

The Modernity of Calligraphy: The Reconstruction of Traditional Art in Western Formalism

Dong Yang, Henan University of Economics and Law, China

The Paris Conference on Arts & Humanities 2025
Official Conference Proceedings

Abstract

As a model of ancient Chinese art, calligraphy highlights its profound connotation in the field of formal aesthetics and its extensive influence across cultures through the integration and reshaping of Western formalism. This process not only marks the core position of calligraphy in modern aesthetics, but also reveals its valuable value in the innovation of modern and contemporary art. With the help of the abstraction of calligraphy, technological innovation and reinterpretation of philosophical concepts, Western formalism has made calligraphy a key part of the contemporary art discourse system and promoted the integration of Eastern and Western art. The modernization and reconstruction of his calligraphy experience is not only a deepening exploration of his formal aesthetics, but also a promotion and transcendence of his cultural symbols and philosophical ideas, highlighting his unique position and far-reaching influence in the global art field.

Keywords: calligraphy modernity, formal aesthetics, cross-cultural communication, integration of Eastern and Western art, reconstruction of cultural symbols

iafor

The International Academic Forum
www.iafor.org

The Modernity of Calligraphy: The Reconstruction of Traditional Art in Western Formalism

As an emblem of the essence of Chinese culture and art, calligraphy has endured for thousands of years, continuously showcasing its unique charm in the manifestation of formal beauty and cultural connotations. With the deepening of globalization, calligraphy has gradually entered the realm of Western art, receiving novel interpretations and structural remolding within the framework of formalist concepts. The deconstruction and absorption of calligraphic forms in Western modern and contemporary art have sparked in-depth academic discussions on how traditional art can achieve reinterpretation and rebirth within the context of modernity theory. In this process, the intertwining of tradition and modernity, as well as Eastern and Western elements, constructs a complex and profound landscape of aesthetic exchanges, compelling us to delve deeper into the unique expressive techniques of calligraphy from a formalist perspective and its value and significance in modern society.

The Modern Interpretation of Calligraphy and the Perspective of Formalist Aesthetics

As the quintessence of ancient Chinese art, the formal aesthetics of calligraphy have undergone a process of reevaluation and redefinition within the discourse of Western modern art. In the early 20th century, Roger Fry, a Western art theorist, revealed and elevated the concept of “calligraphic lines” inherent in Chinese calligraphy through his formalist theoretical framework and integrated it into the aesthetic concept of “significant form.” This theory not only emphasizes the autonomy of artistic forms but also highlights the profound emotions and philosophical connotations conveyed by forms themselves.

Modernity and Formalism: The Redefinition of Concepts

The reconstruction of modernity and formalism in the art field profoundly reflects the dialectical interaction between tradition and innovation. Essentially, modernity represents a critical breakthrough from tradition and is embedded with a process of cultural reproduction. The radical changes in artistic concepts during the 20th century witnessed the independence of form from content, making it one of the core elements. Western formalist theory, by focusing on the internal composition of artworks—form—endows it with a new autonomous value, thereby abstracting away the additional meanings of narration and symbolization. The systematic exposition of this concept benefits from Roger Fry's theory of “significant form,” which emphasizes that the essence of art does not lie in the object of representation itself but in the unique conveyance of emotions and wisdom carried by forms (Qin, 2024).

Fry's formalist theory highlights the importance of artistic form as the core of autonomous expression in the contemporary context. He proposed that the essence of art resides in form, enabling it to transcend specific historical and cultural boundaries. By pursuing the purity of form, Fry redefines the evaluation criteria of modern art, departing from the narrative nature of realism and favoring the enhancement of the direct connection between form and the viewer. On this basis, Fry's formalist theory reveals the “non-narrative” characteristic implicit in modernity, suggesting that artistic forms inherently possess an internal logic of aesthetics and emotions, serving as a crucial pathway for modern art to break away from tradition.

