

The Stipulation of Unity Painting Color Concept to Chinese Traditional Yin Yang and Five Elements Color

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Abstract

Unity Painting is a concept that the researcher put forward to locate his own creative style in his creation. Unity Painting, with a clue of reflecting the characteristics of contemporary oriental visual culture, combines the contemporary painting features of a variety of western painting languages. It aims to link the painting system formed in the context of oriental culture with the world's contemporary art and try to present a new contemporary painting with oriental genes. According to the Chinese literature, the researcher sorted out the five main colors (五正色), ten colors for Heavenly Stems (十天干色彩), five intermediate colors (五间色), and five colors as the expression of the Chi of Thriving and Fading and the Chi of Birth and Death, and deduced the summary and stipulation of the color of yin-yang and five elements under the concept of Unity Painting. Based on this, the researcher drew the color-phase and its variation stipulation diagram of ten colors for Heavenly Stems, the orientation of Heavenly Stems (天干方位), color-phase variation diagram (色相变化图), as well as the stipulation system diagram of the five elements (五行), Heavenly Stems and Earthly Branches (干支), energy, time and colors. Through the research and collation of the literature, the researcher took the stipulated five elements color (五行色彩) as the basis of the color concept of creation to complete the work. This paper discusses how to find the starting point of contemporary art creation in the context of traditional oriental culture, sorts out the practical creation logic, and provides ideas for subsequent researchers, with a view to better establishing the identity of the creator and providing research significance and value in the context of the study of oriental art.

Keywords: *Yin-yang and five elements, color theory, Oriental traditional culture, Unity painting, Contemporary art, Conceptual art, Japanese art, China's neo-painting*

1. INTRODUCTION

In the context of modern painting, the re-examination and practice of color began with the Western Impressionism. The contemporary concept of painting color is within the scope of optics and is built on the understanding of spectrum. Purity, brightness, saturation, and the understanding of cold color and warm color have become the definition of color change since modern art. This paper hopes to provide a new perspective, that is, to understand the essence of world cognition in ancient oriental civilization from the perspective of yin-yang and five elements (阴阳五行) under the context of traditional oriental culture. In the comparison of ancient Chinese literature, the author rearranges the stipulation system of yin-yang and five elements color and finds

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out a set of color system different from the system in context of western painting [1].

From the perspective of a creator, this paper is to transform the cognitive perspective of color application in creation, reorganize and stipulate in combination with the color cognition generated in the context of Eastern culture, and sort out a cognitive system different from the western color concept.

After studying and sorting out the traditional literature, the cognitive system of the concept of yin-yang and five elements (阴阳五行) is mutually verified from a scientific perspective, and the stipulation system of traditional color cognition is sorted out from the literature as well. On this basis, a set of color concept system different from the western aesthetic color cognitive system is derived, and the system is taken as the basis of the color concept of Unity Painting (合和绘画).

Unity Painting (合和绘画) [2, 3], also known as "He Xiang Painting (和象绘画)", is a visual classification processing method for images, scenes, phenomena and signs based on semiotics and the concept of Image-Metaphor Analogy (取象比类) in yin-yang and five elements. This method includes both oriental and western cultural elements and focuses on finding common meanings in image expression. Unity Painting is a style formed in the author's creation. With the clue of reflecting the characteristics of contemporary oriental visual culture, the work mixes a variety of painting languages, trying to present a new look of contemporary painting with Chinese genes. "He, in Chinese 合" means juxtaposition, synthesis, superposition and integration. It tends to describe the action of the artist and the processing of the painting. "He, in Chinese 和" means that many different things maintain a certain balance and bears the meaning of integration and unity. It can be recognized as the description on the results of painting, achieving the unity of diversity among the visual elements of the picture, and forming a complex and rhythmic picture with various dimensions. "Adapt foreign elements for Chinese use. Complete each other externally and internally. Achieve harmony with uniformity" is the main feature of Unity Painting.

