

# From Flatness Towards the Spiritual Connotation: An Analysis of the Planarity of Painting

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**ABSTRACT.** *Painting art is a combination of space and perception. In the development of modern art, the art of painting moves from three-dimensional to planar. The masters of painting continue to explore the overall sense of painting, highlighting the agility of painting through two-dimensional drawing and three-dimensional drawing. The planarity of the painting gives the painting more spiritual connotation and makes the picture more complete. In this article, with the flatness of painting as the core of the research, the laws and characteristics of the flatness of painting are analyzed, and the essence of the flatness of painting from natural feeling to the development in the spiritual level is explained in depth. By analyzing the works of the artists, the study of space and plane by art masters has been clarified. At the same time, it highlights the epoch-making development significance of the flatness of painting, and highlights the artistic creation and technical development of painting.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Painting, Planarity, Spiritual development, Works analysis*

## 1. Introduction

Painting is expressive and abstract. It is an important mode of painting to express the content of the artist's spiritual realm through two-dimensional planes. The style of flat painting can bring strong visual impact to people, and the world reflected in the picture can release explosive power and the sense of pleasure, allowing the painting to show the philosophical meaning contained in it. From the characteristics of icon paintings to Cathelin's spiritual pursuit of painting, it can be seen that the reason why paintings can withstand the test of time and history is not only because of the rich content of the pictures, but also because the pictures can show complex social reality and can stimulate people's pursuit of the spiritual world.

## 2. The connotation of the flatness of painting

The flatness of painting has always been the main characteristic of oriental paintings. Throughout the history of the development of classical art in China, the oriental paintings have various patterns and rich themes, and they are an important manifestation of ancient culture. The simple and profound artistic style can be expressed through colorful patterns. For example, animal and beast decorations in the Bronze Age, the modeling of line drawing and decorative composition in Dunhuang frescoes [1]. For the flat painting art in the West, it can be traced back to primitive society more than 10,000 years ago. The plane is a two-dimensional space and does not pursue the real scene existing in the three-dimensional space. The techniques used by the artist when creating include plane or three-dimensional techniques, and three-dimensional techniques also make full use of plane elements. Through the treatment of space, the sense of distance and height is revealed in the picture. The content that the painting wants to express can be reflected through two-dimensional planarization. The flat painting style makes the painting more realistic. The graphic design can show the demand and subjective desire of the picture, transform the complex structure and volume into a plane form, and eliminate the illusion of three-dimensional space through scientific organization of the picture, so that the point and surface can highlight the nuance of the picture and the coldness and warmth of the color through the position change of the plane space, making the artistic expression of the painting more easier to be accepted by people.

### **3. The regularity and main characteristics of the flatness of painting**

#### ***3.1 Space design***

In the theme design of the flatness of painting, the application of perspective effect is realized through the design of space. In the flat painting method, the method of cavalier perspective and composition from the top view is adopted. In this way, all three-dimensional graphics can remove the corresponding organization, and realize the planar arrangement, which can build a harmonious and stable sense of picture. Taking the impressionist creation in the Renaissance period as an example, it conducts overlapping perspective processing for the three-dimensional effect and length of the object depicted through the two-dimensional plane picture [2]. No matter what angle people stand, they will see the picture that can be observed from their own angle. This perspective method can clearly reflect the distance to the object. The perspective space design makes the flat expression of painting more real. It is an important breakthrough for the development of painting close to reality through creating new spatial concepts through planarization.

#### ***3.2 Shading skills***

Traditional painting techniques are mainly based on the contrast between light and shade, while flat painting uses the relation of objects covering each other to set off the lightness or darkness of the object. By using the corresponding space size, area size, and shadow size to depict the outline of the object, this makes it possible for abstract painting to win more space, and makes the changing space strengthen the richness of the painting content. Especially in modern paintings, natural light and shadow are sought after by artists. However, the key to highlight the level of the work is to deal with the light and shadow according to the subjective will, so that the corresponding direct or indirect relationship can be formed between the light and shadow and the real image.

#### ***3.3 Color connection***

In flat painting, colors are not designed according to the color rules from an objective perspective. Painters often incorporate their subjective emotions into colors. The artist can use the impact of the picture to express his subject. In the graphic design of painting, some of the flatness of color is reflected by simple coating on a large flat surface, and some is reflected through the difference in color gradation that weakens the sense of three-dimensional space. The collision between colors can make the picture more active, and it can also make the picture more orderly. For example, in traditional realistic painting, the black and white relationship between colors is very important. For flat painting, color can construct volume effect through shadow turning, which can realize the change from two-dimensional to three-dimensional visual space, as well as the transition from three-dimensional to two-dimensional.

#### ***3.4 Line features***

The use of lines is a key part of painting technique. In the two-dimensional plane painting works, a variety of lines make the works show different states. No matter it is Chinese paintings, or Western and Japanese paintings, painters pay great attention to the use of lines. Lines can reflect the advantages of modeling and can divide the composition into important components. In the flat design of painting, it can create contrast between lines and lines by fusing the sense of rhythm between lines and colors. As a result, interesting rhythm and order will be produced in flat painting. Through clean lines and orderly line design, viewers can perceive the language features of two-dimensional paintings [3].

