

The application of graffiti symbol language in painting--Take Basquiat as an example

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Abstract: Jean Michel Basquiat is an iconic figure in American graffiti art after World War II and a representative painter of neo-expressionism. Starting out as a New York street artist, his work is highly personal and incorporates a large vocabulary, collage techniques, and African-Caribbean cultural traditions. This paper focuses on Basquiat's paintings, first expounds the related concepts of graffiti and symbols, and then analyzes the formation, characteristics and application of graffiti-type symbol language in his works. It is found that graffiti-type symbol language brings a new perspective and expression to painting, and enriches the form and connotation of painting. Basquiat's art has a profound influence on contemporary painters, and his works are of high value, leaving a strong mark in the history of art.

Key words: Basquiat; Doodle; Symbolic language

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1. Graffiti symbol language interpretation

In the long history, "word" has been widely used. One of the earliest forms of writing in the world is ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics, which is widely present in ancient Egyptian pictures, and ancient Egyptian painting has always followed a set of rigorous procedures, and this era is no exception. When the artists have finished what they want to express, they also need to carve some hieroglyphics on it to let the audience know what the painting is about. The Book of the Dead, dated around 1300 AD, featured constant hieroglyphics, a collection of spells, magic and prayers that were used to guide the afterlife.¹ In 1929, the Surrealist artist Margaret's work "The Betrayal of Image" has an illustrative pipe image, Margaret questioned the established relationship between the painting and the object of representation, the image of a pipe in the painting, the text below says: "This is not a pipe". That is to say, this is just a portrait of a pipe, but not itself. He not only presents the audience with the initial understanding of the relationship between "representation" and "reality", but also urges the audience to re-understand the relationship between "language", "object" and "object", and triggers the audience to think about the arbitrariness of the connection between "language", "object" and "object". The language symbols used by the American black street painter Basquiat in his works are very representative. In his works, the repeated arrangement of a large number of words plays a role in embellishing the picture, and also plays a role in sublimating the theme of the work. These words are not randomly placed in the picture, but echo the content and theme of the picture.

Basquiat's graffiti often combines different symbols with words, and his works seem to be improvised, but as a black artist living in a white world, behind these graffiti paintings and words is his deep thinking. His works often appear skeletons, crosses, hallucinogens, distorted expressions and huge teeth and other images, cluttered lettering and cartoons, rough surface filling forms, a lot of strong colors mixed together, seem to be a vent, but also a kind of piety.

2. Basic characteristics of graffiti symbol language

Subjectively, it is a form of free expression, driven by the personal preferences, emotions and imagination of the creator. Doodlers create according to their own ideas and feelings, and their works can vary in style from simple and casual to elaborate. Graffiti can take many forms, such as cool typography, creative cartoon characters, and political or social graphics. At the same time, graffiti can also reflect personal cultural background, life ex

perience and artistic style, and show the corresponding elements influenced by a specific culture or artistic movement.

In terms of decoration, graffiti has the same origin with murals and rock paintings, and the illustration influences each other, forming a decorative style with modern design. It uses bright colors, unique patterns and creative designs to add visual appeal to buildings, streets, etc., making ordinary environments more interesting, and can be an attractive decorative element throughout the city and in interior Spaces.

In terms of innocence, graffiti creators are not limited by stereotypes and life experience, and have rich imagination. Due to the lack of professional training, his works contain a "sense of power", which is in line with the artist's concept of pursuing art to return to nature, allowing people to experience the world from a pure perspective, feel humanity, and recall childhood happiness.

Creativity is embodied in breaking through traditional art forms. Graffiti artists freely use colors, lines and patterns to create personal works, and also cleverly use the space environment to turn ordinary scenes into artistic displays. At the same time, graffiti integrates contemporary culture, social issues and personal experiences, arouses the audience's resonance and reflection, and is a unique observation and interpretation of society and life.

Symbolism refers to the use of specific patterns, symbols and colors to convey meaning. It can express challenges to traditional rules, represent specific groups, movements or social issues, and can also relate personal emotional experiences, such as exploring self-identity, expressing attitudes toward life or criticizing social phenomena.

It is a powerful expression tool and gives deeper meaning to the work.

3.Basquiat's graffiti-like symbolic language

In 1960, Basquiat was born into a middle-class family, his mother loved fashion art, often took him to visit exhibitions and museums, and cultivated his artistic insight. At the age of 7, he showed his talent for children's painting and illustration, and his parents divorced in the same year. He was injured in a car accident at the age of eight, and the car symbol often appears in his works. The anatomy books given to him by his mother in the hospital have also become the source of his creation. At the age of 17, he and his friends created graffiti on Manhattan walls, including symbols such as SAMO2. Later, Andy Warhol became his best friend and uncle, helping him to rise to the art world, at the age of 23, several exhibitions. But in 1988, at the age of 28, he died of drug addiction and a close friend at his home in New York. Basquiat's art and life are closely linked, art is his way of expressing social and emotional attitudes, against the world.

