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**THE INFLUENCE OF MATERIAL USAGE, SPIRITUAL
ORIENTATION AND AESTHETIC LANGUAGE ON
CONTEMPORARY CHINESE MIXED MEDIA PAINTING**



WANG YINXUE

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
UNIVERSITI UTARA MALAYSIA
2025**

**THE INFLUENCE OF MATERIAL USAGE, SPIRITUAL ORIENTATION
AND AESTHETIC LANGUAGE ON CONTEMPORARY CHINESE MIXED
MEDIA PAINTING**



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**Thesis Submitted to
College of Arts and Sciences
Universiti Utara Malaysia,
in Fulfilment of the Requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**



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Abstrak

Seni kontemporari Cina dengan teknik media campuran adalah manifestasi evolusi dan inovasi dalam dunia seni Cina yang luas. Kajian ini mendalami bentuk seni yang unik ini untuk menjelaskan kedudukannya dalam kalangan teknik lukisan serta memahami kepentingannya dalam naratif seni masa kini. Kepentingan kajian ini terletak pada warisan sejarah dan budaya Cina yang kaya, di mana amalan seni tradisional sentiasa berinteraksi dengan pengaruh moden. Walaupun seni kontemporari Cina ini semakin dihargai, masih ramai yang tidak memahami bahan yang digunakan dan makna tersiratnya, terutamanya apabila dibandingkan dengan bentuk seni tradisional dan kontemporari lain. Justeru itu, soalan kajian utama kami adalah: Apakah ciri-ciri khas dan makna tersirat dalam lukisan media campuran komprehensif moden Cina? Bagaimana seni tersebut berbeza dengan bentuk lukisan lain dari segi bahan yang digunakan serta tafsiran simboliknya? Untuk menjawab persoalan tersebut, pendekatan penyelidikan interpretivis telah digunakan dengan kaedah kajian kes kualitatif. Kaedah ini dipilih adalah disebabkan potensinya untuk meneroka secara mendalam terhadap karya seni terpilih serta penciptanya, dengan menganggap mereka sebagai 'kes kajian'. Pengumpulan data utama dijalankan melalui kaedah temu bual separa berstruktur bersama artis, pengkritik seni, dan ahli sejarah seni, serta disokong oleh pemerhatian langsung dalam lawatan ke galeri dan pameran seni. Kami mengharapkan bahawa kajian ini akan memberikan pemahaman yang jelas tentang makna simbolik dan bahan yang dipilih dalam karya mereka, serta pengaruh budaya yang membentuk seni mereka. Kehasilan ini dijangka dapat menerangkan keseimbangan halus yang dicapai oleh artis antara tradisi dan inovasi, serta implikasi sosio-budaya dalam karya mereka. Melalui pendekatan yang teliti dan pandangan yang mendalam, kajian ini bertujuan memperkayakan wacana dalam bidang sejarah seni, kajian budaya, dan amalan seni kontemporari. Di samping itu, kajian ini menekankan kepentingan lukisan media campuran moden Cina bukan sekadar sebagai satu bentuk seni, tetapi juga sebagai cerminan identiti dan nilai budaya yang terus berkembang.

Kata Kunci: Seni cina kontemporari, Lukisan bahan campuran, Penyelidikan interpretivist, dan Konotasi seni

Abstract

Contemporary Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting stands as a direct result of artistic evolution and inventive work done in Chinese art domains. This research examines the position of contemporary Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting in relation to other techniques to determine its importance for modern artistic narratives. A fundamental reason to conduct this research lies in the traditional Chinese art practices which maintain an active dance with present-day cultural elements. Modern recognition of Chinese comprehensive mixed-material paintings continues to face knowledge gaps regarding their fundamental properties and symbolic meanings and their differences with conventional artistic methods and present-day art styles. The principal research inquiries emerged from this missing information and aim to investigate: What features define and symbolize modern Chinese mixed-material paintings? What makes mixed-material Chinese painting distinct from alternative visual forms regarding their base elements plus meaningful symbolism? The research utilizes an interpretivist research paradigm through which a qualitative case study methodology was implemented to obtain answers. Researchers have chosen this methodology because it allows detailed analysis of particular artwork cases and their creators. Our research uses semi-structured artist, critic, and art historian interviews as the main data collection method together with gallery observations and exhibition data. The research will result in an in-depth understanding of artistic material selection practices and symbolical artworks and cultural influences on artistic choices. The research findings will help explain the complex way artists manage traditional techniques together with innovative methods in their work and the social-cultural message contained in their creations. Our research utilizes comprehensive methodologies and discovered information to contribute advanced ideas about contemporary artistic practices as well as art history and cultural interpretation. The analysis demonstrates how Chinese mixed-material painting of today represents both artistic expression and cultural transformations in a nation's self-identity.

Keywords: Contemporary chinese art, Mixed-material painting, Interpretivist research and Artistic connotations

Acknowledgement

This research on modern Chinese mixed-media painting allowed me to receive invaluable support and opportunities for which I express my most sincere gratitude. This education delivered valuable knowledge because of essential backing from many organizations and dedicated individuals.

First and foremost, I want to show my highest appreciation to both Dr. Ahmad Hisham Bin Zainal Abidin and Dr. Hisham Dzakiria for their essential expertise. Their dedication to following academic standards together with their dedication to artistic theory profoundly shaped my perception and study approach in the field. The guidance and support provided to me by them remains irreplaceable in my life.

The artists who took part in this research study will always hold my deepest appreciation. Through their willingness to share their experiences artists helped reveal the essential aspects of modern and traditional component usage in mixed-media painting. Their valuable input made critical contributions to expand the depth of this research investigation.

I express my appreciation to institutions as well as academic communities and libraries and galleries that contributed essential resources to my research. Great support from researchers and staff contributed a significant value to my research process. Academic reviewers along with my peers delivered constructive remarks that aided in developing a stronger research approach which improved its rigor and made a greater impact.

Lastly, I offer my deepest appreciation to all my family members and dear friends who constantly supported and encouraged me throughout this process. Their faith in my abilities drives me forward during this entire research experience. My research experience has proved to be a transformative process which I plan to use as a foundation for continued investigation of study findings.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

For the past century European artists have actively analyzed traditional realist techniques of Western painting because they consider them obstacles to overcome. The questions about traditional methods of painting resulted in fundamental changes that transformed modern paintings while adding distinctive elements to them (Gardner et al., 2002). The investigation into new painting materials constitutes a principal advancement in art. Western art philosophy today pursues creative expression and personal charm more than mere expression because of avant-garde movements such as Cubism and Futurism (Gourianova, 2012). Artists need distinctive approaches and vision to facilitate their exploration of new materials which leads to diversity in modern art development (Bernstein, 2006).

Modernist painting thrives because of technological advancement and philosophical advancement which create novel materials and expanded creative capabilities (Foster et al., 2004). Artists have received creative impetus following these two world wars and this societal change along with changes in artistic expressions of traditional styles and aesthetic ideas. This has greatly expanded the connotation of painting (Spivey, 2005). Traditional painting materials are no longer just mediums for expressing content; their cultural connotations and physical properties are gradually being highlighted (Elkins, 2019). Moreover, many natural and man-made materials previously unused in paintings have been introduced. These materials have made the expression of painting more diverse, bringing more creativity to artists (Wright, 2008).

With the popularization of new materials, painting techniques are constantly evolving, and collage has become one of the most commonly used techniques among Western artists (Rowell, 1997). Artists like Tàpies, Kounellis, and Kiefer have conducted bold experiments and explorations in their creations, and presented them in various novel ways (Chilvers, 2009). These relentless attempts and explorations have brought more possibilities and diversity to painting expressions (Wright, 2008). However, artistic creation must always rely on the expression of personal emotions. Since the 20th century, mixed media painting has become a new art form in the West, attracting widespread attention (McElroy et al, 2012). For example, Tàpies showed the psychological trauma caused by war using everyday materials; Kounellis tightly combined art with daily life; Kiefer, with his unique ruin art, profoundly revealed the deep connotations of German history and culture (Buchloh, 1989). The books "Painting Mixed Media" by (Wright, 2008), and "Painting Art Studio - 45 Examples of Mixed Material and Technique Applications" by (McElroy et al, 2012), deeply explore these concepts.

Mixed media painting, characterized by its experimental approach and the use of unconventional materials, contrasts sharply with traditional art forms prevalent during the same period. While classical painting and sculpture often emphasized purity of form and material, mixed media painting embraced an eclectic fusion, challenging conventional artistic boundaries. Sculpture and traditional painting, rooted in established techniques and media, focused on the representation of physical form, whereas mixed media painting allowed for greater abstraction and conceptual exploration (Krauss, 1985). The emergence of mixed media painting can be seen as a response to, or even a rebellion against, the perceived rigidity of traditional art forms, introducing a dynamism that resonated with the rapid cultural shifts of the 20th century.

Mixed media painting experienced its peak during the twentieth century yet artists have historically used material combinations from distant past times. Before modern times artists from ancient civilizations incorporated pigments into organic substances and minerals to create different visual effects through their mixed media artwork. Egyptians used gold leaf together with malachite and other scarce materials to decorate religious artifacts and tombs where these elements represented both spiritual meaning and artistic quality (Robins 2008). Representations in medieval illuminated manuscripts integrated multiple elements of ink with gold and silver along with precious stones to create artistic synthesis (Alexander, 1992).

The Renaissance and Baroque artistic times tested new mixed media methods though they remained bound by traditional artistic ordering systems. Leonardo da Vinci researched and used substances such as wax and resin and egg to create particular visual elements in his artwork (Bacci, 2011). The restrained approaches demonstrated an evolving sense of curiosity and experimental tendency to move past established standards. The beginning of the nineteenth century introduced a fundamental transformation to mixed media artistic development. The birth of Realism Impressionism and Post-Impressionist movements started to overthrow the strict rules and classical standards of academic art (Clark, 1999). Through their artwork Edgar Degas and other artists adopted pastels along with charcoal and material diversity as tools which contributed to expanding the recognition of different artistic methods. Artists started using found objects around the same time as collage and assemblage techniques emerged because this changed the way art appeared while mirroring equal artistic approaches (Rand, 1980).

During the 20th century society witnessed revolutionary artistic tests which transformed conventional creative practices. Throughout the 20th century the artistic

movements Cubism Dadaism and Surrealism provided their full endorsement to utilizing unusual materials and production methods. The creative explosion of the late 19th century found its perfect visualization among Picasso's revolutionary collage pieces as well as Duchamp's ready-made items and Kurt Schwitters' Merz-based creations (Rosenberg, 1994). Using mixed media became the sign of both graffiti against conventional social orders and simultaneous love for cultural products and life complexities.

Chinese painting experienced monumental cultural and artistic shifts as the nation implemented its reform and opening-up policies which were strongly influenced by Western artistic traditions (Sullivan, 1999). During the 1980s of the 20th century the '85 New Wave movement welcomed Chinese artists to experiment with fresh artistic approaches which supported the growth of Chinese art according to (Andrews, 1994). Today's artists mix art elements by combining different creative materials, techniques with theme concepts to produce diverse artistic approaches in their creations (Zhu, 2007). Artists today adopt Western painting elements which they adapt using Chinese cultural assets to produce personalized art works (Eschenburg, 2018). Staff and students across art departments in major universities apply this new artistic methodology to advance the field of mixed media painting (Xinyuan, 2023).

The technological advancements of the 20th century had profound impacts on the evolution of mixed media painting. The creation of synthetic materials including acrylics and innovative adhesives gave artists the power to achieve unavailable artistic effects (Foster et al., 2004). New visual frontiers emerged from digital technology and photography because artists began to combine digital prints and photographs and interactive components with their work. Digital technologies became democratically

available throughout the final years of the century which enabled multiple art communities to engage in mixed media experimentation (Kaminska, 2016).

The work of (Sullivan, 2002) systematically analyzes material language as well as form language and compound language to explain approaches for achieving avant-garde art styles. The contents act as important theoretical resources for modern art material language research. The recorded research systemically presents both practical and theoretical aspects of painting language by concentrating on essential concepts, theories, knowledge and ideas about painting techniques and language (Derrida, 2020). The study investigates painting through direct observation combined with the fundamental components of painting form language next to sketch language and color language and finally examines the ontological aspects of painting language and creative forms along with their aesthetic impact on imagery.

The modern position of Chinese mixed-media painting stands between contemporary artistic approaches and traditional artistic foundations. New-age artists integrate traditional aspects with modern components through their artistic endeavors that interweave innovative techniques with classical picture elements based on current design guidelines. The continual transformation of this artistic domain generates complicated symbolic networks between spiritual elements and diverse artistic systems to attract researchers and art experts. Present-day material artworks are showing increasing significance according to (Wang Xi et al., 2023) research. Creative developers of media materials enable artists to establish new formal languages that help them generate visual paintings with independent meanings. Modern art positionally positions mixed media art because contemporary artists use this technique to communicate their visual concepts through complex artwork meanings.

A previous painting language research discusses the highest autonomous value of painting art, freeing painters from the confines of pure technique to establish a whole new language expression model (Gao, 2019). This study makes painting more systematic and recognizes that the research of thought processes in technical expression is the most important aspect of painting. The book is of some assistance to my research on the connotation of the ontological language of mixed media painting. The previous research that discussed the role of mixed materials in painting creation sets out from the historical source of painting art to expound the relevant theoretical knowledge of mixed materials (Owen, 2019), analyzing their unique characteristics and expression methods, and discussing their role and application in painting.

The incorporation of mixed media painting into university courses represented a significant shift in art education (Wang, 2019). This interdisciplinary approach challenged the traditional compartmentalization of artistic disciplines, encouraging students to think beyond established boundaries. Mixed media painting became a conduit for creativity, critical thinking, and personal expression. It required educators to adapt their pedagogical strategies to foster a more exploratory and collaborative learning environment. While this shift was welcomed by many, it also faced resistance from those who saw value in maintaining traditional teaching methods, reflecting a broader debate on the role of innovation versus tradition in art education.

There is an author who breaks traditional lacquer painting techniques through his own creative works (Yun, 2023), enhancing innovation ability and bringing more vitality to lacquer painting. This work has had a significant impact on my thesis researching the painting techniques of various materials based on lacquer. Previous research emphasized the application analysis of traditional Chinese art materials in mixed media painting, focusing on "lacquer," and the cross-border practice of lacquer

materials in mixed media painting, have summarized his research and creative practice experience with lacquer-based mixed materials (Lizun et al., 2022). A researcher pointed out that the expression of materials is closely related to the transmission of emotion (Wei, 2022). By exploring the artistic expression of mixed materials, we can better understand and summarize the connotations of the works of famous mixed media painting artists from both China and the West.

From the extensive examination of mixed media painting in terms of its materials, forms, and techniques, a distinct gap emerges in existing research. While the previous studies focused on the surface attributes, such as material combinations and techniques, there still remains a lack of in-depth exploration into how these materials translate to conceptual or emotional expression. Current studies have not comprehensively addressed the emotional expression and the ontological language of mixed media painting. This case caused the overlooking of the deeper meanings and connotations of the works. Additionally, the existing literature primarily emphasizes Western influence, with limited integration and understanding of how mixed media painting has been interpreted. Also, evolved within different cultural contexts, such as the influence of Western art on Chinese painting (Sullivan, 2002).

The goal of this study emerges from an intention to unify different interpretations. The purpose of this investigation is to investigate the ontological language of mixed media painting as practiced in contemporary art through an original study approach. An organized research examines how mixed media paintings show emotional content together with conceptual components. Hence, this research findings will increase our understanding and establish fresh ontological insights about mixed media painting thereby contributing to theoretical knowledge and cultural discourse.

1.2 Problem Statement

Contemporary Chinese mixed-media painting developed rapidly in the latter part of the 1970s to become an essential element of China's artistic territory (Zhang, 2014). Unlike any other art practice this form brings together ancient and current artistic processes together with multiple substance types accompanied by various beauty styles which express Chinese history and political change over time (Sullivan, 2015). The “National Art Exhibition” and “Ningbo Comprehensive Material Painting Biennale” have boosted recognition for this field but academic research about it stays disorganized (Lyu & Liu, 2019).

The study of material selection and aesthetic languages together with spiritual components remains divided because researchers neglect to connect them. The vast selection of materials used in mixed-media techniques includes ink, rice paper and industrial objects alongside synthetic media according to (Sullivan, 2015) but academic research into this connection remains minimal. The selection of materials serves beyond functional purpose because it possesses historical value and cultural meaning while creating essential meanings for audience perception (Clunas, 2004).

Contrary to popular thought the aesthetic elements present in Chinese contemporary mixed-media painting are inadequately researched and analyzed. Current artists in China work with experimental compositions alongside textural elements rather than conventional traditional brushwork and negative space with symbolic motifs as practiced in traditional Chinese art (Andrews, 1994). Understanding how these elements contribute to artistic expression and the overall viewing experience is essential to contextualizing this art form within broader artistic movements.

Nevertheless, spiritual themes play a vital role in shaping artistic narratives, yet their influence on material selection and visual composition is not well-documented. Many contemporary artists draw inspiration from Taoist, Buddhist, and folk traditions, integrating metaphysical ideas into their work (Hearn, 2012). However, the extent to which these spiritual influences guide the creative process and interact with material and aesthetic choices remains unclear.

Hence, this research is motivated by the desire to bridge this interpretative gap. We aim to foster a more comprehensive understanding of this art form and elevate their appreciation on the global stage to ensure that their profound cultural narratives are recognized and celebrated.

1.3 Research Questions

A study analyses modern Chinese mixed-media painting by investigating its combination of classical painting elements with contemporary techniques along with material choices, aesthetic language, and spiritual themes. The essential definitions for the conceptual clarity include:

- I. Spirituality in this context refers to both traditional Chinese philosophical and religious influences (e.g., Taoism, Confucianism, Buddhism) and contemporary personal or cultural reflections expressed through visual narratives. This study investigates how deeply spiritual themes are embedded in artistic choices and to what extent they shape the meaning of mixed-media works.
- II. Aesthetic language includes formal elements such as color, form, texture, space, and composition, which contribute to the visual appeal and symbolic interpretation of artworks.

- III. Material connotations refer to the symbolic and cultural meanings attributed to specific materials used in mixed-media painting, whether traditional (e.g., ink, rice paper, silk) or modern (e.g., acrylic, found objects, industrial materials).

Hence, with the clarity being mentioned above, the following are the research questions which are yet to explore throughout this study.



General research question

How does contemporary Chinese mixed-media painting integrate traditional and modern techniques, material usage, aesthetic language, spiritual themes, and social connotations to create multifaceted artworks that reflect various dimensions of Chinese culture and spirituality?

Specific Research Question

1. What materials are predominantly used in contemporary Chinese mixed-media painting, and how do these choices impact connotations of contemporary Chinese mixed-media painting?
2. What are the recurring spiritual themes in contemporary Chinese mixed-media painting and how do they inform the artist's choice of materials, aesthetic elements, and their overall connotation?
3. What elements constitute the aesthetic language of contemporary Chinese mixed-media painting and how do they contribute to its overall visual appeal and symbolic representation?

1.4 Research Objectives

The objectives of this research on contemporary Chinese mixed-media painting are:

Table

1.1

Research Objectives

Research Objective (RO)	Scope & Limitations
RO1: To examine the connotations of contemporary Chinese mixed-media painting.	Clearly define "connotations" in relation to materials, themes, and artistic intent to ensure a precise focus.
RO2: To identify and analyze the recurring spiritual themes in contemporary Chinese mixed-media painting.	Specify the extent of spiritual themes—whether philosophical, religious, or metaphysical—to align with the study's scope.
RO3: To explore the aesthetic language of contemporary Chinese mixed-media painting, focusing on its formal elements and symbolic representation.	Clarify how aesthetic language is examined—through color, form, texture, and composition—and its contribution to meaning.

Through the successful accomplishment of these objectives, this research aims to contribute to a deeper and more integrated understanding of contemporary Chinese mixed-media painting, illuminating its richness, complexity, and multifaceted character, and opening new avenues for artistic appreciation, scholarly exploration, and cultural engagement.

1.5 Significance of Study

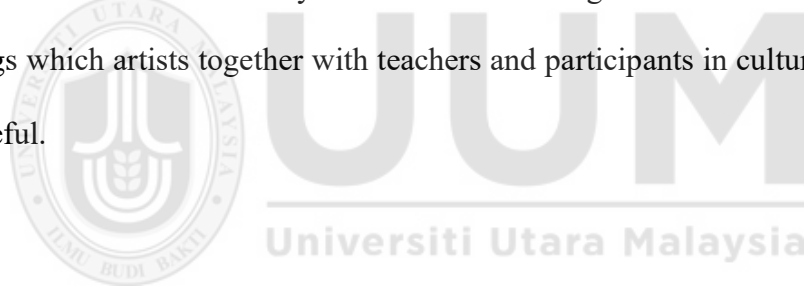
With the thriving development of art today, mixed-media painting faces unprecedented challenges and opportunities. To meet these challenges, artists strive to elevate their artistic cultivation and also continually explore new means of expression. For growth and innovation, mixed-media painting re-examine its painting essence and take it as the leading core. This requires the rational use of traditional artistic expression methods and expanding its development potential in the context of contemporary art through adjusting our ways of thinking and creative techniques.

The ontology language of mixed-media painting is the means by which painters' express thoughts, emotions, concepts, and creative intentions during the creation process. This form of painting not only offers viewers a platform to understand the artwork but also conveys the painter's thoughts and concepts. It is an essential part of the theme of mixed-media painting art, and a necessary path for artists to pursue a unique style. It cannot be denied that techniques and materials play a vital role in the creation of artworks. Still, materials and techniques must depend on the painting's ontology language; otherwise, they are rootless and groundless. The category encompassed by the ontology language of mixed-media painting is broad, but what's most crucial is loyalty to the expression and content representation of the painting type. Therefore, a deep study in this field and establishing the status of the mixed-media painting language is the core task of this research topic.

As an emerging type of painting, mixed-media painting has broadened the space for its development, especially in the establishment of its ontology language. This plays a leading role in clarifying the direction of painting thought. Through analyzing literature, visiting professional exhibitions, and combining current academic research

results, we attempt to systematically organize and study the meaning of the ontology language of mixed-media painting. Comparing it with traditional and modern painting language forms reveals its importance in contemporary art, deepening our understanding of the ontology language of mixed-media painting in the context of contemporary art. This is also the primary goal of this research.

Contemporary Chinese mixed-media painting serves as this research subject because it offers distinct scholarly contributions both theoretically and practically. Our research into this specific field demonstrates contemporary artistic sensibilities and deepens our appreciation of mixed-media art as it constructs links between historical art elements with contemporary artistic practices in the age of global art. This study aims to contribute academically toward understanding mixed-media through valuable learnings which artists together with teachers and participants in cultural fields should find useful.



1.5.1 Theoretical Significance

The research initiative seeks to study ontology language in mixed-media painting through extending previous scholarship. The analysis between mixed-media painting and traditional and modern forms leads to uncovering multifaceted aspects and subtle elements according to (Kester, 2005). The theoretical examination of art performed by (Sinelnik, 2022) receives expanded applicability through the contemporary mixing of multiple artistic elements in Chinese mixed-media painting. The analysis agrees with (Cetinik & She, 2022) that scholars should investigate art with greater depth to develop new interpretations of art classification systems.

The analysis of mixed-media paintings utilizes three essential theories which comprise semiotics and material culture studies with aesthetics for visual and symbolic language interpretation. Through semiotic theory proposed by (Eco, 1979) researchers gain the ability to understand symbols and meanings in artworks which reveal their meaning within traditional Chinese practices. According to (Proen, 1982) the material culture concept establishes the significance of materials since they communicate cultural changes through silent narratives within social and historical contexts. The work of Adorno (Carney, 2020) within aesthetic philosophy establishes methods to analyze formal beauty and complexity as well as expressive depth in mixed-media painting works.

The investigation of traditional and modern methods unification contributed substantially to knowledge about artistic development. There exists a distinctive Chinese cultural characteristic which unites time-tested artistic approaches with modern artistic techniques. The study expands (Groysberg et al., 2018) research by examining cultural continuity alongside innovative exploration. Chinese modern artists connect historical cultural traditions to present-day art while doing so their practices strengthen concepts of cultural adaptation and artistic development. The research examines material selection and visual components to enrich our comprehension of artistic expression as a complex sign system. Research by (Lyu & Liu, 2019) on material symbolism serves as the base for this study since it adds novel insights into the functional aspects of these design elements regarding meaning communication and visual appeal creation. The research (Fichner, 2016) on visual elements such as color, line, texture and form receives theoretical development for contemporary Chinese mixed-media painting which enhances our comprehension of artwork production and

artistic appreciation. The theoretical advancements match current research demands regarding deeper studies on artistic materials which benefit artists.

1.5.2 Practical Significance

An evaluation of ontology language use in mixed-media painting instruction for functional purposes constitutes the research focus. The educational development of novice artists demands grasping contemporary and traditional artistic techniques based on (Albers, 2013). This research applies the work by (Kester, 2011) to establish actionable guidelines that unify the historical dimension with modern artistic standards.

The research findings will provide direction to both artists in practice and curators and art institutions across their operations. Research into contemporary Chinese mixed-media painting requires complete comprehension of artistic forms and their material and aesthetic elements since the hybridization of art has gained significant popularity (Cheng 2012). Material selection and aesthetic components have been analyzed by (Clarke, 2019) to explain their effect on visual design and communication activities thus helping artists develop their creative methods.

The real-world applications of this research study support cultural tradition preservation together with innovative development particularly within China's modern artistic environment (Wang, 2019). The analysis of tradition and modernity in art connects with cultural heritage protection work pursued by (UNESCO, 2015) to support both heritage preservation and innovation development.

This study expands upon (Yang, 2018) by demonstrating the value of modern Chinese mixed-media art in maintaining cultural roots alongside progressive independent exploration. The Chinese government aims to strengthen creative sectors

and boost national soft power by fostering cultural expression (Ministry of Culture and Tourism of China, 2020).

1.6 Scope of Study

This research focuses on delivering extensive knowledge about mixed media painting through examining its historical development, evolution and recent artistic practices along with its cultural importance. The study is organized into three major parts that follow academic and artistic literature standards.

The study investigates the historical growth of mixed media painting by focusing intensely on different artistic techniques used throughout its development. This research assesses the artists' movements toward avant-garde creativity through conventional to avant-garde techniques alongside their connection to culture alongside social and philosophical developments according to (Wang, 2019). A thorough analysis studies the experimental use of multiple materials between various time periods. The selection of materials moves away from natural pigments along with inks into synthetic compounds affecting both artistic methods as well as cultural worth.

The study examines how artists work with mixed media painting today while explaining its different artistic methods combined with materials alongside thematic components. The research investigates mixed media painting as practiced during the contemporary '85 New Wave in China art movement. Artists today break conventional practices through innovative methods to fabricate customized creative works according to (Gladston, 2008). The study also examines educational aspects of mixed media painting through an evaluation of major universities that teach this expression to promote artistic skills development.

This research examines the process of cultural exchange between mixed media painting and the cross-border utilization of materials along with contemporary art narrative diversity. The combination of both traditional Chinese art materials with modern Western techniques produces contemporary art narratives that are more comprehensive according to an analysis. The research examines particular artistic techniques including lacquer utilization in mixed media painting to study favorable cultural aspects from these international partnerships (Wei, 2022).

The methodology uses multiple evaluation techniques which include research literature analysis together with qualitative interviews combined with visual analysis while performing educational assessments across various cultural contexts. The research process maintains ethical practices while relying on both primary and secondary materials for creating a comprehensive study. This research combines three main fields to establish a complete understanding of the detailed mixed media painting discipline.

1.7 Limitation of the Study

The limitations of a research project affect understanding and practicing of study results so investigators need cautious evaluation. The examination of modern mixed media painting presents a substantial restriction because it overlooks historical background information and sustainable artistic developments over time. The research analyzes only Western art traditions together with Chinese expressions which could prevent appropriate evaluation of international art movements that operate beyond their regions. The availability of primary sources together with budgetary and logistical limitations prevent direct observation and experience of contemporary Chinese artwork

(Roller & Lavrakas, 2015). Every researcher brings their personal biases and cultural perspectives when they interpret artwork which affects their analysis. The inspection of advanced mixed media methods encounters technical restrictions which create incomplete knowledge gaps about current painting techniques. The researcher faces difficulties in accessing primary sources and interviews due to language barriers that involve Western art tradition and Chinese art tradition (Wang, 2019). Access to certain artworks and related information might be restricted because of legal and ethical requirements which include obtaining copyrights or obtaining artist permissions. Thus, the research includes valuable findings about mixed media painting but certain aspects might not be fully developed due to the existing limitations.

1.8 Theoretical Background

The theoretical background provides the foundation for understanding the ontology language, material usage, and aesthetic language in contemporary Chinese mixed-media painting. This study draws upon multiple theoretical frameworks, including art ontology, materiality in art, aesthetic theory, semiotics, and cultural theory, to analyze the development and significance of mixed-media painting.

Table 1.2

Theoretical Background of Mixed-Media Painting

Theoretical Framework	Key Concepts	Application in Mixed-Media Painting
Semiotics (Eco, 1976)	• Symbols • Signs • Meaning-making	Decodes how visual symbols and material elements communicate spiritual and

	● Cultural context	conceptual themes in Chinese mixed-media painting.
Material Culture Studies (Prown, 1982)	● Material selection ● Cultural significance ● Historical context	Examines why specific materials are chosen, what they symbolize, and their role in shaping meaning in artwork.
Aesthetic Theory (Adorno, 1970)	● Form ● Content ● Artistic intent ● Visual appeal	Investigates how formal elements (color, line, texture, composition) interact with material choices and spiritual themes to create artistic language.

1.9 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework combines to explain how Connotation of Artworks relates to Spiritual Orientation along with Aesthetic Language and Material Usage and Art Form types in contemporary Chinese mixed-media paintings (Fig. 1.1 shows the framework).

The spiritual orientation of the artwork functions as an abstract directive system which unites conventional faith structures with contemporary artistic interpretation (Tsao, 2015). Research carried out by (Yang, 2018) demonstrates how spiritual elements function as fundamental philosophical elements which produce symbolic value and determine material selection. The way art displays its meaning to viewers makes Aesthetic Language an essential component which artists must consider in their work. Artists utilize visual vocabulary derived from uniting colours with lines and

textures with forms according to (Cheng, 2012). Through element interaction along with their deliberate management the artwork both acquires its aesthetic quality and develops its total art communicative power as noted by (Elkins, 2003).

Thus material usage within the study surpasses physical substances as its fundamental selection criterion. Material choice serves as a symbol according to research by (Sullivan, 2015) and (Krauss, 1985) that reveals historical conditions and cultural identities in addition to societal shifts. The use of traditional pigments together with synthetic materials creates a complex visual and symbolic effect in the artwork. Drawing from both traditional and modern artistic practices Art Form represents the fundamental changes of society together with cultural shifts according to (Wang, 2013) and (Clarke, 2019). The artwork's distinctive connotations result from combining art elements and technical processes that bring unique meaning to the piece during social interactions (Chow, 2018).

The core element of this investigation known as Connotation of Artworks forms the central point of study. The interaction between all identified variables produces a connotation which enables the artist to communicate deeper levels of meaning along with societal messages and personal expressions (Gao, 2019).

The conceptual framework explains the intricate ties among various elements which impact present-day Chinese mixed-media paintings through a complete structured analysis. This research bases its investigative framework on documented studies together with theoretical frameworks and empirical evidence to establish solid groundwork for multidimensional art analysis. The study follows a roadmap that specifies both direction and scope while creating an intellectual framework to understand the complex nature of the research subject.

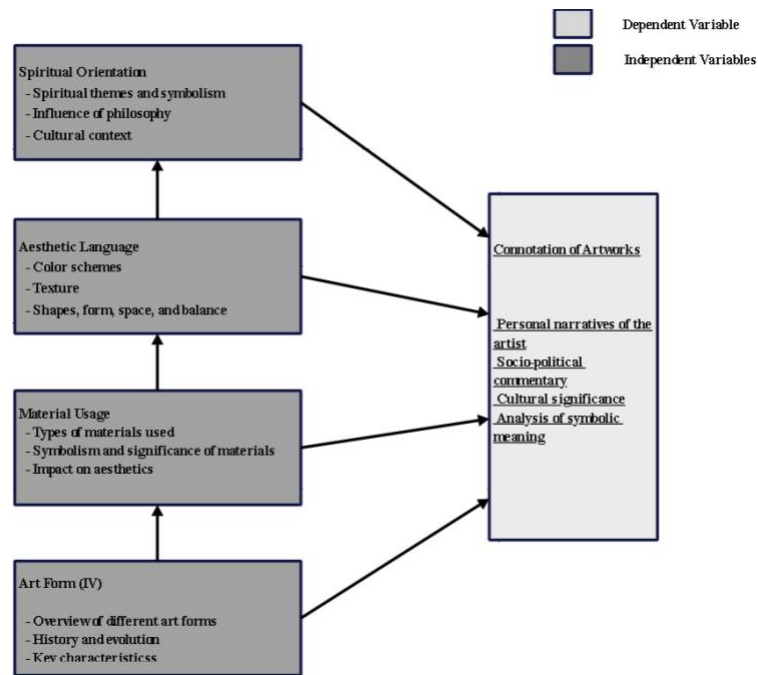


Figure 1.1. Conceptual Framework (Self-Made)

1.10 Definition of Terms

The study uses a conceptual framework that examines systematic relationships between artwork meanings and numerous influencing variables in present-day Chinese mixed-media art.

Conceptual Framework of The Study

Key Concept	Definition & Role in the Study	References
Spiritual Orientation	The philosophical or ideological framework guiding an artist's choice of themes, symbols, and meanings. It includes religious, mystical, or culturally significant beliefs that influence the content and context of the artwork. It also shapes material and aesthetic choices.	Tsao (2015), Yang (2018)
Aesthetic Language	The manipulation of visual elements such as colour, line, texture, and form to create a cohesive artistic expression. It defines the visual vocabulary through which artists communicate meaning and enhance artistic appeal.	Cheng (2012), Elkins (2003), Adorno (1970)
Material Usage	The selection and application of various materials, including pigments, inks, and synthetic substances, which carry historical, cultural, and symbolic significance. Material choices influence both the expressive and conceptual dimensions of the artwork.	Sullivan (2015), Prown (1982)
Art Form	The structural and stylistic methods used in an artwork, reflecting a blend of traditional and modern techniques. It includes genre, style, method, and technique, shaping the artwork's overall composition and meaning.	Clarke (2019), Wang (2013)

Key Concept	Definition & Role in the Study	References
Connotation of Artworks	The underlying meaning and symbolism embedded in contemporary Chinese mixed-media paintings, influenced by spiritual orientation, aesthetic language, material usage, and art form. This study examines how these elements interact to create layered interpretations.	-
Contemporary Chinese Mixed-Media Painting	A genre of art originating in China that integrates multiple artistic media such as paint, ink, fabric, and other materials. It embodies both traditional Chinese artistic heritage and modern global influences.	-
Mixed-Media	A visual art form that incorporates multiple media, encouraging experimentation and innovation. It may include a combination of painting, ink, sculpture, photography, and other materials.	Elkins (2003)

1.11 Organization of Thesis

Each chapter of this thesis completes a specific task to examine how material application and aesthetic elements impact artwork significance in modern Chinese mixed-media artwork. Chapter 1 establishes basic foundations by presenting both a historical review of current Chinese mixed-media painting conditions and by defining the study pursuits along with research questions. The assessment of existing art scholarship presented in chapter 2 will study real-world applications simultaneously with theoretical understanding. The third chapter will guide readers through the actual implementation phase beginning with choosing artworks before engaging with artists

and proceeding to analyze theme contents. Chapter four reveals discoveries that merge theory with practice through investigations before the discussion analyzes these findings according to cultural trends and social observations in chapter five. Chapter 6 will present a summary of the discoveries by presenting academic and artistic contributions made through the thesis while offering recommendations for future investigations. The chapters within this work develop an integrated study which connects academic understanding with actual contemporary Chinese artistic practices.



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This study presents an artistic landscape that is constantly changing in our contemporary China. The focus is on how traditional and modern comprehensive media artworks find ways to coexist and blend together. Integrating a variety of distinct artistic techniques and materials, this research aims to explore the role of different materials in artistic aesthetics and symbols, the repeated spiritual themes, and interpret the social, political and cultural aspects.

To understand this research further, a wide range of academic sources including journals, monographs and case studies along with other scholarly sources are selected. Besides chronicling historical development of mixed media in China this literature also gives deep analysis of current trends and future expectations.

Overall, this chapter intends to build a more holistic view of contemporary mixed media art in China through detailed engagement with a range of diverse perspectives. We deeply examine the interlocking elements such as materials and techniques as well as conceptual frameworks that strongly influence meanings and receptions of these artworks in the broader field of art and culture. Within this exploration, we also illuminate a complex blending of such elements.

2.2 Concept of Mixed-Material Painting

2.2.1 Material in Painting

Matter exists around us and is fundamental to our development of life. The evolution of this material has had a great effect on the development of mankind, and this change in turn has promoted the development of matter. Indeed, the path of human development is often intertwined with existing data (Kretzer, 2016).

In ancient times, people relied heavily on natural resources such as rocks, wood, and by-products such as animal fur and bone. Stone was an important substance in early social life. About 250,000 years ago, our ancestors made use of basic materials, such as sticks and stones, despite their obvious shortcomings. Stone tools of this age included knives, axes, shovels, etc. On this basis, stone tools were improved, with axes being an important representative (Korn, 2015).

In the course of human development, 10,000 years ago, the treatment of stone has extended to the process of hammering, crushing, and polishing. As a result, the manufacturing process of stone tools became increasingly sophisticated. Polished stones have higher precision and sharper properties. Arguably, one of the most important things about the Neolithic period is the pottery tools, which are evidence that people used fire. This innovation not only improved people's living standards but also laid the foundation for the development of the copper smelting industry (Yigitcanlar, 2016). Although in the Neolithic decline period, natural pure copper utensils had begun to be used, due to the scarcity of raw materials, stone tools remained the mainstream. However, with the continuous development of copper smelting and casting technology, people began to use copper objects, thus opening the Copper Age (Webb & Knapp, 2020).

Iron was first used around 2000 BC, initially from meteorites. The newly formed iron is less pure and more soft. However, nearly two hundred years later, the West Asians improved this method, although there were still some impurities in it. The Chinese in the Spring and Autumn Period, inspired by bronze smelting, created the casting process. The invention can make all kinds of iron products directly cast and formed, thus significantly improving productivity. Indeed, with the invention of iron and the subsequent development of smelting technology, human culture entered a new era (Cullen, 2016).

In history, there have been four epoch-making industrial revolutions, and these four industrial revolutions are based on the continuous exploration and modification of matter. Every time there is a breakthrough in science and technology, there will be a new understanding of the requirements of substances, thus promoting the emergence of new materials. At the end of the 18th century, the British were the first to discover the steam engine, which was the world's earliest industrial revolution. This landmark event improved the smelting process and ushered in a new era of steelmaking (McLelland III & Doane, 2015). In the late 19th century, with the continuous development of electric energy and production technology, a new round of industrial revolution was represented by inorganic non-metallic and polymer materials (Rashid et al., 2022). In the middle of the 20th century, due to the invention of nuclear energy, mankind entered a new round of industrial revolution, and the status of man-made and semiconductors also rose (Hecht, 2010). The "Four scientific and technological revolutions" since the 1970s have led to the emergence of new materials such as inorganic nonmetals, metals, and composites (Axinte, 2011).

There is no doubt that material played an important role throughout history. Their thoughts have penetrated all aspects of art, with oil painting as the most important

way. The evolution of oil painting media is inseparable from the changes in oil painting philosophy, which often causes changes. These links are well illustrated by past examples. For example, the famous Chinese artist Qi Baishi often uses unconventional materials in his creations. Qi Baishi is famous for his unique painting style, especially his shrimp, which has a concise and vigorous brushwork. This creation method is not a simple creation, but a deliberate abandonment of traditional materials and techniques, and a more direct and expressive way of creation (Wong, 2019).

Pablo Picasso once said that all creation begins with destruction (Dufour & Steane, 2014). This sentence highlights a painter's repeated attempts to deconstruct common materials in order to create a distinctive style. As a pioneer of Chinese contemporary art, Wu Guanzhong often combines Chinese artistic techniques with contemporary western aesthetics in his creation process. His work shows how innovations in materials and the involvement of various artistic schools have had a profound impact on oil painting thought and aesthetic orientation (Sandilands & Clark, 2010). The innovation and exploration of correct materials plays a crucial role in the development of fine arts. While recognizing the importance of the development and exploitation of such materials, we should also note that they are not the only decisive elements in the development of art. In essence, although painting is a visual work of art with natural properties, it cannot be limited only to its material properties. The expressive technique of painting is inseparable from the interaction between different materials. From the ancient and modern point of view, the creative element of painting has a close connection with its origin, and gives it a tactile form. Taking into account the two dimensions of oil painting, as long as the material meets the requirements of graphic design, it can be used as the carrier of oil painting. Throughout its development,

painters have used various materials, such as oil painting, rice paper, etc., as well as non-traditional materials to form their own unique style and techniques.

Zhang Daqian often tries to break out of conventions and values changes in Chinese painting techniques (Li, M., 2017). He is best known for his ink landscape paintings, which use different textures and sometimes use his hands or fingertips to create unique shapes. Zhang Daqian's development in painting skills reflects his willingness to try various media, his great importance to the concept of art, and his breakthrough in the limitations of tools and materials used in the past. Xu Beihong once said that matter is "the transformation of vision into reality that can be touched." Xu Beihong's organic combination of Chinese painting skills and Western realistic techniques is an important factor in the modernization of Chinese art. He believes that the selection of subject matter can cross different cultural differences and make viewers feel the diversity of diversity and integration. If a picture is an expression of the artist's imagination, then the picture is also a work. The word "material" is generally used to refer to material objects, and resonates in other aspects such as materials science. Some art scholars are particularly interested in material-oriented art research, and this interest comes from their personal experience.

Mr. Liu Haisu of Shanghai Academy of Fine Arts once said: "Matter is not only the matter we touch, but also the soul of the world we live in. No matter it is tangible, empty, or even invisible, our feelings, our memories, can become the essence of art." Liu Haisu extends "material" to the category of "matter", believing that everything can express "matter" and "abstract thinking". This broad definition not only highlights the multiple possibilities of "material" in art, but also reflects its historical significance. However, we must realize that in this broader context, "material" is not just a pure work of art.

In his famous book *Reflections on Traditional and Modern Art*, Xu Beihong borrowed the concept of "gold", "wood", "water", "fire" and "earth" from the five Chinese elements. He examines the effects of various materials and techniques used in classical Chinese art. Xu Beihong compares the composition elements in painting with various factors, and discusses the cyclic interaction between them and the "life stage". In a special way, he organically combines the five-element theory of "complementing and competing" with the composition of painting, showing the special features of "tradition" and "modernity" in Chinese art (Wang Jun, 2011).

Art materials can be classified according to their function and use. The term "painting support" includes basic substances such as oil painting, rice paper, and silk. On this basis, the corresponding substances (such as pigments, media, etc.) are stratified. In his famous work, *Handbook of Materials and Techniques for Artists* (Mayer, 1991), Meyer stressed that the rise of modernism had injected many new materials into the art world. The two materials are combined to capture the natural nature of the painting and interact under the artist's guidance.

From the point of view of historical materials, the oil painting themes of this period can be summarized into two aspects. The first category includes traditional media rooted in Chinese, European and American cultures. These techniques include ink painting, oil painting, and drawing (Sullivan, 2008). These include oil paints, especially Chinese paints, gouache paintings and gouache paintings. On the other material, it began to change to non-traditional materials, which is a kind of acceptance of non-traditional materials. Sullivan pointed out that "new" here not only refers to the innovation at the chemical level, but more importantly, the transformation of traditional oil painting materials (Sullivan, 2008). Although they are not commonly used, they are generally classified according to their nature, function and physical condition.

From the perspective of "history", the innovation of "material" has had a profound effect on art. Lin Fengmian, as an important representative of Chinese contemporary art, has always advocated continuous innovation and development in materials, techniques and methods during his creation process (Guo Wei, 2018). He firmly believes that by using new materials and new means, the essence of Chinese painting can be reshaped. Andrews points out that Lin Fengmeng's ambition is unquestionable for the future of Chinese painting, and it is also a valuable reflection on the art activities in the world today (Guo Wei, 2018). This creation is a break from tradition and an interpretation of the contemporary spirit.

In his masterpiece *Metaphysical Landscape*, Wang Jusheng emphasized the significance of in-depth understanding of material properties to the creation of fine arts. Wang Jusheng argues that the deep grasp of the material is the connection between the artist's inner world and the outer world. Without a grasp of this, its spirit is "invisible" (Andrews & Shen, 2012). In his book *Chinese Art History*, Feng Yuan has made a deep reflection on the development of contemporary art media. He points out that since predecessors have created so many techniques and media, successors may need to constantly open up their own creative space (Andrews & Shen, 2012). Deeply influenced by Lin Fengmian's "radical" thought, Feng Yuan paid special attention to the important role of material excavation in the formation of fine art modeling during the transformation in the 1980s.

2.2.2 Comprehensive Materials

Since Cezanne appeared, modern art has become an important force in art history, and a number of new artistic schools such as Picasso, Matisse, Duchamp,

Kandinsky and Dali have been recognized by people (Witham, 2013). Throughout the European and American painting circles, Picasso and Braque integrated many characteristic materials in their creation, such as wood grain paper and waste newspaper (Paulescu, 2015). The representative of Pop art movement Rauschenberg, the representative of poverty art movement Tapias, and the representative of neo-expressionism Giver all carried out experiments and explorations that broke through the tradition on this basis. Their choice of the "boundary" they live in is a redefinition of the "nature" and "structure" of the era they live in (Kline, 2013). In the selection of materials, Chinese painters are also constantly exploring their own creative methods and concepts, and convey far-reaching meanings in their works. Its experimental nature had a profound impact on the development of Chinese art in the future (Male, 2019).

In the early 20th century, Chinese pioneers such as Xu Beihong and Lin Fengmian went to Europe to study, bringing realism, impressionism and other modern art trends to China. This combination provides a new interpretation of Chinese and Western art creation in the context of China (Raitley, 2011). After the founding of the People's Republic of China, China began to adopt the former Soviet Union's painting composition (Vickers Press, 2013). An integrated educational strategy, including from draft to final creation, focuses on the social and political dimensions of fine art (Gurrell, 2010). Through consulting relevant materials, it was found that although the Soviet oil painting style was introduced after the founding of New China in the early 20th century, there was still a lack of research on the material of the architecture map before the 1980s (Joyeux-Prunel, 2019).

In China, with the arrival of the new century, Western modern and contemporary art has entered China, which has a great impact on the creation of local painters. His choice of art materials and acceptance of new art concepts are important

influences on art creation. In this context, more and more scholars have conducted in-depth research on oil painting materials. In the 1980s and 1990s, the Chinese art world increasingly went global, and European and American painters introduced traditional European techniques, especially in oil painting, into China. Such as the Central Academy of Fine Arts, Lu Xun Academy of Fine Arts and other famous universities, has become an important base for cultural and artistic exchanges. In particular, famous French painters Pierre Guinand and Jean DuBois were invited to give speeches in China, and the "Du Bois technique" proposed by Du Bois was widely recognized by Chinese painters (Gong, 2012). With this impetus, the Academy began to cooperate with art institutions around the world in 1997. In particular, the association with the San Francisco Academy of Fine Arts, under the strong promotion of Chinese American painters such as Zhu Wei and Jackson Lee, shows the great importance of Western oil painting (Wang, 2022). This kind of communication has a profound influence on the development of Chinese modern art.

At the same time, a large number of Chinese painters were also affected by this new international impact and began their exploration of material. The creative explosion produced a new generation of art that departed from classical standards. Among them, Shangyang is the representative, whose representative is the "Dao series"; Wang Huaqing's "Footprints" and other linen paintings, represented by "metamorphic landscape", Zhang Yuan formed a unique self-image in the continuous exploration and exploration of materials and techniques (Fan & Feng, 2019). They not only imbued their work with a sense of novelty, but also transformed the material from a pure medium into a symbol of strong beauty.

In the 1980s, the term "mixed media" emerged in China and coincided with the concept of "mixed media" in the West. In her book *The History of Modern Chinese Art*

(Zhang et al., 2020), Lu Yao points out that art creation in the English language is often divided according to the materials used. Therefore, artworks that combine various materials together are called "composite materials", which can also be said to be "mixed media". Yao Lu et al. proposed English translation methods in the context of Chinese art, such as "mixed media" and "combined materials" (Zhang et al., 2020). The term "avant-garde" is meant to sum up avant-garde art that does not fall into the conventional category. Although the term "mixed media" derives from oil painting, it has been extended to equipment, sculpture and other fields, which reflect the worldwide trend of art in the 20th century.

The interpretation of "mixed media" in Chinese art theory mostly refers to "comprehensive materials" or "comprehensive materials", and the interpretation of it is mostly "comprehensive materials". The term includes many fields from equipment, performances, traditional oil painting, sculpture and so on. Mr. Zhao Ming pointed out in the Innovation of Chinese Contemporary Art (Liu et al., 2015) that this tendency has been fully reflected in many aspects. For example, Xu Bing's famous work "Book of Heaven" as a "mixed material", shows the coordination and unity between paper, wood and ink. One of Li Xiang's works of art, Stone of Eternity, was featured in a large-scale exhibition at the Zhejiang Art Museum in 1992, which combined elements of stone, metal and wood and won universal acclaim. The same is true of Zeng Fanzhi's signature "mask", which perfectly combines traditional oil painting and cloth, thus earning the reputation of "comprehensive media painting". In addition, CAI Guoqiang's "gunpowder" paintings can also be classified as "comprehensive media", because he is very creative in the use of "gunpowder" and "paper".

Painters usually indicate the materials and techniques used in their work categories. Zhou Li, who graduated from the China Academy of Fine Arts in 1986, has

been called "collage" for his "Whispers in Ancient Villages". Wu Lan's "Echoes of Genesis" is also an important result of the exhibition, which uses media such as "ink and collage" to divide categories. Among them, there are Silent Whispers, Time Dialogue, Blood Series by Zhang Peili, etc. These works have a wide range of composition, involving acrylic, oil on canvas, metal, porcelain, wood and other materials (Zhang et al., 2022). In Sun Xun's *The Paradox of the Night*, he uses a unique way to have both a new style and a new style, which is slightly different from his previous painting techniques (Li, 2020). "85 New Wave" is a very influential force, it produced a number of avant-garde art, including experimental art, New wave art, postmodern art. "Modernist Reflections", "Art Frontiers", "Innovative Vision" and other works featuring comprehensive media art capture the essence of contemporary art trends. Many different exhibitions were held in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Zhong Chen, 2012).

In the 1980s, new concepts such as "comprehensive materials" and "mixed materials" appeared in the Chinese art world, which was an important stage in the development of Chinese art. This change is not only a morphological evolution, but also a larger rebellion against a deep art tradition. Modern painters, such as Zhang Xiaogang's Blood Series and Wang Guangyi's Great Criticism, try to break the conventions and use comprehensive materials to express their unique narrative and critical perspectives (Zhang, 2022). The term "mixed media" in Chinese art essentially refers to works that incorporate various non-traditional elements outside of traditional oil painting (Zhang, 2022).

2.2.3 Mixed-materials or Mixed-Media Painting

Chinese painting (such as Zhang Daqian's "*Misty Rain in the South of the Yangtze River*"), Van Gogh's "*Starry Night*" and other Western paintings have long been their unique artistic style. Throughout the past, until the 20th century, the emphasis was placed on expression, ignoring the intrinsic properties of materials. This highlights the role of material as an accessory whose value is largely determined by its function, while elements such as tone, tone, and shape play an important role in determining the visual narrative of a work (Teo, 2015).

In the early 20th century, there was a great turning point in the creation of fine arts, that is, the value and function of the oil painting material itself. After the founding of the People's Republic of China, "nationalism", "oil painting", "printmaking", "sculpture", "mural painting" (also known as "Chinese painting", "oil painting", "printmaking", "engraving", "wall", etc.) played an important role in the development of Chinese art (Zhang, 2017). As traditional categories developed and changed in the 1980s, many creative art styles also emerged. Xu Bing's "Tobacco Plan" and some other representative "hybrid painting" is the most representative one, which seamlessly combines a variety of materials, thus breaking the traditional boundaries of art.

"Comprehensive material painting" is a deviation from traditional painting. In 2010, the Committee of "Comprehensive Material Oil Painting and Art Preservation and Restoration" of the China Artists Association certified this novel expression (Wang, 2022). Since then, the profound meaning and charm of this artistic path has caused numerous debates and controversies, highlighting its central position as a modern art exchange. However, before the 1980s, the integration of oil painting art was a long time ago. Since its establishment, Hangzhou National Academy of Painting has actively

advocated the blending of Chinese and Western cultures. Lin Fengmian, the prestigious principal of the university, summarized these ideas in his landmark book, *Redefining Aesthetics: Chinese and Western Perspectives*, and highlighted the university's unique teaching program, which perfectly combines traditional Chinese ink painting techniques with modern painting techniques (Li, 2021). Since the 1920s, this unconventional way of art creation has crossed the boundary of the two major schools, marking the beginning of Chinese art teaching had entered a transitional period.

Adhering to the school philosophy of Hangzhou Academy of Fine Arts, Zhejiang Academy of Fine Arts established the major of Chinese painting on this basis, which is also a cross-field teaching method of Hangzhou Academy of Fine Arts. Under the guidance of such a concept, Zhejiang Academy of Fine Arts has emerged a number of representative painters, such as Fang Zengxian, whose *"Whispers of Nature"* is an important representative of Chinese modern art; Gu Shengyue, famous for his creative *"Juxtaposed Reality"*; Song Zhongyuan, the 2018 film *"Fleeting Colors"* (Huang Yingling). Although the fundamental purpose of the school was to promote mutual appreciation between the two different schools of fine art, it did not initially focus on the in-depth study of materials such as ink, pigments, and the techniques behind them. Neither the discussion of the new painting media nor the deeper discussion of its internal characteristics have been further deepened. Until the early 1980s, different art styles remained distinct. The Chinese Artists Federation and some other academic organizations still follow the traditional division model (Andrews & Shen, 2012), oil painting, Chinese painting, printmaking, sculpture, etc., are independent.

In 1994, the Chinese National Academy of Arts launched the "comprehensive painting" major for the first time nationwide. Guided by the vision of Chen Shouyi, this project is committed to redefining the boundaries of traditional art. Chen pointed out

that the idea of "comprehensive painting" is not just a mixture of several different styles. Instead, it combines some fundamental principles inherent in the Chinese and Western art traditions to form a refined interpretation and expression (Ke et al., 2022). The purpose of this course is not just synthesis. Its purpose is to expand the form of art expression and explore the enormous potential inherent in various artistic media. In his book *Comprehensive Art: Comprehensive Painting Landscape*, Mr. Liu pointed out that the scope of "comprehensive art" is not limited to a specific category. Instead, it leads to a broader conceptual category and redefines and expands the traditional concept of oil painting (Liu et al., 2023). Such an integrated teaching method is not intended to replace the existing art education. This theory conforms to the philosophy contained in the Outline of Art Teaching and the research method of the "early painting department", advocating the planned integration of different themes and techniques (Wang, 2016).

Since the 1990s, the term "comprehensive painting" has become popular and still has an important practical role today. In a paper titled "*Introduction to Mixed Materials Painting*" published by Zhao Mu and Liu Xuguang in the *Journal of Chinese Contemporary Art* in 2012, they describe it as a multi-purpose art form composed of a variety of different materials (Zhao Liu, 2012). Materials include natural materials, pigments and canvases, but also creatively add collages, which include prints, chemicals or industrial raw materials. In 2018, a survey on "comprehensive painting" conducted by Zhinet confirmed the significance of this term, and a number of professional papers with high visibility emerged, which also marks the term in the field of art has gained general recognition and respect (Ma, 2022).

In recent years, the term "comprehensive material painting" has gradually become a research hotspot in academic circles. Yao Erchang explored this in depth in his book *Oil Painting Materials and Techniques* published in 2015, focusing on the

integration of various media (such as oil, water, emulsion, etc.) with non-traditional painting elements (Yao, 2015). Zheng Yi, in his book *Exploration of the Medium of Modern Painting* published in 2017, gives this interpretation: "Composite material painting" is not so much a limited definition, but rather a special art form. Similarly, Xiao Huang and Zhang Yuan, in their article *Beyond Boundaries: The Coming of Mixed Media in Chinese Contemporary Art* published in 2018, made a broad exploration of the term "mixed media", arguing that it is an artistic activity combining multiple material elements (Xiao & Zhang, 2018). The research of this project will provide an important scientific basis for in-depth understanding of composite material painting.

Hu Wei, president of the Comprehensive Material Oil Painting Art Branch, finally gave a detailed definition of the comprehensive material oil painting (Year of the Tiger) after conducting a questionnaire survey of the members. In his research, he believes that such a painting style is not just a combination of materials and styles. This is a development process from one technique to the combination of multiple techniques, and also a grasp of the artistic essence of "original ecology". Its purpose is not simply to combine various kinds of paintings, but to deliberately make the boundaries of various kinds of paintings clearer, so as to better reflect the current forms of artistic expression and reflect the subtle differences of modern civilization. Rather than accumulate, reintegrate, it is better to reaccumulate, which brings a new vision of "mixed media". It is important to note that the amount of material used does not determine the form of an art. Although the term has a variety of connotations, it does not require a quantification of substances. In the international art market, there are various forms of expression, and they are often grouped under the category of "original

expression". The works have both commonness and individuality because of the aesthetic charm of the material selection itself.

Through the study of "comprehensive painting" and "composite painting", it can be found that the purpose of both is the same: to conduct a deeper study of the material, and pay attention to the essential meaning of the work itself. They both strive to maximize the picture and emotional effects of the two planes. Some scholars have expressed their views on the principles and boundaries of mixed media art. But some experts are wary. Yang Jinsong from the China Academy of Fine Arts said that the new generation of painters and professional painters, especially those with creative consciousness, need to have an overall understanding of the different cultural and social differences in China when creating and expressing emotional resonance (Yang, 2016). He prefers to focus on creating good work rather than on establishing "identity." Zhang Yuan of the Central Academy of Fine Arts also has a similar view, he feels that the essence of comprehensive material painting is not a specific definition, but the practitioner's pursuit of its art. He sees oil painting with integrated materials as a way with infinite potential, and points out that this exploration should not be limited to pure conceptual exploration (Zhang, 2014).

In this paper, it is difficult to classify the art form of composite material oil painting by conventional methods because of its complexity and form. From an aesthetic point of view, although it is represented in a non-traditional material, it eschews traditional categories such as oil, ink, paint, printing, watercolor, drawing, and other established painting styles. Both of these rights are limited, and there is a great deal of freedom. The term "contemporary" used here represents an avant-garde approach to painting, a genre that has grown tremendously since the Reformation, especially after the establishment of the Art Council for Integrated Material Oil Painting

and Art Preservation and Restoration in 2010. This stage is an important developmental stage in the understanding and representation of synthetic materials (Hung, 2010).

2.3 Evolution of Technique Integration in Chinese Mixed-Media Painting

The comprehensive use of various media art techniques in China is a continuous combination of traditional and modern techniques. This development reflects the eternal exchange of Chinese art traditions and modern forms of expression.

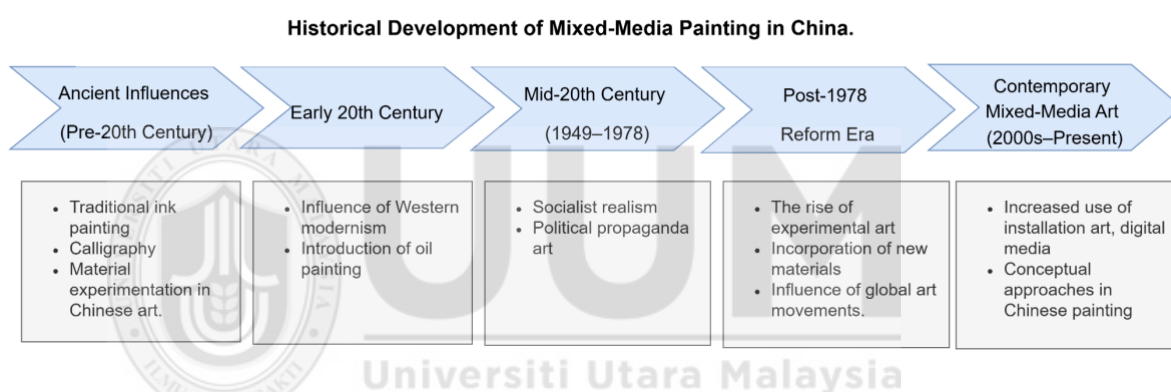


Figure 2.1. Historical Development of Mixed-Media Painting in China

Wu Hong made a pioneering discussion of this issue in his 1999 article, "*The Rapid Change: Experimental Art in China at the end of the Twentieth Century*." Wu Hong has made a detailed record of the creative artistic activities in China in the early 21st century, and has made a detailed analysis of the application and adaptation of Chinese artists to comprehensive media techniques. His research on the texture, tone and form of materials in modern Chinese art has been greatly inspired (Hung, 2010).

Art in Turmoil: China's Cultural Revolution (Richard et al., 2010) fleshes out the narrative. Through the detailed description of Chinese art works of various eras, this book shows the process of transformation and the indomitable character of the painters.

Although this book does not focus solely on integrated media, it also provides a context for understanding how different materials and technologies are combined.

In addition, the book *Art in China* by (Clunas, 1997) tells us a broader context of The Times. Despite his time span, Clunas continues to develop the materials and techniques of Chinese art, tracing its evolution from ancient times to modern times. His research provides an important reference for those who wish to understand the roots of the integration of Chinese comprehensive media and art.

By combining the existing work and combining with other relevant literature, we can more deeply understand the development path and connotation of scientific and technological integration in Chinese modern comprehensive media art.

2.3.1 Overview of the development of traditional Chinese painting

To understand the creation and development of traditional Chinese painting, it is necessary to have a relatively complete understanding of the historical origin of traditional Chinese painting techniques. Chinese traditional painting has a long history of development, and has formed many schools of technique, each with its own aesthetic and philosophy. This creates a broad context for the complexity of today's comprehensive art. Chinese painting has a long history. In the Neolithic period, China already had the art of painted pottery and murals. What is shown in these murals and painted pottery is the respect and love of the ancestors for all things in heaven and earth, reflecting the respect and love of the ancestors for all things in heaven and earth, reflecting the exquisite and lively life of the ancestors. Figure 2.1 is a painted pottery

decorated with fish, birds and geometric patterns, reflecting the decorative technology and aesthetic taste of the period.



Figure 2.2. Neolithic coloured pottery

Chinese painting is an art tradition with a long history. The reason for this continuation lies in the intrinsic nature of Chinese culture and its openness to innovation, which is based on fundamental principles. Wu Hong, in his famous book, *Ever Changing: Experimental Art in China at the End of the Twentieth Century*, explores the dynamics and techniques of the continuous development of Chinese art, and highlights how painters combine tradition with practice (Hung, 2010). In addition, in his book *Chinese Art*, summarized how "Chinese painting aesthetics" was formed through "constant" and "absorbing" multiple factors, and had a profound impact on the development path of "comprehensive media" (Sullivan, 2008).

Ink painting is one of the most representative art forms in China (see Figure 2.2 above). His style does not simply describe the physical world, but emphasizes balance, rhythm, and the philosophy that less is more. It is a transfer of the subject's soul, or core of mind, in line with Taoist principles, which emphasize harmony and balance.



Figure 2.3. Ink-wash painting (Shui-mo Hua)

Chinese painting art has experienced hundreds of years of development, and each dynasty has its own characteristics and achievements. During the Tang and Song dynasties were the peak of artistic development, each school has its own characteristics. Landscape painting, figure painting and flower-and-bird painting are the most prominent categories. (Clunas, 1997) gives a detailed account of the complexity and stylistic development of this period in his book *The Art of China*. As shown in Figure 2.4, a Tang Dynasty landscape painting depicts distant mountains, near water, and dense woods with delicate brushstrokes, demonstrating the sensitivity of the artist to painting at that time.



Figure 2.4. Tang Dynasty Landscape Painting by (Wang Wei, 618-970)

On the other hand, Gongbi painting is another characteristic of Chinese painting. Fine brushwork painting is different, it requires meticulous preparation and completion, and it is not as random as ink painting. Each of the single drawing lines of Gongbi painting convey rich content and enhance the beauty of the picture. As of its fine portrayal and deep symbolic meaning, Gongbi painting embodies the delicacy and delicacy of traditional Chinese painting. Painters who are famous for their unique techniques, such as Qian Xuan and Zhou Chen had made valuable contributions to the diversified development of traditional Chinese art (Barnhart et al., 1997).



Figure 2.5. Gongbi painting style by Song Dynasty, (960-1279)

In addition, Chinese art also has a special expression of perspective. Multi-point perspective is a commonly used method in Chinese painting, which is different from the traditional painting method based on straight lines. (Barnhart et al., 1997) made a more in-depth study of this and believed that viewers can cross time and space through painting, which coincides with the Taoist idea of "unity of heaven and earth". Chinese landscape painting presents an immersive and perceptual feature due to its different perspectives, which greatly changes the viewer's sensory feelings and presents a philosophical image of "heaven and earth" (Bahat et al., 1997).

On this basis, Chinese painting is also closely related to other fine arts such as calligraphy, poetry and seals (Fang & Zakaria, 2024). This shows that the art is multidisciplinary as one area can explain the other, their combined effect forms a more complete and satisfying aesthetic experience. Among them, the training of calligraphy has a profound influence on painting. This technique involves an understanding of the use of the pen, rhythm, and structure.

2.3.2 Introduction and Adoption of Modern Techniques

In the history of Chinese art development, the development course of Chinese painting from tradition to contemporary is an important chapter. The driving force of this evolution comes from the social and cultural changes, the influence of external factors, and the creativity of Chinese painters to express modern ideas and experiences in their own way of creation. Looking back on this history can lay a foundation for us to understand the development of contemporary Chinese comprehensive media art.

The transition of the 19th century to 20th century is an important period of great changes in Chinese history. As it is the period of promoting cross artistic ideas exchanged globally, where cultural and artistic foundation has also changed. (Sullivan, 2008) believes that under this background, Chinese art creation has been greatly impacted. Wu Hong pointed out in his book *"Making History: Wu Hong on Contemporary Art"* that Chinese painters gradually formed a new "artistic vocabulary" through the absorption of western techniques (Hung, 2008). During this period, a large number of Chinese classical art works such as oil paintings and paintings were quickly incorporated into them. Figure 2.6 is an early work of Chinese women's subject painting, characterized by Western perspective and contrast between light and dark, which is an initial period of Chinese painting techniques.



Figure 2.6. A female figure, Western technique integration in Early Chinese Oil

Paintings

Among the contemporary painting techniques integrated with Chinese painting, the linear perspective, light and shade contrast and oil painting are the most prominent. Linear perspective is a kind of expression technique, it can give people a depth of field, three-dimensional feeling, different from the traditional Chinese multi-point landscape painting. In the use of light and shadow, a strong sense of drama is generated, which makes the work more realistic and profound. In addition, this is a new medium for Chinese painters, which has its own unique characteristics and can be manipulated with more materials and colors (see Figure 2.7). At that time, avant-garde painters such as Xu Beihong and Liu Haisu skillfully integrated this new technique with the philosophy and aesthetic spirit of Chinese oil painting. This painting not only shows the realism and objectivity of Western art, but also shows the delicate and delicate soul characteristics of Chinese classical art.



Figure 2.7. Chiaroscuro “Night Watch”

Rembrandt. (1642). The Night Watch [Oil on canvas]. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

Contemporary art schools such as Impressionism, expressionism and Cubism, which originated from the West, have also had a profound impact on Chinese painting. This design focuses on the feeling of the real world, allowing the artist to make bold experiments with color, form and mood to express his ideas. Shanghai painters, for example, were impacted by this kind of "modernism" in their works, which had both the roughness of Western aesthetic and the delicate emotion of traditional Chinese painting.

However, it is important to emphasize that the integration of Western science and technology into Chinese art was not a mere act of imitation. In the book, *Painters and Politics in China*, highlights the strategic importance of such inclusion. This enables Chinese artists to carry out international artistic exchanges while highlighting their own cultural characteristics (Andrews et al.,1994). In the process of using modern techniques, Chinese painters can express the current subject matter and maintain their own artistic heritage.

In the 1980s, Xu Beihong, a famous Chinese artist, reformed Chinese painting. He paid attention to the skills and principles of Western realistic painting, such as perspective, anatomy, color and composition, and applied them to the creation of Chinese painting. This is clearly reflected in his Chinese paintings "*Nine Fang Gao*" (Figure 2.7) and "*Yu Gong Yishan*" (Figure 2.8), which are characterized by an effective combination of traditional Chinese painting techniques and Western sketching methods, and the combination of Chinese ink painting, wrinkle method and light and shade contrast with Western painting's light and shade and block surface, giving Chinese painting a modern charm. From the process of introducing and absorbing Chinese painting art, we can see the adaptation and innovation of Chinese painting art to contemporary art.



Figure 2.8. "Nine Square Gao" by (Xu Beihong, 1931)



Figure 2.9. "Yugong Yishan" by (Xu Beihong, 1940)

2.3.3 Fusion of Traditional and Modern Techniques

Modern artists blend traditional and contemporary techniques in Chinese mixed-media artwork to create a refined intersection between modernity and history between Chinese and Western cultural practices (Wang, 2013). The deep synthesis stems from China's cultural evolution which combines heritage art practices with state-of-the-art global methods (Clarke, 2019).

