

# Analyzing the Significance of Heavy Colors and Ink in Chinese Painting from the Perspective of Cultural Symbol

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## ABSTRACT

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Chinese painting carries thousands of years of historical and cultural heritage and occupies an important position in the global art field. With its unique aesthetic concepts, expression techniques and cultural connotations, it demonstrates the wisdom and creativity of the Chinese nation. In this rich and diverse Chinese painting system, heavy color painting is often used to express major historical themes, religious stories, etc., carrying profound social and cultural functions and aesthetic interests. Ink painting uses water as a medium to show the feelings of literati and poets. This study aims to explore the significance of heavy color and ink in Chinese painting from the unique perspective of cultural symbols. By exploring the cultural symbolic connotations contained in the two and analyzing their evolution and development in different historical periods, we can reveal how they serve as symbols of the spirit and culture of the Chinese nation and convey specific values, aesthetic tastes, and philosophical thoughts; and further explore how heavy color and ink painting participate in cross-cultural exchanges as cultural symbols in the context of contemporary multicultural integration, showing the unique charm of Chinese painting and providing new theoretical support for the inheritance and innovation of Chinese painting art.

**Keywords:** Chinese painting, heavy color, ink painting, cultural symbols

## INTRODUCTION

At present, domestic and foreign academic circles have made fruitful research results on Chinese painting. Western scholars have analyzed its influence on Western modern art from the perspectives of color science and art communication, such as the reference of Impressionist and Post-Impressionist painters to oriental color composition, and the use of heavy color elements in the field of Western decorative art. At the same time, it focuses on the unique aesthetic philosophy of ink painting, compares it with Western philosophical thoughts, and explores its value in the innovation of artistic concepts[1].

The research on heavy color and ink painting in Chinese academic circles focuses on the technical level, mineral pigment production, coloring techniques, and pen and ink procedures. Major art colleges and universities have carried out systematic teaching and research, cultivated a large number of professional talents, and passed on the

essence of skills. In terms of aesthetics, scholars have deeply explained the four qualities of "ease, spirit, wonder, and ability" of ink painting, the gorgeous and solemn beauty of heavy color painting, and the aesthetic trends of different times carried by the two. This paper traces back the development of heavy color painting from primitive painted pottery, Qin and Han Dynasty lacquer painting, Tang and Song Dynasty fine brushwork heavy color to modern heavy color, and studies the process of ink painting from the origin of pre-Qin painting, the budding of literati painting in the Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties, the maturity of brush and ink in the Yuan, Ming and Qing Dynasties to the transformation and transformation in modern times[2].

Although heavy color painting and ink painting have extremely high artistic achievements in the history of Chinese painting, there are still certain limitations in the current research on the two. Existing research lacks comprehensive and systematic research on heavy color and ink as cultural symbols. Most studies focus on the analysis of the technical level, ignoring the deep cultural symbolic meaning behind them. Existing literature discusses the two in isolation, lacking a systematic study of their mutual connection and mutual influence in the overall context of Chinese painting. The common cultural genes and differentiated expressions contained in the two as symbols in the context of Chinese culture have not been fully explored, as well as the deep-seated issues such as how to reshape the image of Chinese painting and convey the Chinese spirit as cultural symbols in the context of cross-cultural communication and contemporary art innovation, which provides a broad space for exploration for this study.

This study aims to break through the limitations of the previous study of heavy color and ink from the perspective of Chinese culture and provide a constructive theoretical reference for subsequent research. The study analyzes heavy color and ink from the perspective of artistic aesthetics, deeply explores the cultural symbolic meaning and function behind them, focuses on the microscopic details and macroscopic historical development of heavy color and ink works, and comprehensively displays the overall style and significance of heavy color and ink in the Chinese painting system.

## **THE CONNOTATION AND CHARACTERISTICS OF CULTURAL SYMBOLS IN CHINESE PAINTING**

### **2.1 Definition and function of cultural symbols**

Cultural symbols refer to signs with some special connotations or special meanings. They are the abstract embodiment of the unique culture of a nation or a country and are important carriers and forms of cultural connotations. Cultural symbols have multiple functions, carrying the collective memory of the nation and inheriting the wisdom, beliefs and customs of the ancestors[3].

