

# *On the Relationship between Image and Vision*

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**Abstract:** Images originated from human's observation and cognition of the world, and have undergone thousands of years of evolution, containing rich meaning. From the perspective of "sight" and "image", this paper studies the definition, overview and mutual relationship of image and video in painting art respectively. This paper discusses their different emphases, forms and methods of expression in the evolution of painting art, and probes into their constructive significance to contemporary painting art.

## **1. Efnition of Image and Video**

In a broad sense, image is a general term for all kinds of graphics and influences. It is the basis for people to watch, an objective reflection of the world in which human beings live, and an important source for us to recognize human beings and the things around us. Graph is the distribution state formed by the light shining on the object. It is like the perception and impression generated by the human eye after receiving the graph. Images are derived from the objective world and have the characteristics of similarity with objective objects. They can vividly describe and describe things. Therefore, they become the most important information carrier for us to understand the world. In a narrow sense, "image" is the image or shape, which refers to the image presented by an object. It can be said that visual art is the technology of making images.

W.J.T. Mitchell also defined image in his research on iconography. He thinks that image is expressed by materiality as the carrier. Its carrier form is not limited to sculpture, painting, photography, etc., it also exists in the language. However, image is not the word, narrative or story itself, it is a kind of people's cognition or memory, it has the characteristics of thinking, similarity and likeness. With this feature, images are integrated into the text categories of vision, image, spirit, perception, language, etc., which provides the basis for artists to reproduce or reconstruct the creation of painting, literature and other text forms. Image has the characteristics of spirituality and is closely related to ideology. For example, in classical art portraits, images are represented as idols; In the industrial mode of production and commodity economy, however, the image is embodied as the fetish of things. According to materialist concept, image is a process of constant change and circulation between abstract and concrete. [10]

Everything seen by the human eye can be called a kind of vision, which indicates the interaction between the viewer and the observed world. Vision is not fixed, it is constantly changing. However, vision is not equal to sight itself, which can be divided into two parts: "sight" and "image". "Sight" is viewing, and "image" is image. There is a distance between viewing and the image of things. [1]

## 2. An Overview of the Evolution of Images and Video

Images are presented by people's viewing behavior. Making images is a process in which human's understanding of the objective world is fixed in the form of images through painting and sculpture. How humans view images reflects their attitudes toward art. In the religious life of early human beings, they opposed the creation of idol worship, and believed that once the image in religion was created, people would worship the image made of expensive materials and fine depiction rather than the god itself, which could generate huge temptation for the mentally weak believers and also cause the extravagance of the religious world. However, with the gradual secularization of religions, people needed to communicate doctrines directly and simply through images, and a large number of religious images were created, as shown in Figure 1.

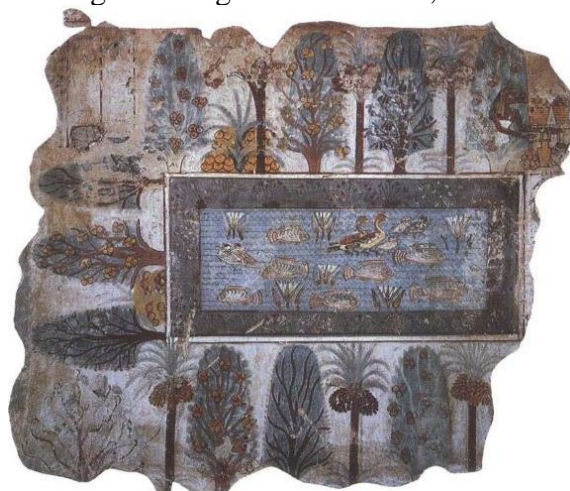


Figure 1: The Garden of Nebamun, About 1400 BC, from a tomb painting at Thebes, 64x74.2 cm, british museum, London.

