

The technique of leaving white space in Xia Gui's works contains taoist philosophy

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Abstract: *Painting, like all things, has its macroscopic connection, as well as its microscopic structure. As an important part of Chinese national culture, ink painting contains the macroscopic connection between painting art and Chinese philosophical thoughts, and has the significance of the carrier of Chinese culture, so it is a valuable research category. Xia Gui, one of the famous painters in the Song Dynasty, was good at expressing artistic conception with few sceneries. Xia Gui's ink paintings are a form of artistic expression, whose development and formation cannot be separated from the influence of traditional Chinese culture, especially the Taoist philosophy represented by Lao Zhuang is the most representative. The blank space is one of the artistic expression techniques commonly used in Xia Gui's works, and it is an important factor of the aesthetic form of Chinese painting. The blank space should not be simply understood as blank space. Intuitively speaking, blank space refers to the empty place and the part that has not been filled. The blank space in the picture is often an unintentional behavior, while the blank space is a conscious management of the "illusory" in the picture, which is meaningful. The blank space creates the artistic conception of Xia GUI's works, which has unique aesthetic value. This article tries to find its unique aesthetic value by analyzing the relationship between the artistic expression technique of "white space" and the Taoist philosophy represented by Lao Zhuang through the specific expression of Xia GUI's works. This paper firstly analyzes the relationship between Chinese Taoist philosophy and ink painting with the method of literature research, then uses qualitative research to sort out the aesthetic images of Xia GUI's works embodied in Taoist philosophy, and finally uses the data derived from the HeTu Luoshu theory to analyze the aesthetic skills and creation rules of Xia GUI's works with blank space. The purpose of this paper is to explore the characteristics of Xia GUI's works under the influence of culture and history layer by layer through the traditional meaning of philosophy. At the same time, it seeks the correlation between the artistic expression characteristics of the white space technique in Xia GUI's works and the philosophical thinking. Finally, it obtains the application rules of the white space technique through the Hetu Luoshu theory, which provides the internal significance and value for the development and innovation of modern ink painting.*

Keywords: *Ink painting, Taoist philosophy, Chinese cultural spirit, Xia GUI, He Tu Luo Shu*

1. Introduction

1.1. Research background and purpose

In the long-term development of Chinese history and culture, "Tao" is regarded as the source of all things in the universe, and has become the source of Chinese culture and Chinese thought, and permeated in different philosophical schools in Chinese history [1]. "Tao" has not only become the noumenon in the sense of philosophy, but also the noumenon of social order and social ethics. It has also become the noumenon of artistic aesthetics. Ink painting is a kind of classical Chinese art form. Han Fei (280BC -- 233BC, thinker and philosopher) explained the ontological meaning of "Tao" in his book "Understanding the Old": Tao is the fundamental driving force for the growth of all things and a summary of the forms of all Li. Reason is the external form of all things, Tao is the fundamental cause of all things, the sage will create civilization when he wins the Tao[2]. Here it is clearly explained: Tao is the origin of ten thousand things, is the rule of ten thousand truth. The sage uses the wisdom of the Tao to write out the rules, and then the articles are formed. In Chinese painting theory, people have already discussed the relationship between painting art and Tao. Zong Bing (AD 375-AD 443), China's first landscape theorist, said in Preface to Landscape Painting: Landscape not only to human beings show the nature of the work of nature, but also to human tactfully show the change of the law of the universe[3]. Fundamentally

speaking, ancient scholars generally believe that art is the image display or expression form of Tao. Art depends on Tao at a deep level, on philosophical thought. Xia GUI's ink painting is a form of artistic expression, and its development and formation cannot be separated from the influence of traditional Chinese culture. The relationship between philosophy and Xia GUI's works can be divided into two dimensions. On the one hand, philosophy contains the origin theory and rule theory of Xia GUI's ink painting, including the painting rules and the highest aesthetic standards of Xia GUI's ink painting. On the other hand, Xia GUI's ink paintings reflect the spirit of Chinese philosophy, not only showing the "Tao", but also spreading Chinese ideology and culture through the form of painting. There is the way of war for soldiers, the way of Kings, the way of tea, and the way of painting. What is discussed is the ontology of Xia GUI's ink painting, which belongs to the category of philosophy and is the essential basis for the study of Chinese painting art. The philosophy of Xia GUI's ink painting works contains painting techniques and painting standards. Therefore, this paper describes the expression forms and thoughts and emotions of Xia GUI's blank techniques in his works through the philosophy of Zhuangzi in Chinese culture. The purpose of this paper is to explore the characteristics of Xia GUI's works under the influence of culture and history layer by layer through the traditional meaning of philosophy. At the same time, it seeks for the correlation between the artistic expression characteristics of Xia GUI's white space technique and philosophical thinking. Finally, through data analysis, the application rules of philosophical thought and white space technique are sorted out, which provides intrinsic significance and value for the development and innovation of modern ink painting.

