

Research on Situational Practical Teaching Methods in Freehand Flower-and-Bird Painting Teaching

Chen Min¹, Wang Yanliang²

¹Shihezi University, Shihezi, Xinjiang, China

²Shihezi Painting and Calligraphy Academy, Shihezi, Xinjiang, China

Abstract: As the core carrier of traditional Chinese ink-wash art, freehand flower-and-bird painting conveys emotions through brush-and-ink techniques and expresses aspirations via natural motifs. It boasts both artistic-aesthetic value and traditional-cultural educational value, serving as an essential component of the modern fine-arts aesthetic-education system. Current teaching of freehand flower-and-bird painting commonly suffers from rigid teaching modes, priority given to techniques over cultural connotations, monotonous practical activities and insufficient cultivation of artistic conception. Consequently, students mechanically acquire painting skills and produce highly homogenized works, with difficulty grasping the spiritual essence of freehand painting art. To break the bottlenecks of conventional teaching and improve the effectiveness of aesthetic education for Chinese painting, this paper explores the application value and implementation approaches of the situational practical-teaching model against the requirements of new-era aesthetic-education reform.

Keywords: Freehand Flower-and-Bird Painting; Situational Teaching; Practical Aesthetic Education

1. Introduction

Derived from the traditional literati-painting system, freehand flower-and-bird painting differs from meticulous fine-brush painting which features elaborate realism. Its core feature lies in “conveying spirit through freehand brushwork and integrating scenes with emotions”. It depicts natural motifs with concise, flexible brush-and-ink language, expresses the creator’s aesthetic sentiments and spiritual integrity, and embodies the core essence of traditional Chinese aesthetics and literati culture.

Amid comprehensive deepening of aesthetic-education reform, the educational objectives of traditional Chinese-painting teaching go beyond the instruction of basic brush-and-ink skills, and place greater emphasis on comprehensive cultivation of students’ cultural literacy, aesthetic competence and innovative thinking.^[1]

2. Existing Problems in Current Teaching of Freehand Flower-and-Bird Painting

2.1 Rigid Teaching Mode and Lack of Situational Experience

Teaching activities for freehand flower-and-bird painting are largely confined to indoor studios with fixed, inflexible teaching procedures. Teachers mostly deliver theoretical explanations and demonstrations of brush-and-ink skills and compositional rules, while students mainly learn by copying model works. Classrooms lack situational grounding of natural scenes and humanistic poetic atmosphere. Students receive knowledge passively throughout the learning process, deprived of opportunities for independent observation, immersive experience and in-depth reflection. They cannot directly perceive dynamic changes and natural vitality of seasonal flowers and birds. Their understanding of pictorial artistic conception remains confined to textual descriptions from books, so their aesthetic perception can hardly be enhanced, and their creations consistently lack verve and texture.

2.2 Emphasis on Techniques over Spiritual Essence and Inadequate Cultural Infiltration

Artistic conception and humanistic connotations constitute the soul of freehand flower-and-bird painting, whereas brush-and-ink techniques merely act as carriers for artistic expression. Nevertheless, current teaching shows a widespread utilitarian tendency, taking technical proficiency as the primary evaluation criterion

and neglecting the incorporation of classical poetry, literati allusions, traditional philosophy and other cultural contents. Most students can proficiently master fundamental techniques including ink-splashing, ink-accumulation and line manipulation, and accurately replicate forms of flowers and birds. Yet they fail to interpret the artistic conception of artworks, understand symbolic implications of classic themes such as plum, orchid, bamboo and chrysanthemum, or recognize correlations between brush-and-ink language and emotional expression. Their works are therefore formally complete yet culturally barren, deviating from the artistic essence of freehand painting that expresses aspirations through objects.^[2]

