

## Teaching Research of Reconstruction Painting for Purpose of Cultivating Creativity of Students

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### Abstract

Reconstruction of painting means one orients nature rather than sourcing from subjective imagination, and it is a new art form of thinking and a new embodiment of the creativity of the artist. Meanwhile, it is a new way of teaching, aiming at improving the students' ability in observation and thinking and at exploring the students' potential in creativity. Its purpose is to enable the students to grow into mature artists with sustainable capacity and creativity.

**Key words:** Reconstruction; Art form of thinking; Creativity; Sustainable development

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The reconstruction painting is creative but not fabricated without foundation. It sources from the reality while differs from the reality. In case of orienting nature, it does not simply imitate the natural images but is inspired by nature to disintegrate and reconstruct the natural objects and image so as to create artistic image distinguished from nature. The reconstruction painting applies the divergent thinking and exercises one question with multiple solutions, seeking for multiple possibilities, redeploing them and then conducting in-depth form studies on picture, during which, the originality, sense of beauty and novelty are required. The reconstruction painting differs from the traditional realistic painting in terms of thinking way and form concept. The traditional realistic painting is dominated by facsimileing nature. With respect to the

subjective initiative of painters and their imitativeness on nature, the proportion of the latter is greater than that of the former, while with respect to the features shown by works, it is very similar to the reality, neither embodying the individuality of painters nor giving play to their subjective initiative and creativity. Jean Piaget thought that the basic goal of education was to cultivate persons capable of creating new things, a creative discoverer good at inventing rather than simply repeating the things already done by others. Our teaching is continuous and the creativity of students can directly influence the next generation and act on the society, consequently, it is particularly important to cultivate and develop creativity of students. We do need the creation rather than the repetition following a set routine. The modernist painter Matisse has declared that "A new painting should be a unique deed, a new birth, and a new form added to the world view held by the human's spirit" (*Selected theories of European modern painting art*, 1980, p.59). Creative thinking is to break the routine and seeks for new and valuable breakthrough.

The traditional realistic painting sets up physical study on the basis of being faithful to objective entity in basic skills training so as to realize the coordination in unity of subjectivity and objectivity and consistency of hands and eyes, emphasizes the rule of reason in shaping, pays attention to studies on human anatomy and perspective laws, and plays an important role in cultivating to grasp the basic skills of shaping required by art of realism. As for the same standard of realistic painting, although the individual artistic ability of artist varies from each other, yet similar appearance is present. The western painters think that the realistic skills have reached up to the limits, and the way out can only be found by rebelling against tradition. This rebellion is one concerning form vision and form thinking, which changes the method of traditional realistic painting viewing nature, and each kind of rebellion brings us a brand-new form concept. Start from

Cezanne, he earnestly studies geometric physical shaping, breaking the traditional scenography to study the form of picture—structure; the cubism breaks the traditional forms to deconstruct the physical body and recombine it; Kandinsky expresses musicality and melodic rhythm in painting; the picture of Piet Mondrian is rational and simple, with sense of order and quietness; Dali creates an absurd, queer and preposterous space-time in the picture, expanding our imagination. The innovation of form is an embodiment of creativity, as well as the embodiment of new form thinking. The painting is an expression method of the people's understanding on the world, and different form thinking reflects different cognition perspective on the world. We advocate students to attempt and to give us a reasonable perspective in their mode of viewing the world, which should be new and distinguished from the previous. What we need is the creation of students rather than their repetition.

Reconstruction painting also coincides with the era which we live in and the painting should be a reflection of the time. The era which we live in is a “picture-reading” era. No matter whether we want to see or not, our eyes are inundated with various things through the network, media and magazines everyday, which renders a great challenge to our aesthetic selection. The repetitive, commonplace and uncreative images certainly will cause our aesthetic fatigue and our eyes expect innovation, novelty and shock. The abnormality and creativity of reconstruction painting will stimulate the people's aesthetic interests, update their sensing way on the world, make them to marvel during viewing, and thus let them generate new thought on the world where we exist.

The reconstruction painting can be classified into three categories: (I) deconstruction and reconstruction of natural images, (II) temporal and spatial reconstruction (association) and (III) the deconstruction and reconstruction of traditional painting.

