

# Comparative Analysis of Chinese and Western Sketch Expression Styles

Shaoduan Zhang  
Luoyang Normal University  
Luoyang, China

**Abstract**—Sketch is an art form with independent language and a discipline of formative art, which has its independent status and value. It can directly express things in the objective world, and can also express abstract forms such as thoughts, concepts, attitudes, feelings, fantasy, and symbols. The differences between Chinese and western thinking styles and cultural backgrounds have caused the differences between Chinese traditional sketch and western traditional sketch. But meanwhile, art is interlinked and integrated with each other. Chinese and western sketches have merged and absorbed with each other in the course of history, and have continued to improve and develop themselves.

**Keywords:** *Chinese traditional sketch, western traditional sketch, divergence, integration*

## I. INTRODUCTION

In a general sense, sketch is the basis of painting. It is a drawing of collection and arrangement of sketches for artistic creation and conception. The sketch is an art form with an independent language and it is the method of understanding and expression of artistic creation. Sketch uses monochrome to express artistic shapes and has an independent artistic language system.

Traditional Chinese sketch is mainly monochrome paintings with no color expression. It describes the scene of objects with lines. It is materials or sketch before painting which also called white-drawing. In other words, sketch is monochrome draft before coloring painting. Traditional Chinese sketching uses pens and inks as drawing tools, uses vessels, walls, fabrics, and papers which were invented later as painting carriers, and uses lines to describe objects. It has unique Chinese characteristics on modeling, art, and aesthetic requirements for sketches, and it uses the sketching techniques and expressions to create.

In western traditional sketch, the subject uses monochromatic lines and blocks to shape the image of an object. It is the basis of formative art and expresses the shape, structure, dynamics, and the relationship between light and shade of objects. Western traditional sketch is a collection and arrangement of sketches for artistic creation and conception. It is a monochrome draft before painting is painted. For example, during the Italian Renaissance, the "Research of the Apostles' Heads and Architecture" made by Da Vinci, and "The Work for the Transfiguration of Christ"

made by Raphael both shaped objects via lines, blocks, and the light and shade relationships, etc., and the sketch is draft or manuscript prepared for paintings or sculptures.

## II. COMPARISON OF THE EXPRESSION OF TRADITIONAL CHINESE AND WESTERN SKETCH

### A. Comparison of modeling techniques

Modeling is the core problem of art and is also the core problem of sketching art. The understanding of modeling is the embodiment of the art spirit and it run through the human art.

Traditional Chinese sketch is not so direct and objective in terms of modeling concepts, and it is collectively reflected by symbol. In the process of using lines, it emphasizes induction and condensing, and the lines are dyed with thick ink to express the artist's modeling concept. In order to be able to perceive the essential structure of the physical image from the surface to the inside, the painters simplify the complex shape, and then complicate the simplistic shape, pursuing the surface shape, starting from the structure, combining in and out, reflecting the internal and external relationship of the structure. Relations such as profile, volume and surface are fully and perfectly expressed, and the painting is well-founded. The traditional Chinese sketch's method of expressing the structure of objects is concentrated in the view of the "bone method pen" in the "Six Methods of Xie He". It expresses the external shape through the internal structural relationship of objects, and the knowledge and understanding of the combination of internal and external shapes represents deep and complex content. In terms of the structure of formative art, Chinese traditional sketch are also devoted to the observation and analysis of the outline, composition, and combination of objects; the familiarity with the laws of structural shape change; and the perfect connection and interpenetration of various structural relationships, which have a thorough and deep understanding.

In terms of shapes, western traditional sketch is mainly based on blocks and surface, and emphasizing the light-shade relationship that light reflects on the painted objects. Western traditional sketch painters understand the inner essential structure through the perception and understanding of objects appearance, and have a deeper understanding of sketch structure. The painter also attaches great importance

to the structure as the shape is determined by the structure and structure is the form of the object itself. It is the shape in which several objects are combined with each other. The artist masters the use of the structure and lines of objects, as well as the undulations and turning points of the physical structure depicted by the tune. Western traditional sketch painters obtain the internal structure of an object through careful observation and multi-angle changing perspectives, analysis, understanding, and perception, and use contour lines, auxiliary lines, and structural lines to determine the structure of the object.

