

The Expression of Crack Texture Language in Contemporary Lacquer Painting Art Taking Su Xiaobai's Art Works as Examples

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ABSTRACT

The crack texture on lacquer painting is a decorative language with aesthetic significance. As early as ancient times, it existed as an occasional phenomenon in the production process of lacquerware. But with the development of the times, changes in people's aesthetic taste, and scientific research on lacquerware craftsmanship, the formation of crack texture has gradually evolved into a decorative language in lacquer painting. This article takes the analysis of crack texture in contemporary lacquer painting as the research object, adopts a case analysis method, and explores the concept, manifestation, and aesthetic characteristics of cracks through the analysis of the works of lacquer artist Su Xiaobai, so as to summarize the significance and future possibilities of exploring crack texture language in lacquer painting creation.

Keywords: Lacquer painting, Crack texture, Texture language, Su Xiaobai.

1. INTRODUCTION

Su Xiaobai, born in 1949 in Wuhan, Hubei, is a member of the Chinese Artists Association and a renowned contemporary abstract painter in China. Su Xiaobai has many years of artistic experience in Europe and is a highly accomplished artist in Germany. He is currently working and living in Shanghai, China and Dusseldorf, Germany. In 1984, he was admitted to the Oil Painting Training Class of the Central Academy of Fine Arts. In 1987, he was awarded the German Cultural and Art Scholarship and later enrolled in the graduate and master classes of the Dusseldorf Academy of Fine Arts, where he studied under modern art masters such as Lupertz and Richter. During Su Xiaobai's visit to Germany, he was inspired by new ideas and returned to China at the age of 55. He began using large lacquer and oil painting pigments as the main media for artistic creation and conducted extensive research, expanding the possibilities of painting. His art gradually moved away from the previous narrative and began to focus on his own relationship with the outside world.

2. THE CONCEPT OF CRACK TEXTURE

"Texture is the surface form of objectively existing substances, which represents the texture of the material surface and reflects the form of material properties."¹ It can be seen that the existence of texture can make the expressed object more vivid and rich. Any object will present different textures, which can be large or small, rough or delicate, and some are artificially processed; Some are formed by chance. Looking back at the present, texture has gradually become an important form of expression in many painting arts. Compared to contemporary painting, early painting artists paid more attention to the light and dark effects, color space, and other painting languages of the screen. The texture that existed in early painting was also more introverted and did not receive too much attention, and the texture language did not belong to the expressive language in early painting. However, influenced by the development of the new era, artistic communication

1. Wang Huabin, *Texture Composition of the Screen* [M]. People's Fine Arts Publishing House, 1995.

has become more convenient, people's thinking has become broader, and painting forms have become more concise and bold. Artists have begun to continuously explore new painting materials, which has led to an understanding and recognition of the expression of texture. It is not difficult to see from the emergence of comprehensive painting that artists in the new era have added expressive power to their images by experimenting with different materials. Not only that, artists can also convey emotions through texture, allowing viewers to feel the artist's thoughts and thoughts in artistic creation, thereby achieving a conceptual communication.

Cracks are a texture phenomenon on the surface of objects, which is involved in both nature and daily life, such as the cracking of the earth, the thirsty riverbed, and the crack paint effect on the surface of furniture. They are closely related to people's daily lives. In the field of lacquer art, crack texture has been applied to the production of lacquerware for a long time. In ancient times, the production process of lacquerware once identified the appearance of crack texture as a defect in craftsmanship, and identified the appearance of crack texture as an occasional occurrence. But with the development of science and technology and the improvement of production technology, people have gradually mastered the emergence rules and production techniques of this crack texture language. Therefore, cracks have also entered the historical stage as a decorative texture language. In contemporary lacquer painting, the texture of cracks is often used to express an effect with a sense of history and cultural depth. "It can be seen from this that we have long abandoned the deep-rooted concept of 'perfection' in ancient times, and do not regard smooth and flawless surfaces as the only aesthetic standard."² The appearance of crack texture has given people a new definition of beauty, and crack texture is the most unique representative of incomplete beauty. The author takes the manifestation of crack texture in contemporary lacquer painting as the main clue, and takes Su Xiaobai's art works as an example to explore the possibility of crack texture in lacquer painting art.

2. Yang Bo, The Distinctive Texture in Lacquer Paintings [J]. Journal of Chengdu University (Social Sciences Edition), 2004 (3).

3. THE EXPRESSIVE FORMS OF CRACK TEXTURE LANGUAGE IN CONTEMPORARY LACQUER PAINTING

The manifestation of crack texture in lacquer painting production can be divided into two types. One approach is to generate cracks through the properties of the large paint itself. This expression method is to use the large paint as the basic pigment on the surface of the substrate, while keeping the substrate unchanged, and mix it with other objects to produce unique changes, resulting in a unique crack texture; Another approach is to use the properties of the material itself for manual manufacturing and processing. This approach involves breaking through the material itself and, while familiarizing itself with the properties of each material, creating a cracking effect during the manufacturing process.

