

Research on the Significance of Children's Painting and Psychological Activities in the Process of Painting

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Abstract: Children's painting is an indispensable psychological activity in the process of children's growth, which plays an important role in cultivating children's healthy personality, physique and even life-long behavior. In the present paper, the significance of children's painting to children themselves and the role of parents in the process of painting are elaborated. Three characteristics of children's painting, namely, originality, integrity and simplicity are interpreted. Meanings of point, line and surface in children's minds are discussed to try to reveal children's psychological activities in the process of painting. Functions of painting are expressed and measures on how to integrate the cultivation of imagination and creativity into the process of children's painting are put forward. In the new era, viewpoints on how to cultivate children's painting ability, how to improve the comprehensive quality of students in primary and secondary schools, and how to cultivate qualified young generations with all-round development of morality, intelligence, physical education, beauty and labor are discussed.

1. Introduction

Children's painting generally refers to a series of psychological activities in which children before the age of 12 observe the external environment through their eyes, think through their brain, and freely graffiti and create their true feelings through their brushes ^[1-3]. Children's painting is a comprehensive psychological activity of children's eyes, brain, hands and other organs. It is a common way for children to express their self-consciousness. Children's painting not only shows art works but also contains many psychological characteristics. From the layout of lines and patterns, we can analyse children's potential psychological consciousness. Although children's ability to use words to express their inner world is limited, most children have extraordinary painting ability. Painting is an important way for children to express creative thinking ^[1, 3, 4].

Sternberg believed that a person's creativity is determined by intelligence, knowledge, thinking form, personality, motivation and environment ^[2-4]. Maslow believed that creation is a way of life, the ability to live creatively is creativity, and creation is the pursuit of self-realization ^[1, 5]. Painting can express children's inner world and make up for the lack of language ability. The level of painting

can also reflect children's psychological and physiological development level. It is an indicator to predict whether children have creative thinking in the future. Painting reflects the development of children's cognitive process, and it is the best way for children to express their feelings. Painting is not only a release of children's nature, but also a natural expression of children's interest in something.

2. The Effect of Painting on Children's Healthy Growth

As a graphic language, painting is a form of expression of children's real emotions in the process of cognition. It is a powerful means and basic tool for children to communicate with the outside world. Herbert Read, a British art critic, believed that ^[1-3] language is the best means to convey ideas, while painting is the best way to convey emotions. When children draw, they usually use lines to express an image they are familiar with and use some symbols to convey the objects and scenes to be expressed. Fundamentally speaking, children's painting is the outpouring of their true feelings about the world. It is a form of growth experience of self-consciousness and plays an important role in the development of body and mind.

2.1. Promotion of the Coordinated Development of Children's Body by Painting

Painting can not only exercise the strength and movement of children's hands but also exercise their coordination ability of eyes and brain. In the early stage of children's growth, the coordinated development of eyes, brain, hands and feet lags. Especially children around the age of 2 ~3, they are more accustomed to using their wrists and simply exert their force, resulting in repeated, monotonous and messy lines on the painting tools. During this period, children mainly show large-area and aimless graffiti. After a period of repeated line training, children will turn to wrist rotation. Currently, the swirling pattern begins to appear in the picture, and the children gradually learn to move from the large muscle group of the arm to the small muscle group of the finger. Under the joint action of hands, eyes and brain, children can find the characteristics of external things. In the process of children's painting, they mainly observe the external world through their eyes. The more things children see, the more colourful the picture they draw.

2.2. Conductive to Cultivating Children's Aesthetic Feeling and Promoting Their Emotional Cognitive Ability

Children's paintings are the beginning of children's understanding of beauty and the embryonic stage of aesthetic education. The specific image presented in children's paintings is the materialized expression of children's internal emotion. They learn to use a brush to express their external world they feel. This is the beginning of human primitive art. Children create works by perceiving, simulating, copying and imagining the external world to achieve psychological satisfaction and development. Painting activities are not limited to hand movements, but also need to be completed by vision, touch, even smell and taste. This is children's zero distance contact with the objective world. The stimulation of the external world affects the external sensory organs, based on which children's cognitive experience is accumulating and enriching day by day. By painting, children can integrate the shape, colour, light and space of objects to form a complete object image. The emotion contained in this object image can project children's rich inner world. Children can also slowly obtain the distance, size, spatial conformation and temporal light and shade changes of objects in the process of observing the outside world. With the accumulation of early knowledge, they can flash of genius in cudgel thinking ^[4, 6]. Painting can cultivate children's sentiment, sublimate their ideological realm, vent their emotions in the heart and balance their development of body and mind. Children integrate what they see and hear into their paintings and recombine all kinds of knowledge and imagination to

make the paintings have strong personality characteristics.