### **(I) Deconstruction and reconstruction of natural images**

The deconstruction and reconstruction of natural images apply the cubism shaping approach mainly featured by “deconstruction and reconstruction” of cubism Picasso, which exercise the techniques like decomposition, malposition, grafting, grouping, gradient, composition, etc., and carefully arrange the order and structure of picture that are self-disciplined and arranged as required by the picture without following the natural structure and order. It is a kind of rational painting, requiring students always to paint against nature and gain inspiration from nature instead of reaching extreme of abstraction and imagination. In case of facing the natural image and observing it, it is necessary to change the perspective

rather than view strictly according to the facts, namely, to have some findings while viewing, for example, to view how to decompose nature, wherein the “‘viewing’ itself has become a kind of creative cause” (*Painting style of Matisse*, 1992, p.2); to change the thinking while embodying nature, reconstructing nature instead of imitating nature, thus forming visual image different from nature. In case of requiring students to make a change, the method of questioning and one question with multiple solutions can be adopted. Is it bound to painting like this? How can the painting be done in other ways? “Deconstruction and reconstruction of nature” is a brand-new observation method and an embodiment of thinking mode. At the initial stage of this subject, students often have doubts on their own observation method and expression techniques because they are used to viewing nature faithfully and teachers should firm the thoughts of students, just let it go ahead. Therefore, teachers should carefully select model paintings before class and regulate the creation boundaries of students. Aimless and limitless painting is a waste of time.

Subtle reconstruction requires paying attention to details, such as cultivating students' refinement, challenging their coarse thinking and rough technique of painting, and helping them not take simpleness as magnificence or fickleness as embodiment. The subtleness of picture embodies the change of students' observation method, and also embodies the depth of thinking. The reconstruction of shaping applies the techniques like decomposition, malposition, grafting, grouping, gradient, composition, etc. for the overall arrangement of picture, requiring students to find preference, novelty, sense of beauty, elements and characteristics. Before making formal paintings, students are required to paint many exploratory sketches (generally no less than 3) for purpose of fully diverging thinking and exploring various possibilities. The teacher should help students to clear their thoughts and let them find the best option for picture showing. The followings are students' homework (Figures 1-3):



**Figure 1**  
**Bottle and Flower (Grafting), Ding Nan**



**Figure 2**  
**Screwy Bottle Handle, Dong Zhan (Grouping)**



**Figure 3**  
**Glass Fruit Plate, Shi Jie (Malposition)**

### **(II) Temporal and spatial reconstruction (association)**

Painting is a kind of expression method for the human's cognition of world, the traditional realistic painting mostly embodies the real objective world while the temporal and spatial reconstruction embodies the imaged world rather than the real objective world, wherein the freedom of painter's spirit is present in the form of rich imagination. The French aesthetician Mikel Dufrenne (1976, p.82) has said that: "This world is imaged... it is always taken as a possible world that can be perceived... in order to closely connect to the perceived objects, only the imagination can separate the object from its natural background and link it with the state of mind". The temporal and spatial reconstruction embodies the freedom of creators' imagination and their exploration on infinite spiritual world. The temporal and spatial reconstruction refers to the expression technique of surrealism painting. Surrealism can be divided into two classes: one is of inward expression, creating a picture of fantasy and dreams through reconstructed image and scene that can be identified to express painters' subconscious repressed in memory and reality, represented by Dali and Magritte. The other is of outward exploration, embodying human's studies on the universe, nature, being, and other abstract forms with picture trending towards abstraction, represented by Miró, Masson, etc.. In teaching, we advocate students to refer to the first one and conduct imaginative creativity with recognizable image instead of trending towards extremes of abstraction. Apply the partially fine and real image of picture, absurd, fantastic and novel scene, and other approaches of surrealism, and promote the art from "accidental" and "abnormal" incidents so as to reach a fantastic effect.



