directly conveys the ominous and grief brought by the event. As in most of Munch's works, the depicted figurative figures are deliberately simplified and blurred, existing only as a carrier of emotions, while the emotions of all the people before the sister's death are infinitely magnified, and the despair, sadness and helplessness of death can be felt through the colors, lines, backgrounds, and the physical movements of the figures.

3. Creation and expression

"My work is not used to beautify the family and the walls, but to represent the real soul." [1]

During his stay in Berlin, Munch met many artists, including the realist playwright Henrik Ibsen, and the realist concept of depicting things that touch the heart had a great influence on his painting, and he looked to the Bohemian school and the realist school that he came into contact with early on for motivation — He looked to his early exposure to the Bohemian School and the Realist school for motivation to create works for the real heart, to represent the living, the breathing, and the suffering of the living. Most of Munch's works express the pain of his own emotions, including the jealousy of love and the fear of death. Jung once pointed out when talking about creativity that complexes are the core of the personal unconscious and are often the source of inspiration and motivation for creativity, while Freud believed that complexes originate from desire and traumatic childhood experiences. From his childhood, his mentally ill father constantly instilled in Munch the idea of death in hell, creating a primitive fear of death. The formation of a subconscious idea often becomes a prophecy or curse on life, and Munch then experienced the death of his mother, sister, father, and the psychotic outbreak of his sister, and was haunted by the death complex throughout his life. In Munch's works, the fear, repression and anxiety derived from the death complex become the main expression. Munch is very good at using contrast of light and dark tones and line drawing to express emotions, so that the strong subjective grief and pain can be presented effectively and produce a great emotional impact.

3.1. *Imprints of the era*

In the era of Munch, "painting" was experiencing a great change in both form and internal essence. This great change began with impressionism and ended with abstract expressionism in the middle of the twentieth century.

In such an era, the gloomy Europe was shrouded in war and political and economic crisis, and even in this era is chaos and turbulence. People's hearts are full of anxiety and anxiety. In the spiritual crisis, artists and philosophers also began to reflect on the fate of human beings. It was during this period that Munch began to try to paint the mind, starting from "A Sick Child", until after the painting "Death in the Ward" was completed in 1894, he began a series of search for death, lust, pain and illness. The expression form of painting in this era shows the innovation of the painting style before the 19th century, just as the era presents.

After the Renaissance, through the reconstruction of the appearance, the painting established the spontaneous order of the divinity on the static aesthetic, and the emotion based on the connection between the individual and the divinity was tame in the new spirit of reason through the appearance of the object. Since then, the art trend of four hundred years in Europe has been developed in the harmonious breeding of the two Greek cultures. But the rational zeitgeist is constantly expanding its own territory. In the 19th century, the aesthetic appreciation constructed by reason became more and more empty and boring, and the appearance and reality were completely separated. It is in such a situation that artists begin to want

to express their true state, tell their true feelings, and be faithful to themselves. As Nietzsche said: " Art is not only an imitation of natural reality, but a metaphysical supplement to natural reality, which is placed as a conquest of natural reality." [2]

3.2. Innovation of painting

Monk deals with this painting when the transition of rational painting is obvious. In this painting, the traditional perspective factor is completely ignored, the whole back scene is raised, and the characters in the foreground and the back scene are clearly in the perspective conflict, but Monk balances the whole picture by determining the position of the figure in the back scene. The sloping floor, the room is in the elevation Angle and the character image is in the visual horizon. This intention shows the function of replacing perspective for picture balance through the color block position. A traditional composition style is broken, and the color block itself breaks through the illusion of perspective establishment, driving the directness of the performance out. The strong background color contrasts with the overall dark character color.

While breaking the perspective, Monk also completely breaks the connection of the plot. The characters and scenes of the whole picture no longer have the centrality and overall nature, and it is only manifested as a fragment. In this way, the hidden emotions in traditional painting will explode again, and in this state, Monk strengthens the emotional expression of emotion through the expression of different colors of the picture. Each person in the picture is an individual, sitting and thinking or thinking about what, praying for what, looking directly at what. We can not simply think that this is sadness, crying, they have no tears, no expression. They seem to be unrelated to each other, exist alone, but in the whole picture but associate these people through a certain tone.

For the expression of death, Munch is different from the expression of contemporary or even early European traditional painting. The representation of the aesthetic depiction of death, the death is hidden in the divine, they are faithful to the divine beauty, the pure expression and form of the world reflect the emptiness and boredom of the spirit of The Times. For the flow of blood or the drooping of arms and the weakness of feet, the cold pale body seemed beautiful but lost this true sense of death. Through the ideal beauty of order and harmony, it is expressed in every color and every figure, but the breath of death is hidden in the form of man. Munch uses the emotional expression of non-static aesthetic, not delicate painting, but facing the death itself.

3.3. Perception of death

Munch had written this description of the scene:

"All my relatives below my father walked around the floor with a sense of anxiety and fear of our sound mind."

