

An Interpretation of Design Thinking in Cezanne's Artistic Style

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Abstract—This thesis begins with the research of Cezanne's artistic style. It breaks through the traditional works appreciation method and level to analyze Cezanne's artistic way of thinking and combine the transition of his artistic thinking with the concrete images of pictures so that decoding the mystery of masterpieces in a simple way. Painting is the well-designed result of painters, even sketching is constituted by deliberate images according to individual artistic style from all kinds of elements. Seeing from the features of Cezanne's paintings, we can find the establishment of his artistic style: from organic shapes to the conciseness of geometric shapes, colors from pure saturation to changeable senior ash, examining the composition of pictures from the constitution angle. He has broken through the traditional thinking of painting and these thinking on vision all are connected closely with visual design rules. Under his inspiration, later artists enter a new period.

Keywords—Cezanne; Artistic Style; Design Thinking

I. CEZANNE AND HIS ARTISTIC STYLE

Any painting is the well-designed result of painters, even sketching is constituted by deliberate images according to individual artistic style from all kinds of elements. There are multi-layered visual design propositions in it: relations of picture composition, relations of plane composition, characters of images, constitution relations of colors, combination of texture and brush strokes, lines and strength, planes and shapes, etc. No matter the formal beauty principles: variety-unity, balance -- symmetry, comparison -- harmony, proportion -- scale, and so on or the composition of images, colors and visual expression techniques, they are all connected closely with visual design rules. Honored as "the father of modern painting", Cezanne early explained the unity of all kinds of contradictions in his paintings. Reading the great master's painting not only increases our aesthetic accomplishment, more important is thinking over the harmonious rules of every element in a same plane and seeing the great master's capacity of balancing contractions through vivid depiction. The images in the painting are the perceptual presentation while with extremely rational

carefulness. He dealt with skillfully and freely so that everyone experienced its mystery understands its enduring popularity. Let's explore the great master's paintings to see how Cezanne made a visual feast in a plane more than one century ago.

Paul Cezanne (1839-1906) was born in Aix-en-Provence, France. In April 1861, he went to Paris to learn the art but he couldn't enter école nationale supérieure des Beaux-arts de Paris all the time. He was a lonely explorer without others' appreciation; he had no pupils, and work achievements were not accepted by families; he was misunderstood and underestimated by his friends; he was not approved during his lifetime. But none of these influenced his love for art. He was determined to create the master-class art with eternal value and the dream of being a great master was always accompanied in his creation. His reputation and status at present were established after his death with his art and thinking inspiring those outstanding figures in the modern art so that he was honored as "the father of modern art" subsequently.

Cezanne's greatness lies in that he considered painting as the way of cognizing and understanding the world. Painting not only pleases people, but is painters' loyalty to images and the result of cognizing the world. "Except for the surface, there are more deeper things in nature", he once said. Cezanne's art fully shows the relations between volume and space and he considered these objects as the eternal and universal things, causing a feeling of firmness and synthesis. He was devoted to catch the shape without disturbing the coherence among shape, light and color. Vivid color and short brush strokes expressed simple conception of nature so we can find the influence of impressionism but it doesn't show many features of impressionism. He didn't care about the effect of light and air like other impressionistic painters, neither decomposed colors so evidently. What he sought for was the synthesis and stability of images and the inner structure of scenery. He proposed to show the object's volume through the relations of hues and to depict the objects by using of cylinders, spheres and cones, aiming to build the significance as the independent painting. It influences later western modernism painting directly so he is

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universally considered as “the father of modern art”. “If Cezanne was right, I would be right”, Matisse said. “Cezanne likes we painters’ father”, Picasso said. “We all begin from Cezanne”, Braque also said. Let’s see Cezanne’s design thinking from another perspective.

II. CONCRETE MANIFESTATION OF CEZANNE’S STYLE

A. Forms - Geometric Shape and Organic Shape

It includes geometric shape and organic shape in the design: geometric shape is the pattern made by rulers and compasses and other tools without the difference of characteristics and is the simplest status of natural images; organic shape is made only by hand or naturally with the personalities and abundant sensibility. Cezanne once had his original views on forms, “Everything in the nature is similar to sphere, cone or cylinder. Painters must learn to depict these simple images.” (1) This thought influences the later western modernism painting directly. What he sought for was the synthesis and structure of images. He proposed to show the object’s volume through the relations of hues and imitating the superficial phenomenon of nature simply never could understand the nature. He found the object’s structure in the nature and decomposed the object’s complex body and colors through blocks and planes. What he had found was not only the method but the essential attribute of one kind of object. He transformed organic shapes to geometric shapes at the same time combined the structure, which was essential in his pictures almost planar. For geometric shape could simplify the complex images, provide composition a strong inner structure and create the painting effect with plane sense.