### **4. The expression of the spiritual essence of the planarity of the painting and the analysis of the works**

#### ***4.1 Show fantasy through details***

The flatness of the painting can show the true state of the work, which is an important advantage for it. To express the spiritual essence of the flatness of the painting, it is necessary to make specific

analysis of the works and obtain actual conclusions. In the expression of the spiritual essence of the flatness of painting, the complex and delicate static life painting is an important work in the flat painting type. Massys is one of the 20th century painting masters. It can be seen from his works that the flatness of the painting pays more attention to unfolding fantasy from details. Through the careful arrangement of colors, Massys realized the full expression of the artist's strong emotions. The compositions and colors with creative meaning can integrate emotions into the picture, which not only can describe the basic form of the external world, but also show the true power of painting under the complex structure. As shown in Figure 1, in Massys's work "Future", he paid great attention to detail when using the painting brush, and the description of the characters' eyes is very detailed. There will be endless reveries when the viewers saw the eyes of the character in the painting.



Figure. 1 "The Future" by Massys

#### 4.2 Design of picture composition combining dynamic and static state

From the study of the expression of the flatness of painting, we can see Cathelin's paintings gradually replaced icon paintings and became more and more popular at that time, and their respective painting characteristics are representative contrasts. The main reason for choosing the two for comparison and connection is that they show the design of picture composition combining dynamic and static state. From flat painting to the embodiment of spiritual connotation, an overall change in painting style is required. The icon painting is the earliest type of painting that appeared in the West. It is a portrait depicting Christianity, the Holy Father and the Holy Spirit in auditoriums and other places, which is a way for the church to express its faith or help believers pray and meditate. In Cathelin's painting ideas, the description of the spiritual world of painting is more reflected. Cathelin has created a unique timeline in his painting, integrating his own feelings with his paintings. These elements are connected through time, which is a powerful expression technique that can reveal the essence of abstraction. In Cathelin's work (as shown in figure 2), people can observe different content from different angles. White and black are each other's background as well as each other's scenery. From this combination of dynamic and static composition design, we can find that the flatness of painting needs to capture the various styles of painting through precise lines, so that the painting can show the unique charm, and highlight the different emotions conveyed by painting in the same world and the same background.

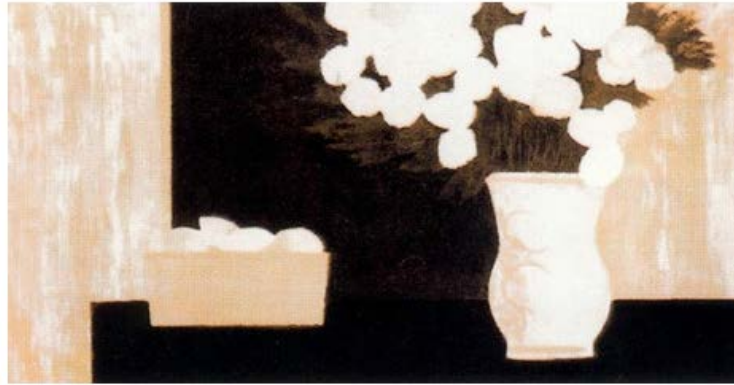


Figure. 2 "The Winter" by Cathelin

#### 4.3 Visual perception of harmonious colors

The spiritual characteristics that painting can show are different. Different art masters have different concerns in their paintings. Some focus on people, some focus on scenery, and some focus on religious beliefs. It can be seen from the development of the flatness of all paintings that color and related visual perception are the core points of paintings. Through the flattened body, it is possible to create a kind of atmosphere with multiple perception. As shown in figure 3, in Klimt's paintings, he pays more attention to flat decorative painting. In his works, the aesthetic feeling is particularly valued. No matter it is landscape painting or figure painting, his works can reflect the orderly and compact style. Through the harmonious treatment between colors, the space in his painting gives people a feeling of relaxation and pleasure. For example, in his portraits, he emphasizes the close connection between various parts of the characters. The character's headwear, clothing, and the background beside the character can make the picture more layered and changeable. The outline of the lines emphasizes the mutual contrast of the works, highlights the brilliant colors of the art, and makes the paintings show a colorful overall effect.



Figure. 3 "Adele" by Gustav Klimt

#### 5. Conclusion

The appeal of art not only comes from the painting technique contained in the work itself, but also depends on the spiritual essence of the work. The flatness of painting is actually to experience the

spiritual content of different levels in paintings through simple visual senses. In this article, through the study of the planeness of painting, it can be found that the characteristic of painting art lies in the multi-level state of the world displayed on the plane. The artistic appeal of painting is extremely penetrating. It can break the limitation of time and space that is composed of long river of history, the vast sea and stars, and realize the demands in people's hearts. A true artist is a person with independent thoughts. They hope to express their personal thoughts and mental state in their works, so they will not choose to show their works with three-dimensional space. Instead, they broke through the conceptual constraints of traditional classical painting theories and created works with vitality. Through the two-dimensional art of the plane modeling space, modern art has achieved long-term development.

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