In traditional Chinese philosophy, the material concept (物质观念), yin-yang and five elements concept (阴阳五行观念) and the concept of Image-Metaphor Analogy (取象比类观念) in the theory of Chi (元气) have the same attributes, and the cognition of the universe has a complete model, which is a natural concept with a strong speculative nature [4]. In this paper, the researcher will make a detailed stipulation on the color of yin-yang and five elements by understanding the traditional concept of Chi and referring to ancient Chinese literature, and create painting based on this stipulation. The concept of Unity Painting established by researchers is the painting system established by integrating these traditions.

2. SUMMARY AND STIPULATION OF YIN-YANG AND FIVE ELEMENTS COLOR IN LITERATURE BY THE CONCEPT OF UNITY PAINTING COLOR

2.1 The Color of Ten Heavenly Stems and Its Variation Stipulation

After obtaining the system of the ten Heavenly Stems color and its variation stipulation diagram according to the literature, the researchers arranged the ten Heavenly Stems in five elements orientation attributes and found the internal rheological trend of their colors: The Stems and Branches color of the same yin-yang and five elements attribute will not show the characteristics of the color of the next level until the color of the upper level of the Stems and Branches continues to fade and the energy reaches the limit. Yin Heavenly Stems and intermediate color are the pauses in this variation process. Intermediate color is the performance of the next level of yang Heavenly Stems being combined and drained. Yin Heavenly Stems is the embodiment of the color of this level mixed with intermediate color. For example: In the process of Jia (甲), Yi (乙) of Wood (木)'s cyan (青) and greenish blue (缥色) changing to the next level, the yellow and green of Wu (戊), Ji (己) of Earth (土) are continuously receding. When the color energy reaches an extreme level, it becomes the red (赤) of

Bing (丙). Here, the yang Heavenly Stems (阳天干) would be recognized as pure Chi (气). The greenish blue (缥色) of Yi (乙) is the color-phase combines cyan (青) of Jia (甲) with a little red (赤) as intermediate colors (间色) of Bing (丙). If the energy of yellow and green keeps fading away from it, it will leave the scope of Wood (木) attribute and enter the Fire (火) attribute in the Stems and Branches and then serves as an intermediate color (间色); or if we regarding to the pure red (赤) of Bing (丙), the silver vermilion (银朱) will be created with the silver red (银红) synthesized by Bing (丙) and serves as an intermediate color (间色) from both Bing(丙) and Xin (辛).