2.3. Improvement of Children's Language Expression Ability by Painting

Language as a conversational symbol and painting as an image symbol have some important characteristics in the process of development. Since ancient times, it has had the theory of "Speech, Image and Meaning" [5, 6]. "Speech" refers to a sentence, and "Meaning" refers to a specific concept. It is popular to express "Meaning" with "Speech" and to present "Speech" with "Meaning". In the Book of Changes, "Image" is introduced into "Speech" and "Meaning", that is, the image of objects. "Image" is a tool used to express meaning while "Speech" is the precursor of "Image" expression. Speech, Meaning and Image are all symbols mentioned in today's theoretical circles. In the process of painting, children can arbitrarily change the size of graphics, add painting details, and express the relationship between light and shade. This process is very similar to the process of children mastering language structure. Both processes are tools to convey cognition and emotion. In the process of children's growth, the two symbols have consistency and synchronization. They promote each other. In the process of painting, children often talk while painting, muttering and talking to themselves. Painting is a silent language. According to their intuition, children comprehensively receive the colour, line, composition, plot and other information revealed in the painting and make emotional responses.

2.4. Parents Cultivate Children's Healthy Growth Through Painting

Painting is children's nature. Children's painting process is not only a creative process, but also an imaginative process. Only by allowing children to take painting as part of their own games can they maintain a long-term interest in painting. Parents should abandon utilitarian thinking in the process of children's painting and encourage them to imagine graffiti boldly. The motivation for children to start painting is to be curious about new things and the new world. They want to record all these with a brush. Children's cognitive style is significantly different from that of adults. They are often self-centred, which is reflected in their paintings. They generally only consider their own ideas and don't care about the opinions of their admirers. Therefore, when viewing children's paintings, parents should respect children's personality, help them open their hearts and let them feel their parents' attention and understanding. Parents should avoid making simple and crude "yes" or "no", "right" and "wrong" evaluations of their children's works.

Children's painting process is inseparable from the necessary instructions and reminders of parents. If a child has no specific concept of many objects, parents can consult relevant books and pictures with him and simply explain to the child in combination with relevant materials. If possible, they can also lead the child to make an on-the-spot investigation. Childlike innocence in children's works is a rare wealth. Parents should respect children's own choices and preserve children's inner curiosity and exploration of the world. In the enlightenment stage of children's painting, we should follow the characteristics of children's development, focus on the observation of things rather than modelling and skills, and encourage children to observe some details. Parents can guide children on the picture theme, colour matching and composition. They should pay attention to situational experience in life to let children create works freely. They don't have too many standards to bind children. They should let children bring their self-confidence and experience into play in their creation.

3. The Uniqueness of Children's Painting

Children's painting can be roughly divided into two stages. The first period is the graffiti period, which mainly occurs at the age of about 3 years old. During this period, children have the desire to express their emotions, but their emotional expression is still aimless. They like to draw some

irregular and unconscious lines. However, these chaotic lines lay the groundwork for future painting. The second period is the ideation period, which mainly occurs at the age of 4 and later. At this stage, children have a certain tendency to express their emotions. They like to depict some basic images to express their simple experiences and needs. The content of the picture is more concerned with children's own inner needs. To sum up, children's painting mainly has the following three characteristics.

3.1. Originality of Children's Painting

From the perspective of original art, in addition to the characteristics of adult painting, children's painting has a special phenomenon, that is, the originality of art ^[1-3]. In the early stage of the development of human civilization, artistic creation was in a natural unconscious state. This unconscious creation is the embryonic form of artistic development. In 1945, a French painter Jean Dubuffet visited the art works of several psychiatric hospitals on his way to Switzerland. The works created by these psychiatric patients deeply moved his heart. After returning to France, he put forward the term "original art" and launched an artistic exploration for more than 40 years. Dubuffet believed that original art includes "Various types of works: sketches, colour paintings, embroidery, hand sculptures, figurines, etc., which show the characteristics of spontaneity and strong creativity. They rely as little as possible on the platitudes of traditional art and culture. The authors are all unknown people who have nothing to do with the professional art circle ^[6-8]. From Dubuffet's interpretation of original art, it can be inferred that if children's painting is allowed to play freely without the guidance of professionals, its expressiveness is much closer to the essence of art and will become a means to maintain creativity in a person's life in addition to writing, language and scientific learning system. In modern society, art is popular, and people live artistically. The primordial nature of painting in childhood may be the driving force of a person's artistic life. Vivian Maier, a photographer who has been a nanny for 40 years in Chicago, USA, is unknown. She works as a nanny all her life, but she has created 100,000 excellent photography works with one camera. It was not until an accidental antique auction in 2007 that the photography works pressed at the bottom of the box were found and widely recognized by the photography industry. The nanny has never received professional art training, but her works are original ones that are not polluted by "culture and art". It is a completely pure and original artistic creation based on her own internal driving force. This internal driving force should come from the original force of artistic creation in her childhood.