1.2. Research scope and methods

Based on the Zhuangzi philosophy of various philosophical schools in China, this paper discusses the ink painting of Xia GUI and expounds the connection between Zhuangzi's philosophy and Xia GUI's technique of leaving white space in his works. This paper firstly analyzes the relationship between Chinese Zhuangzi's philosophy and Xia GUI's works by using the method of literature research, and deeply extracts the history of Xia GUI's ink painting. Then, qualitative research is used to sort out the white-space technique reflected in Xia GUI's works by Zhuangzi's philosophy. Finally, through the specific data analysis of Hetu and Luo Shu, the application rules of philosophical thoughts and white-space technique are sorted out, which provides intrinsic meaning and value for the development and innovation of modern ink painting

2. Ink painting and white space technique

2.1. Understanding ink painting

As a form of painting, ink painting is a kind of painting made by mixing water and ink into different shades of ink. It is regarded as a traditional Chinese painting (Figure 1) [4]. Ink painting is a painting art form with strong ethnic characteristics in China. With the help of painting tools and materials with ethnic characteristics, brush, rice paper and ink (Figure 2). Ink painting is made on the basis of the techniques used by brush and ink to express the painting with images and artistic conception. Use the brush to apply different forces, angles or ink concentration to complete the creation (Figure 3). Basic ink and wash painting, only water and ink, black and white, but the more advanced ink and wash painting, there are meticulous flower and bird painting, colorful, the latter is sometimes called color ink painting[5]. The characteristics of ink painting mainly have two aspects, one is from the tools and materials, ink painting has a blend of ink and wash, free and easy artistic effect. Specifically, the properties and characteristics of water, ink and rice paper are well reflected. Different proportions of water and ink will produce dry, wet and thick levels. The combination of ink and rice paper produces a special effect of osmotic gradient, which has different meanings under different themes. The second is the performance characteristics of ink painting. Due to the integration and penetration of ink painting and rice paper, it is good at expressing the image features of the semishabitiveness, namely image. This kind of artistic expression effect can make people produce rich association, in line with the aesthetic characteristics of Chinese painting pay attention to artistic conception.



Figure 1: Ink painting



Figure 2: Ink painting tool



Figure 3: Brush strokes of ink painting

2.2. Understanding of the white space technique

Blank space is a typical form of artistic expression in ink painting. With the development of Chinese painting history, the phenomenon of white space in ink painting presents different characteristics in different periods. Since the beginning of the history of Chinese painting, the phenomenon of white space appeared in the rock paintings of primitive society and the painted pottery culture of the Stone Age to varying degrees, but the white space at this time was absolutely unconscious [6]. With the development of social productive forces and the emergence of national culture, the art techniques of white space gradually form a kind of conscious consciousness, which is a meaningful white space. By the time of

Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties, the word "white painting" had developed to a great extent. It was not until Tang Dynasty painter Zhang Yanyuan (815 ~907) wrote the Famous Paintings of the Past Dynasties that the word "white painting" appeared, which laid a certain theoretical foundation for the use of white space in ink painting. The Song and Yuan Dynasties was the heyday of the blank space technique of ink and wash painting, pushing the blank space style of ink and wash painting to a distant artistic realm [7]. In the Ming and Qing Dynasties, the theory of white space had a great development. Now, white space has become an important feature of ink painting in the form of artistic expression. In traditional Chinese painting, the white color of rice paper is the physical property of rice paper itself. After artists create on rice paper with their heart, the white color of rice paper turns into a blank in the picture after adding aesthetic emotion. (Figure 4) Although the proportion of real scenes in the picture is not large, you can feel the loneliness and cold of the picture. The white space here can be the whiteness of the sky, the whiteness of clouds, the whiteness of snow, or the "illusory" things such as air and dust. In an ink painting, "white" in different positions, with the painter's different "real scene", thus producing a variety of discourse meaning, has its unique artistic value.



