

# A STUDY OF CHARACTER EXPRESSION IN THE CREATION OF WATERCOLOUR PAINTINGS

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## ABSTRACT

The depiction of characters' expressions has always been one of the key concerns of artists. The expressions of figures in contemporary watercolour paintings are sincere but different in style, reflecting the inner state of mind of the characters in the paintings, as well as the character of the people, presenting an extremely rich artistic expressiveness and providing a visual feast for the viewers. At the same time, the expression of figure painting is also one of the important means for artists to look at the whole society and convey the feelings of characters in contemporary society. This paper will focus on the expression of contemporary figure paintings, through examples of representative portraits and in-depth research and analysis, focusing on the study of the expression of contemporary watercolour figures, and attempting to decipher the skills of the painters and learn from their spirit of continuous exploration and innovation.

**Keywords:** Figure drawing; expression; artistic emotion

## INTRODUCTION

Character expression is characterised by its ability to reflect its true inner self. There are a lot of critical articles and materials about paintings in contemporary Chinese paintings, but there is not much literature focusing on the modelling of paintings, and there are even fewer writings dedicated to the study of character expression in domestic contemporary paintings. This shows that there is a scarcity of literature at home and abroad on analysing Chinese contemporary paintings from this perspective. In this paper, I am going to analyse the expression of figures in contemporary paintings by researching the related topics: what conditions and backgrounds character expressions appear in contemporary watercolour paintings; what kind of expressions artists use to express what kind of artistic views they have; what kind of resonance the viewers have with the works, etc. The expression of figures in contemporary paintings, and the unique significance of expressions of figures of different ages and genders, have their unique significance respectively.

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this research paper is to explore and gain a deeper understanding of the expressions, techniques and effects of character expressions in painting and drawing, in order to improve the artist's ability and expressiveness in depicting character expressions in his/her creative endeavours. Specific research objectives include:

This research will take the artistic expression of contemporary watercolour figure painting as the main line, intercepting the more representative contemporary figure painters and their works for in-depth research and analysis, which will help us to know and understand the footprints of the change and development of the contemporary watercolour figure painting styles from the field of watercolour figure painting expression. When we read the painters' works of art, we should not only focus on their skills, but also learn from their spirit of

continuous exploration and innovation. Exploring the deep aesthetic feelings and spiritual motivation behind the painters will help to promote the perfection of painting theory and enrich the use of techniques and mastery of forms by the artists.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The research method focusing on collecting, organising and synthesising existing relevant literature, art history and art theories in order to understand the development history of figure expressions in painting, different artists' views and practical experiences. In this research, I used the synthesis of relevant literature, art history and art theory to understand the development history of figure expression in painting, different artists' viewpoints and practical experience.

Observation and analysis method: In this research, I studied the expression and effect of character expression by observing and analysing existing artworks, portraits and photographs. I summarized the different embodiments of expression in contemporary watercolour figure subjects, and analysed the influence of visual elements, line use, colour choice and composition on figure expression.



Figure 1 "First Look at the World" Guan Weixing \

### 1. Childish expressions on children's themes

Children's works reflect the lively, cute, innocent and childlike expression of children. Facial expression can reflect a person's spirit and also symbolise his character. In terms of spirit, children are pure, flawless and simple. They are happy with their colours and show their true selves without fear or favour.



Figure 3 Chen Liu's works

## 2. Soft Expressions for Female Subjects

Female subjects have always been popular in the world of art making because they are the origin of life and symbols of life. "Art has been associated with women ever since the ancient Greeks fashioned the god of love and beauty and art into a female figure." [2] Painting is a visual art, and the serenity and beauty of women present a different face in artistic expression. Most of Chen Liu's sketches (Figure 3) come from his life. Chen Liu's figures are not only exquisite images, but he also seeks to reflect the demeanour through his mannerisms. In Chen Liu's watercolour figures, no matter whether they are figures or clay sculptures, or even small insects, all of them are in high spirits. This is the charm of expression

Artistic Practice: Through my own artistic practice, I will explore different painting techniques and methods to express and convey the emotions and expressions of the characters. Combine the artist's experience and observations for reflection and exploration



Research and analysis method: the goal of this paper's research is to explore the importance of character expression in paintings, so the selected samples are biased towards adult audiences with artistic interests and some knowledge of painting, including art students, art professionals, art enthusiasts and so on. In addition, this paper mainly adopts a multi-stage sampling method to obtain a diverse audience group. Firstly, random sampling is used to select art students or professionals from different regions as the starting sample.

Questionnaire method: The questionnaire is divided into three parts, the first part of the personal information part, the second part of the audience's perception of the art of painting and the current situation of character expression, and the third part of the scale part of the importance factors of character expression. The third part of the scale contains four dimensions, namely, emotional expression, storytelling, emotional resonance, and perception and experience.

## QUESTIONNAIRE AND DATA ANALYSIS

### Analysis Descriptive

From Figure 1, it can be seen that most of the interviewees have some knowledge of the art of painting, of which the proportion of those who know is as high as 80.50%. Secondly, it can be learned from Figure 2 that for the interviewees, the elements that are most easily attracted by the paintings are mainly the colour and light and shadow effects, as well as the expression and emotion of the characters, which account for 35.46% and 34.40% respectively. Initially, it can be illustrated that the importance of the emotional expression of the characters as one of the main attracting elements.