In the exploration of the interaction between modernity and formalism, form is gradually regarded as a medium for artists to express themselves and examine the real world. The decoupling of form and content breaks through the narrative framework of classical art,

allowing art to transcend the constraints of specific environments and become an autonomous expressive entity. Fry's theory not only emphasizes the autonomy of form but also reveals the internal connection between the internal structure of formal aesthetics and the transmission of emotions. This structural characteristic marks the main divide between modern and traditional art. By establishing the autonomous status of form, modernity in the art field can achieve the self-consistency of the internal logic of art ontology, with formalism constituting the theoretical support system behind this expression.

This analysis not only deepens our understanding of the connotation of modernity but also demonstrates the value of formalism as a tool for interpreting artistic autonomy. In summary, Fry's formalist perspective, by removing the narrative and symbolic burdens of art, reaffirms the central role of form in the field of modern art, ensuring that in the journey of exploring originality and innovation, art can maintain the harmony of its internal structure and the consistency of emotions.

“Calligraphic Lines”: Cross-Cultural Formal Aesthetics

Within the formalist theoretical framework constructed by Roger Fry, “calligraphic lines” serve not only as a medium for formal expression but also carry an aesthetic value that transcends cultural boundaries. The introduction of this concept marks a significant breakthrough for Chinese calligraphy beyond its native context, integrating it into the discourse of Western modern art and facilitating a new beginning for profound exchanges between Eastern and Western art realms. In Fry's interpretation, calligraphic lines transcend the functions of pure textual or graphic representation. By emphasizing their abstract qualities and rhythm, they evolve into a crucial medium for conveying the emotional imagery of artists. This innovative interpretation of calligraphic lines, while preserving the essence of classical art, incorporates the exploration of formal autonomy in Western modern art, opening up broader horizons for the exploration of calligraphy's modernity.

In this integration process, Fry not only focuses on the expressive power of calligraphic lines but also reveals their inherent rhythmic beauty and dynamics through the lens of formalism (Tao, 2023). He emphasizes that the so-called “linear rhythm” in calligraphy bears high artistic value, breaking the strict perspective rules and three-dimensional spatial construction in traditional Western painting and instead setting lines as the backbone element for conveying emotions, endowing creation with broader freedom and expressive depth. By refining the concept of “calligraphic lines,” Fry not only catalyzes the transformation of formal aesthetics but also provides a solid theoretical foundation for the separation of form and content in modernist art (Liu, 2021).

Moreover, this concept has exerted a profound influence on the progress of Western modern art, particularly evident in the creative practices of renowned artists such as Matisse. The fluidity and rhythmic beauty inherent in calligraphic lines open up new horizons for these artists in their exploration of forms, imbuing their works with richer visual impact and deeper rhythmic sense. This process demonstrates that through the bridge of cross-cultural exchange, the aesthetic form of calligraphy not only injects new vitality into the expressive techniques of Western art but also establishes its unique status and value within the global art discourse system.

In conclusion, “calligraphic lines,” as a cross-border aesthetic expression, not only catalyze the mutual penetration of Eastern and Western art but also reveal the extensive development

potential of traditional art within the framework of modern reconstruction. Through the refinement and practical application of this concept, Fry has created a new value dimension for calligraphy art. By closely integrating the modern characteristics of calligraphy with Western formalist theory through a cross-cultural lens, the continuous influence and status of calligraphy in the field of contemporary art theory are strengthened.

The Resonance Between Modernism and Eastern Art: The Fusion of Form and Connotation

The rise of modernist art has led Western artists to increasingly draw inspiration from the formal beauty and spiritual depth of Eastern art, reshaping global art development. Roger Fry highlighted the connection between Paul Cézanne's practice and Eastern aesthetics, particularly the subtle resonance with Chinese calligraphy. This connection is evident both in line application and in the conveyance of deeper artistic connotations. Cézanne's exploration of form and color integration mirrors the rhythmic beauty emphasized in calligraphy. Fry's analysis of Cézanne's work reveals the internal unity of form and emotion, suggesting that artistic form is not just visual but also embodies the artist's emotional depth and pursuit. This insight bridges Cézanne's art with Eastern concepts, infusing new inspiration into Western modern art (Wen, 2021).