Photo credit: [UK] Gombrich, The Story of Art[M], Guangxi: Guangxi Fine Arts Publishing House, 2008.2

The Egyptians had a completely different attitude towards the image from the ancient Greeks. They treated the image with contradictory and cautious attitude. First, it is based on the distrust of human vision. People believe that vision can blind and prevent people from understanding what things really look like, because its presentation is full of sensory desire. In the Middle Ages, known as the Dark Ages, unlike the ancient Greeks who had a strong desire for visual pursuit, people abandoned this desire. As an auxiliary tool, images helped believers to understand and meditate on the doctrine in the form of painting. Compared with the visual art formed later, this art form of graphic doctrine in the Middle Ages had a strong symbolic meaning[3].

From the way of expression of ancient Egyptian paintings, we can see that the ancient Aetians' depiction of images was not based on visual observation. The painting "Courtyard with Pool" can well illustrate this point. Trees and flowers spread out flat around the square pool, just like the map, is so orderly arranged. All the trees and flowers are depicted in a positive perspective, which shows the characteristics of trees and flowers in a more complete and comprehensive way. The view of the pool is different from that of the trees, because the shape of the pool is better represented by looking down. The ducks, water birds, flowers and fish in the pool are depicted from the front side to get the most complete image. This way of composition of ancient Egyptian painting cannot be understood simply in scatter perspective or eye level, because the practice of ancient Egyptian painting was not presented for the purpose of viewing. Instead, it was more like an extension of hieroglyphics, giving images a symbolic meaning. [4]

According to the figure 2 above, it is not difficult to understand that the images in ancient Egyptian paintings basically present positive characteristics, so as to more clearly depict the characteristics of various parts of things and scenes. It can be said that the eyes of the Egyptians did not see the world any differently than we do, but the positive perspective of representation in Egyptian art has remained almost unchanged for thousands of years.

There is a very big difference between ancient Egyptian art and Greek art. The ancient Egyptians' emphasis on the afterlife, which they believed in more than this life, influenced their plastic arts. This knowledge of this world and the next determined the ancient Egyptian attitude towards visual presentation. They believe that what they see is only a temporary sensation, and that the pursuit of the soul and the afterlife is eternal. This eternal magic comes from the fact that they depict not the accidental state of the individual's vision, but what they consider to be the ideal state formed by the positive rate. Unlike the Greeks, the ancient Egyptians were not concerned with reproduction, but with ensuring the integrity of the parts depicted. Because they believed that in God's world, it was the only way to preserve as much as possible of the dead. In short, like the ancient Egyptians, other civilizations in the ancient century painted the world not as they saw it, but as they knew it. The world they recognize prevents them from seeing the objective world.

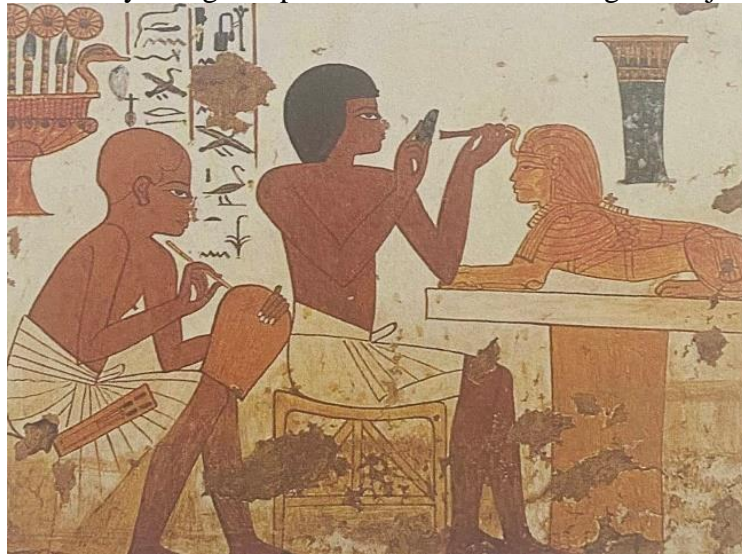


Figure 2: Egyptian craftsmen work on a gold statue of a sphinx, About 1380 BC, It's an imitation of a frescoed in a tomb in Thebes, british museum, London.

