

Research on the Cultivation Path of Creative Ability in Gongbi Figure Painting in Colleges and Universities from the Perspective of Chinese Painting

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Abstract: Within the holistic aesthetic system of Chinese painting, meticulous-style figure painting constitutes a significant component of art education that cannot be overlooked, due to its rigorous formal structure and rich cultural connotations. However, current fine arts instruction in higher education exhibits deficiencies in cultivating creative ability in meticulous figure painting, manifesting as insufficient structuralization, weak aesthetic comprehension, and a lack of personalized expression. Centered on the core theme of "Research on the Cultivation Path of Creative Ability in Gongbi Figure Painting in Colleges and Universities from the Perspective of Chinese Painting" this paper systematically explores the logical pathways and methodological systems for developing students' comprehensive creative abilities within the traditional aesthetic framework, addressing multiple dimensions including artistic language, competency structure, pedagogical cognition, image semantics, aesthetic mechanisms, formulaic training, and expressive strategies. The study contends that the development of creative ability in meticulous figure painting necessitates the organic integration of visual perception, representational logic, cultural understanding, and aesthetic judgment. It emphasizes a dynamic balance between systematic training mechanisms and individualized guidance strategies, ultimately aiming to achieve the modern transformation and contemporary expression of traditional linguistic resources.

Keywords: the perspective of Chinese painting; meticulous-style figure painting; competency structure; aesthetic judgment; formulaic training; personalized expression

Introduction

Within the developmental framework of Chinese painting, meticulous-style figure painting, characterized by its rigorous compositional logic, refined brushwork expression, and profound cultural significance, stands as a vital manifestation of the integration between artistic language and cultural spirit. As pivotal institutions for cultivating artistic talent, colleges and universities bear the dual mission of technical inheritance and artistic innovation in the education of creative abilities for meticulous figure painting. However, the current teaching system faces challenges such as overreliance on traditional paradigms, neglect of constructing visual logic, and insufficient space for personalized expression, which collectively hinder the comprehensive and in-depth development of students' creative capacities.

Against this background, this paper aims to clarify the linguistic characteristics and creative mechanisms of meticulous-style figure painting from the perspective of Chinese painting, analyze its competency composition and pedagogical bottlenecks, and further explore how to establish a developmental pathway from traditional image semantics to personalized expression through formulaic training and guidance in aesthetic judgment. Through this research, it seeks to provide systematic theoretical foundations and practical methodologies for the teaching of meticulous figure painting in higher education, promoting a shift in pedagogical logic from a "technique-centric" approach to one emphasizing "linguistic integration" and "thinking construction," thereby enhancing students' visual expression skills and cultural representation capacities within contemporary contexts.

1. The Connotation and Competency Structure of Meticulous-Style Figure Painting Creation from the Perspective of Chinese Painting

1.1 The Artistic Characteristics and Expressive Mechanisms of Meticulous-Style Figure Painting

As an important category of expression in Chinese painting, meticulous-style figure painting not only carries the ethical views, character perspectives, and aesthetic concepts of traditional Chinese culture but also constructs a highly symbolic visual language system. Its artistic characteristics are rooted in the painting philosophy of "meticulous precision" and "harmony of form and spirit," and its expressive mechanisms integrate multiple dimensions such as line drawing, coloring, composition, and the creation of artistic conception. As the core language of meticulous-style figure painting modeling, lines not only undertake the function of structural depiction but also convey the inner temperament and emotional flow of characters through linear rhythm and brush-ink rhythm. Particularly in the treatment of detailed depictions such as the hairline, eyebrows, eyes, and clothing folds, the emphasis on "exquisite brushwork and wonderful ink" embodies the unique artistic logic of Chinese painting, "using lines to depict form and using intention to convey spirit"^[1].