### **2.2 Chinese painting as a carrier of cultural symbols**

Chinese painting is like a vivid visual history book in the long river of Chinese cultural inheritance and development, recording the historical changes of the Chinese nation with a unique artistic language. From the rock paintings of primitive society to the silk paintings and stone reliefs of the Qin and Han dynasties, paintings reached their artistic peak in the Tang and Song dynasties and became paintings for studying the social economy and folk customs of the time.

Painting is a direct reflection of the artist's inner emotions and thoughts and a medium for communicating with the audience's soul, expressing the artist's personal ambitions and philosophical thinking. Paintings vent the artist's complex emotions in a unique artistic form, triggering the audience's resonance with the vicissitudes of history and life situations.

Chinese painting embodies the unique aesthetic consciousness of the Chinese nation, from the selection of materials and tools to the expression of techniques, to the creation of artistic conception, all of which highlight the charm of oriental aesthetics. The softness and elasticity of the brush and the permeability of rice paper provide unlimited

possibilities for the changes of pen and ink. The painter uses the ingenious blending of water and ink to show the charm of dry and wet, thick and thin, virtual and real on rice paper. Fine brushwork pursues both form and spirit and the freehand brush moves as the heart wishes, focusing on charm and artistic conception. Jiang Feihong's ink paintings only use a few strokes to outline the shapes of mountains and rivers. They seem simple but are full of charm. They embody the aesthetic pursuit of Chinese painting that "less is more" and "white is black". They contain the Chinese people's poetic understanding of nature and life and inherit the national aesthetic genes in aesthetic creation and appreciation, becoming a unique cultural symbol model in world art.



"Zhu zhong Ke "

Jiang FeiHong



"Jin Cao "

Jiang FeiHong



"Wu Qi "

Jiang FeiHong



"SESE"

Jiang FeiHong

## CULTURAL SYMBOLIC SIGNIFICANCE IN CHINESE PAINTING

### 3.1 Heavy color painting

As a unique type of painting in Chinese painting, heavy color painting originated from pottery painting in primitive society, expressing the awe and worship of nature and gods by ancient humans, and opening the precedent of heavy color painting to express meaning with color. With the evolution of history, heavy color painting was further developed in the Qin and Han dynasties. The painted silk paintings unearthed from the Mawangdui Han Tomb in Changsha showed the superb painting skills of the Han Dynasty. In the Han and Tang dynasties, heavy color painting ushered in a glorious heyday. The murals of Mogao Grottoes in Dunhuang are outstanding examples of heavy color painting in this period. They use mineral pigments such as azurite, malachite, cinnabar, and lead powder. After thousands of years, the colors are still bright, reflecting the open and inclusive cultural style and the aesthetic taste of diversified integration at that time. However, after the Song and Yuan Dynasties, heavy color painting gradually came under attack. Literati painters advocated the freehand style of ink and wash, pursued the interest of pen and ink and the expression of inner spirit, and made the mainstream position of heavy color painting in the painting world replaced by ink and wash painting. However, in the fields of temple murals and folk paintings, heavy-color paintings are still tenaciously inherited and developed. For example, the murals of Yongle Palace in Shanxi in the Yuan Dynasty became the treasure of ancient mural art. The Yangliuqing woodblock New Year paintings in the Ming and Qing Dynasties depicted folk stories, festival customs, and other themes that were deeply loved by the people, preserving the fire for the inheritance of heavy color paintings among the people.

Since modern times, with the influx of Western artistic thoughts and the re-examination of traditional culture, heavy color paintings have ushered in the dawn of revival. On the basis of inheriting traditional heavy color painting techniques and materials, painters boldly innovated, integrated the color theory and composition concepts of Western paintings, expanded the expression form and subject matter of heavy color paintings, and made them glow with new vitality. Whether it is depicting historical themes, natural scenery, or showing contemporary social life, heavy color paintings attract the audience's attention with their unique artistic charm and shine on the domestic and international art stage.