Artist Xu Bing merges traditional Chinese calligraphy with contemporary printing methods throughout his works which exemplify this combination. Through his renowned piece "Book from the Sky" he uses real Chinese characters until viewers discover they are invented forms that question traditional language mechanisms (Tsao & Ames, 2011). Artist Cai Guo-Qiang embraces Chinese heritage by using gunpowder as his medium to produce modern visual displays. Rivenc et al. (2006) describe how His work displays societal complexities of modern China through dual elements of controlled traditional techniques and disruptive modern materials.

The field of study lacks systematic research to explain the realization of this integration between traditional and contemporary artistic methods in China. The artists work to unite traditional artistic principles with current spontaneous design approaches. What challenges related to artistic and philosophical work do they face in addition to their methods of overcoming these challenges? The artistic synthesis within contemporary Chinese art represents parallel shifts in Chinese society which showcase the ongoing struggle between traditional methods and modern practices together with national cultural roots and global artistic movements according to Wang et al. (2024) along with Chow (2018).

The implications of this synthesis reach beyond the canvas and into the very fabric of China's cultural identity. This artistic trend exposes China's methods of dealing with globalization along with its efforts to preserve its artistic uniqueness among global cultural trends. The government promotes traditional art while the expansion of contemporary art districts such as 798 Art Zone in Beijing represents the intricate cultural synthesis which occurs at both artist and cultural levels (Zhu, 2017).

Chinese contemporary mixed-media painting brings together traditional artwork methods and modern avant-garde methods which serves as an emblem of China's cultural advancement. The field requires organized scholarly analysis to describe the methods artists use when merging traditional artistic concepts with modern creative methods. A methodical investigation would reveal the effects that this integration process has on artistic creations and new artistic styles and their impacts across various social environments and audience demographics. Investigating Chinese art's integration demonstrates vital knowledge about modern Chinese artistic creativity which accurately portrays social conditions in contemporary China.

2.4 Exploration of Material Usage in Chinese Mixed-Media Painting

In Chinese comprehensive media painting, the use of materials is a very important research topic, which can bring new perspectives for our creative process, aesthetic orientation and conceptual basis. The collocation between different materials not only adds beauty to the artwork, but also adds a symbol and cultural connotation. Taking Xu Junwei's Research on the Theory of Ink Painting as an example, this paper makes a comprehensive study on the use of materials in the creation of modern Chinese comprehensive media art.

2.4.1 Traditional Materials and their Significance

This section discusses what has been the cornerstone of Chinese painting art for hundreds of years. This material is known for its unique characteristics and symbolic meaning, which not only adds beauty to the art, but also adds its humanistic and philosophical connotation.

Pen, ink, paper and inkstone are known as the "four treasures of the study". Chinese ink painting, also known as traditional Chinese painting. From the perspective of Chinese tradition, each component element has its own unique aesthetic and cultural significance, and at the same time, it contains profound philosophy.



Figure 2.10. Four Treasures of the Study (Brush, Ink, Paper and Inkstone)



Figure 2.11. Brush in different types used in Chinese Painting

Brushes are generally made from the fur of animals such as goats, wolves, and rabbits, they are valuable not only because they can play their intended role, but most importantly, they show the temperament of the author (Figure 2.11). Liu Xinlu, Liu Yibo, and Wei Zhaohui, in *"A Rational Examination of Art and Technology: From Traditional Painting to Intelligent Painting"* (Liu et al. 2019), see the pen as the body of the artist, a way for the artist to express thoughts, emotions, and energy on the picture. In Chinese painting, there are many kinds of brush, and each brush can achieve a certain regulatory role, thus enhancing the practicability of painting. The brush and ink are

generally made on the inkstone, which plays a great role in the aesthetic quality of the whole picture. However, mastering the brush and ink to create rich colors and textures is an important skill as it is not about daily usage, but is also a symbol related to nature and vitality. The ink stone stands for steadfastness and consistency. The act of grinding a lump of ink is seen as a meditation that allows the artist to have a deeper connection with the artwork creation.

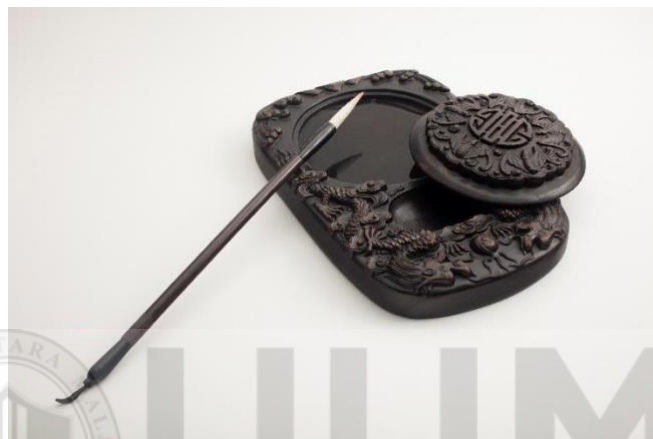


Figure 2.12. Ink Stick and Inkstone

In Chinese painting, paper and silk are commonly used as canvas, giving the work a different visual experience. Rice paper is popular because of its ability to absorb and retain ink, so that it can produce fine lines and ink. Silk, on the other hand, is widely used because of its smooth but not shiny appearance. On the other hand, the smooth appearance of silk makes it very suitable for brightly colored and delicate works of art. In traditional Chinese culture, they represent the idea of harmony, balance and subtlety.



Figure 2.13. “Xuan Zhi”, In English called “paper and silk” or “rice paper”

In addition, many different substances, such as minerals, plants, and animals, are also used in Chinese paintings. Here are a few examples of this conventional textbook. This kind of paint is loved by people for its bright color and long-lasting appearance, and gives artistic beauty. The use of this ancient material is a complex combination of Chinese philosophy, culture and aesthetic concepts. These are the unique Chinese outlook on life, emphasizing harmony, balance, and nature.

2.4.2 Emergence of New Materials in Contemporary Art

In recent years, Chinese integrated media painting has been very different from the conventional norms and media, thus promoting the rapid development of this art form. Modern artists are also constantly exploring new themes, breaking through the "four treasures" of Chinese painting - ink, brush, paper, inkstone. This major development is driven by different factors and a rapidly changing social and cultural environment on a global scale. Together, all these elements extend the boundaries of Chinese art, providing us with new perspectives and original ways of expression.

In the landmark work, *Between Past and Future: New Photography and Video from China* (Philips et al., 2004) pointed out that the development of Chinese

contemporary art materials is an eternal exchange between traditional and modern, local and international, historical and contemporary. The combination of ancient Chinese elements and the use of modern energy sources further deepens the discussion of this question. Therefore, the development of materials allows Chinese painters to free themselves from traditional painting forms and express themselves in a primitive and diversified form.

Chinese contemporary art creations are an interesting fusion of traditional and modern. The interaction between traditional materials such as ink, brush, paper, silk, etc., and modern media such as acrylic, oil painting, crayon and other materials giving painters different ways of visual expression, allowing them to study and communicate different themes and different stories.

Acrylic paints and oil paints, for example, have created an opportunity for Chinese artists to explore their shapes, textures and colors because of their vivid colors and wide range of uses. Some famous painters, such as Zhang Xiaogang and Zhou Chunya, illustrate the creative use of this modern material. These works break the inherent boundary of Chinese art, with strong dramatic color and strong emotional color. Figure 2.14 shows a portrait that combines traditional and modern features. The combination of traditional ink painting techniques and acrylic coatings not only maintains the depth of the picture and also adds a sharp modern tone contrast.



Figure 2.14. A Contemporary works by (Zhang Xiaogang, n.d)

Chinese artists are able to draw a clear line between the traditional and the contemporary because they are adept at using a variety of media, such as photography, collage, ready-made materials, and digital technology. Other media complexes include excavated artifacts. Painters like Xu Bing and CAI Guo-qiang use comprehensive media to break down stereotypes, explore preconceptions about social norms, and encourage discussion and dialogue. Xu Bing's "*Behind the Story*" is both a visual feast and a collection of works that invite the artist to ponder the unique connection between Chinese landscape and nature: one stone is one peak, symbolizing all mountains; a branch represents a tree (Figure 2.15, Figure 2.16).



Figure 2.15. The Story Behind by (Xu Bing, 2020)



Figure 2.16. Material Used in “ The Story Behind” by (Xu Bing, 2020)

This kind of turning to new subject matter is not only the change of aesthetic taste, but also a kind of embodiment of aesthetic taste. It also reflects a series of profound social and cultural changes that China has undergone in recent decades. This change has happened in the last decade. Modern art in China has been impacted by the trend of globalization, the rapid development of technology, and the increasing

connectivity of the art world. All the above have also impacted Hong Kong's fine arts to a certain extent.

At the same time, the novel materials used in Chinese art creation also greatly impact the Western culture's acceptance and interpretation of its culture. Because the artist uses a variety of media means, viewers can communicate with the art from all levels. This calls into question traditional ways of evaluating art and demands a deeper understanding of what works are about.

On this basis, the author makes a detailed study of *Painters and Politics in the People's Republic of China* (Andrew, 1994). This precious historical data explains how Chinese art integrates and transforms different materials and techniques. In addition, they will show how this change corresponds to the broad social and political changes that have taken place in China since the 20th century.

2.4.3 Aesthetic and Symbolic Value of Material Choices

In today's Chinese comprehensive media art creation, the selection of materials is not only directly related to the beauty of the picture, but also to the deep meaning of its connotation. In their book “*History, Materiality, and Social Practice: A Spatial Discourse on Modern Art in China*” (Lavelli & Wu, 2022) argue that artists' choice of materials has gone beyond purely functional considerations. The aesthetic elements and symbolic aspects within contemporary Chinese mixed-media painting expand widely thus influencing deeply how viewers process and comprehend the work.

The material selection process in current Chinese mixed-media painting functions as a multi-faceted nexus between appearance and utility and meaning

(Sullivan, 2015; Lizun, 2022). This complexity goes beyond aesthetic considerations; it reflects a nuanced negotiation between historical traditions, cultural values, and the demands of modern artistic expression (Andrews, 1994). Aesthetically, the quality of a work is proportional to the media it uses. The material chosen by the artist will have a direct impact on the texture, shape, color and spatial composition of the work. For example, the use of Chinese brush and ink techniques can form a smooth and expressive line, but also give people a sense of beauty and coordination, which is the characteristics of Chinese painting. In addition, oil painting and acrylic, with its rich expression and rich colors, give artists richer visual feelings and emotions, and push the aesthetic boundary of Chinese painting to a new height. Figure 2.18 shows the difference between these two oil paintings.



Figure 2.17. Oil and Acrylic paint materials



Figure 2.18. Difference between Acrylic (Left) and Oil (Right) Painting

The use of multiple media elements can bring new realism, juxtaposition and intertextuality to Chinese painting. They include photographs, university paintings, and some excavated objects. They provide immediate, present-moment sensations and capture the listener's senses without even realizing it. Other artists, represented by Liu Wei and Qiu Zhijie, use a variety of materials to create a series of integrated art forms with both beauty and beauty. Their works can both seize the viewer and provoke them to ponder multiple meanings.

The materials used are also symbolic. The use of some materials may suggest a particular cultural connotation, historical connection or a person's experience. For example, Chinese ink works can show nostalgia for history, respect for history, and even recognition of national identity. From another point of view, the use of Western materials such as oil painting and acrylic shows that the painter is willing to accept the impact of foreign culture, which can not only reflect the modernity of China, but also examine the cultural traditions around the world.

In its symbolic meaning, in particular, the excavated cultural heritage is integrated into a comprehensive medium of art. Incorporating mundane objects into art has the opportunity to inspire reflection on broader social and political issues. In Ai Weiwei's installation, for example, he often uses some common materials, such as ancient ceramics or wooden stools, which are very distinctive and cultural. In the process, he focuses on cultural traditions, memories, and political criticism (Kuuva, 2024).

The blending of traditional and contemporary materials raises important questions about artistic identity and cultural evolution. How do artists reconcile time-honored materials, such as ink and brush, with synthetic substances that symbolize industrial progress? How do material innovations shape the artistic process and influence public perception? (Krauss, 1985; Hung, 2010).

In fact, Xu Bing's works offer a compelling example, his art becoming a reflection of China's rapid industrialization and the tension between maintaining cultural heritage and embracing change (Sullivan, 2015). His pieces are often rich in symbolism, using classical Chinese calligraphy in conjunction with unconventional materials, such as tobacco or metal, to challenge traditional aesthetic norms and comment on societal transformations. Likewise, Cai Guo-Qiang's gunpowder drawings embody a powerful dialogue between historical invention and contemporary artistic experimentation. Gunpowder, a material deeply rooted in Chinese history, serves as both a destructive and creative force in his work—bridging the past and the present in explosive artistic expressions (Rivenc, 2020).

Similarly, Zhang Huan's use of ash and steel reflects an engagement with themes of impermanence, spirituality, and urban transformation. His materials, sourced

from temples and industrial sites, evoke the intersection of traditional Chinese philosophy and modern sociopolitical realities (Wei, 2022). Such experimentation not only redefines the aesthetic language of contemporary Chinese art but also situates it within global artistic discourses.

In order to fully understand the rich connotations and messages conveyed by Chinese contemporary comprehensive media artworks, it is necessary to have an understanding of the aesthetic and symbolic connotations of different materials. The selection of materials is not only a matter of technique or aesthetic preference, but also a part of the aesthetic and symbolic nature of a work of art.

2.5 Aesthetic Language in Chinese Mixed-Media Painting

The aesthetic language in art creation constitutes its visual vocabulary, which uses lines, colors, shapes, textures, compositions and other elements to express artistic conception and emotions. In the comprehensive media art environment of China, it is affected by the impact of the local and the world, the traditional and modern factors, and its complexity and diversity.

The main characteristics of Chinese oil painting aesthetics are the deep symbiosis between line and form, the fusion of illusion and reality, and the deep symbiosis between poetry, painting and calligraphy. Under the guidance of Taoism, Confucianism and other philosophical concepts, it constitutes a complex system of pictures and ideas that pursue harmony and implicity, and has a profound relationship with nature and self (Li, 2013). It is not only an aesthetic method, but also a symbolic symbol, which makes the aesthetic language of classical Chinese oil painting into a combination of sensibility and wisdom.

In modern China, the rise of comprehensive media art has greatly changed the aesthetic language of artistic creation. Modern painters often draw materials from tradition and combine them with modern techniques, materials and visual vocabulary to form an aesthetic language that can reflect the individual perspective and the complex reality of the modern world. Li Tiange pointed out that his works often contain a communication between tradition and modernity, Eastern and Western aesthetics, and individuals and society. These works are seen as innovative responses to rapidly changing sociocultural patterns and an increasingly international art environment (Liu, 2024).

The next few sections will explore more about the fusion of Chinese classical and modern aesthetic language. This course explores how different types of writing are constructed, how they are used to express meaning, and how they have evolved with the changes of The Times and artistic innovations. Through the comparison and case study of Chinese oil paintings, we have a relatively complete understanding of the aesthetic language of modern art works, and its important role in the current art research.

2.5.1 Overview of Aesthetic Principles in Traditional Chinese Painting

To study the modern forms of Chinese oil painting, we must first have a deep understanding of the aesthetic principles of Chinese traditional oil painting. This paper takes Yang Guangyu's "The time Spirit, expressiveness and nationality of Modern Chinese oil Painting" as the research object, and attempts to explain its role in the development of Chinese art and the role of contemporary art forms.

Chinese painting is characterized by its own set of aesthetic ideas, which have evolved over the centuries and have become rooted in the philosophical and cultural

life of the Chinese people. "Qi rhyme," also known as spiritual resonance, is one of the fundamental principles. Yang Guangyu said that the painter's ability to infuse "spirit" into his creation, expressed in the movement and rhythm of the brushwork, is a measure of a painter's talent and character (Mamadjonovic, 2024).

The idea of "white space," the so-called "negative space," is another major aesthetic criterion. Unlike Western painting, which tends to completely cover up the picture, Chinese painting often leaves partial white space in order to create a balance between the virtual and the real. The concept of "Yin and Yang" originated from Taoism shows the relative attributes of "negative" and "positive", as well as the coordination and stability of "Yin and Yang" in the formation process (Kelso & Engstrom, 2006).

In addition, Chinese painting, the infiltration of calligraphy, also produced a special aesthetic effect. Painters use brushes to express poetry and philosophy in their works. Such a fusion of literary and artistic forms forms a pluralistic aesthetic language and broadens the interpretation space of the text.

Poetry, painting and calligraphy are called the "three beauties" of Chinese traditional culture, and are listed as the main body of three literary creations. This combination not only strengthens the visual experience of Chinese art, but also highlights the knowledge investment contained in the process of creation and appreciation. According to Yang Guangyu's interpretation of "three beauties", it is not only a separate art form, but also a complete philosophical and aesthetic framework that is organically linked together. Figure 2.19 shows an example of the "three beauties".



Figure 2.19. Three Perfection: Tonic Art by (Zhao Mengfu, n.d)

In addition, in terms of painting concept, Chinese painting pays more attention to ambiguity and suggestion than direct and explicit. This aesthetic perspective can be summarized as "simple but precise", urging the viewer to use imagination and emotional sensitivity when evaluating the work (Hu, 2021). It is precisely as this intervention that the viewer has a dynamic interaction with the work. In such exchanges, semantics are formed through cooperation and are constantly changing.

In traditional Chinese painting, the aesthetic principle not only directly acts on the vision of the picture, but also has certain humanistic implications for itself. In Yang Guangyu's view, the core of Chinese culture is a complex set of aesthetic language formed by simulating the world view, values and the whole personality of Chinese culture.

In order to fully appreciate the various complex visual effects presented by contemporary Chinese comprehensive media art, we need to firmly grasp the above concepts. Many Chinese contemporary artists still rely on this historical concept and re-interpret and re-create it in contemporary artistic activities. Although there have been great changes in technique, style, and theme. In this process, individuals are able to

communicate with their own civilization and find ways to remain relevant in today's rapidly changing society.

In the next section, we will explore how traditional Chinese aesthetic principles have been transplanted into modern media. On this basis, it further analyzes its influence on modern art creation. Through this study, the mutual influence between innovation and tradition in contemporary Chinese art creation can be found, and the characteristics of diversification and sustainable development of Chinese art can be presented.

At the same time, it is supplemented with Zhang Yuejiao's *Graphic Beauty and Practicality* (Zhang, 2016), *Intelligent Generation of Chinese seal Cutting* (Zhang et al., 2022) and other literature which theoretically analyzes the aesthetic concept of traditional Chinese art and put forward valuable thinking. Through these materials, we can have a deeper understanding of the aesthetic principles of traditional Chinese art, and also understand the influence of this concept on the creation of contemporary painters.

2.5.2 Role of Colour in Conveying Meaning and Aesthetic Value

As a form of expression, color has strong emotional, ideological and aesthetic value. This concept is most vividly expressed in China's comprehensive media art creation (Muratbekoca & Shamo, 2024), where tradition and modernity blend together to form a special tone. In his pioneering monograph *Color and Color Symbolism in Early Chinese Ceremonial Art* (Lai, 1991), Liu Yiqing explored the meaning of color in this subject matter.

The color of Chinese art is a very representative symbol. The ancients believed that the "five colors" (red, yellow, blue, white and black) respectively represented the five elements (fire, earth, wood, gold and water), and each color had its corresponding orientation, season and character characteristics. Red represents good luck, happiness and prosperity. In stark contrast, black symbolizes the sea and the north, mystery, winter and wisdom. Figure 2.20 shows the relationship between the five colors and the five elements.

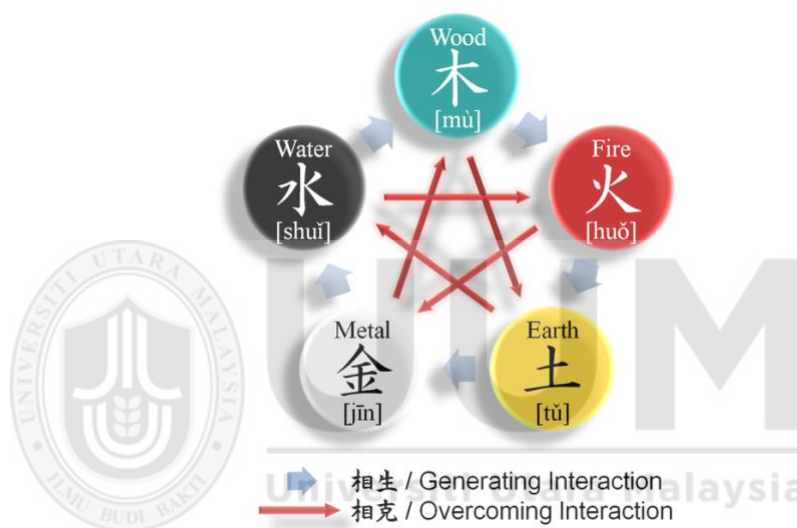


Figure 2.20. The relationship of 5 colours and 5 elements

Since Chinese art entered modern times, under the impact of western art trends, Chinese art has also appeared with diversified performance. However, in the creation of many modern Chinese painters, its traditional symbolic meaning is still a great feature. Under this background, the combination of traditional symbols and contemporary aesthetics has formed a complex and rich visual language with Chinese characteristics.

Zhang Xiaogang, one of the leading exponents of modern Chinese art, presents a fascinating case. Zhang Xiaogang's works are mainly "*Blood Series*", which are

mainly gray and black, with a little red interspersed in the middle. The use of color restrictions enhances the intensity of emotions in his works and the characteristics of surrealism, and carries a symbolic meaning. The gray and black tones evoke a sense of nostalgia and sadness, reflecting the chaos of Chinese history. In sharp contrast, people often emphasize the "red baby" or the red line that binds people together, which means the kinship bond, the genetic and ideological lineage that holds together Chinese families (see Figure 2.21).



Figure 2.21. Bloodline Series No. 9 - The Big Family by (Zhang Xiaogang, 1996)

Compared with other artists, Yue Minjun, Zhang Peili used more symbolic colors, and their colors were more expressions than symbols. Yue Minjun is known for her characteristic smiling image, and her paintings use a vivid color. The characters in the picture are constantly making annoying laughs, and the pictures in the picture are full of sharp contrasts that feel appealing and disturbing at the same time. These rich colors reinforce the irony and criticism in Yue Minjun's works, highlighting the absurdity and emptiness behind the apparent happiness and prosperity.



Figure 2.22. Untitled by (Yue Minjun, 1996)

In the comprehensive media creation, the role played by color is more complex, and its interaction with the texture and material produces richer meaning and aesthetic value. Cai Guo-qiang's "firearm diagram" is a typical interaction. The special color, formed by the black smoke and smoke left over from the explosive explosion, reinforces the dramatic sense of the painting. At the same time, due to the uncertainty of explosives, the color composition presents random and fluctuating characteristics, highlighting its inherent "spontaneous" and "chaotic" themes.

In other mixed media art, the use of colors and symbols is also very different. One interesting example is Ai Weiwei's "*Sunflower Seeds*". This piece is made from millions of hand-painted porcelain sunflower seeds. The black and uniform color represents the unity and anonymity of the group, allowing us to think about individuality, consistency, and the current state of human nature in the context of large-scale production and consumption.

In China, in addition to visual symbols and aesthetics, the use of color in comprehensive media art is also a strong criticism of society and politics. In Zhang Huan's "*Family Tree*" series, the gradual change of ink color on the artist's face from light ink to pure black metaphorically expresses the individual's struggle for self-identity under the double oppression of society and culture. In photographs, the constant change of color not only gives people an intuitive feeling, but also raises questions about identity, memory, and the passage of time. The painting, titled *Family Tree*, was completed two years after Zhang moved to New York. He paints his face in an oil painting made up of different words, names and stories that relate to his people's past. The performance art was filmed in nine scenes, depicting Zhang Yimou's characteristic of slowly covering his face with a pen, and finally rendering his face completely black. Most of the words are derived from Chinese fortune-telling, which refers to judging a person's character and future fate by looking at their facial features. However, the traditional symbols that symbolize Zhang Yimou's personality and destiny end up masking his true nature in a complex cultural cue (Figure 2.23).

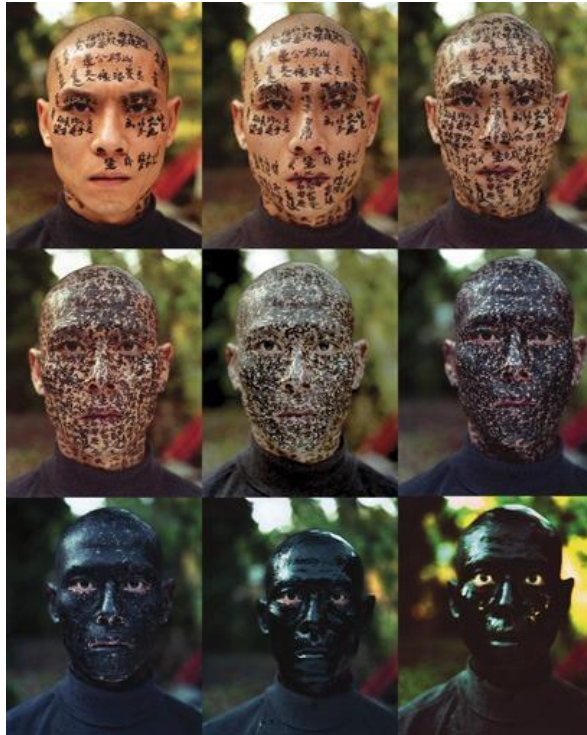


Figure 2.23. Family Tree by (Zhang Huan, 2000).

Photo: courtesy Pace Gallery, New York

In the artistic creation of modern Chinese comprehensive media, color has played a multiple impact. As a means of expression, artists can convey a range of emotions, cultural references, and social commentary by transcending the role of their images. Whether it is Zhang Xiaogang's symbolic color or Yue Minjun's pictorial color, it is the aesthetic language of Chinese art, which plays an important role in our perception, understanding and appreciation.

In addition, the change of color in Chinese integrated media painting also reflects the larger cultural, social and political changes in Chinese society. From the traditional five color symbols to the gradually enriched colors influenced by the West, this process reflects the cultural identity of the Chinese people and the process of continuous communication with the international art world.

Therefore, understanding the role of color in modern Chinese comprehensive media painting is of great significance to the aesthetic orientation of individual painters and the environment in which they create and receive. From this point, we can see that the aesthetic language of Chinese art is rich and colorful, which can also be said to be ever-changing.

2.5.3 Line and its Significance in Contemporary Artworks

Line plays an irreplaceable role in the development of Chinese art and is a very valuable form of expression. In China's comprehensive media art, the use of line is often an organic integration of Chinese cultural heritage and modern aesthetics. Thread is best known for its ability to shape, indicate movement, and create connections in space. In view of the above problems, this project plans to carry out *"Industry 4.0: Research progress and development trend at home and abroad"* (Xu et al., 2018).

In calligraphy creation, the concept of "line" can be traced back to the source of Chinese classical painting. From our point of view, the flow of lines, whether stiff, thick or thin, is an intuitive reflection of the artist's mind. Yizhi (also spelled "one line") is a concept developed by Chinese scholars, who believe that different lines can express the personality and mood of the author. Even when painting tools are no longer limited to pen and ink, this tradition still guides the use of lines in contemporary Chinese art. Figure 2.24 shows the various types of linear painting.

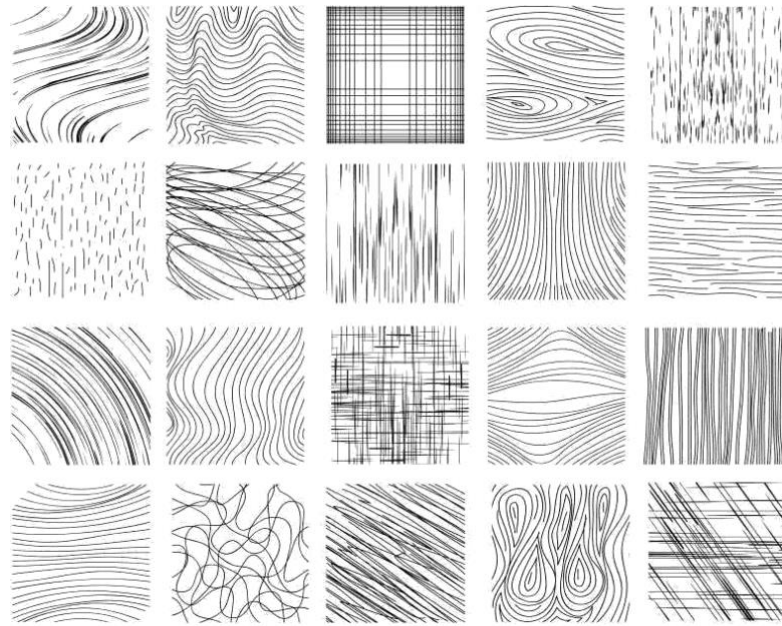


Figure 2.24. Different types of line

In contemporary Chinese art, the use of lines has been inspired by different innovative schools and genres, and continues to develop and evolve on this basis. This allows lines to be used more widely and in a variety of ways. Abstract, minimalism, pop and other contemporary art schools provide us with a new possibility. This new form of expression includes hand shape line and action line, geometric line and contour line.

Wu Guanzhong pioneered the combination of Chinese and Western art, and showed the power of "line" in his paintings. Wu Guanzhong's comprehensive media line is very dynamic and rhythmic, and it moves freely in the picture, presenting a variety of themes such as urban scenery, mountains and rivers, and characters. His paintings are mainly concentrated in ink, which forms a strong resonance with his calligraphy, and his use of color and texture shows his understanding of modern Western art. Figure 2.25 uses the straight line technique.



Figure 2.25. The Hometown of Shakespeare by (Wu Guanzhong, 1992)

Xu Bing is a painter who explores the relationship between "form" and "meaning" with "line" as the clue. Xu Bing reorganizes English phrases into Chinese form (Figure 2.26) (Hui, 2022). In their creation, lines have both aesthetic sense and linguistic meaning. It creates a unique visual language that challenges traditional text signs.



Figure 2.26. An Introduction to Square Word Calligraphy by (Xu Bing, 1994)

In addition, works of art made with a variety of media will interact with other visuals and materials, thus promoting the composition and aesthetic effect of the entire picture. Lines can be made not only with a brush, but also with the arrangement of objects, the edges of shapes, or the boundaries between different colors and materials.

Painters like Song Dong are best known for using ordinary materials and straight lines to lead the viewer's eye and create an orderly, coordinated atmosphere. A common method used by contemporary Chinese painters is to use lines for metaphor or symbolization. A smooth line symbolizes a kind of freedom or rebellion, and a straight, hard line symbolizes power and dominance. The thickness, direction and continuity of the lines can not only convey emotion and story, but also give new meaning to the work.

In short, in Chinese contemporary comprehensive media art, line is a diverse and powerful component. It is not only a visual means of communication, but also a way of spreading ideas, emotions, and cultural norms. The lines in Chinese art, whether drawn with strokes or in other ways, continue the idea of "one comparison". In this way, the line can express the artist's intention, but also can cause the viewer's feelings.

Other readings in this section include *Different Prophecies of the State: Wu Guanzhong, History*, and the *Global in Early 1980s China* (Prizant, 2012), which discusses Wu's innovative use of the line; *The Meaning of Creative Information in Xu Bing's Works: A Saussure Semiotic Analysis of Chinese Calligraphy* (Wijaya & Utami, 2022), this book explores the "lines" in Xu Bing's works from both linguistic and artistic levels.

2.4.4 Comparative Analysis: Evolution of Aesthetic Language over Time

Understanding the aesthetic language in art is like understanding the history and culture of a country. The development of Chinese art aesthetics is a gradual and coherent process, which reflects the track of Chinese social development for hundreds of years. The aesthetic factors of traditional Chinese art and its application in modern

Chinese comprehensive media will help us to better understand this development process.

Under the guidance of philosophical principles and social norms, Chinese painting has a very rich aesthetic language, which is embodied in the aspects of brush, brush, composition, symbol and so on. The traditional Chinese painting art is deeply influenced by calligraphy and pays attention to the beauty of lines. And ink is another basic element, its use is not only for color, it also has the function of expression. In Chinese painting, "harmony" is often used to express "natural beauty".

In sharp contrast, China's modern comprehensive oil painting shows a more diversified aesthetic form, retaining both the original aesthetic characteristics and the original aesthetic characteristics. Under the impact of global integration and European and American culture, Chinese modern art broke through the restrictions of traditional ink painting, challenged the traditional composition with new materials and new techniques, and made a new interpretation of symbolic techniques.

Wang Jing made a more in-depth analysis of this in his book *Research on Chinese Painting under the Thought of the Unity of Nature and Man* (Wang et al., 2023). Just as Mr. Wang said, the development of this kind of aesthetics is not achieved overnight, but a process of gradual integration Chinese and Western cultures. This integration has produced a special artistic expression that reflects the changing cultural and social dynamics of China. We can have a deeper understanding of this evolution through a careful study of the outstanding modern Chinese painters through Table 2.1.

Table 2.1

Case Studies: Artists Redefining Aesthetic Language

Artist	Artwork	Aesthetic Contribution	Reference
Xu Bing	<i>Square Calligraphy Works</i>	Reconstructs English vocabulary using Chinese calligraphic forms, challenging conventional notions of language and meaning. His work exemplifies the recontextualization of traditional Chinese aesthetics and showcases the fluidity of aesthetic language.	Sullivan, 2015
Cai Guo-Qiang	<i>Gunpowder Paintings</i>	Integrates traditional gunpowder techniques with modern large-scale expression. The remnants of explosions create intricate textures, shifting the aesthetic language from delicate precision to an energetic, dynamic visual experience. His work marks a transition from restraint to expressive force.	Rivenc, 2020
Zhang Xiaogang	<i>Bloodline Series</i>	Reinterprets traditional symbols through surreal family portraits. Minimalist, ghostly figures connected by red lines contrast with classical Chinese painting's detailed lines. His work reflects evolving conceptions of identity, memory, and familial bonds in modern China.	Tsao, 2015

The changes in the language of Chinese art aesthetics reflect the social and cultural changes in a wide range of China. This is not a departure from tradition, it is just a dialogue into the past, but also looking forward to the future. Modern Chinese comprehensive media painting, with its unique aesthetic form, combines tradition with modernity, which makes us have a deeper understanding of Chinese art and society.

Books such as "*Cross-cultural Intersection: Religious Motifs in Latimo Glass from China to Italy*" (Gong et al., 2023) and "*Reimagining emotions in a Changing Shanghai: Young, rhizomatic Cartography in Birdhead Contemporary Photography*" (Mugica & Whyke, 2023) bring us explore how cultural intersections have influenced contemporary artistic creation. Through the creation of this series, we can better understand how Chinese art has been impacted by Western aesthetics, and at the same time understand how traditions have been recreated in the modern creative process.

Incidentally, the work of Wu Guanzhong, a seminal figure in 20th-century Chinese art, illustrates this complexity well. Wu's paintings often combine traditional Chinese ink techniques with Western-style oil painting, creating a synthesis that resonates with both tradition and modernity (Cheng, 2012). However, understanding how Wu's lines, colours, and textures communicate requires an in-depth analysis that takes into account his unique fusion of East and West, old and new. It's not enough to examine these elements in isolation; we must understand how they work together to create a cohesive aesthetic language (Elkins, 2003).

To a degree, the spiritual themes that permeate Chinese art often require a sensitive and nuanced approach to analysis. Consider the works of Zeng Fanzhi, known for his expressionistic style. His paintings are often loaded with spiritual symbolism, drawing on Buddhist and Taoist traditions to explore themes of alienation and existential angst (Tsao, 2015). However, unpacking these themes requires an understanding of both the specific cultural context in which Zeng is working and the broader spiritual ideas he engages with. The methodologies to perform this kind of analysis are often scattered and underdeveloped, reflecting a gap in the current scholarship (Wang, 2017).

The challenges of analyzing the aesthetic language and spiritual themes in contemporary Chinese mixed-media painting also reflect broader issues in the study of visual culture. In an increasingly globalized world, artistic practices are becoming more complex and interconnected. This makes the task of analysis more demanding but also more rewarding (Qi, 2024). Scholars and critics who can navigate these complexities will not only enrich our understanding of specific artworks but contribute to a more nuanced appreciation of how visual culture operates in our interconnected world (Chen, 2009).

2.6 Spiritual Themes in Chinese Mixed-Media Painting

The discussion of "soul" in Chinese art has a long historical origin, which is closely related to the origin of Chinese culture. For hundreds of years, Chinese artists have drawn on some of the philosophical and spiritual traditions of Taoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism to create works of art with profound meaning. It is not only a kind of visual aesthetic, but also a philosophical expression, is a kind of thinking about life and survival, a kind of soul introspection.

In China's comprehensive media art, the expression of the spiritual level is clear and detailed. The innovative use of materials, shapes, colors and symbols by modern artists often has profound spiritual implications, reflecting the artists' personal understanding, questioning and interpretation of different religious beliefs. This paper intends to study the fusion, expression and re-creation of spiritual themes in modern Chinese composite media art (Williams, 2012).

In addition, this study will also explore how the subject matter of the mind has evolved with The Times and has moved from a traditional way of expression to a more

abstract and modern one. This course will explore the relationship between aesthetics and symbolization in Chinese integrative media art and its impact on the depth, richness, and diversity of this genre. It is a fascinating tour that allows us to see the culture, philosophy and spirit of China.

2.6.1 Historical Spiritual Themes in Chinese Art

Chinese people's continuous development and continuous development of Chinese culture is reflected in the development of their cultural thoughts. Cheng Han's detailed research report, *Unmasking Urban Development in China: The Implementation of Public Art in Beijing and Shanghai* (Cheng, 2021) pointed out that these subjects cover thousands of years from dynasties to contemporary China. Through the analysis of these spiritual elements and their modes of dissemination, we can better understand the status of contemporary Chinese art.

There is a deep connection between Chinese art and people's soul, which is mainly reflected in the integration of Taoism, Buddhism and Confucianism. The connection between soul and craft began in early China when people saw them as the study and expression of the mysteries of the universe, nature, and human life. Chinese painting, calligraphy and sculpture all reflect this relationship.

In Taoism, the concepts of "harmony", "balance" and "life cycle" have a profound impact on our artistic creation. In the long course of history, Taoist concepts such as Yin and Yang, five elements and eight diagrams are often expressed in symbolic ways. For example, Taoism's appeal for balance and coordination is reflected in ancient Chinese paintings, which are often combined with mountains and rivers (the name of this technique is "landscape"). One of the core ideas of Taoism is the "unity of heaven

and man" between man and heaven and earth. Generally speaking, there are few characters and buildings in landscape paintings.



Figure 2.27. A shanshui painting by (Yuan dynasty artist Gao Kegong, n.d)

Buddhism was introduced into China from India, bringing new and rich spiritual symbols to Chinese art. The three concepts of Buddha, Dharma, and monk, representing the Buddha himself, the teachings of the Buddha, and Buddhist society, are central to the subject matter of Buddhism. This doctrine generally manifests itself in fragments of the lives of the Buddhist Gods, Bodhisattvas, and Buddhas. In addition, lotus also represents enlightenment and purification which is often used in Buddhist art.

Confucius played an important role in the development of Chinese fine arts, and his emphasis was on traditional culture. The core concepts such as filial piety, benevolence, righteousness and propriety are often the focus of Confucianism. The most common approach is to depict everyday situations, such as school, family, and the

courtroom. In traditional Chinese culture, calligraphy is the highest art, which is often based on the instruction of Confucius, illustrating the spiritual factors contained in the aesthetic activities of calligraphy.

When the dynasty changed and a new era came, Chinese art presented a new era background. Although the subject matter remains, the artists have experimented with Western painting techniques and styles, and thus carried out new interpretations and expressions of the subject matter. This new interpretation and expression reflects the social and political changes of The Times.

Through the historical investigation of the theme of "soul" in contemporary Chinese art, it is helpful for us to have a deeper understanding of the various forms of expression displayed by contemporary Chinese painters in the comprehensive media. We should point out that although the materials, techniques and styles of Chinese art are constantly evolving, the soul of Chinese art is deeply rooted there, which is why artists are greatly impacted in painting, expressing ideas and communicating with audiences. From this point of view, we will do a more in-depth study of how traditional Chinese spiritual themes play a role in China's contemporary comprehensive media creation in the following chapters.

The Formation of Mandala: The Visual Culture of Dunhuang Secret Religion (Wang, 2017), *Painting True Form: The Visual Culture of Traditional Chinese Taoism* (Huang, 2020), etc., are all important documents worthy of further study. The book *Depicting the True Form: Traditional Chinese Taoist Visual Culture* comprehensively analyzes the symbolic nature of Taoism in Chinese art, and the book *The Formation of Mandala: The Visual Culture of Dunhuang Secret Religion* discusses the profound influence of Buddhism on Chinese art in all ages (Zhu Wei, 2024).

2.6.2 Recurring Spiritual Themes in Contemporary Mixed-Media Art

In the history of Chinese art, the theme of "soul" has always been inseparable. It is not only a manifestation of religious belief, but also a manifestation of cultural, intellectual and social ideals. This close relationship between soul and aesthetics can be traced back to various dynasties in different forms of art. This section draws extensively from Chinese Symbolism and Art Themes, Fourth Revised Edition: A Comprehensive Handbook of Art Symbolism in China through the Ages (Williams, 2012), in order to examine the rich spiritual themes contained in classical Chinese art.

In the creation of Chinese art, Shang and Zhou dynasties were an important era, and their fundamental spiritual themes have also changed. It is believed that the bronze sacrificial utensils at this time could communicate with heaven and offer sacrifices to ancestors. The bronze was carved with delicate patterns and strange monsters. In many paintings, "dragon" is regarded as the embodiment of the power of heaven and earth and the way of heaven (Pankney, 2013).

Since Buddhism was introduced into China from India in the Han Dynasty, the spiritual outlook of Chinese art has undergone a great change. This change takes place over a period of time. Similar to the Dunhuang grotto temples, it is also a place for storing Buddhist art works. The temple is full of murals and carvings (Ma, 2024). Guan Shi Yin is famous for his loving face, and his portrait has been a timeless subject, representing compassion and love. "Buddhist art embodies the combination of Indian and Chinese aesthetics and forms a special language of spiritual expression," Huang said. This thought has been fully reflected in Huang Qiwen's creation.

Taoism pays attention to the relationship between man and nature, making it an immortal object of Chinese art. Landscape painting, especially in the Song Dynasty, not only praises the beauty of landscape, but also deeply thinks about the subject matter. Taoism advocates eternal life, one with heaven and earth, the lofty mountains in the painting, the calm river, the reclusive recluse, are the ideal of Taoism to seek eternal life, one with heaven and earth. "Grasping a brush-stroke mountain or a flowing river is actually a temporary but connected Taoist belief in life," Mr. Huang said.

The teachings of Confucius are more a guiding idea than a religion. Confucianism has had a great influence on both Chinese society and Chinese art. Moral integrity, religious conviction in the family, and community unity are all Paramount themes. During the Ming and Qing Dynasties, portraits of Confucius were very popular at that time, and many of them highlighted the talent, wisdom and nobility of the characters. In his work, Huang Shoujing said: "These portraits are not just an expression of individuals, but a symbol of Confucius' thought."

At the end of the Qing Dynasty and in the new century after that, Chinese art combined with Chinese and Western elements and formed a new cultural atmosphere. That was when China was still in the Republic era. The era was marked by political turmoil and shared cultural traditions that led to a reappraisal of the idea of the mind. While staying true to his ideological roots, the painter is constantly experimenting with various techniques. Huang sees this combination as "a period in which Chinese art is attempting to negotiate its own spiritual traditions within the framework of contemporary emotions."

The evolution of the spiritual elements of Chinese art reflects a dynamic interaction of Chinese people in aesthetic, philosophy, belief and other aspects.

Whether from the perspective of philosophy or from the perspective of religion, they have deeply impacted the visual language in Chinese art. These works reflect the psychological state of the Chinese people, highlighting the inseparable relationship between soul and creativity in traditional Chinese culture.

2.7 Symbolic Connotations and Interpretations

To study the scope and complexity of Chinese art, we must consider its profound symbolic meaning. Chinese tradition has deep roots in national traditions, which give profound meaning to objects, colors, animals, and even landscapes. Chinese art always includes a certain flexibility which is not only reflected in classic oil painting, but also in modern comprehensive media creation. It is a complex language that combines the visual with the intellectual, the spiritual and the emotional.

In the book, *Art, Myth and Memory* (Campoli., 2020), the author examines the symbolic development process of Chinese painters in various eras. This study will provide a theoretical basis for interpreting the diversity of symbols, and focus on the influence of different cultural contexts and individual creativity on symbols. In order to grasp the symbolic language of Chinese art, we must have a comprehensive understanding of the Chinese traditional cultural tradition, philosophical tradition, as well as the social and political model at that time. The symbolic meaning of Chinese art and its interpretation are a reflection of social values, individual ideas and common propositions of human nature.

2.7.1 Symbolism in Chinese Art: Historical Perspectives

The use of symbols in Chinese art has the characteristics of multiple layers and rich connotation, and its origin can be traced back to ancient times. Chinese symbolic expression is complex and rich, which is closely related to history, philosophy, religion, society and other factors (Chen & Sharudin, 2024). Through the investigation of different generations and different schools of art, the author tries to show the evolution and the context of the symbolic school in Chinese art. Under the guidance of important academic works such as *Chinese Symbolism* and *Art Motifs 4th Revised Edition: A Comprehensive Manual of Art Symbolism in Chinese History* (Williams, 2012), this project aims to have an overall grasp of the formation process of symbolism in Chinese art and lay a solid theoretical foundation for the interpretation of its modern expression.

The use of symbols in Chinese art dates back to the Neolithic period, when people began to use patterns such as the dragon and phoenix. Often, these symbols are associated with power, fertility, and power on a large scale. At the same time, in the exquisite bronze ware of Shang and Zhou dynasties, some symbols such as animal patterns with religious meaning were also found. As two major philosophical systems in China, Confucius and Taoism have a great influence on the symbolization of Chinese culture. Confucius' moral concepts, such as "filial piety", "righteousness", "etiquette", etc., are reflected in the works of art through the images of "bamboo", "plum blossom", "soft" and so on. Taoist symbols are all over the landscape, where mountains represent immortality and water represents a flowing river (Zhang, 2024).

After the spread of Buddhism in China, new symbolic factors were introduced into Chinese art. The lotus, for example, became a universal symbol of purity and enlightenment. Buddhism also uses elaborate imagery, such as palmistry (gestures), to

express specific spiritual teachings. In the Ming and Qing dynasties, the symbolization of Chinese art became higher and higher, and it became more and more elaborate. Imperial symbols, such as the dragon and the phoenix, gradually became symbols of emperors and queens, while other symbols, such as peony and chrysanthemum, were also used to indicate prosperity and longevity. On this basis, scholars and painters gradually used obscure symbolic means to express their personal thoughts, moral character and academic pursuits.

Entering the modern era, Chinese art in the 20th century has undergone a huge transformation, accompanied by the introduction of Western aesthetic concepts and the social and political changes caused by the 20th century. However, even during this period, people did not give up on its inheritance and development, but reformed and transformed it. Traditional symbols are still used by painters today, and are often used to criticize the world today or to make opinions about themselves. For example, Ai Weiwei's *Sunflower Seeds* installation, consisting of millions of hand-painted porcelain seeds which reflects the reality of mass production and individuality (Peacock, 1996). On the other hand, Cai Guo-Qiang's explosive art installations with traditional Chinese materials, such as *Project for Extraterrestrials*, is to reflect existential, technological, and environmental issues (Rivenc et al., 2020).

The use of symbols in Chinese art is a process of constant development and change, which reflects the rich and philosophical connotation of Chinese traditional culture. From the bronze decoration to the delicate expression technique of literati painting, to the re-interpretation of religious images, symbols have become a visual language beyond the aesthetic category in Chinese art. It connects matter and spirit, the individual and the universe, past and present.

Understanding the historical significance of semiotics is of great significance for us to understand Chinese art more deeply. This study will present a multi-level connotation, cultural reference and philosophical perspective from the expression forms of Chinese culture (Siagian, 2024). Just like Fang Chun's article, the influence of the symbolic school continues to influence China's modern art, which is also a kind of evidence of the realistic significance and vitality of the continuous existence.

From this process, the symbol of Chinese art is not just a simple decoration, but a deep expression of cultural identity, moral values, spiritual beliefs and human concepts. This is the ability to transcend time and space, to transcend time and space, to use images as the carrier of immortal wisdom and universal truth. Through the investigation of the historical background and evolution of symbolism (Gao, 2019).

2.7.2 Socio-political Narratives in Contemporary Chinese Mixed-Media Art

As an important part of modern Chinese comprehensive media art, it reflects a form of artistic expression. The narrative, whether intuitive or subtle, reflects the artist's response to social changes, political ideas, and social changes (Gelsbeck, 2024). Based on Li Zhen's *The Branding of Contemporary Chinese Art and its Politics: Interpreting the Power Discourse of the Art Market* (Preece, 2014), this paper studies how Chinese contemporary artists use multiple media to participate in, criticize or identify with different social and political issues.

The social environment of this period determines our understanding of the integration of Chinese art and politics. As China moves towards a global market economy, the informative linkages are more diversified and more complex. Many modern Chinese painters use comprehensive media to reflect on various social issues, criticizing consumerism, urbanization, and environmental pollution. Artists like Ai

Weiwei, for example, criticize ordinary things, from corruption to human rights. The use of multiple media can form multiple levels of commentary and bring a wealth of views and ideas to the reader.

Some painters were more forthright in their discussion of political criticism and national identity. They use symbols, historical imagery, or traditional patterns to challenge political norms, historical narratives, or cultural ideas. The result has been many influential works of art that have had an impact not only in China but also around the world, such as Cai Guoqiang and Xu Bing. The onslaught of censorship and the subtle demand for political criticism led to the formation of distinctive artistic strategies. Without confronting the authorities directly, painters could use allegories, metaphors, and vague expressions to send a political message. Multiple forms of integrated media create a diversified carrier for these subtle ways of expression.

For modern painters, the Cultural Revolution remains a source of inspiration. Painters like Zhang Xiaogang and Zeng Fanzhi explore personal memories, collective traumas, or reflections on history in this chaotic era. The comprehensive media technology makes the discussion of this kind of subject matter more mature and more emotional. China's modern integrated media art is also a narrative involving social and political issues on a worldwide scale. As China has become more involved in the international community, its creations have increasingly dealt with international relations, the dynamics of the world economy, or global human rights issues. For example, Liu Xiaodong and Yin Xiuzhen, their exhibitions have crossed the border and presented a broader vision of the world.

Based on Mr. Li's theory and through the study of the above issues, this paper can find the thoughtfulness and vitality of China's comprehensive media art in today's

social and political context. It is the creativity, courage and insight of the artist in the complex relationship between politics, society and culture that brings a unique and impressive vision to the development of modern China. The connection between Chinese art and politics is diversified and a process of continuous development. From the perspective of integrated media art, we can learn some valuable lessons about the role of art in reflecting, challenging and changing social and political processes.

2.7.3 Cultural Messages and Their Representation in Modern Artworks

In today's art world, the interaction of inheritance and expression forms constitutes a vibrant dialogue. In this exchange, China has a history of thousands of years, and it is a very key player. Chinese multimedia artists, in particular, have created a language that blends past and present, tradition and innovation. Through an in-depth analysis of *Contemporary Chinese Art: A Critical History* (Gladston, 2014), this paper attempts to explain how they integrate cultural symbols, stories, and philosophies into their works and how they affect the viewer's perception.

For many modern Chinese painters, the starting point for their creation is a natural understanding of and respect for China's long cultural heritage. From the philosophical thinking of Confucius and Laozi to the intricate "Four Great Novels", we can get endless inspiration from them. They are added not only to pay tribute to history, but also to acknowledge its continued relevance.

In contemporary times, many painters will integrate traditional patterns into the modern environment. Such as dragon, phoenix, lotus, bamboo, these figures are a kind of symbol, these symbols are often used in contemporary art creation. There are both simple connections and simple abstractions between them, but what they express is far

beyond the scope of aesthetics. As a traditional symbol of rights and rights, it can be juxtaposed with contemporary buildings or surrounding scenery, reflecting the tenacious vitality of Chinese civilization in the face of a rapidly changing society.

Chinese philosophical thoughts, especially Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism, have a vital influence on the connotation of the theme of art creation. Mixed-media painters can combine symbols such as "Yin and Yang" or things like gossip, not just for visual appeal, but for a deeper introspection. A picture can convey a Taoist philosophy of balance and harmony, or a Confucian philosophy of order and ethics. These works of art inspire the wisdom of the viewer and inspire them to think about life, survival and social dynamics.

Contemporary Chinese literary and artistic creation often re-interprets classical novels such as *Journey to the West* and *A Dream of Red Mansions*. Although the legends are familiar, the descriptions are often modern. By placing ancient characters in contemporary situations, or by using modern media and technology to communicate history and reality, we can see that despite time changes, some important human experiences and situations are connected.

China is a vast country with many different regions and characteristics. Artists often incorporate local folk stories, Peking Opera masks, Sichuan embroidery, and even dialects and local dialects to show respect for local culture. Through such creations, people have a deeper understanding of China's many subcultures, thus enriching the national narrative. Under the background of globalization, Chinese painters also began cultural exchanges with countries around the world. It is very common to combine Chinese traditions with cultures from other parts of the world. Such integration often involves global connectivity, migration, and the universality of some cultural

experiences. If you know more about China, you will find that you will find many different meanings, and each level has a deeper connection.

The multi-media art in today's China is a powerful embodiment of the vitality of Chinese culture. This highlights the fact that culture is constantly evolving, adjusting, and interacting with the world today while rooted in history. It is an ongoing conversation, and each work is the beginning of a theme. Through innovative methods, materials and subject matter, the artists connected thousands of years of history with the realities and concerns of the 21st century. As Mr. Wu has rightly pointed out, this kind of art is not just a visual pleasure; They are a conversation between different cultures that engages the audience, reflects their thoughts, and connects them.

2.7.4 Personal Narratives and Artist Experiences: Deciphering Hidden Meanings

Art, as a highly subjective medium, is often used as a canvas to portray one's own experiences, emotions and ideas (Yofan, 2024). There is a profound relationship between individual narration and artistic creation, because the individual's view of the world will inevitably have a certain impact on his creation. In today's mixed media art in China, the connection between the artist and the art has become a clear sign, which gives us a glimpse into the creator's inner heart. Taking the Influence of Dunhuang Murals on Chinese Modern and Contemporary Art (Song, 2021) as an example, this paper discusses how painters integrate their own experiences and implicit meanings into their creations, and then form their understanding and identification of them.

Many artists use their work as a visual journal, recording the course of their lives, their struggles, their joys and sorrows. Zhang Xiaogang's "*Blood Ties*" series of works, portrays his family history through the emotional description. He carried out a

detailed outline of the social and political environment of his era, such a personalized way of narration has narrowed the distance between the artist and the audience, and also the distance between them and their life.

China's international influence is growing, its internal culture is changing, and the question of identity is becoming more complex and elusive. Painters often explore this in their work, exploring gender, race, social status and so on. Various forms of media make the combination of traditional symbols and contemporary idioms more rich and diversified. For example, Zanelle Muhoori's photography challenges and redefines the norms of femininity, expressing a deeper process of self-exploration and validation.

For many artists, artistic creation is often a spiritual solace. They control their emotions by visualizing their personal pain, anxiety, and pleasure. The use of certain materials, textures, or symbols often involves specific experiences or feelings that only the artist himself can understand. But this choice resonates at the cosmic level, conveying a shared sense of humanity. Gu's use of human hair in his installations can be seen as a search for individual and group identity, which is rooted in his cultural traditions.

With China's rapidly developing social and political environment, painters often combine their own experience with broader political insights. Ai Weiwei often expresses his own political views and antagonism with the authorities in his works. His "Sunflower Seeds" exhibition at Tate Contemporary is both a visual delight and a comprehensive assessment of individuality, mass production, and Chinese society. The combination of personal and political narratives adds complexity and depth to the work and invites the viewer to consider larger social issues.

In Chinese art, the contradiction between "traditional" and "modern" is a recurring theme. Painters often express their acceptance of modern society through their works and try to compromise with their inherent concepts (Chen Yifei, 2024). In Xu Bing's creation, he made a bold exploration of contemporary themes through the innovation of traditional calligraphy. The combination of the old and the new is an individual statement that reflects the growing culture of China on a larger scale.

The involvement of the private narrative gives a kind of multiple meaning, making it more personal and more universal. Although the listener is not aware of the specific experience described in the painting, they can feel the feelings expressed in the painting. These human factors can provoke deeper emotional experiences and facilitate different interpretations that transcend different cultural and geographical constraints. In modern China, comprehensive media art's exploration of individual narrative and implied meaning provides us with a wonderful perspective to understand the social environment in which artists live. Their experiences, their beliefs, their feelings, their work, their work, make their work a unique story.

Through the works, we can see the interaction between the artist and the audience, and also let everyone share their life journey together. Whether it is an implicit reminder of childhood memories, political resistance, or poetic expression of love and loss, it makes his creation more colorful and contributes to a broader discussion of modern Chinese art. Zhang Ming believes that his work is not just a static, visual object, but a conversation of life. They talk, whisper, shout or sing in response to the multiple voices of the Creator and resonate with the listeners who meet them.

2.8 Conclusion

Chinese mixed media art is a comprehensive work with both historical influence and global power, as well as an expression form of individual creation and group narration. Through the analysis of its techniques, material selection, aesthetic subtlety, spiritual basis and symbolic connotation, this paper explains its rich connotation and connotation.

The main feature of this exhibition is the integration of technology, reflecting the integration of Western creative techniques in traditional Chinese book art. The combination of different technologies is not just to promote artistic experimentation, but to combine The Times and current artistic trends, so that Chinese artists have a broader space to show their vision. The subject of the mind is expressed through materials and techniques, so that the two fields of physics and metaphysics have a wonderful mutual influence. The author uses a variety of materials to construct a symbolic narrative, adding organisms to connect with nature, and metal components to represent the contemporary. Carefully selected materials can give you more understanding of different things, while also combining the body with abstraction.

In addition, the development of Chinese art in line, texture, modeling, etc., shows a perfect combination of traditional skills and the perfect combination of world art trends. Looking at today's comprehensive media art, we can find that it has an amazing power to integrate and transform many different artistic elements, and presents a complete and highly inclusive cultural framework without affecting the Chinese aesthetic concept. The combination of case studies can provide a practical perspective for the interpretation of spiritual themes. Through case studies, we can understand the subtle decisions and interpretations made by artists, ranging from figurative metaphors

to more abstract expressions. In today's context, such narratives provide painters with a precious perspective to interpret and dissect their minds.

Through the study of these symbolic elements, we can better understand the inherent complexity and complexity of modern Chinese comprehensive media art. Both deeply historical and reflective of contemporary social and political narratives, it is a powerful tool for artists to express their identity, beliefs, and responses to social change. The use of the symbol level is conducive to rich and diverse interpretation, and is conducive to in-depth discussion and reflection.

When various elements are organically combined together, we will see that China's composite media art has gone beyond the purely aesthetic level. The work serves as a platform for cultural dialogue, self-reflection, exploration of spiritual issues, and critical analysis of a society. These painters are skilled in different fields, they play the role of preserving history and culture, but also play the role of the vanguard of future development, tradition and creative methods organically combined.

Finally, through the analysis of this phenomenon, it is further explained that China's comprehensive media art is a deep reflection of individual ideals and social values of a form of artistic expression. The interaction of technology, materials, aesthetics, spiritual connotations, and symbols reflects a thriving art community with a deep heritage of both tradition and world culture. The development of this art form is not only reflected in the history of art, but also in its rich depth and breadth, and has become a dynamic discourse. This narrative has created sufficient space for future research, and also highlights the broad vision and far-reaching connotation of Chinese modern art.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

An investigation into contemporary Chinese mixed-media painting based on material usage and spiritual orientation and aesthetic language requires an examination of research methodology. The subsequent sections explain all pertinent research procedures from research design to sampling and data collection and analysis methods.

The selection process of research participants must have priority status in this study because it focuses on university students from Zhejiang Province. Artistic institutions including the China Academy of Art have made Zhejiang their historical base because it stands as one of China's most elite art education facilities. The active artistic participation of Zhejiang university students in traditional along with contemporary artistic practices makes them suitable subjects to study mixed-media painting evolution (Academy, 2019). The unique position of Zhejiang as a historical art heritage hub together with modern innovation center facilitates broad representation in contemporary Chinese mixed-media painting examination.

Through the systematic framework we begin our research exploration which provides clarity about the methodological design and reasoning behind selection decisions as well as the expected knowledge discoveries from this research.

3.2 Research Framework

On this basis, a general idea and approach to systematically study the

complexity of Chinese comprehensive media art are put forward. This architecture is centered on integrated conceptual design, based on basic theories, and the complex interaction of various media is analyzed and interpreted.

The theoretical framework constructed in this paper is based on four important independent variables, "spiritual orientation", "aesthetic language", "material" and "form", to achieve a delicate balance. Each variable has its own special meaning, and together they constitute the pluralistic nature of modern Chinese comprehensive media artworks. To understand the complexity of comprehensive media art in China, it is necessary to establish a broadly inclusive and consistent research framework. This chapter analyses the complexity of the constructed conceptual framework and explains the different research methods.

Table 3.1
Basic Variables of Chinese Media Artworks

Component	Description	Key Impact	Ways to Study
Spiritual Orientation (Hawks, 2017)	Strengthening the relationship between external aesthetics and internal substance, building a bridge between traditional beliefs and contemporary interpretations.	Conveys creative intentions, forms explanatory viewpoints, and forms deeper connections.	Semiotic analysis: interpreting symbols, signs, and narratives.

Table 3.1 Continued

Component	Description	Key Impact	Ways to Study

Aesthetic Language (Koo, 2022; Elkins, 2013)	The grammar of a work of art consists of color, line, form and structure to convey information.	Act as a sophisticated communication medium, conveying emotions, stories and philosophy.	Observe color, shape, texture, and spatial arrangement.
Material Usage (Sullivan, 2008; Krauss, 1986)	The reflective materials chosen echo history, culture and identity.	Through the coordination of materials, the work is given more connotation and connotation.	Raw material inspection: inspect the physical, chemical and labeling of the selected raw materials.
Art Form (Wang, 2015; Clarke, 2019)	Captures the combination of tradition and contemporary technology, and reflects the evolution of art.	Describe a narrative of continuity and change that reflects social and cultural change.	Compare and analyze: Contrast traditional techniques with contemporary ones.

In the field of comprehensive media art in China, art, culture, history and social and political discourse are intermingled, providing a colorful picture for this art form. Through an interdisciplinary approach, the study attempts to link the various fields of research, each of which addresses various aspects of the issue. This integrated approach ensures the breadth of the investigation, the fine detail, and the capture of every small brushstroke and far-reaching story hidden in the painting.

This study focuses on fine arts and aesthetic theory, guiding us to explore the structure, content, color and texture of works. Adorno's insight lays the theoretical foundation for our interpretation of the charm, aesthetics, and complexity of each work

(Carney, 2020). On the other hand, the study of symbolism and materials has also injected new content into the dimension of culture. The image of "Chinese" depicted by (Eco, 1979) explores for us a variety of symbols and symbols, and reveals its deep meaning closely related to Chinese tradition. The study of "object-culture" proposed by (Proen, 1982) not only coincides with its cultural connotation, but also with its own historical narrative. History and such narratives intersect, making our choice of material a chronicler of time, a silent guardian of a changing culture. In addition, according to the studies of (Wang, 2015) and (Clark, 2019), contemporary comprehensive media art contains a certain social and political atmosphere, reflecting a blend of "traditional" and "modern". These works of art and their ever-advancing technology serve as a beacon for a changing cultural and social environment.

This study integrates the three basic structures of semiotics, material culturology and aesthetics. Symbolic theory provides us with a perspective that can help us more deeply understand the material and psychological aspects of works of art. The study of materials and materials focuses on the selection of materials and the interpretation of their symbols. On this basis, combined with Adorno's aesthetic thought, the interaction between the selection of materials and its inner spirit and aesthetic realm is discussed.

Its research process not only has a solid theoretical basis, but also conforms to the dynamic nature of modern art. Finding a balanced relationship between the ideas of constructivism and the ever-changing development of art has resulted in a stable and resilient research paradigm. Through the overall and in-depth grasp of the Chinese modern comprehensive media artworks, fully grasp its essence, history and significance. The following chapters will use methodological tools to manipulate those variables according to this detailed architecture. The research goal of this project is to

convert abstract concepts into concrete data for rigorous and systematic research. The main research contents of this paper include: the comprehensive application of theory and method and the interdisciplinary vision. This is both a blueprint and a compass that ensures focus, comprehensiveness and depth in the research process.

3.3 Hypotheses/Propositions Development

In the process of in-depth exploration of comprehensive media art in China today, it is necessary to establish some propositions that are consistent with the subject and research purpose. These arguments, as statements of prediction, are a fundamental premise that we examine in our research. Table 3.2 presents a basis for each argument, based on the literary and conceptual framework described earlier in Chapter 1.



Research Propositions and Their Theoretical Basis

Proposition	Description	Scholars	Key Concepts
1. Chinese comprehensive painting is a "new style" blending traditional and modern techniques.	The fusion of traditional Chinese art forms with modern innovations creates a distinctive style that preserves heritage while embracing contemporary expression.	Feng (2016), Zhou (2020)	Traditional vs. Modern, Art as a Cultural Bridge
2. Material selection is key to aesthetic interest and symbolic meaning.	The choice of materials—from traditional pigments to modern media—adds narrative and symbolic depth, reflecting historical and cultural evolution.	Hall & Ames (1995), Park (2015)	Material as Narrative, Historical Continuity
3. Aesthetic language in Chinese mixed-media painting is shaped by color, form, texture, and space.	Visual elements interact like poetry, creating symbolic depth and guiding interpretation.	Koo (2022), Welland (2018)	Visual Grammar, Symbolism, Artistic Interpretation
4. The "soul" of Chinese mixed-media painting is embedded in material and aesthetic choices.	Spirituality and philosophy, rooted in Chinese traditions, influence artistic decisions and deepen meaning.	Gigi Leung (2016), Zhang (2015)	Spirituality in Art, Cultural Identity

Table 3.2 Continued

Proposition	Description	Scholars	Key Concepts
5. Symbols and cultural themes reflect social, political, and personal narratives.	Mixed-media artworks serve as visual records of historical and contemporary social realities.	Yip Kam-fai (2000), Liu et al. (2018)	Art as Cultural Testimony, Social Commentary

Proposition 1: "Chinese comprehensive painting" is a "new style" with distinct personality formed by combining "traditional" and "modern" techniques.

Reason: The combination of traditional and avant-garde means of expression is the essence of contemporary Chinese art. In the words of (Feng, 2016), such a combination not only preserves the essence of traditional Chinese culture, but also advocates a path to advance with The Times. This fusion allows the work to respond to both historical and modern life. Based on the views of (Zhou, 2020), he regards contemporary Chinese art as a bridge across time, and this seamless combination allows artists to both maintain tradition and explore new realms of innovation.

Proposition 2: The material selection of modern Chinese comprehensive material painting is the key to reflect its aesthetic interest and symbolic connotation.

Reason: The essence of integrated media art is its name: integrated media. From traditional Chinese colors, to modern acrylic, oil paint, etc., the combination of these different materials all show the broad and profound subject matter of Chinese art. Hall and Ames (1995) point out that such sources have a narrative function that transcends dynasties and eras. Each material has its own texture, color and essence, which together constitute the narrative mode of the work. On this basis, I conducted more research on

Park (2015) and found that in Chinese paintings, painting materials can be regarded as silent narrators of the past times, cultural changes, and various changes in history. This not only adds aesthetic dimension to the work, but also adds color to the symbolization of the work.

Proposition 3: The aesthetic language of modern Chinese comprehensive material painting is mainly reflected in the elements of color, form, texture, space and so on, which together constitute the visual appeal and symbolic depth of the work.

Reason: The aesthetic language of literature is similar to the words in poetry. In Chinese media art, each aesthetic element is a symphony of visual narratives that constitute a complex "dance step" of meaning and interpretation. As Koo (2022) said, the subtle interaction between colors, shapes, and textures can give insight into the emotional tone, historical background, and philosophy that the painter wants to express. At the same time, in the works of art, its internal spatial arrangement is also a visual grammar, guiding the viewer's vision, and then interpretation. Welland (2018) believes that the coordination and coordination of aesthetic elements can not only capture the eye of the viewer, but also convey the deep, often invisible narrative and message compiled by the author.

Proposition 4: Centered on the "soul" of modern Chinese material painting, the selection of materials and aesthetic elements are designed, and the overall idea of the work is conveyed.

Reason: In Chinese history, "spirituality" has always been highly valued. Gigi Leung (2016) believes that many artworks are not just an intuitive expression, but a spiritual doctrine, philosophy and reflection that deeply draws on Chinese Taoism, Confucianism and other cultures. Such a deep spiritual foundation is that the painter

constantly draws inspiration and guidance for creation in the process of creation. In connection with the views put forward by Zhang (2015), such "pillars of the soul" are inextricably linked with traditional Chinese culture, injecting layers of connotation into them, making them immortal and beyond the mundane, allowing them to transcend the current environment, and telling the common experience of mankind.

Proposition 5: The symbols and cultural implications of modern Chinese comprehensive media art works reflect the broad social, political and personal narratives.