Cézanne's use of lines, as basic elements of form, outlines objects while reflecting his unique insights into nature and emotions. Fry praised this as similar to the emotional expression and rhythmic beauty in calligraphy. Cézanne's intentional manipulation of lines achieves a fusion of flatness and three-dimensionality, echoing calligraphy's "brushwork posture" and highlighting the unity of movement and stillness.

Similarly, Zao Wou-Ki's work demonstrates a profound integration of calligraphic lines and Western abstract expressionism. His piece "29.09.64" uses flowing brushstrokes and overlapping colors to convey calligraphy's rhythmic beauty while breaking spatial limitations through abstract layout. Zao's art deepens formal exploration and conveys emotional depth, much like Cézanne's pursuit of form and emotion unity.

From a formalist perspective, Fry also connected Cézanne's use of color to the rhythmic beauty of Chinese art, proposing the concept of "objective vision." Fry analyzed how Cézanne integrated abstract concepts and rigorous structures within painting space, moving away from traditional representation to express inner emotions and spiritual essence. This transformation forms a node of integration between Eastern and Western art, promoting a deep aesthetic fusion.

In summary, the resonance between Cézanne's work and Eastern art is evident in both form and connotation. Zao Wou-Ki's art further demonstrates the integration of calligraphic lines and color space, opening new possibilities for modernism and Eastern art dialogue. This combination of form and artistic conception, under Fry's interpretation, promotes cross-cultural interaction, transcending geographical and cultural boundaries.

Artistic exchanges, viewed through formal aesthetics, reflect cultural convergence, especially in the mutual borrowing between Eastern and Western art. The collision between calligraphy and formalism sparks dialogues at visual, aesthetic, and philosophical levels. Form, as a medium of cultural dissemination, deepens the harmonious coexistence and integrative innovation between Eastern and Western art. Thus, the exploration of form is not only an aesthetic transformation but also a profound dialogue between artistic tradition and modernity in the context of globalization.

The Formalist Interpretation of Traditional Calligraphy

As a shining pearl in the treasure trove of Chinese culture, traditional calligraphy unfolds novel interpretive dimensions within the perspective of contemporary art. The meticulous deconstruction of elements such as line construction, spatial arrangement, and brushstroke rhythm not only highlights the inherent aesthetic depth of calligraphy but also lays a solid theoretical foundation and practical cases for cross-border artistic dialogues. This study intends to adopt a formalist interpretation to deepen the exploration of calligraphy's formal aesthetics and uncover its new vitality in the modern context.

The Formal Aesthetics of Calligraphic Lines

In the realm of Chinese calligraphy, lines serve both as conveyors of information and as the core of formal aesthetics. They form a unique visual expression system through transformations in form, dynamics, and rhythm (Zeng, 2020). Western formalist art theory, focusing on internal composition and pure visual perception, offers new ways to understand the aesthetic features of calligraphic lines. Unlike Western painting that emphasizes shadows, Eastern art, especially calligraphy, centers on line thickness, with brush strength being the foundation of Eastern painting.

The expressive power of Chinese calligraphic lines is profound and diverse. Stroke thickness, the interplay of straight and curved lines, pressure modulation, and subtle brushstroke echoes create a rich artistic realm, much like musical melodies (Zhu, 2021). Wang Xizhi's "Lanting Xu" exemplifies this with its smooth, flowing rhythm, showcasing naturalness and fluidity. Calligraphic lines carry traditional cultural aesthetics and possess a rigorous formal and structural beauty. From a Western formalist perspective, these characteristics reveal another dimension of calligraphy's abstract beauty.