Still life is the theme Cezanne did best in. In his still-life paintings, almost every kind of fruit is the standard geometric form. Sphere is the form emerges most which stands for apple, orange, and peach while pear is shown conically. He also painted wine bottles frequently that were treated as cylinders naturally. The full spheres in these pictures seem to carry with the natural tension of form itself. Many paintings about Mount Sainte -Victoire in his later period of course include the firmness and stability of triangle, in addition to reinforcement of brush strokes and colors to geometric shapes, making these painting have more special visual power of Cezanne. Even in figure paintings, Cezanne also deeply realized the relations of geometric shape and organic shape and relations between geometric shapes and used them to balance composition or find movement in static state. In this *Madame Cezanne with a Yellow Armchair* created in 1888-1890, in brief, many details have been simplified in the head and body to strengthen the tension of geometry ellipse; the armchair and skirt form an oblique rectangle; full ellipses overlap each other to form vertical axis and the horizontal line formed by the back wall enclosure just cross it, forming the center of picture also balancing the picture and strengthening the stability. “Fig. 1” Images after geometrization highlights the visual impact of body itself, making the picture more complete and lasting with beauty in form that difficult to express. In visual communication, there are geometries formed by straight lines: squares, rectangles, triangles, trapezoids, and polygons;

geometries formed by curves: circles, ellipses, curvilinear figures, etc. Squares are solid and gauged; ellipses are full and expanding; vertical rectangles are towering and giant; transverse rectangles are tranquil and heavy. The figure’s shoulders and arms form egg shape encircling the center of the whole picture. This egg shape just is a stable core. The synthesis of these geometries into one picture embodies Cezanne’s deep research on visual perception.

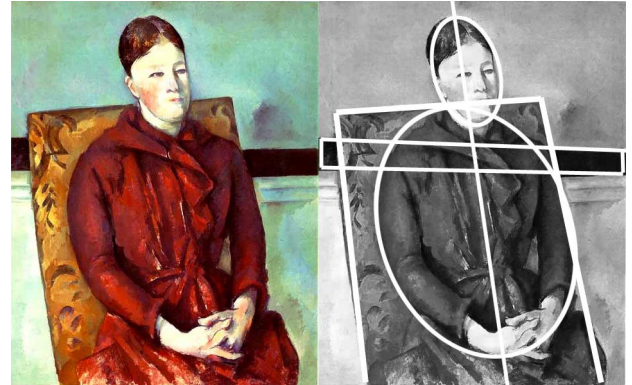


Fig. 1. Madame Cezanne with a Yellow Armchair and Analysis Picture of Form Composition

In portraiture created by Ingres, faces of figures and details of clothes will be delicate enough to move any one, while Cezanne didn’t consider these things when painting. He put all his vigor on the eternal stability of picture. Look at this picture’s form: the head of figure is adapt to the direction and size of ellipse; details of clothes and posture are simplified into ellipse according to Cezanne’s arrangement; the axis of two ellipses passes through the face and the hands, forming the connection in shapes as well as establishing stable syntagmatic relation; oblique chair adjusted to rectangle is the most dynamic place in the picture. In order not to topple over it, he used the back wall and balanced this anxiety through the back horizontal wall line of rectangle shape. This picture even didn’t beautify Madame Cezanne and the blue light reflected by velvet clothes appears with restraint. In most cases he made her be adapt to the picture’s form need.

B. Colors -- Pure Saturation and Changeable Senior Ash

The way Cezanne uses colors is the part most charming while difficult to explain in his artistic features. The color of the main object in the picture is very saturated while the color of background is always in low purity. It is the result Cezanne controlled deliberately: full ball-shape fruits and saturated colors suit each other, forming the visual image with weight; while the controllable background and setoff are ordinary to strengthen the high-profile aspect of magnificent object. The combination of advance and retreat, weight and the body is very harmonious in color composition. Cezanne’s paintings appear to be fervent in high purity. In order to keep the purity, the comparison of light and shade is the least and he only created object by the change of cool or warm in color. The method he used most is putting one warm color sector in between two cool color sectors or on the contrary so he could establish image structure easily.