Reason: In the history of human development, art has never been just a form of aesthetic expression; It's a sound, a note, a record of a time. In China's comprehensive media art creation, the integration of symbols and cultural themes into artistic creation is not only an identification of tradition, but also a discussion of the current reality. Yip Kam-fai (2000) pointed out that the painting can be regarded as a vivid painting, recording the social, political, cultural changes and individual evolution of the time. In addition, Liu et al. (2018) argue that artists can combine symbols with cultural references to criticize, praise, or simply outline the face of the country in which they are located. This makes their work no longer limited to art in galleries, but becomes a living story that resonates with the public and serves as a cultural testament to their time. Thus, Chinese modern comprehensive media art works break through their own material form and become a common memory and cultural identity treasure in dialogue with the past and the present.

Theoretically, the above problems have deep theoretical origin and clear research purpose, which is the important content of this paper. In the course of our research, we examine each argument carefully and, based on the data collected and

subsequent analysis, confirm, revise or disprove them.

3.4 Research Design

As a blueprint for research, the research design guides the implementation of the research project from the beginning to the end. In the field of scientific research, especially when it comes to multi-faceted topics such as the fine arts, a reasonable research program can ensure consistency, systematicness, and consistency among all aspects of the content (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Since art is often a combination of visible skills and invisible emotions, social reflection, and individual expression, it is particularly important for the degree of fineness of design.

China's comprehensive media art is rich in history, culture, technology, narrative, and other factors, which together constitute a complex relationship. Therefore, the way of research should have the same vitality and depth as the artistic form to be explained. There are some philosophical principles involved. These theories lay the foundation of the research method and determine the nature of the research. In this thesis, the epistemology of interpretative theory is the most unified philosophical basis. Interpretivism is a philosophy in contrast to positivism. Traditional positivism claims that facts are deterministic and can be measured objectively. Interpretivism, on the other hand, treats facts as facts constructed by human subjective experience and interpretation (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). This view affirms true pluralism and states that each person's view of the world is shaped by his own experience, culture, and environment.

Art is a multi-dimensional symbol, emotion, and technique, which needs to be

understood from a fine hermeneutic point of view. The central idea of this view of knowledge is that knowledge originates from the subject and his situation, and therefore cannot be separated from his situation (Crotty, 1998). This point is very necessary for the comprehensive media art in China, because it is a very valuable subject. Chinese painting is not just a stroke; they reflect thousands of years of stories, symbols, traditions, and beliefs. The two are related to the artist's own intention and the viewer's interpretation, and interpretive theory is the best interpretation of this (Gadamer, 2013). In this context, the study is in line with (Geertz, 1973) view of understanding a country, which he believes is like reading a heavy instruction book, the higher the level, the deeper the level.

Qualitative research is carried out in order to show the complexity of modern Chinese paintings with comprehensive materials. Qualitative research is essentially the objective understanding of social and humanistic issues by individuals or groups (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Qualitative research is particularly important in the aspects of rich historical traces, rich symbolic meaning, and aesthetic connotation. Its advantage is that its depiction and narration of complex things are more abundant, and it can better depict complex things (Patton, 2014). (Denzin et al., 2023) proposed that qualitative studies have a broad scope, including interviews, thematic groups, and observations. Its diversity allows us to study the subject in greater detail and depth. The purpose of this study is to explore this deep connotation and to show the various internal symbolic meanings, as well as the subtle differences in history and aesthetics. An important feature of qualitative research is its flexibility, which can be adjusted and improved according to new perspectives and unexpected discoveries (Patton, 2014). In addition, the contextual factors pointed out by (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015) cannot be ignored, especially when we try to interpret the various forms of art that are closely

related to culture, history, and personal narrative.

A qualitative study design was chosen because of a number of important considerations. First of all, it is necessary to dig deeply into the research content, extending from the complicated aesthetic language and material symbols to the deep spiritual themes and social and cultural situations, which requires a mature and sharp research method. Qualitative research focuses on a detailed excavation of specific problems, creating good conditions for the solution of deep problems (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Moreover, the attraction of qualitative research is that it can be locked into a specific context. Considering that Chinese works of art are closely linked to deep cultural, historical, and social dynamics, an appreciation of context is essential (Denzin et al., 2022). From a qualitative point of view, Chinese art is no longer just a single work; it is more like a large, dynamic, living part of China (Goetz, 1973).

i. Interviews

Interviewing is a qualitative research method because it can better reflect the deep perspective that other research methods are difficult to find (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). Interviewing (Boyce & Neale, 2006) is defined as a qualitative research method, through in-depth face-to-face conversation with a group of subjects, to explore their views on a certain topic, project, or situation. In this study, interviews are made with first-hand sources from the perspectives of artists, curators, and historians. This interaction can help us better understand the development trajectory, influence, and uniqueness of comprehensive media art in China today.

Based on this, we propose a semi-structured approach to access, that is, to find a balance between looking for specific views and surprising findings (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). These open-ended questions will allow the interviewees to have in-

depth discussions on the prospects of art in China, exchange anecdotes, explain their own life philosophy, and outlook on mixed media art. Kvale and Brinkmann (2007) proposed that the key to understanding the essence of Chinese contemporary art creation lies in the emotion, psychology, and other hidden details shown by people in the process of creation.

ii. Case Studies on Works of Art

(Yin, 2014) believes that case analysis is an in-depth analysis of the real situation of the current society, especially when the boundary between phenomenon and context is blurred. In inquiry-based research, case study is a commonly used research method that explores events, relationships, situations, or processes through detailed examination of individual cases. Through the investigation of Chinese modern comprehensive media art, we can analyze some specific scenes or works through case analysis, so as to achieve the understanding of the creation and performance of different types of works.

Case studies are very important for academic research because they can provide us with a comprehensive view through a deep understanding of the complex dynamics of the real world. (Stake, 1995) points out that case studies have a special function of understanding the interactions among the various factors that contribute to the complexity of a research organization. On this basis, the use of case studies requires a comprehensive exploration of specific studios, museums, and even thematic exhibitions, because they play a crucial role in the formation of the integrated media art model in modern China.

iii. Artistic Analysis

As an important means of art research, art analysis can help people better understand the complexity of a work, rather than simply observing it from the surface. Artistic analysis comes from semiotics, which is to interpret the meaning, techniques, and potential narration of works through the study of signs and symbols (Chandler, 2007). (Rose, 2001) pointed out that this research method has multiple meanings, covering both explicit and implicit categories of art.

The study of art is not only the observation of objects but also the interpretation of invisible narratives. Inspired by (Barthes, 1977), this approach calls for an exploration of the symbols and metaphors contained in the work. Ultimately, in the history of Chinese art, it is crucial to place the work on a greater continuum. Through this study, we hope to gain an in-depth understanding of modern Chinese paintings in comprehensive media, and integrate these paintings into our own culture, history, and personal expression.

3.5 Operational Definition

Operational in theoretical research, action definitions are very important because they clearly state the specific variables and indicators used in the study. By giving a clear definition, researchers can ensure the consistency of understanding and avoid possible ambiguity (Kerlinger, 1966). In this section, we will give an operational definition of the study of modern composite materials in China, and explain some of the important concepts and variables.

Define Key Terms and Variables:

- (i) "Chinese contemporary comprehensive material painting" : The concept used in this paper is a kind of creation created in modern China (after the 1980s) that integrates a variety of materials (such as ink, fabric, paper, metal, etc.). It is a new form of creation that combines tradition and technology.
- (ii) Aesthetic language: The aesthetic language mentioned in this article is a special visual vocabulary used by artists to express narrative or emotion, including color, form, texture and constituent elements.
- (iii) Material symbol: The operable interpretation of the word is a profound meaning, or it is used for special materials in works of art. In the case of China, the use of jade or silk can evoke another association of historical and social significance.
- (iv) Psychological orientation: The psychological orientation of this field of study is a philosophical idea, belief, and deeper spiritual narrative, which is often derived from ancient Chinese beliefs, folklore, or beliefs.
- (v) Socio-cultural significance: a broader, culturally significant narrative, comment, or reflection that is caused or elicited by a work of art. The book contains the painter's views on social change, historical events and cultural change.

A contextual analysis of the words in the field covered:

- (i) Chinese modern material oil paintings: This study not only sees them as a visual work of art, but also as a combination of history, innovation and cultural vitality. This course will explore the material techniques involved and the invisible stories they convey.
- (ii) Aesthetic language: Although the current popular aesthetic principles have been recognized, the discussion in this paper is based on the unique cultural and historical environment of China, to explore how the impact of globalization on local art is integrated with local art.
- (iii) Material symbols: This study is not only about superficial materials, but also about the deep historical and cultural deposits of China, so as to understand the deep meaning of each material in this special art form.
- (iv) Spiritual orientation: Recognizing that spirituality in art is not a single thing, the purpose of this research is to identify various psychological implications that may be entangled in artworks, such as Taoism, Buddhism, local folklore, etc.
- (v) Socio-cultural impact: This study is not only concerned with pure thinking, but also with exploring whether such artworks can serve as a critical or critical role, thereby offering new perspectives on issues such as social change, tension or desire.

3.6 Measurement of Variables/Instrumentation

3.6.1 Measurement

The complexity of Chinese comprehensive media art requires a set of analytical methods that can break through conventional quantitative standards and pay attention

to details and details. (Patton, 2002) points out that qualitative inquiry is essential to uncover issues that are deeply rooted at the cultural and individual level, and our research echoes this.

The most cutting-edge technology is a constantly changing process. This strange combination reflects the gradual development of ancient and contemporary Chinese art in ink and brush. In order to achieve this, we can study the brushwork of the works, that is, how they are combined with ancient writing, or whether they diverge from any modern form. A work of relaxed ink painting technique and contemporary acrylic spraying technique is regarded as a social symbol that surpasses tradition and contemporary, and conforms to the view of "evolution of art mode" proposed by (Zhu et al., 2021).

Next comes the part about material meaning. On a purely material level, the material in the work also echoes the narrative, the mood, the historical imprint. A painting made of paper, for example, tells us a legend about its origin and evolution. While paper can reflect traditional Chinese skills, canvas can reflect contemporary influences from around the world. (Proen, 1982) points to the narrative potential of these sources, viewing them as silent narrators, recording a history and culture.

Fundamentally speaking, the in-depth study of aesthetic language is to explain the visual grammar of fine art works. Each tone, shape and texture provides an overall narrative to the piece. For example, a color dominated by blue represents calm or sombre, while a mixture of colors suggests instability or the blending of different cultures. According to (Marzia & Jung, 2016), understanding the language is like listening to a symphony, where each different tone plays an important role in the overall harmony.

Third, it explores a social and cultural narrative, showing a broader communication between the work of art and its context. A painting of a city scene based on traditional Chinese culture may be an interpretation of the brutal development process of urban society. In addition, some special symbols, such as the Great Dragon and the Great Wall, can be used to show national pride and respect for history. (Becker, 1984) pointed out that a work of art is often a reflection of society, which records the nature, desires and criticism of society.

3.6.2 Instrumentation

In qualitative research, the chosen methods are not just tools but also integral to capturing the essence of the research subject. Given the vast and diverse nature of comprehensive media arts in China, qualitative approaches allow for a deeper and more nuanced exploration of both its breadth and depth.

(i) Observation and visualization studies:

Art appreciation requires a deeper vision. (Littschwager, 2019) presents us with a perspective that recognizes not only specific aesthetics, but also perceived emotions and narratives awakened by art. The tone, texture, and subtle variations of each painting can reveal a story or a mood. In order to ensure that no small details are missed, we use some magnification such as calibration scale, layout analysis grid, and detailed inspection during observation. Although this method is easy, it improves the ability of researchers to look at the surface of things.

(ii) Semi-structured interview:

Art is a whole made up of creators, managers and appreciators. Everyone has an opinion, and it's important to hold onto those opinions. Semi-structured interviews

(Kvale, 1996) ensure that spontaneous insight is retained while providing a guiding framework. Exploring the fusion of technologies, the symbolic use of materials, and the potential for inspiration can unearth layers of understanding that are rigorous and perhaps not clear from rigorous interviews.

(iii) Subject analysis:

Qualitative research often yields a lot of data. A thematic analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006) enables researchers to code the data, identify key themes, and uncover distinct styles and narrative modes across different artworks and artistic perspectives. This method not only structures the data but also reveals the underlying dynamics and evolution of the subject.

(iv) Document analysis

Chinese art is not only the work of an era, it is also a way of artistic expression for hundreds of years. Through the study of historical documents, archival materials, historical reviews, and art publications, we can discover the relationship between past practices and modern expressions. (Hodder, 1994) points out that although literary works are static, they can provide us with dynamic perspectives on cultural and artistic changes.

(v) Review of records:

Every researcher, whether they consciously or not, will put one of their own into their research. Such subjectivity, if left unchecked, can distort perceptions. A reflection journal is a self-checking mechanism. (Ortlipp, 2008) points out that this kind of diary is not just a repository for thoughts, it can also be used to help people introspect. The recording of personal biases, epiphanies, challenges and reflections

can be a metacognitive dimension in the research process, thus improving researchers' research methods.

3.7 Data Collection

The research of mixed media art in China must have a comprehensive data collection framework to reflect the complexity and diversity of this subject. The fundamental nature of this medium is linked to culture, history, technical competence, and the artistic ideas of the individual. To identify a large number of patterns, we carefully built a complete, sensitive, and multivariate data collection program. Based on the theory proposed by (Creswell & Creswell, 2017), this paper conducts an in-depth analysis of different types of mixed media art in China to ensure the accurate expression and understanding of each narrative mode, symbol and technique.

3.7.1 Research Population

Within the broad range of integrated media arts studies in China, identifying the appropriate subjects of study is key to ensuring a correct and complete view. The group being investigated is actually like a tapestry picked out of a carpet, so they need to show the numerous stakes associated with this multifaceted art.

The artist, as the creation subject and idealist of the work, is the basis of this study. According to (Dixon, 2019), there are more than 50,000 registered professional entertainers in China alone. Although the data shows a broad range, it is only the tip of the iceberg, with many artists not yet registered or generally accepted. Their work is

one of continuity, combining the ancient techniques of the Chinese tradition with the modern avant-garde.

Museum curators and art historians have unique insights into placing art within a broader cultural and historical narrative. (Adams, 2022) pointed out that in the past two decades, China's comprehensive media art, especially exhibitions organized by world-renowned organizations, has shown a rapid development trend, highlighting people's increasing attention to and understanding of this new art form. From this perspective, we can see the development of integrated media technology in the development of Chinese art. According to (Shi & Zhang, 2022), art collectors and connoisseurs have played a crucial role in the development and valuation of mixed-media oil painting in China. In recent years, the international market value of Chinese art has reached 13 billion US dollars, from their perspective, the aesthetic value of art, market trends, and the economic basis of art collection.

Literary critics and journalists are the link between artists and listeners. (Xia, 2021) pointed out that artists' comments often have a certain effect on the public's evaluation, and thus on the acceptance, interpretation and social effects of artworks. Their research and writings provide us with an external perspective and a way to examine and evaluate works of art.

3.7.2 Research Sample

In order to make a comprehensive study of Chinese mixed media oil painting, it is necessary to choose materials carefully. This research focuses on deep qualitative research, selecting 10-15 senior artists of Chinese comprehensive media art and selecting appropriate samples. The study used target sampling to ensure a large and in-depth collection of data. Directed sampling, also known as decision sampling or

selective sampling, refers to a deep understanding and knowledge of a problem in an individual or organization (Hamilton & Finley, 2019).

This sampling method is exactly in line with our research purpose, that is, painters who are committed to the evolution and reinterpretation of traditional Chinese painting through comprehensive media means. The criteria for selecting an artist include the recognition the artist has received worldwide, whether in awards, exhibitions or in prestigious art publications. In addition, these samples are used to represent a variety of techniques from the traditional to the avant-garde to ensure a balanced and complete understanding of the media. At the same time, we will also look for a balance between young artists with both academic backgrounds and innovative perspectives (Liu, 2022).

According to the above stringent criteria, the solicitation will leverage the existing art community, while also benefiting from the artist's suggestions to ensure that each participant is not just an interview subject, but someone who knows something about the research. We hope that through carefully selected cases, we can provide a new space for the future comprehensive media art creation in China, so that each artist can make important contributions to the future comprehensive media art creation with his own experience and perception.

The selection criteria for the research participants are:

- (i) No less than 10 years of working experience: engaged in art creation of Chinese comprehensive media. This ensures that they have deep experience and are able to make valuable points.

- (ii) Professional qualification assessment: Those who have hosted more than 2 solo exhibitions or participated in more than 5 works in the past 5 years will be preferentially admitted.
- (iii) Works of art that have been published or exhibited: painters whose works have been published in prestigious art magazines, magazines, or listed as subjects of research.
- (iv) Active in the arts: a painter should be a member of at least one recognized fine arts body, society or body to demonstrate his positive impact on the arts community.
- (v) Engaging in qualitative research: It is preferable if there are painters engaged in qualitative research or interviews, as they show their willingness to explore in depth.

The selection process for the research participants are:

Step 1: Build a database: First build a database to match the main categories of singers. To do this, you can get in touch with organizations such as the Chinese Artists Federation and consult their membership lists.

Step 2: Browse public resources: Browse the selected artist's personal website, gallery or social media profile. Here, you can browse through their portfolio and past exhibits to get a feel for their work.

Step 3: Initial contact: Send an email to 30-40 artists (because not everyone is interested in their work or has the time). An email should spell out the details of the study, its importance and the requirements for the painter.

Step 4: Filter calls: After receiving a positive response, schedule a short call filtering session. The main purpose of this visit is to evaluate the customer and evaluate the customer's satisfaction with the customer, so as to ensure that the in-depth interview can be conducted effectively.

Step 5: Filter according to criteria: Select artists from those who have received positive responses based on existing criteria. This will limit the survey to 10 to 15 people.

Step 6: Find an introduction: In this interview process, you can make some suggestions to a painter who can meet the demanding conditions of the study. This will open the hearts of some artists who may not have been on the radar at first, but are very suitable.

Step 7: Finalize and schedule: When the final list is finalized, send them a survey about the plan, timing, format, and other details of the survey.

3.7.3 Data Collection Procedures

This study intends to have a comprehensive understanding of modern Chinese oil painting with comprehensive materials through interviews, field investigations, and analysis of fine art works.

(i) Interviews

This study will use a semi-structured interview format, with each interview lasting between 60 and 90 minutes. This communication can take place in person or online, depending on the logistics of the researcher and painter.

While a series of script questions will lead us to a discussion, the inherent flexibility of the semi-structured form will allow you to explore new topics and topics, thus guaranteeing the inspiration of the creator. This approach, mainly through qualitative research (Benson et al., 2020), allows researchers to gain a deeper understanding of individual narratives and experiences, rather than simply describing them through simple observations, but presenting a richer and multilayered context that often cannot be presented by a single work of art.

(ii) Field Visits (Case Study)

Through direct access to art creation and exhibition venues, such as studios, galleries or exhibitions, the study aims to place oneself in the melting pot of art's origins and celebrations. The study is based on ethnographic principles (Ward and Delamont, 2020) and focuses on the attention paid to the artist's work, casual communication with the artist and participants, and detailed study of it. Face-to-face interaction with this art-centric environment not only deepens our understanding of its context, but also gives us valuable insight into the processes and atmospheres that are often hidden in the creation and presentation of art.

(iii) Artwork Analysis

The study of the arts is an important component, which incorporates multiple insights gained from interviews and fieldwork. This includes a systematic evaluation of selected works of art, including the choice of materials, the techniques used, the aesthetic decisions made, and the narratives embedded in them. This research will be reinforced through

interviews with early artists, related articles, and secondary sources of exhibits. Through the deconstruction of works of art, we can uncover the material aspects of art form and explore many nuances such as symbolism, artistic innovation, and the path of media evolution (Rose, 2022).

3.8 Techniques of Data Analysis

Efficient data analysis is the key to turning data into useful ideas. With the further development of the research on modern Chinese oil painting, it is necessary to systematically process the data. This part briefly introduces four methods used in this paper: symbol analysis, topic method, context method and narrative method as shown in Figure 3.1.

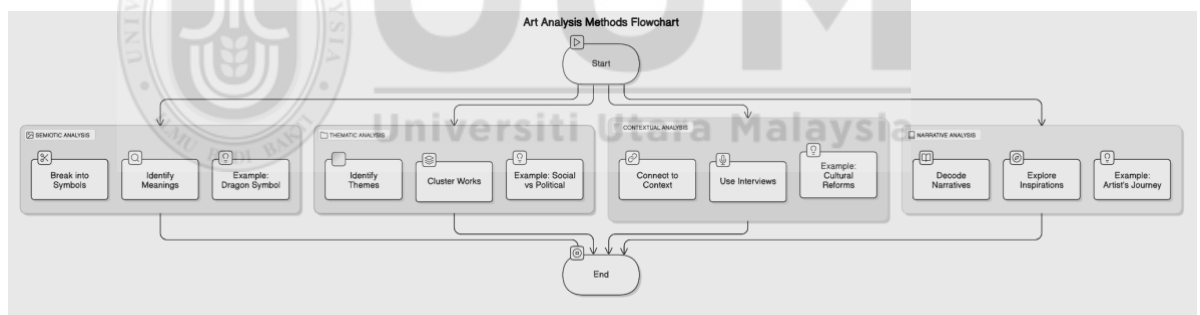


Figure 3.1. Art Analysis Method Flowchart

3.8.1 Semiotic Analysis:

In China's comprehensive media environment, the study of symbolism is still a very effective means for artistic creation with multiple forms of expression. Its essence is to divide each work into several basic visual elements, that is, the so-called symbol. This sign not only has a meaningful meaning, but also has a deeper cultural significance and symbolic significance. For example, in Chinese art works, "dragon" is not only a

legendary animal, it can also be a symbol of strength, power or imperial power. By exploring these two levels, we can find that as a new research method, it can help us better understand the public or implicit information contained in the artist's creation. This research is based on the research of visual symbolism as the core (Rose, 2022).

3.8.2 Thematic Analysis:

The thematic analysis of the work is not limited to a single symbol, but attempts to connect a broader theme and determine the overall theme or style of the work. On this basis, a semantic feature based identification classification method is proposed. When repeated improvements are made to these several groups or groups, the main topic comes up. Whether it's social unrest, political ambition, or private memory, it gives us a broader understanding of the works of art. The aim of this project is to study and compare different types of paintings, especially those depicting social, political and personal emotions.

3.8.3 Contextual Analysis:

Art does not live in a vacuum. Usually, this is a reflection, a criticism, a praise. Contextual analysis relates a work of art to its larger social and political context (Gadamer, 2013). This includes important research on works of art, including interviews with artists, historical records, or records of social and political activity at the time. Such juxtaposition enables the work to be placed in a larger environment to a certain extent, thus giving the symbol and narrative a deeper meaning.

3.8.4 Narrative Analysis:

Painters often add their own stories, experiences and journeys to their work. Narrativism is an inquiry into such private narratives, especially those of works of art that are narrated in a continuous or narrative manner. Through the analysis of the structure and connotation of the novel, we can see some private stories, which have joy, sadness, ambition, and even conflict. In a broader social and political context, these private stories are also a window into the artist's mind, inspiration and worldview. (James, 2023) points out that the narrative study provides a comprehensive view of the painter's work to ensure that the painter's views and feelings (embodied in his work) are not obscured, but are given full credit.

This paper takes Atlas as the research object to explore the rich symbolic and cultural implications of modern Chinese comprehensive media art. The goal of this study is to distinguish the social, political and personal stories contained in the works. This project intends to use Atlas.ti's data coding, classification and visualization methods to reveal the rich symbolic meaning, cultural connotation and narrative mode contained in China's new mixed-media art works.

After the fleshing out of Atlas.ti, we will be dissected in the following stages:

- I. Data entry and proficiency: The journey begins with the introduction of access records, site notes, artwork or captions into Atlas.ti. The preliminary interpretation of these data can give researchers a considerable understanding of the breadth and depth of the data.
- II. Open code: Code will be written for each key component, whether it is a phrase, a sentence, or a complete chapter. This process can create codes like "traditional

symbolism," "modern influence," or "political commentary." In a picture, elements such as colors, shapes, or specific materials used can be coded according to their symbolic relationships.

- III. Coding combination and classification: As the number of codes increases, these codes will be grouped into larger categories or series. For example, codes that refer to "silk use," "porcelain shards," and "rice paper texture" can be grouped into a broad category of "traditional materials."
- IV. Memo writing: One advantage of Atlas.ti is that researchers can easily record notes. They are reflective comments or insights into data, code, or emerging models. Taking notes is crucial in recording the development of your mind.
- V. Visual browsing function based on Web view: Atlas.ti has the ability to visually display codes, quotes and memos. This is particularly helpful in understanding the connections between the various symbolic components of works of art and larger cultural and social themes.
- VI. Data inquiry: Using inquiry tools, researchers can explore certain intersections, for example, several works use "traditional materials", while also evaluating "contemporary changes". From this Angle, we can have a deep insight into the duality of oil painting.
- VII. Final synthesis and interpretation: All coded data, memos, and visual networks are integrated into a coherent narrative. This article will start from the consideration of the social, political and personal landscape, and explain the rich symbolic connotation of modern Chinese comprehensive media art. This step

will lead us to a deeper understanding of how the materials and techniques of painting relate to the broader cultural exchange.

Figure 3.2 shows the steps of data analysis workflow with Atlas.ti.

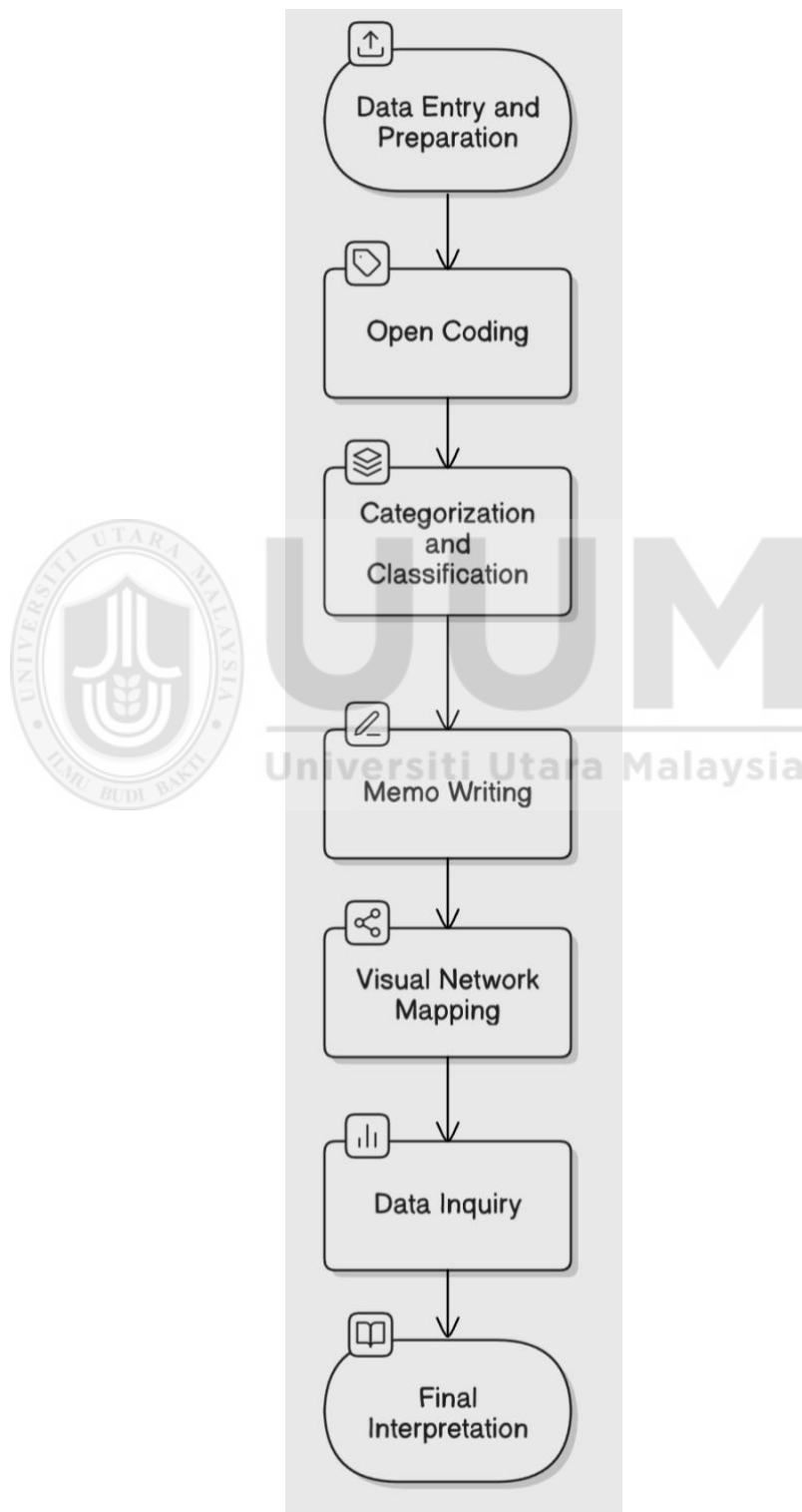


Figure 3.2. Data Analysis Workflow with Atlas.ti.

3.9 Summary

The third chapter elaborates the research ideas of Chinese comprehensive media art in detail. Due to the complexity, symbolism, and cultural nuances of the subject, this chapter uses a qualitative approach. This paper discusses the main contents of this study, including the importance of hermeneutic knowledge view and context. The process of data collection includes: semi-structural interview, field investigation, artistic analysis, etc., each of which has its reasonable and important significance to express the depth of the form of art. This chapter also divides the subjects into different groups and highlights sampling techniques specifically designed for professional painters. A structured and iterative data analysis of the system is carried out by Atlas.ti software, and it is explained in detail. The content of the above three aspects will make us have a complete understanding of the symbolic meaning, cultural meaning and narrative meaning of Chinese comprehensive media artworks.

CHAPTER FOUR

MATERIAL USAGE, SPIRITUAL THEMES AND AESTHETIC LANGUAGE IN CONTEMPORARY CHINESE MIXED-MEDIA PAINTING

4.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter explores the evolving journey of contemporary Chinese mixed media painting, delving into the intricate relationship between material use, spiritual themes and aesthetic language. Contemporary Chinese artists have generated a multifaceted dialog through their choice of materials, the spiritual undercurrents that permeate their work, and the unique aesthetic language they employ. This exploration tends to understand the profound ways in which these artists navigate the complexities of cultural identity, tradition, and modernity. Through in-depth analysis of selected cases, this study aims to shed light on how material innovations can serve not only as a basis for artistic expression, but also as a powerful medium for spiritual exploration and cultural commentary. By combining theoretical frameworks with empirical analysis, this dissertation aims to contribute to a broader discussion of contemporary art, providing new insights into the dynamic interplay of materiality, spirituality, and aesthetics in China's rich cultural context. As we undertook this investigation, it became clear that the artists' choice of materials and aesthetic decisions were deeply linked with different connotations of artwork with cultural significance and spiritual depth, reflecting a conscious engagement with both the ancient heritage and the pressing challenges of the contemporary world.

4.2 Interplay of Material Usage, Spiritual Exploration and Aesthetic Language within Contemporary Chinese Mixed-Media Art

Given the complexity and depth of the topic, the theoretical framework that underpins the interplay of material usage, spiritual exploration, and aesthetic language within contemporary Chinese mixed-media art will be discussed before moving into a deeper exploration.

The exploration of contemporary Chinese mixed-media art necessitates a multifaceted theoretical framework that bridges material culture studies, art history, and spirituality in art. This section elucidates the symbiotic relationship between the physicality of materials and the intangible dimensions of spirituality, exploring how this dynamic is manifested within the aesthetic language of contemporary Chinese artists. Art historians and cultural theorists have long argued that the materials chosen by artists are imbued with intrinsic qualities that transcend their materiality, embodying cultural values, historical narratives, and spiritual energies. This view is consistent with the concept of "material spirituality," in which matter becomes a vessel for deeper existence and transcendent expression. In addition, aesthetic vision - the unique way in which artists see and represent the world - is intricately linked to their material choices, shaping the visual language that conveys spiritual themes. For example, the use of traditional materials such as rice paper and ink in contemporary contexts often reflects reverence for the past and contemplation of the fluidity of time, while the combination of modern synthetic materials implies a break with or a critique of tradition. The impact of modernity on spiritual and cultural practices.

Material culture studies provide a foundational perspective for understanding the significance of material usage in art. Scholars like Jules David Prown and Henry

Glassie have emphasized that objects and materials are not passive entities but active participants in cultural dialogues. In the context of art, materials carry with them historical, cultural, and symbolic meanings that artists leverage to communicate deeper spiritual and philosophical messages. This perspective is vital for analyzing contemporary Chinese mixed-media art, where traditional materials such as silk, bamboo, ink, and paper are not merely artistic media but are imbued with centuries of cultural significance and spiritual connotations.

The study of spirituality in art has evolved to encompass a broad spectrum of practices and interpretations. From Kandinsky's belief in art's ability to express the inner life, to Rothko's transcendent color fields, the quest for spiritual expression in art has transcended cultural and temporal boundaries. In the Chinese context, spirituality in art is deeply intertwined with philosophical traditions such as Daoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism, which emphasize harmony with nature, mindfulness, and the pursuit of moral integrity. These philosophical underpinnings influence contemporary artists, guiding their material choices and aesthetic expressions to explore themes of existence, transcendence, and the sublime.

The global turn in contemporary art has led Chinese artists to engage with a wider array of materials and techniques, reflecting a dialogue between local traditions and global contemporary practices. The works of artists like Ai Weiwei and Cai Guo-Qiang exemplify how contemporary Chinese artists navigate this global-local nexus, using materials both as a means of cultural assertion and as a critique of socio-political realities. This global engagement enriches the spiritual exploration in Chinese mixed-media art, allowing for diverse expressions of spirituality that resonate with both local and global audiences.

Now look at another aspect, aesthetic language in art refers to the use of visual elements—color, form, texture, and composition—to convey meanings and evoke emotional responses. This language is not universal but is shaped by cultural contexts and individual artist's intentions. In contemporary Chinese mixed-media art, aesthetic language becomes a critical medium through which artists explore and express spiritual themes. The choice of colors, the manipulation of forms, and the textural qualities of materials all contribute to the articulation of spiritual experiences and cultural narratives. The writings of scholars such as Alfred Gell in *Art and Agency*, as well as David Morgan's insights into the materiality of religion, provide a fundamental understanding of how objects and materials act as agents of meaning and bearers of spirituality. Meanwhile, the aesthetic theories of Arthur Danto and the cultural criticism proposed by Hal Foster reveal the role of aesthetic choices in the spiritual landscape of contemporary art.

The aesthetic choices made by artists are often deeply imbued with spiritual significance. For instance, the use of gold in Buddhist art symbolizes purity and enlightenment, while the minimalist aesthetic in Zen art reflects principles of simplicity and introspection. In contemporary practices, these traditional symbols and aesthetics are reinterpreted to address modern spiritual quests and existential concerns. The work of Zeng Fanzhi, with his unique use of color and form, offers insights into the individual's spiritual and emotional turmoil in the face of societal changes, showcasing how aesthetic language mediates between personal spirituality and collective cultural identity.

The synthesis of material usage and aesthetic language in contemporary Chinese mixed-media art highlights the complex ways artists navigate the material-spiritual continuum. This synthesis is not merely additive but transformative, where the

interaction between material properties and aesthetic decisions opens up new spaces for spiritual exploration and cultural commentary. For example, the incorporation of industrial materials and digital media in mixed-media artworks reflects on the spiritual implications of technological advancement and environmental degradation, engaging with broader philosophical questions about humanity's place in the modern world.

Key contributions to the theoretical understanding of this synthesis come from scholars such as James Elkins, who explores the relationship between art and the sacred, and David Morgan, who discusses the materiality of religion. Their works, along with those exploring Chinese aesthetics and philosophy—such as François Jullien's treatises on Chinese thought and art—provide a rich theoretical backdrop for analyzing contemporary Chinese mixed-media art. These scholarly works help to frame the artists' material and aesthetic choices within broader discourses on spirituality, culture, and modernity, offering nuanced insights into the ways

In exploring these theoretical perspectives, this subsection examines seminal works in art theory, philosophy, and cultural studies that address the intersection of materiality, spirituality, and aesthetics. As we delve into the material-spiritual nexus of contemporary Chinese mixed-media painting, the following case studies illuminate the nuanced ways artists articulate their spiritual inquiries and cultural dialogues through chosen materials. Each artwork, from Hu Wei's 'Twilight over Autumn Mountains' to Chen Xinmao's 'History Book Series,' serves as a unique exploration of how tangible materials can embody intangible spiritual and cultural themes. These case studies not only exemplify the theoretical perspectives discussed earlier but also showcase the rich diversity of approaches within the field.

4.3 Case Studies: Material Usage, Spiritual Exploration and Aesthetic Language

In the vibrant landscape of contemporary Chinese mixed-media painting, the interplay between material usage and spiritual exploration emerges as a profound medium through which artists express their dialogues with tradition, culture, and identity. This section delves into a carefully curated selection of case studies that exemplify the rich diversity and innovative spirit of modern Chinese artistry. Each chosen artwork serves as a beacon, illuminating the intricate ways through which materials — be they traditional, modern, or a synthesis of both — are not merely tools of creation but vital carriers of meaning, spirituality, and cultural commentary.

The case studies span a range of artistic practices, from the delicate balances of ink and paper to the bold incorporations of digital media and synthetic materials. Through these artworks, we witness a contemporary reimagining of spiritual themes that are deeply rooted in Chinese cultural heritage, such as the harmonious coexistence with nature, the quest for inner tranquility, and the contemplation of life's impermanence. The artists behind these works engage in a dynamic conversation with their cultural past, while simultaneously navigating the complexities of the present and speculating about the future. Their creations offer a unique lens through which we can explore the evolving narrative of Chinese mixed-media art in the context of globalization and technological advancement.

The selection of artworks and artists for this study was guided by several key considerations, aimed at capturing the breadth and depth of material usage and spiritual exploration within contemporary Chinese mixed-media painting. Specifically:

Innovative Material Usage: Priority was given to artists who demonstrate innovative approaches to material usage, whether through the revival of traditional materials in new contexts or the integration of unconventional, modern materials to explore spiritual themes. This criterion ensures that the selected case studies reflect the cutting-edge of material experimentation in contemporary Chinese art.

Spiritual and Cultural Depth: Artworks were chosen for their capacity to delve into profound spiritual and cultural themes, offering insights into how artists grapple with questions of existence, identity, and transcendence. The ability of these artworks to evoke spiritual contemplation and cultural reflection was paramount.

Diversity of Artistic Expression: The selection encompasses a diverse range of artistic expressions, from the abstract and conceptual to the figurative and narrative. This diversity ensures that the case studies collectively represent the rich spectrum of aesthetic languages and thematic concerns present in contemporary Chinese mixed-media art.

Representation Across Generations: The chosen artists span several generations, from established masters to emerging voices, providing a cross-sectional view of how material usage and spiritual exploration have evolved and interacted over time within the Chinese art scene.

Besides, to ensure a comprehensive and nuanced analysis of the interplay between material usage and spiritual exploration in contemporary Chinese mixed-media painting, the selection of case studies was meticulously designed to embody diversity and representation across several dimensions. This broader and more inclusive approach not only enriches the depth of our exploration but also provides a more accurate reflection of the contemporary Chinese art scene. This diversity is evident in

several dimensions including geographic, gender, thematic range, artistic generation and style as well as the representational inclusivity.

The selection of artworks spans across China's vast geographic landscape, capturing the unique artistic traditions and contemporary practices from both the bustling metropolitan centers and the serene countryside. This geographic diversity ensures that the case studies reflect the wide array of environmental, social, and cultural influences on artists' material choices and spiritual themes. For example, artists from urban areas like Beijing and Shanghai often incorporate industrial and synthetic materials, reflecting the rapid urbanization and technological growth, while artists from regions with rich natural landscapes, such as Yunnan or Guangxi, might draw on organic materials and themes of natural harmony and spiritual contemplation tied to their local environments.

Recognizing the importance of gender diversity in providing a holistic view of contemporary Chinese mixed-media art, the case studies include an equal representation of male and female artists. This deliberate choice highlights the distinctive perspectives and thematic concerns that female artists bring to the discourse on spirituality and materiality, often challenging traditional narratives and exploring issues of identity, body, and space in innovative ways. By doing so, the selection underscores the significant contributions of women artists to the richness and diversity of contemporary Chinese art.

The case studies were chosen for their exploration of a broad spectrum of spiritual themes, ensuring a rich thematic range that reflects the complexity of contemporary life and spiritual inquiry. From personal meditations on existence, memory, and the passage of time to broader socio-cultural critiques encompassing

environmental concerns, urban alienation, and the search for meaning in a rapidly changing world, the selected artworks encapsulate the diverse ways artists engage with spiritual themes. This thematic diversity allows for a comprehensive exploration of how material usage and aesthetic language serve as mediums for spiritual expression and cultural commentary.

To capture the dynamic evolution of contemporary Chinese mixed-media painting, the case studies feature artists from different generations, ranging from pioneering figures who have shaped the trajectory of Chinese art since the late 20th century to younger artists who bring fresh perspectives and experimental approaches to the table. This generational diversity is complemented by a variety of artistic styles, from the abstract and avant-garde to the figurative and narrative, and from minimalistic to richly detailed compositions. This selection showcases how artists of different ages and stylistic inclinations navigate the intersection of material innovation, spiritual exploration, and aesthetic expression.

Then, selection process was informed by a commitment to representational inclusivity, seeking to highlight artists from underrepresented communities and backgrounds, thereby enriching the dialogue around spirituality and materiality in art. Along with incorporating artworks that reflect a wide array of lived experiences and cultural perspectives, the case studies collectively offer a more inclusive and nuanced understanding of contemporary Chinese mixed-media painting. Through the detailed consideration of diversity and representation, the selected case studies will provide a rich tapestry of contemporary Chinese mixed-media art and contribute to a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the interplay between material usage, spiritual exploration, and aesthetic language within this vibrant artistic domain.

As we delve into the material-spiritual nexus of contemporary Chinese mixed-media painting, the following case studies illuminate the nuanced ways artists articulate their spiritual inquiries and cultural dialogues through chosen materials. Each artwork, from Hu Wei's 'Twilight over Autumn Mountains' to Chen Xinmao's 'History Book Series,' serves as a unique exploration of how tangible materials can embody intangible spiritual and cultural themes. These case studies not only exemplify the theoretical perspectives discussed earlier but also showcase the rich diversity of approaches within the field.

4.3.1 Hu Wei – *Twilight Over Autumn Mountains*



Figure 4.1. *Twilight over Autumn Mountains*, 125 cm x 125cm, 2007

Hu Wei's work *Twilight in the Autumn Mountains* is supported by a wooden structure and uses rice paper for the image, combining mineral and vegetable pigments, measuring 125 x 125 cm. Executed in 2007, the choice of materials for this work is closely linked to traditional oriental art, as rice paper is widely used in Chinese painting due to its fine texture and good ink absorption. The title of this work, *Twilight in the Autumn Mountains*, hints at its fusion of the traditional elements of landscape painting

with modern art forms. Landscape painting is one of the main forms of Chinese painting, emphasising spirituality and rhythm rather than literal depictions of the material world. On the other hand, modern art forms, such as abstraction, seek to express the artist's emotions and ideas through colours and shapes, often without relying on a direct reproduction of the real world. Chinese landscape painting, which dates back to the fifth century, originated as a literati expression that emphasised personal cultivation and an intrinsic connection to nature.

Abstract art, on the other hand, originated at the beginning of the 20th century as a product of industrialisation and the rapid development of modern life, and was a reaction and experimentation by artists with traditional forms. Combining traditional materials and modern expression, *Twilight in the Autumn Mountains* demonstrates the author's respect for traditional culture as well as his personal perception of the beauty of nature in the context of contemporary art. Through the use of historically significant materials, Hu Wei carries forward the spirit of Eastern aesthetics in his modern artistic creations, making *Twilight in the Autumn Mountains* not only a work of visual art, but also an expression of culture.

Material Usage

In the work “Twilight in the Autumn Mountains”, Hu Wei may have employed a range of materials rich in symbolism. These materials are deeply rooted in the traditions of Chinese art, but also reflect an embrace of contemporary aesthetics. Twilight in the Autumn Mountains reveals the artist's choice of a varied and complex mix of materials that may include oil, acrylic, wood, and possibly collage elements.

The textural details of the work hint at the possible use of Xuan paper, a traditional material with a long history in Chinese art history. This high-quality paper (xuan paper), made from green sandalwood veneer and straw, is highly prized in ink painting, where its fineness and transparency allow the pigments and inks to soak in deeply, creating subtle gradations and delicate layering. The fineness and transparency of Xuan paper makes it ideal for expressing subtle gradations and layers of colour. In contrast to the more traditional rice paper, modern acrylic and oil paints offer high saturation and fast drying times, allowing the artist to paint quickly while also permitting thick textural layering and deep colour expression.

The use of wood not only demonstrates the artist's preference for natural materials, but also provides a raw and sturdy feel. The natural grain of wood provides a textural and visual experience that is very different from that of rice paper, and its natural textures and colours bring a sense of life to the work that may symbolise the harmonious symbiosis between nature and human activity. The hardness of the wood contrasts with the lightness and transparency of the rice paper, and the solidity and heaviness of the wood can be used to balance the lightness and transparency of the rice paper, providing a solid structural foundation for the work and a visual tension for the viewer. The colours used by the artist in his works, particularly the mineral and

vegetable pigments, may reflect a respect for the natural world and an exploration of the colours of the earth. The natural origin of these colours and their visually warm tones lend a warmth and emotion to the work, suggesting a vitality and energy drawn from the land.

Aesthetically, this synthesis of materials creates a rich visual language that allows the viewer to feel both the physical and spiritual dimensions of the work. The contrast of textures, such as the smoothness of the rice paper and the roughness of the wood, as well as the alternation of shades of colour, light and darkness, reinforce the dynamic sense of the work. The effects of light reflection and absorption on different materials also present a multi-dimensional visual experience for the viewer. This is not only a visual treat, but also a spiritual touch, as it conveys the artist's deep understanding and unique insights into tradition and modernity, nature and artifice, light and dark and colour.

In this work, the use of multi-material mixing is a clear signal of the artist's attempt to bridge tradition and modernity. The juxtaposition of traditional rice paper with modern oil and acrylic paints is not only a physical mixture, but also a fusion of time and culture. Through this juxtaposition of materials, the artist builds a bridge between the past and the present, demonstrating respect for and inheritance of traditional culture, as well as a desire to explore modern aesthetics.

The use of rice paper echoes the ancient tradition of Chinese ink painting, a material that carries the weight of history and culture. Across integrating Xuan paper into modern artworks, the artist expresses a retrospective of history and a cherishing of cultural heritage. Xuan paper represents not only a material, but also a cultural symbol, a sign of a traditional art form. At the same time, the inclusion of modern materials such

as oil and acrylic reveals the artist's adoption of contemporary artistic expression. These materials allow the artist to express personal emotions and thoughts in a freer and bolder way. The heaviness and saturation of oil paints and the quick drying and versatility of acrylics provide the artist with an immediate means of expression, which contrasts with the patience and gentle handling required for rice paper. The artist's use of wood, a natural element, reveals a respect for the natural world and an enquiry into the nature of life. The texture and colour of wood brings a sense of originality and is a medium for the artist's dialogue with nature. This dialogue permeates the overall expression of the work, reflecting the artist's attempt to find a harmonious balance between man and nature.

Spiritual Significance of Material Choices

In Hu Wei's "Twilight over Autumn Mountains," the choice of materials and how they are employed appears to be a deliberate strategy to evoke the spiritual themes common in Chinese landscape art, yet with a distinctive contemporary voice. The dominant, textured white may symbolize spiritual purity and the quest for enlightenment, a theme pervasive in many Eastern philosophies. Its expansive presence could be interpreted as the vastness of the spiritual realm or the infinite potential of the Tao, central to Taoist thought. The earthy, fragmented textures below could signify the terrestrial, the foundation from which the spirit ascends. The contrast here is palpable, suggesting a journey from the earthly realm of structured chaos towards the ethereal plane of tranquil uniformity, a narrative thread that aligns with the philosophical concept of ascension from the profane to the sacred.

The striking turquoise color disrupts the earthy tones and adds a dynamic spiritual energy to the composition. In some Eastern traditions, turquoise is associated with healing and protection, serving here as a visual anchor that could represent a spiritual oasis or a haven within the material plane. This unconventional insertion within the broader context of traditional Chinese art suggests a bridge between the earthly and the divine, offering a contemporary interpretation of the interplay between human existence and the spiritual journey.

Hu Wei's material choices resonate with the rich tapestry of Chinese cultural and philosophical thought. The aesthetic philosophy of shanshui (山水), or mountain-water, where the physical landscape is imbued with spiritual significance, is reflected in the painting's composition and materiality. The materials employed in the artwork are not neutral; they carry with them the weight of cultural significance and philosophical reflection.

The textures and cracks within the white expanse might also reflect upon the concept of impermanence and the natural decay inherent in the philosophy of Wu Wei, a principle suggesting alignment with the natural flow of life. Through incorporating materials that display natural patterns and entropy, Hu Wei aligns with this worldview, embracing the beauty of transience and the passage of time.

Furthermore, the juxtaposition of traditional materials with modern elements within the artwork mirrors the philosophical dialogue between ancient wisdom and contemporary reality, a reality where rapid change and technological progress pose new

questions and challenges to spiritual practices. In this way, "Twilight over Autumn Mountains" becomes a canvas where the artist grapples with timeless spiritual questions within the context of modern-day China, reflecting upon how these ancient philosophies can be understood and expressed through the lens of contemporary art.

Through Hu Wei's careful selection of materials, "Twilight over Autumn Mountains" emerges as a profound exploration of the spiritual themes and cultural philosophies that are central to the understanding of not only the artist's personal vision but also the collective cultural identity within the rapidly evolving landscape of contemporary Chinese society. At the same time, the choice and use of colours is not only for visual harmony, but may also be intended to convey emotional temperature and depth of thought. Such multi-material mixing embodies a spirit of exploration, suggesting that the artist is searching for a dialogue between the past and the present, as well as a balance between cultural heritage and contemporary expression. The choice and use of each material is not arbitrary, but rather a conscious effort by the artist to express a certain emotion or thought. Through the material medium, the viewer gets a glimpse of how the artist embraces modernity while respecting tradition, and how he finds a balance between the rich cultural heritage and contemporary artistic expression. The choice and application of these materials become the language of the artist's emotions and thoughts, allowing the viewer to experience the artist's spiritual world while viewing the works.

Preliminary Discussion on the Role of Aesthetic Decisions in Enhancing Material and Spiritual Themes

In *"Twilight over Autumn Mountains,"* Hu Wei's aesthetic language speaks through the interplay of texture and color, each element contributing to the spiritual narrative crafted by the artist. The palpable texture, dominating the upper portion of the artwork, evokes a sense of the ethereal. It is as if one could almost feel the mist of the spiritual realm that the mountains of Chinese lore often breach. The rough, tactile quality invites contemplation, encouraging the viewer to go beyond the visual and engage with the piece on a sensory level that echoes the touch of the natural world.

The use of a bright, almost out-of-place turquoise amidst the earthier, subdued tones introduces a jolt to the senses, serving to awaken and draw the viewer into a more profound engagement with the artwork. This aesthetic decision may symbolize moments of spiritual clarity or epiphany within the earthly journey. It challenges traditional monochromatic landscapes, suggesting that the spiritual journey is not one of uniformity but of vibrant, unexpected moments of discovery and insight. Moreover, the choice of an almost fragmented composition, where the lower elements seem to be in a state of either construction or deconstruction, plays with the aesthetic theme of impermanence and transition. It visually represents the idea that the physical world—and perhaps our spiritual understanding—is constantly evolving, never complete, and always subject to the forces of change.

4.3.2 Hu Wei – *Sea Reef*



Figure 4.2. *Sea Reef*, 180cm x 900 cm, 2019

In this work, Hu Wei utilizes a range of non-traditional materials to construct an image with a strong visual impact. The painting, titled *Sea Reef*, is a grandiose 180 x 900 centimeters in size and was completed in 2019. From the information provided, it appears that the artist used wooden structures, rice paper, mineral-vegetable-earth pigments, gold and silver powders, and metal slag, all of which are diverse and combine traditional and contemporary techniques for mixed media artworks, to create this piece. The piece leans toward abstract art, a genre of art originating in the early 20th century, where the focus is on creating works using the visual language of shapes, colors, and lines rather than traditional realist depictions. The key to this art form is viewer engagement and perception, as abstract art does not usually represent concrete objects in the real world, but rather attempts to touch on more general or pure sensations and concepts.

The history of abstract art can be traced back to the early 20th century, and with the creation of artists such as Kazimir Malevich and Wassily Kandinsky, it opened up a new realm of artistic exploration. At first, abstract art was a rebellion against realism and traditional painting methods. Over time, it developed various genres and directions, such as expressionist abstraction, geometric abstraction and minimalism. Key visual characteristics of abstract art include non-representational shapes, colors and lines,

which combine to form a visual experience designed to provoke emotion and introspection. In Hu Wei's work *Sea Reef*, we can see that he may have expressed the texture and color of the reef through abstraction rather than directly depicting a concrete image of the reef. The use of materials such as gold and silver powder and metal slag creates a unique texture and sheen, which visually mimics the sheen and reflection of seawater as it splashes over the reef.

Material Usage

In Hu Wei's "*Sea Reef*," each material is not merely a tool for creation but carries a wealth of meaning and history, particularly within the context of Chinese art. Let's delve into the symbolism and significance of each material used in the artwork.

The wooden base of "*Sea Reef*" resonates with the age-old tradition of wood in Chinese craftsmanship, from architecture to sculpture. Wood represents growth, life, and resilience in Chinese culture. It's the backbone of the piece, much like how wood has been the backbone of Chinese civilization, offering support and stability. In the context of "*Sea Reef*," the wood structure may symbolize the enduring foundation of natural ecosystems, like reefs, which are vital yet vulnerable pillars of marine life. Xuan paper, known for its association with longevity and resilience, is a traditional medium for Chinese painters and calligraphers. Its use in "*Sea Reef*" bridges the gap between the old and the new by adopting an ancient material in a contemporary artwork. The material's historical connotations of scholarly and artistic pursuits imbue the artwork with a sense of continuity and deep respect for the cultural past.

The mineral pigments are historically significant in Chinese art, valued for their vivid, lasting color. These pigments tie the artwork to the natural world — not only in

their source but also in their spiritual symbolism, as minerals are often associated with the earth's inherent sacredness and energy in many cultures. Their use here could be seen as a nod to the timeless artistry of China, now repurposed for a modern commentary on environmental degradation (Behrooz, 2024). Plant-based pigments, a staple in traditional Chinese art due to their organic quality and natural hues, may evoke a sense of life and growth. In "Sea Reef," these pigments can signify the symbiotic relationship between art and nature, drawing a parallel between the natural life cycle of growth, decay, and rebirth, and the cyclic nature of cultural and artistic rejuvenation.

Soil is a symbol of the land and the homeland, grounding the artwork in place and time. It's traditionally linked to fertility and sustenance but also to burial and return to the earth. In "Sea Reef," soil pigments might reference the earthly origins of the materials and the grounding of spiritual practices in the physical realm, suggesting a return to basics in both art and life. In Chinese culture, gold is often associated with wealth, purity, and celestial realms, while silver can symbolize clarity and purity. Their usage in religious and imperial art has historically signified high status and spiritual importance. Within "Sea Reef," these materials may serve a dual purpose — celebrating the inherent beauty and value of natural formations like coral reefs while also highlighting the threat posed to them by the human quest for wealth and exploitation of natural resources.

An unconventional material in art, metal slag is indicative of industrial waste and byproducts. Its presence in "Sea Reef" introduces a contemporary narrative on industrialization's impact on the environment. The use of such a material is a poignant reminder of the destruction of natural habitats like coral reefs through human activity. Its inclusion may critique the spiritual disconnection from nature that accompanies industrial progress. In "Sea Reef," Hu Wei masterfully employs each material to

communicate a rich tapestry of meanings, harmonizing traditional artistry with contemporary concerns, and infusing the piece with a spiritual dialogue that is deeply rooted in the natural world and its connection with cultural identity.

Spiritual Significance of Material Choices

The spiritual significance of the material choices in Hu Wei's "Sea Reef" is a contemplative embodiment of the dialogue between humanity and nature, echoing a deeply-rooted cultural and philosophical consciousness.

The delicate yet strong Xuan paper represents a canvas of purity, a spiritual blank slate. Its employment in "Sea Reef" may suggest the Buddhist idea of the 'Tabula Rasa,' the pure mind upon which experience paints. In this context, Xuan Zhi - "rice paper" reflects the potential for spiritual renewal and enlightenment — an untouched space awaiting the imprint of higher understanding. The mineral, plant, and soil pigments are evocative of the 'Five Elements', which form the foundation of the universe in Chinese philosophy: wood, fire, earth, metal, and water. The use of these pigments suggests a harmony with nature's cycles and the interdependent relationships among all living things, resonating with Daoist principles of balance and flow within the spiritual ecosystem. The metal slag introduces a contemporary reflection on spiritual disconnection. This byproduct of human industry juxtaposed against natural elements could be interpreted as a metaphor for the industrial age's spiritual byproducts: alienation and environmental disregard. It stands as a material testament to the spiritual void that can accompany unchecked progress and consumerism. In a spiritual context, this could be seen as a call to awareness, a reminder of the 'Kong,' or emptiness, that comes from a life lived out of sync with the natural and cosmic order.

Gold, associated with the sun, yang, and the immortality of the spirit, and silver, related to the moon, yin, and the purity of the soul, introduce a celestial dimension. Their application may reflect the spiritual aspiration toward cosmic harmony and the eternal, going beyond the temporal confines of physical existence to touch upon the infinite. Also, wood, with its life-giving essence in Chinese tradition, symbolizes growth and moral integrity. Its structural role in "Sea Reef" may evoke the Chinese philosophical concept of 'Jian,' meaning steadfastness and simplicity, principles that anchor spiritual practice. The wood's resilience becomes an allegory for the spiritual fortitude necessary to withstand the tempests of life.

The intentional selection and placement of these materials within "Sea Reef" reveal Hu Wei's intricate layering of spiritual themes. The wood's firmness, the paper's receptivity, the natural pigments' earthiness, and the precious metals' luster, against the stark industrial reality of metal slag, all participate in a narrative of contrast and integration. It's a reflection of the spiritual journey itself, which often involves finding unity amidst diversity and seeking harmony in a world of contrasts. This interplay is reflective of the continuing relevance of traditional practices within the contemporary art landscape and highlights the artist's role in navigating the intersection of history and modernity. The traditional elements may serve as a tribute to the enduring legacy of Chinese artistic principles, while the modern materials comment on the present state of environmental and cultural upheaval.

The layering of materials can also be seen as a metaphor for the stratification of time and history, with each layer representing a different epoch or thought. The textured surfaces invite contemplation on the erosion and formation of natural structures, like reefs, which are subject to the passing of time and environmental changes. This could symbolize the resilience and vulnerability of both art and nature, suggesting a nuanced

perspective on the impermanence and transformation inherent in both realms. The stark contrast between the natural materials and the industrial metal slag underscores a tension between ecological preservation and human industrialization. It alludes to the destructive impact of industrial activities on natural sanctuaries, using the physical properties of the materials to create an environmental commentary. The roughness of the metal slag against the smoothness of the Xuan paper could represent the invasive interruption of industrial waste into the natural order, challenging viewers to consider the spiritual dissonance caused by such disruptions.

The artwork's cultural depth is anchored in the rich philosophical traditions of China. The materials Hu Wei selects are not just aesthetically pleasing but steeped in symbolism and meaning. For instance, the strategic use of gold and silver powders does not merely beautify but also encapsulates the spiritual pursuit of transcendence and illumination found in many strands of Chinese thought. The presence of metal slag not only grounds the piece in modernity but also introduces a Confucian consideration for social responsibility and the moral consequences of technological advancement.

Hu Wei's use of Xuan paper and natural pigments invites a contemplation of 'Li,' the Confucian and Daoist principle of natural order and universal reason. The materials employed thus become a canvas on which the macrocosm of philosophical and spiritual principles is drawn. They reflect a search for 'Dao,' the way of the cosmos, and 'De,' the virtue of living in harmony with this way.

The fusion of these diverse materials in "Sea Reef" could be seen as a metaphor for the tapestry of life's spiritual journey. It speaks to the interconnectedness of all things — the 'Qi,' or vital energy, that flows through the natural and human-made worlds. The artwork, in its material complexity, reflects the intricate layers of spiritual

existence, inviting viewers to contemplate the interwoven paths of materiality and spirituality.

In essence, "Sea Reef" stands as a testament to the enduring relationship between art, culture, and spirituality. Each material choice is a note in the symphony of Hu Wei's spiritual expression, resonating with the cultural and philosophical underpinnings of a society that finds itself at the crossroads of history and modernity. The artwork becomes a silent dialogue between the tangible and the ethereal, the ancient and the contemporary, the culturally specific and the universally spiritual.

Preliminary Discussion on the Role of Aesthetic Decisions in Enhancing Material and Spiritual Themes

Hu Wei's "Sea Reef" harnesses the power of abstraction to translate the language of spirituality and materiality into a visual form. The abstract aesthetic, marked by non-representational forms, does not simply depict a scene; rather, it evokes an essence. The aesthetic choice to fragment the landscape into a series of jagged, vertical forms mimics the natural structure of coral reefs, yet abstains from direct imitation. This invites contemplation and introspection, allowing viewers to impose personal spiritual significance onto the artwork.

The colors in "Sea Reef" are restrained, predominantly echoing the subdued hues of the natural world, with the occasional interruption of brighter colors. This palette creates an environment of contemplation, an echo of the Taoist emphasis on harmonious natural beauty. The addition of metallic elements introduces an aesthetic tension, a shimmer that both attracts and alienates, embodying the lure and repulsion of

material wealth and industrial progress. Hu Wei's choice to layer and texturize these colors adds a tactile dimension to the piece, aligning with the spiritual theme of interconnectedness. It is as if the physical layering of the materials is a metaphor for the layers of spiritual understanding that one must peel back to reach enlightenment.

4.3.3 Zhang Yuan – *Inspiration from Nature Series No. 3*



Figure 4.3. *Inspiration from Nature Series No. 3* , 80cm x 80cm, 2002

Zhang Yuan's *Nature's Revelation Series No. 3*, a mixed media painting that embodies the intertwined characteristics of abstraction and semi-abstraction, was

created in 2002 and measures 80 x 80 centimeters. This work embodies the complex relationship between art and nature, demonstrating a deep fusion of traditional and modern artistic practices. In terms of artistic form, it draws on the principles of traditional Chinese art as well as absorbing the essence of contemporary mixed-media techniques, reflecting Zhang Yuan's unique perspective on the dynamics of artistic development in the context of modern society. The art form of this painting is rooted in the traditions of Chinese art, particularly in its colors and composition, which reflect the influence of Chinese landscape painting. The origins of landscape painting as a time-honored art form can be traced back to ancient China and reached its peak during the Song Dynasty. Key characteristics of landscape painting include an emphasis on depth of field and a sense of space, the use of concise lines to represent the forms of mountains and rivers, and its unique chiaroscuro.

With his unique and modern perspective, this work by Zhang Yuan breathes new life into this traditional art form through abstraction and semi-abstract elements, such as blurred outlines of mountains and rivers. In his use of color, Zhang Yuan chooses earth tones that evoke a sense of natural depth and serenity and a quiet blue-green palette, while conveying the emotional and spiritual connotations of the work through the layering and rendering of these colors. His carefully constructed colors are not only a physical representation of nature, but also symbolize its emotional and spiritual connotations. In Chinese culture, these colors are often associated with concepts such as harmony, growth and serenity. Through the application of these colors, Zhang Yuan not only captures the visual beauty of nature, but also invites viewers to reflect on their connection to the natural environment.

Zhang Yuan's use of canvas and mixed media shows his exploration and application of different materials, especially in how he utilizes their physical properties

and their interaction with light to enhance the aesthetic and tactile qualities of his paintings. In terms of compositional approach, he draws on semi-abstract forms to represent natural landscapes rather than directly presenting concrete images, an approach that allows the viewer to interact with the artwork on multiple levels.

Material Usage

Zhang Yuan's *Nature's Revelation Series No. 3* is a unique Tempera mixed media work. This work employs the technique of burlap Tempera, which is a layer of burlap covered with a wooden board, combining the use of the traditional Tempera technique with the modern mixed-materials approach. In this technique, the artist not only uses traditional pigments, but may also incorporate other materials such as metal, paper, and cloth as a way to create unique textures and visual effects. Traditional Tempera painting is known for its durability. Once the pigments on the screen are calcified, they form a protective film that insulates them from the air, preventing further oxidation of the pigments and maintaining the stability of the colors. This ancient method of painting was historically used primarily for religious paintings and was a common technique used by artists during the Middle Ages and Renaissance. In contrast, the drying of oil paint is a slow oxidizing process, and the pigments of an oil painting will continue to oxidize over time until they become chalky, making them far less stable than Tempera.

In this painting, the combined use of various materials not only constitutes the physical form of the picture, but also contains profound symbolic meanings, which interact with each other to build a multi-dimensional understanding of the work. The ancient combination of burlap dhampiras and wood panels provides a solid foundation

that represents solidity and historical sedimentation. The solidity of the wooden planks combined with the rough texture of the burlap symbolizes the raw state of nature and the tradition of artistic creation. The use of this material not only pays homage to traditional craftsmanship, but also to its stability and longevity, reflecting the work's desire to stand the test of time as nature does. This work also incorporates metal, which is intended to enhance the three-dimensional effect of the image. The glossy and hard nature of metal contrasts with the other painting materials, creating an effect of conflict and harmony at the same time. The use of metal may symbolize the relationship between human civilization and the natural world, suggesting the tension between industry and the natural environment.

In addition, the fragility and perishability of paper, a traditional medium for writing and drawing, contrasts with the stability of burlap and wood panels. In mixed media, paper may be used to construct a part of an image or as a carrier of color, and its inclusion may represent the flow of information and traces of time. The incorporation of paper as a medium for recording and transmitting knowledge may represent the flow of knowledge and culture, as well as the knowledge and understanding of nature. The fragility of paper may also be a reminder that human knowledge and cultural achievements are fragile and not eternal in the face of nature. The use of fabric is often associated with softness and flexibility. In paintings, fabric may be used to add to the weave of a surface, or it may represent warmth or shelter. In this work, the use of fabric may be to explore the dialogue between different textures, or it may symbolize man's overlaying and altering of nature.

Zhang Yuan's choice of materials shows a respect for and challenge to artistic tradition. Alongside combining Tempera's traditional methods with modern techniques of synthesizing materials, he breaks the boundaries of traditional painting materials and

at the same time expands the possibilities of painting expression. In Revelations of Nature Series No. 3, Zhang Yuan not only uses conventional materials such as oil and watercolor, but also incorporates metal, paper, and fabric into his paintings. The use of these non-traditional materials enriches the texture of the works and increases the sense of visual hierarchy and depth. Zhang Yuan's integrated material approach is not only a physical use of materials, but also an artistic way of thinking. He views materials as mediums through which different physical properties are fused together to form a new language of expression. For example, he may mix sand, paper shavings or metal shavings with paint to create a layered textural effect. In this way, Zhang Yuan gives his paintings a unique sense of the times, reflecting modern society's profound thinking about materials and material culture.

Zhang Yuan's integrated material approach is not only a physical use of materials, but also an artistic way of thinking. The use of each material carries its own unique cultural and art historical background, and through the superposition and combination of these materials, Zhang Yuan explores more macroscopic themes: the relationship between man and nature, the development of civilization, and the interaction between art and the environment. His choice of materials both conforms to and challenges the traditional norms of artistic creation, as he is not satisfied with the use of a single or traditional material, but rather employs them in an innovative way to express his own artistic ideas and observations of contemporary society.

Spiritual Significance of Material Choices

Zhang Yuan's choice of materials in Nature's Revelation Series No. 3 is not only visually and tactilely expressive, but also contains far-reaching spiritual and

philosophical significance. The following is an interpretation of the spiritual themes behind these material choices, as well as an analysis of the cultural and philosophical foundations they reflect.

The combination of burlap dauphine and wood panels embodies not only a reverence for classical art techniques, but also a respect for traditional values and a resistance to the test of time. On a spiritual level, the sturdiness of the wood panel represents the adherence to beliefs and principles, while the covering of the burlap acts as a shelter in religion, protecting these beliefs from the outside world. Often used in religious art to create icons, *Tempera's* use here suggests a search for divinity and religious tradition, as well as a search for beauty that transcends time.

The juxtaposition of the rough-grained, organic texture of burlap with the smooth, solid texture of wood may initially conjure up images of the chaos of nature against the order of man. However, if we look at these textures from a spiritual perspective, they represent not conflict but coexistence – the chaotic yet harmonious dance of nature and man's attempts to keep in tune with the rhythms of the natural world, reflecting the Taoist idea of seeking harmony with the Tao, the way of natural order. Metal is often seen as cold and lifeless, but it can be reinterpreted as a symbol of reflection – both literally and metaphorically. Spiritually, the reflective surface of metal provides an opportunity for introspection, symbolizing the mirrored nature of water, a symbol of Taoist wisdom and clarity, the ability to reflect things as they really are, without judgment or distortion (Qi, 2024).