**Figure 4**  
**Dream Caused by the Flight of a Bee**

As for the temporal and spatial reconstruction, "temporal" refers to the time and "spatial" means the space. Spatial art generally does not embody the time with pictures tending to show the solidification of moment scenes. However, in the temporal and spatial reconstruction, painters introduce the time into space, combine natural images of different time and sites in one picture, and change the three-dimensional space of picture into four-dimensional space-time, wherein the three-dimensional space generally refers to length, width and depth, namely, the objective space. The introduction of time makes the space-time subjective. Dali creates pictures featured by "temporal and spatial reconstruction", rendering the pictures with novel, absurd, horrible and other visual effects (Figure 4), and bringing the people visual and psychological shock. The deconstruction and reconstruction of Picasso embody the painter's exploration on order and structure in real world, while Dali's temporal and spatial reconstruction embody the possibility of painter seeking for showing real self in unreal space-time. Picasso relies on shaping reconstruction and Dali relies on temporal and spatial reconstruction. Their thoughts and works' appearance are not identical, however, in the term of "reconstruction creation", they are coincident. Thus their thoughts and works can be referred.

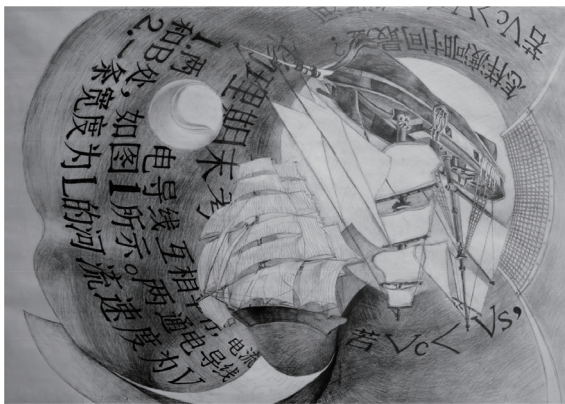
There are 8 techniques of temporal and spatial reconstruction: a. Space association, b. Time association, c. Basic form association, d. Meaning association, e. Volume association, f. Combination association, g. Subconscious association, h. Positive and negative association.

This subject requires to assign students with topics like time/space/sound of blooming/childhood/the world changes, etc.. The students can image according to the arranged topic, make literal expressions first as the writing of a composition, and then optionally select one or two techniques for temporal and spatial reconstruction. Before starting, the students should make more than one alternative schemes, discuss with each other to determine the feasible one, and then begin to paint. During painting,

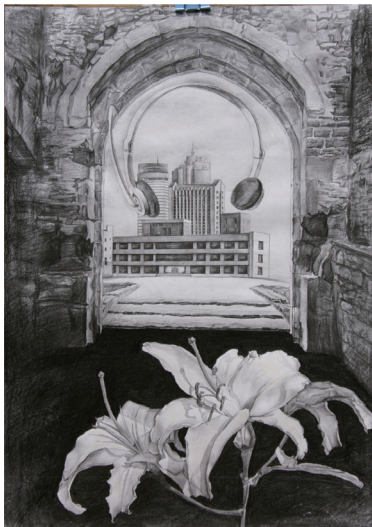
teachers should provide guidance for students, as well as proper limits for preventing limitless woolgathering of students in course of developing their imagination. The followings are students' homework: (Figures 5-9)



**Figure 5**  
**Time Game Li Changhong**



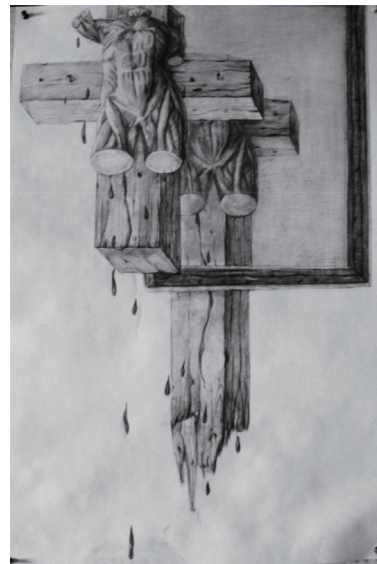
**Figure 6**  
**Boats Floating on the Examination Paper, Li Yunze**