Photo credit: [UK] Gombrich, The Story of Art [M], Guangxi: Guangxi Fine Arts Publishing House, 2008.2

The expression of conceptualization of images also appears in ancient Chinese art. For example, when ancient Chinese depicted figures, they would determine the size ratio of figures according to their official position and status. Another example is that Chinese painting began to be influenced by Taoist thought in the Wei and Jin dynasties. Painters were passionate about the natural beauty between landscapes, which was reflected in the pictures of landscapes, flowers and birds. The pursuit of artistic conception, image and image was always placed in the most important position by the painters, while the technical problems of visual reproduction were placed in the secondary position by the painters. More importantly, Chinese painting is also different from the focal perspective of classical European painting in terms of viewing Angle. It uses a more casual and free "moving focus" method to organize the picture. This is the expression and understanding of space and time in traditional Chinese painting. By moving from one subject to another on the scroll, the painting breaks through the border and forms the possibility of space. Through a period of time with

nature, the artist transforms his observation and perception into an image through the method of "eye, mind and mind", which goes far beyond people's pursuit of visual representation. [7]

In short, in the painting experience of ancient Egypt and China, we can see that the pursuit of visual representation technology is not the main problem that painters have to solve in their painting creation. Painters ignore the visual relationship between the object and the work, and what they pay attention to is the meaning represented by the image itself. This visual attitude also makes their painting form present a highly stable stylized style. [8,9].

Of course, the image can also be regarded as a visual representation technology, at least in the ancient Greek period and the period from the Renaissance to the invention of photography, the development of Western painting is closely related to imitation and representation. It can be said that the continuous improvement of imitation technology has promoted the development of painting art. With the help of imitation and reproduction, the relationship between man and nature has been confirmed and presented in different forms in painting creation in different periods. The Greeks summed up the laws of natural beauty about unity, harmony and proportion from the imitation of natural images; Renaissance painters, through the study of subjective visual mapping imaging methods, effectively promoted the development of imitation and reproduction painting techniques with a scientific attitude. Therefore, elements such as three-dimensional modeling, light and shadow and perspective became the common painting techniques of later painters.

Nowadays, we are in an era of extremely developed image technology. Images appear in every corner of our lives. As a unique visual cultural phenomenon of this era, picture reading is everywhere. Therefore, the study of visual images of artistic works has gradually become a kind of image information study. In addition, the invention of image technology has led to the production of a large number of artificial visual products. The common feature of these public images is that they are shared by the public and the whole people. A very typical feature of such sharing is that it appears in every corner of people's life in a forced manner and penetrates into every aspect of people's life. It can be said that they have changed the way of thinking and visual experience of human beings. The pictorial visual way has constituted an important formal problem in contemporary art. [1]

Contemporary image research covers many fields, such as language communication, information dissemination, production technology, culture, social politics and so on. The ancient people's reverence for images is no longer applicable to today. Great changes have taken place in terms of both research understanding and possible influence of images, and images have gradually become an empty shell filled with various research theories. At the same time, it also caused the confusion of its semantics and lost the spirit of the past. [2]

To sum up, people in the ancient and Middle Ages paid more attention to the symbolic meaning of images, people in the 17th to 19th centuries paid more attention to the visual meaning of images, and people in the contemporary era pay more attention to the language transformation of images, which is a process of turning from "icon" to "Index" and then to "convention". Through this process, the image from a complete symbol of the world is gradually defined by its creator's subject consciousness, and gradually objectified and objectified.

### **3. The Relationship between Image and Video**

How people see establishes their relationship to the world in which they live. When people look at what they see, a kind of selective fixation develops. Human eyes are not just simple and mechanical reflectors. In the process of viewing, people think that the object they see is an objective object, but in fact it exists as a carrier of self-consciousness projection. In this act of viewing, people are constantly reviewing and adjusting the relationship between the object and the self, so

that we can determine our place in the world. The process of painting can also be said to reflect this process of viewing.

Before the invention of the camera, it was not easy to depict what the eyes saw (visual image) on the picture, and it became a common representation method to depict and measure based on the eyes. This method of expression is the center of visual depiction, which has become the main way of Western painting.