Basquiat's paintings are directly derived from his thinking consciousness, and these thinking consciousness are directly derived from everything experienced in real life.³ Basquiat's work is a unique blend of street art, abstract expressionism, and African cultural elements. His works are full of strong colors, bold lines and expressive images, reflecting his inner emotions and reflections on social reality. The original impulse is reflected in his works as the creative power of intuition and instinct, which originates from his love for art, pursuit of free expression and breakthrough of traditional norms. Through painting, he explores social problems, responds to and resists reality, and his original impulse is closely connected with his inner desire and thinking and criticism of society.

3.1.Basquiat's symbolic language has several characteristics.

Exaggerated characters. the Irony of the Negro depicts a black police officer, addresses issues of race and black culture, and explores the complex relationship between racial identity, history, and power. Basquiat typified black police officers with a sharp satire of his own people. He intended to show the domination of blacks by whites. In his work, we see a kind of great irony in the content, which is to make black people become police officers. In this painting, the hat represents a cage, and in the lower right corner of the painting, the English word "hostage" is written, which is clearly Basquiat's absurd view of the identity of the black police officer.

Messy lines. In Basquiat's paintings, the ornamentation of "line" is its unique artistic language. The decorative lines with saw scale lines, arrangement lines and spirals as the main elements are interspersed between different parts to form a sense of integrity. In addition, the interpenetration and combination of these decorative line

s form a special visual beauty on the picture.

The emphasis and rhythm of the words. Aside from the specific meaning of letters in his works, the study of letters as a decorative symbol is the main content of Basquiat's artistic language research. 4"Line emphasis is a gradual or spontaneous process of increasing or decreasing its intensity," Kandinsky said. Each of Basquiat's words is strongly decorative. His painting intention is not simply to pursue the beauty brought by such a decorative technique, but to make readers better understand his works through the operation of various elements in the picture. Although Basquiat filled the picture with words, he did not be as rigid as books, but used a variety of different strokes, the font was modified by deformation, scaling, smudging, etc. Some words were painted out, and some were crossed out with a line, so that the continuous writing and adjustment, so that the picture is no longer thin, layer after layer, so that his artistic language is more rich.

The use of symbols. We can see that in Basquiat's works of art, there are a large number of symbols, and in different works, you can see repeated symbols. These symbols are closely related to his childhood experiences. For example, the image of cars often appears in his works, which is because of a car accident he encountered in his childhood, which left a deep impression on his mind, so he often uses his works to express his innermost feelings. In "Untitled(car)," in the center of the photo is a huge car with its rear pointed upward as if it were braking in an emergency. Basquiat used a thick brush to brush the body of the car, as if to describe the scene, the bright red color, reminiscent of a car accident.

Overlay and separation between symbols. Borrowing is a method to deconstruct and reconstruct elements by adjusting the distance and perspective of the relationship between elements in the same space, and then the change of the relationship leads to the emergence of a new context to create interesting effects. 5In Basquiat's creation, this kind of "borrowing" is also reflected. He separates and overlaps large areas of volume and outline lines to achieve a sense of randomness and interest of the original painting. In his work Man with a Crown, Basquiat shows a black man with a crown and a sword in his hand. First, he uses a black block to show the torso and limbs of the figure, and then uses white lines to draw the outline and eyes of the figure. The outline and the black block cover and overlap each other, giving people a strong impact with a sense of decoration, childlike interest and randomness. Full of primitive charm.

4. Value expression of graffiti-type symbol language

Graffiti symbol language is a kind of painting form with unique expression and creativity, and its application and development in painting is of great significance. Graffiti symbol language gives painting more freedom and personality, this language is not bound by traditional painting rules, so that artists can express their inner thoughts and emotions more freely. It has a strong visual impact, can attract the attention of the viewer, through the unique symbol and color combination, convey a wealth of information and emotions.

In terms of development, with the changes of The Times, graffiti symbol language is constantly evolving in painting. Its integration with contemporary art brings new inspiration and possibilities for artistic creation. At the same time, the rise of social media also provides a broader platform for the spread of graffiti symbol language. Artists can showcase their work through social media to share and communicate with more people. In addition, graffiti symbol language has also been widely used in commercial fields, such as advertising, design and so on. It adds a unique personality and charm to brand communication and product design. In short, the application and development of graffiti symbol language in painting has brought new vitality and innovation to the field of art. It not only enriches the expression form of painting, but also satisfies people's needs for individuation and free expression. In the future, we can expect it to continue to play an important role in more areas, bringing more color and creativity to our lives.

5. Conclusion

Graffiti, which some call "ephemeral art," may be short-lived, but it is full of charm. This study is a comprehensive study of graffiti and graffiti art. To clarify its origin and development, analyze the concept of symbol and

d semiotics, and lay a foundation for understanding graffiti sign language. It is found that graffiti-type symbol language has various forms and rich characteristics, and Basquiat's works are a typical representative. The symbols in his works contain spiritual meaning, which originates from his educational background and living environment, and has a unique artistic style and strong appeal. Graffiti painting has multiple values and can express itself, release emotions and promote artistic innovation. Symbolic language is rich in artistic creation, with various application and development trends. In the future, graffiti symbol language is expected to play an important role in many fields. This study provides a reference for artistic exploration and helps artists obtain new inspiration and expression ways.

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