Formalist scholars analyze Chinese character strokes to uncover their abstract beauty. The alternation of thick and thin strokes, the contrast between straight and curved lines, and the dense and sparse layout reflect the calligrapher's personality and skill, while emphasizing the aesthetic value of strokes themselves. Formalism's emphasis on the independent integrity and self-expression of strokes aligns with their use in calligraphy, where they transcend textual information to become abstract visual forms.

Western formalism reshapes calligraphic lines into pure visual expressions. Artists like Brice Marden integrate calligraphic essence into their works, inspired by traditional Chinese calligraphy. Marden uses simple yet powerful lines to convey emotions and ideas, creating a unique visual narrative (Zhou, 2014). His calligraphic lines are reinterpreted as abstract forms, highlighting rhythmic beauty and formal aesthetic significance in contemporary art.

Antoni Tàpies also incorporates Eastern calligraphic aesthetics, using rugged brushstrokes and thick textures to convey emotional philosophy. His work "Composition with Grey and Black" employs raw materials and line arrangements to create a rhythmic and tense visual experience, echoing the strength and variability of calligraphic lines. This demonstrates Tàpies' absorption and innovative interpretation of Eastern calligraphy aesthetics.

The convergence of calligraphy and Western formalism deepens the formal aesthetics of lines. Through non-representational expression, calligraphic visual language gains new interpretive dimensions. Formalism's deconstruction and reconstruction reveal the aesthetic significance of

calligraphic lines and strengthen their position in contemporary art dialogues, injecting new vitality into global cultural exchanges.

In summary, the formal aesthetics of calligraphic lines obtain new interpretive dimensions under the perspective of Western formalist theory. By abstracting and reshaping the line elements, the visual grammar of calligraphy is redefined and expressed within the modern art field. This cross-border artistic dialogue not only highlights the modern expressive power of calligraphy art but also opens up novel perspectives for the practice of formalist theory. The special position of calligraphic lines in the modern context is a vivid example of the effect of this aesthetic reconstruction.

The Visual Art of Spatial Layout

The spatial layout of calligraphy, as a core element of its formal aesthetics, not only involves the balanced distribution of visual elements and the creation of beauty but also profoundly reflects the philosophical concepts of emptiness and solidity, as well as movement and stillness in ancient Chinese aesthetics. Reexamining it from a formalist perspective reveals the unique artistic contributions and aesthetic allure of this layout principle in cross-cultural exchanges (Chen, 2016).

In the field of calligraphy art, spatial layout transcends the mere arrangement of characters and the adjustment of spacing, transforming into a profound manifestation of internal rhythm and structural order. Take Yan Zhenqing's *Manuscript in Memory of My Nephew* from the Tang Dynasty as an example. This work is highly esteemed not only for its profound emotions but also for its outstanding spatial aesthetic value in form. Yan Zhenqing constructs a visual landscape of tension and harmony by masterfully controlling the distances between characters and lines and precisely grasping the dynamics and rhythms within the strokes. The use of “blank space” not only endows the work with a flowing vitality but also adds rich layers and profound visual effects to the overall composition. From a formalist perspective, this strategy of blending emptiness and solidity can be regarded as a high-level abstract visual communication mode, highlighting the exquisite skills and profound thinking of calligraphy art in handling spatial composition and context creation.

In the Western modern art field, this unique spatial aesthetic concept has obtained novel interpretations and expansions. Western artists such as Brice Marden, in their practice of integrating calligraphic elements, particularly emphasize the application of the concept of “blank space” and spatial rhythm. Their artistic creations demonstrate a dynamic balance between large areas of blank space and concise and powerful lines, conveying a pure formal aesthetic experience through the creation of visual tension and dynamics. This creative technique is not only an inheritance of the spatial construction skills of Chinese calligraphy but also, through the lens of formalism, translates and integrates them into the Western art context, becoming a form of abstract art expression.