3.1 Displaying Crack Texture Through Chinese Lacquer

As one of the numerous pigments, the unique feature of raw lacquer is that its dried film has excellent resistance to penetration, corrosion, weather, and durability, and can be used for various purposes, such as painting, furniture making, and so on. In addition, raw lacquer pigments also have the characteristics of safety, environmental protection, and non-toxic, making them a very excellent color material. By using raw lacquer to express the texture of cracks, it is usually based on raw lacquer as the base pigment, mixed with other substances to produce a reaction. The expansion coefficient of the external raw lacquer layer is greater than the expansion coefficient of the internal matrix. During the drying process of the paint layer, the paint layer is subjected to external compression or internal expansion tension, resulting in cracking. There are many ways to form such cracks, such as egg white wrinkles, paste wrinkles, loess wrinkles, etc. The principle is similar, and fission is formed based on the water expansion ratio of different materials during the drying process. For example, in lacquer painting, a certain amount of loess is usually mixed into the paint material for the rendering of the picture. During the painting process, the artist will use various tools such as brushes, bamboo chopsticks, fine bristle brushes, etc., and use specific techniques and techniques to apply loess paint to the screen. After the loess and paint lose moisture during the drying process, they form a crack texture effect, which can be used to simulate

the fission of land, mountain stone patterns, stone patterns, and so on.

3.2 Artificial Production and Processing of Materials

Another manifestation of crack texture formation in lacquer painting is manual molding, such as eggshell inlay, mother-of-pearl inlay, lacquer skin inlay, and other lacquer painting techniques, which all produce crack texture. If used properly in the personal creative process, it often produces a variety of effects. The eggshell not only serves as the white color in lacquer painting, but also the texture of the cracked eggshell itself makes the white color in the image richer and more vibrant. In addition, the front and back of the eggshell will exhibit different texture effects. And mother-of-pearl can also be processed into various shapes. If mother-of-pearl has good permeability, it can also present a variable background color in the cracks of free splicing. After repeated painting and polishing, the lacquer skin will present a flaky texture effect, similar to the texture of an eggshell naturally cracking under external force. The eggshell inlay in the background of Qiao Shiguang's lacquer painting "The Sound of Elephant Feet Drums" ("Figure 1") is cut and extended according to the dynamic dance patterns of the characters, using crack texture to express the spatial relationship between the person and the background, enriching the visual hierarchy.



Figure 1 "The Sound of Elephant Feet Drums" created by Qiao Shiguang in 1983, with a size of 91x61cm. Image source: Yachang Art Network.

4. THE AESTHETIC CHARACTERISTICS OF CRACK TEXTURE LANGUAGE IN SU XIAOBAI'S PAINTINGS

Su Xiaobai has reshaped the aesthetic relationship between his paintings and objects through his paintings. His paintings often enrich their visual effects through specific textures, and

use abstract methods to confirm his personal historical senses. The application of crack texture in his paintings has a profound impact on composition aesthetics, spatial aesthetics, and abstract aesthetics.

4.1 The Formal Beauty of "Winding and Interlacing"

The formal beauty of the crack texture stems from its unique lines and patterns, which present a natural and irregular form and have high artistic and aesthetic value. The gradual appearance of crisscrossing cracks as decorative elements can be traced back to the Ge kiln in ceramic art. Due to differences in the expansion coefficient of the glaze during the firing process of porcelain, unique cracks are caused. These cracks usually appear as complete blocks, gradually expanding, and the details become more rich, ultimately presenting a cross combination of "herringbone" shapes, giving a staggered visual effect. In Su Xiaobai's art works, he incorporated ready-made materials into the painting to comprehensively change traditional painting methods and create a casual and relaxed crack effect. Due to the brightness of the raw lacquer itself, Su Xiaobai deliberately polished it to a darker color. As in his work "Tianqing-6" ("Figure 2"), the simple paint color was transformed into a complex gray tone through chemical reactions, reproducing the ice cracks and sky blue color of Ge Kiln. The winding and interlacing texture of the cracks has a unique texture beauty, with a smooth surface texture but rich touch, giving people a strong visual and tactile impact. The sky blue color, symbolizing the vastness of the universe, gives people a profound, elegant, and implicit feeling, reflecting Laozi's important aesthetic pursuit: the beauty of "tranquility". "The beauty of 'tranquility' is a manifestation of beauty guided by the thought of 'inaction'."³ Minimal and rich, thick and distant, the lacquer emits ancient information from the inside out, and simulates the layered texture of ceramics, making people seem to be able to gaze into the depths of the universe. Su Xiaobai's use of raw lacquer materials brings a modern and minimalist form to his works with a unique Eastern simplicity and solemnity.

3. Hu Yukang, Pan Tianbo, Raw Lacquer and Chinese Culture [M]. Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 2013.