Instead of emphasizing the ephemeral nature of paper, its integration among durable materials like wood and metal speaks to the resilience of spiritual knowledge and tradition. Paper carries the wisdom of the ages; it is the vessel for written scripture,

poetry, and philosophy. Its delicate presence amidst the robustness suggests that spirituality, though seemingly fragile, has an enduring quality that survives beyond the material. The use of fabric adds a personal dimension, representing the human element within the vast tableau of existence. In many spiritual traditions, clothing is symbolic of identity and status—think of monks' robes or shamanic garments. In this artwork, fabric may symbolize the spiritual journey of the individual, uniquely textured and woven, an intimate garment of the soul that we carry through life.

As a whole, Zhang Yuan's works spiritually emphasize the fragility and finitude of human life in contrast to the power and vastness of nature. He may be exploring humanity's place in the natural environment and how we can understand and respect the power of nature through artistic expression and material use. The choice of materials and artistic expression in the work may be calling on the viewer to reflect on the impact of human activities on the environment, as well as exploring how to find a harmonious coexistence between material civilization and the natural environment.

On a philosophical level, the painting presents a cosmic view in which human beings are only one of the many components of nature, and our cultural and technological achievements, though remarkable, must ultimately be harmonized with the laws and rhythms of nature. With the help of combining traditional materials with modern concepts, Zhang Yuan presents a new perspective in Nature's Revelation Series No. 3, in which mixed media is used to convey the possibility of harmony between man and nature.

Preliminary Discussion on the Role of Aesthetic Decisions in Enhancing Material and Spiritual Themes

The painting's panoramic sweep, with its gradations of blues and greens against the starkness of metal, speaks to the vastness and depth of the ocean, a critical element in nature's grand tapestry. The aesthetic choice to represent the sea in such turbulent and dynamic forms suggests the tumultuous relationship between humanity and the ocean's depths, a space teeming with mystery and spirituality. The surface of the canvas becomes a space where the physical and metaphysical meet, where the aesthetic representation is not just seen but felt, invoking a contemplation of the sublime.

The way colors bleed into one another, where the clarity of boundaries is intentionally obscured, echoes the spiritual belief that all life is interconnected; separations are illusions. This melding of colors can be seen as a visual representation of the Daoist concept of harmony, where opposites blend and give rise to each other in a continual cycle of natural balance.

Zhang Yuan's choice to incorporate fabric into this fluid scene adds a textural dimension that invites touch and evokes the tactile experience of interacting with nature. Fabric, traditionally associated with human craft and utility, here, becomes a symbol of humanity's attempt to order and make sense of the natural world. The physical texture adds a layer of reality to the piece, grounding the spiritual in the material world.

These initial observations reveal Zhang Yuan's "Inspiration from Nature Series No. 3" as an aesthetic gateway to deeper spiritual inquiry. While the materials used in the artwork establish a dialogue with nature's elements, the aesthetic choices of color, form, and texture invite the viewer to feel and experience this conversation on a more intuitive level.

4.3.4 Zhang Yuan – *Memories of the Red Lotus Wetland No. 3*



Figure 4.4. *Memories of the Red Lotus Wetland No. 3*, 120cm x 120cm, 2015

Zhang Yuan's *Memory of Red Lotus Wetland No. 3* is a painting created with mixed materials, showing the artist's deep sense of natural landscape and unique artistic expression. As can be seen from this painting, Zhang Yuan tends to use an abstract technique to depict his subject. This form of abstract art, which originated in the early 20th century, abandoned the pursuit of realistic depictions of the natural world and instead emphasized the expression of the artist's thoughts and emotions through non-figurative combinations of colors, shapes and lines. In the evolution of history, abstract

art has gone through many stages, from Expressionism to Cubism, and later to Abstract Expressionism, each of which profoundly reflects the social background and personal philosophy of the artist at the time. In this work, it can be seen that Zhang Yuan's use of color is quite bold and expressive. The strong contrast between the dark background and the bright splashes of color creates a hazy and mysterious atmosphere, enabling the viewer to feel the power and emotion contained in the work. These colors are not just a visual treat, they are also a metaphor for the author's reflections on nature and memory. Lines, on the other hand, serve to delineate space and guide the flow of vision, and are no longer a tool for depicting specific shapes.

The composition of the painting shows a free and improvisational style, which may reflect a visual mapping of the artist's inner world. From the perspective of cultural influence, *Memory of the Red Lotus Wetland No. 3* may reflect an important trend in the contemporary Chinese art world: that is, on the basis of inheriting and respecting tradition, boldly innovating and absorbing the achievements of Western modern art. Zhang Yuan's work also displays a large scale in size that is often associated with modern artworks, with its 120 x 120 cm area providing him with a vast space to display his techniques and express his subject matter. In the 2015 Shanghai Urban Space Art Season, this painting was exhibited to highlight the importance of academic activities in contemporary art creation, and to emphasize that art inherits tradition while absorbing and integrating contemporary innovations and academic achievements. As one of Zhang Yuan's masterpieces, *Memory of Red Lotus Wetland No. 3* demonstrates the artist's deep sense of natural landscape and unique artistic expression.

Material Usage

Zhang Yuan's *Memories of the Red Lotus Wetland No. 3* utilizes a range of materials to enrich the layers and meanings of the painting, and the application of each material reflects the artist's deep understanding of nature and his philosophical reflections.

Rough-textured materials such as sand or gravel play an important role in this work. They not only provide rich visual and tactile effects, but also add a real natural texture to the picture. These natural elements are directly derived from the wetland environment, making the work closely connected to the natural landscape it depicts. Symbolically, the sand and gravel present the unadorned nature of the wetland, their rough surfaces and irregular shapes symbolizing the wildness and disorder of nature and the imprint that time has left on the natural environment. The rough texture can also be seen as a tribute to the Chinese art technique of "Cunfa" or "Wrinkle Brush", in which texture is used to create vitality and express the spirit of nature. In *Memories of the Red Lotus Wetland No.3*, this spirit is clearly visible, as the natural elements in the painting seem to overflow into the viewer's space, breaking the confines of the canvas.

Smooth coatings, on the other hand, create a contrast to the rough textures in the work. These coatings may have been delicately applied using oil or acrylic paints, creating a water-like reflective effect. Oil paints have a deep historical connection to art and can bring a sense of tradition and depth to a work. The rich texture and vibrant luminosity of oil paint creates a dialog with the past, while the flexibility and quick-drying properties of acrylics allow for spontaneous expression and the use of modern techniques such as embossing and layering. Such use of materials not only demonstrates the artist's painting skills technically, but also conveys feelings of serenity and calm on a spiritual level. They symbolize areas of tranquility in nature, such as a calm lake, reflecting spiritual clarity and purity.

Slender lines run throughout the painting; they appear as brushstrokes or scratches, standing like reeds in nature. The fineness and tenacity of these lines not only visually guide the flow of the viewer's eyes, but also add a sense of dynamism to the composition. Symbolically, these lines represent the growth and vitality of nature. They break through the dull background delicately but powerfully, highlighting the indomitable life force in the face of adversity.

The use of mixed media reflects Zhang Yuan's thoughtfulness in creation. Through combining different materials, Zhang Yuan not only explores the aesthetic attributes of the wetland, a specific natural environment, but also the complex relationship between human beings and nature. The choice of each material is not arbitrary; together they form a complex dialog about ecology, aesthetics and existentialism. The use of these materials highlights the ecological value of the wetland and reflects the artist's profound thinking about the impact of nature and human behavior.

Spiritual Significance of Material Choices

In "Memories of the Red Lotus Wetland No. 3," Zhang Yuan infuses the materials with a spirit that transcends their physicality, elevating the artwork into a realm of contemplation and transcendence.

The coarse materials such as sand or crushed stone scattered across the canvas are evocative of the fundamental elements of earth and nature. Spiritually, they reflect the Buddhist concept of impermanence and the continuous cycle of life and death. The grains of sand may represent the countless individual moments that compose our lives, echoing the sand mandalas of Tibetan Buddhism, which are painstakingly created and then destroyed to symbolize the transient nature of material life.

These materials, also been often walked upon and overlooked, are elevated to a subject of focus, symbolizing the reverence for the humble and often neglected aspects of the natural world. In a spiritual context, these raw earth elements might represent the Taoist concept of 'Ziran,' which stands for the self-so, the natural, spontaneous state of being that aligns with the Tao, the underlying order of the Universe. The texture created by such materials also carries with it an element of tactile spirituality. Just as Zen gardens use gravel and rock to represent the ripples and solidity of the natural world, so too might the roughness of these materials suggest the contemplative practice of meditation and mindfulness, offering a sensory path to inner stillness and presence.

The oil paint, a medium with a rich legacy in art, carries with it the weight of tradition and the passage of time. Its use here can be seen as a nod to the ancestors and the enduring human quest for meaning and beauty. The spiritual significance is akin to the reverence for ancient wisdom in Taoist philosophy, acknowledging that current knowledge and practice are built upon the foundations laid by those who came before. The philosophy of 'Li,' the Confucian and Taoist concept that relates to the organic patterns found in nature. In this sense, the oil paint not only adds color but also embodies the spiritual patterns that life's paths might take, following an organic and moral order.

Acrylics, on the other hand, represent the spirit of innovation and the flexibility of modern philosophy. Their inclusion signifies adaptability and the transcendence of traditional boundaries, aligning with the Buddhist embrace of change and the impermanence of all things. Its application in the artwork signals an embrace of contemporary life's pace and the changes shaping the current spiritual landscape. It is a testament to resilience and the ability to evolve—a quality essential to spiritual growth and enlightenment. Acrylics, with their contemporary origin, resonate with the notion

of 'Sunyata' or emptiness, where all forms are seen as transient and without an eternal essence.

The brushwork and marks made by the artist suggest the physical act of painting as a spiritual exercise, similar to the calligraphic practice of writing sutras where each mark is imbued with meditative focus and intent. This conveys a spiritual struggle or the chaotic beauty of natural forces. This dynamic quality of the paint application can be seen as symbolic of the 'Qi,' the life force that moves through all things, transferred from the creator to the creation, a dynamic life force captured on canvas, according to Chinese cosmology. The artwork thus becomes a visual representation of the flow of energy and the elemental forces that drive the universe.

Memories of the Red Lotus Wetland No. 3 seems to be constructing a spiritual world that is both deep and subtle through the use of each material. Through the rough texture of sand and gravel, the smooth coating of oil or acrylic, and the thin lines outlined by brushes or knives, the work as a whole depicts a topic of time, memory, and the beauty of natural immortality.

The rough textured materials give a sense of the deposition of time and the immutability of nature, reminding us of the history of the natural world and its fundamental role in human life. The smooth coated portions provide space for reflection, allowing for a deep sense of tranquility and peace, just as a tranquil lake in nature soothes the soul. The slender lines, on the other hand, symbolize the vitality and tenacity of life, which continues to grow upward even in the midst of a sedate environment.

Overall, through this work, Zhang Yuan conveys his respect for nature and vitality, as well as his thoughts on the passage of time. His choice of materials and artistic approach work together to reveal a complex system of natural elements that

encompasses the themes of growth, decline, and the cycle of life. The spiritual world of the paintings emphasizes the necessity of living in harmony with nature and the importance of finding one's own corner of tranquility in modern life. Through careful observation and affectionate depiction of natural scenes, Zhang Yuan encourages the viewer to contemplate humanity's place in the grand scheme of nature, and how we can find lasting value and meaning in an ever-changing world.

Preliminary Discussion on the Role of Aesthetic Decisions in Enhancing Material and Spiritual Themes

The aesthetic composition of the artwork, characterized by vigorous brushwork and the juxtaposition of textured elements against a dark, brooding backdrop, serves as a visual meditation on the chaotic and yet harmonious essence of nature. Each stroke and mark embody the Daoist principle of living in harmony with the natural world, suggesting a landscape that is both wild and orderly, inviting contemplation on the balance inherent in the natural world and within ourselves.

The use of bold, gestural strokes may be seen as an act of channeling 'Qi,' the vital force in traditional Chinese philosophy. The energy and movement captured in the brushwork evoke the spiritual practice of 'Qi Gong,' where the flow of energy is directed and harnessed through movement. The painting thus becomes a frozen tableau of spiritual energy in motion, a visual 'Qi Gong' that reflects the dynamic interplay of Yin and Yang.

The dark palette interspersed with bursts of light and texture suggests the mystery and depth of the wetland environment. These aesthetic choices could signify

the enigmatic aspects of the spiritual journey, the unknown depths of the soul that are rich with potential for discovery and enlightenment. The application of paint and material in layers adds to the depth, implying the multiple layers of understanding that can be achieved through spiritual practice.

4.3.5 Tang Chenhua – *Clouds at the Horizon No. 4*

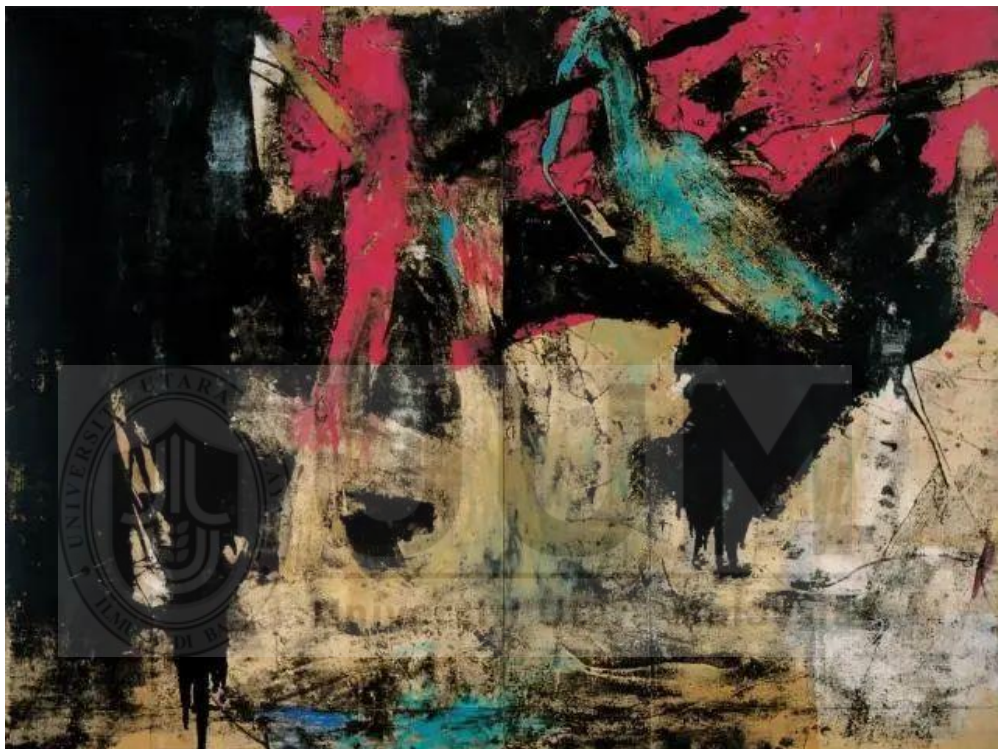


Figure 4.5. *Clouds at the Horizon No. 4*, 195cm x 260cm, 2007

Born in 1964 in Fujian, China, and originally from Inner Mongolia, Tang Chenhua is currently an associate professor at the Printmaking Department of the Central Academy of Fine Arts. He is an artist with a rich international academic background and 18 years of experience in overseas art creation. His works emphasize the spontaneity of the creative process, exude the passion of abstract expressionism and performance art, and have a dazzling personal style deeply rooted in Eastern culture. His mission is to manifest the spirit of China in contemporary art, using the expressive

power of color and brushstrokes to explore the profound questions of life and an ambitious aesthetic that blends Eastern and Western influences.

Tang 's contemporary "experimental art" transcends traditional boundaries and offers new perspectives on the world and the self through the language of abstract art. Characterized by the unity of aesthetic and cognitive values, his works liberate painting from its traditional constraints and imbue it with spirituality. Unique to Tang ChenHua's work is his confident use of color that transcends purely conceptual painting, igniting an inner strength that conveys to the viewer an immediate sense of confidence and autonomy. His oil paintings use a personal, unmistakable language, guided by impulsive and powerful gestures that develop new imagery from the inherent qualities of oil painting.

Tang ChenHua's mixed-material paintings have a unique quality, in which the composition and colorfulness of his brushstrokes are integrated with artistic concepts, revealing the deep relationship between the will to live and the meaning of existence. He "continues to accumulate in the genre of abstract painting, and with abundant expressive strength, his works show vigorous tension, forming a distinctive style of abstract expression" (Fan Dian's words). Tang ChenHua's artistic creation is closely related to his attitude towards life. He encourages himself that "life is a long journey", and he wants to "wander through life", using the most touching feelings and the sincerest paintings to "compose every footstep of the symphony of life", in the course of which he will collide and interact with each other. With the most touching feelings and sincere paintings, he wants to "compose every footnote of the symphony of life", and complete the spiritual adventure again and again in the collision and interaction.

In *Clouds in the Sky No. 4*, created in 2007, Tang Chenhua employs mixed media, mineral pigments, oil sticks, and collage techniques on a 195 x 260 cm canvas. This work is part of a series that reflects the confrontation and continuation of tradition and modernity, the collision and fusion of Eastern and Western cultures, overflowing with modernity and spiritual pursuit. Tang Chenhua's paintings are structured in black, in which color gains vitality and becomes more active, making color a source of passion and a creative shaper of the overall structure of the painting. His works realize a complete abandonment of nature, entrusting it to its own equally authentic "nature". Tang Chenhua's fusion of multiple materials and techniques in "*Clouds in the Sky No.4*" has a significant impact on the entire painting, offering multiple experiences both visually and tactilely. The work conveys the ephemeral beauty of clouds through the blending of colors, layering of textures, and strategic use of light and shadow, creating an experience that is immersive and intoxicating. This approach not only demonstrates Tang's innovative spirit of combining tradition with modern art practices, but also reflects his love of art.

Material Usage

In "*Clouds at the Horizon No. 4*", Tang Chenhua has curated a selection of materials that each contribute a layer of meaning and aesthetic significance, creating a piece that is rich in both texture and metaphor. The mixed media nature of the piece embodies the fusion of techniques and philosophies. This approach itself is a modern concept, signifying the breaking of barriers between different artistic disciplines and suggesting a more holistic, interconnected view of art that mirrors contemporary society's complex structure. In Tang Chenhua's "*Clouds at the Horizon No. 4*," the artist's selection of canvas, oil paint, mineral colors, and oil pastels as mediums collectively narrate an abstract yet profound cosmology.

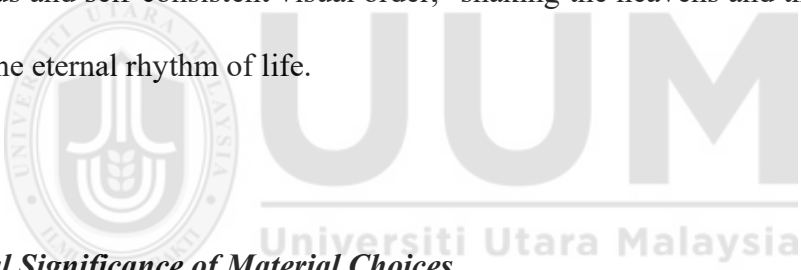
The use of canvas—the traditional groundwork for oil painting—remains a constant homage to the history of painting. The woven fabric of the canvas, which has been the starting point for countless masterpieces over the centuries, symbolizes the continuum of artistic endeavor. It is the plane where the spiritual and the material converge, where the raw potential for creation lies dormant until the artist's hand awakens it. The oil paints serve as a link to the rich legacy of the artistic masters, often associated with refined techniques and deep, lustrous finishes that have historically been used to convey the divine or the transcendent. Here, their application is perhaps a meditation on fluidity and transformation—a visual parallel to the ever-changing shapes and colors that clouds manifest, reflecting the ephemeral and dynamic nature of life itself.

Mineral colors, often vibrant and deeply pigmented, have a luminosity that synthetic paints can rarely match. Their presence on the canvas is a gentle reminder of the earth's gifts, bringing with them the spiritual energy of the natural world. In "Clouds at the Horizon No. 4," they may suggest the raw beauty and powerful forces within the natural landscape, a world that is inherently spiritual and deeply connected to human existence. The use of oil pastels introduces a contemporary contrast. They allow for spontaneous expression, their directness and immediacy injecting a youthful, passionate energy into the artwork. In the spiritual realm, this could signify the burst of insight or inspiration that comes unbidden to the mind—the sudden clarity or the 'satori' in Zen Buddhism—a moment of enlightenment.

This group of mixed-material paintings on canvas, oil, mineral color, and oil stick as media, using bottle stickers, transferring, and hand-painting, are far-reaching and unique, embodying the confrontation and continuation of tradition and modernity, and the collision and fusion of the West and the East, and are overflowing with strong

modernity and full of spiritual aspirations in the linguistic schema. The thick and solid black forms the framework and spine of the core theme, and the combination of color spots, color blocks and color dots symphonize, showing the vibrant rhythm of life. The printing, painting and production effects complement each other, revealing the artist's ability to control his emotions and his sensitivity and resourcefulness in artistic expression.

The magnificent picture constitutes a business-like scene, implying, symbolizing and imagining, with the throbbing of life and the fervent hope of growth. Outstanding picture dynamics, is the vitality of the vigor and flare, both exciting and stable overall structure, but also lyrical and changing the flow of details, in the self-conscious and self-consistent visual order, "shaking the heavens and the earth's heroic song," the eternal rhythm of life.



Spiritual Significance of Material Choices

In "Clouds at the Horizon No. 4," Tang Chenhua's selection and combination of materials manifest a spiritual narrative that interweaves the physicality of art with the intangibility of the human spirit and cultural essence.

The canvas as a base material stands as a metaphor for the spiritual plane, it provides a silent yet potent foundation reminiscent of the meditative state from which spiritual insight springs forth. It's plain, unassuming surface is akin to the Taoist concept of Wuji, the undifferentiated void that precedes creation and out of which all complexities of the universe arise. It's a state of pure potential, much like the canvas before the artist brings it to life.

The application of oil paints adds a historical and spiritual depth to the piece. Since oils have been used traditionally in religious and spiritually significant art, their usage here can be seen as connecting the work to a lineage of artworks that seek to explore and communicate the more profound mysteries of existence. The layers of oil paint, with their depth and richness, suggest the layered complexities of spiritual growth, the journey within that involves navigating through the layers of the self to reach enlightenment.

Mineral colors bring the spirit of the earth into the painting. In many cultures, minerals are attributed with spiritual properties—turquoise wards off evil in some Native American traditions, lapis lazuli represents heavens in Ancient Egypt, and jade carries significance in Chinese spirituality. The mineral colors in “Clouds at the Horizon No. 4” may symbolize a spiritual connection to Earth, a grounding in the primal energy that sustains life and the foundation from which spiritual consciousness can grow. The oil pastels introduce a tactile and immediate quality to the work. They are traditionally more associated with child-like play and creativity, suggesting a return to innocence and the raw, unfiltered expression of the soul. Their textural contrast on the canvas may invoke the Zen principle of direct experience, cutting through illusion to perceive the true nature of reality.

The interplay between the canvas's plain, tactile fabric and the smooth, viscous oil paints creates a dynamic tension. The oils seep into the canvas, merging and becoming one with the fabric, illustrating the spiritual belief in the union of body and soul. This symbiotic relationship could represent the intertwining of the physical world with spiritual existence, reflecting the Confucian ideal of harmony between heaven and earth. The earth-derived mineral pigments interact with the creamy texture of oil pastels to produce a textural landscape that is evocative of nature's own diverse tapestry. This

intermingling can be seen as a metaphor for the Daoist principles of mutual arising, where each element is defined by its relationship with others. Just as the mineral colors provide the raw, organic essence, the oil pastels offer vibrancy and life. Together, they speak to the spiritual theme of interconnectedness—each material's identity is enhanced by the other's presence.

The artwork's materials come together to form a visual representation of spiritual ecology. The canvas absorbs and supports; the oils and minerals blend to create depth and nuance; the pastels highlight and accentuate; the collage elements disrupt and add complexity. This collective interaction is symbolic of the human spirit's journey: a base of experiences, enriched by knowledge and emotion, highlighted by moments of intense feeling and learning, and all the while, beautifully complex and layered with the richness of life's tapestry.

Tang Chenhua's painting becomes a spiritual microcosm where the interaction of materials narrates the dance of existence—the chaotic yet harmonious flow of life that shapes the soul. The canvas is a quiet space of potential, the paints and pigments the medium of expression, and their interplay the very act of spiritual becoming.

Preliminary Discussion on the Role of Aesthetic Decisions in Enhancing Material and Spiritual Themes

In Tang Chenhua's "Clouds at the Horizon No. 4," the aesthetic language articulated through his artistic decisions does more than define the painting's visual impact; it also enhances the material and spiritual themes interwoven throughout the work.

The dark, almost somber tones that dominate the painting create a powerful backdrop that compels the viewer to look deeper, beyond the surface. This darkness is punctured by vibrant flashes of color—a spiritual awakening against the void. The stark contrast mirrors the Taoist understanding of light and dark as complementary forces. The blackness is the ‘Wuji,’ the limitless void, while the vivid colors represent the ‘Taiji,’ the supreme ultimate state where Yin and Yang begin to differentiate.

Tang's brushwork—fluid yet deliberate—carries a spiritual fluidity reminiscent of Chinese calligraphy where each stroke is laden with meaning and intent. The movement captured on the canvas echoes the ebb and flow of Qi, the vital force that permeates all things in Taoist and Chinese cosmological beliefs. The rough texture created by the mixed media approach, especially the inclusion of sand or gravel, imparts an earthiness that evokes the sensation of being rooted in the natural world. This textural decision echoes the Buddhist notion of grounding in the present moment, the tactile nature of the materials serving as a reminder of the physical world that houses our spiritual experiences.

As for the collaged elements, they disrupt the traditional two-dimensional space of painting, adding a tangible layer that reaches out to the viewer. This technique could represent the layers of consciousness, with each piece of the collage symbolizing a thought, memory, or spiritual insight that contributes to the complex construction of human understanding and perception.

4.3.6 Tang Chenhua – *The Other Side of the Sea No. 31*



Figure 4.6. *The Other Side of the Sea No.31*

Tang ChenHua is an outstanding artist whose exhibition "The Other Side of the Sea No.31" was held at the Biyun Art Museum in Jinqiao, Shanghai. The exhibition featured nearly 100 works from 2019 to 2021, including 32 works on the theme of "The Other Side of the Sea". Tang ChenHua's creative inspiration comes from years of world art expeditions and memories. He has traveled from the East to the West many times, flying over the sea, and the endless water has become a vague and spatial existence in his memory. This sea, like a ribbon of time and space, separates this shore from the other, the present world from the unknown, the real from the imaginary. Everyone looks out from this side of the sea and imagines the other side of the sea in a poetic or wild way.

"The Other Side of the Sea No.31" is an abstract expressionist style work, the material of oil on canvas and its large size make people feel a visual shock. The mixed colors and broad brushstrokes in the work give a sense of depth and dynamism, a feeling as if the artist is talking to the canvas, conveying his emotions through colors and shapes. This painting is not just a play of colors, but more like a release of emotions, the abstract form of which allows each viewer to find his or her own feelings and interpretations in it. The process of creating such a piece of work may have included a great deal of experimentation and exploration. The artist may have spent a lot of time studying how colors interact with each other on the canvas, and how different application techniques can create different visual effects.

The process was likely not linear, but rather a series of trial and error that gradually moved closer to the final work. In a broader cultural and contemporary context, this work may reflect the complexity and diversity of contemporary society. The 21st century artists are often faced with the challenge of finding their individual voices in an age of globalization and information explosion. In such a context, Tang Chenhua's work may be his response to this era, where abstraction allows him to express those thoughts and emotions that transcend words and concrete forms. In addition, each artist's personal experiences and beliefs influence their creations in one way or another, and Tang's works may contain his philosophical outlook and aesthetic orientation.

Material Usage

In exploring Tang Chenhua's work "The Other Side of the Sea No.31", we can begin with the comprehensive materials used to gain a deeper understanding of the properties of these materials, the artist's intention in using them, and the deeper

meanings that they collectively bring. Through the use of oil on canvas, combined with acrylics, possible non-traditional materials, etc., this work presents a unique visual and emotional experience that reflects the artist's profound exploration of the ocean, life, and human existence.

The use of oil paint, with its rich colors and layers, builds a deep and changing ocean world for "The Other Side of the Sea No.31". The saturation and extensibility of the oil colors allow the flow of the sea and the changes in light and shadow to be delicately expressed, bringing the viewer a strong visual impact and emotional resonance. The artist shows the magnificence and mystery of the ocean through oil colors, which provokes people's awe of the great power of nature and their thoughts on the essence of life. The introduction of acrylic brings a more distinctive and modern visual effect to the work. The quick-drying properties and vividness of the colors of acrylic paint make the waves, light and sense of space in the picture more vivid and three-dimensional, enhancing the dynamic and modern sense of the picture.

The use of this material not only reflects the artist's innovation and experimentation in technique, but also symbolizes the affirmation of the vitality of life and the ever-changing world. The combination of oil and acrylic demonstrates a fusion of time and space. With its long tradition and deep cultural heritage, oil color carries a sense of time; while acrylic, with its modernity and novelty, represents the current artistic exploration and expression. In "The Other Side of the Sea No.31", the depth of oil color and the sharpness of acrylic are intertwined in the picture, just like the flow of time, connecting the past with the present, showing an aesthetic pursuit that transcends time.

As the carrier of these two materials, cloth provides a physically stable and absorptive platform for the combination, but also a place for spiritual and emotional integration, which allows materials such as oil and acrylic to fully express their characteristics. The texture and absorbency of the cloth surface allows the oils and acrylics to penetrate deeper and deeper, blurring the boundaries between them to form an indivisible whole. The texture and durability of the cloth surface provides good support for the deep background of the ocean and the delicate details depicted, making the whole work have the depth of traditional painting without losing the novelty and vigor of modern art. This physical fusion symbolizes the complex and subtle relationship between nature and mankind, matter and spirit, reflecting the artist's deep understanding and expression of the world. The use of non-traditional materials, such as pieces of paper, sand or other materials embedded in the painting, adds more texture and layers to "The Other Side of the Sea No.31". The introduction of these materials enriches the visual effect of the picture and adds more symbolic meanings to the work, such as the complexity and variability of the ocean and the richness and diversity of life.

The intersection and fusion of composite materials in "The Other Side of the Sea No.31" is a profound exploration of natural beauty, the meaning of life and human emotions by artist Tang ChenHua. This fusion not only demonstrates the artist's skill technically, but also expresses his philosophical thinking about life and the universe. Through the interweaving and fusion of these materials, Tang ChenHua successfully brings the viewer into a spiritual world that is both real and beyond reality, allowing people to appreciate the beauty and at the same time feel the depth and breadth of life.

Spiritual Significance of Material Choices

The sincere and passionate poetic expression of the works in the series "The Other Side of the Sea No.31" is the intermingling of poetry and emotion, the intertwining of imagery and mindfulness, and the combination of writing and structure. This kind of artistic observation, which is supported by its own cultural tradition, as well as global vision and human feelings, matches the author's oriental cultural identity and "constitutes the fusion of the native language of the local culture and modern art forms". Kandinsky said: "The harmony of color and form, in the strict sense, must be based solely on the principle of being able to touch the soul of mankind," and "The Other Side of the Sea" is precisely a set of colorful poems that captivate the soul, poetic overflowing images, both the splendor and flavor of a single viewing, but also the simplicity and grandeur of the whole. "Tang ChenHua feels that "colors are very emotional", and his life experience and visual accumulation have provided a very smooth and free channel for the spiritual light of the scene to be realized, and transformed into a splendid and colorful Labyrinth of color. The ethereal imagery, the fantasy of reflections, and the poetic conveyance are unforgettable.

The group painting "The Other Side of the Sea No.31" lights up the soul of art with the poetry of life. It is mainly oil on canvas, and in the process of creation, it pursues and emphasizes the emotional reserve and charm of hand-painted sense of painting, using rich color contrasts, traces of brushstrokes, extrusion and superposition, fracture and spreading, and lightness and gravity, resulting in an unusually rich and passionate visual atmosphere and form, and this kind of turbulent and colorful image captures the poetic enlightenment of life, and thus refracts the sublime of the spirit and the soul. Such as "speculate the mood of blues from your music", "depict the psychological sadness and attachment", these triggers and feelings from the depths of

the heart, to open up the barrier of soul communication, music and painting "through the senses ".

This series of works is particularly fascinating. Although there is no reproduction of the "sea" scene, it is able to accurately convey people's perception of the "sea" and gain emotional resonance by virtue of melodic associations and sensory portraits. The work frankly "exposes" the experience and perception of reality and life, "traveling" in the "trail" of human spirit, linking the code of natural life and philosophical thoughts of life, carrying the author's artistic ideal and poet's sentiment. The author's artistic ideals and poet's feelings.

Oil paint, with its depth and luminosity, lends itself to the representation of the profound and the infinite. The rich, layered application on canvas offers a spiritual journey through color, where each hue resonates with emotional depth and suggests the varying depths of the sea, from the sun-kissed surface to the mysterious, unfathomable deep. The deep blacks and vibrant oranges can evoke the Taoist principle of Yin and Yang—opposing forces that are interconnected and interdependent in the natural world. The introduction of acrylics adds a modern dimension, representing the fluidity and transience of contemporary life. Fast-drying and versatile, acrylic paint symbolizes the present moment—vivid, immediate, and ever-changing. The interplay between the permanence of oil and the immediacy of acrylic mirrors the human condition, tethered between the timeless and the ephemeral.

The combination of oil and acrylic in "The Other Side of the Sea No.31" deeply symbolizes the fluidity and ever-changing nature of life. The stark contrast between the traditional heaviness of oil color and the modernity of acrylic reflects the dialogue between the past and the present, symbolizing the passage of time and the accumulation

of life experiences. This fusion of materials suggests the artist's philosophical reflection on the constant flow and change of life. Life, like the ocean, has moments of calm as well as waves, and this constant change is the essential characteristic of life. Through the intertwined use of such materials, "The Other Side of the Sea No.31" triggers philosophical reflections on the boundaries between "this shore" and "the other shore", between reality and imagination, between the finite and the infinite.

Through the depiction of the ocean, a vast and deep natural landscape, the artist leads the viewer to think about the boundaries of human existence and how to transcend these boundaries, exploring the courage and possibilities of the unknown. The use of non-traditional materials, such as the embedding of paper and sand, increases the symbolic meaning of the work, reflecting the artist's philosophical reflections on the relationship between nature and mankind. The introduction of these materials symbolizes the diversity and complexity of the natural world, and at the same time reflects human intervention and utilization of nature. Through the comprehensive use of such materials, "The Other Side of the Sea No.31" demonstrates the harmonious yet contradictory relationship between human beings and nature, and triggers a profound reflection on how human beings can realize self-development while respecting nature.

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Tang ChenHua's works record the emotional ups and downs and life reflections during the epidemic prevention and control period in the form of paintings, positively echoing the grand proposition of artists' participation in social practice, and artistically answering the ultimate thinking about the meaning of life. The oil paintings in the exhibition are full of tension, with the rational thinking of printmaking, but also transcending the figurative into abstract emotional expression. Tang ChenHua presents his understanding and feelings of the world through the logic of color, the language of composition, and the expressive effect of texture. The series of works "The Other Side of the Sea" has gone beyond the definition of general easel painting, and should be regarded as the visualization of Tang ChenHua's involvement in the social life in the way of art, and the spiritual expression of his thinking about life.

Preliminary Discussion on the Role of Aesthetic Decisions in Enhancing Material and Spiritual Themes

In Tang ChenHua's "The Other Side of the Sea No.31", aesthetic decision-making plays a central role in reinforcing both material and spiritual themes. Through the meticulous use of color, shape, and texture, the artist not only demonstrates his deep understanding of aesthetics, but also communicates emotionally and intellectually with the viewer through these aesthetic languages. These preliminary aesthetic observations provide a window into how the work conveys deeper meaning through visual language.

In "The Other Side of the Sea No.31", Tang Chenghua creates a dynamic and profound visual effect through the mixed use of oil and acrylic. This choice not only demonstrates the physical properties and aesthetic value of the different materials, but more importantly, their combination visually mimics the ebb and flow of the ocean, thus enhancing the work's exploration of the sea as a symbol of life and change. In addition, the use of non-traditional materials, such as the embedding of pieces of paper or sand, adds unique textures and layers to the images. These aesthetic decisions further enrich the material themes of the work, making it a powerful medium for exploring the relationship between nature and humanity.

The language of aesthetics also plays a key role in conveying the spiritual themes of "The Other Side of the Sea No.31". The choice and application of color is not only for visual beauty, but also as a direct expression of the artist's emotional and philosophical reflections. The extensive use of deep blue and gray tones creates an atmosphere that is both serene and mysterious, reflecting the artist's deeper contemplation of the ocean - as a metaphor for the unknown and the inner world.

Through this aesthetic language, the work conveys a desire to transcend reality and explore the unknown, as well as philosophical reflections on the nature of life.

These initial observations reveal the importance of aesthetic decisions in “The Other Side of the Sea No.31”, focus on their contribution to the visual effect of the work and how they help to express and intensify the material and spiritual themes. Through thoughtful choices of colors, shapes, and materials, Tang Chenhua successfully translates complex emotional and philosophical reflections into a visible and palpable artistic language. The use of this aesthetic language not only allows the viewer to appreciate the work visually, but more importantly, it prompts the viewer to empathize with the work emotionally and intellectually.



4.3.7 Yang Yang – *Golden Splendour*



Figure 4.7. *Golden Splendour*, 240cm x 200cm, 2019

Yang Yang is a distinguished artist who graduated from the Central Academy of Fine Arts with a Master's degree in 2011. Under the guidance of Prof. Hu Wei, she is not only a member of the China Artists Association, but also a member of the Committee on Mixed Materials Painting and Art Conservation and Restoration. As a Shuanglong Scholar, Yang Yang is a Distinguished Professor and Master's Degree Tutor at Zhejiang Normal University. She has received several honors for her artistic

attainments, including a silver medal at the "12th National Art Exhibition" in 2014 and a nomination for a gold medal in the category of mixed-materials painting. In 2019, she was again awarded a silver medal at the "13th National Art Exhibition". Her works have won top prizes at the 3rd, 4th, and 5th National Youth Art Exhibitions, and have been featured in the 4th, 6th, 7th, and 8th Beijing International Art Biennale.

Yang Yang's solo exhibitions have been held in Beijing, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Fuzhou and many other cities, and her works have been collected by prestigious institutions such as the National Art Museum of China, the Central Academy of Fine Arts, and the Art Museum of Sichuan Fine Arts Institute. Her artistic contributions also include publications in prestigious journals and inclusion in a 2020 high school art textbook. Created in 2019 and measuring 240x200cm, her work "Infinity" is a testament to her mastery of combining traditional techniques with contemporary themes. Using paper, mineral colors and foil, Yang Yang produces a visually stunning piece that reflects her unique artistic perspective." "Infinity" embodies the fusion of traditional Chinese artistic elements with modern expressions, demonstrating Yang Yang's ability to navigate and fuse the realms of historical art and contemporary innovation.

The artwork embodies a departure from traditional practices, adopting a multi-dimensional approach that blends various textures and materials to create a complex visual narrative. This approach not only demonstrates Yang Yang's mastery of a variety of artistic techniques, but also reflects the broader evolution of Chinese art from its traditional roots to a more inclusive and experimental form of artistic expression.

Material Usage

In "Golden Splendour" by Yang Yang, the artist employs an array of materials that include golden substances such as gold leaf, gold paint, or metallic powders, each

contributing to the luminous quality of the work. Gold materials have a physical durability that resists tarnishing, ensuring the artwork retains its brilliance over time. These elements are not only chosen for their inherent visual appeal but also for their historical and cultural significance, particularly within the context of Chinese ancient murals and Japanese screen paintings and lacquerware where gold has been traditionally used. The incorporation of such materials is a nod to the opulence and reverence associated with the precious metal throughout art history. The gold elements in the painting act as windows into the painting's space, offering glimpses into different planes of existence or states of consciousness. The way gold interacts with light can transform the painting's space, giving it a three-dimensional quality that shifts with the viewer's perspective.

Yang also integrates specialized techniques and materials like crackle lacquer and aging agents, as well as other materials that naturally age and weather, to achieve a textured, time-worn appearance. They physically alter the painting's surface by creating textures that can range from subtle fine lines to pronounced fissures. The use of crackling varnish and aging agents adds a dimension of time-worn authenticity to the piece, suggesting themes of decay and the passage of time. These textures contrast with the perfection of gold, reflecting the juxtaposition between the immutable and the ephemera. This deliberate choice adds a layer of depth and historical resonance to the piece, inviting contemplation on the passage of time and the enduring beauty of art despite or perhaps because of its impermanence.

Natural mineral colors and foils are also present in the artwork, with the artist personally grinding attractive soils and stones. Hand-ground mineral pigments provide a unique granular texture that cannot be replicated with synthetic paints. The natural variation in particle size and coloration adds a tactile quality to the work. Foils, being

thin sheets of metal, can be applied to create flat, reflective surfaces or crinkled for a textured effect. These elements ground the painting in the natural world, connecting it to the earth's raw beauty. The minerals offer an organic, unpredictable quality, while the foils can introduce sharp contrasts in texture and sheen, enhancing the artwork's physical and visual complexity. This practice speaks to a meticulous attention to detail and a dedication to the raw beauty of natural elements. Yang's approach to collecting these materials reflects an ongoing engagement with her environment, marrying the natural with the artistic.

In "Golden Splendour," water is used to merge the mineral colors and foils, creating an interplay of "soft and hard, loose and tight, void and solid" within the painting's spatial relationships. This technique reflects the fluidity and interconnectedness of life, as well as the artist's mastery in manipulating materials to achieve both visual harmony and thematic depth. This fusion results in a dynamic tension within the space of the artwork, juxtaposing hardness with softness, looseness with tightness, and solidity with void. The interaction of these elements on the canvas is a dance of contrasts, expertly balanced to create a spatial relationship that is at once cohesive and dynamic.

Spiritual Significance of Material Choices

The artwork "Golden Splendour" by Yang Yang serves as a confluence where material choices deeply resonate with cultural, historical, and spiritual narratives. The gold materials in "Golden Splendour" draw from a rich cultural vein where gold has been synonymous with divine grace, immortality, and the cosmos. Gold's use in religious iconography across the world, and particularly its significance in Chinese art

as an imperial color and a symbol of ultimate truth and perfection, lends a profound historical weight to the work. The utilization of crackling varnish and aged textures recalls the aesthetic of ancient artifacts, invoking a sense of historical depth and continuity. Moreover, the application of natural minerals connects the piece to the Earth and its history, symbolizing the timeless cycle of nature's birth and rebirth.

Everything in the world is in a state of flux, ever-changing and fleeting. The power of time is huge, time can grow everything and turn everything into dust, people are just a grain of dust in the world, Yang Yang tries to incorporate the sense of time into his creations, and the beauty of the "status quo" of the ancient statues and frescoes after experiencing time touches my nerves deeply, the mottled colors, mutilated forms, flaking walls, etc. are all the beauty brought by time.

Ancient Greek statues in the museum after thousands of years, Yang Yang said that the moment she saw it time seemed to stand still, that kind of silence, sublime, divine beauty is the power of the heart, touching her deeply. When she saw China's Northern Wei Dynasty Buddha, Nara, Japan, Kamakura classical Buddha seems to feel a kind of faith power, the overall shape and every line, block turn reflects the spirit of the statue maker, faith, ideals, is beyond the eternal existence of time and space. The great relics left by mankind abound, as small as a piece of cloth used by the first people, remnants of clothes, straw, etc., they all carry the luster of time, go to quietly feel them, slowly read them, see with the eyes, communicate with the heart, you can get inner satisfaction. She quotes Yamamoto Bose: "True beauty is something that can pass the test of time; time, with its corrosive power to oppress, to pardon no one, and its will to return all things to the land, can endure these forms and colors that remain, and that is true beauty."

Yang Yang tries to embody this power of time in his works, as if the women in the images are existences after time, they are modern, with silhouettes as perfect as possible in my mind, and at the same time they are broken, missing, imperfect, with the perfection and mutilation of shapes and colors forming a relationship of interlacing and contrasting, embodying the passage of time: past, present and future. The overall atmosphere of the picture is simple, quiet and transcendental, leaving a gap for imagination.

Philosophically, the materials speak to the spiritual journey of transformation and enlightenment. The gold elements, through their luminosity, represent the quest for spiritual knowledge and the illumination of the mind. The crackling and natural aging processes are reflective of the Buddhist philosophy of impermanence, underscoring the transient nature of physical existence. It juxtaposes the eternal and the ephemeral, providing a profound commentary on the human condition: the quest for lasting meaning in a transient world. In turn, the natural minerals symbolize authenticity and grounding in truth, drawing from Daoist beliefs that emphasize living in harmony with nature's raw and unadulterated beauty. The natural mineral colors ground the work in the material reality, yet their use also speaks to the artist's meditation on the spiritual essence that infuses all natural forms, resonating with the pantheistic elements of traditional Chinese spirituality.

Each material carries its own set of symbolic meanings, contributing to the painting's overarching narrative. Gold not only represents wealth and divine connection but also acts as a metaphor for inner wisdom and the pursuit of spiritual richness. The crackled texture and patina echo the cycles of life and death, embodying the natural processes of aging and decay, while also highlighting the beauty found in each phase of existence. The mineral pigments, each unique and unreplicable, symbolize

individuality and the essential elements of the universe, drawing connections to the idea that every entity in the cosmos is singular yet part of a greater whole.

Together, these materials and their symbolic implications create a rich tapestry that is both a visual spectacle and a profound spiritual dialogue. The materials in “Golden Splendour” thus become an alchemical blend that transforms the physical into a conduit for the spiritual, weaving together a narrative that bridges the gap between the seen and the unseen, and invites contemplation on the interplay of physical existence and the spiritual universe. “Golden Splendour” becomes a reflective surface for contemplating the human condition, the passage of time, and our place within the cosmos.

Preliminary Discussion on the Role of Aesthetic Decisions in Enhancing Material and Spiritual Themes

In “Golden Splendour” by Yang Yang, the aesthetic decisions regarding material use are integral to the artwork's overall composition and profoundly deepen the thematic content. These choices invite a multisensory engagement and emotional response that elevate the artwork beyond a mere visual experience.

The aesthetic qualities of gold - its luster and reflectivity - are not merely embellishments but serve as focal points that structure the visual experience of the artwork. They bring a sense of depth and dimensionality to the composition, drawing the eye and engaging the viewer in a visual dance. The textures created by the crackling varnish and aging materials disrupt the uniformity of the golden surface, adding a tactile quality that invites closer inspection. The form of the painting, achieved through the

strategic placement of these textures and the flowing of colors, creates a dynamic that seems almost in motion, mirroring the flux of life itself.

The aesthetic use of gold and the resulting cracked textures contribute significantly to the artwork's exploration of themes such as transience versus permanence, and the search for divine light in the mundane world. The way light plays off the gold reflects the theme of enlightenment, with each ray of light representing a potential moment of spiritual clarity. Shadows cast by the textured surface emphasize the passage of time, with the play of light and dark suggesting the dual nature of existence. The scale of the work, large and encompassing, along with its spatial arrangement of fragmented golden sections, gives a celestial quality to the composition, as if offering a fragmented glimpse of something ethereal and grand.

The aesthetic choices in "Golden Splendour" elicit an emotional response that is both immediate and complex. The grandeur of gold can evoke feelings of awe and reverence, while the crackled textures may inspire contemplation on the beauty of imperfection. The sensory impact of the work is heightened by the contrast between the materials' rough and smooth textures, which can be both visually and physically felt. This contrast creates a dynamic interplay that can stimulate a meditative state in the viewer, encouraging a deeper engagement with the themes of the artwork. The tactile experience, combined with the visual splendor, bridges the gap between the artwork and the viewer, allowing for a personal and profound connection with the themes presented.

4.3.8 Yang Yang – *Spring Will Come*

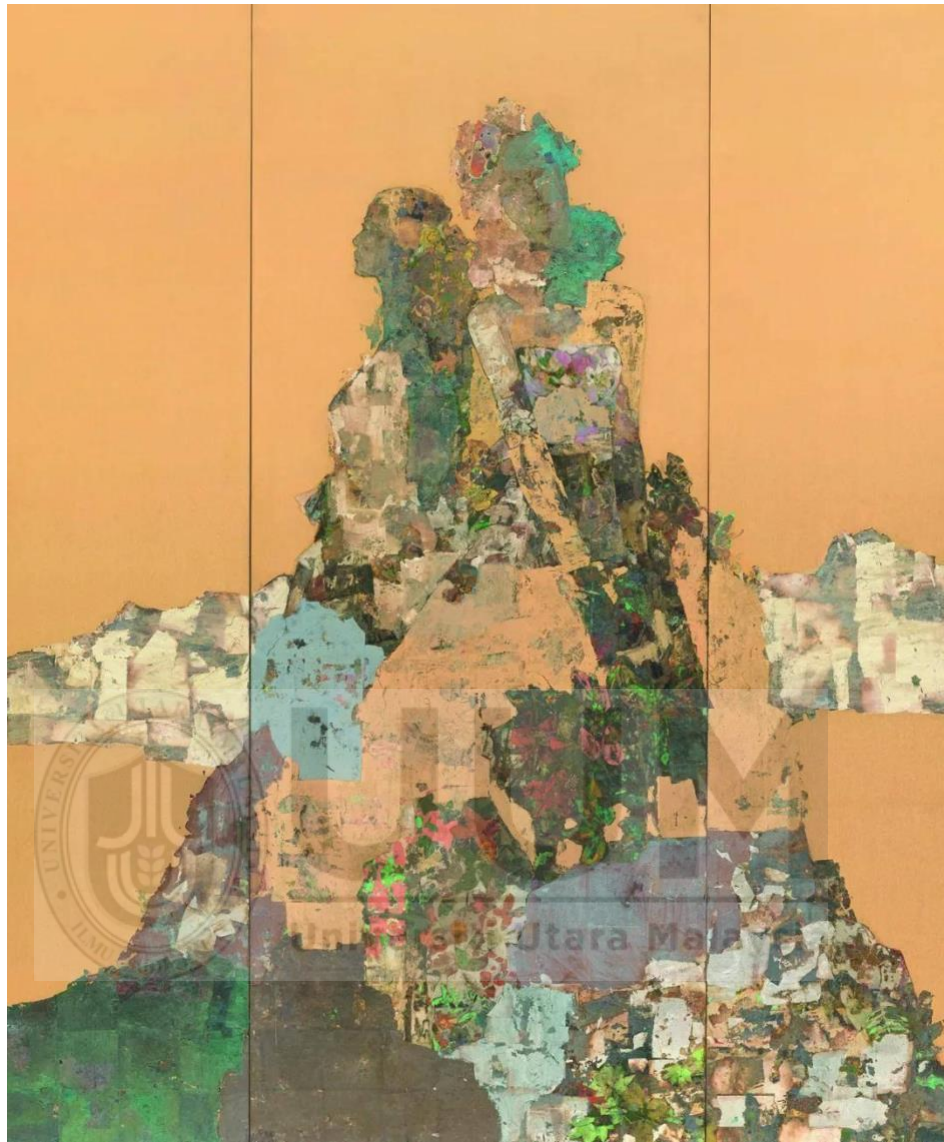


Figure 4.8. Spring Will Come, 232cm x 192cm, 2014

Yang Yang's "Spring is Coming", measuring 232cm x 192cm, is a mixed-material painting that won the first prize in the mixed-material painting section of the 12th National Art Exhibition. Yang Yang's artistic creation is not only a technical exploration, but also a deep fusion of emotion and philosophy. In Spring is Coming, she utilizes natural mineral colors and foils to explore the relationship between time

and space, as well as the intertwining of nature and humanity through unique materials and techniques. Yang Yang's artistic achievements are not only reflected in her personal honors, but more importantly in her promotion and development of the art of mixed-material painting. Her works have been exhibited in many important exhibitions both at home and abroad, and have received wide recognition and praise. Her artistic practice not only breaks new ground for contemporary artistic expression in Chinese fine arts, but also provides valuable experience and inspiration for later artists.

Yang Yang's artistic exploration begins with in-depth observation of daily life and reflection on her inner world. She created this work with the belief that art creation is a process of relaxation and enjoyment, a journey to explore the beauty of eternity and femininity (Eden,2024). In her works, one can see the reorganization of time and the breaking of space, through the use of different materials, letting the mineral color flow and the foil change the texture, expressing the inner mottled time. Her works not only show technical mastery, but more importantly convey a profound sense of time and space. "Spring is Coming" is Yang Yang's profound expression of the passage of time and natural change. Through the use of synthesized materials, she creates an aesthetic that is both modern and classical, blending traditional and modern, Eastern and Western aesthetic elements. This work is not only an anticipation of the coming spring, but also a profound reflection on life, time and nature. Yang Yang's art world is full of the pursuit of beauty and the exploration of the meaning of life, and her works allow people to enjoy visually as well as touch their hearts.

Material Usage

In the artwork presented, the artist has employed paper, mineral pigments, and foil—a combination that bridges the ancient with the contemporary and the east with the west.

Paper has a venerable history in Chinese art, traditionally used for both calligraphy and painting. It is revered for its capacity to absorb and hold ink and pigments in a way that vividly captures the artist's hand. Its use in contemporary art continues this tradition but also opens up new possibilities for expression. Paper can be both delicate and strong, its surface a medium for transient gestures as well as enduring statements. The choice to use paper is a nod to artistic ancestry, respecting the old while embracing the flexibility to innovate. In "Spring Will Come," the paper base stands not just as a surface for paint but as a statement of temporality and rebirth. The delicate nature of paper, prone to change and deterioration over time, parallels the transitory seasons which always cycle back to spring. Paper's role in the artwork is emblematic of nature's resilience; just as the material is vulnerable yet enduring, so too does spring follow the harshness of winter.

Mineral pigments hold a place of high esteem in art history due to their rich, vibrant hues and longevity. Historically, their use is rooted in the creation of artworks meant to endure, often for religious or important cultural artifacts. In modern contexts, these pigments bring a natural earthiness and a connection to the physical world that synthetic pigments often lack. Their inclusion in this work may suggest a spiritual link to the natural world, a grounding in the elemental forces that shape life and art. The mineral colors used in "Spring Will Come" contribute more than their rich textures and hues; they reflect the awakening of life that spring heralds. These pigments, historically sourced from the earth, hold within them the essence of the natural world. Their

application in the artwork evokes the blossoming flowers and verdant landscapes that reemerge with spring, infusing the piece with a sense of vitality and renewal.

The use of foil is particularly intriguing. Traditionally, gold and silver foil have been used in art to symbolize the divine or to denote value and importance. In a contemporary setting, foil can reflect the modern fascination with materiality and commercialism. Its reflective quality also adds a dynamic interplay of light and shadow to the artwork, creating a luminous effect that can change depending on the viewer's perspective. The foil in this piece may challenge the viewer to consider the value placed on material wealth versus the spiritual or intrinsic worth of natural beauty and artistic expression. The inclusion in "Spring will Come" of foil brings a reflective and radiant dimension to the painting. It represents the light returning after the dark, winter months, mirroring the way sunlight sparkles on morning dew or the last remnants of snow. The metallic sheen juxtaposed against the matte of the paper and the depth of the mineral colors brings forward the contrast between dormancy and life, emphasizing the hopeful message that no matter the darkness, spring will indeed come.

The material usage in "Spring Will Come" is not just a technical application but a carefully crafted metaphorical landscape. The paper is the dormant earth, the mineral colors are the signs of emerging life, and the foil is the light of new beginnings. Together, they create an artwork that is a poignant reflection on the cycle of seasons and life itself, suggesting that after every ending, there is a new beginning, and with every winter, there will be the inevitable arrival of spring.

Spiritual Significance of Material Choices

"Spring Will Come" is an evocative title that suggests a deep-seated belief in renewal and hope. This belief is artfully woven into the fabric of the artwork through

the choice and use of materials. The artwork shows a convergence of symbols that each bear spiritual and philosophical weight, combining to articulate a unified narrative of rejuvenation and hope.

The paper serves as the soul of the piece, a fragile yet enduring medium that has historically been the bearer of human thought and culture. Its vulnerability to time and the elements is counterbalanced by its potential for longevity, mirroring the human condition's fragility and the enduring nature of the spirit. In a philosophical sense, paper reflects the blank slate of existence—the 'tabula rasa'—upon which the experiences of life leave their indelible mark. The paper embodies the Taoist idea of 'wu wei', an effortless action that is in harmony with the natural world — a fitting concept for a piece that awaits the arrival of spring.

Mineral colors adorn this spiritual canvas with hues drawn directly from nature's palette, grounding the work in the physical realm and evoking the cyclical rebirth that defines the natural world. These pigments, by their very nature, carry the essence of the earth—solid, unyielding, yet part of a larger organic cycle. Philosophically, they suggest the concept of 'pantheism,' the idea that the divine pervades all aspects of the natural world, visible in the shifting seasons and the rebirth that follows winter's decay. The inclusion of foil adds a luminous dimension that interacts dynamically with the viewer's perspective. Its reflective nature captures and plays with light, symbolizing the return of the sun's warmth in the spring and the enlightenment that pierces the darkness of ignorance. The foil can be seen as a metaphor for the 'illuminated soul'—a being that, after enduring the long night of spiritual winter, finds itself reborn with greater insight and understanding.

In order to make the picture richer, increase the sense of hierarchy and rhythm, emphasize the heaviness and durability of the work, without losing its vividness and freshness, the work "Spring is coming" adopts the way of multiple creations, with layers and layers of depth, like the "accumulation of ink" in Chinese paintings, but it is very different, it is not a simple repetition, each time is a new beginning, and the next action is closely linked to the next time, each time laying the groundwork for the next creation. It is not a simple repetition, each time is a new beginning, and closely connected with the next action, each time laying the foundation for the next creation. In the process of creation, there will be many unexpected effects, leaving behind many precious things, which cannot all appear in the picture.

In order to see simplicity in the midst of abundance, and to embody abundance in simplicity, it is necessary to do enough homework and summarize, and put something into a kind of emotion, so that the picture can move towards simplicity. Mixed media painting has a unique advantage in this aspect. First of all, the word "mixed" allows Yang Yang to break the boundaries of painting, synthesize the strengths of various painting styles, and not stick to certain materials and techniques according to the needs of the artist's creative emotion. The result is to broaden the creative thinking, make the painting means more diversified, the creative passion is fuller, and gradually enter into the unrestrained state, which can touch the deepest soul of the most real emotions, and produce unexpected picture effects.

Secondly, in terms of the extensibility and inclusiveness of this work, the author says that the Artistic Committee of Comprehensive Material Painting of the China Art Association defines comprehensive material painting as "the evolution of single-type material techniques, and the interpenetration and integration of multiple types of paintings and multiple material techniques," although it is only defined at the level of

materials and techniques, and the ultimate pursuit of which rises to the level of the spirit to form the transformation of concepts, and she is also interested in the development of the concepts of painting. The ultimate pursuit is to rise to the spiritual level, to form a conceptual transformation, and she has utilized this concept as well. The use of new materials will surely stimulate a wider space of imagination and generate new concepts, which will naturally be transformed into a new language in the interaction between materials and concepts, and this new language will also fulfill the uniqueness of the works of mixed-material paintings. Inclusiveness is reflected in the fact that it can integrate the ancient and modern, through the Chinese and Western, the works can have the traditional Chinese literati atmosphere, but also contains the characteristics of contemporary diversified society, which opens up a broad world for artistic creation, and becomes the trend of the development of the art trend in contemporary society.

The integration of these materials creates a complex tapestry that speaks to the interplay between the ephemeral and the eternal. The paper's temporal nature, the mineral colors' earth-bound reliability, and the foil's transcendent luminosity collectively reflect the balance between the transient and the perpetual—between the changing seasons and the constancy of time. They echo the philosophy of Heraclitus, who posited that change is the only constant, and Laozi, who emphasized living in harmony with the Tao, the eternal principle that underlies a seemingly ever-changing world.

Large-size, thematic creations require rich, full, heavy and complete images, and usually after a long period of creation, many vivid things are lost, and little of the initial impulse and freshness remains. Therefore, it is important to maintain the vividness and freshness in the process, and the works should be completed with the effect of a single breath, and the "paintability" is very important. Many people will

think of the production of material performance at the same time, emphasizing the sense of production, in fact, on the contrary, painting is the essence of the pursuit of mixed-materials painting, traditional Chinese ink painting, "writing" "writing God", emphasizing the use of the brush. Chinese traditional ink painting emphasizes "writing" and "writing spirit", and stresses the use of brush. Waves of twists and turns, and vividness of brush strokes are the requirements of Chinese painting. Mixed media painting also talks about "using the brush", and its use of the brush emphasizes feelings, the creator's current feelings guide the next action to take place, and the brush on the hand is transformed into the brush in the heart, at this time, whether it is collage or the use of foils, will produce a sense of the brush. The use of a color or a material will evoke other colors or materials to echo it. Every color in the picture is alive, growing, fermenting, transforming, and even giving birth to a new life.

The selection of materials and artistic expression drive each other, is a long-term exploration and experimentation process, this process is arduous but fun, only long-term in this field to find out, experiment, through the trials and tribulations of people can deeply appreciate. The use of new materials creates a broader space for us to express ourselves, and a new material often opens the door of inspiration for us to try out areas that were previously out of our reach. Artistic creation is not about materials for the sake of materials, and the exploration of the language of painting is not the pursuit of a blind and arbitrary form; the use of a

new material only brings out the characteristics of the material if it is integrated into the personalized experience. Metaphysical material is sublimated into metaphysical spirit, and the language it expresses can be sincere. Therefore, the use of materials can not be detached from the emotional needs, if you find that the existing materials can not meet the current pursuit of art, there will be a need for new materials, in the face of the complexity of the material world, which elements you need, complete fetishism is of course not desirable, in the first contact with this field, often feel at a loss, so she chose a point of origin, and from here on out, step by step! Moving forward, not a little bit of false, which the journey of sweet and bitter to know.

Together, these materials in “Spring Will Come” form a rich narrative that is both an ode to the physical reality of spring's return and a deeper contemplation on the spiritual cycle of loss, dormancy, and rebirth. The artwork becomes a meditation on the assurance of renewal inherent in the natural order, offering a visual and tactile testament to the resilience of life and the perennial renewal of the spirit.

Preliminary Discussion on the Role of Aesthetic Decisions in Enhancing Material and Spiritual Themes

"Spring Will Come" is a vivid demonstration of how aesthetic language can amplify the spiritual and material narrative of an artwork. Yang Yang's aesthetic decisions weave together a tapestry that speaks to the season of rebirth and the perennial promise of new beginnings. The aesthetic decisions in "Spring Will Come" reflect a delicate balance between representation and abstraction. The soft transitions and layering of mineral colors on the paper create a depth that moves beyond the two-dimensional plane, hinting at the more profound depths of spiritual awakening that spring represents. These transitions may suggest the gradual nature of seasonal and spiritual shifts—neither happens suddenly but rather unfolds subtly, almost imperceptibly.

The foil's reflective properties bring a dynamic element to the work. As the viewer moves, the light shifts, and new details emerge, symbolizing the ever-changing perspective one gains as they grow and learn spiritually. This interplay of light also reflects the inner brightness of spring—the spiritual light within that grows stronger and breaks through the darkness of winter.

The rough textures against smooth expanses of color within the work create a dialogue between the tactile and the visual, much like the spiritual journey involves a dialogue between the tangible experiences of the physical world and the intangible understandings of the spiritual realm. The textural diversity can also be seen as reflecting the variety of life's experiences—each moment textured differently, contributing to the overall picture of one's life.

4.3.9 Wang Huaiqing – *Room within a Room*



Figure 4.9. Room Within a Room, 2002

Wang Huaiqing is a Beijing-born artist specializing in oil painting. After graduating from the Central Academy of Arts and Crafts with a bachelor's degree in 1969, he continued his studies at the same institution and received his master's degree in 1981, and from 1987 to 1988, he was a visiting scholar at OCU University in the United States. Currently, Wang Huaiqing is a first-class painter at the Beijing Painting Academy, a member of the Chinese Artists Association, and a director of the Chinese Oil Painting Society. Now 77 years old, Wang Huaiqing has become a hermit-like figure in the art market. Over the years, his works have rarely appeared on the auction market, but when they do, they often fetch high prices. In May of this year, his work *Eight Bars of Yong* set an auction record at RMB 71.75 million.

Wang Huaiqing's prominence in the market began with the first Contemporary art boom in 2008. As a disciple of Wu Guanzhong, his fusion of Chinese and Western styles was highly sought-after overseas, earning him the reputation of "blossoming

outside the walls, fragrant inside the walls". However, with the gradual return of power in the Chinese art market, his works have been attracting more and more attention from museums in the mainland, fetching high prices on many occasions, and it seems that Wang Huaqing wanted to continue the legend when he created "Room in a Room - Red Bed" in 2002. He focused on the key part of the Han Xizai Night Banquet, the tented bed, for a close-up and enhanced depiction. Room in a Room - Red Bed is a rich combination of Wang Huaqing's early experiences and millennial ambitions.

During his first trip to Jiangnan in the early 1980s, he experienced an unforgettable night in an inn next to Lu Xun's former residence in Shaoxing, Zhejiang Province, where he spent the night in an "opium bed," which became the basis for the emotion and style of his work. 1999, sensing that the most turbulent century in Chinese history was coming to an end and that the 21st century, a symbol of new beginnings and hope, was about to begin, Wang Huaqing changed his profound color language for the first time, creating a bright red-toned work called Foot-2, which presents a majestic Ming-style flower-legged table. For the first time, he changed his profound color language and created the bright red-toned work Foot-2, presenting a majestic Ming-style table with flower legs; in the same year, Wang Huaqing also experimented with combining furniture elements for the first time in his painting Ru Chair.

Room within a Room is Wang Huaqing's profound exploration of space and form, which blends the essence of traditional Chinese aesthetics with the vision of contemporary art. Winner of the Silver Prize at the 13th National Exhibition of Mixed Materials Painting, this work exemplifies Wang's expertise in using mixed media- especially oil on canvas mounted on wood-to construct a visual narrative that is both historically grounded and forward-thinking. The work is a reflection of Wang's personal history and artistic evolution, heavily influenced by his experiences with traditional

Chinese "frame beds" during his travels in Jiangnan in the early 1980s, as well as a significant stopover next to Lu Xun's former residence in Shaoxing. These encounters, coupled with his reflections on the turbulence of 20th century China and the dawn of the 21st century, profoundly shaped the thematic and emotional tone of Room Within a Room.

Material Usage

Wang Huaqing's Room within a Room is an artwork that utilizes a rich variety of materials, with physical and visual layers of depth that add complexity and multi-dimensional perspective to the work. Room Within a Room is primarily rendered on canvas, wood panel and oil paint.

Oil on canvas provides a tension-filled foundation for the painting, and its fabric texture gives the viewer a sense of warmth and familiarity that is especially evident in touch. As the traditional medium for painting, oil on canvas not only carries the visual expression of the artist, but also represents a part of the history of Western art. The spreading and layering of oil paint on oil canvas creates a visual effect that is both fluid and deep, allowing the viewer to feel the transition and mixing of colors, a delicate texture and rendering of colors that gives the work a vivid sense of dynamism. In this work, the oil canvas is posted on a wooden board, which is not a simple background material, but the soul of the whole work. The richness of the oil paintings and the depth of the colors bring life and emotional fluidity to the images, and the use of red is often associated with celebration, luck and new beginnings in Chinese culture. In 1999, Wang Huaqing chose to use the color red to symbolize the beginning of a new era and hope,

which is not only culturally significant, but also a strong emotional and visual marker in artistic expression.

Wood, the structural material that provides support for the canvas, is also symbolic for its traditional use in Chinese culture. Wood has a long history of use in Chinese furniture and architecture, associated with an aesthetic of stability, sturdiness and elegance. The texture and grain of the wood itself adds to the tactile and visual complexity of the piece, and its natural grain and color provide a sense of roughness that contrasts with the smooth surface of oil canvas. In addition, the use of Ming furniture and the exquisite craftsmanship of the wood demonstrates a respect for and reference to Chinese tradition. By incorporating the elements of wooden furniture directly into his artwork, Wang Huaqing breaks the two-dimensional limitations of traditional painting and elevates it to the realm of sculpture and installation art, offering viewers a sense of three-dimensional space that they can almost step into and experience.

Spiritual Significance of Material Choices

Wang Huaqing's "Room within a Room" is a profound exploration of space and tradition through the lens of material and spiritual synthesis. The artwork fuses materials in a manner that both evokes and subverts traditional Chinese cultural motifs.

The oil on canvas technique, a mainstay of Western art, achieves deep vibrancy and nuance in color here, bridging the gap between modern aesthetic sensibilities and the traditional Chinese context. The choice of oil paint could signify the fluidity of spiritual beliefs and the layering of experiences, with each layer of paint representing

the complexity and richness of life's journey. The spirit is not monochromatic; it is a spectrum that oils capture with profound sensitivity.

The wooden elements in "Room within a Room" serve as more than just structural support—they embody the concept of 'home' and shelter. In traditional Chinese philosophy, wood is associated with growth and vitality, aligning with the principle of 'Mu' (wood) in the Wu Xing (Five Elements). The presence of the wood, especially in the construction of Ming-style furniture within the painting, conveys solidity and connectedness to tradition and history. It suggests a spiritual continuity and grounding, offering a sanctuary within which the spirit can dwell and find comfort.

The interplay between the oil on canvas and the wooden elements creates a dialogue between the transient and the eternal. The canvas, often a symbol of fleeting expression, holds the volatile, ever-shifting emotions and thoughts conveyed through the oils, while the wood suggests a permanence, echoing the enduring aspects of the human spirit. Together, they speak to the duality of existence—the temporal physical world juxtaposed against the immortality of the soul.