Understanding the primordial nature of children's painting can guide children's artistic life all their life, make the artistic life accompany children's growth all their life, and is quite beneficial to children's healthy personality and physique when they grow up. The artistic characteristics of children's painting not only have the feature of professional artistic creation but also have the feature of non-professional original and mysterious creation.

3.2. Integrity of Children's Painting

Children's painting is all the presentation of children's vision. It is an artistic display driven by the original internal driving force. Therefore, children's painting process is the artistic expression of their inner world. This kind of thinking promotes the integrity of their picture and is the most instinctive artistic expression. There will be a strong emotional impulse in the process of children's painting. They try to grasp the object to be depicted in detail. This is the psychological expression feature of children's growth, the true expression of their emotions, and the beginning of their understanding of the external world.

When children draw, they like to show all the objects, avoid occlusion and overlap, and strive to ensure the integrity of the objects. The artistic feature of integrity is the cornerstone of the content of

works in adult painting art. Even painters like Qi Baishi and Zhang Daqian, both of whom are famous art masters, coordinate integrity with content as a form of expression. In modern art, the integrity of art is more used for formal expression from the original description to the formal language characteristics into an orderly and stable artistic characteristic.

3.3. Simplicity of Children's Painting

Children's painting has the artistic characteristics of "simplicity". During the graffiti period, although children are limited by their performance skills, they are satisfied with using simple and repeated lines and simple colours to express their images and vent their happy mood when drawing. From the perspective of art development, this simple and pure pursuit is also one of the artistic characteristics of modern art and post-modern art. The word "simplicity" comes out of an ancient philosopher Zhuang Zi's work: *The Way of Heaven*. In this work, there was an interpretation of simplicity: "Silence is holy, movement is king, inaction is respected, and simplicity is the world. No one can compete with simplicity for beauty" [3, 5, 8-10]. Simplicity is an artistic feature in the aesthetics of philosophy and culture in early time, and it is one of the aesthetic features pursued by the nation. In the ancient classic works of *"Master Huainan--The Original Way"*, there were descriptions: "The so-called heaven is pure and simple, straight and white, and there is no one who is mixed with others." In the work of *Qin* written by Wang Changling of Tang Dynasty, there were such expressions: "The lonely tongs sing secretly and falsely, and the simplicity conveys the secluded truth." The colour blocks in the paintings of Henri Matisse, a famous French painter, are independent and interesting. He used colour cutting and pasting. His painting method was extremely simple, but his works are very lively [5, 9, 11]. In the picture of *Blackboard* painted by CY Twombly, and master of abstract art, there are six lines of continuous circles. The painter sits on his friend's shoulder and the friend shakes at will. The painter continuously draws lines on the blackboard with chalk, just like children's graffiti. The pure creation and creation of artists are the embodiment of simple thinking. They reach the realm of artistic philosophy.

Simple and clear as well as simple thinking also derives the simple characteristics of children's painting. This artistic thinking is the expression of children's original internal driving force and the attempt of children's objective description of external things. It is this simple artistic feature that makes it easier for children's painting to show the internal essence of things. Although children's understanding of the essence of things is not scientific, the simple and powerful picture reveals children's rich imagination and creativity.

4. Interpretation of Children's Psychological Activities in the Process of Painting

The study of painting psychology began at the end of the 19th century. There were three research hotspots successively: The first time was in the early 1930s. In this period, researchers paid attention to the change probability of children's painting, that is, the internal regularity and order of children's painting. The second time happened in the late 1930s. Researchers began to pay attention to children's painting skills and methods, which reflected the researchers' attention to children's painting education at that time. At this stage, people paid attention to art education in children's painting but paid little attention to children's internal needs. The third time appeared in the 1950s. In this period, psychology was developed, and it was used as a base. Through experimental means and other prediction methods, the development of children's painting with their intellectual level and psychological state were linked. It is believed that painting reflected children's intellectual level and psychological state.

In the 1980s, children's painting began to pay attention to psychological research and art research. It reflected not only children's painting skills, but also children's deep cognitive ability of the external world. Psychological interpretation of children's painting aims to observe children's painting actions

and understand children's inner thoughts.