The color system of heavy color paintings is based on mineral pigments. Mineral pigments such as azurite, malachite, cinnabar, and realgar are painted on the screen after grinding and mixing glue. They have the characteristics of bright colors, strong covering power, and long-lasting color retention. These pigments come from natural minerals, giving the paintings a majestic and solemn charm. Unlike Western paintings that focus on light and shadow and realistic use of colors, the colors of heavy color paintings emphasize symbolism and decorativeness. They are matched according to the traditional Chinese concept of blue, red, yellow, white, and black, and intertwined with each other. Through contrast and harmony, they create a rhythmic and rhythmic picture atmosphere to convey specific emotions and meanings.

In terms of technique, outlining is the basis of modeling in heavy color painting, and coloring focuses on the thickness, dryness, and wetness of the pigment, making the color rich and three-dimensional. Rendering creates a virtual-real effect through the gradual transition of color, enhancing the layering and spatial sense of the picture, making the picture both delicate and lively, with a combination of rigidity and softness, and unique ingenuity.

Take Jiang Feihong as an example. The pigments such as azurite, malachite, cinnabar, and lead powder in the painting complement each other. The high-saturation contrasting colors such as red and yellow, blue and gold are harmoniously matched, which not only shows the elegance and refinement of the painting. The painter uses rendering techniques to make the color transition natural, forming a sharp contrast with the heavy colors of the painting, and the coexistence of reality and illusion, presenting the life scenes vividly to the viewer, showing the artistic charm of heavy color painting.



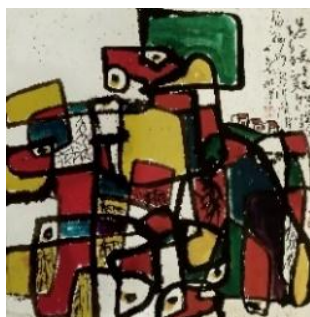
"Fu Sheng Yi Meng "

Jiang FeiHong



"Jiang Xue"

Jiang FeiHong



"The Beauty of Life"

Jiang FeiHong



"Mirror Life"

Jiang FeiHong

### 3.2 Ink painting

Ink painting carries a profound cultural heritage. It began to sprout in the pre-Qin period and initially showed the clues of controlling ink with water and pursuing charm. In the Wei, Jin, Southern, and Northern Dynasties, ink painting began to emerge, and painters paid more attention to the expression of spiritual temperament and laid a theoretical and practical foundation for the development of ink painting by expressing spirit with form. In the Tang and Song Dynasties, ink painting matured, and many schools and techniques emerged vigorously. In the Yuan, Ming, and Qing Dynasties, ink painting became the mainstream of the painting world. In the interweaving of retro and innovation, ink painting in the Qing Dynasty moved forward, breaking through traditional constraints, injecting new vitality into ink painting, and showing a different social outlook and humanistic feelings.

Since modern times, ink painting has developed in a diversified way in the tide of changes in the times and the integration of Chinese and Western cultures[5]. Traditional painters adhere to the spirit of pen and ink, integrate the atmosphere of the times, and show the charm and heritage of Chinese traditional culture; some painters actively absorb the nutrition of Western painting, integrate perspective, color, composition, and other elements into ink painting, expand the expression form and subject range of ink painting, make it closer to modern aesthetics and social needs, and present a prosperous scene of blooming flowers.



The artistic characteristics of ink painting are to pursue artistic conception and aura as the primary goal. The natural atmosphere, life philosophy, or emotional waves contained in the painting.

As the core element of ink painting, pen and ink show the form and charm of objects through pen skills and lines; the use of ink focuses on mutual coordination and ink color changes, reflecting the beauty of yin and yang, density and opening, and achieving the artistic effect of "ink is divided into five colors".

Ink painting contains profound philosophical aesthetics. The Taoist "Tao follows nature" and "rule by inaction" allow painters to pursue a natural, innocent, and simple state. The Confucian "benevolence, righteousness, courtesy, wisdom and trustworthiness" endow ink painting with humanistic care and moral connotations. The Zen "enlightenment" and "heart" ideas make ink painting focus on inner understanding and spiritual transcendence. The three are intertwined to build a unique aesthetic system of ink painting.

As a symbol of the spirit of the Chinese nation, ink painting uses pen and ink to write the vicissitudes of history, uses blank space to imply tolerance and open-mindedness, and conveys the spiritual qualities of tenacity and optimism through artistic conception. It inherits the soul and blood of the nation and becomes an important window for the world to understand China and Chinese culture.