Western traditional sketch has light and shade modeling expressions, while Chinese traditional sketch does not. Western traditional sketch highlights the three-dimensional, spatial, and virtual changes produced by the relationship between light and shade, and the contrast of lines and blocks makes the body thicker and more beautiful. The light source produces a light-shade relationship on the object. The three-dimensional sense, quality, and sense of space of the object can be more realistically expressed. The light-to-deep changes are characterized by different light sources, and the lights have physical phenomenon such as back light, reflect light, the boundary between light and shade, and projection, etc. It not only mastered the understanding of the light-shade relationship of sketches, but also mastered the initiative of drawing objects, actively and rationally transforming the physical factors of light and shade into modeling factors that reflect the artistic theme. Due to the relationship between human emotional factors and visual experience, the objective physical light and shade phenomenon has subjective association characteristics under the artist's pen, and produces a difference in perception of different color levels. The description of the light and shade relationship creates a new art form that transcends the natural state, thereby freeing the works of art from the shackles of natural reality and closer to the reality of art.

### *B. Comparison of perspective methods*

In terms of perspective, the perspective of traditional Chinese sketch is based on scatter perspective, emphasizing the necessary characteristics of the painted image. Regardless of whether these characteristics can be seen by the naked eye when the perspective is determined, the objects are not exactly the same. It is not required to be exactly similar to the real thing, but it is required to show the typical characteristics of the object and achieve the "same and different" artistic effect. Chinese traditional sketch observes the height of the object through the point of view, and shows the compositional relationship between the upward and downward view of the object through the visible horizon. The perspective method of traditional Chinese sketching is scatter perspective, making full use of the blank space on the paper, highlighting the center, drawing with structure, drawing with lines, and focusing on ink. The traditional Chinese sketching is drawing with image memory, pursues the dynamics and resemblance and requires the pictures convey vivid spirit through form.

Western traditional sketch attach great importance to perspective. The whole painting has a strong sense of perspective. The size, length, height, width, and size of the object will show complex and delicate deformation. The relationships between near-far-far-small, near-high-far-low, near-wide-far-narrow, near-clear, far-distance, and blurry are clearly portrayed between object images. Using the principle of perspective, the laws of physical visual changes can be accurately grasped, and the shape and the relationship between objects and space can be correctly showed. As long as the correct observation method is required, people can accurately grasp the rich changes of objects at different angles. The sketches created by traditional western sketch painters are almost the same as what people see. It emphasizes that under certain conditions, the object image is described for a long time, even small light sources cannot be changed; in addition, there are strict requirements on the physical position of the object image to prevent the observation result from changing. Although both Chinese and western sketches have an observation of space, the focal perspective of western sketch is strictly in accordance with the laws of physics, while the changing point perspective of Chinese sketch is looking at the front horizontally, upwards, and downwards.

### *C. The difference between Chinese and western sketch in application of lines*

In terms of lines, in addition to the characteristics of formative arts, traditional Chinese sketch also has the characteristics of "lines". In formative arts, lines are the mainstay, and the line-based modeling program is developed to its extreme. Beyond the requirements to shape the body, it became a means of expressing the author's ideas, thoughts and feelings. There is no necessary dependency between the lines of traditional Chinese sketch and the shapes it draws, thus it obtained great creative freedom, allowing painters to pursue more things beyond the shape and endow it with more connotations to make the line itself meaningful. There is an aesthetic value that exists separately from the body of the object. The expression of lines reflects the beauty of form and emotion in shaping the form. It is dominated by lines and has a rich and expansive expressive force. Traditional Chinese sketch reflects the strength and beauty of the lines themselves, enabling painters to pursue the character of the lines individually, and to reflect the rhythm, dynamics, momentum, the beauty of character and interest. Chinese traditional sketch painters show the nature of the object body through changes in the fineness, depth, imagination, strength, and weakness of the lines, and show the rhythm and meter of the movement through the fastness, slowness, lateness, speed, and turning frustration of the line.