**Figure 7**  
**Sound of Blooming, Guo Qingping**



**Figure 8**  
**Mask-Association on Space, Huang Haixia**



**Figure 9**  
**The Space, Zhan Ping**

### (III) Deconstruction and reconstruction of traditional painting

Every new painting form is the rebellion and development of previous painting forms, meaning new cognition and thinking on the world. For instance, neo-classicism is a rebellion of classicism which evolves into enervating style at later stage, emphasizing that ideal is more important than feeling and rule is more important than expression, and stressing the completeness and preciseness of artistic forms. Romanticism is a rebellion of neo-classicism, insisting to freely express the human's feeling, interest and talent without restriction of form and rule. Realism aims at classicism and romanticism, opposing excessive fantasy and subjective fabrication, and advocating creating arts of the era and faithful depiction of all the observed persons and things. Post-impressionism is a negation

and evolution of impressionism, unsatisfying to express impression and feeling of the objective nature and expecting to embody the philosophy on subjective spirit and ideal. Cezanne seeks for geometric form and structure with order, the cubism challenges all artistic concepts with normal perspective, form and structure as the standard, the surrealism shows us a non-logic preposterous space-time, changing our visual experience..... there are many schools in the art history, during teaching, the teacher should make students understood that we look ahead by standing on the shoulders of masters. Not only inheritance and development, but also rebellion against the masters are required for a selective learning, thus realizing “apply what we have learnt as we own”.

Deconstruction and reconstruction of traditional paintings not merely refer to those in form but are more embodied in reconstruction of implication of picture expression. It represents painter’s thinking on the current art state and social issues. Students cultivated by us should not only have sound basic skills and creative thinking ability, but also possess sustainability of art development. It is a complex and far-reaching issue that how to let students focus on artistic issues and to reflect the contemporary era with art. In school days, our teachers can only provide students a perspective of thinking, while the development relies on students’ artistic ability and persistence. In study of the subject of deconstruction and reconstruction of traditional painting, we exactly want to provide students a perspective of focusing on art.



Figure 11  
Las Meninas, Picasso



Figure 12  
Luncheon on the Grass After Manet, Picasso

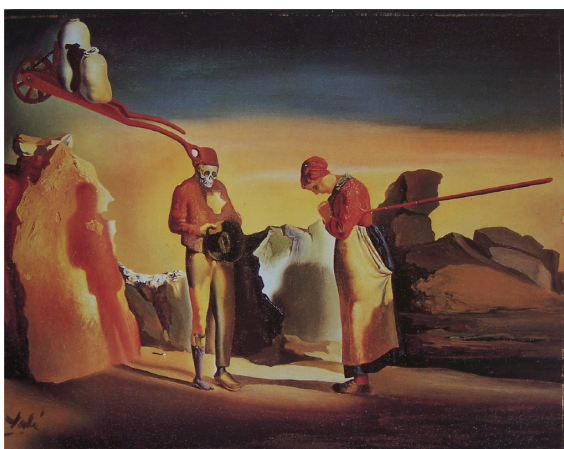


Figure 10  
The Angelus, Dali



Figure 13  
Danae, Dali



**Figure 14**  
**Hello, Manet, Yue Minjun**

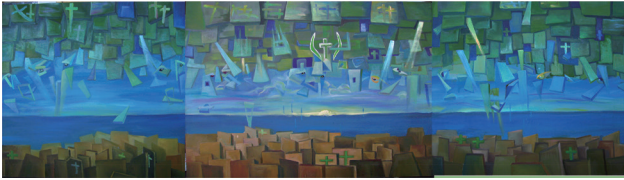


**Figure 15**  
**Melee After Duchamp, Wang Huaxiang**

Picasso and Dali are superiors learning from and challenging the masters. Dali deconstructs and reconstructs Millet's *The Angelus* (Figure 10). In the original *The Angelus* of Millet, it creates a serene, devout and eternal picture atmosphere like an idyll, while in Dali's painting, except that the characters' movement and props can be obviously observed from the original work, others have been changed, like the characters become into human skeletons, the wheelbarrow is lifted up to the head of farmer and the rake up to the body of peasant woman, and the background behind them is changed into lifeless barren mountain instead of the vast field and looming church. The theme of farmer can be often observed in works of Dali, wherein the composition of sexual repression is revealed subconsciously, completely deconstructing the meaning of original work. Danae is a figure sourcing from the ancient Greek mythology, and is taken as a painting theme by many artists, no exception for Dali. In the painting *Danae* (Figure 13), the image of Danae is changed into Gala, and Danae and all things in the picture are in null-gravity state, floating in

