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Taking Giorgio Morandi's Works as an Example to Discuss the Relationship Between Sketching and Painting Creation

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Abstract

This article takes the works of Giorgio Morandi as an example to explore the relationship between sketching and painting creation. Morandi developed a unique artistic style during the development of modern art in the 20th century, particularly demonstrated through the simplicity and harmony in his sketches and etchings. The article analyzes the importance of sketching as a form of artistic thinking in painting creation, suggesting that sketching is not merely a basic technique but a tool for expressing creative thought. By studying the sketch elements in Morandi's works, the article discusses the significant role of sketching in representing object form, spatial structure, and light and shadow. It emphasizes the organic unity between sketch thinking and painting creation thinking.

Keywords: sketching; painting creation; Giorgio Morandi

Understanding Sketching in Painting Creation

Sketching is one of the most fundamental techniques in painting and an essential tool for many artists. However, when people talk about sketching, they often focus solely on it as a basic technique or a preparatory step, without delving into its artistic thinking and creative value. In reality, art practitioners should view sketching as a form of artistic thinking, combining visual perception principles with the ability to reproduce what we see. This prompts a deeper consideration of the role of sketch thinking within the context of painting creation.

Artists should strive to understand the essence and principles of art creation more deeply. Sketching is not just a simple skill but a creative thinking method. Through sketching, artists can explore the rules

of visual perception, discover the relationships between objects' shapes, structures, and spaces, and organically combine these elements to form a unique style of expression. During the act of sketching, artists are not merely recording and reproducing visual information but are also re-creating and reconstructing the form and spatial structure of objects. This creative thinking allows artists to produce works that are more unique and expressive.

In art creation, the application of sketch thinking is highly significant. Through sketching, artists can continually explore and uncover the mysteries of object form and spatial relationships, thus producing works with greater artistic value and expressiveness. Therefore, sketching should not only be regarded as a tool or technique but as a thinking process and a creative journey to better achieve one's artistic creation goals.

The Necessity of Sketching in Painting Creation

1. Simplification of Visual Information

Certain elements in a painting can disrupt or interfere with the overall composition—these are often referred to as "unnecessary elements." These elements can distract the viewer's attention, making the painting appear disorganized and lacking clarity. Artists can simplify the composition by eliminating or reducing these unnecessary elements, thereby creating a more cohesive and powerful image that highlights the subject and focus of the work.

Morandi was particularly adept at using this technique of simplification to create a sense of unity and order in his works. He often painted still lifes, buildings, and landscapes, which were typically simple in subject. Particularly in his still-life paintings, which often featured just a few objects, he used careful observation of each object's shape, shadow, and spatial relationships to give the composition depth and dimension. Morandi also applied this approach to his depictions of architecture and landscapes, where he simplified the shapes and structures, transforming them into basic geometric forms and lines, creating an abstract yet orderly composition. This technique of simplification is widely used in painting. Artists can simplify details, reduce extraneous lines, or remove unnecessary shadows to control the overall composition.

For instance, if some elements in a painting are overly prominent or intricate, they can make the whole composition appear chaotic and lack coherence. In such cases, the artist can reduce certain elements, such as removing unneeded lines or colors, to balance the composition.

This method of subtraction is a common compositional technique in painting, achieved by reducing or simplifying elements in the composition to create balance. This can be done through "color reduction," "line reduction," and "shape reduction."

Reduction of Color refers to achieving balance in a painting by either reducing the number of colors or weakening the color saturation. Painters can reduce the number of colors by converting some of them into neutral tones like gray, black, or white. Additionally, they can adjust the brightness and

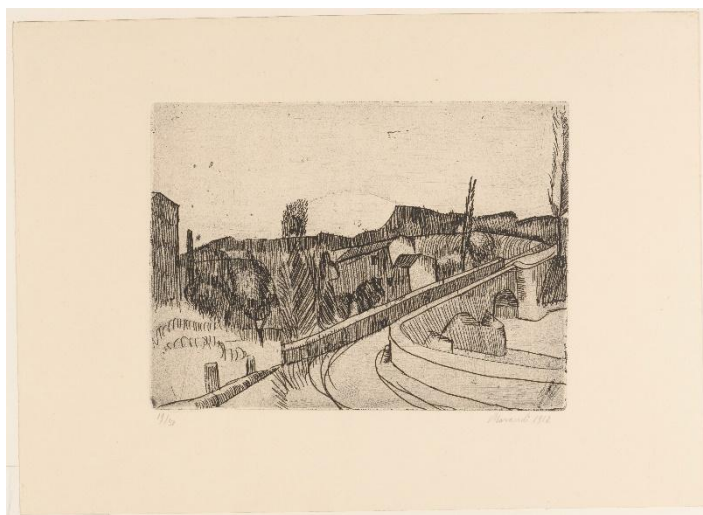
saturation of colors to control the overall effect, making the composition appear more harmonious.