The color system in meticulous-style figure painting is not merely decorative, but rather a visual strategy possessing both layering and psychological guidance. The application of color emphasizes a dynamic equilibrium between warm-cool relationships and void-solid contrasts, forming a chromatic layout within the overall composition that is both orderly and rhythmic. Through repeated glazing and shading, the painting achieves formal perfection and unity, while in terms of content, it conveys the character's identity, emotional state, and even the zeitgeist of the era. The essence of the artistic expression mechanism in meticulous-style figure painting lies precisely in seeking tension between "form" and "spirit," and finding balance between "precision" and "expressive charm." This mechanism is not an isolated technical system, but rather a composite entity integrating image generation, cultural expression, and aesthetic judgment, thereby providing a highly dynamic training paradigm for talent cultivation in higher education.

1.2 The Component Elements of Creative Ability in Meticulous-Style Figure Painting

As a composite artistic capability, creative ability in meticulous-style figure painting is not limited to technical proficiency alone, but encompasses multiple dimensions including observational skills, representational ability, control over pictorial language, mastery of color systems, and narrative construction. These capacities do not accumulate in a linear fashion but rather interweave and mutually support one another, forming a complex trinity of cognitive, operational, and expressive systems. Its foundation lies in the precise grasp of human anatomy and the perception of dynamics, requiring the creator to possess a deep understanding of bodily proportions, kinetic rhythms, and weight distribution, thereby reconstructing a sense of three-dimensional realism and vitality within a two-dimensional picture plane.

A further manifestation of this ability lies in the rhythmic control of linear language and the organizational capacity of schematic structure. The thickness, curvature, lifting, pressing, pausing, and transitioning of lines not only determine the clarity of the figure's contours but also influence the overall aura and expressive power of the composition; meanwhile, the image structure establishes the visual weight and narrative focus, serving as the core component of the aesthetic efficacy of the entire painting.

Furthermore, the creator must also master the correspondence between color application logic and color psychology, expressing character personality and psychological states through subtle shading to achieve the artistic effect of "emotion follows color." Ultimately, by integrating strategies such as composition, brushwork vitality, subject selection, and artistic conception creation, the artist constructs a visual work possessing artistic tension and individualized style. This ability not only reflects technical proficiency but also demonstrates the depth of artistic cognition and the power of cultural expression^[2].

1.3 The Current State of Understanding Regarding Creative Ability in Meticulous-Style Figure Painting within the Higher Education Context

Current instruction in meticulous-style figure painting at the tertiary level commonly faces a structural imbalance characterized by "priority on skill training over artistic thinking." In terms of curricular content, most courses still prioritize technical copying as their core component, such as

isolated exercises in outlining facial features or imitating coloring techniques for drapery folds. While students may accumulate foundational technical skills through such training, they often lack comprehension of the image's overall logic and the visual language system as a whole. This "fragmented teaching approach" not only restricts students' holistic grasp of character portrayal but also weakens their ability to coordinate visual elements during independent creation. Furthermore, a systematic understanding of capturing and transforming the "expressive essence" inherent in traditional figure painting has yet to be established, resulting in most student works remaining superficially precise yet devoid of artistic charm, with notably insufficient aesthetic depth and cultural resonance.

The teaching methodology often manifests as a unidirectional "technique-imitation-replication" model, which fails to engage students' initiative and creativity. At the level of teaching evaluation, the assessment criteria predominantly focus on the completeness of works and technical precision, without comprehensively encompassing higher-level artistic competencies such as conceptual logic, image relationship management, and character personality portrayal.

In this context, students struggle to break free from the comfort zone of "technique dependence," as their creative thinking tends to become conservative and passive, lacking the motivation to explore their own linguistic system. To genuinely enhance the cultivation of creative ability in meticulous-style figure painting, it is essential to transform the curriculum structure from a focus on "skill training" to the "development of image generation capabilities," while strengthening the systematic integration of elements such as cultural schemata, visual logic, and emotional expression. Thereby, this drives the evolution of teaching content from "technique" to "image thinking," ultimately achieving the goal of constructing meticulous figure painting abilities centered on the logic of Chinese painting.