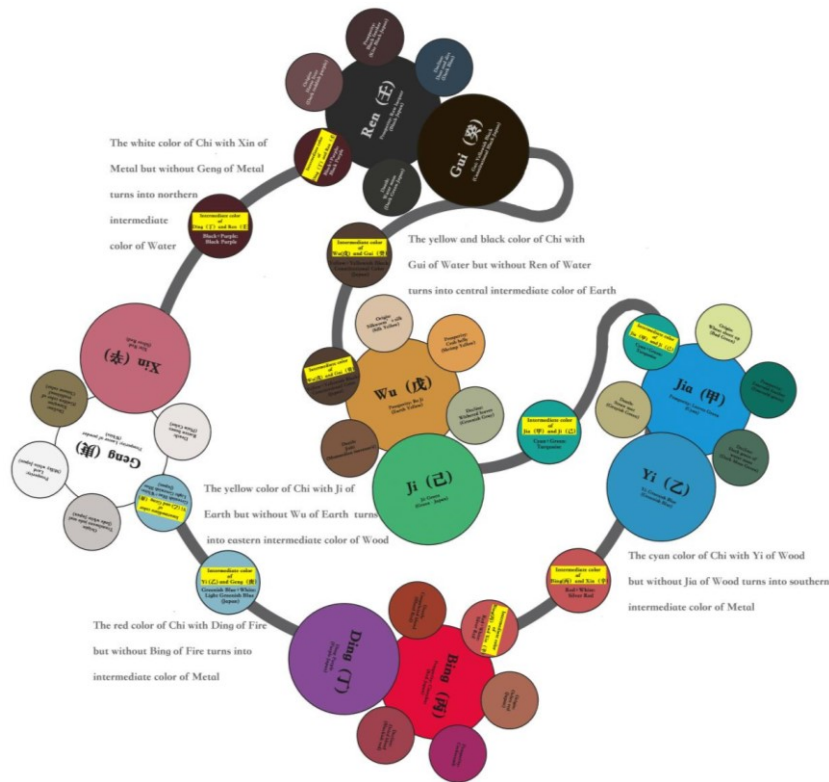
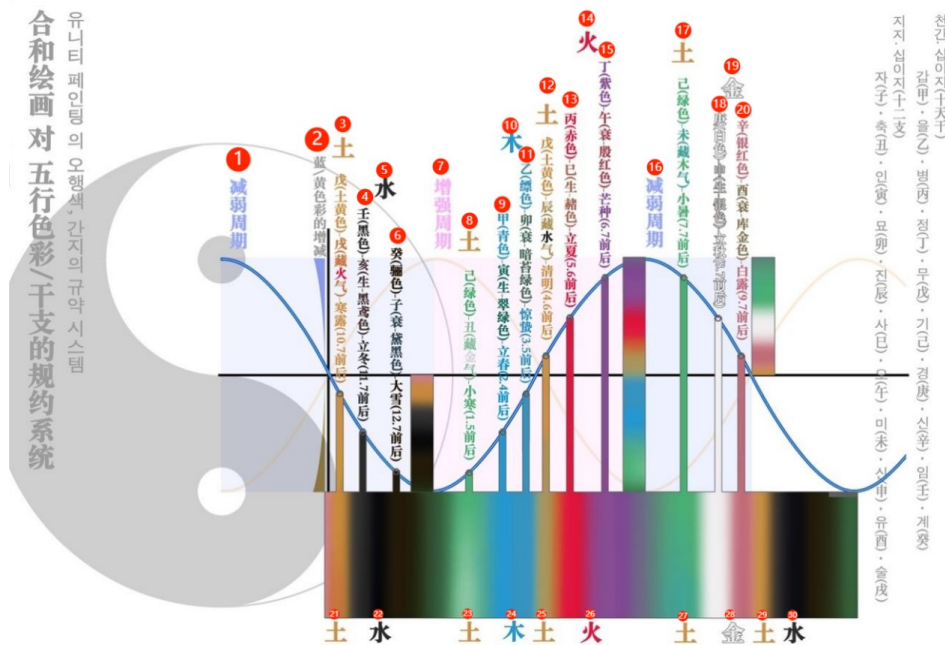


Figure 1. Orientation and Color-Phase and Variation Diagram of the Heavenly Stems (天干)

The color perception of Unity Painting system does not come from the color context after Impressionism, nor from the color cognition under the modern optical knowledge structure. The color system of Unity Painting is a color cognition system based on the color concept of yin-yang and five elements. Here, the researcher uses a diagram to sort out the color relationship and stipulation system based on the Unity Painting, that is, change of energy caused by alternate rotation of yin-yang<Figure 2>. Therefore, an energy fluctuation in the sine function image is generated, which corresponds to the twelve solar terms (十二节气) on the time axis of a year. According to the energy of the sun and the ground in each term, the ancients described the corresponding color system on each term by taking images, and the abstract characters were represented by ten Heavenly Stems. When the researcher established the color system of Unity Painting, he determined these colors by comparing them with the literature. We can see the corresponding relationship between the variations of color and solar terms in the figure, and we can also see the color of the Earthly Branches corresponding to the Heavenly Stems. Under the overall framework of the Heavenly Stems color as a clue, there is a slight deviation of the Earthly Branches color.