Figure 4: Ink painting

2.3. White space creation in Xia GUI's works

Xia GUI was a master painter of the Southern Song Dynasty. He painted people in the early years and landscapes in the later years. Xia GUI was awarded the honor of gold belt by the emperor during his stay in the academy [8]. Xia GUI's works have obvious personal style, heavy brushwork, with a grand and free momentum. Xia GUI's works are simple and decisive, with large white space. He often uses the white space as real scenes, effectively uses space expression and diagonal lines to maintain a sense of balance in his works. Xia GUI's works have a strong contrast between the virtual and the real. He pursues strength and simplicity when describing scenery. Xia GUI seldom uses real scenery to paint artistic conception directly, and sets off artistic conception with few sceneries. Although the brushstrokes of Xia GUI's works are simple but profound, it is easy to feel his plain and naive psychological pursuit through his works. (Figure 5) This painting is the work of Xia GUI, now stored in the National Palace Museum, Taipei. The original size is 41cm×889cm, and the theme is the Qingyuan view of Khe Shan (partial). The whole picture is relatively empty, and the perspective sense of near large and far small is used to finely depict the mountains and trees at the bottom of the picture. The gesture of the trees and the transition of the trunk face are very dynamic, and the structure of the leaves is logical and vivid, and coherent. The mountain lines are smooth and decisive, and the flexible processing of thick and dry and wet will show the hard texture of the mountain. On the top of the picture, the light ink color is used to depict the distant scenery, which is the blank area of the work. Through the use of black and white, the combination of virtual and real makes the audience feel the artistic conception of the ancient scenery.



Figure 5: Clear view of Xiagui and Kishan

Xia GUI's ink paintings are a form of artistic expression, whose development and formation cannot be separated from the influence of traditional Chinese culture, especially the Taoist philosophy represented by Lao Zhuang is the most representative. The blank space is one of the artistic expression techniques commonly used in Xia GUI's works, which is an important factor of the aesthetic form of Xia GUI's personal characteristics. When talking about Chinese ink painting, Fu Baoshi once said: "Chinese painting is the biggest expression of the Chinese national spirit, and also the most intimate style of Chinese philosophy." As an important form of artistic expression in Xia GUI's works, Xia GUI was deeply influenced by Chinese traditional culture in his painting creation, among which the Taoist philosophy represented by Zhuangzi Thought had the most extensive influence. It can be said that Zhuangzi's philosophy is the direct theoretical source of Xia GUI's emphasis on blank space. In Zhuangzi's theory, the discussion on the concepts and relations of vitality, existence and black and white profoundly influenced the painter Xia GUI's aesthetic orientation and spiritual pursuit in traditional painting creation, and finally reflected it in his paintings with the artistic expression technique of blank space.

3. Chinese Taoist philosophy and Xia GUI's works

3.1. Philosophical connotation of Daojia Zhuangzi

Ancient Chinese philosophy is formed by the integration and complementary of Confucianism, Taoism and Zen. The formation of philosophy has established the core connotation of Chinese traditional culture[9]. Chinese painting art form and aesthetic, but also the embodiment of traditional culture. Although modern painting art is complex and changeable, it is still developing in succession. Therefore, the author believes that combing the cultural roots of Chinese ink painting can improve the level of painting in a small way and enhance national self-confidence in a large way, which is more important in the current era. As an important part of ancient Chinese philosophy, it is very important to explore the connection between Zhuangzi's philosophy and ink painting. Taoist philosophy holds that a leisurely, uninhibited behavior is called a true painter. Of course, it is not that casual behavior is the condition of the real painter, but that naive, free and easy is the condition of the real painter. Taoist ideas emphasize that painters should construct painting art in a natural way of thinking, express the essence of human nature with wisdom and freedom, and integrate ink painting between nature and human. Taoist philosophy holds that "everything under heaven is born of existence, and existence is born of nothing." Human beings originally did not paint, so painting was born in nothing. Then at the beginning of painting creation, there was no painting method, painting theory. Later, in practice, there was painting theory. In an ink painting, the objects depicted are only springs and trees, which are limited. But there is no limit to the imagination of the blank space. Taoist philosophy believes that inaction is another characteristic of painting. The so-called inaction is not to pursue any effect deliberately. It is right that many painters have some preconceptions about where and what to paint and what purpose to achieve before the painting begins. However, after the painting is finished, unexpected effects occur. Although ink art pays attention to methods, it aims to express nature. Taoist philosophy believes that painting pays attention to the vivid charm and the modeling rule of writing connotation in form, so that the artistic creation of ink painting cannot be restricted by the perspective, time and space, and show all the connotation.