Actually he replaced “form” with “change of color tonality”, namely strengthened the shaping of images by rhythmic changes of colors in every color gamut. Just as what he said himself, “When the colors are abundant, the shapes will be full.”

He considered the manifestation of colors and shapes as “the essence of form” and explained nature by his own observation and feelings. Paintings created by Cezanne after 1890 are more abstract and the contour lines are more broken and looser. Colors float on the objects to keep the features itself independent of the objects. Every brush stroke exists in the picture properly according to its role at the same time is subject to the whole harmony, getting the combination of classicism and romance, structure and color, nature and painting with both structure and lyricism. He decomposed all elements into the abstracts and then reorganized into the reality of paintings.

In Cezanne’s pictures, colors never are isolate elements and any color lump existing on its own has its established shape. He deeply analyzed every spatial structure of images and combined the color lump of every part formed after illuminating with this body. We can see from the rigid color lumps of figure’s face in his works Portrait 1896-1897 that color tonality change of every color lump is obvious and the connected shapes, angles and directions of different color lumps are all bonded with the structure of face. Just as what he said, “Every sector’s color should follow the change of structure.” “Fig. 2” In the painting Still Life with Bottle and Onion, you can find calm thinking and judgment of Cezanne obviously from the subtle change of the color and forms of onions. “Fig. 3” Magnifying part of the picture, we can see clearly that the body of picture is divided by color lumps into some blocks in one plane and the size, shape and location of these color lumps all connect with the body closely. We just think Cezanne didn’t have to remind himself of structure always when painted, for it has become his subconsciousness so he could understand structure only by his instinct. These paintings, not attractive at first sight, are filled with the artist’s skills and his thought and consciousness when painted. So they are honored as the immortal works that reach the very high state in many aspects simultaneously like color, form, structure, composition, texture, manifestation, etc. The paintings’ harmonious relations formed among these aspects are worth using for reference and appreciating for us.

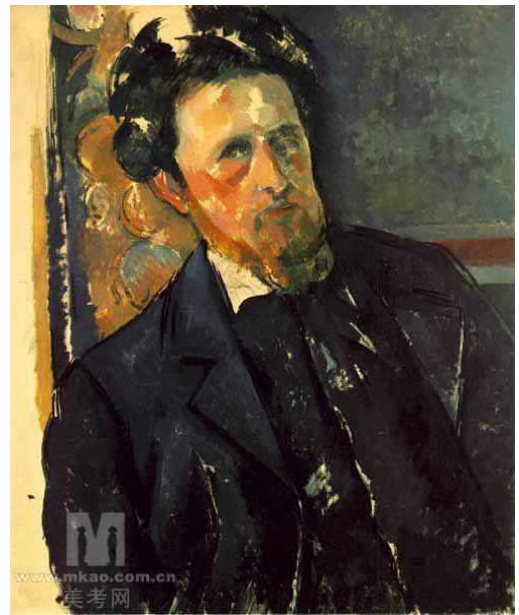


Fig. 2. Portrait 1896-1897



Fig. 3. Still Life with Bottle and Onion

C. Composition and Constitution

Composition means organize the images of object according to intention when painting based on the requirements of subject and theme. While constitution refers to combine certain materials for one purpose and materials used for combination are called as constitution elements. The concept of constitution is established by Bauhaus. It simplifies and generalizes one plane or space. When simplifying to the highest degree, it will appear the constitution elements like points, lines, light, time, etc. Constitution is combining these elements according to the certain technology with purpose. Forms arranged in composition are made for sense of beauty while constitution is made for the spiritual reaction. {2} But both of them are related with balance and symmetry between the elements and the balance of comparison and viewpoint. The visual communication design uses more constitution to convey information to the deep heart of human. When Cezanne

geometrized the images of object, the elements constituted could be seen clearly in the picture. Maybe the harmony of picture with constitution thought is more close to the heart of people. Cezanne combined shapes, colors, constitution, points, lines, directions and other elements according to a certain structure mode in his pictures. In order to get the picture's harmony of constitution, he would change the appearance and proportion of objective images and adjust the angle of perspective deliberately so we often see that the images are out of shape and that two plates in a same painting have different perspective conditions. The only standard comes from Cezanne's reflection on picture itself. Just as his viewpoint, "when painters paint, an apple or a face is only a carrier for the show of lines and colors without anything else." So later Picasso estimated like this, "What Cezanne painted is not apple but the space and weight on circles."