For Monk, death accompanied him from his memory, could not escape, and still accompanied him many years after Sofia left. Such a mental trauma was eternal for him. It seems that in the depths of his heart, only himself, only his own. After experiencing the loss of his loved ones, he became more vulnerable. So he only use such a gray color, like a cloud under the characters to express themselves.

"On the wall of time, blank is also a kind of missing — do not want to go down, dare not think, also can not think."

Death always comes so frequently, Monk did not naked show a person's departure, in the back of the chair behind the hidden Sofia, he is using such a "blank" to vent his unspeakable deep pain. The body lay right behind it, but he was unwilling to face it. In the center of the picture is the author's description of himself, his white yellow skin, watching something, perhaps vaguely seeing a vague figure, those who are loved in the time and the person who left. Every little memory is reflected in his mind. The lady standing beside him was Just Inge, who stood erect but seemed unable to fall down, with her blue white face without a trace of blood. Sitting on the side of Laura, hands clenched helpless, patience of the mood is about to collapse, so hanging head, holding hands. Want to cry, cry at the top of the voice mood, because leave the soul. Even if everything outside is beautiful and sunny. There is no strong bright color, the color of the characters except for the different color of almost all the gray clothing. The density of free and obvious contour divides the picture. Different from the details of traditional paintings, Munch's specific description of character movements is only presented in general posture and dynamic, which seems to be a few strokes, but full of strong will. The meaning of such a specific posture for each person is its deep meaning, even without as many details as possible, there is no lack of emotion.

With the overwhelming anxiety, he also tried to escape. But finally found that this was his doomed journey, even if he did not want to have to go. After many years, he still missed the loss of his sister Sophia. But he began to face these memories that haunted him, knowing that illness and death were lingering. See Figure 2.

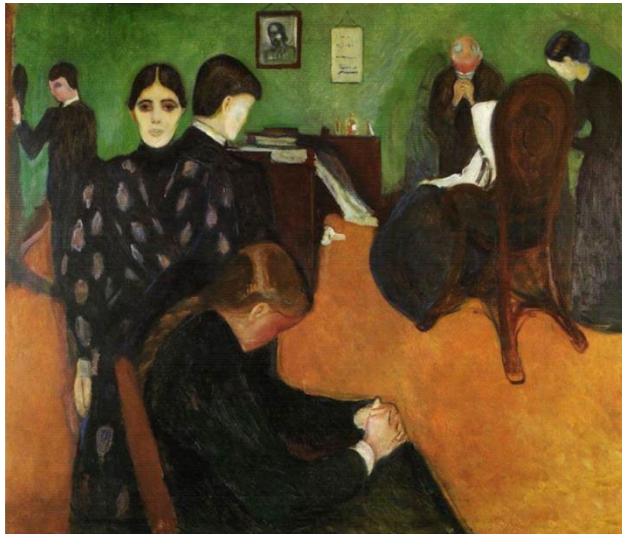


Figure 2: *Death in the Sickroom.*

4. Brave expression

"The birth of death — death is the catheter of life".

Death has always been a topic that human beings fear but must face. People have been used to deceiving themselves, wronged and then offend conscience, but compromise the reality for the vital things. Monk has always had the courage to make his paintings challenge and even interrogate the viewer's soul and vision. Starting from the deep feeling, I place the subtle changes in the world that resonate with other people, and then achieve the general mental state. It is his continuous persistence, his search for self and not giving up on human nature, that makes the artist second only to God.[3]

Monk said my family was shrouded by illness and death, and no one knew anxiety better than I did. His spirit was fragile, and he chose not to compromise with reality. He guards his memory, even if it is destroyed with cruelty, he is still looking for that memory and truly recorded through his form. About death, accept and feel it, just like the laws of everything in the universe. The existence of life is confrontation, he compared himself as a grain of Mars, would rather destroy rather than be incompetent to spend. It is deeply realized for the weakness of death, he is more brave to contend with it.

He once asked, "How can man draw real crying based on nature?"[4] It is precisely because of this thinking that the form of painting has a deeper expression, the unnecessary equivalence between truth and detail, and the state of painting is more important to its own expression. Have such emotion and soul, with the release of the tone unscrupulous. He forgot the hypocrisy and self-preservation in life, he was used to the reality of the meaningless and wanted to shake the dreamer.

5. Conclusion

When Munch was looking for a true expression of himself, he also brought a new painting concept to The Times. He was a rebel of his time, and his living circumstances made him leave the negative, obscure and pessimistic world, even though he was still suffering but tried to fight back against death and seek the value of living. It is his persistent and continuous depiction of the spirit, and the discussion of the meaning of life produced by death, even with the fear of death, still adhere to the truth. He bravely faced the reality and the truth through the artistic self-confession and expression. It is precisely because of the existence of such people, who break the traditional ideas and promote the art. It is this sense of reality that removes the beautiful ideal shape and reveals what it should be. This more expressive technique can arouse the resonance of the viewer's feelings.

References

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