3.2. The Theory of White space and vitality in Xia GUI's works

The blank space is the concrete embodiment of the vitality of Lao Zhuang's philosophy. In Taoist philosophy represented by Lao Zhuang, Qi is regarded as the basic element that constitutes everything in the universe. Taoist philosophy holds that everything is produced by gas, and things will be destroyed if gas is dispersed. It is the movement and circulation of gas that makes everything in the world grow and develop continuously [10]. The Taoist thoughts and theories on qi have a profound influence on the development of Chinese painting, and also guide the creation of Xia GUI's works, prompting Xia GUI to attach great importance to the pursuit of ethereal spirit and charm in his paintings. In the book of Ancient Paintings by Sheikh of the Southern Dynasty, it is mentioned that there are six methods of painting, and vivid charm is the primary law and the highest standard for painting creation and appreciation of the level of a painting. The blank area of a painting is the gas in the picture, which is the balance of the whole picture and organically links individual and local artistic imagination. In modern times, Huang Binhong also said: "Painting is like playing chess, one needs to be good at leaving active eyes, active eyes can win." The so-called living eye is the aura in the painting ". The "living eye" in Weiqi is the "gas eye" in painting. The gas eye in specific painting works is the blank space left by the artist

intentionally or unintentionally. It is the white space in the picture that forms the flow of gas in the picture, making the things in the picture full of vitality, endless movement, endless shape and meaning. Therefore, the concept of qi in Taoist philosophy represented by Lao Zhuang is the philosophical basis of the blank space in ink painting. (FIG. 6) In Xia GUI's painting, the "gas" formed in the blank area fills the whole picture with a hazy feeling. The artistic technique of the blank area expresses the natural scene of the mountain covered by clouds and fog. The majesty of the mountain and the softness and mystery of the blank area make the work come alive. The concept of vitality in Taoist philosophy has always played a positive role in Xia GUI's works.



Figure 6: Works by XIAGUI

When Zong Baihua (1897—1986 Chinese philosopher) talked about the blank space, he once said, "The heaviest blank space in ink painting. Empty space is not really empty space. It is the place where Reiki flows to and from life. It can also be seen that the blank in Xia GUI's ink paintings is not for the sake of the blank, it has a certain aesthetic significance. To appreciate ink painting, one must follow the trend of gas. To sum up, the theory of vitality in Tao philosophy is particularly important in the expression of blank space in painting.

3.3. White space and observation in Xia GUI's works

The blank space in ink painting also reflects the Taoist philosophy represented by Lao Zhuang. The relationship between the two is an important category of Lao Zhuang's philosophy [11]. Lao Tzu thought that 'Tao' is the collection of all things, and it is all inclusive. And nothing and being are the dual attributes of Tao. Taoist philosophy says that "everything under heaven is born of existence, and existence is born of nothing", and everything between heaven and earth is the organic unity of "nothing" and "existence", and nothing can only be "existence" or "nothing", only "nothing" without "existence", the relationship between things cannot be understood. If there is only "existence" without "nothing", Things lose their meaning of existence. Thus, the relationship between being and nothing is dialectically unified. In ink painting, "being" is a real scene composed of thousands of strokes and inks, which reflects the forms of thousands of things, while "nothing" is the illusory meaning in the painting, which is expressed as "white", seeking a simple, empty and abstruse artistic conception. This "whiteness" can be the whiteness of rice paper, or the whiteness of cloud air, sunlight and other virtual scenes. It represents the existence of "nothing" in space. The use of white space in ink painting is mainly a painstaking management of "no" space. Its essence is to interpret nothing and create enough with blank space (Figure 7). It is a river drawing drawn by Xia GUI with simple strokes. Instead of deliberately depicting the ripples of the river, Xia uses blank space to express them. He adds the element of a boat in the lower right corner of the picture to express the atmosphere of the river. The mountains and trees in the distance use less concentrated ink to express the grandeur of the landscape. This piece of work through large-scale blank art techniques, let the audience have a feeling of standing on high overlooking the river. The spirit essence of "nothing" in Xia GUI's works, which is produced by the blank space, is the idly view of nothing and the aesthetic view that nothing comes out of nothing in the philosophy of Lao Zhuang. By leaving blank space, the objects in the picture have an end point and infinite meaning, so as to arouse the viewer's imagination, so as to achieve a kind of "implication" and form a kind of "outside the picture".