Preliminary Discussion on the Role of Aesthetic Decisions in Enhancing Material and Spiritual Themes

The aesthetic decisions made by the artist play a crucial role in conveying the material and spiritual themes inherent in the artwork. Wang Huaqing's use of color, composition, and texture contributes to the overall aesthetic experience and deepens the viewers' engagement with the piece. The artist's choice of a rich color palette, including vibrant reds and earthy tones, creates a visually stimulating environment. The contrast between warm and cool colors adds dynamism to the composition, drawing the viewer's attention and evoking emotional responses.

The composition of "Room within a Room" is carefully crafted to invite exploration and contemplation. The layered elements, including the Ming-style frame bed and the canvas-mounted wooden panels, create a sense of depth and dimensionality. The arrangement of these elements within the frame guides the viewer's gaze and prompts them to explore the interplay between the physical and spiritual realms. Wang Huaqing's expressive brushwork and textured surfaces add a tactile quality to the artwork. The visible brushstrokes and varied textures create visual interest and invite tactile exploration. The combination of smooth canvas surfaces and rough wooden elements further enhances the sensory experience, inviting viewers to engage with the artwork on multiple levels.

The aesthetic decisions made by the artist serve to amplify the material and spiritual themes present in the artwork. Through careful manipulation of color, composition, and texture, Wang Huaqing creates a visually compelling piece that invites viewers to reflect on the intersection of the physical and metaphysical worlds.

4.3.10 Wang Huaiqing – *Relative Sound*

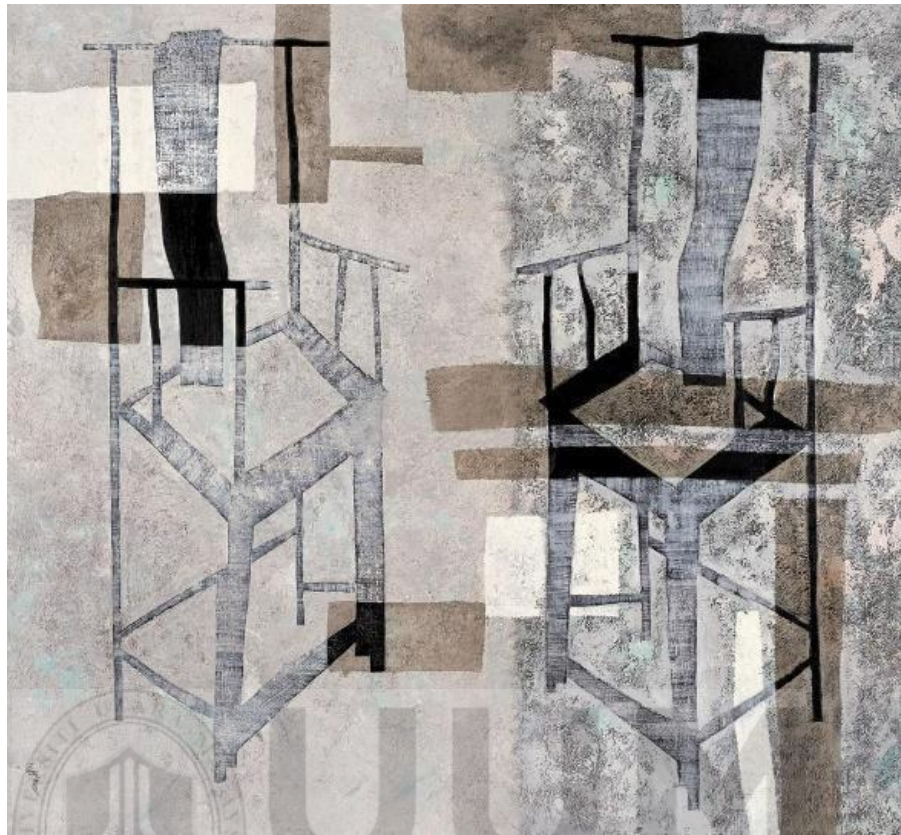


Figure 4.10. *Relative Sound*, 130.5cm x 143.5cm, 1992

Wang Huaiqing, a famous contemporary Chinese painter, is well known in the art world for his profound artistic concepts and unique creative style. His work "Relative Sound" is a 130.5×143.5cm mixed media painting created in 1992, which not only shows Wang Huaiqing's deep understanding of traditional Chinese culture, but also integrates modern artistic expression, demonstrating the artist's profound insight into the interaction and transformation between form and content, tradition and modernity. Wang Huaiqing's art creations are deeply influenced by traditional Chinese culture and philosophy, especially his in-depth exploration of the concepts of "relative" and "sound". In *Relative Sound*, Wang explores the relationship between stillness and motion, emptiness and reality, and the ancient and the modern by contrasting and

balancing different visual elements. He believes that artworks should go beyond pure visual enjoyment to achieve an inner, philosophical communication.

"Relative Sound" adopts a mixed-material painting method, which not only reflects Wang Huaqing's in-depth understanding and utilization of the characteristics of different materials, but also demonstrates his innovation and experimentation in artistic expression. Wang Huaqing is good at constructing a visual space full of tension and rhythm through the texture of materials, the contrast of colors and the clever arrangement of layout. In *Relatively Audible*, viewers can feel a strong dynamic beauty that comes from the interaction and harmony between opposing elements.

"Relative Sound" is not only an important achievement of Wang Huaqing's artistic exploration, but also a representative work in Chinese contemporary art. It is a powerful interpretation of the fusion of traditional Chinese culture and modern art with a unique perspective and profound connotation. The success of this work not only reflects the achievements of Wang Huaqing's personal artistic path, but also provides new perspectives and inspirations for the development of Chinese contemporary art. "Relative Sound" has also been highly evaluated and recognized in the art market; in 2006, the work was sold at the Beijing Chengxuan Auction for RMB 4,950,000, far exceeding the pre-sale estimate, a price that reflects not only the market's high evaluation of Wang Huaqing's work, but also collectors' recognition of the value of Chinese contemporary art.

Wang Huaqing's "Relative Sound" is an outstanding work of art that combines tradition and modernity, East and West, static and dynamic. It not only demonstrates Wang Huaqing's profound artistic skills and unique spirit of innovation, but also provides us with a new aesthetic experience and space for reflection. Through this work,

we can more deeply understand the power of art and its unique role in connecting the past and the future, tradition and modernity.

Material Usage

In Wang Huaqing's "Relative Sound," the materials chosen play a critical role in the painting's impact and serve as a bridge connecting various thematic elements of tradition and modernity, form and content, stillness and motion. The primary materials employed include traditional elements like ink and paper, which pay homage to the age-old Chinese art of ink painting, known for its emphasis on brushwork and the spiritual representation of objects. Traditional ink provides a range of tonalities from deep blacks to grays, achievable through its dilution and application. It's likely used to outline the geometric shapes and forms that resemble chairs. Its fluidity allows for subtle washes that give depth and a sense of ancient heritage to the artwork, integrating with other materials to blur the lines between the old and the new. Wang Huaqing innovates this tradition by incorporating mixed media, which may include more contemporary materials such as acrylics or oils, alongside non-traditional substances like sand, fabric, or found objects.

The choice of these materials is deliberate. The traditional ink symbolizes the connection to historical Chinese art forms and philosophies. The fluidity and variability of ink are perfect for capturing the transient and ephemeral, aligning with the concepts of motion within stillness that Wang explores. Paper serves as a quiet, humble background, its texture providing a subtle depth that contrasts with the boldness of the ink. Wang Huaqing may use paper not only as the foundational surface but also

potentially layered to create a tactile, dimensional effect. The variations in paper texture can absorb ink differently, adding to the visual complexity and depth of the composition.

In contrast, the use of modern materials represents Wang's engagement with contemporary art practices and dialogues. Acrylics, known for their bright colors and versatility, might be used to introduce elements of modernity and contrast within the work. Acrylics have a plasticity that allows for bright, saturated colors, while oils offer a rich, lustrous finish with a depth of color that can appear translucent or thickly textured. These modern media might be employed to fill in the larger blocks of color and form, contrasting with the more fluid ink strokes. They can create a sensation of the present, playing against the traditional materials indicative of the past. Their application against the traditional ink can create a visual tension that mirrors the thematic tension between the ancient and the modern.

The potential inclusion of textured materials such as sand or fabric can further enhance the painting's physicality, introducing a tactile dimension that invites the viewer to consider the artwork's themes through a sensory experience. Sand adds a granular, rough texture that can vary in color from pale creams to dark browns. Sand might be used to build up areas of the composition, providing a literal roughness that can contrast with the smoothness of painted surfaces. Its earthiness can bring a raw, natural element into the painting, juxtaposing the idea of the constructed with the organic. These materials can create a sense of depth and reality that contrasts with the more ethereal qualities of the ink, reinforcing the painting's exploration of emptiness and form.

The materials used in "Relative Sound" are not merely applied but integrated to play off each other, creating a conversation between the physicality of the materials and

the intangible qualities they represent. Each material contributes to the overall composition by adding its unique texture, color, and form, which Wang Huaqing meticulously balances to achieve a harmonious yet dynamic visual rhythm. This rhythm echoes the painting's thematic focus on the relative nature of sound and silence, movement and repose, encouraging a meditative viewer engagement. Their collective physical appearance contributes to an artwork that is a tapestry of textures and forms, inviting viewers to read the painting not only visually but through the lens of history, culture, and tactile experience. The integration of these diverse materials on the canvas showcases Wang Huaqing's masterful orchestration of form and content, tradition and innovation.

Spiritual Significance of Material Choices

In "Relative Sound," Wang Huaqing's selection of materials is imbued with spiritual and philosophical significance that is deeply interwoven with the artwork's physicality.

In Chinese culture, ink is more than a medium—it's a reflection of the artist's spirit and the flow of energy (Qi). Its application is often seen as a spiritual practice, akin to meditation. The variable nature of ink, which can be controlled yet yield unexpected results, parallels Taoist and Zen Buddhist themes of harmony with the natural world and the beauty of spontaneity. It suggests a relinquishment of control, where the medium itself participates in the creation process, symbolizing the interaction between human intention and the Dao, or the way of the universe. Its application in "Relative Sound" can be seen as a reflection on the fluid nature of existence and the Daoist acceptance of change as an intrinsic aspect of life.

Paper, as the carrier of written knowledge and traditional painting, has a revered status in Chinese culture, signifying the preservation of wisdom and history. The texture of the paper and its responsiveness to ink can represent the human condition—receptive, impressionable, and resilient. In the spiritual context, it can be seen as a blank slate, the void, or the uncarved block, concepts which are central to Confucian and Taoist philosophies, representing the potential and purity of the undisturbed natural state. By using paper, Wang engages with the material's heritage, suggesting themes of transience and the ephemeral nature of human achievements, in line with Buddhist teachings on impermanence.

Acrylics or Oils, with their vivid colors and durable nature, are often associated with the Western art tradition and might symbolize the assertiveness of the modern, secular world. The boldness and solidity of acrylics and oils can be seen as a manifestation of the human desire to make a mark, to assert individuality, and to convey personal vision—a reflection of the modern quest for identity and self-expression. Their use could symbolize a modern quest for meaning in a rapidly changing world, resonating with the contemporary spiritual journey towards integration and balance between tradition and progress.

Sand, being an elemental substance, is often associated with the passage of time and transformation in various spiritual traditions. Its inclusion in the artwork can symbolize the grounding of the spiritual in the material world, the Zen concept of being present, and the impermanent nature of all things, with each grain representing a moment in time. Its inclusion in the “Relative Sound” could represent the foundational aspects of being and the Buddhist notion of interconnectedness with the natural world. Fabric, traditionally linked to craftsmanship and the domestic sphere, carries connotations of warmth, comfort, and human connection. Its use in the artwork can

signify the weaving of life's tapestry, with each thread representing relationships and interconnections, reflecting the Confucian value of social harmony and the interconnectedness of all life. Wang's use of fabric may thus symbolize the weaving together of different life threads to form a coherent whole, reflective of the interlaced nature of the cosmos.

The overall spiritual themes represented in Wang Huaqing's "Relative Sound" are a contemplation on the duality of existence, the harmony of contrasts, and the search for equilibrium in a constantly changing universe. Through the integration of various materials, Wang crafts a multifaceted dialogue that echoes through spiritual and philosophical dimensions.

The use of traditional ink and paper in juxtaposition with modern materials such as acrylics or oils reflects the coexistence of the ancient and the contemporary, the transient and the permanent. This duality suggests the Daoist principle of Yin and Yang, where opposite forces are seen as interconnected and giving rise to each other in natural cycles. The contrasts between the smooth, flowing ink and the gritty texture of sand, or the pliability of fabric against the rigidity of the found objects, serve to highlight the balance that can be found within opposites. This theme resonates with the Confucian ideal of harmony, suggesting that beauty and understanding arise from acknowledging and integrating disparate elements.

The spiritual practice of transformation is represented by the aging process invoked through crackling varnish and the use of found objects, suggesting a cycle of death and rebirth. This cycle is a fundamental concept in Buddhism, where all life is seen as subject to the process of impermanence and renewal. The fluid application of ink, potentially contrasted with static forms within the composition, may symbolize the

ebb and flow of life's energies — a meditation on the perpetual motion within apparent stillness, embodying the philosophical notion that change is the only constant.

Wang Huaqing's "Relative Sound" becomes a spiritual map, where the materials he chooses are not mere physical substances but carriers of profound spiritual and philosophical messages. This artwork has reflected on the broader themes of life, death, rebirth, and the search for balance in an ever-evolving cosmos. It's a visual symphony that articulates the complex nature of human existence, the persistent quest for meaning, and the profound beauty found in the harmonious dance of contrasting elements. Each material, with its distinct cultural and historical resonance, contributes to a dialogue that invites contemplation on the interplay between the material and spiritual realms.

Preliminary Discussion on the Role of Aesthetic Decisions in Enhancing Material and Spiritual Themes

In Wang Huaqing's "Relative Sound," the aesthetic choices of material integration contribute significantly to the overarching composition and enhance the thematic essence of the artwork.

The materials' aesthetic qualities such as the subdued color palette, the varied textures, and the architectural form of the abstracted chairs create a cohesive composition that challenges the viewer's perception. The fragmented and reconstructed forms of chairs, a common symbol of human presence and absence, may contribute to an overall feeling of past narratives intersected with contemporary discourse. The arrangement of these forms creates a visual rhythm, suggesting both motion and

stillness, engaging the viewer in a visual play between the historical weight of tradition and the ephemeral nature of modernity.

The aesthetic use of traditional and modern materials together deepens the painting's exploration of philosophical themes of relativity and the perceptual interplay between sound and silence. The juxtaposition of the textures—from the granular touch of sand to the smoothness of oils or acrylics—parallels the ancient Chinese philosophical discussions about the beauty of worn objects compared to the new, reflecting on the cycles of life and the transformation of matter and spirit over time. The play of light and shadow across these textures highlights the spatial dynamics of the composition, enhancing the piece's spiritual narrative that embraces the balance of yin and yang, the tangible and the intangible, solidity and void.

Wang's aesthetic decisions evoke a sensory experience that transcends the visual, prompting viewers to engage with the artwork on a deeper, more intuitive level. The tactile nature of the mixed media might provoke a desire to touch and explore, mirroring the human inclination towards understanding through physical connection. This sensory engagement with the piece encourages a contemplative state, inviting introspection on the subtle nuances of existence and the complex interplay between life's fleeting moments and the search for enduring meaning. The visual impact of the chairs, often a place of rest and reflection, in their altered state within the artwork, can elicit a sense of nostalgia, urging a profound emotional connection with the concepts of presence, absence, and the relative nature of our perceptions.

"Relative Sound," with its careful integration of varied materials and textures, allows for an experience that is as much about feeling and emotion as it is about seeing,

drawing the viewer into a layered encounter with the spiritual and philosophical themes inherent in the work.

4.3.11 Chen Xinmao – *Playing In The Lanting Pavilion*



Figure 4.11. *Playing In The Lanting Pavilion* , 69cm x 138cm, 2011

Chen Xinmao's "Playing In The Lanting Pavilion" is a group of paintings depicting scenes from classical literature and history, particularly those related to the Eastern Jin Dynasty literati Wang Xizhi and his famous Lanting Preface. Wang Xizhi is one of the greatest calligraphers in Chinese history, and the Lanting Preface is his most famous work, regarded as "the best calligraphy in the world". The "Playing In The Lanting Pavilion" captures the cultural and historical significance behind the Lanting Preface through art, while showcasing the elegant atmosphere of the Lanting Gathering. Held in the spring of 353 A.D. at the Lanting Pavilion in today's Shaoxing, Zhejiang Province, the gathering brought together forty-two literati who enjoyed friendship and literature by drinking wine, composing poems, and admiring the landscape. After the gathering, Wang Xizhi wrote the Lanting Preface, which has been celebrated not only

for its remarkable calligraphy but also for its profound content and philosophical significance.

The work "Playing In The Lanting Pavilion", measuring 69x138 cm, was created in 2011 and is categorized as contemporary ink art. It adopts the techniques and styles of traditional Chinese painting, incorporating the characteristics of ink and wash painting, and demonstrates the lifestyle and artistic aesthetics of the literati of that era through delicate brushstrokes and muted colors. Expressed through the medium of ink on paper, this series of works may not only focus on the depiction of the scenes of the Lanting Gathering, but also contain an in-depth exploration of the ideology of the literati of that era, their aesthetic concepts, and their philosophy of harmonious coexistence with nature. Such works not only demonstrate the traditional charm of ink painting, but also reflect the artistic pursuit and depth of thought of contemporary artists in inheritance and innovation.

Material Usage

In Chen Xinmao's "Playing In The Lanting Pavilion" series, the materials used are Xuan paper, ink, acrylic, and mixed media. Each of these materials brings its own cultural and historical significance to the artwork, creating a rich tapestry of meaning and aesthetic impact.

Xuan paper is renowned for its smooth texture, strength, and durability, qualities that make it a preferred choice for traditional Chinese ink painting. Its ability to absorb and hold ink lends itself to subtle gradations of shade and tone, enabling the artist to explore the interplay between light and shadow, presence and absence. Originating from ancient China, Xuan paper has been used for centuries in calligraphy and painting, revered for its refinement and association with scholarly art. In "Playing In The Lanting

Pavilion," Xuan paper likely serves as the primary substrate. It provides a base that enhances the diffusion of ink and pigments, enabling the ethereal, misty landscapes that are characteristic of traditional Chinese painting; it also represents a connection to this heritage, embodying the flow of cultural traditions through time.

Acrylic paint offers vibrant color, quick drying times, and versatility, contrasting with the more subdued and fluid ink. Its use might introduce a modern element to the work, bridging traditional Eastern techniques with Western artistic practices. The acrylics in Chen's work could provide vibrant splashes of color or serve as a textural contrast to the more muted ink washes. They might be used to highlight certain elements within the painting or to bring a contemporary edge to the traditional scenes, symbolizing the blending of eras.

The incorporation of mixed media elements allows for a layering of textures and the introduction of three-dimensional aspects that challenge the flatness of traditional painting. Materials such as rice paper, textiles, or natural fibers could be used to add physical depth and tactile variation. These may be layered or collaged onto the painting's surface. Pebbles, sand, or soil might be affixed to the painting, adding an organic texture and a three-dimensional aspect that draws the viewer's attention to the physicality of the natural world within the artistic landscape. Small metal pieces or foils could reflect light, creating focal points or shimmering effects that enhance the sense of liveliness within the artwork.

Through the combination of these materials, Chen Xinmao's "Playing In The Lanting Pavilion" series becomes a visual exploration of the dance between tradition and innovation, East and West, life and art. The choice of Xuan paper and ink grounds the work in Eastern traditions, while the use of acrylic and mixed media opens a

dialogue with Western cultural elements, mirroring the complexity and interconnectedness of human nature and the ongoing narrative of cultural exchange.

Spiritual Significance of Material Choices

Chen Xinmao's "Playing In The Lanting Pavilion," through the integration of Xuan paper, ink, acrylic, and mixed media, encapsulates overarching spiritual themes that reflect upon the deep interconnection between humanity and the cosmos, the fluid nature of time, and the pursuit of harmony within the dichotomy of life and the afterlife.

The delicate Xuan paper, absorbing the free-flowing ink, represents the essence of human vulnerability and the capacity to be shaped by experiences and emotions. It embodies the Taoist principle of harmony with nature and the Buddhist acceptance of life's transient moments. This choice of material and the way it interacts with ink evoke the spiritual theme of life as a journey of continuous transformation and enlightenment. Its delicate nature requires a controlled hand, echoing the spiritual discipline and presence practiced in Eastern traditions. The paper's responsiveness to ink and water is akin to the human response to the intangible forces of life—emotions, the flow of time, and spiritual energies.

Ink's fluidity is emblematic of Taoist principles, emphasizing the natural flow of life and the concept of 'Wu Wei,' or non-action, allowing things to take their natural course. Its variable intensity on paper can represent the spectrum of life experiences. Ink, with its rich gradation and capacity for both boldness and subtlety, suggests the philosophical idea that life encompasses a spectrum of experiences, from darkness to light, paralleling the journey from ignorance to awareness. The application of ink on

paper symbolizes the continuous interplay between the tangible and intangible aspects of existence, mirroring the spiritual path that navigates through the seen and unseen elements of the world. As it permeates the Xuan paper, the ink symbolizes the permeation of spiritual knowledge and experience through the soul, suggesting a journey of enlightenment.

Acrylic paints introduce a contemporary counterpoint to the traditional materials, reflecting the modern human condition's struggle to find its place within the ancient flow of wisdom and the world's ever-evolving nature. Its bright, durable presence can symbolize the human desire for permanence and the enduring quest for meaning in a rapidly changing world. This aspect of the artwork speaks to the theme of integrating the old with the new, seeking a form of spiritual synthesis that resonates with today's cultural and philosophical complexities. The incorporation of mixed media adds a tactile and diverse dimension to the artwork, representing the rich tapestry of life that is woven from an array of different experiences, cultures, and perspectives. It highlights the interconnectedness of all things, a fundamental aspect of both Taoist and Buddhist thought, where everything is part of a larger whole, and every individual thread is essential to the fabric of the universe.

Overall, "Playing In The Lanting Pavilion" represents spiritual themes of interconnectedness and the cyclic nature of life. It is a visual meditation on the ebb and flow of existence, the impermanence of life, and the continuity that underlies all change. The integration of materials creates a complex narrative that invites contemplation and introspection, urging the viewer to consider their role in the grand pavilion of life where past, present, and future converge in the artistry of existence. The materials serve as conduits for exploring the ephemerality of life, the search for balance between change and constancy, and the weaving of individual stories into a collective human narrative.

Through "Playing In The Lanting Pavilion," the artist creates a space where the tangible meets the intangible, inviting viewers to consider their own place within the ongoing dialogue of life's grand pavilion.

Preliminary Discussion on the Role of Aesthetic Decisions in Enhancing Material and Spiritual Themes

In Chen Xinmao's "Playing In The Lanting Pavilion," the aesthetic decisions regarding the materials used enhance the artwork's spiritual and philosophical themes through their contribution to the composition and the elicitation of emotional and sensory responses.

The color palette, predominantly in tranquil blues with the starkness of black ink, creates a contemplative atmosphere that is reminiscent of traditional Chinese landscapes, invoking a sense of serenity and the sublime. The soft absorbency of the Xuan paper allows the ink and acrylic to blend at their boundaries, mirroring the concept of unity and the Taoist notion of the harmonious coexistence of the elements. The texture of the mixed media provides a contrast that invites closer inspection and prompts reflection on the complexities beneath life's surface.

The use of traditional ink in a modern composition reinforces the continuity of cultural practices through time and the persistence of seeking understanding through art. Light and shadow play across the varied textures, giving form to the spiritual concept of duality and balance within the universe. The scale of the individual elements and their arrangement across the series of panels encourages the viewer to consider the

interconnectedness of experiences, as they might read a scroll or a series of poetic verses, suggesting the sequential nature of life and the passage of time.

The artwork's visual and tactile elements engage the viewer on an emotional level, evoking feelings of nostalgia for the past and contemplation of the present. The rhythmic flow of the ink and the calm expanses of color have a soothing effect, inviting introspection. The incorporation of tactile mixed media materials encourages physical interaction, or at least the desire for it, facilitating a deeper personal connection with the artwork and its themes. The viewer's sensory journey through the materials mirrors the spiritual journey through life, love, and death, resonating with the inner search for meaning and understanding.

Through these aesthetic decisions, Chen Xinmao's "Playing In The Lanting Pavilion" series transcends its material boundaries, offering an immersive experience that interweaves visual beauty with spiritual depth. The materials and their application enhance the artwork's themes, invoking a sense of the ethereal, the eternal flow of nature and time, and the human quest for harmony amid the contrasting forces of existence.

4.3.12 Chen Xinmao – *History Book Series*



Figure 4.12. *History Book Series* , 270cm x 70cm, 2006

Chen Xinmao's *History Book Series* is a series of works that explores how historical accounts and personal memories interact and transform, and combines the techniques of traditional Chinese ink painting with modern materials and concepts. Created in 2006, the paintings measure 270 x 70 centimeters and consist of five collages. These works not only use traditional materials such as ink and rice paper, but also incorporate non-traditional and non-painting materials such as text, hemp fiber, plaster powder, rubber, and plastic. Through this multi-material synthesis, Chen Xinmao conducts an in-depth exploration of the language of painting. In terms of texture, Chen Xinmao creates a mottled effect, making the images look as if they have undergone the erosion of time, revealing a sense of vicissitude and historical depth. In his book “Twenty Years of Experimentation with Chinese Ink Painting 1980-2001”, Pi Daojian

points out that Chen Xinmao's works intervene in the spiritual life of modern people while using traditional ink and brushwork, and that, despite the introduction of a variety of nontraditional materials, he still retains the aesthetic concepts of the Orient.

In his book *Works and Exhibition Grounds: On Contemporary Chinese Art*, Wu Hong gives a specific assessment of the History Book Series - Misprints, mentioning that these works present unfinished, partially defaced, and intentionally misprinted woodblock prints. Remnants or clues are presented in the form of damaged images and fragments, and the use of ink not only increases the ambiguity between the text and the visual image, but also sometimes obliterates the handwriting in randomly seeping ink stains. Chen Xinmao's History Book Series thus evolves and deepens in both its presentation and content. In this way, he not only expands our understanding of the graphic innovation of ink, but also deconstructs the authority of history. In Chen Xinmao's paintings, history is no longer a fixed, authoritative record, but becomes an open, cultural space that can be reinterpreted and experienced. In these paintings, we can feel how Chen Xinmao pursues a new expressive power and inner emotional strength through innovations in materials and techniques, as well as challenges to traditional forms. His series of works is not only a presentation of his personal feelings towards history, but also a challenge to the viewer's perception of history.

Material Usage

In Chen Xinmao's "History Book Series," the varied materials each contribute their unique aesthetic qualities, which, when combined, create a tactile and visually rich tableau that speaks to the layering of history and memory. The series includes materials such as ink, Xuan paper, as well as less conventional and non-pictorial elements like text, hemp fibers, plaster powder, rubber, and plastic.

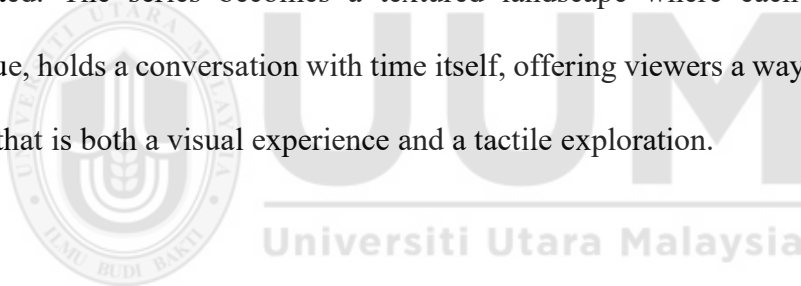
In terms of traditional materials, Ink provides a spectrum from deep blacks to watery grays, capable of both stark contrasts and subtle shadings. Xuan paper is noted for its fine texture and softness, facilitating a smooth spread of ink. Ink flows into the fibrous Xuan paper, creating an interaction where the medium's density and the paper's absorbency meet. This represents the flow of history, with the spread of ink akin to the spread of stories and events over time. The technique honors traditional Chinese painting, suggesting a reverence for the historical methods of recording and depicting narratives.

While for the non-traditional materials, “History Book Series” had applied text which embeds narrative directly into the visual medium, potentially serving as historical references or personal annotations. The text may vary in size and color, standing out against the monochrome ink or blending subtly into the background. Text integrated into visual art adds a direct narrative element, making literal the concept of history as a series of recorded events. The text becomes a part of the visual texture and acts as a bridge between image and word, past and present.

Hemp fibers offer a textural contrast to the smoothness of Xuan paper and the fluidity of ink. It have a raw, organic look, with a texture that can be both rough and delicate. When applied to the artwork, hemp fibers create a tactile experience that may protrude from or sit atop the Xuan paper, introducing a third dimension. This evokes the texture of historical documents and manuscripts, the physicality of recorded history, and the intertwining of countless individual strands into the historical narrative. Also, plaster powder has also being used in the “History Book Series” artwork. The material after mixed with a binding agent and applied to a surface, hardens into a white, solid form that can be smooth or textured.

Rubber and plastic materials can come in various colors and degrees of transparency and can be manipulated into numerous shapes and textures. These modern, synthetic materials contrast sharply with the organic nature of ink and Xuan paper. Their use may reflect the encroachment of the modern world on traditional narratives, the preservation and distortion of memory through modern materials, and the resilience of history despite the changes wrought by time.

The "History Book Series" uses these materials not only for their visual and tactile qualities but also for their symbolic resonance. The traditional technique of ink on paper represents the flow of history, while the integration of modern materials and text speaks to the evolving nature of how history is recorded, remembered, and interpreted. The series becomes a textured landscape where each material, each technique, holds a conversation with time itself, offering viewers a way to interact with history that is both a visual experience and a tactile exploration.



Spiritual Significance of Material Choices

In Chen Xinmao's "History Book Series," the materials are meticulously chosen not only for their physical properties but also for their ability to convey deeper spiritual and philosophical meanings.

The traditional practice of ink on Xuan paper is imbued with a sense of meditation and mindfulness, reflecting the spiritual practice of calligraphy and painting in Chinese culture. The ink, representing the fluidity and impermanence of life, and the paper symbolizing the receptiveness of the human spirit, together echo Taoist and Buddhist philosophies that emphasize harmony with the natural world and acceptance of the transitory nature of existence. The way ink interacts with Xuan paper, with its propensity for diffusion and absorption, can be seen as a metaphor for the way experiences and memories permeate our consciousness and become part of our personal and collective histories.

Text within the artwork serves as a manifestation of the Logos, the word as a divine principle or the embodiment of reason and knowledge. It connects to the spiritual tradition of textual reverence found in many cultures, where written words are considered sacred, holding the power to both depict and shape reality. The inclusion of text challenges the boundaries between the sacred act of writing and the secular act of painting, offering a meditation on the nature of historical truth and the written accounts that shape our understanding of the world.

Hemp, as a natural material, resonates with spiritual concepts of interconnectedness and the organic tapestry of life. It speaks to the idea that every individual's life is a thread in the larger fabric of history and humanity. The use of hemp fibers can be seen as a return to the roots of human civilization, highlighting the

fundamental, often overlooked elements that have sustained human societies through time.

The use of plaster powder, which hardens over time, can signify the fossilization of memories and the preservation of the past. It relates to the spiritual practice of remembrance and commemoration, encapsulating moments in time. Plaster as a layering medium can symbolize the layers of meaning in history and the philosophical notion that our current understanding is built upon the foundations laid by our ancestors.

These synthetic materials, emblematic of the industrial and post-industrial eras, may represent the human-made world's intrusion into natural and spiritual realms, prompting reflection on modernity's impact on spiritual life and traditional values. Their use in the artwork raises questions about the permanence of the current era's legacies and the sustainability of the relationship between humanity and the environment.

In the “History Book Series,” Chen Xinmao harnesses the spiritual and philosophical connotations of these materials to craft a narrative that is as much about the spiritual journey of humanity through history as it is about the history itself. The materials serve as conduits for the exploration of how individual and collective memories are formed, preserved, and transformed, reflecting on the spiritual and philosophical implications of the passage of time and the artifacts it leaves behind.

Preliminary Discussion on the Role of Aesthetic Decisions in Enhancing Material and Spiritual Themes

In Chen Xinmao’s “History Book Series,” the aesthetic decisions surrounding material use are pivotal in shaping the series’ thematic and emotive power. The aesthetic

qualities of the materials—ranging from the somber tones of the ink to the earthy textures of hemp fibers—combine to form a visual tapestry that reflects the complex narrative of history. The deliberate use of color, predominantly monochromatic with bursts of red, sets a tone that is both reflective and poignant, mirroring the emotional gravity of historical reflection. The form of the artwork, presented in a series of panels, may allude to the pages of a book or scrolls, a traditional format for historical documents in Chinese culture. The texture brought in by plaster and hemp creates a physicality that invites viewers to consider the tactile nature of history, as something that can be touched and felt, not just read and seen.

The use of traditional materials such as ink and Xuan paper maintains a connection to the past, while their interaction with modern elements like rubber and plastic speaks to the ongoing narrative of history as it unfolds into the present. Light and shadow play across the diverse surfaces, highlighting the reliefs created by plaster and the smoothness of printed text, suggesting the presence of the unseen within the seen, a philosophical contemplation of the known and unknown aspects of history. The scale of the panels and their arrangement encourage a journey through the artwork, much like reading a history book, where each panel reveals a different chapter or facet of the narrative.

The contrast between the various materials and the range of textures elicits a visceral response, fostering a connection that goes beyond the visual. The roughness of the hemp against the smoothness of the paper, the raised plaster against the flat text, each detail resonates on an emotional level, conjuring feelings of nostalgia, loss, or contemplation. The choice to use synthetic materials alongside natural ones can provoke thoughts about the relentless passage of time and the artifacts it leaves in its wake—some enduring, some fleeting.

Through these aesthetic choices, the “History Book Series” not only invites aesthetic appreciation but also encourages an emotional and sensory journey. The materials and their integration become a metaphor for the layers of human experience, encapsulating the blend of emotion and thought that characterizes our relationship with history. The artwork, thus, becomes a space where sensory experience and spiritual contemplation intersect, offering a profound engagement with the themes of memory, history, and existence.

4.4 Analysis of Contemporary Trends and Innovations

The discussion of mixed media painting on the visual level primarily focuses on the ontological aspects of painting's formal language. However, the expression of any artwork should not be confined solely to the visual domain. It necessitates an inner transformation based on visual pursuits to delve into the layers of artistic language, thereby shifting the focus to the spiritual expression of the work. The formal language at the visual level and the artistic thoughts behind it are inseparable, together constituting the complete expression of a work. Many researchers have addressed the issue of materials being used for their own sake in current mixed media painting and have proposed valuable viewpoints.

Respondent 1 believes that: "China has advanced the development of mixed media painting through material research, leading to a more diverse and multifaceted development of Chinese painting. However, I disagree with elevating this aspect too highly because, according to traditional Chinese views, the language of painting materials still falls within the 'instrument' category. The correct evaluation of its relationship with the 'way' is crucial, and I do not agree with considering materials as

the highest realm of painting art." Pan uses the relationship between 'instrument' and 'way' to explore the significance of material exploration in painting, suggesting that materials should not be overly emphasized.

Respondent 2 shares a similar view, stating that "ultimately, materials are just a medium that needs to carry ideas. Artists use materials to convey the power of humanity to move, touch, and infect the audience. On one hand, we use such a medium to convey our thoughts, and on the other hand, the audience perceives and reflects on the humanity and society behind it through the material or medium."

Both artists converge on the idea that the spiritual aspect of mixed media painting is the fundamental issue. Therefore, this section primarily explores the spiritual orientation of contemporary mixed media painting in China. Respondent 3's perspective is worth discussing where he believes that the spiritual attribute of mixed media painting lies in artists following their innermost, most genuine, and most perplexing issues to seek their unique cultural ideals.

With the continuous progress of human society and history, the forms of artistic creation have shown a tendency towards diversification. Since the early 20th century, the art field has witnessed various conceptual and experimental artistic explorations. Artists, in their quest for a unique artistic language and to express their cultural perceptions of the era, have tirelessly explored new technologies and materials. In the process, artists have realized that materials are not only visual; materials related to smell, hearing, and touch have also started to enter the realm of artistic expression. In artistic creation, materials serve as tools for conveying artists' emotions and thoughts, utilizing their various properties to express their artistic concepts. The relentless advancement of technology has significantly changed people's social lives, prompting artists to revise

their notions of painting materials. The external form and internal spiritual and cultural attributes of materials have become part of artists' considerations. The emphasis on materials in mixed media painting has led to its spiritual orientation being closely linked with the materials themselves.

Artists need to be intimately familiar with painting materials, as their creative process relies on accumulating experience in handling these materials. When artists are struck by inspiration, they must consider whether their mastery of material techniques can perfectly express their ideas; otherwise, the effort is meaningless. The development of society, the evolution of culture, and technological progress have led artists from different eras to adopt varying materials. In the creation of mixed media paintings, unlike traditional painting, the preparation of materials is part of the artistic process. Artists, according to their expressive needs, strive to select appropriate art and materials for expression, considering both the formal aspects of materials and their visual characteristics. Furthermore, they deeply explore the psychological attributes and cultural reflections that materials can evoke, testing whether these materials can aptly express their ideas. This involves grasping the spiritual orientation of materials, which is the source of mixed media painting's spiritual direction. Under the influence of material language, artists' ideas and concepts are presented. In summary, materials possess their own spiritual attributes, which become part of the spiritual orientation of mixed media painting. In the following text, the author explores the trends and innovations of this contemporary art form from four aspects, starting with materials.

(i) Mixed-material painting presents the spirit of the times

In the realm of traditional painting, the selection and use of materials tend to be relatively singular, whereas the creation of mixed media painting encompasses a wealth

of materials. Traditional painting arts possess a narrative and dramatic expressiveness that mixed media painting lacks. However, the richness in material selection, diversity of creative means, and complexity of visual forms in mixed media painting allow for a more profound expression of the artist's inner world. This adaptability better aligns with the contemporary world's economic, cultural, and technological advancements, enabling artists to unleash their imagination more freely and enrich the language of their canvases, thus enhancing their artistic expressiveness.

In contrast to the limitations of traditional painting materials, any material that can be used on a flat surface has entered the purview of mixed media artists, becoming a major component of artistic expression. The emergence of this cultural phenomenon can be attributed to various reasons. In the current societal context, the development of different art forms is inevitably linked to the continuous evolution of human culture. The several industrial revolutions in history that significantly boosted productivity have led to the creation of various new materials, thereby facilitating breakthroughs in the art field. Respondent 4 shared about, artists have gradually shifted their focus to the value of materials long overlooked by people. In traditional painting, the characteristics of painting materials were undervalued and not given much importance. However, in the creation of mixed media painting, the value of materials is highly regarded by artists. The use of materials characteristic of the era makes mixed media painting emblematic of its time. The process of artistic creation is the materialization of the artist's spiritual quest, where the artist's ideas interact with materials, highlighting the significance of the materials themselves and conveying the artist's spirit through their presentation. The continuous development of material language provides new resources for the evolution of human cultural arts, gradually making its way onto the stage of art history as a new breakthrough in painting art.

Each era has its characteristics, and the environment in which today's artists have grown up differs significantly from that of their predecessors. Consequently, their entire worldview and values differ greatly from those of earlier artists. Traditional painting arts can no longer satisfy the emotional expression needs of today's artists, leading to the demand for new materials. Materials possess characteristics of their era; the materials used in artworks of any given period inherently reflect the spirit or concepts of that era. The temporality of materials is also evident in the exploration of new materials, where technological advancements bring about material innovation. These new materials, unavailable in previous eras, inevitably carry the characteristics of their time when used by artists in their creations.

Mixed media painting tightly intertwines the physical properties of materials with their spiritual attributes, allowing artists to navigate between traditional and contemporary choices in their creative process. The texture of the materials themselves, combined with the spirit behind them, becomes an indispensable carrier in the artistic expression of this era. Since the last century, the exploration of generations of artists has continually highlighted the intrinsic value of materials. They have evolved beyond merely supporting painting expression, gradually separating the material's physical properties from form and color.

The art of any era cannot detach from its historical context, always striving to embody the spirit of the time while simultaneously becoming a part of that very spirit. Key moments in the history of art development are often accompanied by changes in materials. The German classical philosopher Hegel provided an interpretation of the spirit of the age, viewing it as the unique universal spirit of each era, a collective consciousness transcending the individual. Art, as a product of the absolute spirit, manifests the spirit of the age. This understanding of the spirit of the age has had a

wide-ranging impact. Respondent 1 has shared about the well-known French philosopher Diderot, who, building on Hegel's theory, conducted in-depth analyses of European painting during the Renaissance and studied ancient Greek sculpture. Starting from fundamental facts in art history, he provided a comprehensive analysis of the environmental and temporal factors that influenced the development of art. He pointed out that to gain a deep understanding of a specific artwork, one cannot analyze it in isolation; it is essential to have a profound grasp of the spirit of the age in which the artwork was created. This understanding applies to the cognition of artists and art movements as well. There are countless examples of this in art history, Zhang Daqian is known for creating paintings that have a spiritual undercurrent running through them. His ink drawings of landscapes reveal scenes that go beyond a simple description of the scenery since they are often influenced by Buddhist and Taoist thought. It is a tribute to his spiritual expressionism that his masterwork "Dwelling in the Qingbian Mountains" was created (see Figure 4.13).

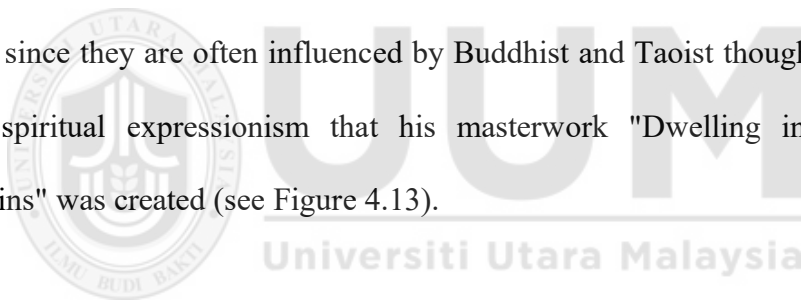




Figure 4.13. Dwelling in the Qingbian Mountains by Zhang Daqian, 1899-1983

The spiritual link to nature and the world that Zhang's use of splashing ink and color portrays may be seen in his artwork. Not only does the representation of mountains and water stand for the material world, but it also exemplifies the Taoist concepts of harmony, balance, and the unending flow of life. Zhang's capacity to transcend the physical plane and generate a spiritual dimension via his brush strokes is highlighted in Li's critique.

In his writings, Wu Guanzhong often investigated the philosophical divide that exists between the ancient East and the contemporary West. This spiritual journey is compellingly reflected in the artist's picture "A Small Town by the River," which depicts the journey (Figure 41). The purpose of Wu's abstract depiction, which is to

transcend cultural and spiritual barriers, is that it is inspired by both traditional Chinese painting and Western modernity. The intertwining of lines, colors, and shapes in Wu's work is meant to be seen as a metaphor for the interdependence of all things. His painting methods are not only aesthetic choices; rather, they express a deep grasp of human nature and the spiritual desire for unity among diversity. He uses a variety of mediums, including oil, acrylic, and watercolor.



Figure 4.14. A Small Town by the River, 1984

In Shi Tao's paintings, solitary monks are often seen traveling across the countryside; these images are a potent symbol of the individual's search for spiritual enlightenment. This idea is well captured in the artist's picture titled "A Monk in a Boat," (see Figure 4.15) in which a lonely monk paddling alone in a boat represents the spiritual journey, the search for enlightenment, and the connection between man and the universe. Enlightenment on a spiritual level may be represented visually through Shi Tao's use of imagery that is both straightforward and deep. A peaceful environment is created by the use of a minimalist composition and the subtle interaction of ink and paper, which invites viewers to ponder on their own personal spiritual journey.



Figure 4.15. A Monk in a Boat, Qing dynasty (1644-1911)

The interpretation of spiritual themes in Chinese art is shown to be subtle and multifaceted via the use of these case studies. The many approaches to style and method used by the artists are illustrative of the myriad ways in which spiritual concepts may be communicated via the visual arts. These pieces of art, whether it be the ethereal landscapes of Zhang Daqian, the abstract international expressions of Wu Guanzhong, or the contemplative portraiture of Shi Tao, provide a glimpse into the profoundly spiritual qualities that are ingrained in Chinese culture.

Artworks from different historical periods exhibit characteristics reflective of their times. In primitive societies, the primary task of early humans was to fulfill basic life needs. They used mineral pigments to paint images of wounded animals on the dark cave walls, hoping to harness the mystical powers of witchcraft for tangible gains. The cultural traditions of ancient Egypt focused on the significance of life and death, with their tomb paintings featuring a plethora of texts and images related to curses and prayers. The use of various precious artistic materials, combined with brilliant color

treatment, created an eternal resting place. In the Middle Ages, the use of gold and silver foil in mosaic paintings and religious decorations created a magnificent religious atmosphere, reflecting the supreme glory of religion. During the Renaissance, artists began to focus on creations that reflected a human-centered humanism spirit. The continuous evolution of Western painting materials brought about changes in painting styles and subjects, aligning well with shifts in the spirit of the age.

Starting from the mid-19th century with Impressionism, numerous painting languages emerged. Respondent 5 have shared about his knowledge, where the evolution of the painting were starting from Cubism represented by Picasso and Braque, painting materials gradually became a prominent element. Artists began incorporating various readymade materials into their canvases through collage, making the expansion of painting materials a norm in the creative processes of artists from various schools. From the early 20th century to the present, the exploration and discovery of painting materials have continuously merged with the emotions and thoughts of artists, allowing painting to gradually break free from thematic restrictions. Art no longer served specific demographics; painting art returned to its essential characteristics, initiating self-discipline. Many modernist artists began exploring art for its own sake, independently researching the fundamental aspects of painting such as lines, shapes, brushstrokes, and color, resulting in many classic artworks. In the creation of mixed media painting, the materials used by artists are no longer just a single component of formal language. Moreover, the cultural connotations they carry, especially the spirit of the age they reflect, endow mixed media painting with era-specific characteristics.

Artists can only develop a profound understanding of materials through continuous exploration. Artists engaged in mixed media painting must select materials during creation, thoroughly understanding their properties in the process. Based on this

understanding and practical application, artists may deepen their comprehension of materials, enabling them to more aptly participate in the expression of the work. The physical properties of materials are fixed, but through the artists' practice and re-creation, juxtaposed with other elements of the painting, they may generate new meanings.

(ii) The Experimentality of Mixed Media Painting

The term "experiment" here does not refer to the concept of experimental art often mentioned today, but rather to an attitude and behavior. Artists, during the creative process, are not satisfied with current artistic concepts or modes of creation and hope for the emergence of new artistic forms, taken from Respondent 6. In this process, artists explore and attempt various approaches across different aspects. This dissatisfaction with reality and the continuous attempt constitutes an experimental attitude.

The experimentation in the art field is not unique to contemporary art since the early 20th century. At every stage in the development of human art, some artists have been dissatisfied with the existing material techniques and artistic concepts. They have embarked on various attempts, especially in the realm of materials related to painting, from different angles to seek new materials and expression techniques. The transition of Western painting from tempera to oil painting involved significant experimentation by generations of artists, playing a crucial role. Later artists, building on the practices of their predecessors, continuously tried new materials, ultimately forming a highly mature oil painting material and technique system. However, Respondent 7 has shared his thoughts where this kind of experimentation differs significantly from that in contemporary art. The experiments during the formation of oil painting were essentially

improvements in painting materials by generations of artists, having a constructive meaning. In contrast, contemporary art experiments often subvert traditional artistic styles. For instance, the creations of Cézanne, the father of modern art, rebelled against the previous painting creation's imitation of nature. Duchamp's creations significantly expanded the boundaries of art, rebelling against the "sublime" in artistic creation.

The two World Wars brought about rapid changes in the era, and along with these significant shifts, modernist art flourished remarkably. The profoundly influential art historian Gombrich believed that the various changes in the art field that began in the early 20th century fundamentally lay in the "experiments" conducted by artists in their creative work. This term aptly summarizes the overall characteristic that was unique to the art of the last century. These experiments were primarily manifested in the ultimate pursuit of pictorial form. Modernist artists dared to break all boundaries, actively exploring issues previously unaddressed in artistic creation. Therefore, some researchers believe that the art movements produced throughout the 20th century have surpassed the sum of all art movements from other periods. Modernist art, while proclaiming its art creation against tradition, also questioned the aesthetic standards formed over centuries, especially the artistic pursuits of Classicism, opposing all existing art rules. The spirit of seeking novelty and rebellion against convention is one of the essential characteristics of modern art.

Since the late 1970s, some china artists gradually became dissatisfied with the painting creation modes before the Cultural Revolution, hoping to break free from rigid thinking. They began to explore themes and materials in painting expression. Respondent 8 shared his opinion that this exploration reached its climax during the "85 New Wave" period, with group activities of young artists emerging in both the relatively developed Jiangsu and Zhejiang regions and the more remote areas of Shanxi,

Yunnan, and Qinghai. Influenced by Western contemporary art, they created paintings with vastly different styles. This period was a "harvest time for the explosive growth of new art styles in practice." Many artists were experimenting with painting materials at the time. For example, Huang Yong Ping, a representative figure of Xiamen Dada, influenced by Dadaism, began experimenting with a form of non-expressive painting that was both self-imposed and unrelated to the self in March 1985.

Respondent 8 reveals that, "This involves carefully selecting a certain medium, yet the use of this medium renders the 'careful' and 'choice' ineffective, resulting in outcomes of chance and randomness. Creating three turntables with bearings, divided into eight fan-shaped sections, dividing the canvas into potential sections corresponding to the turntables, encoding the various paints available in my studio: green (paint) — 1, emerald (color gum) — 2, ocher (color powder gum) — 3, green (ink) — 4, ... and so on, creating dice corresponding to the paints. (Paint 1) — (Dice 1) The turntable is used to choose the painting layout."

Although the artist might focus more on the process of creation, and the ultimate goal might not be to create a classic work, it is evident from his exploration of painting materials and tools, directly conveying the experimental attitude of the artist.

In traditional oil and ink painting creation, the tools, materials, and techniques are relatively fixed, and the creative process does not require much experimentation, or to put it another way, even if there are some minor experiments, they still fall within the category of the painting type and do not involve many surprises. The creation of mixed media painting, unlike the above two types of painting, has no fixed application of materials and traditional techniques. The selection and use of materials is a very important task in this type of painting creation. Here, Respondent 9 said his realization

for the creative process of artists from the perspective of mixed media painting creators. He said: once an artist has a creative idea, they will try their best to find the most suitable tools and materials for expression. The process of searching for materials is essentially an experiment. The artist must choose usable materials from a vast array through thoughtful comparison, a kind of discovery vision. Based on this, the artist must conduct extensive experiments with the materials found, to analyze their visual characteristics and explore the pictorial effects they can create. Through countless back-and-forth experiments, the artist may find the materials most suitable for expressing their artistic concepts. Some artists' creative process may follow another approach, where they may not have a clear idea in mind initially but inadvertently discover certain materials in daily life that match their aesthetic, sparking creative inspiration. Then, through in-depth understanding and experimentation with the materials, their artistic concepts gradually become clearer. There are differences in the order of these two creative approaches, due to different artists' creative habits.

However, it is undeniable that both creative processes involve experimental behavior and attitude, with experimentation running through the entire process of mixed media painting creation. And this experimentation is not passive; it is an active choice by the artist who wants their creation to stand out, seeking their unique painting language and artistic path. After all, the fundamental purpose of art is to create, and experimenting with materials becomes a breakthrough in painting creation. However, there is a risk in experimentation, namely, that an artist engaged in mixed media painting may experience a decline in experimental spirit after forming their artistic style and finding their artistic language.

In summary, the author believes that an artist's active choice to engage in mixed media painting creation, with the uncertainty of materials necessitating various

experiments, naturally embodies an experimental spirit, which is most commendable. Artists engaged in mixed media painting explore relentlessly from their perspectives, with the identity of experimenters and the courage to not fear failure, driving the development of this painting type to its current state. The experimentality of contemporary Chinese mixed media painting has also led to its openness, with a large number of artists exploring in this field, which is extremely beneficial for the development of painting art as a whole.



(iii) Mixed Media Painting Highlights Traditional Culture

Over thousands of years of history, the Chinese nation has created numerous cultural traditions inherited and developed by successive generations. These traditions encompass national civilization, customs, spirit, imagery, symbols, etc. They can unite the national spirit, reflect national characteristics, and represent the overall manifestation of various ideological cultures and conceptual forms in the history of China's diverse ethnic groups. With distinct national characteristics and an immensely broad and inclusive connotation, these excellent cultural attributes demonstrate the greatness of the Chinese nation and the wisdom of its people, becoming the spiritual source for many types of art currently in China. Through the analysis of mixed media painting exhibitions, it has been found that many works display the spirit of traditional culture, draw inspiration from various elements within traditional culture, and make creative transformations. Selected representative works has been analyze to elucidate how Chinese mixed media paintings highlight traditional culture, mainly from the following aspects.



Figure 4.16. Clouds and Mist of Huangshan No.3

Contemporary Chinese mixed media paintings, to some extent, break down the boundaries between different painting genres. As mentioned earlier, there is a close relationship with Chinese painting, with many elements of Chinese painting being presented in artists' creations. Respondent 10 have shared the artwork of Zhang Qingguo's mixed media painting "Clouds and Mists of Huangshan·3" (Figure 43), the use of black and white, reminiscent of ink painting, portrays the cloud sea of Huangshan. From the composition, brushwork, color tone, and even the name of the work, one can clearly sense the artistic conception of Chinese landscape painting. He said: "Xi Weishu's work also displays significant characteristics of Chinese painting, and there are many similar works". These artists draw nourishment from Chinese painting, combining it with the use of mixed media to integrate both aspects and convey the concept of their work.



Figure 4.17. The Eleven-Faced Goddess of Mercy, Second-Faced

Buddhism, a religion introduced from abroad, has been in China for two thousand years since the Eastern Han Dynasty. Throughout this long history, it, along with China's native Confucianism and Taoism, known collectively as Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism, has had a significant impact on Chinese history. Inspired by religion, many Buddhist art works have emerged, including religious murals represented by Dunhuang murals and Buddhist statues of various materials, all treasures of traditional Chinese culture. Many mixed media paintings utilize Buddhist imagery. Respondent 12 have shared, Han Jiaqi's "Buddha Series" (Figure 44) draws direct inspiration from Buddha statues, with the series consisting of eleven pieces depicting eleven different Buddha-faced. The materials used in the creation include silk, gilding,

and colorful ink, where the charm of ink and the brilliant mottling of gold and silver foil create a striking contrast, fully utilizing the delicate and gentle characteristics of silk to aptly express the Zen spirit of the Buddha statues.



Figure 4.18. Old Brick Wall By Wang Yunqu

Chinese traditional culture is rich in classic imagery that has become part of our national collective memory, now embodying symbolic significance. In Wang Yunqu's work "Old Brick Wall" (Figure 4.17), the composition is arranged in a seemingly haphazard fashion with various rectangular blocks, possibly mimicking the uneven and textured surface of aged masonry. Old brick walls are commonly found in historical neighborhoods across many Chinese cities and could be seen as symbols of history, culture, and the passage of time. These walls often bear the marks of the changing eras and could tell countless stories from the past. Respondent 13 has shared her thoughts

where she thinks the preservation and demolition of old brick walls and buildings can be a subject of cultural debate in China, as they are connected to heritage. Such artworks may evoke nostalgia and a reflection on the rapid urbanization and modernization that often lead to the loss of traditional architectural elements. With the aid of replicating the textures and forms of aged walls, the artist might be commenting on these changes and inviting viewers to ponder the cultural implications of the disappearance of such structures. Additionally, the material used in this piece, if indeed it includes fragments of real old bricks, could also speak to the concept of reusing and honoring the old within new artistic expressions, a practice that can also be seen as a metaphor for cultural continuity and remembrance.

Ink has always held a special place in Chinese art, particularly in expressing spiritual themes. Contemporary artists have taken this further by blending ink with various modern materials. The interplay between ink and mixed media adds layers of complexity, creating new depths of meaning. For instance, Zheng Chongbin's paintings utilize ink and acrylic in a way that challenges traditional ink painting techniques. His works often depict landscapes that transcend mere visual representation, aiming to capture the 'spirit' of the landscape, thus creating a visual and emotional connection to nature's underlying essence. Figure 4.18 shows an artwork titled “*Overlapped shape*” by Zheng Chongbin.



Figure 4.19. Overlapped Shape, by Zheng Chongbin (2015)

Sculpture and installation art have also become potent means of expressing spiritual themes. Artists manipulate materials like bronze, wood, stone, and even everyday objects to create works that symbolize spiritual concepts. Zhang Huan's sculptures often incorporate spiritual symbols using unique materials like ash and temple relics, creating connections to Buddhist themes and the impermanence of life. The technique and material used in such works are integral to their spiritual message.

The advent of digital media has opened new possibilities in representing spiritual themes. Artists like Wang Gongxin have explored spirituality through video and digital installations. Along with combining visual, auditory, and sometimes even tactile experiences, these artists create immersive environments that engage viewers in a spiritual dialogue. The material here is not tangible, but the techniques used in digital art form a new language to explore age-old spiritual concepts.

The interplay of material and technique in representing spiritual themes in Chinese art is a nuanced and dynamic aspect. It is not just about creating visually appealing works but about crafting experiences that delve into profound spiritual

realities. From traditional practices to contemporary innovations, the thoughtful selection and manipulation of materials and techniques have enabled artists to create multi-dimensional expressions of spiritual ideas. The synthesis of old and new, tangible and intangible, reflects the very nature of spirituality – an ever-evolving quest for understanding, connection, and transcendence.

The above analysis, starting from different traditional cultural types, explores the importance and application of traditional culture in mixed media painting. Due to space limitations, only a few representative examples could be analyzed, but reality is more complex, with mixed media painting creation reflecting a more diverse array of traditional cultural types. In summary, mixed media painting holds certain practical significance in terms of traditional culture. From another perspective, for contemporary Chinese mixed media painting to establish itself in the global art scene, it must possess its own unique artistic style and ideological content. The diversity and national characteristics of traditional culture may significantly contribute to this endeavor.

(iv) Mixed Media Painting Reflects Popular Culture

In recent decades, human society's productive forces have reached an unprecedented height, with the advancement of industrialization driving the rapid development of the commodity economy. This progress has spawned a new cultural phenomenon previously nonexistent, known as popular culture. Entering the industrial society, the traditional handicraft society, which had persisted for thousands of years, began to decline. The classical painting focused on narration and realism gradually faded away, along with its accompanying spiritual culture. The development of industrialization and mechanization made mass production a reality, laying a solid material foundation for the emergence of popular culture. Movies, video games,

performances, television, and sports competitions have become typical representatives of popular culture and indispensable entertainment in our daily lives. The lives of all are inundated with a vast array of products and pervasive advertising. The fast pace of society leaves us little time to deeply ponder some cultural phenomena, gradually assimilating us into various phenomena of popular culture. The continuous development of popular culture, represented by the middle class, has greatly impacted the elite culture formed historically.

Starting with Impressionism, which emerged alongside the two industrial revolutions, modernism gradually dissolved the state of art types favored by the aristocracy. Due to the development of productive forces and the progress of industrialization, ordinary people could also experience the aesthetic ways of the aristocracy, turning it into a widespread aesthetic consciousness of the masses. The object of art service began to shift, with popular culture becoming the main theme expressed by artists. As history moved into the postmodernism period, artistic creation's opposition to elite culture and the mechanical reproduction in the context of industrialization mutually promoted the emergence of genuine popular culture. New forms and materials in painting continually emerged, with diverse forms of expression becoming the direct presentation of artists' thoughts, and material elements becoming the main channel for expressing artists' concepts. The creations of artists met the demands of popular culture. The emergence of popular culture facilitated the rise and significant development of Pop Art, with the popularity of Pop Art playing a certain role in better disseminating popular culture. They form a cyclical relationship, mutually driving each other and creating an ideal virtuous cycle.

In the 1960s, American Pop Art reached its peak of development. The plethora of products and fresh phenomena in cities became the material sources for Pop Art,

providing endless topics for creation. Their primary method of creation involved constant repetition and copying and pasting to express their artistic concepts and their understanding of the world and life. The commercial society provided Pop Art with a wealth of creative inspiration. Art was no longer something lofty; various objects in everyday life could also become materials for art and subjects of artistic expression. Pop artists like Andy Warhol showed intense interest in various aspects of American society, intending to use them as materials for artistic expression. They believed everything was beautiful and embraced all the wonders of the commercial society with open arms. Typical Pop Art lacks originality at the level of image creation, as originality was not their pursuit or significance; they were more concerned with copying and appropriating various ready-made images in the commodity society.

Over the past few decades, human society's productive forces have reached an unprecedented level, with the advancement of industrialization propelling the rapid development of the commodity economy. This development has given rise to a new cultural phenomenon that did not exist before, known as popular culture. With the transition into industrial society, the traditional handicraft society that had lasted for thousands of years began to decline. As a result, classical painting, which focused on narration and realism, gradually disappeared, along with the spiritual culture that accompanied it. The development of industrialization and mechanization made mass production a reality, laying a solid material foundation for the emergence of popular culture. Cinema, video games, performances, television, and sports competitions have become iconic representatives of popular culture and indispensable forms of entertainment in our daily lives. Our lives are inundated with a plethora of products and omnipresent advertising, and the fast pace of society leaves us little time for deep contemplation of some cultural phenomena, gradually assimilating us into the various

phenomena of popular culture. The continuous development of popular culture, represented by the middle class, has significantly impacted the elite culture formed throughout history.

Pop art has a close connection with the social background of industrialization. Popular culture has adopted various innovative means of dissemination, and artists' creations are no longer mysterious or extremely personalized endeavors. Their artistic creation is essentially a process of producing commodities. Respondent 10 have shared that various well-known entities, even celebrities, have become recurring creative materials in the works of Andy Warhol. Of course, while Andy Warhol was extremely talented in commercial aspects, his creations should not be understood merely as simple replications and arrangements of celebrity images or products. He chose such methods for his creations with his own starting points. Beyond commercial interests, these works also conveyed his artistic thoughts and values, perfectly combining the two. His classic works have been continuously reproduced and published in magazines and newspapers worldwide, making him one of the most famous artists globally at that time.



Figure 4.20. Heroes and Beautie, oil on canvas, 120×160cm, 1999

In the current social context, artistic creation and the commercial market are inextricably linked. Under the combined influence of media and commerce, the direction of artists' creations is also significantly affected. The reason why Pop Art became the most popular artistic style in the United States during the 1960s and 1970s and a representative of popular culture mainly lies in the diversity of artistic dissemination under the background of industrialization. The rootedness of composite art in ordinary people's lives also made its dissemination more convenient, becoming a form of representation for the masses. Artists should focus on the spirituality of their works, as spirituality is paramount. Many artists' creations gradually move from exploring material forms to probing the spiritual content of their works. Pop artists combined their lives and artistic expressions, producing a positive reaction between the two. The emergence and development of popular culture have strongly propelled the spread of Pop Art, achieving great commercial success. In turn, Pop Art has also promoted the advancement of popular culture into new domains. After China's reform and opening-up, the continuous exchange between Chinese and Western art introduced Pop Art to China, influencing a group of domestic artists and leading to the emergence of artists with a Pop Art style. Among these artists, Wei Guangqing explored painting materials.

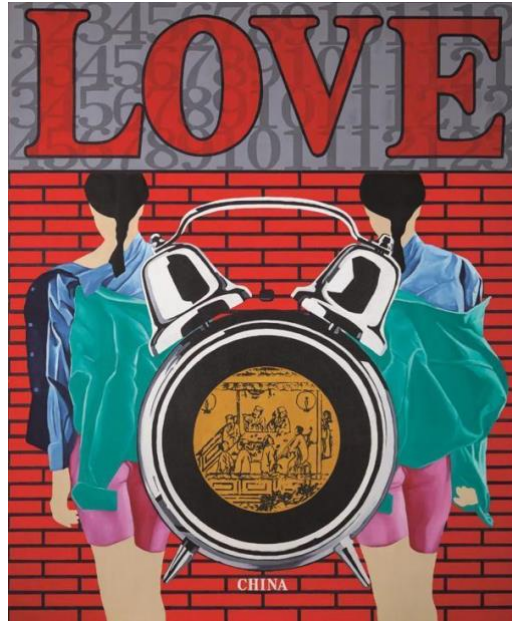


Figure 4.21. Red Wall - LOVE, oil on canvas, 200×160cm, 1994

On the topic of painting materials, artists had a profound understanding as early as the early 1990s. Respondent 10 also have shared his opinion where: "The free choice of materials and the free use of random effects can help us transcend the functions and limitations of previous paintings, allowing us to easily escape from previous painting types and their constraints to touch upon issues and cultural hotspots of interest, thereby bringing vitality to contemporary art". Since the 1990s, Wei Guangqing created a series of works in the Pop Art style, reflecting his contemplation of the era. He introduced typical images from the consumer society into his paintings in various ways, using Pop Art methods to handle the imagery, juxtaposing different types of material objects within the paintings, which have a certain tendency towards popular culture.



Figure 4.22. Hairpin Beauty, Oil on Canvas, 89 x 116cm, 1997

Many contemporary artists, like Ji Wenyu, have also used common mixed media painting methods such as collage and appropriation to express the popular culture of their era. They borrow classic images to reflect on the issues of our time. These classic images are deconstructed by artists in various ways, dissolving their original meanings and exploring the relationship between China's consumer era and popular culture. Respondent 3 shared Figure 4.21 which shows three main panels, each adorned with what appears to be traditional Chinese motifs and stamps. On the left and right panels, there are figures dressed in classical Chinese attire, complete with elaborate hairpieces and holding fans. Their poses are elegant and poised. The central panel features a modernly dressed figure, contrasting with the traditional figures, perhaps signifying a blend of old and new or the cultural transitions and contrasts within society. The diverse material characteristics of contemporary Chinese mixed media paintings can bridge the gap between the audience and the artwork, allowing viewers to find materials closely related to their daily lives within the paintings, thereby establishing a connection with popular culture.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

5.1 Chapter Overview

The following chapter seeks to engage deeply with the study's core questions, providing a reflective examination of how material choice, spiritual underpinnings, and the intricate web of aesthetic expressions uniquely contribute to the connotation and reception of mixed media artworks within the contemporary Chinese art landscape. Form, color, and material are the three essential elements in the expression of painting's formal language. Before modernism, materials did not directly participate in the expression of painting; they were often hidden behind the scenes, playing only a supportive role in the expression of the work. After entering the last century, the range of painting materials greatly expanded, allowing the various characteristics of the materials themselves to be gradually discovered and to start directly participating in the expression of emotions and concepts in the artwork. Material language gradually became as important as form language and color language.

In the creation of mixed material paintings, material serves as the language of painting, where the physical characteristics and aesthetic of the material constitute the external appearance of the work, bringing new changes at the visual level and presenting more unique aesthetic characteristics; different material attributes give people different psychological and spiritual implications, which possess emotional and cultural dual characteristics, and profoundly affect the spiritual expression of painting. The aesthetic perception of material and its spiritual connotation will affect the expression of the work. Quoting from Respondent 11, he believes that "the expression

of material and the spirit of material constitute the internal structure relationship of 'form and below' and 'form and above' in mixed material painting. The artistic charm of mixed material painting is not only the expansion and innovation of style, but also reflects the contemporary reinterpretation of the spiritual characteristics of Chinese traditional culture."

This chapter will serve as the core of this thesis, combining all the analysis to share deep insights about contemporary mixed-media painting. It highlights how material, spiritual, and aesthetic elements interact, showing their importance in art's ongoing development and its role in reflecting, challenging, and going beyond societal limits.

5.2 Aesthetic Harmony and Material Usage in Artistic Expression

The development of painting to this day has undergone revolutionary changes in every aspect, whether in terms of its connotations or its extent. However, based on the basic characteristics of flatness and visibility inherent to painting, the pursuit of visual aspects has always been a fundamental requirement of the art form. Without visual elements, the art of painting would lose its necessity of existence. It is only on the basis of visibility that one can further pursue the spiritual significance of the image, and in some works, the visual aspect itself may be the essence of the work's meaning. Compared to traditional types of painting, the practice of mixed media painting creation places even greater emphasis on the visual aspect.

The visual characteristics and spiritual pursuits of an artwork are like two sides of the same coin, often showing a waxing and waning relationship at different historical stages (Dyson, 2008). The importance of visual pursuit in artworks, and the ultimate

pursuit of the image, is something no artist would ignore. Artists often choose the subjects and materials that most resonate with them for their creations. If the material does not evoke an emotional resonance in the artist, seeking merely the so-called meaning of the work, many artists would be reluctant to engage. Often, breakthroughs in techniques and materials lead to spiritual breakthroughs.

Respondent 12 mentioned, "When people have an understanding of the characteristics of a certain material, recognize a psychological isomorphism on a certain material, and with a specific purpose utilize it, gradually mastering and harnessing this material to achieve its best effect through crafting methods and expressive techniques, this is the embodiment of the 'value' of the material." Here, the so-called "psychological isomorphism," "specific purpose," and "material 'value'" encompass meanings on both the visual and spiritual levels, forming a dialectical relationship. Respondent 13 said, "When art is in the form of creation, it primarily encompasses three dimensions: sensory stimulation, a rich spiritual life, and a sense of social mission." The three dimensions mentioned by Zhang contain both the externality of vision and the spirituality of the work, first provoking sensory stimulation, then moving to the dialogue phase, completing the spiritual expression of the work. This also illustrates the fundamental role of visual elements in painting expression.

