Analysis of the Formal Language in Contemporary Minority Nationality-Themed Fine Brushwork Figure Painting

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Abstract: Minority nationality-themed fine brushwork figure paintings, focusing on the portrayal of ethnic minority people, represent a unique genre dedicated to depicting the spirit of ethnic minority people. It occupies a distinctive niche within the broader continuum of Chinese art, carrying forward the creative passion and artistic pursuit of each generation of fine brushwork artists towards minority culture. With the progress and development of the times, classic works have always been the treasure of artistic creation in this genre. These thematic paintings manifest profound artistic expression and regional characters, especially exhibiting ethnic distinctiveness in their formal language. To be outstanding, creators must achieve a comprehensive understanding of the formal language of this genre, thus only by respecting the cultures of the minority areas and optimizing the creation can this type of painting innovate and develop, staying true to its roots while encouraging innovation.

Keywords: Minority Themes; Fine Brushwork Figure Painting; Formal Language; Analysis

1. Introduction
Zang nationality-themed fine brushwork figure paintings derive their inspiration from the geographic and cultural characteristics of the Zang ethnic areas, blending Western realistic techniques with traditional Chinese fine brushwork methods to depict the image and local customs of the Zang people. This genre has garnered significant attention within the fine arts academic community. Having evolved over a considerable period, it has witnessed extensive development. Artists express their artistic ideals by portraying the local customs, indomitable spirit, traditional clothing, and snowy landscapes. These representations offer artists a continuous and vivid source of creative materials, showcasing the unique cultural symbols and distinctive regional characteristics of the Zang nationality [1]. This not only enriches the theory and practice of Chinese fine brushwork painting but also allows a broader audience to understand Xizang through these artworks.

2. Overview of Zang Nationality-Themed Fine Brushwork Figure Paintings
Zang nationality-themed fine brushwork figure paintings exhibit distinctive characteristics and are an integral part of China's contemporary painting system, as well as a crystallization of the creators' wisdom. With its continuous development and progress, a relatively complete system has gradually taken shape in the current era. It has garnered extensive attention and recognition from painters in the field of fine brushwork painting. Based on existing paintings of this genre, the works can be subdivided into the following categories:

2.1 Realistic Paintings of Daily Life and Religious Themes
Among contemporary Zang nationality-themed fine brushwork figure paintings, the majority of works depicting daily life of Zang people are inspired by labor scenes. Artists are moved by Zang people's labor activities, particularly blending hardworking women and bold men with the natural environment and labor scenes. For instance, renowned military artist Li Shaozhou's works "Highland Barley" and "Spring Plowing" portray the industrious and virtuous qualities inherent in the Zang people [2].
In the Zang ethnic areas of China, Zang Buddhism is practiced. As an essential part of the Chinese Buddhist system, the local customs and practices of the Zang ethnic areas are also closely related to Zang Buddhism. In
such a context, many Zang nationality-themed fine brushwork figure paintings integrate these elements into their creation process to highlight the Zang thematic subject matter. Commonly used religious elements include temples, stupas, Buddha statues, prayer flags, and prayer wheels, as in the works "The Stupa" (Figure 1) and "Lhabrang Monastery" (Figure 2) by Sang Jianguo. These artists incorporate spaces and tools for communication with the divine, reflecting the devout religious beliefs of Zang people.

2.2 Festival Culture and Women's Life Themes
This category of paintings portrays festivals and women's lives in a serene and profound manner, delving into the subtleties of women's lives with more depth and understanding than a mere external observation might reveal. For example, the work "Joyful Return from Norbulingka" (Figure 3) by Zhu Licun depicts a scene where Zang girls, slightly tipsy, return home with songs and laughter after celebrating at the Norbulingka Park. It authentically captures the girls' intoxicated merriment. Zhu vividly renders the natural and true essence of returning to daily life, capturing the everyday moments of Zang young women with a uniquely feminine sensitivity, gentleness, and delicacy. The artwork embodies a beautiful artistic conception, showcasing the festive customs of the Zang culture.

2.3 Portraiture and Costume Themes
The primary characteristic of fine brushwork figure painting that focus on Zang portraiture is the vividness of their formal language, highlighting the intricate details of Zang attire and the distinct features of the characters portrayed. These paintings pay meticulous attention to the delicacy of facial expression [3]. For instance, in "Lhabrang Monastery" (Figure 2) by Sang Jianguo, an elderly figure with grey hair, leaning on a cane and clasping his hands, is depicted wearing traditional Zang robes and praying devoutly, with a corner of the Lhabrang Monastery as the backdrop. The subject and setting complement each other, rendering the scene with authenticity and sanctity.

Costumes serve as a distinctive emblem of an ethnic group. In fine brushwork figure painting themed around the Zang culture, the subjects'
attire naturally becomes a crucial component of the artistic expression [4]. Zang costumes, rich in variety and splendor, subtly convey the resilient spirit of the Zang people through their decorations, materials, patterns, and colors. There are numerous figure paintings that celebrate the beauty of Zang costumes, such as Zheng Meiqiu's work "Tashi Delek" (Figure 4) and Yu Li's "Fragrant World" (Figure 5), which meticulously depict the texture and luxurious beauty of Zang garments and silver ornaments.