Cezanne simplified the details of objective objects in the picture to strengthen the main structure. The picture structure is the bone of composition also is a kind of plane constitution relation, which has relation to the last success or failure of picture. When the images are simplified into geometries, the constitution relations of picture become the plane constitution relations between geometries. Their combination mode determines visual center's confirmation, the balance relations of picture, the spirit of works, and visual impact and vitality of picture.

Another method Cezanne used in composition is raising the horizon line of picture, even the scenery gives people the feeling of looking down from a height. The advantage is obvious: he could arrange all kinds of geometries at will in the perspective similar to a plane like fiddling with chess pieces [3]. It not only strengthens the reality of images but strengthens the feeling of constitution in a plane. Cezanne gave himself the biggest picture freedom so it not only releases the feeling of being restrained the objective images bring to painters but more ensures painter's dominance to the picture. He has set a good example for us. A painting has its own rules but not the nature itself. It is Cezanne's bravery to change the appearance of nature through his observation and feeling that gives the new look of picture.

The painting *Cherries and Peaches* and Constitution Relation of Each Part Diagram: "Fi. 4" and "Fig. 5". Plates on the desk have showed two viewpoints: the plate and cloth on the left seem to be painted erectly. The shape of plate is close to the perfect circle and cherries in the plate have clear structural relationship; the plate and jar on the right seem to be the second viewpoint of picture. The color is not so eye-catching and the shape of plate is close to ellipse. The overlap phenomenon of fruits is more obvious. So we can find that Cezanne has the special arrangement in forms. He considered the objects as a pile of structure syntheses and emphasized the sense of volume and space of objects so he not only took small structures into account but also highlighted the main body of picture. What's more, he made a special arrangement on the transparency and purity of background color to stress the above main body.



Fig. 4. Cherries and Peaches

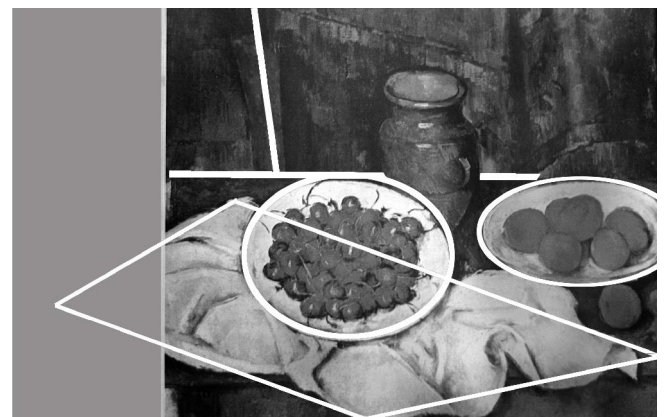


Fig. 5. Constitution Relation of Each Part Diagram

III. CONCLUSION

Reading great master's classical works always give us new gains: though Cezanne's art career is not smooth, he didn't complain but still cherished the past irreversible time and loved everything life gave him in his way. What important is not things appeared in pictures but his spiritual energy of loving life reflected in pictures.

Before his death, Cezanne still wanted to paint the eternal throb of nature - "no loose connections or gaps are permitted in a picture, or the emotion, light, and truth of it will disappear and run away...I close to all the broken fragments again...Everything we can see is scattering and disappearing. Nature is the same as usual always but its appearance is changing all the time. As painters, our mission is expressing its eternal throb by use of all its fickle elements and appearance." Paintings created by Cezanne are not lifelike and transiting naturally like classical paintings even they appear to be clumsy, but his meticulous research has surpassed any painters with traditional style of painting before. What he solved is the problem of painting essence between plane canvases and three-dimensional and the fundamental problem of combination of structure and color.

The combination of structure and color close art philosophy
is the eternal answer of visual arts.

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