## RESULTS

### 4.1 Style Comparison

The styles of heavy color painting and ink painting are significantly different, and together they constitute the rich and colorful artistic appearance of Chinese painting[6].

In terms of the use of colors, heavy color paintings are characterized by their brilliant, colorful, thick, and strong colors. Heavy color paintings use mineral pigments that do not fade after thousands of years, creating a sense of magnificence, solemnity, and splendor for the picture. Ink painting uses the color concept of "ink is divided into five colors", showing an elegant world of black, white, and gray, pursuing an ethereal, quiet, implicit, and restrained artistic conception.

In terms of line expression, heavy color painting focuses on the neatness, delicacy, rigor, and precision of lines, and line modeling is its foundation. The painter uses elastic lines to outline the contours, structure and expressions of objects. The lines have clear starting and ending points, and are smooth and graceful, as exquisite as a spring silkworm spinning silk. The lines of ink paintings are more freehand and flexible, pursuing the charm and interest of brush and ink.

In terms of composition and layout, heavy color paintings often pursue rigorous symmetry, density and fullness. The elements of the picture are rich and varied, and the characters and scenery are arranged in a proper density. It focuses on the decorativeness and formal beauty of the picture, and strives to create a gorgeous and solemn atmosphere. Ink painting prefers a simple, ethereal composition with a combination of reality and illusion. Painters often use the technique of leaving blank space to contrast the real with the virtual, allowing the viewer to have infinite associations within a limited picture.

In terms of subject matter selection, heavy-color paintings often focus on major historical themes, religious stories, court life, myths, and legends. These themes carry profound cultural connotations and social significance and display a sense of solemnity, sacredness, and magnificence through brilliant colors and exquisite craftsmanship. Ink painting is fond of themes such as landscapes, nature, flowers, birds, fish, insects, and literati, and its main purpose is to express emotions and aspirations through objects.

## 4.2 Connotation Comparison

There are significant differences in the connotations of heavy color painting and ink painting, which reflect the profound brilliance of Chinese traditional culture from different dimensions and reflect the diverse spiritual demands and aesthetic ideals of the Chinese people.

Heavy color painting focuses on secular and collective expression. In ancient times, it mostly served the court nobility and religious beliefs, carrying the social hierarchy, etiquette norms, and the secular wishes of the people. It embodies people's yearning for a better life and embodies the collective spiritual aspirations and social consensus.

Ink painting tends to express spirituality and individuality. It is the spiritual habitat of literati and poets, where painters use their pens and ink to express their personal emotions, thoughts, and interests, and pursue spiritual independence and freedom.

In terms of aesthetic taste, heavy color painting pursues the beauty of magnificence, solemnity, and splendor. Its rich and brilliant colors, rigorous and delicate composition, and exquisite and complex techniques create a formal beauty with strong visual impact, allowing people to intuitively feel the solemnity, magnificence, and sacredness of the picture. Ink painting advocates a natural, innocent, ethereal, and tranquil state. It triggers viewers' reflection on life circumstances and natural philosophy, allows viewers to realize the harmonious unity of man and nature in a subtle and restrained way, pursues an inner spiritual resonance and spiritual enlightenment, and displays the profound and far-reaching beauty of traditional Chinese aesthetics.



"Fu Sheng Yi Meng "

Jiang FeiHong



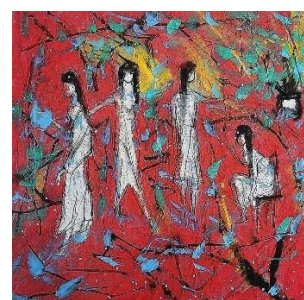
"Power from depths life"

Jiang FeiHong



"cymbidium"

Jiang FeiHong



"Dance"

Jiang FeiHong

Heavy color paintings carry rich historical memories, social features and folk culture. It has become an important carrier of Chinese national cultural heritage and social memory, maintaining the nation's cultural identity and emotional bonds. Ink painting is a concentrated embodiment of the spirit of Chinese traditional culture, which is used to express feelings about family and country, show noble character, and pursue spiritual transcendence. Ink painting carries the character and integrity of literati, and has become the core symbol of the spiritual home of the Chinese nation, passed down from generation to generation and shining brightly[7].