The spatial structure of calligraphy is closely linked to the concept of “scattered perspective” in Chinese classical painting. This technique departs from the fixed observation point and single spatial dimension in Western perspective principles. Through the flexible display of multiple viewpoints, it constructs a multi-layered and profound sense of space. For example, in Zhang Xu's cursive script work *Four Poems from the Song Dynasty*, the brushstrokes are unrestrained and bold, and the characters are like dragons soaring and snakes slithering, demonstrating a strong sense of spatial dynamics and vivid rhythmic beauty. The formalist art

critic Schiller, when analyzing this layout structure, pointed out that it transcends the limitations of two-dimensional space, blending time and space, making the visual experience more three-dimensional and free (Wu & Gu, 2005).

In the field of contemporary expressive art, the concept of the spatial aesthetics of calligraphy has been further extended and expanded. Taking Xu Bing's work *Book from the Sky* as an example, this work deconstructs the form of Chinese characters and reconstructs the spatial structure, creating a new visual order and aesthetic concept. Although these characters no longer carry their original semantic load, with the meticulously arranged spatial layout and the ingenious use of blank space art, the work successfully separates and reconstructs form and connotation. This artistic attempt that crosses cultural boundaries not only provides a novel interpretation of the spatial aesthetics of traditional calligraphy but also injects new theoretical support and creative inspiration into the diverse expressions in the field of contemporary art.

In summary, under the lens of formalist theory, the spatial configuration of calligraphy not only ushers in broader artistic interpretive dimensions but also highlights its profound aesthetic value on the stage of cross-regional art practice. This field extends from the techniques of “using blank space” and “scattered perspective” in ancient calligraphy to the re-deconstruction of the concept of space in modern and contemporary art, demonstrating the continuous innovation and revival of the spatial aesthetics of calligraphy in the context of globalization. This aesthetic concept continuously stimulates new vitality in the process of cross-cultural dialogue, consolidating its status as a core element and reference framework for contemporary art expression.

The Dynamic Expression of Brushstroke Rhythm

The brushstroke rhythm in calligraphy art shares a close connection with the dynamic expression in Western formalism, highlighting their resonance in dynamic aesthetics (Ma, 2016). Chinese calligraphy, emerging with the birth of Chinese characters, has evolved from a text-recording tool to a dynamic medium rich in vitality. The lightness and heaviness of brush force, and the start and turn of brush movement, reflect the calligrapher's inner emotions and rhythm control. This rhythmic beauty not only adds visual appeal to calligraphy but also embeds musicality, providing a flowing visual experience.

In calligraphy, strokes and lines transcend simple information transmission, becoming an aesthetic carrier for profound emotions and individuality. Masters like Zhang Xu and Huai Su exemplify this through their cursive scripts. Zhang Xu's “brush momentum like the wind” and Huai Su's “brush force that startles the wind and rain” showcase intense dynamics and rhythmic control, bringing calligraphy's dynamic beauty to its peak (Wu, 2010).

Cai Guoqiang's gunpowder painting and explosion art vividly demonstrate the dynamic rhythm of calligraphy. His work “Wave” uses gunpowder explosions to create unpredictable, dynamic lines, echoing the vivid beauty of calligraphy strokes. This medium interprets a concept of flowing aesthetics, expanding the dynamic aesthetics of calligraphy in modern art.

From the perspective of formalist aesthetics, dynamic aesthetics in calligraphy are deepened into pure visual expression. Western abstract expressionists like Jackson Pollock capture fluidity and rhythm through drip painting, similar to calligraphy. This technique echoes the deep understanding of line application and rhythm control in Chinese calligraphy.

Exploring calligraphy reveals the core function of brushstroke strength and momentum. Wang Xizhi's "The Scripture of Huangting" shows how lightness, heaviness, slowness, and rapidity construct character beauty and reflect internal connections between strokes. This technique emphasizes the flow of qi and rhythm, endowing each stroke with a rhythmic sense like a musical melody. This dynamic aesthetic is reinterpreted in Western formalist art, becoming a form of free expression that highlights the artist's personality and emotions.