3. Implementation Paths for Situational Practical Teaching of Freehand Flower-and-Bird Painting

3.1 Construct Natural Real-Scene Situations to Consolidate Foundations for Sketching Practice

Nature is the source of creation for freehand flower-and-bird painting; creations separated from nature are bound to be hollow and rigid. Teachers should break spatial constraints of studios and organize regular outdoor situational sketching activities following seasonal variations. In accordance with features of spring, summer, autumn and winter, seasonal floral-and-avian motifs are selected. Students are guided to face real-world natural settings, observe growth patterns of plants, interleaving of branches and leaves, dynamic verve of birds, and hierarchical shifts of light and shadow, so as to accumulate vivid, authentic creative materials. Real-scene teaching abandons precise modeling requirements for realistic painting and adheres to the freehand principle of “valuing spirit over form”. Students are encouraged to capture the essential verve of objects instead of mechanically duplicating appearances. Targeted brush-and-ink training is carried out alongside field-site experience. Students learn to recreate natural vitality by deploying varied ink density, dryness-wetness as well as virtual-real and dense-sparse lines. They develop the understanding that “brush-and-ink originates from nature and artistic conception derives from real-world scenes”, and reduce over-reliance on model paintings.^[3]

3.2 Build Poetic-Cultural Situations to Deepen Aesthetic Comprehension of Artistic Conception

The integration of poetry and painting represents a core cultural trait of freehand flower-and-bird painting. Artistic-conception construction relies heavily on edification from poetic culture and literati spirits. Teaching can build poetic-cultural situations based on classical poems and master anecdotes to cultivate artistic conception via poetry and refine paintings through literature. At course initiation, classical poems matching teaching themes are introduced to interpret correspondences between poetic moods and painting connotations. Through appreciating poems themed on plum blossoms, lotus flowers, bamboo and rocks, students comprehend literati virtues such as nobility, fortitude and elegance embodied in these motifs. Meanwhile, humanistic situations are built around works of ancient masters. Comparative analysis of brush-and-ink styles and creative aspirations of Bada Shanren, Qi Baishi, Zheng Banqiao and other artists helps students recognize intrinsic links between brush-and-ink language, creators’ mental states and historical contexts. Thematic creation tasks are assigned under cultural-situation guidance. Students are encouraged to transform poetic conception and literati sentiments into ink-wash visuals, advancing their creation from mere depiction of objects to expression of inner aspirations.

4. Optimization Strategies for Situational Practical Teaching

4.1 Establish Hierarchical Teaching Systems to Teach Students in Accordance with Their Aptitude

A progressive situational-teaching system should be constructed in accordance with students’ painting foundations and cognitive patterns. At the beginner stage, basic perceptive-oriented situations are prioritized, focusing on simple object observation and elementary brush-and-ink training to consolidate students’ technical and aesthetic foundations. At the intermediate stage, in-depth situations such as outdoor sketching and poetic-themed creation foster students’ capabilities in capturing object verve and constructing artistic conception. At the advanced stage, innovation-oriented situations are developed. Students are guided to produce

personalized works combining traditional aesthetics and modern aesthetic concepts and gradually form individual artistic styles, satisfying learning demands of learners at diverse proficiency levels.^[4]

4.2 Enrich Diversified Teaching Resources and Consolidate Teaching Carriers

Three categories of resources, namely local natural-folk resources, digital aesthetic-education resources and school-based curriculum resources, shall be integrated to improve carriers for situational teaching. Local distinctive vegetation and folk-custom resources are explored to develop region-specific teaching situations. Digital resources such as online master-work exhibition halls and ink-art databases broaden students' aesthetic horizons. Serial thematic courses covering seasonal flowers-and-birds and poetry-painting integration are sorted out to form systematic teaching content, ensuring regular and standardized delivery of situational practical teaching.^[5]

5. Conclusion

Situational practical teaching fits perfectly with the artistic features of freehand flower-and-bird painting and the requirements of new-era aesthetic education. Through full-scale construction of four types of situations: natural real-scene, poetic-cultural,

classroom-immersive and life-experience situations, an immersive, experiential and practical new-type teaching model is established. It effectively solves prominent teaching problems including disconnection between knowledge and practice, deficient artistic conception and insufficient innovation.

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