2. Aesthetic Construction and the Mechanism of Understanding Traditional Imagery in the Cultivation of Creative Ability

2.1 The Semantic and Symbolic System of Traditional Imagery in Meticulous-Style Figure Painting

As one of the most narratively and symbolically prominent categories within the Chinese painting system, meticulous-style figure painting is deeply rooted in the pictorial motifs and symbolic frameworks of classical Chinese culture. Its compositional structure often carries cultural connotations that transcend mere visual representation, where figure modeling, costume styles, scene arrangements, and accessory elements collectively form a visual context characterized by symbolism and canonical conventions.

In figure representation, postures, expressions, and attire not only reflect the character's identity and period style but also convey specific ethical values and aesthetic tastes. In background composition, the arrangement of elements such as pavilions, towers, pine trees, bamboo, plum blossoms, and orchids often carries metaphorical significance, forming an associative network of cultural imagery. This system of pictorial meaning is by no means a flat, diagrammatic expression, but rather a highly condensed and culturally profound mode of visual narration^[3].

In the teaching of meticulous-style figure painting in higher education, the comprehension of pictorial semantics serves as a crucial bridge connecting traditional culture with contemporary expression. If students fail to recognize and interpret the symbolic logic inherent in traditional imagery during the creative process, they often resort to the hollow use of formal language, resulting in works that lack cultural depth and spiritual direction. Therefore, the cultivation of creative ability should guide students to establish an aesthetic understanding of the symbolic system of traditional imagery. Through the study of classical themes and canonical motifs, students can infuse their figure depictions with a holistic grasp of identity, emotion, context, and cultural background. Image construction should not merely involve the collage of forms, but should become a mode of visual culture generation, endowing works with cultural resonance and artistic impact, thereby achieving the effective activation of traditional visual semantics within a contemporary framework.

2.2 Aesthetic Analysis of the Relationship Between "Realistic Depiction" and "Expressive Conception" in Meticulous-Style Figure Painting

Although renowned for its detailed and realistic techniques, meticulous-style figure painting within the holistic aesthetic tradition of Chinese painting never equates realism with mechanical replication of reality. Instead, it achieves the typification, spiritualization, and artistic reconstruction of figures

through precise control of form and subtle orchestration of brush and ink. Its "realistic depiction" does not merely reproduce objective appearances but represents a selective and subjective approach to representation, emphasizing the nuanced balance between "likeness and unlikeness." Conversely, "expressive conception" does not imply simplified techniques but manifests in the artist's spiritual penetration, emotional generation, and capacity for imagery construction. The "unity of form and spirit" embodied in meticulous-style figure painting precisely represents the concentrated manifestation of the harmonious integration between "realistic depiction" and "expressive conception."

In the context of creative pedagogy at the tertiary level, students often develop cognitive biases between "technical precision" and "expressive conception," either tending toward mechanical pursuit of details while neglecting the cultivation of the work's intrinsic temperament and artistic atmosphere, or prematurely attempting subjective expression without adequate technical foundation and visual logic, resulting in vague and unrealistic articulation. Therefore, the enhancement of creative ability should guide students to seek "spirit" through "form" and pursue "conception" within "precision," understanding that meticulous-style figure painting is not merely an accumulation of techniques but an interactive generation of skill and spirituality. Only by thoroughly mastering the principles of form and the conventions of brush and ink, while effectively integrating personal emotion, artistic intention, and cultural aesthetics into the image construction process, can students genuinely achieve the dynamic unity of realistic depiction and expressive conception in their creations, thereby elevating the depth of visual language and the height of artistic expression^[4].