Robert Motherwell's "Lyric Suite" series skillfully integrates Eastern calligraphic brushwork into formalist art, creating abstract works rich in dynamic beauty. Motherwell's smooth lines and brushstrokes convey deep emotions and dynamic tension, emphasizing calligraphy's unique value and its importance in contemporary art. This cross-cultural exploration deepens our understanding of calligraphy and opens new expressive techniques for formalist art.

In conclusion, the brushstroke rhythm in calligraphy complements Western formalism's dynamic expression. Formalist aesthetics reveal calligraphy's inherent abstract beauty and infuse it with new dynamics. Contemporary artists like Cai Guoqiang enrich this dynamic aesthetics, allowing calligraphy to thrive in modern art. This cross-cultural exploration enhances our understanding of calligraphy and opens new horizons for formalist art creation, reinterpreting calligraphy with new artistic vitality in the contemporary context.

The Reconstruction of Calligraphy Within Western Formalism

The reshaping of calligraphy art within the field of Western formalist art, through the adoption of abstract expressionism, the integration of traditional techniques into the modern context, and the elevation of philosophical concepts, demonstrates its profound potential in formal aesthetics and broad creative space. This artistic practice that spans cultural boundaries not only breathes new life into calligraphy art but also contributes diverse expressive techniques and novel theoretical perspectives to the field of contemporary art.

The Abstract Reconstruction of Calligraphy Style

The abstract reconstruction of calligraphy style within the field of Western formalist art highlights its unique formal beauty and profound artistic potential. This practice involves extracting the essence from calligraphy style and innovating it, transforming it into a purely abstract art form, thus radiating novel visual shock effects. This process is not only a re-deconstruction of calligraphy art but also an in-depth exploration and excavation of its internal aesthetic value.

Firstly, Western formalist art theory focuses on the formal beauty and visual impact of artworks. The unique stroke construction, structural layout, and rhythmic beauty in calligraphy art provide extensive creative materials for this theoretical system. Pioneers of the formalist movement, such as Wassily Kandinsky, in their in-depth exploration of calligraphic brushstrokes, revealed the abstract aesthetic concepts contained therein. In his pioneering abstract paintings, Kandinsky borrowed the free and smooth lines and dynamic composition techniques in calligraphy, aiming to convey deep emotional connotations and thinking concepts through pure visual expression. His representative work *Composition VII* is a case in point. This work, through the interweaving arrangement of winding lines and color blocks, constructs a novel visual expression system, demonstrating the transformation style of calligraphic elements into abstract art.

In addition, the black-and-white paintings created by Franz Kline, with their rough and powerful lines and distinct contrasts, showcase an artistic form beauty similar to calligraphy. His work *Mahoning*, with its bold brushstrokes and vibrant composition design, contains the strength and rhythm of calligraphy, thus establishing a classic status within the field of Western formalist art. This abstract reinterpretation of traditional forms not only broadens the expressive boundaries of formalism but also enables calligraphy art to occupy a place in the history of modern art.

Within the scope of formalist art discussion, the abstract reconstruction of calligraphy style not only promotes the progress of the abstract art field but also elevates the brushstrokes and layout structure of calligraphy to a crucial part of modern art creation. This process is not only a reaffirmation of the formal aesthetic value of calligraphy but also an in-depth exploration of its internal artistic potential. Formalist art practitioners, through the method of abstracting calligraphy style, reveal the broad expressive power and infinite creative space of calligraphy as a unique visual expression system.

In conclusion, within the realm of Western formalism, abstract reconstruction highlights its profound potential in formal aesthetics. Through cross-border artistic exploration and regenerative creation, the abstract aesthetics of calligraphy are re-interpreted and applied. This process not only broadens the expressive techniques of modern art but also establishes a new status and influence for calligraphy art in global art dialogues. The abstract reconstruction of calligraphy style marks a profound reflection and innovation of modern art on traditional art forms, enabling it to regain the vitality and novelty of artistic life in the contemporary context.