Figure 7: Works by XIAGUI

In ink painting, the image expression of "having" does not need to be comprehensive, but should focus on the spatial expression of "nothing", and make full use of the blank space to leave a broad and open space for the viewer's imagination. The "nothing" formed by this blank makes the picture rich in inspiration, suggestiveness and summoning. The blank space formed by the painting is a favorable condition for the extension of artistic conception of a painting

3.4. White space and black and white view of Xia GUI's works

Black and white is a special color consciousness in Taoist philosophy represented by Lao Zhuang, who believes that "five colors make the eyes blind" and plain colors are the most beautiful, so black and white is the most compatible with "Tao" and can reveal the essential beauty of things, which is fundamentally different from the Western concept of color. The concept of black and white has a profound impact on the development of Chinese ink painting. Under the influence of the philosophical concept of "knowing white and keeping black" in Taoist philosophy and the aesthetic thought of empty, quiet and simple, ink painting chose black and white as the color tone of the picture, and developed the color theoretical system of "ink is divided into five colors". Black and white have become the unique artistic expression forms of ink painting. Xia GUI often used ink to interpret black, which is the specific expression of "reality". Different concentrations of ink color form a variety of things and express a rich and colorful reality. Painters often use the white color of rice paper, light ink and so on to make white space. White space is to deal with the scattered small white space in the painting and the unified relationship with black. White in painting is "nothing", is the concrete expression of "unreal". The painstakingly managed "white" by the painter forms the space for the existence of things in the picture, so that the gas in the painting can flow through the painting, expressing the empty and quiet "unreal" or "nothing". Black and white are set off by each other. With the change of brush and ink, the flow potential and rhythm of the gas are formed, giving life to thousands of images in the painting. As far as the meaning of color is concerned, it fully conforms to the aesthetic concept of simplicity and nothingness in Taoist philosophy. This kind of white is not a colorless white in the color system of western natural science. It has its own unique aesthetic value, showing the ancient people's artistic pursuit of high art as a simple realm of consciousness.

4. The expression and application of Hetuluo's theory in Xia GUI's works

4.1. Opposition and unity in Xia GUI's works

The concept of black and white in Taoist philosophy is the same as tai chi thinking. One Yin and one Yang are not only opposites, but also unified. This relationship of opposition and unity depends entirely on the different properties of Yin and Yang and the equally important relationship between them. When "Yin" and "Yang" are independent, the imbalance and balance relationship shown cannot be ignored on the blank composition techniques of ink painting.

In Xia GUI's works, there are often opposing relationships, such as subject and object, black and white, motion and quiet, thick and light, virtual and solid, etc. In fact, they all belong to the dialectical theoretical philosophy of "Yin and Yang" opposition and unity. This artistic expression technique plays a huge role in ink painting. Without black, there would be no so-called white, and without white, there would be no so-called black. The relationship between white and black is not absolute, and both black and white are phenomena produced under relative conditions. If there is only black without white space in ink and wash art, the audience will not feel the vitality of the picture. Can present the beauty of balanced and unbalanced art.

4.2. Balance and imbalance of Xia GUI's works

The theory in China Hetuluoshu can help us to have a deeper understanding of the relationship between black and white space in Xia GUI's works. The reason can be more profound understanding of Taoist thought, and provide more valuable guiding significance for the blank space technique of ink painting. Hetu is a mysterious pattern handed down from ancient China. This mysterious pattern originates from the stars in the sky and contains the esoteric cosmic star code. It is known as the "cosmic cube". Today, they're actually a branch of mathematics, often called magic squares or Rubik's squares. From this ancient drawing, the field is how to solve the relationship between balance and imbalance, and how to solve the relationship between black and white in Chinese traditional culture. Through analysis, I will have a more comprehensive understanding of the white space technique in Xia GUI's works. (FIG. 8) is the Hetu, with white spots as Yang and black spots as Yin. Odd numbers are Yang, even numbers are Yin, that is, 1.3.5.7.9 is Yang, and 2.4.6.8.10 is Yin[12]. The change of number and the relationship between Yin and Yang in "Hetu" can find out the technique principle of white space. In the river map can be seen: horizontal, dry nine, four, from three, eight for Yang. Longitudinally, Xuner, Kan seven, Gen six and Kun one are Yin. From the perspective of the relationship between Yin and Yang, Gan and Kun correspond to $9+1=10$; The distance and the barrier correspond to $3+7=10$; For dugong, $4+6=10$; Earthquake corresponds to Sunda $8+2=10$. It can be seen from this that no matter how the relationship between Yin and Yang changes, the result will be balanced in the imbalance between Yin and Yang.