4.1. Cultivation of Children's Interest in Painting

Painting is a language and symbol for children to express their emotions and good wishes. Children use the combination of lines, shapes and colours to express their understanding of the surrounding things and environment, their inner world and their vision for a better life in the future [2, 12, 13]. Children's love for painting is innate. In art teaching, teachers can make use of children's natural love for painting to meet their wishes and cultivate their interest in painting. In this way, they will invest more energy and time in their future painting study, and will continue to try new creations in painting, which is very helpful to cultivate children's painting imagination and creativity. Therefore, in daily art teaching, teachers should pay attention to the cultivation of children's interest in painting. They should encourage them to imagine boldly to help them gradually form innovative thinking and spirit.

4.2. Cultivate Children's Confidence and Imagination Through Painting

Children's painting evaluation is an important teaching link in the process of art teaching. Psychological research shows that everyone is eager to be praised and affirmed by teachers in the process of learning, especially children. If teachers see bad things in children's paintings and criticize them, children will be bored with painting creation. In the long run, they will gradually reduce or even lose confidence in painting. Their interest in learning painting will gradually disappear. Therefore, in art teaching, teachers should learn to make good use of the situation, correctly evaluate and stimulate children's confidence in painting. When appreciating and evaluating children's paintings, teachers should stand in the perspective of children, evaluate the works with children's eyes, take encouragement and praise as the evaluation principle, carefully listen to children's understanding of the works, give appropriate praise, and encourage them to create boldly.

In the process of art teaching, teachers can organize rich and colourful activities in different forms, mobilize children's various sensory systems, train children's sense of concreteness, and then cultivate their imagination and creativity. A person's brain information mainly comes from vision. "Seeing" is an important way and means for children to understand the world. In painting, observation is also very important. Children's imagination and creativity will be imperceptibly improved through the observation of objects and images, and then reproduction, painting, decoration, imagination and colouring. In art activities, teachers can play a piece of music for children to enjoy carefully and stimulate their auditory system. Then teachers can guide children to express their feelings after listening through lines, positions and colours to cultivate their imagination and creativity.

4.3. Children's Psychological Activities Expressed by Lines, Positions and Colours in the Picture

As the oldest and most primitive form of expression in art history, lines can most easily express objective things and subjective imagination. Different lines contain different feelings. Vertical lines often give people a sense of straightness and integrity. Horizontal lines make people feel peaceful and stable. Regular curves often have the meaning of smoothness and perfection. Irregular curves have a dynamic, flowing and vivid feeling. Jagged lines often have the tendency to attack and to take the initiative. Repeated thick bold lines often contain irritability and anger. The thin and shallow lines show that children have a sense of distrust of the outside world, have no self-confidence and are afraid of being criticized [5-8]. In the eyes of children, lines are a very magical tool. Children can draw various shapes such as circles and squares on a piece of white paper. They can also express the shape, spirit, light, shadow and texture of objects in the forms of changes in length, density and light, and appropriate relaxation. Different painters can create different styles of paintings with lines.

Children's painting is not only the cognition of the objective world, but also the display of their inner world thoughts, a kind of visual expression. Children's inner activities can be seen from the position of objects given by children in the painting. Putting ordinary objects in different places of the picture has different meanings. If children place all objects in the middle of the picture, it shows that they are stubborn in interpersonal relationships [7, 8]. When the object is placed too left or too right, it indicates that children miss the past or look forward to the future. However, when the object is placed excessively above, it shows that children have higher requirements for themselves and have a higher level of pursuit. When the object is put excessively below, it implies that children may be depressed to some extent. At this time, we should ask them what problems they have encountered. It is a common phenomenon that children tend to put objects or characters in the middle, which reflects their sense of security to their surroundings.

Psychological research shows that colour always causes human related emotions [5, 6], especially for children. Different colours will produce different magnetic field energy. Colours can be perceived by human eyes, resulting in changes in psychological state and further in physiological response. When children feel happy, they usually use warm colours such as orange and yellow to draw or even mix a variety of colours. When expressing sadness, they use more cold colours such as purple, dark blue and grey. When expressing anger, they often use extreme colours such as bright red and black.

5. Conclusion

Painting is of positive significance to children's growth, adulthood and success. It plays a positive role in promotion of the coordinated development of children's body and improvement of children's language expression ability. It is conducive to cultivating children's aesthetic feeling and promoting their emotional cognitive ability. Originality, integrity, and simplicity are the three characteristics of children's painting. Parents play important roles in the cultivation of children's painting creativity.

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