Usually when people see a concrete figure on a picture, the viewer and artist transform the image into an image with unique meaning by watching the visual presentation. We seem to ignore the distance between images, and the self-construction of the subject vision replaces this space of existence, which is a completely different viewing attitude. [5]

As can be seen from the figure 3, the painter Mondrian initially focused his painting on the study of vision. Gradually, he changed from imitating natural objects to subjectively expressing his emotions through images. Finally, in his works in his later years, painting completely transcends visual expression and transforms into a purely formalized form of expression, which announces the end of viewing behavior.

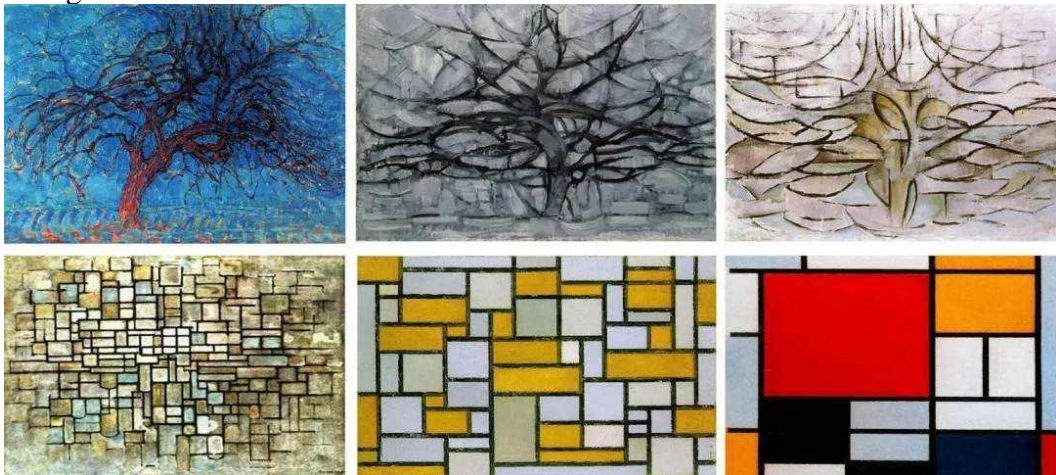


Figure 3: The Grey Tree by Mondrian, 1912; Composition in Red, Blue and Yellow by Mondrian, 1930

Photo credit: Claire Zucheri. - Romei, Mondrian pop-up monumental[M], Beijing: New Star Press, 2017. 2

Mondrian's artistic creation case can be used as a classic clue of the development of Western painting in visual presentation: 1. Imitation and reproduction of objects; 2. Consciously explore visual forms and subjectively express the feelings of the subject; 3. Reconstruct the objective world by means of form composition.

Painting is usually regarded as the visual presentation, which is dominated by our perception. Painting is the presentation of the visual experience of the subject. Therefore, it can be said that the process of painting is the process of the subject's self-construction. If the existence of things is understood as an image on the human retina, then it is not so important that things actually exist, but that our own existence is determined in this way. This subjectivist theory is not accepted by everyone, but it exists among us. Especially in modern times, science has driven imaging technology to an unprecedented degree, making this subjective way of viewing absolute.

Contemporary image culture has filled the space between "sight" and "image", and the way people view the world has changed. In the process of watching, people pay more attention to the meanings represented by various images. Various images are labeled with different labels, and the process of watching is just as easy as going to shopping malls or scrolling mobile phones. Under

this trend, as unique living individuals, our direct perception of the image is weakened and replaced by interpretation and analysis of the image. The strong emotion and surge of life generated by watching the image disappear. Images have gradually become a reference to the real world, and the multi-dimensional world has been compressed into a flat label endowed with meaning. In today's age of visualization, this kind of individual image expressed through vision is gradually disappearing, painting is quietly away from the visual experience and the pursuit of performance skills. [9]