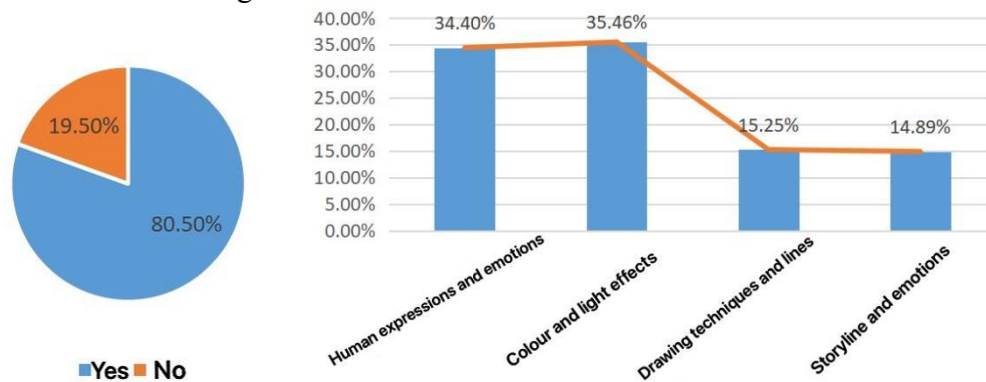


Figure 1 Do you know about the art of painting

Figure 2 When viewing a painting, which of the following elements are you more likely to be attracted to?

As can be seen from Figures 3 and 4, most of the respondents believe that character expressions are very important, relatively important or generally important, with the percentages of 26.95%, 27.66% and 29.08% respectively. Secondly, its importance is mainly reflected in the fact that character expressions can enhance the drama and tension of the work, which accounts for 29.79%.

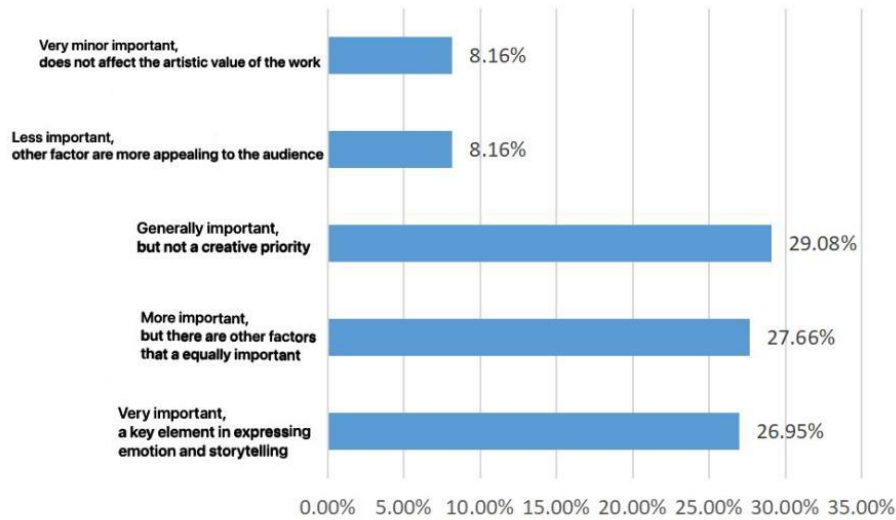


Fig. 3 How important do you think the character's expression is in the paintings

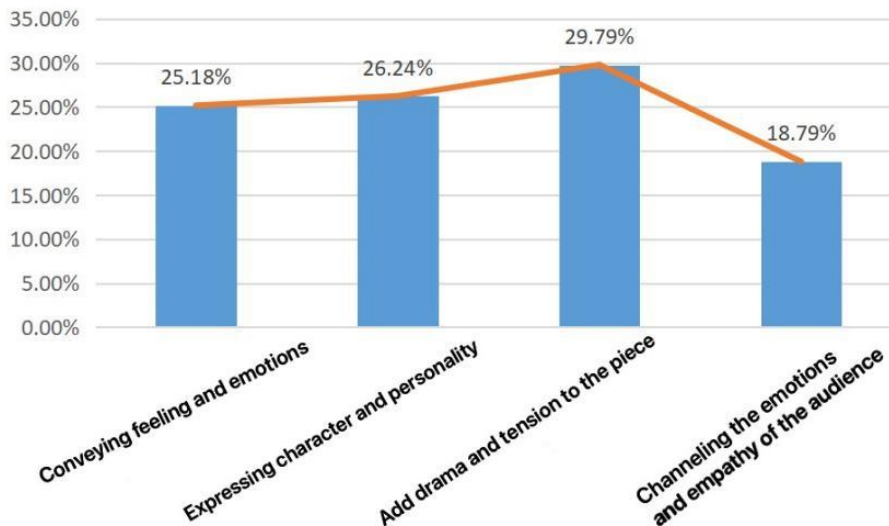


Fig. 4 In your opinion, what is the role of the character's expression in the paintings

The preference of respondents for character expressions in paintings in Figures 5 and 6 shows that expressions of anger and indignation are more appreciated, accounting for 29.08 per cent of the total; followed by the fact that character expressions are the most important in portraits, accounting for 64.18 per cent of the total.

## CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

At the beginning of the 21st century, looking back at contemporary watercolour figure painting, we can see from the changes in the expression of the figure painting that contemporary figure painting has undergone great changes in the concept of thinking. These changes in the expressions of the figures and the updating of the concept of thinking have expanded and enriched the expressive techniques of the language of figure painting. The authors put more emphasis on the subjective feelings of the heart, and use various methods to reflect life, pay attention to society and express life.

The diversified development of contemporary figure painting is related to social psychology and national aesthetics, expanding and developing the expression of figure painting to emphasise the subjective feelings of the painter's mind. In the face of this change in the way of thinking, different artistic styles will expand our understanding and strengthen the feelings of the competent mind. The expression of the figure in today's painting is the result of the influence of concepts on the method of expression, as well as the broadening of the boundaries of concepts through the wide application of materials. The development of art language in contemporary painting should use modern concepts and new materials, inject strong spiritual factors to give paintings a stronger expressive tension, and strive to pursue the simultaneous development of painting and the times.

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