| | | | | | |
|----|--|----|--|----|-------|
| 1 | Weakening period | 14 | Fire | | |
| 2 | Increase or decrease of blue / yellow color | 15 | Ding (Purple) - Wu (Decline - Blackish Red) - Grain in Ear (Around 7 th June) | | |
| 3 | Earth - Wu (Earth Yellow) - Xu (Hidden Fire) - Cold Dew (Around 7 th Oct.) | 16 | Weakening period | | |
| 4 | Ren (Black) - Hai (Birth - Kite Black) - Beginning of Winter (Around 7 th Nov.) | 17 | Earth - Ji (Green) - Wei (Hidden Wood) - Slight Heat (Around 7 th July) | | |
| 5 | Water | 18 | Geng (White) - Shen (Birth - Silver) - Beginning of Autumn (Around 7 th Aug.) | | |
| 6 | Gui (Yellowish Black) - Zi (Decline - Dark Black) - Major Snow (Around 7 th Dec.) | 19 | Metal | | |
| 7 | Enhancement period | 20 | Xin (Silver Red) - You (Decline - Traditional Coin Color) - White Dew (7 th Sep.) | | |
| 8 | Earth - Ji (Green) - Chou (Hidden Metal) - Slight Cold (Around 5 th , Jan.) | 21 | Earth | 26 | Fire |
| 9 | Jia (Cyan) - Yin (Birth - Emerald Green) - Beginning of Spring (Around 4 th Feb.) | 22 | Water | 27 | Earth |
| 10 | Wood | 23 | Earth | 28 | Metal |
| 11 | Yi (Greenish Blue) - Mao (Decline - Dark Moss Green) - Waking of Insects (Around 5 th , Mar.) | 24 | Wood | 29 | Earth |
| 12 | Wood - Wu (Earth Yellow) - Chen (Hidden Water) - Pure Brightness (Around 6 th April) | 25 | Earth | 30 | Water |
| 13 | Bing (Red) - Si (Birth - Ochre Red) - Beginning of Summer (Around 6 th May) | | | | |

Figure 2. The Stipulation System of Five Elements (五行), Stems and Branches(干支), Energy, Time and Colors in Unity Painting

3. THE STIPULATION SYSTEM OF COLOR IN UNITY PAINTING

The *Twelve Branches* (《十二支》) series of works is an experiment to establish the category of works of conventional symbols to use the stipulation of Unity Painting on color and modeling form by Image-Metaphor Analogy. The Four Consumings and Accumulating - the Hidden Stems of the Earthly Branches (四墓库-地支

藏干) originates from the metaphysical definition in the concept of five elements. The specific form of the Hidden Stems is as indicated in the figure. It is a semiotic system used to represent the Chi (气) and Image (象) contained in the Earthly Branches (地支) energy.

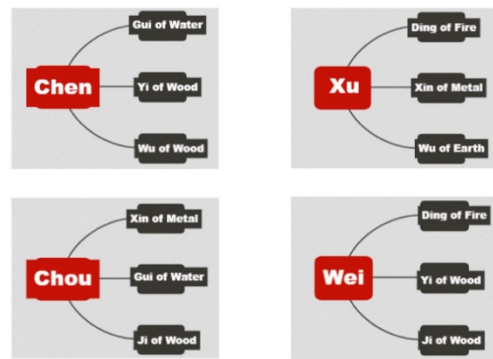


Figure 3. The Diagram of Four Hidden Earthly Branches (四地支藏干)

Researchers have imaged this metaphysical abstract concept in the way of analogy. At the early stage of the work designing, it is difficult to imagine what kind of visual effect will be formed when the work is painted with the color stipulation of Unity Painting (合和绘画) from a completely rigorous perspective. When the work is pushed forward to the later stage step by step, its shape, internal structure and visual effect are still quite impressive. It seems that the works have nothing to do with real life, but in the process of Image-Metaphor Analogy (取象比类), many metaphysical information of yin-yang and five elements (阴阳五行) have been contained in them. It can be said that it is a work with the spirit and mystery of semiotics <Figure 3>.

Skull face background color: Dark yellowish black (骊色) (nearly black) is the Image of Gui of Water (癸水) as the Hidden Stem (藏干) in the Earthly Branches (地支), **Skull outline:** Greenish blue is the Image of the Yi of Wood (乙木) as the Hidden Stem (藏干) in the Earthly Branches (地支), **Background:** Earth yellow is the Image of Wu of Earth (戊土) as the Hidden Stem (藏干) in the Earthly Branches (地支)

In the *Twelve Branches - Chen Water Accumulating* (《十二支-辰水库》), in the yin-yang and five elements (阴阳五行), the operation state of soil is understood as dispersible in a block form. In order to express the metaphysical concept of Chen Earth (辰土) as a Water Accumulating (水库), the internal elements of the work are designed hereby. Chen Earth (辰土) is a Water Accumulating (水库) with the characteristics of cultivation and inclusion. There is no Fire (火) hides in Chen (辰) and Chou (丑), they contain Gui Water (癸水), which represents a cold Earth Image. The audience can feel the wet and cold feeling conveyed by the cold tone in the works in strict accordance with the stipulation. In order to show the closed and contained nature of the Earth (土), like all things are fading away and turned back to Earth Accumulating (土库). The symbolic form of the skull is selected in the work, which means the state of apoptosis, and the cascading visual structure also symbolizes the interdependence of life and death cycles, and death breeds the birth and iteration<Figure. 4>.



