Flat Sense And Decorative Meaning: On the Influence of Chinese Meticulous Painting on Persian Meticulous Painting in Composition Rules

Guangke Geng
Jiangsu Vocational Institute Of Commerce, Art Design College

Abstract: The composition methods of Chinese Meticulous Painting, with its flat sense and decorative meaning, are based on “cavalier perspective”, focusing on the subjective feelings of the painter. It has a profound influence on the composition techniques of Persian miniature painting.

Keywords: Painting with meticulous detail; Persian miniature; The composition Moving point perspective; Leveling; Decoration

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As an important branch of traditional Chinese painting, Chinese Meticulous Painting enjoys a long history and its origin and development are inseparable from the entire Chinese civilization. “Traditional Chinese painting is unique in the creation of form and color, especially in the use of lines, which is clearly different from Western painting and reflects the long-lasting oriental charm.”

In the Neolithic Age, the primitive rock paintings and decorative patterns of painted pottery products have bred the embryonic form of traditional Chinese painting. After the transition of Xia, Shang, and Zhou Dynasties, paintings have transformed from accessory decorations into independent forms. The silk paintings, Character Dragon and Phoenix Picture and Character Royal Dragon Picture, unearthed from the Chu Tomb in Changsha are the earliest single and complete paintings discovered so far in China. The lines are used as modeling methods in the pictures, which are also the long-term inheritance of Chinese Meticulous Paintings. The silk paintings of the Mawangdui Han tomb, also unearthed in Changsha, show the fullness of the paintings during the Qin and Han Dynasties.

“The development of flower-and-bird painting in the Song Dynasty and thereafter revolves around two aspects and three routes: the two aspects are the colorful paintings and the freehand paintings with ink changes; the three routes

About the author: Guangke Geng (1981-1), male, han, Jiangsu Xuzhou, lecturer, master, Research direction: Fine Arts.
include the meticulous brushwork, ink plum and bamboo, freehand flowers and birds.” [2] The Song Dynasty was a period when ink painting rose up, and it was also a period when the creation of meticulous painting became mature.

Meticulous painting, also known as “fine brushwork”, is symmetrical with “freehand brushwork”. It is a Chinese painting method that uses neat, meticulous, and relevant techniques to depict objects. It is divided into two types: white-painting and heavy-color painting. “Meticulous brushwork is to describe objects completely with ink lines, without coloring. Meticulous brushwork refers to Chinese paintings that are neat and dense and with heavy colors. In the early days of Chinese painting, fine brushwork painting in heavy color played an important role.” [3]

Meticulous painting pursues decorative meaning and emphasizes the vividness of painting. Compared with freehand painting, its painting methods are much neater and more rigorous, which are based on the accurate form of the painted object.

In terms of meticulous painting composition, it adopts a composition method based on “Cavalier Perspective”. Therefore, there is no fixed point of view, but a bird’s-eye view, a horizontal view, or a floating view. “The perspective of Chinese painting is refreshing and imaginary. From a bird’s-eye view of the world, he observes the whole rhythm of nature. His spatial position is to wander in time, travel around, and gather several layers and multiple viewpoints into a poetic and picturesque image. “[4] The composition of traditional Chinese paintings is summarized as “management position” in Nanqi XieHe’s “Six Laws”. The “management” here includes a series of thinking activities such as thinking, analysis, and scrutiny. It is the painter who “thinks and explores painstakingly, chooses and makes choices carefully and meticulously, and organizes and arranges ingeniously.”[5]

Persian miniature painting is sometimes called Iranian miniature painting. It is not only an important category of Persian art, but also an important part of medieval art.

Miniature painting was popular among the nobles of Babylon, Greece, Rome, Byzantium and other empires, and used to decorate jewelry boxes, jewelry boxes, badges and other items.

The history of Persian miniature painting can be traced back to the Sassanian period of the Persian Empire from the 3rd to the 7th century AD.