5.2.1 The Uniqueness and Difference of Chinese Contemporary Mixed Materials

Painting from Traditional Painting

In the context of contemporary Chinese art, the integration of diverse materials in painting signifies a departure from traditional practices, marking a distinctive and differential approach. Compared to traditional painting, today's artworks have

undergone profound transformations. In various painting exhibitions held both domestically and internationally, it is common to encounter artworks that transcend the conventional categorizations of mediums like oil painting, incorporating a variety of materials and techniques to achieve unique visual effects. Mixed media painting pays close attention not only to the expression of spirit but also to the visual characteristics presented through the use of physical materials. This approach highlights the essence of painting and showcases differences from traditional painting styles and concepts, emphasizing its uniqueness. The expansion into non-traditional materials has become a noteworthy trend in contemporary domestic painting creation, enriching the artistic language of painters and sparking inspiration and passion.

Painting occupies a significant position within human artistic culture, its development influenced by a multitude of factors including politics, economy, culture, and geography, reflecting various aspects of human life (Hawkins, 2013; Jirajarupat & Yinghua, 2023). Materials play a crucial role in painting creation, with their use being influenced by various factors. The introduction of mixed materials has led to an extremely diverse external form of painting. Compared to the relatively fixed visual effects created with traditional painting materials, mixed media painting presents new, varied visual forms, underscoring fundamental differences from traditional painting.

During the 1990s, Zhang Xiaogang came to prominence as a key character in the Chinese contemporary art scene. He is best known for his surrealist style of painting. The body of work titled "Bloodline: Big Family" (Figure 5.1) exhibits the artist's skillful combination of Western and traditional Chinese painting methods. Zhang's depictions of people evoke feelings of melancholy and draw inspiration from traditional Chinese painting techniques of the portrait genre. However, these characters are depicted with

a surrealistic twist, their visage mask-like and emotionless, representing the artist's indictment of the conformity and repression that are prevalent in society.



Figure 5.1. Zhang Xiaogang, Bloodline - Big Family: Family No. 2, Estimate Upon Request

Additionally, in order to generate a three-dimensional impression and provide his figures with depth, Zhang makes use of Western methods such as chiaroscuro. The flawless, almost porcelain-like texture of the faces in Zhang's portraits, which was produced by laborious brushwork and layering of oil paint, exemplifies a perfect marriage of Gongbi's careful attention to detail with the Western oil painting style. A thorough analysis of Zhang's oeuvre is present in Wu Hung's definitive work, "Making History: Wu Hung on Contemporary Art" (2008). In this seminal book, Wu Hung meticulously dissects both the symbolic intricacies and technical prowess exhibited in Zhang's creations. Wu proposes that Zhang's artistry deftly bridges the evolving continuum of Chinese art, illustrating the dexterous interplay between enduring cultural traditions and external inspirations to forge a distinctive visual language. Through this

lens, Wu underscores Zhang's work as emblematic of this artistic convergence (Hung, 2008).

Respondent 14 have shared that Tang Chenhua has achieved remarkable success in exploring mixed media painting, infusing his works with creative passion and a speculative philosophical spirit. His education and life experiences, spanning both Eastern and Western cultures, allow him to explore painting issues from a dual perspective of cultural integration. Along with combining traditional Chinese cultural symbols with the creative characteristics of mixed media painting, he has conducted fruitful explorations in painting. Educated at the Central Academy of Fine Arts and having spent significant time abroad, Tang's international experiences have deeply informed his artistic language. "Clouds at the Horizon No. 4" (Figure 5.2) exemplifies Tang's method of integrating diverse materials—such as mineral pigments, oil sticks, and collage—into large-scale canvases to explore the spiritual and aesthetic dimensions of contemporary life. His work is a testament to the ongoing dialogue between tradition and modernity, East and West, reflecting a sophisticated understanding of cultural identity within the global art context. Tang's dedication to expressing the spirit of contemporary China through a dynamic and passionate use of color and form underscores his role as an innovator in the field of mixed-media painting.



Figure 5.2: Clouds at the Horizon No. 4, 195 x 250cm, 2007

Tang Chenhua's "Clouds at the Horizon No. 4," created in 2007, employs mixed media, mineral pigments, oil sticks, and collage techniques on a large canvas. This work is emblematic of Tang's endeavor to manifest the spirit of contemporary China through an ambitious aesthetic that blends Eastern and Western influences. Tang's approach to abstract expressionism and performance art, combined with his rich international academic background, allows him to transcend traditional boundaries. The artwork reflects the confrontation and continuation of tradition and modernity, presenting a visual exploration of the transient beauty of clouds and the spiritual pursuit of modernity. Tang Chenhua's utilization of mixed media to achieve a depiction of clouds diverges sharply from traditional Chinese painting, which historically emphasizes simplicity, brushwork, and ink properties. "Clouds at the Horizon No. 4" showcases the artist's innovative spirit in combining traditional with modern art practices, highlighting the work's textural depth and dynamism. This piece exemplifies how contemporary artists expand the expressive potential of painting beyond traditional techniques, incorporating a variety of materials to explore themes of nature, spirituality, and the

passage of time. The layering of textures and strategic use of light and shadow achieved through mixed media significantly underscore the fundamental differences from traditional painting, emphasizing contemporary Chinese mixed-media painting's unique place in the art world.



Figure 5.3. Twilight over Autumn Mountains, 125cm x 125cm, 2007

Hu Wei's "Twilight over Autumn Mountains" (Figure 52) represents a fascinating melding of traditional Chinese art principles with contemporary experimentation, making it stand apart significantly from conventional Chinese painting. At its core, the artwork maintains a strong allegiance to the principles of traditional Chinese landscape painting, notably in its use of rice paper and mineral pigments. These materials, cherished for their ability to convey the subtle textures and depth of natural landscapes, root the work firmly within the historical continuum of Chinese art. However, Hu Wei diverges from traditional methods by incorporating modern techniques and perspectives. His approach to landscape transcends the mere replication of nature, venturing into the realm of abstraction and subjective expression.

This integration of modern art forms with traditional elements demonstrates a respectful nod to the past while asserting a contemporary voice, highlighting the artist's innovative bridge between epochs.

The strategic use of mixed materials in "Twilight over Autumn Mountains" underlines its distinction from traditional painting. While classical Chinese painting primarily revolves around ink on paper, emphasizing brushwork and tonal variations, Hu Wei's inclusion of contemporary materials and techniques injects a new vitality into the traditional landscape genre. By doing so, Hu Wei not only expands the textural possibilities of the medium but also imbues the work with a multidimensional quality that challenges the viewer's perception and engages them in a deeper exploration of material and meaning. Another distinguishing feature of "Twilight over Autumn Mountains" is its conceptual depth, which diverges from the more literal and naturalistic intentions of traditional Chinese landscape painting. Hu Wei's work invites contemplation on the nature of existence, the passage of time, and the spiritual essence of the natural world. The abstract quality of the painting encourages a personal interpretation, allowing viewers to project their own experiences and emotions onto the canvas, a departure from the more didactic or narrative-driven traditional works. Hu Wei's aesthetic choices in "Twilight over Autumn Mountains" reflect a unique blend of simplicity and complexity, tranquility, and dynamism, mirroring the dualities present in both traditional Chinese philosophy and modern life. The artwork's innovative structure and composition—balancing abstract elements with traditional motifs—offer a fresh perspective on the enduring themes of harmony and balance, pivotal to Chinese art and thought.

It's clear that mixed media painting diverges significantly from traditional oil painting or Chinese painting, showcasing unique characteristics. In terms of materials,

mixed media painting offers a liberty that contrasts the singularity of traditional mediums, addressing the complex cultural expressions needed in today's diverse societal landscape. Furthermore, the creative processes in mixed media painting allow for a more personalized expression, distinguishing it from other art forms.

5.2.2. Shifting Perspectives through Material Interventions in Painting

Traditional painting creates images on a two-dimensional plane to convey the artist's conceptual expressions, where the introduction of mixed materials has transformed the concept of the "plane," challenging the conventional two-dimensional space (Henderson, 2018). Western traditional oil paintings often craft the illusion of three dimensions on a two-dimensional surface, with viewers interpreting the artist's thoughts and appreciating beauty through the depicted imagery, where the constituent pigments and materials lack intrinsic meaning (Stokkedal, 2016). As painting has evolved, this mode of viewing has limited the communication between artists and audiences, prompting the inclusion of non-traditional painting materials and giving rise to a new pictorial language and, consequently, a transformation in the manner of viewing. This change means that viewers not only gather information from the visual images formed by shapes and colors on the canvas but also perceive the essence of the work through the visual characteristics and cultural attributes of the materials used by the artist.

Every material in the vast world possesses its uniqueness, and the use of non-traditional materials by painters directly contributes to the expression of their work. The distinct visual characteristics of these materials prompt viewers to unconsciously ponder the reasons behind their use and their connotations. Furthermore, many artists

employ a variety of materials in their creations, which are often unrelated. Through their juxtaposition based on the artist's reflections and expressions, these materials generate a unique pictorial structure, creating entirely new visual images. When viewers engage with the artwork, their perception builds upon the existing grasp of imagery to include an awareness of the materials, focusing not on the depicted images or specific details but on direct visual perception. This perception, grounded in direct visual experience, does not diminish understanding of the artwork due to the ambiguity of shapes or the uncertainty of details. The process of viewing, stimulated by the unique characteristics of the materials and the psychological impact they convey, moves the audience to deeper contemplation, understanding of cultural attributes, and conceptual shifts, thus appreciating the underlying meaning of the work.



Figure 5.4. Lishui Landscape No.4, Oil on canvas, 80×60cm, 2019

This transformation in viewing and engaging with artworks is exemplified through the analysis of two paintings with distinct styles. Respondent 14 have shared an artwork's landscape piece of Dai Jiafeng (Figure 53), where he shared the artist's approach to composition is notably unique, employing parallel perspective to structure the scene. The artist doesn't overly concern himself with the objective truth of external lighting; rather, he selects the color palette based on his subjective, genuine feelings towards the scene, resulting in a work that conveys a sense of tranquility, serenity, and

simplicity. Viewers of his work are likely to unconsciously focus on the mentioned composition and color, as well as the depicted imagery, ultimately fostering a unique appreciation of the piece and an understanding of the artist's pursuits without delving into the analysis of the medium—oil paint.

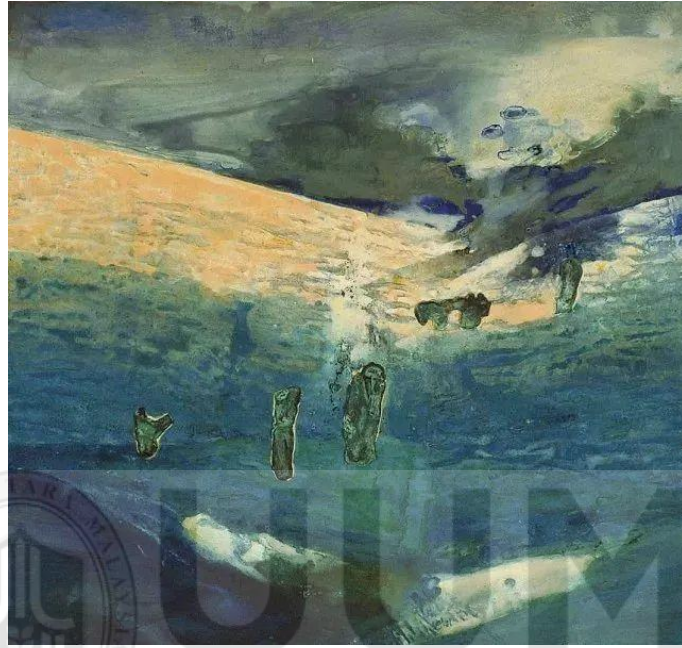


Figure 5.5. Inspiration from Nature Series No. 3, 80 x 80 cm, 2002

Figure 5.5 exemplifies a transformative approach in the realm of contemporary art by integrating diverse materials into his canvas. Zhang draws upon traditional Chinese art's emphasis on harmony between humanity and nature, merging it with the essence of contemporary mixed-media techniques. This blend reflects Zhang's unique perspective on the dynamics of artistic development amid modern society's complexities. His choice of semi-abstract forms to represent natural landscapes signals a departure from direct depiction towards a more evocative and emotionally resonant portrayal. Alongside employing burlap, tempera, and a mix of other materials on a wooden board, Zhang layers his canvas with a rich textural depth that moves beyond

the visual to engage the tactile senses of the viewer, inviting a meditative interaction with the natural world.

Zhang Yuan's "Inspiration from Nature Series No. 3" challenges traditional painting's reliance on a two-dimensional plane for conveying conceptual expressions. The introduction of mixed materials such as burlap and tempera on wood transforms the concept of the plane itself, engaging with the viewer's perception in multifaceted ways. Through integrating burlap and tempera, Zhang disrupts the conventional smoothness of the canvas, introducing a physical depth and texture that invite the viewer to experience the artwork beyond visual aesthetics. This material intervention creates a tactile dimension that traditional two-dimensional paintings lack, enhancing the viewer's engagement with the piece. The choice of burlap, a material associated with simplicity and utility, alongside traditional tempera painting, imbues the artwork with cultural significance and historical depth. These materials prompt viewers to ponder their use and meaning within the work, transforming the viewing experience from a purely visual interpretation to a contemplation of the artwork's broader cultural and conceptual implications. Zhang's juxtaposition of various materials based on his reflections and expressions generates a unique pictorial structure that challenges traditional visual representations. This approach encourages viewers to shift their focus from specific imagery to the direct visual perception of materials, thereby enhancing the understanding of the artwork's essence and underlying themes. Through the unique characteristics and psychological impact of the chosen materials, Zhang Yuan moves the audience towards deeper contemplation. The artwork stimulates a direct visual experience that transcends traditional viewing modes, inviting the audience to explore the cultural attributes and conceptual shifts underlying the piece. In summary, this artwork exemplifies how contemporary Chinese mixed-media painting employs

material interventions to shift perspectives from traditional two-dimensional viewing to a more dynamic and multisensory engagement. This transformation in the manner of viewing enriches the dialogue between artist and audience, fostering a deeper appreciation for the artwork's material essence and cultural significance.

5.2.3 Material as Medium Evolving Texture and Substance in Contemporary Mixed-Media Painting

In European traditional oil painting, thematic expression is the paramount element of creation. Artists, influenced by their era's historical and cultural contexts, select themes that resonate with their time, with all other aspects of painting serving to articulate these themes. Starting with Impressionism, the elements of color and form in painting began to evolve within their own trajectories, and the modernist movement brought a wide appreciation for formal elements among artists. This led to the 20th century becoming a golden age for global artistic development, characterized by the continual emergence of art movements and a great diversity in styles (Gaggi, 2015). As mentioned earlier, starting with Cubism, the role of materials in artistic expression began to emerge. The external diversity and intrinsic richness of materials gradually shifted from being mere vehicles of artistic expression to becoming subjects in their own right, gaining increasing attention.

With the elevated status of materials, accompanied by continual updates in artistic concepts, artists have expanded the range of materials used in painting creations, incorporating many new materials into the realm of artistic expression. Each material has its characteristics, and the appropriateness of material selection is directly related to the success or failure of the artwork (Ashby & Johnson, 2013). An analysis of

significant recent mixed-material painting exhibitions reveals a wide variety of material choices in contemporary mixed-material paintings in China. As previously mentioned, material expression has become one of the basic languages of painting, with material diversification inevitably leading to innovations in pictorial form and making the language of painting richer. More and more artists recognize the innovative potential of materials for the development of painting, with the expansion of materials in painting showcasing tremendous possibilities. The introduction of new materials into painting creation, compared to traditional painting practices, has become a challenging task. Artists must continuously experiment with new materials to enhance their understanding and familiarity. The unfamiliarity with materials often introduces many accidental elements during the exploration process, which can spark an artist's curiosity and inspire new ideas, further recognizing the infinite potential of material factors in the formation of painting language (Tharp & Tharp, 2019).

The history of painting has produced countless art movements and styles, each with its rich and diverse language of painting. However, as mentioned, these artistic languages primarily revolve around explorations of form and color. After generations of continuous effort by artists, it seems that innovations within these two languages have reached their limit, making it increasingly unlikely to innovate within these confines. The language of materials has become a new breakthrough for innovation in painting language. The diversified involvement of materials in the creative practice of mixed-media painting enriches its linguistic form.

The involvement of materials in painting addresses the monotony previously seen in traditional painting's use of materials. Each material possesses unique properties, and if utilized by artists, its visual characteristics will be manifested on the canvas, resulting in what is known as texture (Djonov & Van, 2011). The creation of texture is

a crucial pictorial element in the language of materials. In traditional realistic oil paintings or Chinese paintings, the texture of the painting exists, such as when painters use oil paint to represent the texture of objects, creating special textural effects through the manipulation of thickness and brushstrokes. In mixed-media painting, similar methods of creating texture with oil painting materials still exist. On the other hand, various materials are applied to the canvas in numerous ways, with the materiality of these substances becoming an important component of the painting's texture, offering a more authentic representation and a different visual experience. Moreover, in traditional painting, the texture and material characteristics of depicted objects can be simulated using corresponding techniques, whereas in mixed-media painting, the materiality of real materials can serve as the subject of the canvas, unifying the entire painting under a coherent concept and directly participating in the conceptual expression of the work.



Figure 5.6. Warp Scroll, 40×60cm, 2021

For instance, as shared by Respondent 9, in Hu Yi's works, the artist was inspired by the scrolls in the Warp Scroll (see Figure 5.6) which were shared by respondent, leading to the creation of forms resembling arranged and stacked scrolls using Xuan paper. The stacking of Xuan paper scrolls and the dense background interact, exploring the existence and disappearance of civilization. The use of Xuan paper, a traditional Chinese paper known for its fine texture, strength, and durability, adds another layer of depth to this artwork. Xuan paper is typically used in Chinese ink and wash painting due to its ability to absorb and hold water and ink in a way that can produce a variety of tones and textures. In this artwork, the Xuan paper seems to have been manipulated to create highly textured, almost three-dimensional forms. The artist may have employed techniques such as folding, crumpling, or layering the Xuan paper to create the rugged, cliff-like vertical structures. The inherent qualities of Xuan paper provide a delicate contrast to the visual roughness and suggest a dialogue between the strength of the depicted forms and the delicate nature of the medium (Ozguner,2013). The choice of Xuan paper for this kind of mixed-media painting emphasizes the importance of the medium as an integral part of artistic expression. It shows respect for the traditional materials and techniques while also pushing the boundaries to explore new possibilities in texture and form. The historical connotations of Xuan paper, often associated with the elegance and subtlety of classical Chinese art, are recontextualized here in a contemporary framework, bridging past and present, and illustrating the evolution of materials in mixed-media art.

5.2.4 Material Reflecting the Spirit of the Times

Outstanding artists from both the East and West have utilized traditional painting materials to forge various styles and forms, which to this day, continue to exhibit a strong vitality, appealing to a wide creative community and audience. Prompted by the advancements of the three technological revolutions, human civilization has embarked on a new phase, unveiling a fresh visage. The incessant development of human civilization has imposed new demands on visual arts. In the narratives chronicling human civilization, terms such as the Neolithic Age, Paleolithic Age, and Bronze Age are frequently mentioned (Rudgley, 2000). This mode of naming underscores the significance of materials, with each era featuring its quintessential material characteristics, representing the unique contributions made to the advancement of human civilization. Extending this notion, each historical period is associated with its most emblematic and classical artistic styles and aesthetic traits. For instance, the mention of the Shang and Zhou dynasties conjures images of bronze art, the Tang dynasty evokes Tang poetry, and the Yuan dynasty recalls Yuan blue and white porcelain. Thus, when today becomes history, what terms will future generations use to describe our era? Respondent 15 believed that this should be the pursuit of every artist: to incessantly explore and search for the materials most suited and representative of our time for creation. The exploration of new materials in the practice of mixed media painting has blurred the boundaries between different types of painting, emphasizing the expression of multiple meanings and presenting a trend towards diversity, showcasing a uniqueness that transcends tradition. This diversity aligns more closely with the "pluralistic" direction of contemporary social and cultural development. The continual expansion of materials has become an important mode of expression in contemporary painting creation.

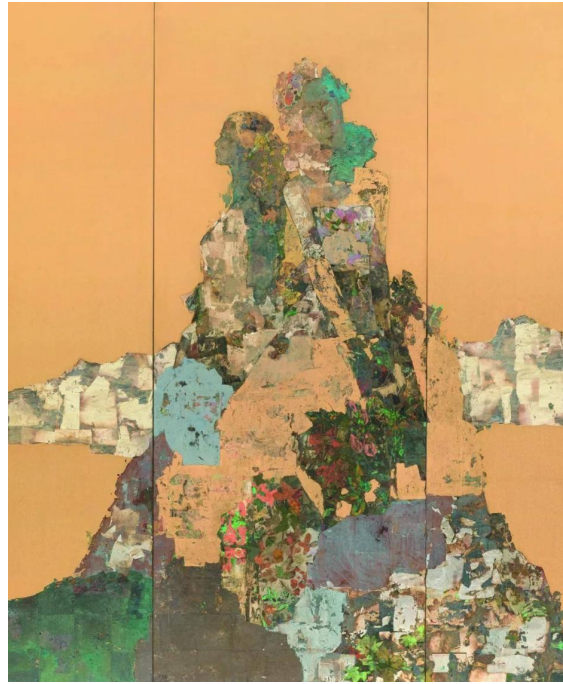


Figure 5.7. Spring will come, 232cm x 192cm, 2014

The choice and use of materials in Yang Yang's works are worthy of discussion. Yang Yang's artistic journey is marked by a profound engagement with the cultural and aesthetic dimensions of contemporary life, underpinned by her solid academic foundation and professional achievements. This artwork, “Spring Will Come” (Figure 5.7) presents a captivating blend of colors and textures that coalesce into an image evoking the essence of spring and renewal. The use of mixed media here is pronounced, with an array of materials that appear to be layered and possibly torn, creating a rich tapestry that seems to both emerge from and recede into the background's warm, monochromatic tone. In “Spring Will Come,” Yang Yang extends her exploration of mixed media to capture the essence of renewal, hope, and the cyclical nature of life. This artwork, emblematic of her reflective and innovative approach, encapsulates the anticipation of change and the beauty of transformation, themes that resonate deeply in the context of contemporary society's challenges and aspirations. In “Spring Will Come,” Yang Yang’s choice of materials goes beyond their physical attributes to embody the

spiritual and temporal transitions inherent in the concept of spring. The materials she selects are imbued with cultural and emotional significance, reflecting a collective longing for rejuvenation and new beginnings. This symbolic use of materials resonates with the contemporary ethos, where there is a heightened awareness of change and the possibilities that lie ahead.

The innovative use of mixed materials in “Spring Will Come” exemplifies the eclectic nature of contemporary art practice, which increasingly incorporates diverse elements to create rich, layered compositions. Yang Yang’s approach mirrors the spirit of our times, characterized by hybridity and the fusion of different cultural and artistic traditions. This diversity in materials and techniques aligns with the broader trends of globalization and cross-cultural exchange that define the contemporary era. The artwork’s thematic focus on the anticipation of spring reflects a universal theme of renewal relevant in any era but takes on particular resonance in the context of contemporary global challenges. Through her material choices and the resultant visual narrative, Yang Yang taps into a collective consciousness that yearns for recovery, growth, and optimism in the face of adversity. The materials used thus become a conduit for expressing and engaging with these universal themes, grounding the artwork in the specificities of the present moment.

5.2.5 Texture in the Aesthetic Language of Mixed Media Painting Through Materiality

The composition of a painting is formed by various formal elements. In prehistoric paintings, the primary elements were simple lines and basic colors. In subsequent types of painting, such as tempera, fresco, and oil painting, the main

elements constituting the image were form and color. This is not to say that texture was absent in the types of painting mentioned earlier; oil painters also utilized various tools to create different textural effects. However, in these genres, texture was a relatively insignificant component of the composition, attracting far less attention from artists compared to the imagery and color of the paintings. Starting with Cubism, as new materials began to be extensively explored in painting, painting concepts also started to change, and the role of textures created by materials of different qualities became increasingly prominent in the image. By the 1980s, some research began to focus on the issue of texture in paintings. Respondent 15 have mentioned: "Artists who dare to explore will embark on a journey to discover new textures with unique characteristics," highlighting the importance of texture in creation.

The development of visual arts cannot be separated from the role of materials, where the texture of materials primarily refers to their surface texture. Texture can effectively present the tactile quality of images and is an important component of a painting (Strickfaden & Vildieu, 2014). The juxtaposition of different materials that displays the tactile quality of the materials and the visual characteristics of the material surfaces can be referred to as texture. Analyzing the concept of texture literally, "Ji" relates to "skin," mainly referring to the surface layer of various materials, while "Li" refers to the texture of materials. Texture can be perceived visually as a tangible reality, with every material possessing certain textural effects.

This part will analyze texture on two levels of meaning: on the one hand, the inherent textural effects of material substances; on the other hand, the rich visual elements created by artists using various methods and tools based on the inherent texture of materials. Texture has become an important part of the visual language in contemporary painting. The continuous development of painting techniques and the

expanded use of various new materials have led artists to pay more attention to texture. The objective world as seen by artists differs from the natural world perceived by others. Artists employ various methods to represent the objective material world that enters their field of vision. The magical textures created by nature in the surrounding world become a primary source of textural beauty in the creation of their artworks. Textures are omnipresent in our living and natural environments, especially in mixed media paintings, where textures are visible everywhere (Haindl & Filip, 2013). Whether it is the natural textures found everywhere in life or the textural effects artists can create on the canvas, they possess undeniable aesthetic value for painting.

Texture, a basic component of traditional Chinese art, has been a focal area for a very long time. Ink wash paintings make use of texture to express many parts of the natural world. In modern mixed-media painting, the idea of texture, also known as "cun," which refers to the manipulation of ink to imitate the natural textures inherent in the environment, has been artistically altered in order to inject a feeling of physicality and tangibility into the work.

To produce works with a wide variety of textures, contemporary artists utilize a wide variety of materials, including cloth, sand, paper, and metal, which are stacked and manipulated in a variety of different ways. Because of the emphasis placed on texture, the piece of art now has a palpable and perceptible quality that encourages viewers to 'feel' the work rather than merely see' it. For instance, in Shi Guorui's photograms, the juxtaposition of the rough texture of the rice paper with the smooth, liquid quality of the photographic chemicals generates a fascinating contrast that evokes a feeling of otherworldliness and mystery. Figure 5.8 combines different types of composite material such as sand and metal to present the beauty of texture in the artworks.



Figure 5.8. Sunshine in my hand by (Fei Yining, 2022)

On the other hand, form has always been an important factor to examine in terms of aesthetics within the context of art history as a whole. The development of form has been crucial throughout history, beginning with the figurative forms of traditional Chinese art and continuing into the abstract forms of the contemporary age. In order to create a visual conversation between the past and the present, contemporary Chinese artists often use strategies such as incorporating, combining, or contrasting the many forms seen in their mixed-media works. The investigation of form that can be seen in the work of artists like Xu Bing is fascinating. His "Book from the Sky" is carved with thousands of characters, all of which, upon closer examination, are shown to be meaningless. This manipulation of form serves not just as a reflection on language and meaning but also as a challenge to standard conceptions of readability and understanding in the visual arts. Figure 58 shows the "Book from the Sky" overview look, and its content.

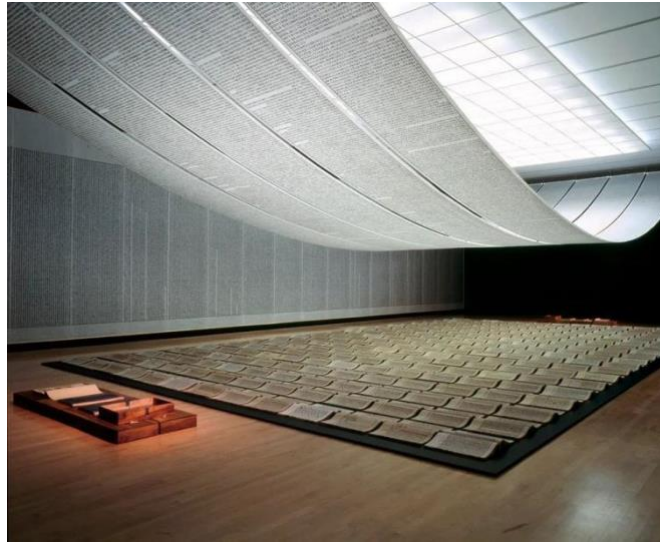


Figure 5.9. “Book from the Sky” overview look

Both natural and pictorial textures possess characteristics of randomness and serendipity, particularly evident when artists create pictorial textures. This serendipity often sparks the artist's passion for exploration, resulting in unique textural effects that lie between controllability and uncontrollability, unattainable by other singular expressive methods. These often impart a sense of natural perfection, offering viewers an infinitely expansive space for interpretation (Sarkar, & Blaney, 2023). Texture, with its inherent abstract beauty and tendency towards imagery, can guide viewers to fully engage their imagination, integrating imagined concepts into the artist's creation. At this point, the mode of perceiving and appreciating the artwork shifts from a singular, passive observation to an active, participatory engagement, characterized by emotional involvement. To some extent, viewers also partake in the artist's expression of the work, possessing a creative value, namely the embodiment of the aesthetic value of texture.

The surface texture and form of materials constitute their textural characteristics. Texture can reflect the tactile quality of objects, with all external characteristics of an object falling under the category of texture. Its presence continuously accentuates the

sensory elements of materials. In other words, any surface form of a material is its inherent texture, with different materials providing diverse visual experiences. Beyond their inherent spirituality, the unique surface texture of each object plays a significant role, representing the primary manifestation of differences between objects and reflecting the sensory elements of materials. The textural form of materials in artworks has a certain aesthetic value. When these textures are present in a painting, they must not only satisfy the visual perception of beauty but also guide the imagination based on visual perception, allowing for deeper engagement with the artwork and a richer aesthetic experience.

Differences exist between materials, each with its unique textural characteristics. In the creation of mixed media paintings, the methods for creating texture are incredibly diverse, depending on the materials used and the differences in the conceptual expression of the work. Artists must experiment extensively with materials, familiarize themselves with their properties, and then, leveraging their unique sensations and aesthetic awareness of materials, employ a combination of various material substances, tools, and a rich array of expressive techniques to create rich pictorial textures, conveying the artist's artistic pursuits (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999). Due to the diversity of choices, the creation of texture offers limitless possibilities. These textures are dynamic and vibrant, providing novel visual experiences and infinite imaginative space. The visual novelty and intrigue of textures can guide viewers to analyze and explore the compositional elements of the work, enhancing its readability and creating unique visual effects and thought-provoking atmospheres. Texture can play an unexpected role in the development and innovation of painting art, with texture and the work's conceptual expression organically integrating within the image. Choosing the appropriate texture effect can better express the theme.

In the realm of mixed media painting, artists experiment with various painting materials, gradually deriving related techniques for material use through this experimental process (Scurto et al., 2021). The synergy between materials and techniques can create rich textural effects, evoking diverse psychological responses, capable of expressing a wide range of emotions and thoughts. More directly, these textural effects enhance the intensity of artistic expression and can stimulate creativity. During creation, the textures in a painting can primarily be categorized into natural textures, artificial textures, and composite textures. Natural textures refer to the textural manifestations of natural substances found in the environment, such as the textures of leaves, stones, and the grain of wood. These textures are not manufactured by the artist; rather, when artists incorporate such textures into their works, it demonstrates a discerning eye and an adoption principle. They discover natural textures that align with their artistic concepts and incorporate them into their paintings as part of the expression. Many people today, living in bustling cities, yearn for a return to nature and harbor a deep longing for the natural world. The use of natural material textures can allow individuals to experience the marvels of nature amidst their busy lives, inducing a relaxed state of mind, and producing unexpected effects when used in paintings.

Artificial textures are those created by artists in response to the needs of the painting, through continuous experimentation and independent thought, employing various materials and corresponding tools and techniques. Compared to natural textures, artificial textures possess a degree of randomness and unpredictability, often resulting in unexpected and vivid pictorial effects. However, I believe that this randomness is not absolute. At this point, it is crucial to balance randomness with scientificity, ensuring that the creation of artificial textures is beneficial to the overall expression of the

painting, navigating between controllability and uncontrollability in a way that favors the cohesive aesthetic of the work.



Figure 5.10. Window of the Great Country, 240 x 180cm, 2017

Composite texture, as the name suggests, integrates the effects of the two aforementioned textures within a painting, focusing on the interplay between them. In the works of Li Shuai of “Window of the Great Country” as shared by Respondent 15, for instance, the natural texture of plant materials and textures created through various brushstrokes and other materials are seamlessly combined within the canvas, enhancing the expressiveness of the image. In the process of creating mixed media paintings, the effect on the canvas is often not limited to a single type of texture. Artists always strive to create sufficiently rich effects on the canvas to express their artistic concepts, making the classification of textures often irrelevant in practice.

Texture can also be analyzed from another perspective: representational texture, abstract texture, and imaginal texture. Representational texture can be understood in two ways: first, the use of natural textures inherent to some natural materials; second, artists creating effects similar to natural textures through various methods or artificially modifying natural textures. The direct utilization of natural textures can showcase the

material beauty of the substances themselves, while artificially created textures can make textures more controllable, beneficial for the expression of the artwork. Abstract texture, in contrast to representational texture, does not focus on mimicking reality; it does not depict any real objects from the texture itself, presenting only the material's tactile qualities, thickness, linearity, size, roughness, or smoothness as formal aspects. Imaginal texture lies between abstract and representational textures. Artists might mimic real objects in their creation but avoid too direct a depiction. From imaginal texture, one can discern the realism of objects, yet this realism differs from that of representational texture, existing between likeness and unlikeness, thus more profoundly stirring the viewer's emotional experience. Therefore, the imaginary texture exhibits greater inclusivity. The realism of representational texture, the formality of abstract texture, and the emotive function of imaginal texture do not have clear boundaries in their function within a painting, with possible functional transformations. Representational texture also contains formal elements; it, along with abstract texture, can convey emotions, and the creation of imaginal texture must also consider the dual meanings of form and shape. These categories interpenetrate based on their distinctions, collectively playing a role in the creative process.

Whether it's natural, artificial, composite, representational, abstract, or imaginal textures, these classifications allow artists to demonstrate more layered creativity and provide viewers with stronger readability. When appreciating mixed media paintings, the richness of texture offers a deeper visual experience. From various mixed media painting exhibitions, it's evident that the emphasis on texture, along with themes, forms, and colors, has become an indispensable part of the image, jointly undertaking tasks such as theme expression and atmosphere creation. The fundamental reason for this

development lies in the diversity of materials within the painting, enriching the aesthetic experience and inviting active viewer engagement with the work's nuanced expressions.

5.2.6 Influence of Material Choices on Visual and Symbolic Dimension

Materiality, as a component of artistic creation, is vital not only for the physical process of creation but also for the aesthetic and symbolic dimensions of an artwork. With this recognition, we delve deeper into the subject by examining the practices of two globally renowned contemporary Chinese artists, Cai Guo-Qiang and Ai Weiwei. These case studies, drawn primarily from "Spreading Seeds: Ai Weiwei's Sunflower Seeds and His Performative Personality Received in the West" (Wu, 2017), along with other scholarly sources, provide concrete examples of the influence of materiality on visual aesthetics and symbolic interpretations.

Cai Guo-Qiang's practice offers a compelling exploration of the integration of traditional and contemporary materials. Renowned for his gunpowder drawings and 'explosion events', his work is a testament to the power of innovative material use in crafting a distinct artistic language. The aesthetic and symbolic weight of his choice of gunpowder - a material deeply rooted in Chinese history - is significant. Invented in China, gunpowder has been used historically for a myriad of purposes, from medicinal and mystical uses to applications in warfare.



Figure 5.11. Cai Guo-Qiang's Gunpowder Paintings

Aesthetically, gunpowder allows Cai to create artworks that embody dynamism, expansiveness, and a degree of unpredictability. The process, which involves carefully arranging gunpowder on the canvas and igniting it, culminates in a spontaneous energy release that leaves indelible marks on the canvas. This technique results in abstract landscapes, celestial scenes, and narrative compositions, all characterized by the volatile energy of the material.

The aesthetic qualities of Cai's gunpowder artworks extend beyond the visual. The ephemeral moment of ignition, the release of smoke, and the residual traces left on the canvas all contribute to a multisensory experience. The smell of burnt gunpowder, the tactile evidence of the explosion, and the auditory memory of the ignition event are integral to the audience's perception and understanding of his work. The sensory dimensions of his practice underscore the material's capacity to engage viewers on multiple levels, reinforcing the aesthetic potency of his unique medium.

Symbolically, the use of gunpowder in Cai's art offers an array of interpretations. The destructive yet transformative power of gunpowder echoes themes of life, death,

creation, and destruction - the duality that is a defining aspect of human existence. His work encapsulates the paradoxical tension between chaos and control, each explosion a carefully orchestrated event that harnesses a volatile natural force. Furthermore, the use of gunpowder carries associations with China's historical and contemporary realities, symbolizing its ancient technological prowess, its military history, and its rise as a global power.

Turning to Ai Weiwei, we encounter an artist whose material choices range from traditional ceramics and reclaimed wood to everyday objects and ready-made items. His diverse material use reflects his expansive artistic practice, which encompasses sculpture, installation, architecture, photography, and film. Aesthetically, Ai's material choices allow for extensive experimentation with visual forms and spatial arrangements. His installation works often present a powerful visual impact, the sheer scale of which demands attention. The piece 'Sunflower Seeds' (Figure 5.11), comprising millions of hand-painted porcelain seeds, forms a vast gray carpet when seen from a distance, but upon closer examination, each seed is revealed to be unique, handcrafted by artisans in Jingdezhen, China's porcelain capital.



Figure 5.12. Ai Weiwei's Sunflower Seeds, Tate Modern

Such use of materials opens up a wide spectrum of aesthetic experiences for viewers, invoking contemplation about mass production, labor, individuality, and cultural heritage. Ai's work underscores the potential of materials to communicate complex narratives and themes visually, leading audiences to question established perceptions and engage in a deeper dialogue with the work. Ai's choice of materials also plays a crucial role in his powerful societal and political commentaries. His use of ancient pottery and reclaimed wood serves as a link to China's cultural heritage, stimulating discourse about authenticity, value, memory, and the erasure of history in the face of rapid modernization. In contrast, his use of everyday objects like backpacks or bicycles often stands as a metaphor for the experiences of ordinary people, shedding light on social issues and critiquing injustices. His material selections, therefore, function as a cornerstone of his socio-political commentary, pushing the boundaries of art's communicative potential.

5.3 Exploring Materiality and Spirituality in the Essence of Mixed Material Paintings

5.3.1 Material's Spirituality in Mixed-Material Painting

Respondent 1 shared : Heidegger, in "The Pursuit of Things," writes, "'What is a thing' equals 'Who is a person'. The basis of materiality is that which is proven to be the most direct reality of an artwork. 'A thing is materialized form'." The properties of materials reflected in the language of paintings created by artists include the intrinsic attributes and objective characteristics of the material itself. In painting, the manifestation of material encompasses the entire material world, the objects referenced in the painting, and the material mediums used in the painting. The spiritual quality represented by material materials, due to the diverse cultural backgrounds of different regions, possesses its relative uniqueness, and the blending of different cultural messages endows them with a certain universality. The unique and the universal are mutually permeable, similar to the unification of individual spirit and the collective macro manifestation of spirituality. Thus, we can view paintings as material entities created by different subjects in the macro world.

In our experiential world of existence, belief and spirit are deeply embedded within the material world. Philosophers such as Lucretius, Aristotle, Spinoza, and Santayana have all discussed the relationship between the world and the self, proposing that the origin of the world is the womb of the self's spirit (Christensen, 1999; Say, 2016). Heidegger once said: "In dialects, what speaks differently is the place, that is, the earth. And the mouth is not merely an organ on a body represented as an organism but rather the body and the mouth both belong to the earth's surging and growth (Heidegger, 2017). We, who are to die, grow from this surging and growth of the earth,

from where we gain our foundational stability." At the same time, Respondent 2's thoughts aligned with this philosophy while he shared that, Santayana views us as entrapped in an irrational world, with our roots planted in the material world; human thoughts and concepts all stem from the protections granted by materials where "All those names or symbols that can be regarded as objects of faith in human experience fundamentally point to material" (Moreno, 2015).

Material is the only entity in the universe, possessing immense energy and serving as the incarnation of artistic practitioners. Respondent 4's societal belief is aligned with "Antoni Tàpies, where he believed that painting should become an object, an object carrying the artist's thoughts, like a charged load, whose waves, upon touch by the sensitive, spontaneously evoke emotions. (Hartzenberg, 1994)" In the creation process of mixed media painting, material serves as the field itself for the artist's intellectual practice; we can view the language essence of this genre as materiality. Any material can become a medium or carrier for the painting language, expressing the spiritual direction of the artwork. In mixed media painting, the artist's "referent" exists because of the medium material, with the blend of material and spirit forming the core of mixed media painting. The tangible qualities of material trigger the physical senses of the viewer, while the unique life essence of the materials fosters an emotional fusion between the artist and the audience. Materials, while externally adorning the artwork, also shape its vitality through their physical properties and the spiritual qualities they manifest. The unity between the artist's inner emotions and the inherent spirit of the constituted materials, containing life messages, often implies a deep, indirect meditation constructed through the language of materiality.

5.3.2 Uniting Individuality, Universality, Spirituality, and Transcendence

A. Expression of Individual Spirit

Respondent 6 said: "If you give a hundred artists the same material to create with, you will undoubtedly receive a hundred unique, completely different works. This is because the soul of each artwork is the artist themselves." The birth of an artwork stems from the creator, with artists possessing unique accumulations of emotions and life experiences, reflecting their dialogue with the world (Grey, 2017). Artworks are not uniform; if art becomes entirely identical, it would only indicate the loss of the original soul of art. The evolution of an artist's thought requires specific art forms for its manifestation and expression. With the passage of time, the demeanor displayed by artworks grows or dramatically transforms to seek a sublimation of the soul. Outstanding paintings are inevitably derived from life but distinct from the commonplace, bearing their own vivid artistic characteristics. A comprehensive analysis from the perspective of painting history, extracting deep and positive contexts of painting creation, mostly will embody the unique artistic spirit of the artist.

As Respondent 6 shared by taking Kandinsky as an example, the book "The Spirit in Art" was proposed against a specific social background (Selz, 1957). At the time, he was deeply influenced by the transition from traditional to contemporary art fields, with significant changes in the era prompting revolutionary progress in art forms, moving beyond history to exhibit new individual manifestations. This aligns with his pyramid theory, where individuals of high energy cognition constantly push the pyramid upwards. Painting should no longer be the unconscious naturalism of the majority but should rather focus on exploring the inner spirit through the external world, pursuing the spiritual essence of art beneath the material veil. Under his concept,

abstract painting proliferated into advanced internal art forms within the art movement. This creative spirit, through random abstraction, detaches from material to eliminate non-essential aspects of objects, opting to create a pure spiritual form between symbols and spirit, to "deliberately stir the human soul" achieving a spiritual value approaching perfection. Great painters should embody 'individuality,' 'temporal factors,' and 'pure and eternal art elements.' The imprint of time and individuality runs through all people, nations, and eras, discarding the constraints of space and time. In Kandinsky's era, abstract art was a potent form to express his unique artistic spirit. Sublime artists need to utilize appropriate art forms under the choice of self-consciousness to express themselves, where works must embody a pure internal language to reflect the spirit of the age, discarding the stereotypical behavior of art for art's sake, and instead, pursue a deep quest for inner resonance.

Kandinsky's stance and his era led him to choose abstractism. From Kandinsky's perspective, material and spirit are separated into a mind-body dualism, an inner spiritual essence under natural forms. In our current realm of mixed media painting, material has birthed different meanings and roles. Material no longer merely refers to the mechanical realistic imitation of natural objective things, nor achieves artistic effect through superficial, transient stimuli. In mixed media painting, material represents an expression with infinite possibilities, material language, and medium, aiming for a more free, pure, and vital articulation of the artist's spirituality. The physical properties of materials determine the active domain of the artist's creation and produce unique artistic characteristics. The artist's creativity and imagination in creation are also somewhat limited by materials, thus also sparking the emergence of different unique works.

In summary, situated in today's more diverse world, the artistic spirit of different creative subjects carries their unique individual concepts. Development offers infinite

possibilities to artistic forms, regardless of the era, the artistic spirit of artists is always based on the desire to reflect the self and engage in dialogue with the contemporary world. Any form is an equal choice under the artist's own needs, using appropriate forms to transform their art into spiritual reality, "Only freedom can encompass all future life."

B. Expression of Individual Spirit

The unique spirit of individuals and their connection to the cosmic origin evoke contemplation of the universal spirit, or "spirituality." Our activities in the material world underscore the primacy of action, fundamentally representing the infinite possibilities of human action. The spirituality of mixed media painting language encompasses the unity of the artist's spiritual heritage and transcendence. The concept of spirituality is not the transmission of some personal experience, morality, or notion. It should represent profound wisdom from a macro perspective on life's calm contemplation (Lin et al., 2016). Thus, the relationship between individual spirit and universal spirituality is dialectically unified and interwoven.

Artists of mixed media paintings have always believed in focusing their perspective on life observation, continuously discerning the meaning of truth from their perceptions, thereby better sustaining their actions without limits. Santayana often stated, "Regardless of whether it's physical or spiritual, the amount of symbolic knowledge and value we can obtain in this world is not important. What matters is the actions we undertake in this world." I recall a lesson where: "The formal language of art can be taught, and form can be discussed and clarified, but spirituality, materiality, humanity, etc., cannot be clearly articulated with language, and individual situations vary. In academia, teachers can only impart formal language to some extent. Expressing

the innermost through 'entropy reduction' requires diligent effort, as the ancients said, "Learning without thought is labor lost!" This "spirituality" does not become a limitation or a rule; it represents the sedimentation of spiritual awareness and reflection, which cannot be transmitted or experienced through teaching alone. This spiritual heritage and transcendence's unity core lies in our practice and actions between the material essence of the universe.



Figure 5.13. Inspiration from Nature Series No. 3, 80cm x 80cm, 2002

For example, the extensive body of work created throughout Zhang Yuan's life can be seen as the action and thought process of his entire artistic life. Zhang Yuan is an artist who navigates the interplay between traditional Chinese aesthetics and contemporary artistic practices. His "Inspiration from Nature Series No. 3" (Figure 62)

crafted in 2002, stands as a testament to his contemplative dialogue with the natural world and the ways in which it intersects with human perception and experience. This work is a culmination of Zhang's observations and meditations on the essence of nature, reflecting a profound wisdom that transcends the personal to touch upon the universal. Zhang Yuan's artwork represents the convergence of his spiritual heritage—a deep respect for the natural world as conceived in traditional Chinese philosophy—with a transcendental vision that elevates this heritage into the realm of universal spirituality. The mixed-media elements he incorporates serve as metaphors for the layers of human consciousness and the interconnection between the individual spirit and the cosmic origin. The spirituality evident in Zhang's work is non-didactic and eschews straightforward moral or experiential transmission. Instead, it is an evocation—a call to the viewer to engage in their own reflective journey. The visual language employed in the piece speaks to a quiet contemplation, a meditative state that invites the audience to contemplate the universal spirit within the microcosm of their individual experiences.

The painting presented appears to be an abstract work, where vibrant and contrasting colors blend into each other, creating a dynamic and emotionally charged scene. The artist's individual spirit is palpably expressed through the brushstrokes, color choices, and the overall mood of the piece. In this artwork, the artist seems to explore the vast and tumultuous nature of the sea or a similarly fluid environment. The use of blue tones, varying from deep to light, alongside the contrasting sandy yellow, conveys a natural scene – possibly the intersection of water and land, or the depths of the ocean being illuminated by a source of light from above. There is a clear contrast between darkness and light, tumult and tranquility within the painting. This could signify the artist's personal conflicts or the universal human experience of navigating through darkness towards light. The artist's spirit is resilient, enduring the chaos and seeking

peace, a journey that many can relate to on a spiritual level. The painting's abstract form allows for an expression that goes beyond literal representation and seems to invite contemplation on deeper, more introspective themes.



Figure 5.14. “Phenomena and Perception B, renamed Relationships”, 1968/2022

While Respondent 7 have shared, "Mono-ha" artist Lee Ufan proposed the return to the originality of human artistic creation sparked by the primordial nature of materials. He believed that artistic creation should follow the original properties of materials, conforming to the development laws of things to unveil the veil of universal concepts. From the macro perspective of universal spirit, whether singular or plural, a value-oriented stance cannot fully reveal the truth of life. Figure 63 shows “Phenomena

and Perception B, renamed Relationships”, one of an artwork from series of works where stones are placed on glass surfaces. These installations often capture the reflection of the surrounding environment on the glass, creating a picture-within-a-picture effect with the stones positioned atop. In this artwork, Li collaborates with others to elevate a stone to a specific height before dropping it onto the glass, resulting in a web of cracks that dialogues anew with the exhibition space's floor and the stones themselves.

Li Ufan's process involves the careful selection and placement of stones, focusing on the visual relationships forged between objects and their spatial context, as well as between objects themselves. In doing so, the artist recedes to the same level as the materials he employs, such as stones and steel plates, thereby becoming a participant in the interactive network these relationships create. This approach resonates with Li's emphasis on the bodily aspect of 'breath,' suggesting an intuitive connection between the physical engagement with materials and the creation of space. The arrangement of these objects naturally delineates a new domain, offering spectators varied experiences and perceptions as they view the works from different vantage points. Through presenting unprocessed natural materials, Li invites viewers to shed preconceived notions and definitions of the objects, thereby enabling them to adopt fresh perspectives and insights into the world around them. This strategy not only redefines the viewer's engagement with the material world but also underscores the transformative power of art in altering our perception of the natural state. This has aligned with Respondent 8 thoughts: “As life is an infinite and eternal realm, artists need to perceive the essence of life in a transcendent way of individual spirit, not to judge, but to observe everything distantly, understanding the relationship between humans and their spirit with the

universe. Isn't this pursuit, devoid of any stray thoughts, the return to the universal spirit, "spirituality"? ”

(3) Spirit and Spirituality

In contemplating the relationship between spirit and spirituality, I believe "Spirit and Spirituality" aptly captures their complex and profound coexistence. This book delves into life and death, the body and the soul—two significant questions of human existence (Fuller, 2008). It touches upon human nature discussions found in different religions and cultural comprehensions, being both traditional and transcendent, encapsulating the eternal truth humanity continually seeks. Throughout the book, I observed the author's myriad of personal ideas alongside a holistic and macroscopic vision of life. This wisdom transcends time and space, being conceptual yet surpassing mere concepts. Perhaps as a painter's mind, I was not captivated by individual quotes during my reading. Instead, I was immersed in the rhythm of the entire book, which, like a complete painting, draws one into contemplation. Fragmented records create a subtle and uniquely artistic expression of the mystique of "Spirit and Spirituality." This essence evokes in one mixed media painting descriptors such as scattering, deconstruction, displacement, switching, symbolism, fantasy, and detachment. The frequency of life forms a slowly pure warm current, a relentless power circulating within one's spirit. The author does not impose concepts on spirit and spirituality but captures the essence of the entire book's language.

Respondent 9 said: "The ultimate purpose of art is to focus on the construction of spirituality, the pursuit of beauty, goodness, the ultimate meaning of humanity and life. Only art established on a universal human foundation that transcends time, class, and the individual can attain eternal vitality." The existence of spirit relies on

consciousness, formed under the development of consciousness, while I prefer to interpret spirituality as a higher product of spiritual development, a further step of spirit guided by rational thought towards the essence of humanity. Spirituality is the source of humanity's ultimate meaning, the unity of human spirit and cognition. It is an endless, standardless wisdom of life awareness based on "existence," more comprehensive and eternal compared to consciousness and spirit but also intertwined with them.

In Nietzsche's philosophical world, Nietzsche cherished life. If past sufferings made life feel despair and confusion, finding and nourishing new beliefs could give one the courage to continue living, and these new nutrients become new values (Fink, 2003). In Nietzsche's world, life always achieves its desired elevation through the evolution of values to find the meaning of existence. For Santayana, a healthy life requires us to strive and run forward. Courage emanates from the subject's inner source, not needing new values to gain courage (Santayana, 2017). Any values and judgments become labels that block part of the vision and produce bias, and bias never represents any truth but is fleeting. Respondent 10 shared: "Under immortal forms, every age has an equal past and an equal future, and the tastes and ambitions of our time cannot be taken seriously. Everything urges us to see human affairs with a scientific, realist, biological perspective, as things rise from the material kingdom as they are, with a spiritual refraction."

Life is more of a transfer to humanity, requiring rational enlightenment and confrontation. The practice unfolded by life itself is not about suppressing one force with another or replacing one idea with another. It is about gaining one's own enlightenment after contemplating and connecting with every moment of natural life experiences and then resonating and sublimating with other natural lives in continuous

comprehensive progress, generating the power of profound love in the unity of knowledge and action, heart to heart.

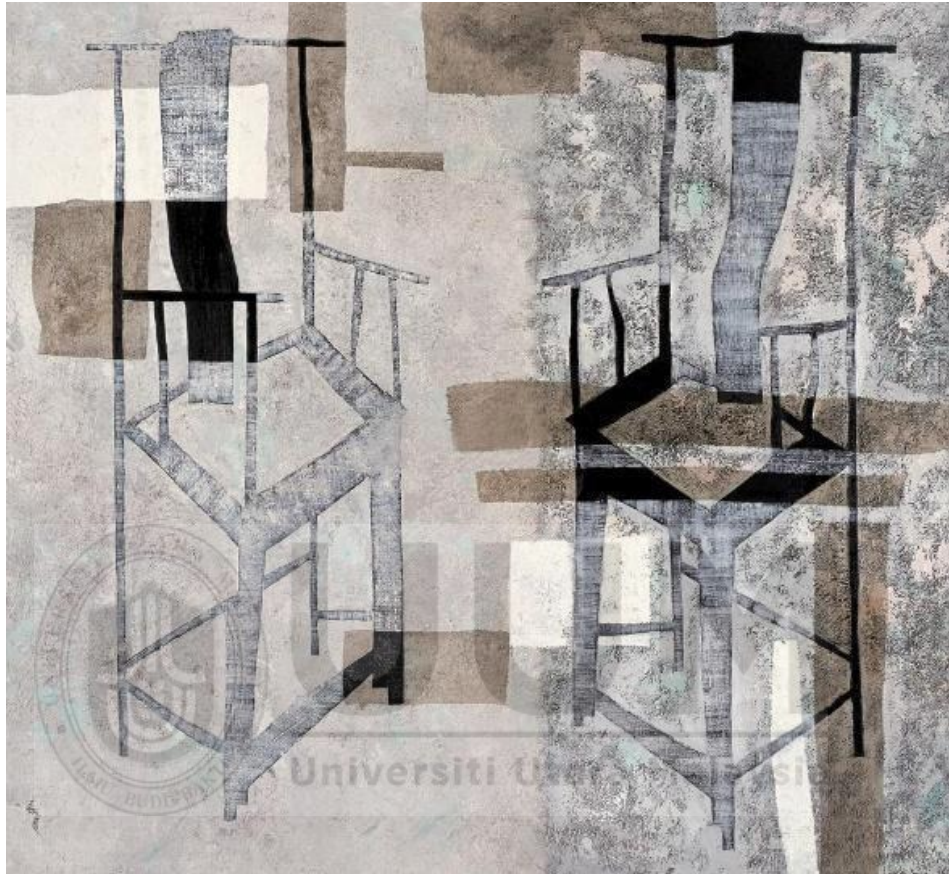


Figure 5.15. *Relative Sound*, 130,5 cm x 143.5cm, 1992

Figure 5.14 is an artwork that exemplifies the complexities and profound relationship between spirit and spirituality. This piece employs a visual language rich in abstract forms and suggestive of architectural elements, perhaps chairs, and other structures, which are arranged in a manner that seems both deliberate and arbitrary, echoing the human effort to impose order on the chaos of existence. In this artwork, the fragmented forms—reminiscent of chairs or architectural elements—hover in a state of suspension or collapse, speaking to the duality of creation and deconstruction, presence and absence. These forms, while suggesting stability and human-made order, are

abstracted to a point where they verge on the edge of recognition and ambiguity. This could be seen as a visual metaphor for the spiritual search for meaning within the chaos of existence, reflecting a Zen-like acceptance of the impermanence of all constructs, whether physical or conceptual.

The chairs, traditionally symbols of rest and human activity, are transformed into something otherworldly in Huaiqing's work. This transformation could represent the transition from the material to the spiritual realm, a theme often explored in Taoist philosophy. The fragmented nature of the chairs and their placement within the piece evoke a sense of harmony amidst dissonance, a core aspect of spirituality where seeming opposites coexist and inform one another, much like the Taoist concept of Yin and Yang. Moreover, the abstract nature of the work invites a contemplative state, echoing the philosophical notion that true understanding comes from within. The lack of explicit imagery prompts viewers to seek their own spiritual reflections and meanings, offering an internal space for personal contemplation and introspection. The spirit of the artwork, then, lies not just in its visible form but in the space it creates for spiritual dialogue. It challenges the observer to consider the essence of existence beyond the physical and to reflect on the cycles of life and the perpetual flow of energy that underpins the universe. The visual rhythm of the piece, akin to a silent melody, can be interpreted as the 'sound' of the relative—a play on the idea that our understanding and experiences are relative to our position within the cosmic tapestry.

From this, it can be seen that if the relationship between spirit and spirituality is likened to the relationship between individuality and universality, then only by stepping out of the self-interpreted ego category and displaying the emotionally unified and sublimated form of humanity can eternal life be attained. This transcends all values and evaluative labels, stripping away mental impurities and intuitively deeply approaching

eternity with a calm and rational attitude towards life. This concerns the common destiny of the entire nation and all humanity, constituting the artist's responsibility and duty. Departing from one-sided and biased self-interpretation to deeply pursue the unity and eternity of life is inevitable. If the ultimate liberation of humanity is regarded as the liberation of humanity, then the art world is certainly being liberated towards a completely free form and spirit. This liberation encompasses not only metaphysical spiritual liberation but also a deep pursuit of humanity's place within the mysteries of the natural world. Reflecting the essence of life and the truth of human nature on the objective basis of the natural world, it stems from life and is the artist's profound study and understanding of ontology, compensating for the imperfect and unattractive aspects of life. This creative compensation is a perfected beauty expressed by art through reasonable imagination. The artist casts the form of the work with their soul, giving it a spirited and vivid essence, capturing the vitality inherent to life. The art form, through the artist's spiritual temperament, displays the character of life, and it is precisely because of this soulful program and state of being that eternal and pure immortal works can be created.

5.3.3 Spirit in the Dialectics of Subject, Object, and Rational Life Awareness

Respondent 11 once said, "We never view anything in isolation. Instinctively, we are aware of all its connections. Everything exists in ambiguity, everything is unclear. It's impossible to exhaust the study of one realm without exhausting the entire world."

Whether it's mixed media painting or other forms of painting or even other art forms, their inception cannot be separated from the contemplation of subject and object.

After grasping the individual and universal aspects of spirit and spirituality, the relationship between human subjectivity and objects is also a key consideration in the study of the spirituality of mixed media painting language. Many attribute the development of painting history to the rise of human subjectivity, with the traditional depiction of objects transforming into a recognition of subject as a significant breakthrough in painting value. A video through literatures surveying sparked my contemplation on the subject and object: "Descartes believed 'How I think about the world' is most important, shifting the focus from external objects to the human interior, grounding philosophy in the metaphysical 'I think, therefore I am.' This made humans the absolute subject, and the world the object of my thoughts; Kant believed 'How I understand the world' is most important, reversing the subject-object relationship, arguing that human cognition of the world is limited by innate forms of cognition, such as memory and experience. The essence of the world is 'What kind of world can I know?' not 'What is the world?', further strengthening human subjectivity; Nietzsche believed 'How I interpret the world' is most important, redefining the subject-object relationship with visualism. He proposed: 'There are no truths, only interpretations.' Everything is from the human perspective. In this shift, the object no longer matters, the subject 'I' is most important." Indeed, the subject is very important, but is the object truly unimportant?

In our contemplation of the individual and universal aspects of spirit and spirituality, we mentioned "If the relationship between spirit and spirituality is likened to the relationship between individuality and universality. Then only by moving beyond the self-interpreted ego, showcasing a form of emotion that unites and sublimates humanity, can eternal life be achieved." Therefore, if we consider the subject as the artist and the object as material, we can further think that in the language of mixed

media painting, the relationship between subject and object is a dialectical one, without a hierarchy of importance. Mixed media painting is a combination of subject and object, individuality and universality, the hidden and the manifest. The world is a viewpoint-free, right-or-wrong-free amalgamation, enveloping the grand nature of the universe, a living body of countless spirits and viewpoints developed and combined. We can realize this viewpoint in further argumentation.

In contemplation of life, Plato used a supernatural direction to explain spirituality (Wynn, 2013). Hegel proposed that spirit is affirmed as free on the opposite side of material. This idea undoubtedly distances from material and natural life, hanging high and detached, so far from our real world of existence (Verene, 2012). Santayana does not believe in divine fiction and detachment from reality. If material is considered the essence of existence, then morals and concepts are reflections of spiritual reality. For the creative subject in painting, the interpretation of spirituality should not be an empirical conveyance or other state of free viewpoints but should focus on rational contemplation of practical actions in the material world, which is the integration of subject and object we mentioned.

In ancient Eastern philosophy and the Zen world, spirituality is a "transcendental" spiritual contemplation, not completely detaching human consciousness from the material world but deeply rooted in life, rational wisdom free from all common desires and emotions (Pandey, 2023). The ultimate goal of such spirituality is always to better integrate with the object world, transcending all values and evaluative labels, stripping away mental impurities and biases to intuitively practice life deeply, approaching eternity infinitely with a calm and rational attitude toward life. This flash of spiritual meaning in life is to break away from the spirit supremacy viewpoint, born from contemplation and enlightenment in the process of intuitive

practical action. Unlike solipsism's limited preconception, it carries infinite possibilities and vitality, always ready to return to the source of life. The essence of life lies in the contemplation of various practical actions unfolded by life itself, never an escape or release from material existence.



Figure 5.16. *Seven Chairs*, 307cm x 176cm, 1984

Figure 65 represents one of the artwork of Antoni Tàpies that shared by Respondent 3, his work "Revealing Existence through Nothingness", expresses his focus on humanity within the human world, the harmony of life and the universe, and contemplation on socio-cultural innovation, where one . In his painting practice, he actively seeks the truth of life and its meaning, analyzing and understanding the mutual influence and connection between himself, the people, and the nation in all aspects. He insists on contributing to transforming the world through art, with most of his works reflecting the pain caused by the brutality of war, expressing a strong desire to rescue suffering humanity from agony. He considers the compositional elements of his paintings as spiritual symbols. The objects in his works, symbolizing human bodies and ready-made material items, present the intrinsic connection between humans and the

material world, with the texture of materials directly affecting the quality and implications of the images. He believed, "In our view, the East has discovered some attitudes that are both spiritual and materialistic in a unified manner, much more precise and credible than those old beliefs of our tradition that separate God from the world, spirit from flesh." The artwork focuses on national society, art innovation, has a sense of responsibility and moral conscience with an anxious spirit, and contemplates the origin of the world. Using imagination to create seemingly random discarded items, these abandoned objects, forgotten by time and life, narrate the bygone eternity and the rebirth of life awareness. The intent is to blend human spirit with the true essence of existence, thereby expressing "profound philosophy" and "the unfathomable universe."



Figure 5.17. The Other Side of the Sea No.31

In Tang Chenhua's work "The Other Side of the Sea No.31", we find a poignant exploration of spirit and spirituality, particularly within the dialectics of subject, object, and rational life awareness. This piece does not view humanity and the world as dichotomous but rather as interconnected realms where the material and spiritual coalesce and converse. In "The Other Side of the Sea No.31," Tang Chenhua employs a language of mixed media to convey this interplay between the subjective interpretation of the artist and the objective existence of materials. The work serves as a platform where the subject—the artist—engages with the object—both the material used and the subject matter itself. Through this interaction, Tang emphasizes the importance of the object; it is not something to be dismissed or seen as secondary to the subject's experience. Instead, it is an integral part of the dialogue that forms the essence of the artwork.

As we consider the artwork in the context of life's rational contemplation, we see that Tang does not detach from the material reality of the world. The materials—perhaps representing the sea, the earth, and the natural elements—resonate with the tangible aspects of existence. Yet, there's an evident push towards a higher meaning, a spiritual resonance that transcends the physicality of the media. In this, Tang aligns with Eastern philosophy and Zen principles, where spirituality is deeply embedded in life's rational wisdom, unshackled from common desires and emotions. "The Other Side of the Sea No.31" might be viewed as an intuitive practice of life, where Tang strips away biases and mental impurities to present a vision of existence that approaches eternity. This vision is not limited by solipsistic tendencies; instead, it is ripe with infinite possibilities and the vitality of life. It is a return to the source, a spiritual grounding in the contemplation and enlightenment derived from the interaction of

materials and artistic expression. Tang's piece thus resonates deeply with the essence of life as conceived in rational action and thought. It is not an escapism from material existence but an affirmation of it, a celebration of the dialectical unity of subject and object, and the integration of human consciousness within the fabric of the world. The artwork is a meditation on the myriad actions unfolded by life itself, capturing the spirit of human existence and its continuous search for deeper meaning.

Hence, spirituality is the further guidance of humanity towards its essence under the premise of rational thought and integration, developed from the spirit of consciousness. It is a source and growth towards the ultimate meaning of humanity with infinite variation and development. It is not just metaphysical spiritual liberation but also a deep pursuit of the mysteries of the objective world where humanity resides. Spirituality does not entirely detach human consciousness from science and the world itself but is a more foundational material force deeply rooted in life, a dialectical unity of subject and object, rational wisdom free.

5.3.4 Spiritual Themes in Contemporary Mixed-Material Art Reflecting Past and Present

Materiality is indispensable to the essence of observation before the symbolization of thought processing, serving as the origin of life's positive and proactive actions (Clutterbuck, 2024). Santayana notes, "If the organism of life can function well, then it will achieve a continuous existence in time through intuition of the essence related to it; however, without some oscillation, it's hard to continue existing, and this oscillation is very likely to be a rapid demise" (Santayana, 1918). The "rapid demise" mentioned undoubtedly refers to human intuition, where human's initial

recognition is swiftly structured upon human faith in the form of symbols, and this cessation of progress represents a terrifying demise. Santayana further suggests that humanity can unlock multiple perspectives of conception through a contemplative life. "The Life of Reason" refers to contemplative life as "spirituality," meaning the suspension of human thought's understanding of mundane things. Following the macroscopic "suspension" of thought, a deep reflective dimension is engaged, avoiding prejudiced and emotionally impolite frenzy. Like the ancient spirit of "Tao" and the wisdom of Zen, "suspension" is not an aloof detachment from material supremacy but rather a spiritual descent interwoven with the material world (Olson, 2000). Therefore, the spirituality of mixed media painting language is our deep contemplation existing within life itself, referring to the spiritual power of human awakening and struggle within the material world.

(i) Eternal Echoes in the Hallways of Time



Figure 5.18. History Book Series, 270cm x 70cm, 2006

In "Eternal Echoes in the Hallways of Time," the "History Book Series" becomes a spiritual odyssey through the corridors of the past, where the echoes of ancestral voices reverberate into the present. Each page and image Chen Xinmao selects is not merely a relic but a vessel carrying the timeless whispers of the sages, the silent roars of battles long ended, and the hushed confessions of love that shaped civilizations. The artwork likely integrates historical texts or imagery, aligning with the material presence of history as a tangible force. Yet, it transcends mere documentation by invoking the collective memory and spirit of the times depicted. This series might represent the oscillation between the past and the present, as Santayana suggests, where the intuitive grasp of historical essence and its impact on contemporary life is critically examined. The use of mixed materials in this artwork series possibly brings together different epochs, suggesting the continuous thread of humanity's striving for understanding and the role of historical contemplation in shaping the spiritual life of the present.

In Chen Xinmao's "History Book Series," the spiritual dialogue between materiality and metaphysics is visualized through the juxtaposition of historical textural elements with contemporary artistic methods. The series might feature layers of ink, calligraphy, or paper combined with modern materials, creating a palimpsest that represents the layered complexity of history and memory. This layering technique resonates with Santayana's view of contemplative life, where the spiritual suspension of human thought serves as a gateway to deeper reflection. Chen's artwork may encourage viewers to temporarily suspend their immediate preconceptions and emotionally charged interpretations to engage with history's essence on a more profound level. This "suspension" is akin to the ancient spirit of "Tao," where a

harmonious balance between action and inaction is sought, and the wisdom of Zen, which finds depth in simplicity and significance in the mundane.

The "History Book Series" by Chen Xinmao can be contemplated through the spiritual theme of essence as accessed through memory. This series likely engages with the material artifacts of history—perhaps actual pages or imagery from historical texts—to delve into the collective spiritual journey of humanity. The essence here is not just about the factual recounting of events but the emotional and philosophical currents that run through historical narratives. Chen's work may seek to evoke the spirit of past ages, exploring how these spirits still permeate the present, influencing our current state of being and our collective consciousness.