2.3 The Guiding Role of Aesthetic Judgment in Creative Path Selection

In the creation of meticulous-style figure painting, aesthetic judgment not only forms the foundation for selecting themes, arranging compositions, and coordinating colors but also serves as the crucial variable determining the expressive direction and artistic value of the entire work. The development of this capability depends on students' comprehensive understanding and independent decision-making regarding image structure, cultural context, visual logic, and artistic style. Its core manifestation lies in making artistically value-oriented choices amidst complex aesthetic information.

Superior aesthetic judgment not only enables the avoidance of formal issues such as compositional redundancy and imbalances in brush and ink, but also establishes the work's spiritual character and aesthetic stance at a conceptual level. This enables image creation to transcend mere technical presentation, advancing to the higher plane of visual language generation and meaning construction.

In the teaching process, the lack of aesthetic judgment often manifests as vague creative objectives, disorganized image logic, or imbalanced stylistic tendencies. This stems not only from limitations in students' individual aesthetic experiences but is also closely related to the absence of targeted guidance in the curriculum structure. To effectively enhance students' autonomous decision-making and expressive capabilities in creation, it is essential to incorporate aesthetic judgment training as a core component of competency development. Through the analytical deconstruction of exemplary image paradigms, the simulated reconstruction of compositional logic, and dialectical thinking exercises on the relationship between form and content, students should be guided to establish stable and clear aesthetic standards. On this foundation, students can then make appropriate choices among diverse visual resources and expressive pathways, construct an individualized linguistic system for meticulous-style figure painting, thereby achieving the transformation from "skill acquisition" to "aesthetic generation."

3. Constructing a Capability Development Pathway Based on Formulaic Training and Individual Expression

3.1 Systematic Training Pathways for Formulaic Modeling in Meticulous-Style Figure Painting

The formulaic modeling in meticulous-style figure painting, serving as the foundational paradigm for image construction in Chinese painting, reflects a high degree of abstraction and integration of human anatomy, dynamic spirit, and cultural symbolism, characterized by its systematic nature, heritage value, and aesthetic directionality. In meticulous-style figure painting, formulas are neither tools for mechanical imitation nor obstacles to individual expression, but rather deeply accumulated rules of visual language that embody the core concept of "unity of form and spirit, conveying spirit through form" in traditional Chinese modeling philosophy. Through stylized human proportions, facial feature arrangements, and drapery line treatments, its structural language elevates realistic structure to

aesthetic form, endowing figures with a stable and recognizable aesthetic tone. In pedagogical practice, this traditional formula should not be regarded as an "outdated method" that restricts creativity, but rather understood as an essential scaffold for developing students' visual judgment and formal control capabilities^[5].

In order to enable university students to effectively master and internalize the formulaic language of meticulous-style figure painting modeling, it is essential to establish a progressive training pathway following the logical sequence of "structural interpretation - paradigm copying - formal reconstruction." The elementary stage focuses on structural modular teaching, systematically analyzing the proportional relationships and linear directions of the head, torso, and limbs to help students construct a rational cognitive framework of human anatomy. The intermediate stage shifts to precise copying and detailed imitation of exemplary images, strengthening students' control over line quality, modeling rhythm, and dynamic balance, while guiding them to identify and analyze the aesthetic connotations within classical paradigms. The advanced stage shifts its focus to image reconstruction and individual reinterpretation, encouraging students to develop differentiated expression and formal innovation through the transformation and recombination of established formulas, thereby facilitating their critical transition from imitation to creation. This pathway, through systematic training and phased guidance, constructs a composite competency channel of "technique-language-style" for students, serving as an effective strategy for enhancing modeling literacy in meticulous-style figure painting.

3.2 Layered Progressive Training in Color Language and Application Techniques

The color composition of meticulous-style figure painting follows unique application principles and visual rhythms, with its expressive method adhering to the fundamental logic of "systematic color application and cumulative layering to achieve form," achieving translucent relationships and subtle transitions between colors through multi-layered application. Unlike the direct expression and contrast relationships of color in Western painting, Chinese painting's color application techniques emphasize the coordination between brushwork and color, the proportion of water to pigment, and the order of washing and outlining, demonstrating a progressive strategy of visual construction.