The traditional western sketch has a "line" expression technique, which is just a special feature. It is convenient and fast to use lines to capture the form and it is now called "sketch". Lines are only the basic requirements and means of the subordinated object to be described. Lines can accurately depict the basic shape and dynamic characteristics of the object image, so as to show the atmosphere of the scene to meet the requirements of recording images, understanding

life, improving acute observation, and creative ability. Through the use of lines in traditional western sketches, it shows the contrast of lines, fineness, rigidity-flexibility, and rhythm. It also shows the various structural changes of objects, volume and surface turns, textured space, and the dynamic and static relationships, etc. The contrast between lines forms a vivid sense of rhythm and melody, and forms a sense of rhythm in the visual sense. The expression of the lines reflects the formal beauty and emotional beauty in shaping the form. The lines are intertwined to form a light and dark block surface. Different lines produce black and white tones on the screen, forming the visual effect of light and shadow changes. Western traditional sketch have moved from line shapes to surface shapes of light and shade and color. The lines in western traditional sketch are subordinate to the objects of expression, leaving the specific expression content of the shape, structure, light and shade to be expressed. What is different from the line-oriented pursuit in traditional Chinese sketch is that the lines in Western traditional sketch, there is no independent value in itself.

### III. CAUSES OF DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CHINESE AND WESTERN TRADITIONAL SKETCH STYLES

The differences in the research methods and content of Chinese and western cultural scholars and the differences in epistemology also make some divergence in the sketch styles and expression methods for China and the west. China learns the traditional Chinese Confucianism, and it is a simple elementary philosophy that makes China's concept of modeling is based on the philosophical thought of "harmony between man and nature". The painter's self-consciousness has been deeply developed into a subjective and active spiritual world and psychological intention, so that his sketch content, subject matter, image and form are not completely restricted by the natural form of objective objects. The west, however, advocates religious thought and religious art, which are mainly based on scientific rationality, and pursue realism to achieve realistic image. The main difference between Chinese and western philosophy is that the traditional Chinese philosophy's leading concept is life, and the western philosophy's traditional leading concept is nature. It is understood by the comprehension and reflection of philosophical and cultural developments of China and the west. The differences in the way of thinking are that Chinese people are more abstract in thinking, while westerners are more specific. The differences in attitude to life are that Chinese people are more focused on spiritual feelings, while westerners are more practical. There are also differences in academic traditions between China and the west. For example, some westerners simply do not recognize Xu Xusheng's narrative of ancient myths and legends in China, and there is also a contradiction between Chinese and western academic traditions. Western academic traditions are consistent with their legal traditions. They pay attention to evidence, logic, facts, and inferences. This has led to differences between Chinese and Western cultural thoughts, but also to the differences between Chinese and Western traditional sketch.

#### A. *Differences between Chinese and western ways of thinking*

The Chinese way of thinking attaches importance to interpersonal relations, ethical relations, comparing human to nature, restoration to heart, and emphasis on form instead of substance, which lead to metaphysics. It is an isolated value system. The west emphasizes nature and essence. Its value system moves from nature to people and finally to subjectivity and value philosophy. In terms of epistemology, China places great emphasis on intuition, introspection, transcendental rationality, and ethical spirit; in the west, it places emphasis on experiments, facts, logic, and scientific discovery. The similarities and differences in thinking inevitably lead to similarities and differences in the modeling concepts and methods of sketches in China and the west.

#### B. *Differences between Chinese and western scientific methodology*

Oriental culture takes humanistic culture as the main body, and western culture takes scientific culture as the main body. The way of thinking of China is holistic while the way of thinking of the west is formal. They stipulated different models of scientific development, resulting in two different types of scientific culture.

#### C. *Differences between Chinese and western logic*

Western Aristotle's logic and ancient Chinese dialectical logic belong to completely different types of logic systems on basic issues such as the role of logic, logical structure, and criteria for determining truth. Traditional Chinese philosophy is characterized by its emphasis on politics, ethics, and life issues, and its moderate attitude towards cosmology and natural laws. In this tradition, logic has not been explored as an independent object from the beginning. From Confucius to Zhuangzi, they both regard speculation as useless and harmful things, and they both oppose speculative discussion of speculative forms such as concepts. Thus, there is no place for pure science such as logic. Logic plays a leading role in painting, and the expression methods and artistic style of Chinese and western sketches will inevitably have similarities and differences.

### IV. CONVERGENCE AND FUSION OF CHINESE AND WESTERN SKETCHES IN MODERN TIMES

A basic attitude towards Chinese and western sketches is to stick to Chinese sketch on the one hand; and to integrate Chinese and western sketches on the other hand, the two should proceed simultaneously. From Xu Beihong, Lin Fengmian, Zhang Daqian, to Wu Guanzhong, Zhao Wuji, they all are transformational painters who have studied the integration of Chinese and western paintings throughout their lives. Lin Fengmian has long pointed out that "the shortcomings of western art are the strengths of oriental art; the shortcomings of oriental art are the strengths of western art." The two should be independent that Chinese painting cannot be part of the western painting. Only if both arts exist equally from professional aspect can the two sketch systems have the basis for equal development.