Figure 4. Na Wei, the Twelve Branches - Chen Water Accumulating, 100x100cm, Oil on Canvas, Screen Painting, 2020, Private Collection

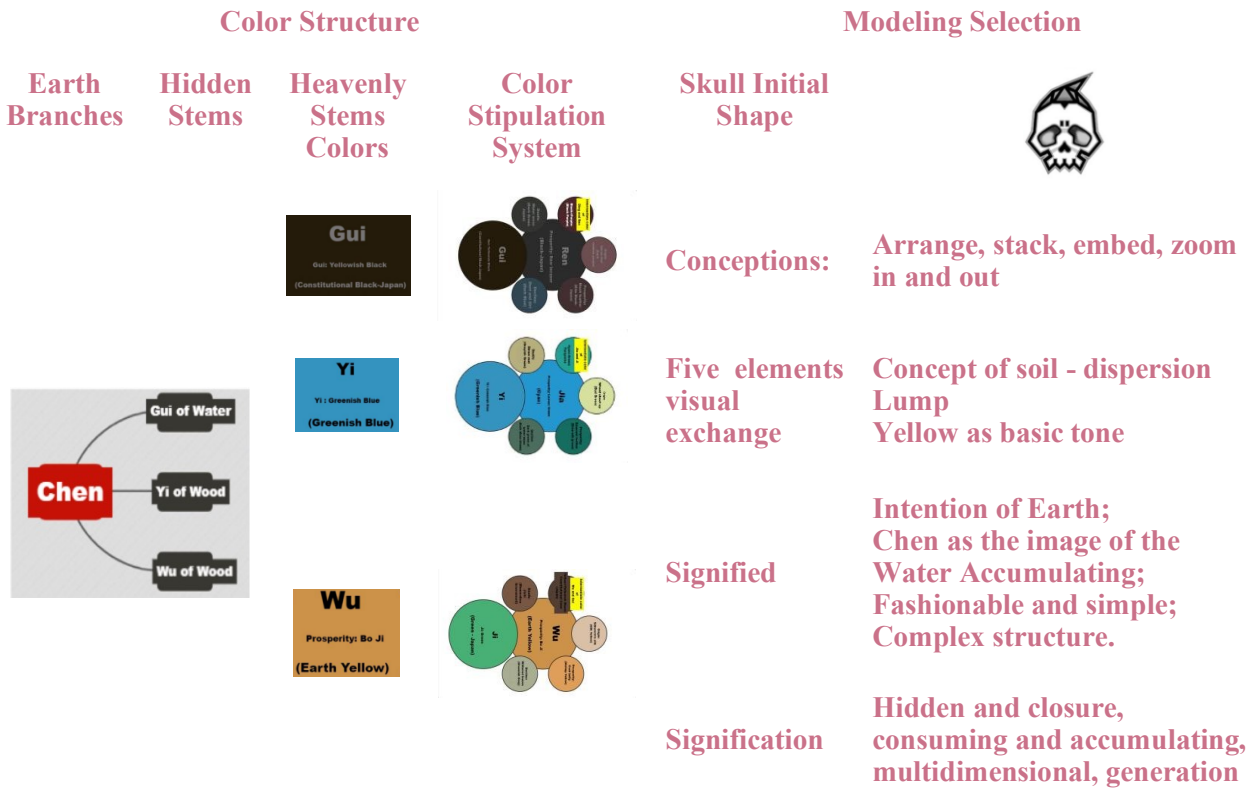


Figure 5. Stipulation of Visual Elements of Works



Figure 6. Part of Na Wei's the *Twelve Branches - Chen Water Accumulating*

The work matches the Hidden Stems in the Earthly Branches (地支藏干) regulated by the yin-yang and five elements with the five elements color (五行色彩) stipulated by the Unity Painting (合和绘画), and substituted them into colors correspondingly, trying to minimize the influence of subjective colors on the picture. Finally, the work shows the structural relationship between the combination of Hidden Stems in the Earthly Branches (地支藏干) and the five elements color (五行色彩) itself. The work is completed by screen printing, which constantly repeats the modeling, increasing the sense of layering and the complexity of the symbol structure of the work <Figure. 6>