(ii) Transcendence and Impermanence



Figure 5.19. Memories of the Red Lotus Wetland No. 3, 120cm x 120cm, 2015

The artwork "Memories of the Red Lotus Wetland No.3" potentially explores the spiritual themes of transcendence and impermanence, invoking the quiet yet

profound beauty of a natural wetland scene. The red lotus, often a symbol of purity and enlightenment in Eastern traditions, rises from the murky waters, offering a visual meditation on the potential for spiritual growth amidst the complexities of life. In this work, the wetland is not merely a physical locale but a spiritual landscape. It is a place of intersection where the earthly and the divine meet, where the transient beauty of the lotus flower reflects the fleeting nature of existence, yet its recurring bloom each season speaks to the cycle of rebirth and renewal—a core principle in many spiritual beliefs, including Buddhism.

Chen Xinmao, in creating this piece, might draw from a deep cultural reservoir that includes an appreciation for the traditional Chinese artistic focus on nature as a mirror of the inner world. If he follows the path of many contemporary Chinese artists, Chen is likely influenced by both traditional Chinese art forms and modern artistic expressions. This interplay is evident in how he captures the spirit of the red lotus wetland—there is a reverence for the past and its teachings, yet a present engagement with the current moment and its emotional and spiritual realities. "Memories of the Red Lotus Wetland No.3" could be composed of a rich tapestry of textures and colors that mimic the variegated environment of a wetland, perhaps integrating natural materials or evocative textures that call to mind the organic matter of the wetlands. This material choice and artistic technique invite the viewer to experience the wetland as a living, breathing entity, one that encapsulates the Buddhist concept of impermanence (anicca) and the Daoist understanding of the constant flow of life (Dao). The red lotus symbol in the piece, often associated with the heart in Eastern philosophies, suggests an unfolding of spiritual wisdom and a blossoming of consciousness. The number three, possibly indicating the artwork's place within a series, may echo the three jewels of Buddhism or other significant triads, hinting at a balance and harmony inherent in the

natural and spiritual world. This artwork serves as a portal to a deeper understanding of the self and the universe, reflecting the spirituality of nature and the human capacity to perceive, reflect, and transcend.

(iii) Harmonics of the Eternal Cycle



Figure 5.20. Sea Reef, 180cm x 900cm, 2019

In "Sea Reef" by Hu Wei, a deeper spiritual theme emerges, woven intricately through the interplay of traditional materials and modern abstraction. The theme could be described as "Harmonics of the Eternal Cycle", reflecting the Daoist concept of the eternal cycle of life and nature's immutable rhythms. This theme encapsulates the spiritual essence which emphasizes the artwork's role as a medium for expressing the perpetual motion and the inherent balance of the natural world. The use of wooden structures and rice paper in Hu Wei's piece represents a harmony with nature's resilience and the organic flow of life's energy. These materials are traditional symbols of endurance and adaptability, reflecting the artist's recognition of the constant, yet often unseen, life force (Qi) that sustains all existence.

Mineral-vegetable-earth pigments, combined with the opulence of gold and silver powders, reflect the vividness and richness of life as well as its more sublime and intangible spiritual aspects. This juxtaposition of earthy textures with metallic sheen could represent the dialogue between the physical realm and the more profound, spiritual layers of being. The contrast illuminates the transient nature of existence—

how life, like the shifting sands and tides, is impermanent, and yet, there's a beauty in its transience that is both spiritual and profound. Metal slag, often a byproduct of industrial processes, introduces a contemporary dimension to the piece, confronting the viewer with the impact of human activity on the natural environment. The inclusion of this material could be a commentary on the spiritual discord that arises from environmental neglect, urging a reflection on how modern industrialization has affected the harmony between humanity and nature.

Hu Wei, with his likely background deeply rooted in the cultural and artistic heritage of China, may infuse "Sea Reef" with the weight of history and a forward-looking vision. His choice of materials and abstract expression does not merely point to a reconciliation of past and present but also a quest for a sustainable spiritual future. In this way, "Sea Reef" becomes a vessel of cultural memory, capturing the ebb and flow of human interaction with the natural world. The landscape of the artwork invites the audience to a state of contemplative engagement, offering a pause from the bustling rhythm of human-centric existence to witness the grandeur of nature's quietude. The art piece acts as a meditation on the enduring pulse of the natural world—a pulse that is felt rather than heard, reverberating through time and beckoning the soul to listen to its subtle yet profound truths. This artwork is thus a contemporary ode to the ancient spiritual dialogue between humanity and the natural world, a call to remember our place within the larger cycle of life and to respect the delicate balance that sustains it. Hu Wei's artwork is a testament to the enduring search for spiritual meaning and the quest to express the inexpressible through the language of art.

In summary, the subjective creative power of artists endows materials with originality beyond universal significance. Different memories generate different recognitions and psychological experiences, and the uniqueness of life manifested in

mixed media painting arises from the individuality of the artist. Therefore, the control of material media in painting by the subject ultimately gives birth to a unique spiritual connotation, whether macro or micro. In macro perspective creation, we can refer to it as having "spirituality" content, and in micro perspective creation, we can refer to it as having personal emotions or ideas as "spirit." When we discuss spirit and spirituality, the concept of spirituality is not a delivery of some personal experience, morality, or idea. It should be a positive thinking and wisdom on the macro stance of life. This signifies that the fruit of thought produced under calm contemplation is a life observation akin to truth, propelled by positive and active forces, where negative and unwanted spirits are eliminated through the screening process to become dust of history. The ontology of mixed media painting language is material, and humans are also essentially material, with belief and spirit deeply rooted in the material world. Materiality often encompasses not just the initial properties of matter but countless life meanings and formal languages. Materiality and the spirituality of painting language are intertwined equally, with the material being the decisive power source controlling the essence. It is on the basis of material that artists can express other inner aspects.

5.4. Connotations of Visual and Spiritual Coexistence: Unveiling Depth in Artistic Expression

Contemporary Chinese mixed media painting has diverged from traditional painting materials due to the introduction of diverse materials into the expression of the artwork, transforming painting from merely shaping forms and single visual effects into a visual ecosystem. The language of painting has also undergone fundamental changes, primarily based on the shift in artistic concepts. As art has developed to this point, the boundaries of materials have infinitely expanded; all matter around us can become

materials for artistic expression, whether visible, invisible, or even human thoughts as mediums for artistic creation.

As mentioned earlier, mixed media painting possesses meanings on both aesthetics and spiritual levels. However, in practical creation, many artists often focus on one aspect at the expense of the other. Some artists overly concentrate on the visual aspects of their work, neglecting the expression of its inner meaning, leading to paintings becoming mere accumulations of materials. Meanwhile, others use various non-traditional materials in their works but regard these materials as no different from traditional ones like paint, serving only as carriers without other values. Both of these understandings have their biases. The reasonable situation should be the perfect unity of both aspects within the artwork, where the significance of materials is self-evident in this process.

In the preceding text, I have combed through the evolution of materials in traditional Eastern and Western painting and discovered that significant innovations in painting materials are invariably accompanied by revolutions in artists' thoughts. As stated above, the creation of mixed media paintings utilizes a more diverse array of painting materials, playing a crucial role in the creative process. On one hand, the visual characteristics of the materials themselves, such as color and texture, are crucial components of the visual presentation of the artwork; on the other hand, many of the materials used carry conventional cultural attributes that directly participate in the artist's thematic expression, the use of Xuan paper, which is highly characteristic of China and reflects the essence of Chinese traditional culture. These dual roles of materials—both their physical properties and spiritual attributes—are essential. Typically, an artist's understanding of materials progresses from the exterior to the

interior, starting with an understanding of the material's external features and gradually forming an insight into its intrinsic qualities, a process that unfolds step by step.

In the artistic creation process, an artist's own cultivation plays a crucial role in the use of materials. He must deeply understand the materials, fully grasp their various properties, and integrate them rationally with his internal contemplation to achieve an appropriate expression. In this process, artists must fully utilize their artistic talents for purposeful subjective manipulation of materials. Under the guidance of their ideologies, the materials chosen by the artists become integral to their classical works. Conversely, if artists cannot control the materials well during the creation process, they may also be adversely affected by the painting materials, leading to issues like those mentioned above—either overly focusing on the material's physical properties or neglecting the material's role altogether.

The emphasis on materials in mixed media painting creation and the openness of material use grant artists great freedom in choosing materials. Artists from different regions, eras, and cultural backgrounds always reflect their uniqueness in material selection. This diversity in material use endows artists with their distinct artistic characteristics. Different artists choose different painting materials for creation, and their methods of handling these materials vary, resulting in a variety of painting languages. The emergence of language diversity is precisely the opportunity for the formation of artists' unique artistic styles.

The study of painting history can be approached from many angles, with different scholars having varying opinions. Painting history can be explained from all aspects of the cultural domain, and its own history, from the perspective of materials, is supported by media—here referring to materials—which have been validated by

artists' artistic thoughts. Material and thought continuously evolve, making modernist painting reflect the characteristics of the era. The transformation of painting materials has led to changes in painting language, a process from quantitative to qualitative change. In recent centuries, the artistic pursuits of modern art have continuously evolved, prompting the development of art to begin introspection. After a period of challenging exploration, artists engaged in modern art creation have been striving to find the appropriate means for self-expression, to convey the essence of life and the aspiration for a beautiful world. This choice is unique to this era; artists from all past eras could not make such free selections of materials. The combination of material cognition and artistic concepts will ultimately bring about new phenomena.



Figure 5.21. Golden Splendour, 240cm x 200cm, 2019

In the artistic creation process, materials are integrated into the expression of artworks and participate in the exploration of artistic language. Within a single artwork,

the contrasting materials fully explore the physical characteristics of the materials and delve deeper into the cultural and ideological properties inherent in the materials themselves. In the creation of mixed media paintings, artists have elevated materials to a significant aesthetic object, enhancing their status beyond mere technical factors to meet formal requirements. For instance, in Yang Yang's "Golden Splendour", employ gold, a material that has both a visual allure and a profound spiritual symbolism. Gold's luminance represents wisdom that is not tarnished by time—a metaphor for the immutable truths that guide human existence. Respondent 15 has shared his thoughts on this artwork where the use of gold transcends its physical beauty and becomes a reflection of enlightenment, the precious moments of clarity and understanding that are sought after in spiritual journeys. It speaks to the splendor that lies in moments of insight—the 'golden' revelations that pierce through the mundane to reveal a deeper understanding of life's essence.



Figure 5.22. Room Within a Room, 320cm x 320cm, 2002

In Wang Huaqing's work "Room within a Room" could be an exploration of personal space and the boundaries of self. The materials used to create this 'room'—perhaps layers of fabric, transparent materials, or enclosing structures—might represent the layers of the self, the boundaries we erect, and the intimate spaces we inhabit spiritually. This piece invites contemplation of inner sanctums, the private worlds we each hold within, and how these personal dimensions resonate with and diverge from the external world. It's a visual metaphor for the spiritual practice of introspection, a silent space for encountering the soul.



Figure 5.23. Playing In The Lanting Pavilion

In another perspective, "Playing in the Lanting Pavilion" by Chen Xiaomao, invokes a sense of communal joy and the shared experience of being. This work may use materials that evoke the textures and sensations of a pavilion—the solidity of stone or wood, the whisper of wind through paper lanterns, the collective murmur of voices. Here, the spiritual theme revolves around the harmonious interplay of individual spirits

within a community, reflecting the Confucian ideal of social harmony and the Daoist appreciation for the natural flow of human interactions.

From the onset of human origins, the use of materials was a natural state, with understanding limited only to the external form of materials. With continuous societal progress, humans have accessed an increasing array of materials, enhancing their cognition of materials. Artists' recognition of materials has shifted from direct perception of external forms to the exploration of material connotations, gradually highlighting the intrinsic properties of the materials. At this point, materials gradually become a form of artistic language. Artistic language, under the combined influence of the natural forces of the materials and creativity, emanates new life. The various non-traditional painting materials we see today, when existing merely as physical entities, do not inherently possess artistic language characteristics. However, once these materials are selected by artists and placed within the context of painting, they acquire the capability to generate artistic language. Therefore, as artists, it is crucial to fully understand the external characteristics of the chosen materials, grasp their inner implications, and integrate them with the spiritual essence of the creative subject. This ensures the material foundation of artwork creation and underlines the materials as an essential component of artistic existence.

In mixed media painting, the representation mainly refers to the artwork's external form, pointing towards the visual dimension of meaning; internally, it mainly signifies the spiritual expression of the work. Painting is an art practice activity formed through the scientific combination of various formal elements, necessitating the conveyance of spiritual content. The content and form within painting creation are two sides of the same coin, indispensable to each other, with form serving the content, which encompasses concepts, emotions, thoughts, etc. However, this statement is not absolute,

as within the realm of contemporary art, form itself sometimes becomes the content. In traditional painting, the materials do not directly participate in the expression of the work, with modeling and color directly undertaking the task of expression. In mixed media painting, however, artists must rely on the spiritual connotations of the materials themselves to present their artistic viewpoints. The materials and the artist's artistic concept in painting creation are mutually restrictive and interdependent, jointly completing the work's expression.

In mixed media painting, the status of materials is not merely as a medium for painting expression; it is a crucial element of the composition. In the traditional painting creation process, such as in contemporary oil painting creation, artists typically do not consider the cultural aspect of oil paint nor explore the material on a material level; at this time, it merely serves as a vehicle for expressing the artist's ideas. When creating mixed media paintings, the situation changes, as the expansion and exploration of materials become an essential task for artists, with the selection and use of materials being a significant component of the painting creation process. The involvement of a variety of rich materials in painting creation inevitably brings their visual elements into the artist's perspective, with the unique visual characteristics of each type of material directly participating in the expression of the work. This reality feature of materials in mixed media painting has led some artists into an endless pursuit of materials, where the characteristics of the materials themselves are magnified to the extent that it leads to an extreme focus on the external aspects of the work, merely pursuing novelty for its sake, which, to some extent, has made some mixed media paintings become a "showcase of skills," diminishing the academic nature of mixed media painting. Artists must not overlook the pursuit of the spiritual content of the work during the creation process.

When creating mixed media paintings, artists should fully mobilize their subjective initiative, using their various cultural accumulations to select appropriate materials. There are two pathways for choosing materials: one, where the artist already has a fairly clear idea before starting the creation, and based on their own expressive thoughts, selects the most appropriate materials for expression, ultimately finding the "indispensable" material to complete their creation; the other is based on the understanding of materials, where the artist may not have a clear thought before creation, but based on long-term research and accumulation on painting materials, a certain material may inspire their creative impulse. The artist based on the discovery of materials, refines their ideas, and clarifies their thoughts, thereby completing the expression of the work. Both of these scenarios are common creative approaches among artists engaged in mixed media painting creation. In these two approaches, both the visual and spiritual dimensions of meaning are considered. The external visual characteristics of the material itself and its inherent spiritual attributes perfectly integrate with the artist's thematic ideas, working together to complete the work's expression.

When creating, artists should give sufficient importance to the thoughtfulness of the work. The creation of mixed media paintings cannot be done in isolation but requires deep thinking within the cultural context of the entire world, building on the excellent cultural traditions of the Chinese nation to construct their own ideological system. The expansion and use of materials should consider both the appearance and the spiritual content of the materials and their significance to the artist's individual spirit. These two aspects are inseparable and should be reasonably blended into the artist's creation. Only in this way can the significance and value of mixed media painting be better highlighted.



5.5 Chapter Summary

In the creation of mixed media paintings, material as a painting language initially possesses physical properties and aesthetics, thereby bringing significance to the visual aspect of painting. Different physical properties elicit diverse psychological implications and profoundly impact the spiritual expression of the painting. The creation process forms a whole from the material itself to its spiritual content. For painting, the visual and spiritual aspects are the two sides of the same coin; a superior work always reasonably balances these two factors.

This chapter mainly explores the visual characteristics and spiritual connotations of contemporary mixed media painting in China. On the visual level, it discusses the uniqueness and differences of Chinese mixed media painting compared to traditional painting, how material intervention changes the way paintings are viewed, the enrichment and expansion of existing painting languages, how the "material" itself conveys a sense of the era, and the texture of materials as another language of the painting. On the level of spiritual orientation, it is believed that mixed media painting can showcase the spirit of the times, embody experimental characteristics, highlight traditional culture, and respond to popular culture. In specific creative practices, there often appears a disjunction between the visual and the spiritual. Therefore, attention should be paid to the coexistence and unity of the visual and spiritual aspects. The choice of materials and the artist's inner needs and artistic thought are closely related, and one should not be neglected for the sake of the other.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

6.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter encapsulates the culmination of a comprehensive investigation into the influence of material usage, spiritual orientation, and aesthetic language on contemporary Chinese mixed-media painting. Through a meticulous exploration, this study has illuminated the nuanced ways these elements interplay to shape the essence and reception of mixed-media artworks within the context of contemporary Chinese art. The findings underscore the profound impact of these factors on both the creation and interpretation of mixed-media paintings, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of their significance in the art world.

6.2 Summary of Key Findings

The investigation into the dynamic realm of contemporary Chinese mixed-media painting has yielded rich insights into the interplay of material usage, spiritual orientation, and aesthetic language. These elements coalesce to form a distinctive tapestry that not only reflects the individual artist's vision but also resonates with broader cultural, philosophical, and emotional landscapes. The key findings of this study provide an in-depth understanding of their multifaceted influence:

(i) Material Usage

This study has unveiled the intricate layers of meaning embedded in the choice and manipulation of materials by contemporary Chinese mixed-media artists. Beyond their physical properties, materials are selected for their cultural resonances, historical connotations, and ability to evoke specific emotions or ideas. Artists strategically use materials to bridge traditional and modern, local and global, creating works that speak to a complex identity negotiation in a rapidly changing society. Innovations in material usage not only challenge the viewer's perception but also redefine the boundaries of mixed-media art itself. The findings indicate that material choice is not serendipitous but a deliberate, thoughtful process that adds depth and nuance to the artwork, making it a critical component of the artistic narrative.

(ii) Spiritual Orientation

The exploration of spiritual themes within contemporary Chinese mixed-media painting reveals a profound engagement with questions of existence, transcendence, and the human spirit. Spiritual orientation in these artworks often transcends religious doctrine, embodying a broader quest for meaning and connection in the human experience. This study highlights how artists incorporate ancient symbols, philosophies, and motifs, reinterpreting them within the context of contemporary life. These spiritual elements serve as a conduit for introspection and existential inquiry, inviting viewers into a meditative space where art and spirituality intersect. The findings underscore the enduring relevance of spiritual themes as a source of inspiration and contemplation, both for the artist in the act of creation and for the audience in their engagement with the artwork.

(iii) Aesthetic Language

The aesthetic language of contemporary Chinese mixed-media painting is marked by a rich diversity and innovative expression. This study demonstrates how artists employ color, line, texture, and form not just as visual elements but as vehicles of communication, imbued with emotional weight and symbolic meaning. Aesthetic choices are often informed by cultural narratives, personal experiences, and social commentary, enabling artists to construct layered, multidimensional artworks. The findings reveal a deliberate blurring of traditional aesthetic boundaries, as artists experiment with hybrid forms and multimedia elements to create new visual languages. This inventive use of aesthetic language allows for a nuanced articulation of identity, belonging, and resistance, making it a pivotal aspect of the artworks' overall impact and significance.

In sum, the investigation into material usage, spiritual orientation, and aesthetic language in contemporary Chinese mixed-media painting has illuminated the complex interrelations between these elements and their collective impact on the art form. Through a nuanced examination of these key findings, the study contributes to a deeper appreciation of the rich textures and profound meanings embedded in contemporary Chinese mixed-media art, offering insights into the evolving landscape of artistic expression in the context of global and local cultural currents.

6.3 Detailed Analysis of Findings

6.3.1 Impact of Material Usage

The intricate exploration of material usage within contemporary Chinese mixed-media art sheds light on the profound ways materials influence the artworks' essence and audience reception. This section delves into specific themes, illuminated by case studies from Chapter 4, demonstrating the significant roles materials play in the creative realm.

A. Dynamic Interaction with Cultural Contexts

The selection of materials in contemporary Chinese mixed-media painting is a deliberate act that reflects the dynamic interaction between the artist's cultural heritage and the evolving socio-political landscape. This interplay is not merely a backdrop but a critical element that shapes the very essence of the artwork. Traditional materials like rice paper, which carry the weight of centuries of Chinese artistic tradition, are reimagined and repurposed to express complex themes relevant to contemporary society.

Hu Wei's utilization of rice paper is a testament to this nuanced dialogue between the old and the new. With the help of incorporating rice paper, a material steeped in the history of Chinese ink painting, into mixed-media artworks, Hu Wei creates a tangible link to the past. However, this link is not just about preservation; it's a springboard for exploration and critique. His works navigate the complexities of modern Chinese identity, juxtaposed against the backdrop of rapid urbanization and environmental concerns. The traditional texture and symbolism of rice paper interact with modern materials and themes, crafting a narrative that bridges temporal divides.

This symbiosis of material and message underscores the artist's role as a mediator between tradition and modernity, highlighting the transformative power of art in reflecting and shaping cultural discourse.

B. Symbolic Resonance

In the realm of contemporary Chinese mixed-media art, materials are more than mere vehicles for artistic expression; they are imbued with deep symbolic significance. Artists meticulously choose materials that resonate with their thematic concerns, leveraging their intrinsic meanings to enrich the narrative and emotional depth of their works. Zhang Yuan's use of reclaimed wood and industrial remnants epitomizes the potent symbolic resonance that materials can convey.

In Zhang Yuan's environmentally themed works, materials such as reclaimed wood serve dual purposes. On one level, they are physical remnants of natural and human-made environments, carrying with them histories of use and discard. On another, more profound level, they become emblematic of the broader issue of environmental degradation and the urgent need for sustainable practices. The tactile and visual qualities of these materials—rough textures, worn surfaces, and the inherent aesthetic of decay—evoke a visceral response from the viewer, making the abstract concept of environmental loss tangibly felt. Through embedding these materials within the context of his art, Zhang Yuan transforms them into powerful symbols of both destruction and potential redemption. This symbolic use of materials elevates the artwork beyond its visual components, turning it into a compelling call to action and reflection on the relationship between humanity and the natural world.

C. Innovative Textural Dialogues

The exploration of texture in contemporary Chinese mixed-media art serves as a radical departure from traditional visual aesthetics, fostering a dialogue between the artwork and its audience that is profoundly tactile and immersive. Tang Chenhua's pioneering integration of electronic components within his mixed-media pieces exemplifies this avant-garde approach, challenging the static nature of conventional canvas work and propelling the viewer into a realm where the distinctions between the digital and the physical blur.

Tang's methodological use of materials such as circuit boards, LED lights, and other electronic paraphernalia, woven into the fabric of his art, disrupts traditional expectations of texture and form. This not only redefines the tactile experience of the artwork but also embodies the merging of technological advancement with artistic expression. Such innovative textural dialogues encourage viewers to engage with the art on a multisensory level, prompting reflection on the interplay between technology and nature, and the increasingly digitalized context of human existence. Through this exploration, Tang Chenhua opens up new frontiers for artistic expression, where the textural qualities of materials are leveraged to evoke deeper contemplation of contemporary realities and foster a more engaged viewer interaction.

D. Interactivity and Viewer Engagement

The evolution of material use in art has dramatically transformed the viewer's role, particularly in the domain of contemporary Chinese mixed-media installations. Yang Yang's work is emblematic of this shift, employing materials designed to respond to the audience's presence, such as motion-sensitive lights and interactive digital

interfaces. This interactive approach transcends traditional passive consumption, inviting the viewer to become an integral part of the artwork's life and meaning.

Such installations not only captivate the audience through their novelty but also deepen the artwork's impact by forging a personal connection between the viewer and the piece. The act of engaging with the installation—whether through movement, touch, or digital interaction—creates a unique experience for each viewer, making the art resonate on a more personal level. The materials used by Yang Yang act as conduits for this engagement, transforming the space around the artwork into an active zone of participation. This dynamic exchange fosters a sense of immersion and personal investment in the artwork, making the experience memorable and often sparking deeper reflection on the themes explored.

E. Recontextualization of Everyday Objects

The transformative power of art to elevate the mundane to the realm of the extraordinary is vividly demonstrated in the recontextualization of everyday objects within contemporary Chinese mixed-media art. Wang Huaiqing's adept integration of commonplace materials and objects into his artwork serves as a compelling exploration of space, materiality, and the essence of the everyday. Along with repurposing objects that are often overlooked in daily life, Wang challenges the viewer's preconceived notions about art, inviting a deeper contemplation of the ordinary.

Wang's approach to recontextualization goes beyond mere aesthetic innovation; it is a philosophical inquiry into the nature of beauty and the inherent value of materials. By incorporating architectural elements like doors, windows, and furniture into his mixed-media canvases, Wang blurs the lines between painting and sculpture, interior and exterior, artifice and natural. This fusion not only disrupts traditional classifications

of art but also encourages a reconceptualization of space—both the physical space of the environment and the conceptual space of art itself. The ordinary objects, once stripped of their functional context, become abstracted forms, gaining new significance as subjects of artistic expression.

This recontextualization acts as a catalyst for viewers to reassess their surroundings and the materials that populate them. Wang Huaiqing's work suggests that beauty and significance are not confined to traditionally valued art objects but can be found in the everyday. This perspective fosters a democratization of beauty, where the artistic gaze transforms the mundane into the meaningful. The viewer is thus encouraged to engage in a similar process of reevaluation, to look beyond the surface and discover the aesthetic and symbolic potential of the objects that constitute their daily lives.

F. Reimagining Historical and Literary Themes

A notable theme that emerges from the exploration of material usage in contemporary Chinese mixed-media art is the reimagining of historical and literary themes through the innovative use of materials. This thematic layer adds a profound dimension to the artworks, connecting them with China's rich cultural past while also making them relevant to contemporary societal contexts.

Chen Xinmao stands out in this regard, as his work meticulously intertwines traditional Chinese motifs and narratives with modern artistic expressions. Through his "*Playing In The Lanting Pavilion*" series) and "*History Book Series*", Chen demonstrates how materials can serve not only as the medium for artistic creation but also as vessels for cultural memory and reinterpretation. For example, in the "Playing In The Lanting Pavilion" series, Chen uses materials like silk, ink, and paper, which are

deeply rooted in Chinese art history, alongside contemporary mediums such as digital imaging and mixed-media collage. This juxtaposition allows Chen to bridge the temporal divide, bringing ancient stories and aesthetics into a dialogue with the present day. The choice of silk and ink pays homage to the traditional art of calligraphy and painting, while the integration of modern techniques and materials reflects the ongoing evolution of Chinese cultural identity.

Chen's work exemplifies how materials can transcend their physical properties to evoke the spiritual essence and aesthetic beauty of historical and literary themes. Alongside reimagining these themes through a contemporary lens, Chen not only preserves but also revitalizes the cultural heritage, making it accessible and engaging for modern audiences. His innovative approach to material usage invites viewers to reflect on the continuity of tradition in an era of rapid change and globalization, offering a nuanced perspective on the dynamics of cultural preservation and innovation.

6.3.2 Influence of Spiritual Orientation

The examination of spiritual orientation within contemporary Chinese mixed-media art unveils a profound layer of cultural introspection and philosophical exploration that significantly shapes the content, form, and reception of artworks. Through the lens of specific case studies highlighted in Chapters 4 and 5, and augmented by insights gleaned from interviews in the appendix, this analysis delves into the intricate ways in which spiritual themes are woven into the fabric of contemporary artistic expression.

Interplay of Traditional and Modern Spiritual Themes

Artists like Hu Wei and Zhang Yuan exemplify the dynamic interplay between traditional spiritual themes and modern artistic practices. Hu Wei's *"Twilight over Autumn Mountains"* and Zhang Yuan's *"Inspiration from Nature Series No. 3"* integrate traditional Taoist and Buddhist concepts of harmony with nature and the impermanence of life, respectively, into their mixed-media works. These artworks not only reflect a deep spiritual engagement with traditional Chinese philosophical ideas but also address contemporary ecological concerns, illustrating how spiritual orientation can serve as a bridge between the past and present.

Innovation in Spiritual Expression

Tang Chenhua and Yang Yang push the boundaries of how spiritual themes are expressed in mixed-media art. Through innovative use of materials and interactive installations, they create immersive experiences that evoke Zen principles of mindfulness and the direct experience of the present moment. Tang's *"天边的云彩之四"* ("Clouds at the Horizon No. 4") and Yang's interactive piece *"金色华章"* ("Golden Splendour") challenge viewers to engage with the artworks in a manner that transcends traditional visual aesthetics, fostering a contemplative space that is deeply spiritual.

Cultural and Societal Reflections

The works of Wang Huaiqing and Chen Xinmao reflect upon the role of spirituality in contemporary Chinese society. Wang's *"Room within a Room"* and

Chen's *"Playing In The Lanting Pavilion"* series draw from Confucian and Taoist philosophies to explore themes of harmony, ethical living, and the spiritual significance of art and culture. These artists' engagements with spiritual themes not only underscore their personal spiritual journeys but also comment on the broader societal search for meaning and identity in a rapidly changing world.

Interviews with artists and critics reveal a conscious effort to integrate spiritual themes into mixed-media art as a means of exploring personal and collective identities. Artists express a desire to reconnect with traditional spiritual values amidst the pressures of modern life, using their artworks as a platform for spiritual exploration and social commentary. Critics, on the other hand, highlight the diversity of spiritual expressions in contemporary art, noting a trend towards more inclusive and eclectic spiritual themes that reflect the pluralistic nature of modern Chinese society.

The influence of spiritual orientation on contemporary Chinese mixed-media art is profound and multifaceted. By integrating traditional spiritual themes with modern artistic practices, artists create works that are not only visually captivating but also rich in symbolic and philosophical depth. The insights from interviews further enrich this discussion, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the role of spirituality in contemporary artistic expression. Through their works, artists navigate the complexities of modern identity, offering reflections on spirituality that resonate with contemporary audiences and contribute to the ongoing dialogue between tradition and modernity in Chinese culture.

6.3.3 Role of Aesthetic Language

The examination of aesthetic language within contemporary Chinese mixed-media painting reveals a profound dialogue between visual elements and the artworks' deeper meanings, emotional resonances, and cultural identities. Drawing from the insights presented in the previous section, this analysis elucidates how color, line, texture, and form are not merely visual tools but are imbued with significant cultural, emotional, and philosophical depth.

Color as Emotional and Symbolic Conduit

The use of color in contemporary Chinese mixed-media art is deeply evocative, carrying both emotional weight and symbolic significance. As discussed in the interviews, artists like Zhang Yuan and Hu Wei meticulously select their color palettes to resonate with traditional Chinese color symbolism while also injecting modern sensibilities that reflect contemporary issues and personal emotions. For example, Zhang Yuan's *"Inspiration from Nature Series No. 3"* utilizes greens and browns not only to depict the natural world but also to comment on environmental degradation, invoking a sense of loss and urging for reflection. This nuanced use of color underscores how aesthetic choices are deeply tied to the artworks' thematic concerns and emotional impact.

Line and Form as Expressions of Identity and Spirituality

The treatment of line and form within these artworks often serves as a direct expression of cultural identity and spiritual exploration. Artists like Chen Xinmao leverage traditional calligraphic techniques, where the line is more than a visual element—it is a bridge to the past, carrying the weight of history and philosophy. In his

"Playing In The Lanting Pavilion" series, the fluidity and strength of line work connect the viewer to ancient literary traditions, embodying the spiritual quest for harmony and enlightenment. This connection between line, form, and spirituality reflects a broader cultural narrative, where aesthetic choices become a means of navigating contemporary life's complexities through the lens of traditional wisdom.

Texture as a Medium of Tactile and Conceptual Exploration

Texture in contemporary Chinese mixed-media painting often transcends its tactile quality, becoming a tool for conceptual exploration and viewer engagement. Tang Chenhua's incorporation of unconventional materials to create unique textures invites the audience to physically and intellectually interact with the artwork, as discussed in the interviews. These textural innovations challenge the viewer's perceptions, encouraging a deeper engagement with the artwork's thematic layers and enriching the emotional and philosophical dialogue initiated by the artist.

Integration of Aesthetic Elements in Mixed-Media Contexts

The integration of these aesthetic elements—color, line, texture, and form—within the mixed-media context amplifies their expressive potential. As revealed in the appendix interviews, artists deliberately layer these elements to create complex visual narratives that reflect on social issues, personal experiences, and cultural heritage. This layering is not just a technical feat but a strategic choice that allows for a multifaceted exploration of identity, spirituality, and contemporary challenges.

In short, the role of aesthetic language in contemporary Chinese mixed-media painting is multifaceted, serving as a vital bridge between the artist's intentions and the viewer's experience. Through careful manipulation of color, line, texture, and form,

artists convey complex narratives that delve into emotional depths, cultural identities, and philosophical inquiries. The insights from the appendix interviews underscore the deliberate choices artists make in their aesthetic language to engage with both traditional influences and modern realities, highlighting the dynamic and evolving nature of contemporary Chinese mixed-media art.

6.4 Theoretical Implications

This study's exploration into the interplay of material usage, spiritual orientation, and aesthetic language within contemporary Chinese mixed-media painting offers substantial contributions to existing art theories. Through delving into these dimensions, the research elucidates how mixed-media painting operates as a dynamic site for cultural expression, emotional exploration, and aesthetic innovation

Firstly, the study reinforces and expands upon theories of materiality in art. Through the examination of diverse materials used in contemporary Chinese mixed-media painting, the findings underscore the significance of material choice not merely as a physical foundation but as a carrier of deep symbolic and cultural meanings. This aligns with and contributes to material culture studies in art, emphasizing how artists' material selections are embedded with historical, cultural, and personal narratives, challenging the traditional material-aesthetic dichotomies present in art theory.

Secondly, the investigation into spiritual orientation in the artworks studied brings to light the nuanced ways in which contemporary artists integrate and reinterpret traditional spiritual and philosophical themes within the context of modern societal issues. This contributes to the broader discourse on the role of spirituality in art, suggesting a theoretical framework where spirituality is not confined to religious or

transcendental realms but is actively engaged with social commentary and personal introspection. This expands upon existing theories by positioning spirituality as a versatile and potent tool for artistic expression in the contemporary era.

Lastly, the analysis of aesthetic language—through color, line, texture, and form—reveals a sophisticated visual vocabulary that artists use to communicate complex ideas and evoke emotional responses. This study contributes to aesthetic theories by demonstrating how these elements are strategically combined to transcend mere visual pleasure, acting instead as a nuanced language for expressing the complexities of modern life, cultural identity, and philosophical inquiries.

One of the new theoretical insights developed through this analysis is the concept of "Integrated Aesthetic Dynamism" within contemporary Chinese mixed-media painting. This conceptual framework posits that the dynamic integration of diverse materials, spiritual themes, and aesthetic elements forms a unique artistic force that propels the art beyond traditional boundaries. Integrated Aesthetic Dynamism highlights the fluidity and versatility of contemporary mixed-media art, suggesting that its essence lies in the constant negotiation and fusion of various influences—be they material, spiritual, or aesthetic.

Furthermore, this study introduces the notion of "Cultural-Spiritual Synthesis" as a theoretical lens for understanding the depth of spiritual orientation in contemporary Chinese art. Cultural-Spiritual Synthesis argues that modern artists are engaged in a creative synthesis of cultural heritage and personal spiritual exploration, through which they address broader existential themes and contemporary societal challenges. This framework suggests that spiritual orientation in art is a complex amalgamation of

tradition and individuality, providing a rich terrain for theoretical exploration and artistic innovation.

These theoretical insights contribute to a deeper understanding of contemporary Chinese mixed-media painting, offering new perspectives for scholars, artists, and educators. They invite further research into the interplay between materiality, spirituality, and aesthetics, encouraging a multidisciplinary approach to art studies that acknowledges the multifaceted nature of artistic creation in the modern world.

6.5 Practical Implications

The findings of this study offer several actionable recommendations for artists working in mixed-media and seeking to create impactful artworks. Firstly, artists are encouraged to explore and experiment with a diverse range of materials, both traditional and unconventional, to discover unique textural and symbolic possibilities. Across by considering the cultural, historical, and emotional resonance of materials, artists can deepen the thematic richness of their work.

Engaging with spiritual themes offers a profound avenue for artists to connect with audiences on an existential level. Artists should delve into their cultural heritage and personal beliefs to infuse their art with spiritual depth. This can be achieved by incorporating symbolic motifs, narratives, and philosophies that resonate with the spiritual quests and questions of contemporary society. Developing a distinctive aesthetic language is crucial for articulating complex ideas and emotions. Artists are advised to refine their use of color, line, texture, and form, using these elements not just for visual appeal but as tools for communication. Experimentation with composition,

contrast, and layering can help artists convey nuanced messages and evoke specific emotional responses, enhancing the viewer's engagement with the artwork.

The insights from this study have significant implications for art education and curation. Educators are encouraged to integrate discussions on materiality, spirituality, and aesthetics into their curriculum, highlighting the interconnectedness of these aspects in creating meaningful art. By exposing students to a wide range of materials and encouraging them to consider the symbolic and emotional weight of their choices, educators can foster a deeper understanding of artistic expression. Curators of contemporary Chinese mixed-media art can use these findings to design exhibitions that highlight the complex interplay between materials, spiritual themes, and aesthetic language. By curating works that exemplify innovative use of materials and engage with profound spiritual and philosophical questions, curators can offer audiences a more enriching and thought-provoking experience. Additionally, providing educational materials that explain the significance of these elements can enhance viewers' appreciation and understanding of the artworks.

Collectors and art enthusiasts stand to gain deeper insights into evaluating and appreciating mixed-media paintings through an understanding of the study's findings. When evaluating artworks, attention should be paid to the choice and treatment of materials, as these can reveal much about an artist's intentions and the work's thematic depth. Recognizing the use of materials not only for their aesthetic impact but also for their cultural and emotional significance can enrich the collecting experience. Understanding and appreciating the spiritual orientation of artworks requires a willingness to engage with the philosophical and existential themes they explore. Collectors and enthusiasts should consider how spiritual themes are woven into the

fabric of the artwork and what this reveals about the artist's worldview and the cultural context of the work.

An appreciation for the nuanced use of aesthetic language—how color, line, texture, and form are employed—can significantly enhance the appreciation of mixed-media art. Recognizing the deliberate choices artists make in their aesthetic language can provide insights into the emotional and communicative dimensions of the artwork, offering a fuller understanding of its value and meaning. Together, these practical implications serve to deepen the engagement with contemporary Chinese mixed-media art across the spectrum of creation, curation, education, and collection, fostering a richer dialogue between the art and its audiences.

6.6 Limitations and Future Research

This study, while comprehensive in its exploration of material usage, spiritual orientation, and aesthetic language in contemporary Chinese mixed-media art, encounters several limitations that merit acknowledgment. Firstly, the selection of case studies, while diverse, is not exhaustive and may not fully represent the wide array of practices and perspectives within the field. The chosen artists and artworks reflect a particular segment of contemporary Chinese mixed-media art, potentially overlooking emerging artists or less mainstream approaches.

Access to artworks posed another significant limitation. Due to logistical constraints, much of the analysis was based on digital reproductions of artworks rather than direct, physical interactions. This limitation may impact the depth of engagement with the material and textural qualities of the artworks, which are central to their

appreciation and understanding. Interpretive biases represent an inherent challenge in any qualitative research. While efforts were made to approach the analysis with an open and critical perspective, personal biases and cultural interpretations may influence the analysis and conclusions drawn from the artworks. The exploration of contemporary Chinese mixed-media painting opens several avenues for future research that could extend and deepen the findings of this study:

- (i) Expanded Case Study Selection: Future studies could broaden the scope of case studies to include a wider range of artists, including emerging talents and those working on the peripheries of the mainstream art world. This expansion would enrich the understanding of the diversity and dynamism within contemporary Chinese mixed-media art.
- (ii) Comparative Studies: There is a significant opportunity for comparative studies that examine mixed-media practices across different cultural contexts or compare mixed-media painting with other art forms, such as sculpture or digital art. Such comparisons could illuminate the unique contributions of mixed-media painting to the global art scene and foster cross-cultural dialogues on materiality, spirituality, and aesthetics.
- (iii) Longitudinal Studies: Longitudinal studies tracking the evolution of contemporary Chinese mixed-media art over time could provide valuable insights into how the art form responds to changing social, cultural, and technological landscapes. This research could highlight trends, shifts in thematic concerns, and innovations in material usage and aesthetic strategies.

- (iv) **Material and Technological Innovations:** Further research could focus specifically on the role of new materials and technological advancements in shaping the future of mixed-media art. This could include studies on the integration of digital media, interactive components, and sustainable materials, exploring how these innovations impact artistic expression and viewer engagement.
- (v) **Audience Reception and Interpretation:** Investigating how different audiences perceive and engage with contemporary Chinese mixed-media art can offer insights into the communicative power of the art form. Research in this area could explore the impact of cultural background, art education, and personal experiences on the interpretation of artworks.

With the aid of addressing these limitations and pursuing the suggested directions for future research, scholars and practitioners can continue to build on the foundational work of this study, contributing to a richer, more nuanced understanding of contemporary Chinese mixed-media painting and its place within the broader landscape of global art.

6.7 Concluding Thoughts

Embarking on this study has been a journey of exploration and discovery, offering profound insights into the vibrant world of contemporary Chinese mixed-media painting. The investigation into the nuanced interplay of material usage, spiritual orientation, and aesthetic language has not only expanded my understanding of this dynamic art form but has also deepened my appreciation for the ways in which artists navigate and reflect upon the complexities of modern life. This research has illuminated

the depth of creativity, cultural engagement, and philosophical inquiry that characterizes contemporary Chinese mixed-media art, revealing an artistic practice that is both deeply rooted in tradition and boldly innovative.

The process of analyzing artworks, conducting interviews, and synthesizing findings has underscored the rich tapestry of influences that shape the creation and reception of mixed-media paintings. It has highlighted the importance of materiality in conveying meaning, the power of spiritual themes in connecting with audiences on a profound level, and the role of aesthetic language in crafting visually compelling narratives. This exploration has revealed the intricate ways in which contemporary Chinese artists employ mixed-media techniques to engage with questions of identity, culture, and spirituality, offering invaluable perspectives on the human experience.

This study contributes to the broader field of art research by offering a comprehensive analysis of contemporary Chinese mixed-media painting, shedding light on the intricate interplay between material usage, spiritual orientation, and aesthetic language. Through examining how these elements combine to create artworks that are at once deeply personal and universally resonant, the research enhances our understanding and appreciation of this art form's unique capacity to bridge the past and the present, the individual and the collective. The findings underscore the significance of contemporary Chinese mixed-media painting as a site of cultural expression and innovation, reflecting the fluidity of modern Chinese identity and the ongoing dialogue between tradition and modernity. This study not only celebrates the creativity and diversity of contemporary Chinese artists but also invites further exploration into the evolving landscape of mixed-media art.

In conclusion, the journey through contemporary Chinese mixed-media painting has been a testament to the enduring power of art to reflect, challenge, and inspire. It is my hope that this research will not only contribute to the academic discourse on contemporary art but also encourage artists, educators, and art lovers to engage more deeply with the rich complexities and transformative potential of mixed-media painting. Through this exploration, we can continue to uncover the myriad ways in which art connects us to our shared humanity and the world around us.



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Appendix A

Interview Questionnaire

Background and Introduction

1. Can you briefly introduce yourself and describe your association with Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting?

Understanding of Comprehensive Mixed-Material Painting

2. How would you define contemporary Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting?
3. What differentiates it from other forms of Chinese painting?

Materiality

4. Can you elaborate on the materials commonly used in this art form?
5. How do the chosen materials influence the aesthetics and connotations of the artwork?

Historical Context and Evolution

6. How do you perceive the evolution of comprehensive mixed-material painting in China over the years?
7. Are there particular historical events or societal shifts that have influenced this art form?

Cultural and Personal Interpretations

8. How do cultural and societal beliefs and values manifest themselves in these artworks?
9. Can you share any personal experiences or observations that have shaped your understanding or practice of this art form?

Critique and Feedback

10. From your perspective, what are the strengths and limitations of Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting?

11. How has the art community and the broader public responded to this art form?

Influence and Legacy

12. How do you see the future trajectory of this art form?
13. What legacy do you believe it will leave behind for future generations?

Personal Insights and Anecdotes

14. Can you share a memorable experience or story related to this art form, whether as an observer, critic, or creator?
15. If there was one thing you'd want someone unfamiliar with contemporary Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting to understand, what would it be?
16. Is there anything else you'd like to share about this art form that we haven't touched upon?

Expecting to getting detailed description of the art form which could range from personal experiences of artists to the choices of materials they make. By understanding the behind motivation and inspiration or the challenges faced by the artist, define the why do they choose the certain materials or the reason of blending of materials. Then, uncover the deeper meanings and symbolism by the artist by getting personal story or perceptions from the artist or getting the recurring themes during qualitative data analysis. Then, the connotations of contemporary Chinese mixed-media paintings can be understood by interpret from the aspects symbolic content, societal messages and personal narratives conveyed by the artists.

Appendix B

Interview Transcript

B.1 Mixed Media Painting Interview Transcript – Respondent 1

Interviewer: Good morning, Mr. Respondent 1. It's an honour to have this opportunity to speak with you. Thank you for taking the time to share your insights with us.

Respondent 1: Good morning, and thank you for inviting me. It's a pleasure to be here and discuss my experiences and views on contemporary Chinese mixed-media painting.

Interviewer: Mr. Respondent 1, how would you define contemporary Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting?

Respondent 1: Contemporary Chinese mixed-material painting is an art form that embodies the spirit of experimentation. It's a blend of the old and the new, where traditional Chinese aesthetics meet modern artistic expressions. This form of art is not just about the visual impact but also about the dialogue it initiates between the past and the present.

Interviewer: What differentiates it from other forms of Chinese painting?

Respondent 1: Traditional Chinese painting is deeply rooted in historical techniques and philosophies, focusing on brushwork, ink play, and a deep connection with nature and spirituality. Contemporary mixed-material painting, on the other hand, is more about breaking these traditional boundaries. It's about incorporating new materials, techniques, and ideas, reflecting the rapid changes in Chinese society and culture.

Interviewer: Can you elaborate on the materials commonly used in this art form?

Respondent 1: Artists are exploring a wide range of materials, from the traditional – like ink, paper, and silk – to the unconventional, like gunpowder, acrylic, and digital media. Each material brings its own texture, quality, and historical connotation, adding layers of meaning to the artwork.

Interviewer: How do these materials influence the aesthetics and connotations of the artwork?

Respondent 1: The impact of materials on an artwork's aesthetics and connotations is profound and multifaceted. As we advance in the development of mixed media painting, we delve into material research, leading to diverse and multifaceted developments in Chinese painting. Traditional materials link us to our cultural heritage, providing a sense of continuity and depth. In contrast, modern materials bring fresh perspectives, embodying innovation and reflecting on contemporary societal issues. This juxtaposition not only enriches the visual language of the artwork but also adds layers of meaning, creating a dialogue between the past and present. Yet, it's crucial to maintain a balance, as the essence of art transcends the mere instrumental use of materials, aligning more closely with the philosophical 'way' of art.

Interviewer: How do you perceive the evolution of comprehensive mixed-material painting in China over the years?

Respondent 1: It has evolved dramatically, mirroring the rapid socio-economic and cultural changes in China. From the cautious incorporation of new materials and techniques to a more bold and confident expression, this art form has become a platform for artists to explore and comment on the complexities of modern Chinese identity.

Interviewer: Are there particular historical events or societal shifts that have influenced this art form?

Respondent 1: Absolutely, the trajectory of mixed-material painting in China is inextricably linked to the nation's historical and societal shifts. The Cultural Revolution, economic reforms, and the rapid pace of urbanization and globalization have profoundly influenced the themes and materials explored in this art form. These periods of intense change have prompted artists to reflect deeply on identity, tradition, and the impact of modernity, using their work as a means to navigate and comment on these transformations. The emergence of movements like Scar Art in the early 1980s, for instance, underscores how art is a reflection of its time, shaped by the prevailing cultural and social conditions. Understanding this context is essential for grasping the depth and complexity of contemporary Chinese mixed-material painting, highlighting the importance of viewing art as a product of its environmental and temporal factors.

Interviewer: How does contemporary Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting resonate with or diverge from traditional Chinese artistic philosophies and principles?

Respondent 1: Contemporary Chinese mixed-material painting is a reflection of the dynamism in Chinese art, resonating with traditional philosophies through its depth and spiritual exploration, yet diverging in its method and medium. Traditional views categorize the language of painting materials within the 'instrument' category, emphasizing the 'way' or Dao as the essence. Today, while we explore new materials, echoing Heidegger's notion that the essence of a thing, including art, involves a direct interaction with materiality, we also maintain a reverence for traditional principles. This blend of exploration and respect creates a unique dialogue between the old and the new, ensuring that even as we push boundaries with materials, we remain rooted in the philosophical underpinnings of Chinese art.

Interviewer: How do cultural and societal beliefs and values manifest themselves in these artworks?

Respondent 1: Cultural and societal beliefs are intricately woven into the fabric of contemporary mixed-material painting, serving as both subject and symbol. Drawing from Diderot's analyses, we understand that an artwork must be appreciated within the context of its time, reflecting the spirit of its age. For example, the emergence of Scar Art in the 1980s, with artists like Gao Xiaohua and He Duoling, was a direct response to the societal conditions of that period. Similarly, today's mixed-material paintings might explore themes of urbanization, globalization, and identity, capturing the zeitgeist of contemporary China and reflecting on how these broader shifts affect individual lives and collective consciousness.

Interviewer: From your perspective, what are the strengths and limitations of Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting?

Respondent 1: The strength of this art form lies in its versatility and capacity for nuanced expression, allowing artists to explore and represent the multifaceted experiences of contemporary life. However, I caution against overemphasizing the role of materials. While material research has undoubtedly enriched Chinese painting, aligning it with the philosophical debate on the 'instrument' versus the 'way,' we must not lose sight of the essence of art. The exploration of new materials should enhance, not overshadow, the spiritual and philosophical depth that lies at the heart of Chinese artistic tradition.

Interviewer: How do you see the future trajectory of this art form

Respondent 1: I see it becoming even more diverse and global in its reach. As artists continue to experiment with materials and engage with global artistic dialogues, this art form will likely evolve to express a broader spectrum of experiences and ideas, resonating with the pluralistic direction of contemporary social and cultural development. It's an exciting time for Chinese art, as we navigate the balance between innovation and tradition, creating works that are both uniquely Chinese and universally relevant.

Interviewer: What legacy do you believe it will leave behind for future generations?

Respondent 1: It will leave a legacy of innovation and cultural dialogue. Future generations will look back at these works as a reflection of our times – the challenges we faced, the questions we grappled with, and our journey as a society.

Interviewer: Can you share a memorable experience or story related to this art form, whether as an observer, critic, or creator?

Respondent 1: One memorable experience was when I first experimented with gunpowder in my art. It was a transformative moment, not just in terms of the visual impact it created, but also in how it connected with the audience. The use of gunpowder, a material deeply rooted in Chinese history but used in a contemporary context, created a powerful metaphor for the cultural and historical explosions that shape our society. It was a moment where tradition and modernity, destruction and creation, all came together in a single artistic expression.

Interviewer: If there was one thing you'd want someone unfamiliar with contemporary Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting to understand, what would it be?

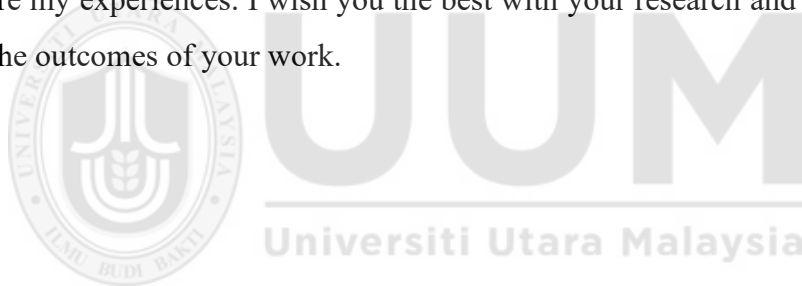
Respondent 1: I would want them to understand that this art form is not just about the visual spectacle. It's a reflection of the soul of modern China – its struggles, its transformations, and its aspirations. Each artwork tells a story, not just about the artist, but about the broader context in which it was created. It's a window into the complexities of Chinese identity in a rapidly changing world.

Interviewer: Is there anything else you'd like to share about this art form that we haven't touched upon?

Respondent 1: I think it's important to recognize the courage and creativity of the artists who work in this medium. They are not just artists; they are cultural commentators and historians, documenting and interpreting the world around them. Their work challenges, inspires, and provokes, and it's this spirit of inquiry and exploration that truly defines contemporary Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting. Like what Heidegger have shared in his book “The pursuit of things”, which emphasis that “what is the things” equal to “who is the person”, therefore the properties of the materials are reflects on the artists itself.

Interviewer: Mr. Respondent 1, thank you so much for this enlightening conversation. Your perspectives have provided invaluable depth to our understanding of contemporary Chinese mixed-media painting. We truly appreciate your time and thoughts.

Respondent 1: Thank you for having me. It was a great pleasure to discuss these topics and share my experiences. I wish you the best with your research and look forward to seeing the outcomes of your work.



B.2 Mixed Media Painting Interview Transcript – Respondent 2

Interviewer: Good day Mr. Respondent 2, could you briefly introduce yourself and describe your association with Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting?

Respondent 2: I am Respondent 2, an artist deeply fascinated by the power of language and text in art. My work often explores the intersection of traditional Chinese art forms with contemporary themes, and I find mixed-material painting a compelling medium to express these ideas.

Interviewer: How would you define contemporary Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting?

Respondent 2: It's a vibrant and evolving art form that bridges the gap between China's rich artistic heritage and the rapidly changing modern world. It's about challenging conventions and exploring new ways to communicate cultural and personal narratives.

Interviewer: What differentiates it from other forms of Chinese painting?

Respondent 2: Its willingness to experiment and embrace a wide range of materials and techniques. While traditional Chinese painting adheres to certain established norms, contemporary mixed-material painting is more about questioning and redefining those norms.

Interviewer: Can you elaborate on the materials commonly used in this art form?

Respondent 2: Artists are using everything from ink and paper to digital media and found objects. Each material brings its own language and contributes to the dialogue within the artwork. For me, materials are just a medium that needs to carry ideas. Artists use materials to convey the power of humanity to move, touch, and infect the audience. On one hand, we use such a medium to convey our thoughts, and on the other hand, the audience perceives and reflects on the humanity and society behind it through the material or medium.

Interviewer: How do the chosen materials influence the aesthetics and connotations of the artwork?

Respondent 2: The materials are not just mediums; they are part of the message. Traditional materials connect the work to historical contexts, while modern materials

often comment on contemporary issues. The interaction between these materials creates a complex visual and conceptual landscape.

Interviewer: How do you perceive the evolution of comprehensive mixed-material painting in China over the years?

Respondent 2: It has become more reflective of the societal and cultural shifts in China. As the country has opened up and modernized, so too has the art, becoming more global in its outlook while still retaining a distinctly Chinese perspective.

Interviewer: Are there particular historical events or societal shifts that have influenced this art form?

Respondent 2: Events like the Cultural Revolution and China's economic reforms have had a profound impact. They've forced artists to re-evaluate their cultural identity and the role of art in society, leading to more expressive and diverse forms of artistic expression.

Interviewer: How does contemporary Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting resonate with or diverge from traditional Chinese artistic philosophies and principles?

Respondent 2: While it diverges in form and technique, it often resonates with traditional philosophies in its search for human wants, needs, and deeper meaning. There's a continuity in the pursuit of expressing the human condition, albeit through different lenses. Where this is comes from Santayana's views, it reveals that human entrapped in an irrational world, with our roots planed in the materials world. As one of your selected artwork "Golden Splendour".

Interviewer: How do cultural and societal beliefs and values manifest themselves in these artworks?

Respondent 2: They are often at the core of these artworks. Whether it's exploring the tension between individuality and collectivism, or commenting on social and political issues, these beliefs and values are intricately woven into the fabric of the art.

Interviewer: From your perspective, what are the strengths and limitations of Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting?

Respondent 2: Its strength lies in its diversity and its ability to provoke thought and dialogue. The limitation, perhaps, is the risk of becoming too esoteric or disconnected from the audience if the balance between innovation and communication is not carefully maintained.

Interviewer: How do you see the future trajectory of this art form?

Respondent 2: It will continue to evolve and push boundaries. As China's place in the world changes, so too will the themes and techniques explored in this art form. It's an exciting time, with endless possibilities for creative expression.

Interviewer: What legacy do you believe it will leave behind for future generations?

Respondent 2: It will leave a legacy of bold exploration and a deep engagement with both the past and the present. It will be seen as a reflection of a unique period in Chinese history, where tradition and modernity collided and coalesced in fascinating ways.

Interviewer: Can you share any personal experiences or observations that have shaped your understanding or practice of this art form?

Respondent 2: My journey has been deeply influenced by my experiences during the Cultural Revolution. The turmoil and the suppression of artistic expression during that time had a profound impact on me. It taught me the power of art as a form of communication and resistance. This experience has driven me to explore the boundaries of language and expression in my art, leading me to experiment with various materials and techniques to convey complex ideas.

Interviewer: How has the art community and the broader public responded to this art form?

Respondent 2: The response has been diverse. Within the art community, there's a great deal of excitement and appreciation for the innovation and depth that this form brings. However, the broader public's reception is mixed. Some are captivated by the novelty and the fusion of traditional and modern elements, while others find it challenging to interpret. This divide is reflective of the broader conversation about the role of tradition in contemporary society and the pace of cultural change in China.

Interviewer: Can you share a memorable experience or story related to this art form, whether as an observer, critic, or creator?

Respondent 2: One of my most memorable experiences was creating my 'Book from the Sky' installation. It involved creating thousands of characters that looked traditional but were actually nonsensical. This work, in many ways, reflects the essence of contemporary mixed-material painting – it's about challenging perceptions, blending the old with the new, and creating something that makes the viewer question and think.

Interviewer: If there was one thing you'd want someone unfamiliar with contemporary Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting to understand, what would it be?

Respondent 2: It's that this art form is not just about aesthetics; it's a conversation. It's about the ongoing dialogue between artists and their cultural heritage, between modernity and tradition, and between China and the world.

Interviewer: Before we wrap out our session, Is there anything else you'd like to share about this art form that we haven't touched upon?

Respondent 2: I think it's important to approach this art form with an open mind. It's not just about what's on the canvas or the materials used; it's about the ideas and questions it raises. It's an art form that invites exploration and interpretation, and that's what makes it so exciting.

Interviewer: Thank you for your sharing, Mr Respondent 2, I am so glad to have a session with you.

B.3 Mixed Media Painting Interview Transcript – Respondent 3

Interviewer: Good morning, Mr. Respondent 3. It's a great honour to have you with us today. Thank you for agreeing to share your insights on contemporary Chinese mixed-media painting.

Respondent 3: Good morning. It's my pleasure to be here and discuss these aspects of contemporary art, a field that's close to my heart.

Interviewer: Could you briefly introduce yourself and describe your association with Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting?

Respondent 3: I am Respondent 3. In my work, I often explore the complexities of human emotion and the human condition, using a variety of materials to express these themes. My association with mixed-material painting is through my exploration of new forms and expressions in contemporary art.

Interviewer: How would you define contemporary Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting?

Respondent 3: It's a form of art that is constantly evolving, reflecting the rapid changes in Chinese society. It's about exploring new expressions and materials to convey deeper emotional and psychological states.

Interviewer: What differentiates it from other forms of Chinese painting?

Respondent 3: Its boldness in experimentation and its reflection of contemporary issues. While traditional Chinese painting is more about harmony and balance, contemporary mixed-material painting often delves into the complexities and contradictions of modern life.

Interviewer: Can you elaborate on the materials commonly used in this art form?

Respondent 3: Artists use a range of materials, from traditional ink and paper to modern acrylics, oils, and even digital media. Each material adds a different texture and depth, allowing for a more nuanced expression of complex themes.

Interviewer: How do the chosen materials influence the aesthetics and connotations of the artwork?

Respondent 3: The materials are not just tools; they are integral to the artwork's message. They can add layers of meaning, with each material bringing its own historical and cultural connotations.

Interviewer: How do you perceive the evolution of comprehensive mixed-material painting in China over the years?

Respondent 3: It has become more reflective of individual expression and the complexities of contemporary life. The evolution signifies a shift from collective narratives to more personal and introspective themes.

Interviewer: Are there particular historical events or societal shifts that have influenced this art form?

Respondent 3: Yes, events like China's economic boom and its integration into the global community have had a significant impact. These changes have brought new ideas and challenges, which are reflected in the art.

Interviewer: How does contemporary Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting resonate with or diverge from traditional Chinese artistic philosophies and principles?

Respondent 3: While it diverges in its techniques and materials, it often resonates with traditional principles in its exploration of human innermost and the most genuine and perplexing issues by searching for meaning for their unique cultural ideas. There's a continuity in the quest to understand and express the human experience.

Interviewer: How do cultural and societal beliefs and values manifest themselves in these artworks?

Respondent 3: They are often at the core, whether it's exploring the tension between tradition and modernity, or examining the impact of societal changes on the individual. These artworks are a reflection of the times we live in.

Interviewer: From your perspective, what are the strengths and limitations of Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting?

Respondent 3: Its strength lies in its ability to convey deep emotional states and complex ideas. The limitation is that sometimes the message can be obscured by the experimentation with form and material.

Interviewer: How do you see the future trajectory of this art form?

Respondent 3: It will continue to evolve, reflecting the ongoing changes in Chinese society and the broader world. It will likely become more diverse and complex, mirroring the multifaceted nature of contemporary life.

Interviewer: What legacy do you believe it will leave behind for future generations?

Respondent 3: It will leave a legacy of exploration and expression, showing how artists grappled with the challenges and opportunities of their times. It will be a testament to the richness and complexity of contemporary Chinese culture.

Interviewer: Can you share any personal experiences or observations that have shaped your understanding or practice of this art form?

Respondent 3: My personal experiences, particularly my early years in Wuhan and my later life in Beijing, have deeply influenced my work. The contrast between these environments, the rural and the urban, the traditional and the modern, has been a constant source of inspiration and exploration in my art.

Interviewer: How has the art community and the broader public responded to this art form?

Respondent 3: The art community has been very receptive, seeing it as a vital and dynamic part of contemporary art. The broader public's response is more varied, with some embracing it and others finding it challenging. It's a reflection of the diverse perspectives in society.

Interviewer: Can you share a memorable experience or story related to this art form, whether as an observer, critic, or creator?

Respondent 3: A memorable experience was the "Hairpin Beauty" series, where it use the Chinese motif and stamps to explore the theme of cultural, identity and the facade we present to the world. This series was a turning point in my career, marking my move towards more complex and layered compositions, both in terms of materials and cultural themes.

Interviewer: If there was one thing you'd want someone unfamiliar with contemporary Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting to understand, what would it be?

Respondent 3: It's that this art form is a reflection of the human condition in contemporary China. It's not just about aesthetics; it's about the stories, emotions, and questions that define our current era.

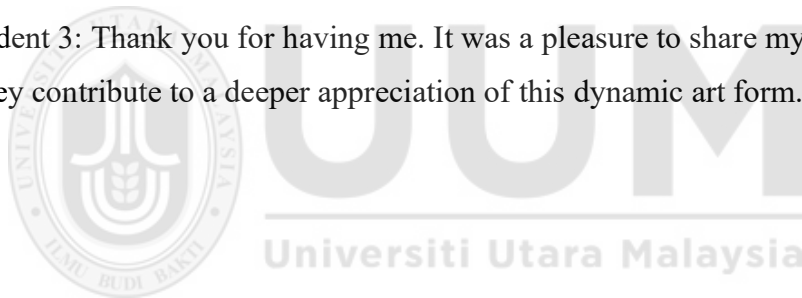
Interviewer: Is there anything else you'd like to share about this art form that we haven't touched upon?

Respondent 3: I would like to emphasize the importance of individual expression in this art form. It's a space where artists can freely explore their ideas and emotions, making each work deeply personal and unique.

End of the Interview:

Interviewer: Mr. Respondent 3, thank you for this insightful conversation. Your perspectives have added great depth to our understanding of contemporary Chinese mixed-media painting.

Respondent 3: Thank you for having me. It was a pleasure to share my thoughts, and I hope they contribute to a deeper appreciation of this dynamic art form.



B.4 Mixed Media Painting Interview Transcript – Respondent 4

Interviewer: Good morning, Mr. Respondent 4. Thank you for joining us today. Your insights into contemporary Chinese art are highly anticipated.

Respondent 4: Good morning. I'm always ready to discuss art and its impacts, especially in the context of contemporary China.

Interviewer: Could you briefly introduce yourself and describe your association with Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting?

Respondent 4: I am Respondent 4, an artist and activist. My work often intersects with political and social commentary. I use a variety of materials to express my views on contemporary issues, which aligns with the ethos of mixed-material painting.

Interviewer: How would you define contemporary Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting?

Respondent 4: It's a rebellion against traditional forms, a mirror reflecting the complexities and contradictions of modern China. It's not just art; it's a statement about our times.

Interviewer: What differentiates it from other forms of Chinese painting?

Respondent 4: Its boldness and its willingness to confront and question. While traditional forms often emphasize harmony and subtlety, contemporary mixed-material painting is more direct, more confrontational.

Interviewer: Can you elaborate on the materials commonly used in this art form?

Respondent 4: Everything from industrial materials to historical artifacts can be used. The choice of material is often a statement in itself, reflecting on history, society, and the state of the world.

Interviewer: How do the chosen materials influence the aesthetics and connotations of the artwork?

Respondent 4: They are critical. The materials bring their own histories and meanings, adding layers to the artwork. They can turn a piece into a political statement or a social commentary.

Interviewer: How do you perceive the evolution of comprehensive mixed-material painting in China over the years?

Respondent 4: It has become more daring, more critical of the status quo. As China has changed, so has its art, becoming a platform for commentary and dissent. Artists have gradually shifted their focus to the value of materials long overlooked by people. In traditional painting, the characteristics of painting materials were undervalued and not given much importance. However, in the creation of mixed media painting, the value of materials is highly regarded by artists.

Interviewer: Are there particular historical events or societal shifts that have influenced this art form?

Respondent 4: Absolutely. The Cultural Revolution, the Tiananmen Square protests, the rapid economic growth and its social impacts – all these events have left their mark on contemporary art.

Interviewer: How does contemporary Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting resonate with or diverge from traditional Chinese artistic philosophies and principles?

Respondent 4: It diverges significantly. Traditional art often avoids direct confrontation, but contemporary mixed-material painting embraces it. It's more about challenging norms than following them.

Interviewer: How do cultural and societal beliefs and values manifest themselves in these artworks?

Respondent 4: They are often critiqued and questioned. Contemporary artists use their work to challenge societal norms and to reflect on the rapid changes and the resulting tensions in Chinese society. For example, Antoni an object carrying the artist's thoughts, like a charged load, whose waves, upon touch by the sensitive, spontaneously evoke emotions. Therefore, we can view the language essence as one of the identity of materiality

Interviewer: From your perspective, what are the strengths and limitations of Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting?

Respondent 4: Its strength is its ability to provoke thought and challenge perceptions. Its limitation, perhaps, is that it can be too esoteric, too focused on the artist's perspective, sometimes alienating the wider audience.

Interviewer: How do you see the future trajectory of this art form?

Respondent 4: It will continue to evolve as a form of resistance and commentary. As long as there are issues to confront, this art form will remain relevant and vital.

Interviewer: What legacy do you believe it will leave behind for future generations?

Respondent 4: A legacy of courage and questioning. It will show future generations that art can be a powerful tool for social and political commentary.

Interviewer: Can you share any personal experiences or observations that have shaped your understanding or practice of this art form?

Respondent 4: My entire career has been about challenging authority and questioning societal norms. Every piece I create is informed by my experiences with censorship, surveillance, and the struggle for freedom of expression.

Interviewer: How has the art community and the broader public responded to this art form?

Respondent 4: The art community has been supportive, seeing it as a vital expression of contemporary issues. The public response is more mixed – some see it as essential commentary, others as too confrontational.

Interviewer: Can you share a memorable experience or story related to this art form, whether as an observer, critic, or creator?

Respondent 4: My 'Sunflower Seeds' installation at the Tate Modern was memorable. Each seed was handcrafted and painted – a commentary on mass production, individuality, and the human cost of China's economic boom. It encapsulated the essence of contemporary mixed-material art – complex, thought-provoking, and deeply connected to current issues.

Interviewer: If there was one thing, you'd want someone unfamiliar with contemporary Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting to understand, what would it be?

Respondent 4: That it's more than art. It's a reflection of our society, our struggles, and our hopes. It's a window into the soul of modern China. Any material can become a medium or carrier for the painting language, to express the spirit of the artwork that the artist wishes to express.

Interviewer: Is there anything else you'd like to share about this art form that we haven't touched upon?

Respondent 4: Just that it should be approached with an open mind. It's not always comfortable, but it's always meaningful. It's a vital part of our cultural dialogue.

Interviewer: Mr. Respondent 4, thank you for sharing your profound insights and experiences with us. Your perspectives have been incredibly enlightening.

Respondent 4: Thank you for the opportunity to speak. It's always important to discuss and reflect on the role of art in society.



B.5 Mixed Media Painting Interview Transcript – Respondent 5

Interviewer: Good morning, Mr. Respondent 5. Thank you for joining us today to share your insights on contemporary Chinese art.

Respondent 5: Good morning. It's my pleasure to be here and discuss the evolving landscape of Chinese art.