*A. The spread of western learning from the end of the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century*

Modern imperialism opened the door to China with artillery fire, and traditional Chinese fine arts were impacted. A group of innovators went to the west to study sketching, and western learning was introduced to China, which have broken the confusion of the feudal literati inheritance of stereotypes. Western sketching thoughts and some techniques have been widely used in Chinese sketch teaching from different levels through Xu Beihong, Lin Fengmian, etc, which has caused the traditional Chinese sketching system and the factors of western sketch to infiltrate and integrate with each other. Under the vigorous advocacy of Pan Tianshou, the Ministry of Education of the Republic of China reclassified the painting department of the National Academy of Fine Arts into the Department of Chinese Painting and the Department of Western Painting, forming a preliminary framework for Chinese painting teaching. After the founding of the People's Republic of China, the introduction of the Soviet Cheschakov's sketch teaching system profoundly changed the concept of sketch performance in China and was almost fully applied to the sketch teaching in Chinese universities. Pursuing similarity in form rather than similarity in spirit has once again brought a shock on traditional Chinese sketching, repelling the similarity in spirit in Chinese sketching, which makes the already fragile traditional Chinese sketching teaching system more fragile, causing sketching teaching to suffer severe setback during this historical period, and the impact of setbacks have lasted until present.

*B. Promotion of western sketch art in China from early 20th century to mid 20th century*

Due to the relative perfection of western sketches, some Chinese painters have advocated western arts and advocated Western sketches. Those painters have a sense of demand for western arts and advocate learning western sketches. Western sketch has directly influenced the Chinese painting world, pushing China's sketching styles to a new age of development. Some Chinese painters will think that only "wholesale westernization" can transform the local culture and arts. They think that everything in China is bad while everything in the west is a good ideological system. There are no exceptions in everything from political thought, economic systems, and humanities to natural sciences, and even ethics serving as a refuge for national cultures is being harassed.

China has its own national characteristics, and the west has its scientific achievements. After breaking through the outdated and isolated state, Chinese sketch faced the future and learned from the west, which formed a new trend, and the constant development formed a general trend towards the future, which opened up a broad prospect for the diversification of artistic modeling. Some painters combined western art and advocated the use of realistic sketches of western sketch to improve Chinese sketches. They expected that realistic arts would be used to promote social progress and benefit life. Through the painters' direct influence on the

Chinese painting world, China's sketch modeling has been put into a new development period. On the basis of mastering western modeling rules and combining the fine traditions of Chinese art, they achieved admirable achievements in sketch study.

The growth of modern Chinese sketch has evolved under the constraints of the social background. "After the imperialist gunboat policy opened the door of the isolated Chinese feudal dynasty, the Chinese people began to seek western science and culture and seek the way to save the country and the people, which threatened the social foundation of feudal culture. The growth of modern Chinese sketch was also influenced by western sketch. The study of western sketch by Chinese painters has formed a new wave and restricted the western trend of thought. In the progress of the times, artists are thinking about selecting art that is compatible with society, forming a diverse principle of artistic creation. In the history of sketch development, there is one thing in common: respect for history, respect for predecessors, and inherit the principles that have universality and commonality characteristics.

## V. CONCLUSION

The differences between Chinese and Western sketch modeling concepts were originally based on differences in their historical backgrounds, national cultures, and thinking methods, and being closely related to their respective scientific and philosophical foundations caused painters have different thinking and expression styles in modeling concepts.

After the western powers opened China's gateway with cannons, with the introduction of a large number of Western products, western sketch arts are also imported, which break the parallel lines of Chinese and Western sketches and begin to intersect with Chinese sketch. With the idea of "learn from foreigners to compete with them", Chinese has begun to learn their sketches from the West, and Chinese painting has since broken through the seclusion. The relative perfection of western sketch has caused some Chinese painters to admire Western art, which has made Chinese painting arts acquire both "internal and external" characteristics while retaining the traditional Chinese painting system. It is a huge leap for Chinese sketching. The fusion of Chinese and Western sketches not only opened up a new world of Chinese sketches, but also had a huge impact on Western sketches. The form of Chinese painting after the integration of Chinese and Western sketches gradually forms the overall future trends and opens up a broad prospect for the diversification of artistic modeling.

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