The Modern Deduction of Traditional Techniques

Under the reinterpretation of Western formalism, traditional calligraphy techniques have emerged as a powerful tool for cross-cultural communication. Through innovation and practical application, calligraphy has been revitalized in the realm of modern art, becoming a bridge between Eastern and Western artistic traditions.

Firstly, modern calligraphy techniques have shown an innovative trend in form and medium. Contemporary artists continue to use traditional brushes and rice paper while incorporating new tools like electronic pens and digital tablets. This fusion not only preserves the unique charm of calligraphy but also expands its expressive potential. Many calligraphers now create on digital platforms, adding dynamic elements to their works and enriching the visual experience.

In addition, calligraphy techniques have demonstrated strong vitality in contemporary design. Designers integrate the beauty of calligraphic lines into graphic design and advertising, using the rhythmic brushwork and compositional layout to create visually impactful and culturally rich works. This integration enhances the artistic appeal of design and establishes calligraphy's central role in modern visual communication. For example, designers use calligraphy's flowing lines to convey unique aesthetics in posters.

Antoni Tàpies' practice of integrating materials like sand and stucco into his works echoes the use of ink and paper in Chinese calligraphy. His piece “Door” exemplifies a modern expression of classic techniques, highlighting the tension between tradition and contemporary art through material exploration. This approach deepens the understanding of calligraphy's texture and rhythm (Zhang, 2015).

In the 20th century, Western painting became closely related to calligraphic qualities. Artists like Julian Schnabel incorporate calligraphic elements into their works, such as “The Patients and the Doctors,” using simple yet powerful lines to convey deep emotional and intellectual connotations. This fusion demonstrates calligraphy's significant role in modern art.

Against the backdrop of cross-cultural exchanges and technical innovations, calligraphy's application in modern art preserves its ancient aesthetics while infusing it with new vitality. It provides inspiration and unique perspectives for contemporary art creation, serving as a bridge for the inheritance and development of traditional art. This application is a deep exploration and reinterpretation of calligraphy's internal artistic value.

In summary, traditional calligraphy techniques, reinterpreted through Western formalism, showcase profound vitality and artistic heritage. Through innovation and practical exploration, calligraphy thrives in modern and contemporary art, becoming a bridge for cross-cultural artistic dialogue. This interactive art not only broadens the expressive boundaries of modern art but also elevates calligraphy's status and influence in the contemporary context.

The Philosophical Sublimation of Calligraphy Concepts

Within the Western formalist framework, the philosophical connotations of calligraphy are elevated and condensed. Formalism delves into the philosophical dimensions of calligraphy, uncovering its rich ideological content and cultural heritage, and infusing new interpretive perspectives and expressive techniques into traditional calligraphy.

In traditional Chinese culture, the concept of “qi” is central, symbolizing the vital force that animates all things. In calligraphy, “qi” is both an aesthetic element and a key philosophical concept, permeating the creative and appreciative processes. It represents the kinetic energy and vitality of a work, serving as a crucial criterion for evaluating its quality. Western formalism explores this concept, revealing calligraphy's abstract aesthetic characteristics and inspiring artists to integrate Eastern aesthetics into their work.

Western art theory views calligraphy as a practice that unites mind and hand, focusing on the harmonious unity of the spiritual and material aspects of creation. This aligns with Richard Wollheim's “expression” theory, which posits that art appreciation is a reproduction of the creator's psychological process. Through this lens, formalist artists gain deeper insights into calligraphy's creative mechanism and internal logic, integrating its dynamic aesthetics into their works.

Formalism also reinterprets the “form” and “momentum” in calligraphy, seeing them as a connection between “force” and “form.” “Form” refers to the visual framework, while “momentum” represents the internal dynamic tension. Their combination embodies the unity of stillness and movement in calligraphy. Formalist artists analyze these elements to extract abstract energy and formal aesthetics, integrating them into modern art.