Around the 7th century AD, Islam arose in the Arabian Peninsula and gradually established an Islamic empire centered on the Persian region. Because Islam opposes idolatry, a large number of decorative covers and illustrations appear in manuscript books for the entertainment and appreciation of the upper class and wealthy citizens. These illustrations usually depict Persian or Indian fables,
legends, love poems, and biographies of emperors and heroes, creating rich images of animals and characters. This kind of small books with illustrations and paintings based on literary stories is called “Persian miniature”.

In the Timur Dynasty (1369~1500 AD), Persian miniature painting developed to its heyday. And from the 16th to the 17th century AD, the creation level of Persian miniature painting was even more sophisticated. However, after the 18th century, it almost died out due to the invasion of European colonists.

Persian miniature painting is a special form of painting arising from the exchange and collision of Eastern and Western civilizations, and belongs to court art. A huge difference from Western painting is that Persian miniature painting focuses on decorating the characters and scenes in the storyline with Arabic geometry and plant patterns, or combining with Persian writing and Arabic calligraphy to form the painting style with stories, legends, images, and words in one. Its characteristics are: in terms of spatial effect, the miniature painting is not restricted to the focal perspective, but highlights the supernatural composition of the plane, so that the artist’s imagination can be fully displayed; the picture is dense and complex, the composition is full, and there is almost no blank. The depiction of artistic images draws on the traditional Chinese meticulous painting technique, meticulous and precise, and good at the outline of lines; the detailed engraving pictures are comprehensive and meticulous, and dozens of different characters and even the hair and eyelashes of the characters can be simultaneously depicted on the square-inch picture. What’s more, some details of the depiction need to be appreciated with a magnifying glass. The painting has strong color contrast and higher purity and brightness, which make the picture brilliant and gorgeous. Every Persian miniature painting is a gorgeous and charming little world, showing a luxurious and noble quality, reflecting the superb skills and extraordinary artistic achievements of ancient Persian artists.

In the terms of composition form, Persian miniature painting has more oriental artistic characteristics, with a strong sense of plane and decoration, breaking the static focus perspective of Western painting, not being restricted by time and space. And its perspective is extremely similar with the cavalier perspective of Chinese meticulous painting.”

As early as the Wei and Jin dynasties, Chinese painters recognized the perspective law that everything looks small in the distance and big on the contrary. In the Northern and Southern Dynasties, Zong Bing wrote in The Preface of Painting Landscapes: “If you go a little bit wider, you will see a smaller one. Now we unfold the silk suede and let the distant view fall on it. Then, the shape of the Langfeng peak of Kunlun Mountain can also be expressed on the square-inch-sized silk suede. As long as you draw three inches vertically, you can express the height of a thousand meters; if you draw a few feet horizontally with ink, you can express
the distance of hundreds of miles.” In Landscape Theory written by Wang Wei in the Tang Dynasty, the key to dealing with the perspective relationship in landscape paintings is that if a mountain is to be painted in a meter, a tree will be drawn in a foot; if a horse is to be drawn in an inch, then a person is to be drawn in a point. Do not draw eyebrows and eyes on people in the distance, and do not draw branches on the trees in the distance. The mountains in the distance needn’t to be decorated with stones, they should be painted like a hidden eyebrow; The river in the distance do not have ripples, so it should be painted in connection with the clouds and sky. However, unlike western painters, Chinese painters are not loyal to the perspective principle of images, but pay more attention to their personal subjective feelings. They often use the method of overlooking observation in the composition of pictures. The perspective is erratic and floating, and they deal with complex images with highly refined and generalized techniques. For Chinese meticulous painting and even all traditional paintings, it is an important feature to connect plots of different times and even different spaces with scenes. This characteristic has played an indelible role in the development of oriental art, which has had a profound impact on the fine arts of many Asian countries and regions. The sense of flatness and decoration have even become the characteristics of the entire Oriental art.

The composition of the Persian miniature basically follows the rules of the plane layout, and also uses the “cavalier perspective” to process the picture. Between the square-inch pictures, complicated scenes and numerous characters need to be arranged, which is intricate and complicated, but not chaotic. Of course, after all, Persian paintings cannot fully absorb the aesthetic taste of Chinese art. They tend to cover the composition of the picture and paint the whole picture with gorgeous and bright colors. This has something to do with the aesthetic psychology of the people in the desert area that fear blankness.

References