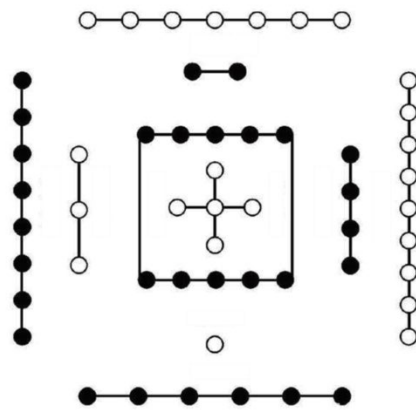


Figure 8: Hetu

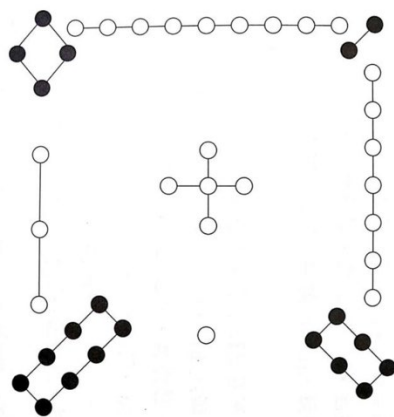


Figure 9: Luoshu

(Figure 9) is Luo Shu. In Luo Shu's theory, the dialectical theory of traditional Chinese philosophy is also reflected. In Luo Shu's book, the white dot is the number of days and the black dot is the number of ground. From the distribution position of the number of days in Luoshu and the number of ground, the number of days at the bottom of 1, middle of 5, and the number of days at the top of 9 reflects the trend of the rise of clear air, while the number of ground at the top of 6 and the number of ground at the bottom of 14 reflects the trend of the subsidence. Vertical: $8+3+4=15$; $1+5+9=15$; $6+7+2=15$. Horizontally $8+1+6=15$; $3+5+7=15$; $4+9+2=15$. Diagonal: $8+5+2=15$; $6+5+4=15$. Based on the relationship between these numbers and the same sum obtained by each of them, it can be seen that the numbers in Luo Shu change in a certain law, and the relationship between Yin and Yang is how to achieve balance

in the case of imbalance. It can be concluded from the above description (FIG. 10) that the sum of the three numbers, horizontal, vertical and diagonal, is 15. The composition method of ink painting forms the artistic expression technique of white space according to these theories. The relationship between imbalance and equilibrium can be clearly seen in the common constant values. In Xia GUI's works (FIG. 11), the number 1 is at the bottom with the smallest blank area, while the number 5 has a smaller blank area. The number 9 is on top, with the most white space. Although the painting tends to be heavy at the top and light at the bottom, the number 5 is in the middle, corresponding to the white space in the middle part, so the overall balance of the work is maintained.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 4 | 9 | 2 |
| 3 | 5 | 7 |
| 8 | 1 | 6 |

Figure 10: Nine house diagram



Figure 11: Area of white space

5. Conclusion

Through the exploration of the works of the painter Xia GUI and the Taoist philosophy, the author believes that based on the characteristics of ink painting art itself, the main purpose of painting art is not to simply express the true features of objects. The real representation of the object only completes the function of photography technology, and does not reflect the high-level creative connotation of the ink art itself. The ink art reflects the painter's thoughts and feelings of understanding things, and shows the artist's artistic thinking method combining subjective and objective. As for the technique of white space, it can be concluded that there is no absolute concrete and abstract concept in the technique of white space through the theory of vitality, no concept of concept and black and white theory of Taoist philosophy. The technique of leaving blank in Xia GUI's works is created under the dialectical thoughts of opposition and unity, balance and imbalance. By combining the nine palace values of Hetu Luoshu, the harmonious picture sense can be easily maintained. The development of ink art should be deeply rooted in the soil of Chinese traditional philosophical thoughts and thoughts, showing Chinese philosophy and art views. Using the artistic thinking method of the coexistence of subjective and objective, the reality in the virtual and the reality in the virtual, to innovate Chinese ink painting.

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