Interviewer: Could you briefly introduce yourself and describe your association with Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting?

Respondent 5: I am Respondent 5, an artist primarily known for my portraiture that often reflects on China's cultural and historical identity. My work, while not strictly mixed-material, resonates with the genre through its exploration of memory and identity, often incorporating various elements that challenge traditional portraiture.

Interviewer: How would you define contemporary Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting?

Respondent 5: It's a genre that reflects the complexity of modern China, blending traditional aesthetics with new, often Western influences. It's about exploring identity in a rapidly changing society.

Interviewer: What differentiates it from other forms of Chinese painting?

Respondent 5: Its willingness to experiment and challenge traditional norms. While classical Chinese painting is steeped in history and technique, contemporary mixed-material painting is more about exploring new forms and expressions.

Interviewer: Can you elaborate on the materials commonly used in this art form?

Respondent 5: Artists use a variety of materials, from traditional ink and paper to modern acrylics, oils, and even digital elements. This diversity allows for a richer, more layered expression.

Interviewer: How do the chosen materials influence the aesthetics and connotations of the artwork?

Respondent 5: Each material adds its own narrative layer. Traditional materials anchor the work in history, while modern materials can introduce themes of globalization and

cultural exchange. While, many artists use lines, shapes, brushstrokes, and color to express their own artwork to create classic artworks too.

Interviewer: How do you perceive the evolution of comprehensive mixed-material painting in China over the years?

Respondent 5: It has evolved from a cautious exploration of new forms to a confident, diverse expression of contemporary issues. It reflects the growing complexity of Chinese society. Starting from the Cubism represented by Picasso and Braque, painting materials gradually became a prominent element. At the present artwork, it explores to artists' emotions and creatively.

Interviewer: Are there particular historical events or societal shifts that have influenced this art form?

Respondent 5: Yes, events like the Cultural Revolution and China's economic reforms have deeply influenced this art form, introducing themes of memory, trauma, and the rapid transformation of society.

Interviewer: How does contemporary Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting resonate with or diverge from traditional Chinese artistic philosophies and principles?

Respondent 5: While it diverges in form, it often resonates with traditional themes like the search for harmony and the exploration of human nature. There's a continuity in its introspective nature.

Interviewer: How do cultural and societal beliefs and values manifest themselves in these artworks?

Respondent 5: They often reflect on the tension between individual and collective identity, the impact of historical events on personal lives, and the struggle to find one's place in a rapidly changing world.

Interviewer: From your perspective, what are the strengths and limitations of Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting?

Respondent 5: Its strength lies in its ability to express complex, multifaceted and cultural ideas. Its limitation, perhaps, is that it can sometimes become too introspective, potentially alienating a broader audience.

Interviewer: How do you see the future trajectory of this art form?

Respondent 5: It will likely become more diverse and globally influenced, reflecting China's increasing integration with the world. It will continue to be a vital medium for exploring and expressing contemporary Chinese identity.

Interviewer: What legacy do you believe it will leave behind for future generations?

Respondent 5: A legacy of exploration and introspection. It will show future generations the depth and complexity of our era's cultural and societal challenges.

Interviewer: Can you share any personal experiences or observations that have shaped your understanding or practice of this art form?

Respondent 5: My experiences growing up during the Cultural Revolution have profoundly influenced my work. The sense of disconnection and the search for identity in my paintings reflect the broader quest for meaning in contemporary Chinese society.

Interviewer: How has the art community and the broader public responded to this art form?

Respondent 5: The art community has embraced it as a critical reflection of our times. The public response is more varied, with some deeply connecting with its themes and others finding it challenging.

Interviewer: Can you share a memorable experience or story related to this art form, whether as an observer, critic, or creator?

Respondent 5: A memorable experience was my 'Bloodline' series, where I explored the theme of family and identity. This series resonated deeply with many, reflecting the universal quest for connection and understanding in a rapidly changing society.

Interviewer: If there was one thing, you'd want someone unfamiliar with contemporary Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting to understand, what would it be?

Respondent 5: That it's a reflection of the soul of modern China – its struggles, its transformations, and its search for a new identity. It's not just art; it's a narrative of our times.

Interviewer: Is there anything else you'd like to share about this art form that we haven't touched upon?

Respondent 5: Just that it should be approached with an open heart. It's a window into the complexities of contemporary Chinese life, offering insights not just into art, but into the human condition.

Interviewer: Mr. Respondent 5, thank you for this deeply insightful conversation. Your perspectives have been invaluable in understanding the nuances of contemporary Chinese mixed-media painting.

Respondent 5: Thank you for having me. It's been a pleasure to share my thoughts and experiences.



B.6 Mixed Media Painting Interview Transcript – Respondent 6

Interviewer: Good morning, Mr. Respondent 6. We are honoured to have you with us today to discuss contemporary Chinese art.

Respondent 6: Good morning. It's a pleasure to be here and share my thoughts on these important topics.

Interviewer: Could you briefly introduce yourself and describe your association with Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting?

Respondent 6: I am Respondent 6, primarily known for my performance art and sculptures, but my work also intersects with mixed-material painting. My art often involves a physical and spiritual exploration of self and society, which aligns with the ethos of mixed-material painting in contemporary Chinese art.

Interviewer: How would you define contemporary Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting?

Respondent 6: It is an art form that embodies the tension and dialogue between the old and the new, the physical and the spiritual. If you give a hundred artists the same material to create with, you will undoubtedly receive a hundred unique, completely different works. This is because the soul of each artwork is the artist themselves. It's a reflection of the diverse and complex nature of modern Chinese society.

Interviewer: What differentiates it from other forms of Chinese painting?

Respondent 6: Its boldness in embracing a wide array of materials and techniques, and its willingness to confront and question traditional aesthetics and cultural norms.

Interviewer: Can you elaborate on the materials commonly used in this art form?

Respondent 6: Artists use a diverse range of materials, from traditional ink and rice paper to unconventional items like ash, metal, and even organic materials. This variety allows for a rich tapestry of textures and meanings.

Interviewer: How do the chosen materials influence the aesthetics and connotations of the artwork?

Respondent 6: The materials are not just mediums for expression; they are integral to the artwork's narrative. They bring their own histories, cultural significances, and spiritual connotations, adding depth and complexity to the art.

Interviewer: How do you perceive the evolution of comprehensive mixed-material painting in China over the years?

Respondent 6: It has evolved from a cautious exploration of new forms to a confident, diverse expression of personal and societal narratives, reflecting the rapid changes and cultural shifts in China.

Interviewer: Are there particular historical events or societal shifts that have influenced this art form?

Respondent 6: Yes, events like the Cultural Revolution, China's economic reforms, and its opening up to the world have deeply influenced this art form, introducing themes of identity, memory, and the interplay between the individual and the collective. Also, Kandinsky's *The Spirit in Art* has a unique social background where he have influenced by the transition from traditional to contemporary art fields, with significant changes in the era prompting revolutionary progress in art forms, moving beyond history to exhibit new individual manifestations.

Interviewer: How does contemporary Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting resonate with or diverge from traditional Chinese artistic philosophies and principles?

Respondent 6: It diverges in its form and expression but often resonates with traditional philosophies in its contemplation of nature, spirituality, and the human condition. There's a continuity in its introspective and reflective nature. Like what I have shared about Kandisky, hid pyramid theory where individuals of high energy cognition constantly push the pyramid upwards. Painting should no longer be the unconscious naturalism of the majority but should rather focus on exploring the inner spirit through the external world.

Interviewer: How do cultural and societal beliefs and values manifest themselves in these artworks?

Respondent 6: They often explore the tension between tradition and modernity, the individual's place in society, and the spiritual void in a rapidly modernizing world. These artworks are a mirror to the soul of contemporary China.

Interviewer: From your perspective, what are the strengths and limitations of Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting?

Respondent 6: Its strength lies in its ability to provoke thought and evoke deep emotional responses. Its limitation, perhaps, is that it can sometimes become too abstract or introspective, potentially alienating a broader audience.

Interviewer: How do you see the future trajectory of this art form?

Respondent 6: It will likely become more diverse and globally influenced, reflecting China's increasing integration with the world. It will continue to be a vital medium for exploring and expressing contemporary Chinese identity.

Interviewer: What legacy do you believe it will leave behind for future generations?

Respondent 6: A legacy of exploration, introspection, and a deep engagement with both the spiritual and the material aspects of life. It will show future generations the depth and complexity of our era's cultural and societal challenges.

Interviewer: Can you share any personal experiences or observations that have shaped your understanding or practice of this art form?

Respondent 6: My experiences with performance art, where the body becomes a canvas and a medium, have deeply influenced my understanding of mixed-material painting. The idea of transformation, both physical and spiritual, is a theme that resonates strongly in my work.

Interviewer: How has the art community and the broader public responded to this art form?

Respondent 6: The art community has been very receptive, seeing it as a critical reflection of our times. The public response is more varied, with some deeply connecting with its themes and others finding it challenging.

Interviewer: Can you share a memorable experience or story related to this art form, whether as an observer, critic, or creator?

Respondent 6: A memorable experience was my 'Family Tree' series, where my face was progressively painted with calligraphy until it was completely obscured. This work, reflecting on identity and history, encapsulates the essence of contemporary mixed-material art – it's personal, thought-provoking, and deeply connected to cultural roots.

Interviewer: If there was one thing you'd want someone unfamiliar with contemporary Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting to understand, what would it be?

Respondent 6: That it's a form of art deeply rooted in the present, yet reaching back into history and tradition. It's a dialogue between the artist and their cultural heritage, and between the individual and the collective experience.

Interviewer: Is there anything else you'd like to share about this art form that we haven't touched upon?

Respondent 6: Just that it should be approached with an open mind and heart. It's a journey into the depths of contemporary Chinese society, offering insights not just into art, but into the human condition in a broader sense.

Interviewer: Mr. Respondent 6, thank you for this deeply insightful conversation. Your perspectives have been invaluable in understanding the nuances of contemporary Chinese mixed-media painting.

Respondent 6: Thank you for having me. It's been a pleasure to share my thoughts and experiences.

B.7 Mixed Media Painting Interview Transcript – Respondent 7

Interviewer: Good morning, Mr. Respondent 7. Thank you for joining us today to discuss the evolving landscape of contemporary Chinese art.

Respondent 7: Good morning. It's a pleasure to be here and share my thoughts on these topics.

Interviewer: Could you briefly introduce yourself and describe your association with Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting?

Respondent 7: I am Respondent 7, an artist whose work often challenges conventional boundaries. My association with mixed-material painting lies in my use of diverse materials and techniques to comment on and reflect upon the rapid changes in contemporary society.

Interviewer: How would you define contemporary Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting?

Respondent 7: It's a dynamic and evolving form of expression that captures the complexities of modern China. It blends traditional techniques with new materials and ideas, reflecting the tensions and transformations of our time.

Interviewer: What differentiates it from other forms of Chinese painting?

Respondent 7: Its experimental nature and its engagement with contemporary issues. Unlike traditional Chinese painting, which often emphasizes harmony and balance, contemporary mixed-material painting is more about confronting and questioning the realities of our society.

Interviewer: Can you elaborate on the materials commonly used in this art form?

Respondent 7: Artists use a wide range of materials, from traditional ones like ink and paper to unconventional ones like industrial materials, found objects, and even digital media. This diversity allows for a more nuanced and layered exploration of themes.

Interviewer: How do the chosen materials influence the aesthetics and connotations of the artwork?

Respondent 7: The materials are integral to the message. They bring their own histories and meanings, adding layers of complexity to the artwork and often making a statement about the world we live in.

Interviewer: How do you perceive the evolution of comprehensive mixed-material painting in China over the years?

Respondent 7: It has become more reflective of the rapid urbanization and technological changes in China. The evolution signifies a shift from traditional aesthetics to a more diverse and complex artistic language. While, I would like to highlights that formation of oil painting were essentially improvements in painting materials by generations of artists where they having a constructive meaning.

Interviewer: Are there particular historical events or societal shifts that have influenced this art form?

Respondent 7: Yes, events like China's economic boom and globalization have had a significant impact. They've introduced new themes and concerns, such as the impact of urbanization and the loss of traditional values.

Interviewer: How does contemporary Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting resonate with or diverge from traditional Chinese artistic philosophies and principles?

Respondent 7: While it diverges in its techniques and materials, it often resonates with traditional philosophies in its contemplation of the human condition and the search for meaning in a rapidly changing world. For instance, the creations of Cézanne, the father of modern art, rebelled against the previous painting creation's imitation of nature. Duchamp's creations significantly expanded the boundaries of art, rebelling against the "sublime" in artistic creation.

Interviewer: How do cultural and societal beliefs and values manifest themselves in these artworks?

Respondent 7: They often critique and question these beliefs and values, reflecting on the challenges and contradictions of modern Chinese society. I would like to share Lee Ufan's ideas where he believed artistic creation should follow the original properties of materials, conforming to the development laws of things to unveil the veil of universal concepts, I have same thoughts as well.

Interviewer: From your perspective, what are the strengths and limitations of Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting?

Respondent 7: Its strength lies in its ability to provoke thought and challenge perceptions. Its limitation, perhaps, is that it can sometimes become too focused on the shock value, losing some of its potential for deeper reflection.

Interviewer: How do you see the future trajectory of this art form?

Respondent 7: It will likely continue to evolve, reflecting the ongoing changes in Chinese society and the broader world. It will remain a vital medium for exploring and expressing contemporary issues.

Interviewer: What legacy do you believe it will leave behind for future generations?

Respondent 7: A legacy of innovation and critical engagement with society. It will show future generations the diverse ways artists have responded to the complexities of their times.

Interviewer: Can you share any personal experiences or observations that have shaped your understanding or practice of this art form?

Respondent 7: My experiences living and working in rapidly urbanizing Beijing have profoundly influenced my work. The transformation of the cityscape and the societal changes that come with it are constant sources of inspiration and reflection in my art.

Interviewer: How has the art community and the broader public responded to this art form?

Respondent 7: The art community has been very receptive, seeing it as a critical reflection of our times. The public response is more varied, with some deeply connecting with its themes and others finding it challenging or provocative.

Interviewer: Can you share a memorable experience or story related to this art form, whether as an observer, critic, or creator?

Respondent 7: A memorable experience was creating my installation 'Love It, Bite It', where I used dog chews to construct models of iconic buildings. This work, reflecting on power, consumption, and impermanence, encapsulates the essence of contemporary

mixed-material art – it's provocative, thought-provoking, and deeply connected to current issues.

Interviewer: If there was one thing, you'd want someone unfamiliar with contemporary Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting to understand, what would it be?

Respondent 7: That it's a reflection of the complexities of modern life in China. It's not just about aesthetics; it's about the stories, questions, and critiques that define our current era.

Interviewer: Is there anything else you'd like to share about this art form that we haven't touched upon?

Respondent 7: Just that it should be approached with an open mind and a willingness to engage with challenging ideas. It's a vital part of our cultural dialogue, offering insights into the rapidly changing world we live in.

Interviewer: Mr. Respondent 7, thank you for this deeply insightful conversation. Your perspectives have been invaluable in understanding the nuances of contemporary Chinese mixed-media painting.

Respondent 7: Thank you for having me. It's been a pleasure to share my thoughts and experiences.

B.8 Mixed Media Painting Interview Transcript – Respondent 8

Interviewer: Good morning, Mr. Respondent 8. It's a great honour to have you with us today to discuss contemporary Chinese art.

Respondent 8: Good morning. I'm delighted to be here and share my perspective on these fascinating topics.

Interviewer: Could you briefly introduce yourself and describe your association with Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting?

Respondent 8: I am Respondent 8, an artist known for my signature style of self-portraiture with exaggerated and often laughing figures. My work, while not strictly mixed-material, intersects with the genre through its exploration of contemporary themes using a blend of traditional and modern techniques.

Interviewer: How would you define contemporary Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting?

Respondent 8: It's a vibrant and evolving art form that reflects the complexities and contradictions of modern China. It combines traditional aesthetics with new, often global influences, creating a unique visual language.

Interviewer: What differentiates it from other forms of Chinese painting?

Respondent 8: Its boldness in experimentation and its direct engagement with contemporary issues. Unlike traditional Chinese painting, which often focuses on harmony and subtlety, contemporary mixed-material painting is more about confronting and questioning the realities of our society.

Interviewer: Can you elaborate on the materials commonly used in this art form?

Respondent 8: Artists use a wide range of materials, from traditional ones like ink and paper to unconventional ones like industrial materials, found objects, and even digital media. This diversity allows for a more nuanced and layered exploration of themes.

Interviewer: How do the chosen materials influence the aesthetics and connotations of the artwork?

Respondent 8: The materials are integral to the message. They bring their own histories and meanings, adding layers of complexity to the artwork and often making a statement about the world we live in.

Interviewer: How do you perceive the evolution of comprehensive mixed-material painting in China over the years?

Respondent 8: It has become more reflective of the rapid urbanization and technological changes in China. The evolution signifies a shift from traditional aesthetics to a more diverse and complex artistic language.

Interviewer: Are there particular historical events or societal shifts that have influenced this art form?

Respondent 8: Absolutely, there are several pivotal moments and shifts that have profoundly influenced the course of contemporary Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting. The end of the Cultural Revolution and the subsequent opening up of China to the world played a crucial role. This period of reform and opening allowed for an influx of Western contemporary art ideas, which, mixed with China's rich traditional art heritage, created a fertile ground for innovation and experimentation that hadn't been possible before. Moreover, the rapid economic development and urbanization of China since the late 20th century have been significant. They've not only changed the physical landscape but also the societal and cultural dynamics, leading to a re-evaluation of identity, tradition, and modernity in the Chinese context. These changes have prompted artists to explore themes of dislocation, environmental degradation, and the complexities of living in a rapidly modernizing society, often using mixed materials to express these themes more vividly.

Interviewer: How does contemporary Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting resonate with or diverge from traditional Chinese artistic philosophies and principles?

Respondent 8: While it diverges in its techniques and materials, it often resonates with traditional philosophies in its contemplation of the human condition and the search for meaning in a rapidly changing world.

Interviewer: How do cultural and societal beliefs and values manifest themselves in these artworks?

Respondent 8: They often critique and question these beliefs and values, reflecting on the challenges and contradictions of modern Chinese society.

Interviewer: From your perspective, what are the strengths and limitations of Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting?

Respondent 8: Its strength lies in its ability to provoke thought and challenge perceptions. Its limitation, perhaps, is that it can sometimes become too focused on the shock value, losing some of its potential for deeper reflection.

Interviewer: How do you see the future trajectory of this art form?

Respondent 8: It will likely continue to evolve, reflecting the ongoing changes in Chinese society and the broader world. It will remain a vital medium for exploring and expressing contemporary issues.

Interviewer: What legacy do you believe it will leave behind for future generations?

Respondent 8: A legacy of innovation and critical engagement with society. It will show future generations the diverse ways artists have responded to the complexities of their times.

Interviewer: Can you share any personal experiences or observations that have shaped your understanding or practice of this art form?

Respondent 8: The experimentation with materials from that era has significantly broadened the palette for contemporary artists, myself included. It's not just about the aesthetic qualities these materials bring but their ability to convey deeper meanings and critiques. This exploration of materials allows artists to reflect on and respond to the rapid changes in our society, much like the artists of the "85 New Wave" responded to their cultural and societal context.

Interviewer: How has the art community and the broader public responded to this art form?

Respondent 8: The art community has been very receptive, seeing it as a critical reflection of our times. The public response is more varied, with some deeply connecting with its themes and others finding it challenging or provocative.

Interviewer: Can you share a memorable experience or story related to this art form, whether as an observer, critic, or creator?

Respondent 8: A memorable experience was the creation of my series where the laughing figure, often a representation of myself, is placed in various historical and contemporary contexts. The spirit of experimentation that defined the "85 New Wave" period greatly influences my approach to art. Like those artists, I aim to challenge rigid thinking and explore the essence of life through my work. My use of exaggerated, laughing figures, for instance, is an attempt to observe life from a distance, embracing the unpredictability and randomness that Huang Yong Ping explored with his non-expressive painting techniques. This legacy of experimentation and breaking boundaries is something I strive to continue in my practice.

Interviewer: If there was one thing you'd want someone unfamiliar with contemporary Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting to understand, what would it be?

Respondent 8: That it's a reflection of the complexities of modern life in China. It's not just about aesthetics; it's about the stories, questions, and critiques that define our current era. Navigating spirituality in art is about transcending the immediate and tangible to touch upon the universal truths of human existence. My process, much like the artists before me, involves a degree of surrender to chance and the essence of life beyond the surface. It's about creating a dialogue with the universe through my art, an exploration of the relationship between the human spirit and the infinite complexities of life.

Interviewer: Is there anything else you'd like to share about this art form that we haven't touched upon?

Respondent 8: Just that it should be approached with an open mind and a willingness to engage with challenging ideas. It's a vital part of our cultural dialogue, offering insights into the rapidly changing world we live in.

Interviewer: Mr. Respondent 8, thank you for this deeply insightful conversation. Your perspectives have been invaluable in understanding the nuances of contemporary Chinese mixed-media painting.

Respondent 8: Thank you for having me. It's been a pleasure to share my thoughts and experiences.



B.9 Mixed Media Painting Interview Transcript – Respondent 9

Interviewer: Good morning, Mr. Respondent 9. We're honoured to have you with us today to delve into the world of contemporary Chinese art.

Respondent 9: Good morning. I'm glad to be here and discuss my work and perspectives on art.

Interviewer: Could you briefly introduce yourself and describe your association with Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting?

Respondent 9: I am Respondent 9, known for my role in the Political Pop movement in Chinese contemporary art. My work often juxtaposes elements of political propaganda with icons of consumer culture, reflecting the complex interplay of ideology and capitalism in modern China.

Interviewer: How would you define contemporary Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting?

Respondent 9: It's an art form that critically engages with both China's political history and its current socio-economic realities. It's about challenging the viewer to see beyond the surface and question deeper societal and ideological constructs.

Interviewer: What differentiates it from other forms of Chinese painting?

Respondent 9: Its direct engagement with contemporary social and political themes sets it apart. It's less about traditional aesthetics and more about making bold statements on current issues.

Interviewer: Can you elaborate on the materials commonly used in this art form?

Respondent 9: Beyond traditional mediums, artists often incorporate industrial materials, commercial imagery, and even digital elements. These materials are chosen for their cultural and political significance, adding layers of meaning to the artwork.

Interviewer: How do the chosen materials influence the aesthetics and connotations of the artwork?

Respondent 9: The choice of materials is pivotal in shaping both the visual impact and the layered meanings within an artwork. Take, for instance, the inspiration I draw from

Hu Yi's works, particularly the way he uses Xuan paper to echo the traditional scrolls in the Warp Scroll. This choice is not merely aesthetic but deeply intentional. By arranging and stacking Xuan paper scrolls against a dense background, Hu Yi explores themes of civilization's emergence and dissolution. This interaction between material and concept—where the delicate, ephemeral nature of Xuan paper contrasts with the weighty themes of existence and loss—embodies the complex dialogue contemporary mixed-media artists engage with. It reflects a meticulous process of selecting materials that resonate with the thematic essence we aim to explore, underscoring the transformative power of materials in conveying profound societal and existential inquiries. Through such approaches, we not only push the boundaries of aesthetics but also delve into the deeper connotations of our civilization and its fleeting nature, inviting reflection on the cycles of creation and oblivion that define human history.

Interviewer: How do you perceive the evolution of comprehensive mixed-material painting in China over the years?

Respondent 9: The evolution has been dynamic, shaped significantly by China's rapid socio-economic changes and its dialogue with the global art scene. Initially, artists sought to find the most suitable tools and materials to express burgeoning ideas—this journey of discovery and experimentation was foundational. Over time, as the creative landscape broadened, the focus shifted towards more complex interrogations of material and form. This reflects a deeper engagement with the philosophical aims of art: to question, to beautify, and to understand the essence of our being. Through these explorations, comprehensive mixed-material painting has become a critical lens through which we view not just the art itself but its capacity to comment on and engage with the spiritual and existential queries of our time.

Interviewer: Are there particular historical events or societal shifts that have influenced this art form?

Respondent 9: Indeed, the transition from the Cultural Revolution to the opening up of China has been a monumental shift, fostering a fertile ground for mixed-media painting. This period allowed for a renaissance of artistic expression, mirroring societal transformations. As artists, we delve into the exploration of materials as an experimental process, akin to the way earlier innovators searched for new modes of expression amidst changing times. This search is not just physical but deeply

philosophical, reflecting on the ultimate purpose of art—to construct spirituality and explore the deeper meanings of humanity and life. For instance, the use of Xuan paper in contemporary works, inspired by traditional scrolls, isn't just a nod to the past; it's a reimagining of how materials can convey complex narratives about civilization, its ebbs and flows. This reflects a broader artistic endeavor to connect with universal human foundations, transcending time and individual experiences to touch upon eternal themes of existence and identity.

Interviewer: How does contemporary Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting resonate with or diverge from traditional Chinese artistic philosophies and principles?

Respondent 9: Contemporary mixed-material painting diverges from traditional Chinese art in technique and medium but shares a philosophical lineage. The rigorous process of material selection and experimentation is a modern manifestation of the ancient quest for harmony and understanding within the natural world. Similarly, while traditional art emphasizes balance and subtlety, contemporary practices leverage contrast and critique to probe deeper societal issues. Yet, both align with the core belief that art serves a higher purpose—be it the construction of spirituality or the pursuit of truth. This dialogue between the old and the new, the material and the spiritual, underscores a continuous exploration of what it means to be human, a theme as relevant today as it was centuries ago.

Interviewer: How do cultural and societal beliefs and values manifest themselves in these artworks?

Respondent 9: They often manifest as a critique of these beliefs and values, particularly in the context of China's rapid modernization and the tensions between socialist ideology and capitalist reality.

Interviewer: From your perspective, what are the strengths and limitations of Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting?

Respondent 9: One of the strengths of this art form lies in its inherent diversity and its capacity for critical engagement with contemporary issues. The experimental approach to selecting and using materials encourages a deep exploration of the visual and thematic possibilities, allowing for a multifaceted critique of modern society. However, a limitation arises when the emphasis on material and experimentation overshadows the

narrative or conceptual clarity of the artwork. The balance between form and content, material and message, is delicate and crucial for the art to resonate fully with its audience. Despite these challenges, the pursuit of art as a reflection of the human condition and a means to explore the spiritual and existential depths remains a compelling aspect of comprehensive mixed-material painting, promising its continued evolution and relevance.

Interviewer: How do you see the future trajectory of this art form?

Respondent 9: It will likely continue to evolve as a critical reflection of China's place in the global context, addressing issues of cultural identity, power dynamics, and the impact of globalization.

Interviewer: What legacy do you believe it will leave behind for future generations?

Respondent 9: It will leave a legacy of boldness in addressing complex social and political themes, encouraging future generations to think critically about the world they inhabit.

Interviewer: Can you share any personal experiences or observations that have shaped your understanding or practice of this art form?

Respondent 9: My experiences during the Cultural Revolution have profoundly influenced my perspective. The omnipresent propaganda imagery from that time became a key element in my work, recontextualized to comment on contemporary issues.

Interviewer: How has the art community and the broader public responded to this art form?

Respondent 9: The art community has generally been receptive, appreciating its critical approach. Public responses vary, with some viewers deeply engaged by the political and cultural commentary, while others may find it challenging.

Interviewer: Can you share a memorable experience or story related to this art form, whether as an observer, critic, or creator?

Respondent 9: Creating my Great Criticism series was a turning point for me. It was a moment where I felt I could effectively communicate the complexities of China's

transition, using the language of both propaganda and advertising to create a dialogue on ideology and consumerism.

Interviewer: If there was one thing, you'd want someone unfamiliar with contemporary Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting to understand, what would it be?

Respondent 9: That this art form is a powerful tool for reflecting on and critiquing the rapid changes in Chinese society and the broader global context. It's not just art for art's sake; it's art with a purpose.

Interviewer: Is there anything else you'd like to share about this art form that we haven't touched upon?

Respondent 9: Just that it should be approached with an open mind and a willingness to engage with the ideas it presents. It's a reflection of our times, offering insights into the complexities of modern China.

Interviewer: Mr. Respondent 9, thank you for sharing your invaluable insights and experiences with us today. Your contributions to contemporary Chinese art are deeply appreciated.

Respondent 9: Thank you for the opportunity to discuss these topics. I hope my work continues to provoke thought and dialogue.

B.10 Mixed Media Painting Interview Transcript – Respondent 10

Interviewer: Good morning, Mr. Respondent 10. It's a privilege to have you with us today to discuss your unique perspective on contemporary Chinese art.

Respondent 10: Good morning. I'm pleased to be here and share my thoughts on these topics.

Interviewer: Could you briefly introduce yourself and describe your association with Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting?

Respondent 10: I am Respondent 10, an artist and filmmaker. My work often explores the boundaries between film and painting, blending traditional Chinese aesthetics with contemporary themes. This intersection aligns with the ethos of mixed-material painting in contemporary Chinese art.

Interviewer: How would you define contemporary Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting?

Respondent 10: It's an art form that captures the fluidity and complexity of modern China. It combines traditional techniques with new, often experimental approaches, creating a dialogue between the past and the present.

Interviewer: What differentiates it from other forms of Chinese painting

Respondent 10: Its experimental nature and its engagement with contemporary issues. It's less about replicating traditional aesthetics and more about exploring new forms of expression and meaning.

Interviewer: Can you elaborate on the materials commonly used in this art form?

Respondent 10: From traditional elements like ink and Xuan paper to modern and unconventional materials such as digital media and found objects, each is chosen for its potential to deepen the artwork's narrative. Warhol's approach, combining commercial savvy with profound artistic inquiry, inspires us to select materials that go beyond their surface value, allowing us to explore and critique contemporary themes in multifaceted ways. In much the same way Andy Warhol utilized celebrities and commercial imagery not as mere subjects but as materials imbued with complex cultural and artistic

significance, we in contemporary Chinese mixed-material painting embrace a wide array of mediums.

Interviewer: How do the chosen materials influence the aesthetics and connotations of the artwork?

Respondent 10: The materials are a critical part of the artwork's narrative. They bring their own cultural and historical connotations, adding depth and complexity to the art, and often creating a sense of ambiguity and open-ended interpretation. For instance, by incorporating elements from consumer culture, as Wei Guangqing does, and experimenting with randomness and material juxtaposition, we can create pieces that reflect and critique the era's socio-cultural dynamics. This approach allows for a multifaceted exploration of contemporary issues, imbuing the work with a sense of immediacy and relevance. It's about transcending the mere visual appeal of the materials to uncover and engage with deeper cultural narratives, thereby enriching the artwork's connotations and its dialogue with the viewer.

Interviewer: How do you perceive the evolution of comprehensive mixed-material painting in China over the years?

Respondent 10: The evolution has been marked by a continuous quest for breaking away from traditional constraints and exploring new thematic territories. The freedom in material choice and the embrace of randomness have been pivotal in this journey, allowing artists to reflect more dynamically on the shifts within our society. The Pop Art movement, as embraced by artists like Wei in the 1990s, represents a crucial moment in this evolution. It signifies a turning point where artists began to more directly interrogate the consumer culture's impact on our collective psyche and societal values. This period underscored a move towards greater vitality and diversity in Chinese contemporary art, reflecting a broader global dialogue while maintaining a distinct cultural voice.

Interviewer: Are there particular historical events or societal shifts that have influenced this art form?

Respondent 10: Events like the Cultural Revolution and China's economic reforms have been particularly influential. They've shaped the way artists view and critique the interplay of history, memory, and contemporary life.

Interviewer: How does contemporary Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting resonate with or diverge from traditional Chinese artistic philosophies and principles?

Respondent 10: While it diverges in its form and content, focusing more on individual expression and contemporary issues, it resonates with traditional philosophies in its contemplative and often introspective nature.

Interviewer: How do cultural and societal beliefs and values manifest themselves in these artworks?

Respondent 10: They often manifest as a reflection or critique of these beliefs and values, particularly in the context of modern China's rapid transformation and the tensions this creates between the individual and society.

Interviewer: From your perspective, what are the strengths and limitations of Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting?

Respondent 10: The strength of this art form lies in its capacity to blend diverse materials and themes, creating works that invite viewers to contemplate deeper questions of existence, beauty, and spirituality. This approach allows for a rich tapestry of interpretation and meaning, challenging the audience to see beyond the immediate. However, one limitation could be the potential for misunderstanding or misinterpretation, especially when the art delves into abstract or complex thematic areas. This challenge reminds us of the importance of grounding our work in a universal human foundation, striving for art that maintains its vitality across time and cultures, much as the immortal forms discussed in the second concept suggest.

Interviewer: How do you see the future trajectory of this art form?

Respondent 10: It will likely continue to evolve as a critical reflection of China's place in the global context, addressing issues of identity, history, and the impact of modernization.

Interviewer: What legacy do you believe it will leave behind for future generations?

Respondent 10: The legacy of contemporary Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting will be one of innovation and introspection, reflecting a period in human history where art became a crucial medium for exploring the intersections between the

material and the spiritual. Inspired by figures like Warhol, who navigated between commercial success and profound artistic exploration, this art form will be remembered for its ability to provoke thought and encourage a deeper understanding of our place in the universe. It stands as a testament to the idea that art, in its most enduring form, transcends the immediate and the commercial, reaching towards the eternal and the universal.

Interviewer: Can you share any personal experiences or observations that have shaped your understanding or practice of this art form?

Respondent 10: My experiences in filmmaking have shaped my approach to art. The use of narrative, ambiguity, and the exploration of time and memory in my films are themes that resonate with the broader context of contemporary mixed-material painting.

Interviewer: How has the art community and the broader public responded to this art form?

Respondent 10: The response has been varied, reflecting the diverse nature of the art itself. Within the art community, there's a deep appreciation for the experimental and reflective qualities of mixed-material painting, recognizing its role in pushing the boundaries of traditional Chinese art. The public's reaction is more nuanced, with some finding immediate connection and others gradually appreciating the depth and complexity of the works. This mirrors the journey of artists like Warhol, whose work, initially seen through the lens of pop culture and commercialism, gained deeper recognition for its artistic and societal insights. It underscores the importance of approaching contemporary art with an open mind, ready to explore the layers of meaning that lie beneath the surface.

Interviewer: Can you share a memorable experience or story related to this art form, whether as an observer, critic, or creator?

Respondent 10: Creating my multi-screen film installations has been a memorable experience. These works, which blend cinematic and painterly elements, challenge traditional narrative structures and invite viewers to engage with the work in a more personal and interpretive manner.

Interviewer: If there was one thing you'd want someone unfamiliar with contemporary Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting to understand, what would it be?

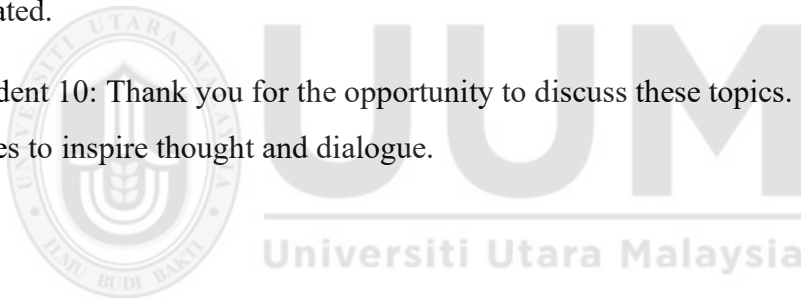
Respondent 10: That it's a form of art that invites contemplation and personal interpretation. It's not just about what is seen on the surface but about the layers of meaning and emotion that lie beneath.

Interviewer: Is there anything else you'd like to share about this art form that we haven't touched upon?

Respondent 10: Just that it should be approached with an open mind and a willingness to engage with the ideas it presents. It's a reflection of our times, offering a unique perspective on the complexities of contemporary Chinese society.

Interviewer: Mr. Respondent 10, thank you for sharing your profound insights and experiences with us. Your contributions to contemporary Chinese art are deeply appreciated.

Respondent 10: Thank you for the opportunity to discuss these topics. I hope my work continues to inspire thought and dialogue.



B.11 Mixed Media Painting Interview Transcript – Respondent 11

Interviewer: Good morning, Mr. Respondent 11. We are honoured to have you with us today to discuss your unique approach to contemporary Chinese art.

Respondent 11: Good morning. It's a pleasure to be here and share my experiences and thoughts on art.

Interviewer: Could you briefly introduce yourself and describe your association with Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting?

Respondent 11: I am Respondent 11, an artist known for my work with traditional Chinese calligraphy and my exploration of linguistic and cultural themes. My approach often involves deconstructing and reinterpreting traditional forms, aligning with the ethos of mixed-material painting in contemporary Chinese art.

Interviewer: How would you define contemporary Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting?

Respondent 11: It's an art form that challenges and redefines traditional Chinese aesthetics by incorporating modern materials and concepts. It reflects the ongoing dialogue between China's rich historical legacy and the realities of its rapidly evolving society.

Interviewer: What differentiates it from other forms of Chinese painting?

Respondent 11: Its experimental nature and its engagement with contemporary issues. It's less about replicating traditional aesthetics and more about exploring new forms of expression and meaning.

Interviewer: Can you elaborate on the materials commonly used in this art form?

Respondent 11: The choice of materials in comprehensive mixed-material painting goes beyond mere physicality; it's about embodying the spirit of the material, creating a symbiosis between 'form and below' and 'form and above.' This approach not only innovates style but also serves as a contemporary reinterpretation of the spiritual characteristics of Chinese traditional culture. By integrating materials ranging from the traditional to the unconventional, artists can delve into the complex internal structure

relationships within their works, echoing the depth and ambiguity of existence itself, much like the interconnectedness and indefinability.

Interviewer: How do the chosen materials influence the aesthetics and connotations of the artwork?

Respondent 11: The materials chosen for a piece carry with them a dual expression—both material and spiritual—that shapes the artwork's internal structure and external impact. This dual expression allows us to explore the vast ambiguities and connections within our world, reflecting the notion that everything exists in relation to everything else, as noted in concept 2. For example, the use of black and white in Zhang Qingguo's "Clouds and Mists of Huangshan-3" mirrors the ink painting tradition, bridging the gap between the tangible material and its transcendent spiritual essence, thereby enriching the artwork's connotations and its resonance with traditional Chinese artistic principles.

Interviewer: How do you perceive the evolution of comprehensive mixed-material painting in China over the years?

Respondent 11: It has evolved to reflect the dramatic changes in Chinese society, particularly the shift from a traditional, collective culture to a more fragmented, individualistic one. The art form has become a space for exploring these changes and their impact on the individual and society.

Interviewer: Are there particular historical events or societal shifts that have influenced this art form?

Respondent 11: Events like the Cultural Revolution and China's economic reforms have been particularly influential. They've shaped the way artists view and critique the interplay of history, memory, and contemporary life.

Interviewer: How does contemporary Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting resonate with or diverge from traditional Chinese artistic philosophies and principles?

Respondent 11: This art form both diverges from and resonates with traditional Chinese artistic philosophies. While it adopts modern materials and methodologies, it also seeks to explore the underlying spiritual dimensions of materials, reflecting traditional Chinese concerns with harmony and the essence of nature. The artistic charm of mixed-material painting lies not just in style expansion or innovation but in its ability to reflect

and reinterpret the spiritual characteristics of traditional culture in a contemporary context, as I mentioned earlier. This creates a bridge between the past and the present, embracing the ambiguity and interconnectedness that define both life and art.

Interviewer: How do cultural and societal beliefs and values manifest themselves in these artworks?

Respondent 11: They often manifest as a reflection or critique of these beliefs and values, particularly in the context of modern China's rapid transformation and the tensions this creates between the individual and society.

Interviewer: From your perspective, what are the strengths and limitations of Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting?

Respondent 11: Its strength lies in its ability to provoke thought and evoke a sense of introspection. A limitation is that its abstract and often ambiguous nature can sometimes make it less accessible to a broader audience.

Interviewer: How do you see the future trajectory of this art form?

Respondent 11: It will likely continue to evolve as a critical reflection of China's place in the global context, addressing issues of identity, history, and the impact of modernization.

Interviewer: What legacy do you believe it will leave behind for future generations?

Respondent 11: The legacy of comprehensive mixed-material painting in China will be its ability to challenge and expand the boundaries of traditional art, incorporating a broad spectrum of materials and ideas to explore the intricate relationship between material expression and spiritual essence. Future generations will inherit an art form that is deeply rooted in the rich soil of Chinese culture yet extends its branches towards the universal, grappling with the ambiguities and interconnectedness of our world. This legacy will inspire continued exploration and dialogue within the art community, encouraging artists to seek their own paths in the ever-evolving landscape of contemporary art.

Interviewer: Can you share any personal experiences or observations that have shaped your understanding or practice of this art form?

Respondent 11: My experiences in exploring the nature of language and calligraphy have shaped my approach to art. The idea of language as both a cultural bridge and barrier is a theme that resonates with the broader context of contemporary mixed-material painting.

Interviewer: How has the art community and the broader public responded to this art form?

Respondent 11: The art community has generally been receptive, appreciating its depth and complexity. Public responses vary, with some viewers deeply engaged by the themes and others finding it challenging or enigmatic.

Interviewer: Can you share a memorable experience or story related to this art form, whether as an observer, critic, or creator?

Respondent 11: Creating my large-scale installations that involve calligraphy and unconventional materials has been a memorable experience. These works, which challenge traditional perceptions of language and script, invite viewers to engage with the work in a more personal and interpretive manner.

Interviewer: If there was one thing you'd want someone unfamiliar with contemporary Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting to understand, what would it be?

Respondent 11: That it's a form of art that invites contemplation and personal interpretation. It's not just about what is seen on the surface but about the layers of meaning and emotion that lie beneath.

Interviewer: Is there anything else you'd like to share about this art form that we haven't touched upon?

Respondent 11: Just that it should be approached with an open mind and a willingness to engage with the ideas it presents. It's a reflection of our times, offering a unique perspective on the complexities of contemporary Chinese society.

Interviewer: Mr. Respondent 11, thank you for sharing your profound insights and experiences with us. Your contributions to contemporary Chinese art are deeply appreciated.

Respondent 11: Thank you for the opportunity to discuss these topics. I hope my work continues to inspire thought and dialogue.



B.12 Mixed Media Painting Interview Transcript – Respondent 12

Interviewer: Good morning, Mr. Respondent 12. We are honoured to have you with us today to share your insights into contemporary Chinese art.

Respondent 12: Good morning. I'm happy to be here and discuss my work and views on art.

Interviewer: Could you briefly introduce yourself and describe your association with Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting?

Respondent 12: I am Respondent 12, an artist often associated with the Cynical Realism movement. My work, known for its distinctive bald figures, often combines traditional painting techniques with modern themes, reflecting the complexities of contemporary life in China.

Interviewer: How would you define contemporary Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting?

Respondent 12: It's an art form that captures the tension and contradictions of modern China. It combines traditional methods with new materials and ideas, often reflecting a sense of cynicism and disillusionment with the current state of society.

Interviewer: What differentiates it from other forms of Chinese painting?

Respondent 12: Its direct engagement with contemporary social and political themes sets it apart. It's more about expressing individual perspectives on current issues than adhering to traditional aesthetics.

Interviewer: Can you elaborate on the materials commonly used in this art form?

Respondent 12: In line with Wang Huangsheng's perspective, our choice of materials in mixed-media painting goes beyond their physical attributes to embrace their intrinsic 'value,' which is determined not only by their visual appeal but also by their spiritual resonance. This involves recognizing a 'psychological isomorphism' with the materials, where our choice is driven by a specific purpose to fully harness and master these materials to express our artistic vision effectively. For instance, in Han Jiaqi's "Buddha Series," the use of silk, gilding, and colorful ink isn't just about creating visual contrast;

it's about utilizing these materials' delicate and gentle characteristics to express the Zen spirit, demonstrating a profound engagement with the materials' deeper values.

Interviewer: How do the chosen materials influence the aesthetics and connotations of the artwork?

Respondent 12: The materials we select carry a dual burden: they must convey the intended aesthetic vision and resonate with the viewers on a spiritual level. This dialectical relationship between 'form and below' and 'form and above,' as mentioned, underscores the complexity of our engagement with materials. It's about achieving a harmony where the material's physicality and its spiritual echo contribute equally to the artwork's narrative. The spiritual essence of materials, when aligned with the artist's purpose and the viewer's perception, enriches the artwork, infusing it with a depth that transcends mere visual appreciation.

Interviewer: How do you perceive the evolution of comprehensive mixed-material painting in China over the years?

Respondent 12: It has evolved to reflect the rapid changes in Chinese society, particularly the growing sense of individualism and skepticism towards traditional values and ideologies.

Interviewer: Are there particular historical events or societal shifts that have influenced this art form?

Respondent 12: Yes, events like the end of the Cultural Revolution and China's economic reforms have been particularly influential. They've introduced themes of existential angst, disillusionment, and the questioning of authority.

Interviewer: How does contemporary Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting resonate with or diverge from traditional Chinese artistic philosophies and principles?

Respondent 12: This art form is deeply rooted in the traditional Chinese artistic philosophy that values the spiritual and emotional essence of art. However, it diverges through its innovative use of materials and themes, reflecting modern existential and societal questions. The 'value' of materials in our work is not just a tribute to the physical properties but a nod to the philosophical tradition that sees art as a bridge between the tangible and the ethereal, the individual and the universal. Our approach mirrors the

traditional reverence for the spiritual in art but seeks to reinterpret it within the context of contemporary life's challenges and complexities.

Interviewer: How do cultural and societal beliefs and values manifest themselves in these artworks?

Respondent 12: They often manifest as a critique or exploration of these beliefs and values, particularly in the context of modern China's rapid transformation and the tensions this creates between the individual and society.

Interviewer: From your perspective, what are the strengths and limitations of Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting?

Respondent 12: Its strength lies in its ability to provoke thought and stimulate debate on important issues. A limitation is that its sometimes cynical or ironic tone can overshadow its potential for deeper reflection.

Interviewer: How do you see the future trajectory of this art form?

Respondent 12: It will likely continue to evolve as a critical reflection of China's place in the global context, addressing issues of cultural identity, power dynamics, and the impact of globalization.

Interviewer: What legacy do you believe it will leave behind for future generations?

Respondent 12: The legacy of contemporary Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting will be its ability to fuse material innovation with deep spiritual inquiry. Future generations will inherit an art form that not only pushed the boundaries of aesthetic expression but also deepened the philosophical engagement with materials and their potential to reflect and critique the human condition. This legacy of exploration and reinterpretation will inspire future artists to continue probing the depths of material 'value' and psychological isomorphism, ensuring the art remains a vibrant and critical part of our cultural dialogue.

Interviewer: Can you share any personal experiences or observations that have shaped your understanding or practice of this art form?

Respondent 12: My experiences during China's rapid social and economic changes have profoundly influenced my perspective. The sense of disillusionment and skepticism that

pervades my work is a direct response to these changes, reflecting the broader societal mood.

Interviewer: How has the art community and the broader public responded to this art form?

Respondent 12: The art community has generally been receptive, appreciating its critical approach. Public responses vary, with some viewers deeply engaged by the political and cultural commentary, while others may find it challenging.

Interviewer: Can you share a memorable experience or story related to this art form, whether as an observer, critic, or creator?

Respondent 12: Creating my series of large-scale paintings featuring bald figures in various states of emotion was a turning point for me. It was a moment where I felt I could effectively communicate the sense of cynicism and questioning that I saw in society.

Interviewer: If there was one thing you'd want someone unfamiliar with contemporary Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting to understand, what would it be?

Respondent 12: That this art form is a powerful tool for reflecting on and critiquing the rapid changes in Chinese society and the broader global context. It's not just art for art's sake; it's art with a purpose.

Interviewer: Is there anything else you'd like to share about this art form that we haven't touched upon?

Respondent 12: Just that it should be approached with an open mind. It's a window into the complexities of contemporary Chinese society, offering a unique perspective on the intersection of history, culture, and modernity.

Interviewer: Mr. Respondent 12, thank you for sharing your invaluable insights and experiences with us today. Your contributions to contemporary Chinese art are deeply appreciated.

Respondent 12: Thank you for the opportunity to discuss these topics. I hope my work continues to provoke thought and dialogue.



B.13 Mixed Media Painting Interview Transcript – Respondent 13

Interviewer: Good morning, Respondent 13. We're thrilled to have the opportunity to discuss your journey and insights into contemporary Chinese mixed-media painting. Thank you for joining us today.

Respondent 13: Good morning! It's my pleasure to share my thoughts and experiences with you. I'm always excited to discuss the art form I'm so passionate about.

Interviewer: Can you briefly introduce yourself and describe your association with Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting?

Respondent 13: Of course. I'm Respondent 13, a painter deeply rooted in the traditions of Chinese art yet constantly pushing the boundaries with contemporary methods and materials. My association with mixed-material painting stems from my desire to capture the essence of modern life in China, blending traditional techniques with new media to reflect the complexities of our society.

Interviewer: How would you define contemporary Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting?

Respondent 13: It's a dynamic art form that marries traditional Chinese painting principles with modern materials and techniques. This fusion creates a layered narrative, reflecting the multifaceted nature of contemporary Chinese society.

Respondent 13: The key difference lies in its inclusivity of materials and techniques. While traditional forms might adhere strictly to ink and brush on paper, mixed-media painting welcomes everything from acrylics to digital elements, allowing for a richer exploration of themes.

Interviewer: Can you elaborate on the materials commonly used in this art form?

Respondent 13: The materials in contemporary Chinese mixed-media painting are not just chosen for their physical properties but for their ability to resonate on a sensory, spiritual, and societal level. As mentioned, art encompasses sensory stimulation, rich spiritual life, and a social mission. For example, incorporating materials that evoke the textures and forms of old brick walls not only stimulates the senses but also invites

reflection on cultural heritage and urbanization's impact. This approach underlines the value of materials as carriers of deeper meanings and dialogues.

Interviewer: How do the chosen materials influence the aesthetics and connotations of the artwork?

Respondent 13: Each material is selected with a deep understanding of its inherent 'value,' as Wang Huangsheng suggests, which goes beyond the visual to include the material's psychological resonance and its capacity to serve a specific purpose. This meticulous selection process ensures that the artwork provokes sensory stimulation and then moves to a phase of dialogue, completing the spiritual expression. For instance, the use of silk, gilding, and colorful ink in Han Jiaqi's "Buddha Series" not only creates a striking visual contrast but also encapsulates the Zen spirit, reflecting a deliberate choice that enhances the artwork's spiritual and social dimensions.

Interviewer: How do you perceive the evolution of comprehensive mixed-material painting in China over the years?

Respondent 13: It has evolved significantly, reflecting China's rapid social and economic changes. The art form has grown from strictly traditional approaches to a more inclusive, experimental practice that mirrors our society's complexity.

Interviewer: Are there particular historical events or societal shifts that have influenced this art form?

Respondent 13: Indeed, the rapid urbanization and the ensuing debate over the preservation versus demolition of old structures have significantly influenced contemporary art. This context has led artists, including myself, to explore themes of nostalgia and reflection on cultural identity through our choice of materials and subjects. By replicating the textures and forms of aged walls, as some artworks do, we're not just commenting on these changes but also inviting viewers to engage with the broader cultural implications of such transformations, highlighting the art's deep social mission.

Interviewer: How does contemporary Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting resonate with or diverge from traditional Chinese artistic philosophies and principles?

Respondent 13: While it diverges in form and material, it resonates in spirit. The core philosophies of harmony, balance, and the interplay between humanity and nature remain central, even as the methods and materials evolve.

Interviewer: How do cultural and societal beliefs and values manifest themselves in these artworks?

Respondent 13: They're embedded in the choice of subjects, materials, and even the brushwork. Artworks often reflect societal values like resilience, community, and the importance of history, seen through a contemporary lens.

Interviewer: Can you share any personal experiences or observations that have shaped your understanding or practice of this art form?

Respondent 13: Working on pieces that reflect the cultural debate on the preservation of heritage in the face of modernization has been particularly impactful. These projects have deepened my understanding of the materials' value, not just in a sensory or aesthetic capacity but as vessels for a richer spiritual life and a poignant social commentary. It's a practice that constantly challenges me to think deeply about the role of art in society and the artist's responsibility to engage with these critical issues.

Interviewer: From your perspective, what are the strengths and limitations of Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting?

Respondent 13: One of its greatest strengths lies in its multidimensional approach to creation, engaging the sensory, the spiritual, and the societal in equal measure. This allows for a rich and complex exploration of contemporary life. However, the challenge lies in balancing these dimensions—ensuring that the sensory stimulation does not overshadow the deeper spiritual and social commentary that is fundamental to the artwork's value. It's about maintaining coherence in the dialogue between the visual elements and the spiritual expression within the context of rapid societal changes.

Interviewer: How has the art community and the broader public responded to this art form?

Respondent 13: There's a growing appreciation for its innovative approach and its capacity to convey complex societal narratives. It's seen as a vibrant reflection of contemporary China.

Interviewer: How do you see the future trajectory of this art form?

Respondent 13: I believe it will continue to evolve, embracing new technologies and materials while staying grounded in Chinese artistic traditions. It's poised to play a crucial role in global art conversations.

Interviewer: What legacy do you believe it will leave behind for future generations?

Respondent 13: It will leave a legacy of innovation and cultural dialogue. Future generations will see it as a testament to our era's dynamism and complexity, encouraging them to continue exploring new frontiers in art.

Interviewer: Can you share a memorable experience or story related to this art form, whether as an observer, critic, or creator?

Respondent 13: One of the most memorable experiences was working on a series in a remote village, where the fusion of natural landscapes with the village's industrial backdrop inspired a mixed-media series that felt deeply rooted in the current Chinese experience.

Interviewer: If there was one thing you'd want someone unfamiliar with contemporary Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting to understand, what would it be?

Respondent 13: That it's a vibrant, living conversation with our heritage and contemporary life. It's about finding beauty and meaning in the convergence of the old and the new.

Interviewer: Is there anything else you'd like to share about this art form that we haven't touched upon?

Respondent 13: Just that it's an open invitation to explore the richness of Chinese culture through a modern lens. It challenges both creators and viewers to see the world in more nuanced and colourful ways.

Interviewer: Respondent 13, thank you immensely for sharing your insights and stories with us. Your perspectives offer a profound understanding of contemporary Chinese mixed-media painting and its significance.

Respondent 13: Thank you for the conversation. I hope it inspires more people to explore and appreciate this fascinating art form.



B.14 Mixed Media Painting Interview Transcript – Respondent 14

Interviewer: Good morning, Respondent 14. It's an honour to have you with us to delve into your artistic journey and the insights you've garnered in contemporary Chinese mixed-media painting. Thank you for sharing your time today.

Respondent 14: Good morning, and thank you for having me. I'm always eager to discuss the realms of art and philosophy, especially when it comes to the evolving landscape of Chinese mixed-media art.

Interviewer: Can you briefly introduce yourself and describe your association with Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting?

Respondent 14: I am an artist and educator, deeply engaged in exploring the interconnections between history, geography, and society through my art. My association with mixed-material painting is framed by my interest in merging traditional calligraphy with contemporary mediums to interrogate and narrate the complexities of modern China.

Interviewer: How would you define contemporary Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting?

Respondent 14: It's a boundary-pushing practice that amalgamates diverse materials and techniques to question, critique, and reflect upon contemporary societal issues, historical memory, and cultural identity in China.

Interviewer: What differentiates it from other forms of Chinese painting?

Respondent 14: Its differentiation lies in its methodological freedom and conceptual depth. Unlike more traditional forms that may prioritize aesthetic perfection, mixed-material painting embraces experimentation and ideological exploration.

Interviewer: Can you elaborate on the materials commonly used in this art form?

Respondent 14: Beyond ink and paper, we incorporate digital imagery, found objects, and unconventional materials like neon lights or video installations. These materials are not just mediums but active participants in the artwork's narrative.

Interviewer: How do the chosen materials influence the aesthetics and connotations of the artwork?

Respondent 14: Materials are chosen not just for their physical properties but for their ability to convey deeper meanings and emotions. In the case of Dai Jiafeng's landscapes, for instance, the use of silk, gilding, and colorful ink transcends mere visual appeal. These materials, selected based on the artist's subjective response to the scene, convey tranquility and serenity, inviting viewers to engage with the artwork on a more intuitive level. This approach underscores the significance of material selection in achieving a work's intended emotional and philosophical impact, emphasizing the role of personal feeling and the pursuit of spiritual expression in the artistic process.

Interviewer: How do you perceive the evolution of comprehensive mixed-material painting in China over the years?

Respondent 14: The evolution has been profound, marked by artists like Tang Chenhua, who've infused their work with a blend of Eastern and Western cultural perspectives. This dual perspective allows for a richer, more nuanced exploration of themes, where traditional Chinese symbols and the speculative spirit of mixed media painting converge. It's this kind of cultural integration and creative passion that exemplifies the growth of mixed-media painting, reflecting a broadening of artistic horizons and a fruitful exploration of painting's possibilities.

Interviewer: Are there particular historical events or societal shifts that have influenced this art form?

Respondent 14: The evolution of contemporary Chinese mixed-media painting is deeply influenced by China's historical engagement with global cultures and rapid modernization. Artists like Tang Chenhua and Dai Jiafeng exemplify this, blending Eastern and Western artistic traditions and responding to urbanization's impact on society. Through their work, they explore cultural integration and the tension between tradition and contemporary life, inviting reflections on societal changes. This art form serves as a creative commentary on the interplay between China's rich heritage and its dynamic present, capturing the nuanced responses of artists to the transformative forces shaping modern China.

Interviewer: How does contemporary Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting resonate with or diverge from traditional Chinese artistic philosophies and principles?

Respondent 14: While it diverges in form and medium, it often resonates in intent—seeking harmony between man and nature, exploring philosophical concepts of emptiness and fullness, and contemplating the human condition. The spirit of inquiry remains consistent, even as the modes of expression change.

Interviewer: How do cultural and societal beliefs and values manifest themselves in these artworks?

Respondent 14: They are woven into the very fabric of these artworks, whether in the critique of consumerism, the exploration of historical narratives, or the interrogation of cultural identities. These artworks serve as mirrors and windows—reflecting inward and looking outward.

Interviewer: Can you share any personal experiences or observations that have shaped your understanding or practice of this art form?

Respondent 14: My experiences have taught me the importance of cultural integration and the exploration of art from multiple cultural viewpoints. Engaging with both Eastern and Western traditions, much like Tang Chenhua, has allowed me to see the value in combining traditional Chinese cultural symbols with the innovative approaches of mixed-media painting. This cultural fusion has opened up new avenues for expressing complex themes and has enriched my work with a speculative philosophical spirit that seeks to bridge different cultural understandings and expressions.

Interviewer: From your perspective, what are the strengths and limitations of Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting?

Respondent 14: Its strength lies in its ability to engage with complexity and multiplicity. However, its limitations may arise from the very same source—navigating the balance between coherence and chaos, ensuring the message is not lost in the medium.

Interviewer: How has the art community and the broader public responded to this art form?

Respondent 14: The response has been increasingly positive, with a growing recognition of its relevance and potency in articulating contemporary issues. It has sparked dialogues that transcend art circles, engaging a wider public discourse.

Interviewer: How do you see the future trajectory of this art form?

Respondent 14: I see it becoming an even more vital tool for cultural critique and self-examination. As China continues to navigate its place in the global context, this art form will play a crucial role in expressing our collective anxieties, hopes, and visions for the future.

Interviewer: What legacy do you believe it will leave behind for future generations?

Respondent 14: The legacy will be one of openness and exploration. Artists like Tang Chenhua and Dai Jiafeng have shown us the power of blending cultural perspectives and personal emotions with artistic technique. Future generations will inherit an art form that is not only technically diverse but also rich in its capacity to express a broad spectrum of human experiences and philosophical inquiries. This legacy of cultural integration and personal exploration in art will encourage future artists to continue pushing the boundaries of what is possible in mixed-media painting, fostering a continued dialogue between tradition and innovation, between the personal and the universal.

Interviewer: Can you share a memorable experience or story related to this art form, whether as an observer, critic, or creator?

Respondent 14: One of the most memorable experiences was creating a large-scale map installation that charted the intersections of historical and fictional narratives across a physical space. It was a vivid reminder of art's capacity to map out not just geographies, but also the terrains of our imagination and collective memory.

Interviewer: If there was one thing you'd want someone unfamiliar with contemporary Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting to understand, what would it be?

Respondent 14: That it's a vibrant, critical, and deeply reflective practice that seeks to understand and articulate the nuances of our times. It invites viewers to question, to delve deeper, and to engage with the world in meaningful ways.

Interviewer: Is there anything else you'd like to share about this art form that we haven't touched upon?

Respondent 14: Just that it's an ever-evolving dialogue, not just among artists, but between artists and society. It's a practice that holds a mirror up to ourselves, asking us to confront and engage with our complex, interconnected world.

Interviewer: Respondent 14, thank you profoundly for sharing your profound insights and perspectives. Your contributions to the dialogue on contemporary art and society are invaluable, and we look forward to witnessing how your work continues to inspire and provoke thought.

Respondent 14: Thank you for the opportunity to share. I hope this conversation sparks further exploration and dialogue among your readers.



B.15 Mixed Media Painting Interview Transcript – Respondent 15

Interviewer: Good morning, Respondent 15. It's a pleasure to have you with us today to share your journey and reflections on your unique artistic practice, especially within the context of contemporary Chinese mixed-media painting. Thank you for joining us.

Respondent 15: Good morning, and thank you for inviting me. I'm looking forward to discussing my work and the broader art form, which holds a special place in my creative expression.

Interviewer: Can you briefly introduce yourself and describe your association with Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting?

Respondent 15: I am an artist who primarily works with textiles, thread, and unconventional materials to weave together narratives around femininity, identity, and the body. My association with mixed-material painting stems from my belief in the power of diverse materials to express complex themes and emotions, blending traditional craftsmanship with contemporary artistic expressions.

Interviewer: How would you define contemporary Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting?

Respondent 15: To me, contemporary Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting is an art form that embodies the spirit of exploration and diversity. It's about pushing beyond traditional boundaries to discover new textures with unique characteristics, making each creation a journey in itself. This art form is characterized by its blend of cultural symbols and innovative practices, where artists like Tang Chenhua have shown remarkable success in exploring painting from a dual perspective of cultural integration. It's a field where creative passion meets speculative philosophical spirit, allowing for deep, multifaceted expressions of our time.

Interviewer: What differentiates it from other forms of Chinese painting?

Respondent 15: Its openness to experimentation and integration of diverse materials and techniques. Unlike traditional Chinese painting, which has well-defined aesthetic and technical parameters, mixed-media painting embraces a broader spectrum of expressions, making it a fertile ground for innovation and personal storytelling.

Interviewer: Can you elaborate on the materials commonly used in this art form?

Respondent 15: The materials in contemporary mixed-media painting range widely, reflecting the artist's pursuit to express complex themes through diverse textures and forms. "Artists who dare to explore will embark on a journey to discover new textures with unique characteristics," which is pivotal in our creation process. Beyond traditional ink and paper, we engage with materials like textiles, metals, and even digital elements. This diversity not only blurs the boundaries between different types of painting but also emphasizes the expression of multiple meanings, showcasing a uniqueness that transcends tradition.

Interviewer: How do the chosen materials influence the aesthetics and connotations of the artwork?

Respondent 15: The chosen materials deeply influence the artwork's aesthetics and connotations, imbuing it with layers of meaning that resonate both visually and spiritually. For instance, the use of gold in artworks transcends its physical beauty to become a reflection of enlightenment and the precious moments of clarity and understanding sought after in spiritual journeys. This use of material speaks to the splendor in moments of insight, the 'golden' revelations that pierce through the mundane to reveal a deeper understanding of life's essence. Such choices underscore the pursuit of every artist to incessantly explore and search for materials that are not only suited but also representative of our times, enhancing the artwork's dialogue with contemporary social and cultural developments.

Interviewer: How do you perceive the evolution of comprehensive mixed-material painting in China over the years?

Respondent 15: It has grown from a niche experimental practice to a major force in contemporary art, mirroring China's rapid societal and cultural transformations. This evolution reflects artists' desires to engage more deeply with their environment and express the multifaceted experiences of modern Chinese life.

Interviewer: Are there particular historical events or societal shifts that have influenced this art form?

Respondent 15: Yes, from the economic reforms of the late 20th century to the rise of digital culture, these shifts have prompted artists to explore new materials and themes, reflecting on changes in Chinese society, the role of tradition, and the impact of technology on our lives. The exploration of new materials in mixed-media painting reflects an ongoing dialogue with these changes, blurring traditional boundaries and emphasizing a trend towards diversity. This evolution aligns closely with the pluralistic direction of contemporary society, where artworks serve as a reflection and critique of the times. Artists respond to these shifts by integrating diverse materials and perspectives, showcasing a uniqueness that transcends traditional approaches and mirrors the complexities of modern life.

Interviewer: How does contemporary Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting resonate with or diverge from traditional Chinese artistic philosophies and principles?

Respondent 15: Contemporary Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting both resonates with and diverges from traditional artistic philosophies and principles. On one hand, it embraces the spirit of traditional Chinese art by emphasizing harmony between elements and expressing deep philosophical ideas. On the other, it diverges through its exploratory use of materials and techniques, representing a journey to discover new textures and expressions. This approach, emphasizing the "importance of texture in creation," reflects a speculative philosophical spirit akin to traditional meditations on nature and existence. However, by integrating non-traditional materials and cultural symbols within the canvas, it also represents a departure towards a more pluralistic and diverse expression, aligning more closely with contemporary social and cultural development rather than strictly following ancient aesthetic norms.

Interviewer: How do cultural and societal beliefs and values manifest themselves in these artworks?

Respondent 15: Cultural and societal beliefs and values are deeply embedded in contemporary Chinese mixed-media artworks, reflecting the complex interplay between China's rich heritage and rapid modernization. For instance, the use of gold in certain artworks goes beyond its aesthetic value, embodying enlightenment and spiritual journeys significant to Chinese culture. These 'golden revelations' signify moments of clarity and deep cultural insight, connecting the material's use with traditional values of wisdom and spiritual pursuit. Moreover, the exploration of new

materials and the representation of traditional symbols within these artworks reflect a continuous dialogue with contemporary issues—such as the tension between preservation and innovation, or individuality versus collectivism. This exploration not only blurs the boundaries between different types of painting but also showcases a diversity that resonates with the pluralistic direction of contemporary society, illustrating how artists are incessantly searching for materials that reflect and critique the times.

Interviewer: Can you share any personal experiences or observations that have shaped your understanding or practice of this art form?

Respondent 15: My background in textile design and my transition to fine art profoundly shaped my approach. The tactile nature of textiles and the labor-intensive process of weaving and stitching have informed my understanding of art as an extension of the body and a medium for exploring identity.

Interviewer: From your perspective, what are the strengths and limitations of Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting?

Respondent 15: The strength of Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting lies in its boundless potential for expression and innovation. It allows for a profound exploration of themes through the diverse textures and meanings of its materials, bridging traditional and contemporary, tangible and intangible. However, its limitation may lie in the challenge of coherence—ensuring that the myriad materials and techniques coalesce into a singular, impactful narrative without diluting the artwork's thematic essence or becoming overly eclectic.

Interviewer: How has the art community and the broader public responded to this art form?

Respondent 15: The art community has embraced mixed-material painting with enthusiasm, appreciating its versatility and the new perspectives it brings to Chinese art. The broader public's response has been increasingly positive, with many finding the fusion of materials and themes a reflective mirror of modern society's complexity. This art form has sparked conversations about identity, heritage, and the pace of societal change, resonating with a wide audience eager to engage with its layered meanings.

Interviewer: How do you see the future trajectory of this art form?

Respondent 15: I see the future of Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting as incredibly promising. It will continue to evolve, pushing the boundaries of artistic expression and reflecting the rapid changes in our society. As artists explore new materials and techniques, this art form will remain at the forefront of cultural dialogue, capturing the essence of our times and influencing the global art scene with its unique perspectives.

Interviewer: What legacy do you believe it will leave behind for future generations?

Respondent 15: A legacy of openness and exploration, encouraging future artists to question, experiment, and express themselves freely, bridging the past and future through their creative endeavours. It will be remembered for its contribution to the global understanding of Chinese culture, showcasing the richness and diversity of our contemporary society. This art form will inspire artists to continuously explore and reinterpret the world around them, ensuring a vibrant and dynamic future for Chinese art.

Interviewer: Can you share a memorable experience or story related to this art form, whether as an observer, critic, or creator?

Respondent 15: One memorable experience was my first large-scale installation, where I transformed a room into a cocoon of white thread. It was a physical manifestation of my thoughts on connection and protection, highlighting the power of materials to transform spaces and perceptions.

Interviewer: If there was one thing you'd want someone unfamiliar with contemporary Chinese comprehensive mixed-material painting to understand, what would it be?

Respondent 15: I would want them to understand that this art form is a vivid testament to the power of innovation and diversity in expression. It embodies the spirit of contemporary China—its struggles, its beauty, and its ongoing dialogue between the past and the present. Mixed-media painting is not just about the combination of different materials but about the exploration of new frontiers in art, inviting viewers to see beyond the surface and engage with the deeper narratives woven into the fabric of our society.

Interviewer: Is there anything else you'd like to share about this art form that we haven't touched upon?

Respondent 15: Just that at its heart, contemporary Chinese mixed-media painting is about connections—between materials, ideas, and people. It's a testament to the creativity and resilience of artists navigating the complexities of modern life.

Interviewer: Respondent 15, thank you for sharing your profound insights and stories with us. Your work continues to inspire and challenge our perceptions, and we look forward to seeing how your artistic journey unfolds.

Respondent 15: Thank you for the engaging conversation. I hope it inspires others to explore and appreciate the diversity and depth of contemporary Chinese art.