the air. In comparison with Vinci's *Leda and the Swan*, the picture presents a spatial surrealistic sense. Picasso deconstructs and reconstructs Diego Velazquez's *Las Meninas* (Figure 11) and Manet's *Luncheon on the grass* (Figure 12), applying the method of multi-view geometric combination, which is a kind of fun-loving attitude, expressing a free creation. The contemporary painter Wang Huaxiang of China is also a painter proposing adaption of classic works, and in his recent art show named as "face-lifting" held in National Art Museum of China, it is exactly a show of works well combining reproduction and presentation, reality and imagination, and inheritance and creation. Have a look at the work *Melee after Duchamp* (Figure 15), which sources from *The Intervention of the Sabine Women* created by David in his later years where it depicts a scene that the women who married with the Romans and gave birth to babies after being looted rushed into the battle and prevented their fathers and brothers and their husbands from killing each other with their own bodies. Wang Huaxiang re-endows new meaning to the picture. The characters like Elsie, King of Rome, King of Sabin, etc. are changed into himself and his relatives and friends, the babies on the ground are changed into modern dolls, and the background becomes into Feidi Workshop Arts from warm red Castle of Rome, metaphorizing the picture of contemporary art in form of reconstruction, constituting new visual experience and meaning expression, build a special spatial association in-between the ancients and moderns living in different times, and brings new artistic experience for the viewers. The series paintings *Scene* made by Yue Minjun are also the deconstruction of classic paintings of masters. The art critic Feng Bo thinks that Yue Minjun adapts the classics with his own painting language and signals, repairs and updates traditional modes and styles, deforming them, eliminating the possibilities of linear development of classic works, and thus not only rendering classical themes with epochal character in theme but also producing many jokes with various absurd techniques. He thinks that the human should continually change their perspectives, explore new metaphors and create new styles for purpose of constantly resisting delicacy or chaos, and liberating to a certain extent other numerous narration and memory depressed for a long term. This emancipation is inherited and criticized also and the work *Hello, Manet* (Figure 14) is a painting that can be included therein. Matisse has said that "Among all kinds of art, there is one not only proceeding from individuals but also evolving from will of generations. The individual inherits from the previous generation. The person cannot do simply and casually" (*Painting style of Matisse*, 1992, p.4). We require students to select paintings of masters for reconstruction of structure. It is the beginning of students entering into creation by learning and criticizing the paintings of masters to manifest the subject consciousness of painters and to finish painter's imagination.

This subject requires to select masters' paintings with grand picture scene, clear theme and many characters for students to conduct reconstruction and expression, which can be carried out separately or by group. The title of subject can be decided optionally.



**Figure 16**  
**The Last Supper**

This piece of work shows the deconstruction and reconstruction of Leonardo da Vinci's "The Last Supper" (Figure 16) performed by my students, in which a lot of rectangles like tombstones, processional banners and buildings are employed, thus achieving mysterious effects and giving one such feeling that religion is everywhere. Size and meaning of the painting are basically the same as the original, but its images have been changed. This is the result of students' thinking on "The Last Supper." This work was performed in groups and was completed based on students' brainstorming of the subject. So producing

this work also cultivates students' collective consciousness and cooperation abilities.

Reconstruction of painting reflects the creators' freedom to create and their exploration of the world order and structure. During studying the reconstruction of painting, rather than only focusing on the form of research, we studies for the purpose of tapping students' potential, developing their creativity, inspiring their imagination, enabling them to give full play to subjective initiative in learning and helping them to actively, purposefully and consciously express their understanding of the world so that they can express their own aesthetic emotion through form. This form is neither spontaneous, nor duplicate. It develops by critically inheriting masters' skills and we hope our students can find their own way of artistic creation in learning.

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