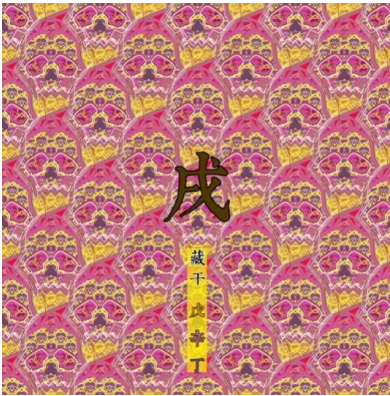


Figure 7. Na Wei, the *Twelve Branches - Xu Fire Accumulating*, 100x100cm, Oil on Canvas, Screen Painting, 2020, Private Collection

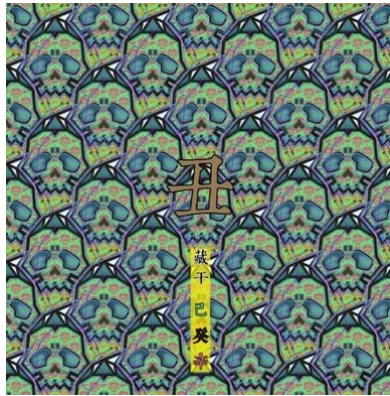


Figure 8. Na Wei, the *Twelve Branches - Chou Metal Accumulating*, 100x100cm, Oil on Canvas, Screen Painting, 2020, Private Collection



Figure 9. Na Wei, the *Twelve Branches - Wei Wood Accumulating*, 100x100cm, Oil on Canvas, Screen Painting, 2020, Private Collection

The above shows four pieces in the series of the *Twelve Earthly Branches* (十二地支), which are the Four Consumings and Accumulating (四墓库) concepts of "Chen (辰), Xu (戌), Chou (丑) and Wei (未)" as the symbols of the Earthly Branches (地支). From these four works, we can see the characteristics of the symbols of Unity Painting Stipulation (合和绘画规约), and also see its impact on color and modeling stipulation in creation<Figure. 7-9>. the author introduces the creative experience of the stipulation system established by the author through the specific application of the Image-Metaphor Analogy and the stipulation system of color, modeling, form and material in Unity Painting. From the analysis of each category of works, the author introduces the combination of the author's theory and practice to the readers and arouses thinking among readers and other creators.

4. CONCLUSION

In the context of contemporary art with the West as the mainstream values, this is not entirely an issue of discourse power. From another point of view, a series of value systems constructed by the West with its own civilization system hold strong and solid strength. Since the beginning of modern art, the western discourse system has been the dominant force. Artists in the East have been thinking about learning from the West and returning to themselves until today. Eastern countries such as Japan and South Korea are in the forefront of Westernization. It is not difficult to see their deep thinking on oriental civilization and their confident learning and application in their artists' works.

As a Chinese artist, the researcher also receives the Westernization influence under the modern education mode and the reflection on self-positioning. If we want to locate a new angle of creation in the context of contemporary art, we need to break away from the single influence of the western system and find a new perspective of artistic expression in the oriental tradition. In the process of studying and sorting out the context of oriental traditional culture, we can indeed find that there are many factors that can be borrowed from the traditional concept of yin-yang and five elements. This is not only to stay in the understanding of some well-known simple concepts, but also to go deeper into the category that can be practically applied. Starting from the logic of basic elements, for example, there are great differences between the cognitive styles of modeling, form, color, material, etc. in eastern culture and those in the West. Whether these elements can sort out a

complete logic has become the focus of the work. If these ancient cognitive styles can be deeply studied, it is likely to produce works of art that are different from those under the Western inertia logic, and form a complete and contemporary visual system. This not only symbolizes the revival of oriental civilization, but also will be a complement to modern human civilization. The author hopes that later researchers will pay attention to and conduct in-depth research.

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