The mastery of color language relies not only on perceptual cognition and intuitive judgment but also on an in-depth understanding of technical details and long-term training. In higher education, without a scientifically structured progressive mechanism, students often struggle to grasp the rhythm of color application and the overall vitality of the composition, resulting in superficial color application and monotonous pictorial relationships.

The progressive training in color application techniques should establish a clearly structured instructional pathway based on the inherent logic of color construction and the principles of visual psychology. The initial stage focuses on the recognition of color fundamentals and the control of purity, training students' sensitivity to warm-cool relationships, value contrast, and color gradation. The intermediate phase guides students to master key techniques such as cumulative layering and glazing, focusing on resolving transitional and harmonization issues in color layering. The advanced stage concentrates on the integration of overall color structure and atmosphere creation, emphasizing the ability to utilize color within compositions for guiding visual flow and enhancing narrative expression. Through this layered training in color language, students can not only achieve precise mastery of color application techniques but also develop a stable and expressive personal color style in image construction, thereby expanding broader expressive possibilities for individualized creation^[6].

3.3 Guidance Mechanisms and Expansion Strategies for Personalized Expression Capability

Although the traditional system of meticulous-style figure painting emphasizes formulaic norms and technical accumulation, works of true artistic value often nurture individuality within these norms and release spiritual expression within established conventions. The development of personalized expression capability relies on students forming stable creative inclinations and self-awareness through aesthetic judgment, visual choices, and image organization.

This capability manifests not only in the differentiated selection of subject matter and compositional style but, more significantly, in the artistic autonomy demonstrated across emotional orchestration, linguistic construction, and cultural response. In the creative pedagogy of higher education, overemphasis on technical standardization without adequate attention to individual exploration may lead to homogenized student works lacking stylistic distinctiveness. Therefore, establishing scientifically effective mechanisms for individualized guidance constitutes a vital component of

cultivating competency in meticulous-style figure painting.

The guidance of personalized expression should, on the basis of comprehensive technical mastery, stimulate students' subjective consciousness and cultural imagination. Through methods such as concept generation, image experimentation, and style positioning, students should be guided to establish a creative logic characterized by unique aesthetic perspectives. Instructors should provide open-ended themes, image deconstruction tasks, and cross-media transformation attempts in teaching, offering students diverse expressive pathways while encouraging them to extract transformable visual language resources from traditional elements to construct individualized image narrative approaches. By guiding students through the transformation process from imitation to creation, from technique to language, and from form to artistic conception, we can not only expand their creative boundaries but also enhance the artistic tension and cultural depth of their works in contemporary expression, ultimately achieving the dual generation of technique and spirit in the teaching of meticulous-style figure painting.

Conclusion

The construction of creative ability in meticulous-style figure painting is not merely a process of technical accumulation, but rather a systematic practice involving the synergistic development of aesthetic awareness, autonomous expression, and cultural interpretation capabilities. Through in-depth analysis of the linguistic structure of meticulous-style figure painting, traditional image semantics, the relationship between realistic depiction and expressive conception, as well as the mechanisms of formulaic training and individual expression, this paper proposes a pedagogical pathway transitioning from foundational technical training to comprehensive creative competence. This pathway emphasizes the equal importance of visual logic and cultural perception, while focusing on the coordinated development of technical inheritance and creative initiative, thereby providing a theoretical foundation for establishing a multidimensional competency cultivation system in higher education instruction.

Looking ahead, the pedagogy of meticulous-style figure painting creation must further incorporate cross-media language, narrative construction, and contemporary image transformation strategies to achieve the revitalization and reconstruction of traditional artistic resources, thereby empowering students to develop a more critically aware and expressively profound artistic perspective on meticulous-style figure painting within complex cultural contexts.

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