“Lines,” a significant element in world civilization, reflect human aesthetic psychology and practical needs, showing diverse expressions across cultures. Cross-cultural exchanges broaden calligraphy's expressive boundaries and inspire modern art (Mai & Zhang, 2023). Through formalist interpretation, calligraphy's philosophical essence is refined, highlighting its unique value in contemporary art discourse. This process delves into calligraphy's philosophical core, facilitating dialogue and integration between Eastern and Western cultures.

Thus, from a formalist perspective, calligraphy's philosophical thoughts are reinterpreted and practiced anew. This cross-cultural exploration deepens our understanding of calligraphy and opens new horizons for contemporary art creation. Calligraphy is rejuvenated within modern art, becoming a vital link in the dialogue between Eastern and Western art. This transformation not only re-examines calligraphy's essential value but also explores its cultural heritage, emphasizing its unique position and lasting appeal in the contemporary art world. Cross-border dialogues enrich modern art's diverse expressions and elevate calligraphy's global significance.

Conclusion

In the contemporary context, calligraphy art, through its deep integration with Western formalism, has led to the reshaping of its formal aesthetics and the elevation of its philosophical concepts. The line aesthetics, spatial arrangement, and brushstroke rhythm of calligraphy art obtain new interpretations under the formalist interpretation, presenting unique visual narratives and dynamic beauty. This transformation not only breathes new life into calligraphy in global art dialogues but also introduces abundant sources of inspiration and novel expressive techniques to modern art creation. Cross-border artistic dialogues not only highlight the diverse aspects and inclusive characteristics of calligraphy art but also emphasize its innovative ability in the contemporary context.

References

- Chen, L. (2016). Interview with Chu Mo — Calligraphy formal aesthetics. *Chinese Calligraphy*, 10, 21–24.
- Liu, Q. (2021). “Calligraphic Lines” — Roger Fry’s extraction and application of chinese calligraphic art resources. *Art and Design Research*, 01, 55, 108–114.
- Ma, D. H. (2016). Aesthetic paradigm interpretation of the technical language of Zhang Xu’s “Four Ancient Poems”. *Chinese Calligraphy*, 16, 42–44.
- Mai, Y. X., & Zhang, S. Y. (2023). Line aesthetics: Integration in cross-cultural contexts — One of the series of papers on “Oriental Aesthetics Research in an International Perspective”. *Chinese Literature Studies*, 01, 1–9.
- Qin, Y. J. (2024). Expression and structuring — Fry on matisse’s two stages and dimensions. *Art Observation*, 07, 93–102, 162.
- Tao, J. J. (2023). On roger fry’s aesthetic of spirit under the influence of chinese classical theory of vital rhythm. *Foreign Literature Studies*, 45(02), 10–21.
- Wen, J. T. (2021). Re-examining the understanding of the essence of calligraphy in modern times. *Chinese Calligraphy*, 11, 169–171.
- Wu, Y. Q. (2010). On the connotation of the expressiveness of calligraphy art. *Journal of Southwest University (Social Sciences Edition)*, 36(01), 186–187.
- Wu, Z. H., & Gu, Y. Y. (2005). A preliminary analysis of the influence of chinese calligraphic brushstrokes on modern. *Journal of Jiangnan University (Humanities & Social Sciences)*, 06, 116–118.
- Zeng, F. R. (2020). Chinese “Shengsheng” aesthetics in cross-Cultural studies. *Dongyue Forum*, 41(01), 98–108, 191–192.
- Zhang, C. H. (2015). The integration of oil painting brushstrokes and calligraphy. *Journal of Inner Mongolia University for the Arts*, 12(03), 113–117.
- Zhou, R. (2014). Doubts on several issues in calligraphy aesthetics theory in the past twenty years. *Journal of Nanjing Art Institute (Fine Arts and Design Edition)*, 03, 93–98.
- Zhu, R. B. (2021). Skillfully using the method of commentary to gradually reach the elite — Taking the “Preface to the Poems Composed at the Orchid Pavilion” as an Example. *Middle School Chinese Teaching*, 04, 23–26.

Contact email: yangdong020810@126.com

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0009-1076-290X>