## DISCUSSION

### 5.1 Fusion of heavy colors and ink painting

As contemporary art develops, the fusion of heavy color painting and ink painting has become a significant trend in the development of Chinese painting. Many artists are committed to exploring innovative ways to integrate the two, injecting new vitality into Chinese painting and showing a unique charm of the times.

As a pioneer in the integration of Chinese and Western art, Lin Fengmian's painting practice opened up new paths for the fusion of heavy colors and ink[9]. He studied in Europe in his early years, absorbing the nourishment of Western modern art. After returning to China, he delved deeply into traditional painting. His works often use ink as

the base, incorporating heavy color elements to break the inherent boundaries of traditional painting.

Wu Guanzhong is a master of fusion. He skillfully uses ink lines to outline the contours of objects and displays their verve with simple and agile strokes. At the same time, he boldly introduces heavy colors and uses rich colors to construct the layers and atmosphere of the picture. It aims to combine the essence of Chinese and Western art and promote Chinese painting to the world.

This fusion is not only a superposition of techniques but also an innovation of concepts. Break through the limitations of traditional heavy colors and single ink styles, create a new style that combines the advantages of both, meet the diverse aesthetic needs of contemporary people, and make the ancient painting genre fit the aesthetic of the times. Behind the fusion of heavy colors and ink is the adherence to the spirit of traditional culture and the response to the world art trend. The painter uses the fusion to express the contemporary life perception and the spirit of the times, making Chinese painting unique on the international stage, like a cultural ambassador to convey oriental wisdom and promote cross-border Cultural exchanges add color to the world's art treasure house.

### CONCLUSION

This study has conducted an in-depth study of heavy color and ink painting in Chinese painting from the perspective of cultural symbols[11]and systematically analyzed the development process, artistic characteristics, cultural symbolic significance, and comparison and integration of the two.

Heavy color painting originated from painted pottery in primitive society, experienced the peak of development in the Qin and Han Dynasties, was impacted by literati painting after the Song and Yuan Dynasties, and was revived and innovated in modern times; its colors are bright, and the techniques are mainly based on drawing, filling, and rendering. It carries the cultural expression of secular groups such as the court, religion, and folk, and symbolizes magnificence and solemnity. Ink painting sprouted in the pre-Qin Dynasty, started in the Wei, Jin, Southern, and Northern Dynasties, matured in the Tang and Song Dynasties, became mainstream in the Yuan, Ming, and Qing Dynasties, and developed in a diversified way in modern times; it pursues artistic conception and aura, with pen and ink as the core, and contains Confucian, Buddhist and Taoist philosophical aesthetics. It is the expression of the spiritual individual of the literati, showing a sense of emptiness and remoteness. The two styles are gorgeous and strong, and elegant and ethereal. In terms of connotation, they focus on secular groups and spiritual individuals respectively, but they are integrated with each other in contemporary times, giving birth to new styles and schools, and promoting cultural dialogue between the East and the West.

In the context of increasingly frequent cross-cultural exchanges, heavy-color and ink painting will play a more important role as Chinese cultural symbols. They will attract the world's attention with their unique oriental aesthetics, show their charm in international exhibitions and cultural activities, and inject vitality into global art. Through in-depth interaction with Western art, Chinese painting absorbs new concepts and techniques and expands its boundaries.

With the rapid development of science and technology, new technologies will bring changes to both. Digital painting, virtual reality, etc. can provide new creative means and display platforms, simulate the texture effects of traditional materials, break through the limitations of time and space, and allow classic works to be presented in new forms to inspire creative inspiration.

In the cultivation of artistic talents, we should focus on the combination of inheritance and innovation, and colleges and universities should strengthen cultural connotation and aesthetic education, cultivate artists with profound cultural heritage and innovative spirit; encourage artists to take root in tradition, pay attention to reality, look at the world, and create more masterpieces that show the style of the times and convey the Chinese spirit, so that heavy

color and ink painting will shine in the new era and continue to write a glorious chapter in Chinese painting.

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