3. The Formal Language of Zang Nationality Themed-Fine Brushwork Figure Paintings

3.1 Lines
Line drawing forms the foundation and backbone of Zang nationality-themed fine brushwork figure paintings. These paintings demand precision, delicacy, and neatness in line work. The artist selects lines of appropriate thickness and curve to sculpt the figures according to the varied characteristics of the subjects, different body parts, and diverse materials. For the portrayal of light and shadow, techniques such as "thick in shade, thin in light" and "dense in shade, light in light" are employed, depending on the light source. To convey spatial depth in the composition, instead of adopting the Western focus on perspective, these paintings often use a combination of scatter perspective and the principle of unlimited visual field, implementing a "Foreground Realism, Background Illusion" line rhythm to create a sense of space and layering [5]. These themed paintings encapsulate formal languages of reality and subtlety, intensity and rhythm, variation and unity, reflecting a multidimensional and precise expression of the figures' form, color, and space, a testimony to their nuanced and rich representation.

3.2 Colors
Color is a significant aspect of the formal language in Zang nationality-themed fine brushwork figure paintings, playing a key role in the visual impact and emotional expression of the artwork. The Zang ethnic areas possess a strong palette, and many painters utilize high-contrast colors to accentuate the Zang themes, with symbolic meanings inherent in the chosen hues. During the color selection process, artists focus on the harmony and contrast of shades and temperature, seeking a balance between uniformity and variety [6]. Predominant choices include Zang- styled red, Zang- styled yellow, Zang- styled blue, and white, which embody the cultural sentiment of the Zang region within the depiction of figures, attire, backgrounds, and objects. Red signifies protective deities, yellow the land, blue the sky, and white purity. These are complemented by stable, profound, and intense secondary colors, resonating with the warm and sincere temperament of the Zang people, achieving a harmonious and unified composition.

3.3 Composition
The composition in Zang nationality-themed fine brushwork figure paintings is not a mere accumulation of elements but a thoughtful and
deliberate placement, thus integrating elements. Traditional compositional forms such as Chinese characters "Mountain" and Zigzag shapes allow for free vertical expansion and horizontal balance in the picture's structure. In the process of composition, with the human figure at the center, elements are arranged with care, creating a blend of sparsity and density that makes the main subject stand out without monotony. Some Zang nationality-themed paintings break away from tradition to pursue aesthetic beauty and a distinctive visual structure, often employing decorative techniques combined with elements of color, dots, lines, and shapes to establish a personalized compositional language. Such innovative trials must be grounded in extensive painting practice; otherwise, they can be counterproductive. This highlights the crucial importance of composition in the expression of these paintings [7].

3.4 Form and Shape
The creation of form and shape is a critical aspect that artists emphasize significantly. It serves as a key carrier for highlighting the characteristics of the formal language of these paintings, and the creation process in this aspect directly affects the expression of the core ideas in Zang nationality-themed fine brushwork figure paintings. In the practice of creating paintings, the expression of form and shape language borrows from the characteristics of Western sketching while inheriting the features of Chinese traditional fine brushwork painting's form design. This blending of realistic and exaggerated styles, with a focus on the treatment of line formation, is one of the main characteristics of these paintings [8]. Realism fully and effectively portrays three-dimensionality of painted figures, whereas an exaggerated style presents the local customs and practices in a simplified yet elegant manner, adding a sense of mystery and visual impact to the artwork.

3.5 Techniques
Sang Jianguo, a renowned Chinese artist of Zang nationality-themed fine brushwork figure paintings, not only employed Western painting techniques but also integrated Chinese painting skills into his creations. This has pioneered the painting methods and innovating the techniques for such themes. In his process, Sang predominantly used ink and brush as his tools for painting figures, with his most representative work being "Lhabrang Monastery." During his creation, he utilized whole milk as a painting material and adopted an irregular smearing method for his artwork.

3.6 Texture
Texture, or the tactile quality of surfaces, is the result of the fusion of materials and painting techniques, and it is also a formal language that artists need to pay attention to. The formal language of texture in these paintings is characterized by its strong sense of intrigue and intuitiveness. Artists working with these themes need to intimately understand Zang cultural characteristics and integrate their personal insights into their works [9]. Influenced by Western Surrealism, Conceptualism, and Constructivism, many contemporary artists in this genre in China use techniques like outlining, filling, dotting, and dyeing as their primary methods for creating textures. They also innovate by adding processes like washing, sprinkling salt, scraping, and waxing to the original paintings. These techniques endow the paintings with a more pronounced sense of three-dimensionality, strong visual effects, and intrigue [10].

4. Conclusion
Minority nationality-themed fine brushwork figure paintings have emerged and risen with the development of the times, featuring a unique ethnic breath and steadfast national spirit. These paintings introduce a new aesthetic trend to contemporary fine brushwork figure creation with minority nationality themes. The minority areas in China are located on the plateau, deep in the snow-covered highlands, where the unique geographical environment and distinctive folk customs shape the local culture and customs. As Chinese artists delve deeper into the research of fine brushwork figure paintings in these areas, using minority nationality themes as material for figure creation not only highlights the unique human and environmental features but also effectively enhances the value orientation of fine brushwork figure painting creation, emphasizing the artistry and formal language characteristics of fine brushwork painting.
Therefore, researchers of fine brushwork figure paintings that are rich in the characteristics of the era must fully grasp the formal language features of minority nationality-themed fine brushwork figure paintings and master the creation techniques of figure painting to occupy an important position in today's art world.

References
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