As is known to all, when people watch works of art, they are not simply visual behaviors. Our scientific knowledge, religious belief, language and context will come out to help us explain the world described in the picture. However, as a unique living individual, we all have a unique feeling for the real world around us, which cannot be completely replaced by images and language. When we look at a landscape painting, we usually focus on elements like color, shape, light and space, but no matter how realistic the landscape is, there is still a big difference between what we feel in the real landscape and what we feel when we look at the painting. The difference between "sight" and "image" makes people question whether images can reflect the reality of the world. This never-perfect coincidence is the secret that makes the works of art in Figure 1 so different. It is also this never-perfect coincidence that constitutes the eternal power and source of artistic creation. Image experience and visual representation are two different and coexist clues, which constitute the development of the whole human visual culture and evolve an extremely rich history of painting art. [6]



Figure 4: What makes today's families so different and so appealing? Richard Hamilton 1956

Photo credit: Li Xingyuan, Outline of the History of Western Art[M], Hunan: Hunan Fine Arts Publishing House,2002

Today, images and the broader contemporary visual form are gradually replacing the creation of art based on visual experience. This shows that contemporary image culture makes people no longer directly feel the way of existence of the world, but to feel the assumed objectified world. We are lost in this objectified image world created by us, and feel that whatever can be possessed and used by us. There are real and existential questions that have been drowned in this "feast" of visual cultural construction. The visual landscape and visual objects of postmodernism divide the connection between people and the world, so that the contemporary image culture not only presents

the characteristics of no depth, direct, directionless, overload feeling and strong sensibility, but also shows the confusion and fusion of symbols, images and marks, as well as the floating signifier without a chain. People are immersed in the aesthetic fantasy of reality. The aesthetic pleasure brought by the inversion of reality and art and the deified mass media culture replace our exploration of reality and vision. In the consumption and communication of visual culture, people lose the ability of self-evaluation and passively become a visual receiver. A dazzling display of technology has replaced the wisdom of seeing, and we have lost an important communication with the world: the ability to think and observe images in depth. [2] , as shown in Figure 4.

#### 4. Conclusion

Conclusion: The study of visual culture is one of the most active fields in contemporary cultural forms, and image is the most important carrier. At present, visual culture and image are more closely related, the traditional visual aesthetic experience of the public is constantly under the impact of the rapidly developing image, and painting has gradually exposed the tendency of "visualization". From the perspective of the relationship between image and video, the difference, distance and transformation between "sight" and "image" are studied, and the painterly nature of contemporary culture and art is deeply thought and explored, as shown in Figure 5.

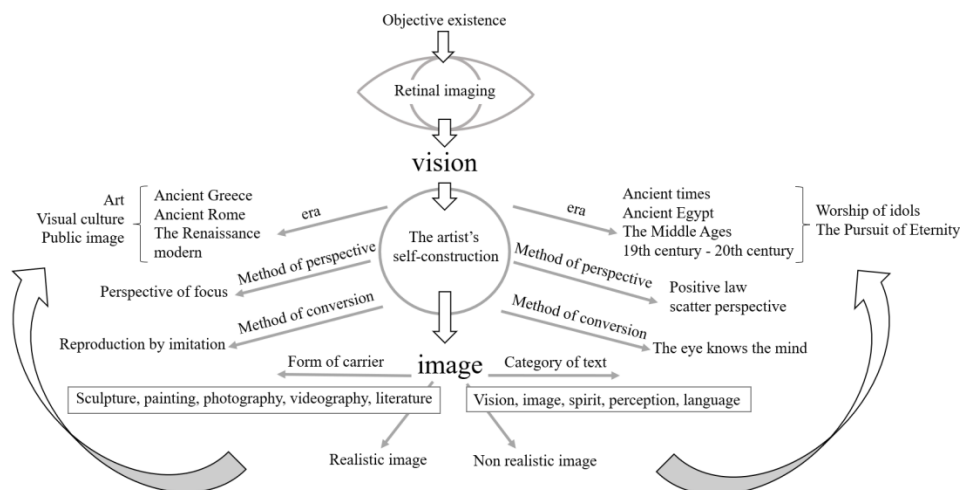


Figure 5: The analysis of the relation between image and vision is omitted

Photo credit: Author Made

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