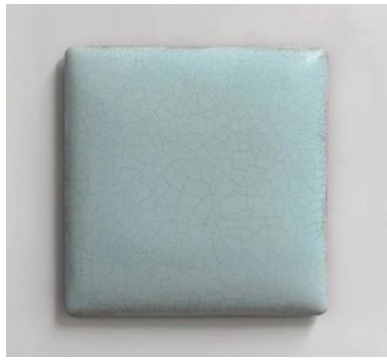


Figure 2 Su Xiaobai's "Tianqing-6" 2018 oil paint. Lacquer. Flax. emulsion Wood. 100x 97 x 13 cm
Image source: Geng Gallery.

4.2 The Space Beauty of "Infinite Extension"

The crack texture in lacquer painting, as a unique form of artistic expression, can also create a unique spatial beauty through it. The crack texture is generally connected in a herringbone shape, forming a network of closed lines that can be freely combined. In lacquer painting, it not only reflects the theme content, but also conveys ideological, emotional, and philosophical connotations. Artists can use the crack texture to create a sense of texture and hierarchy, creating a rich spatial and visual experience. As early as ancient times, people were accustomed to using crack textures in furniture design through mortises or hollows, such as Chinese style bed boards, back chairs, table legs, etc., not only to meet functional needs, but also to beautify the shape of the furniture. Secondly, randomly overlapping network cracks can vary in shape based on the size of a limited picture frame, with an infinitely extending spatial effect. The application of crack texture in lacquer painting, through the artist's clever handling, can give viewers a profound and distant sense of spatial beauty, allowing them to have a deeper experience and feeling of art. Taking Su Xiaobai's lacquer painting "Kiln 2" ("Figure 3") as an example, the color tone of the picture is monotonous, with the middle part of the crack texture spreading outward and the edges forming a rounded shape. There seems to be no boundary around the painting, eliminating the limitations of time and space. The viewer's heart has endless psychological possibilities, all of which depend on their emotional changes and psychological characteristics. Sometimes it can expand infinitely, uncontrollable, and sometimes it gives people a sense of fulfillment,

fulfillment, and desire, a very coherent sense of oppression.



Figure 3 "Kiln 2", 2014, oil paint. Lacquer. Flax. emulsion, 54x 48x 5cm. (Image source: Su Xiaobai's portfolio)

4.3 Abstract Beauty of "Freedom and Flexibility"

The crack texture presents a diverse, free, and agile effect in the application of lacquer painting. It is connected by points and coplanar by lines, without the aesthetic characteristics of symmetry and balance, and is different from regular geometric shapes, with a more concise form. "With the development of the times, contemporary aesthetics no longer focuses on intuitive feelings, but more on the hidden meaning behind the work, conveying the author's thoughts, emotions, concepts, and inner feelings more. It no longer stays on the aesthetic level, but on the surface of the work, through the interaction between texture and theme content, fully exerts itself in the image, elevating the connotation to the level of spiritual realm. The crack texture language is unique in lacquer painting creation, expressing the longing and pursuit of art, and also expressing the creator's ideas through abstract and concrete forms. In terms of creation, it has always been the bond between life itself and matter."⁴ Su Xiaobai seeks pure visual space in the essence of his works, pursues originality in painting, abandons the depiction of nature, and is committed to creating pure and detailed images. In terms of expression, it is mainly composed of color blocks, and the overlap and fusion of cracks and texture produce subtle and delicate changes. Although there is no image, the pure aesthetic of color and shape can stimulate the audience's direct aesthetic. Though close to the abstract vocabulary of

4. Wang Huabin, *Texture Composition of the Screen* [M]. People's Fine Arts Publishing House, 1995.

Westerners, he chose ancient Chinese lacquer as a special carrier. The high fluidity, bright colors, and delicate surface of the raw lacquer add a warm and moist feeling to the picture. The extensive use of materials such as flax, rattan, and leather greatly enhances the expressive power of the image, resulting in crack texture.

5. CONCLUSION

In recent years, the traditional aesthetic concept of advocating individuality has gradually been broken by artists. In terms of craftsmanship, artists pursue the arbitrariness and contingency of texture effects, maintaining and revealing handmade traces, often using flawed textures to express artistic individuality and creative inspiration. The works created in this way have unique characteristics and give people a sense of returning to simplicity. Just as Su Xiaobai's works focus on the craftsmanship itself, telling the material itself, every grain, wrinkle, crack, and flowing trace is telling the intricate production process.

In the favorable development atmosphere of modern lacquer painting, more and more artists are using pure handcrafting to express their works, constantly innovating and learning from each other. The cracks and textures left on the surface after production are not only marks left by pure craftsmanship, but also reflect the author's subjective concepts and aesthetic level. Nowadays, this method is often used to combat the phenomenon of rough manufacturing and imitation in large-scale industrial production environments in modern society.

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