Reduction of Line involves reducing the number or intensity of lines to balance the composition. Lines are one of the basic elements in sketches or paintings, and by adjusting the thickness, length, or number of lines, artists can influence the overall effect. Through the direction and arrangement of lines, painters can also guide the viewer's gaze and create a sense of depth and structure in the artwork.

Reduction of Form means simplifying the number of shapes or reducing the complexity of the shapes in order to balance the composition. Artists can achieve this by simplifying or omitting unnecessary shapes. Furthermore, adjusting the size and position of shapes within the artwork can alter the overall effect of the composition.

The use of reduction as a technique to control the overall composition is a crucial skill in painting, aiding in the creation of a structured yet dynamic artwork. In Morandi's still life paintings, he often included only simple objects like bottles, jugs, and jars. Through clever composition and technique, he reduced the forms of these objects to their essence. By arranging these simple objects in different ways, Morandi directed the viewer's attention to the texture and spatial relationships of the objects. At the same time, his works typically featured soft colors and subtle changes in light and shadow, reducing sharp contrasts to create a serene and warm atmosphere, allowing viewers to immerse themselves in the painting and feel the artist's love and sensitivity to life.

Morandi even simplified the objects themselves in his still life paintings by altering them during their arrangement—such as letting dust accumulate on the bottles over time, wrapping them in paper, or applying matte paint to their surfaces.

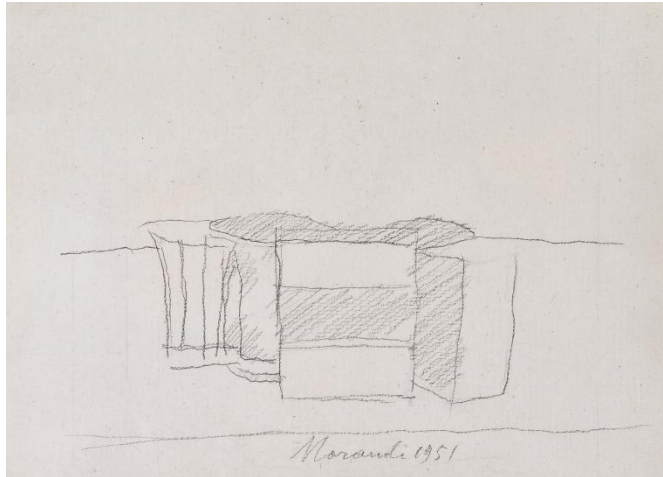


Morandi's method of simplification extends beyond still life and into his landscape paintings. He often chose simple scenes, such as towns, churches, or parks, and used masterful composition to fully express the shapes and moods of the scenery. When faced with complex real-life landscapes, he selectively removed certain elements, retaining only those he deemed essential. As a result, every element in the

painting holds significance and finds its rightful place within the composition, bringing a sense of unity and harmony to the overall artwork.

2. Quick Recording of Visual Information

Through sketching, artists can quickly record visual information using simple materials (such as pencils, charcoal, paper) and straightforward techniques, yielding an immediate visual effect. Sketching serves as the foundation for expressing forms, structure, space, texture, and more in visual arts. During the creation process, artists can use sketches to record and express their visual experiences, capturing fleeting beauty to better convey their artistic perspective and emotions.



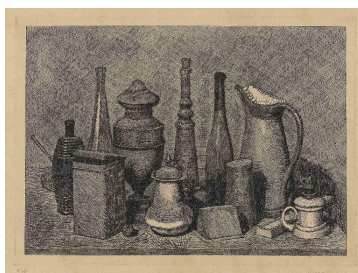
In the surviving works of Giorgio Morandi, there are some quick sketches, which, while not his major works, are valuable in helping us understand Morandi's creative process and artistic philosophy. In these sketches, we can observe his pursuit of simplicity and purity, using minimal lines and outlines to depict the forms of objects, reflecting his keen observation of objects and his mastery of visual language.

Artists can use simple lines, shading, textures, and other elements to represent form, structure, texture, space, and more, constructing complex and dynamic compositions. By employing sketching in their creative process, artists can step back from their work, repeatedly analyze, and continuously adjust and improve elements such as composition, proportion, and light and shadow, resulting in works with greater accuracy, strength, and expressiveness.

3. Painting Experiment of Visual Information

Sketching is one of the most cost-effective forms of trial and error in artistic creation. Unlike oil painting or sculpture, sketching requires minimal material costs and technical difficulty. In many cases, it only requires simple tools such as paper and pencils. Through sketching, artists can freely experiment with various techniques such as different lines, shapes, shadows, and textures. They can conduct repeated tests and adjustments without worrying about failure or incurring significant losses.

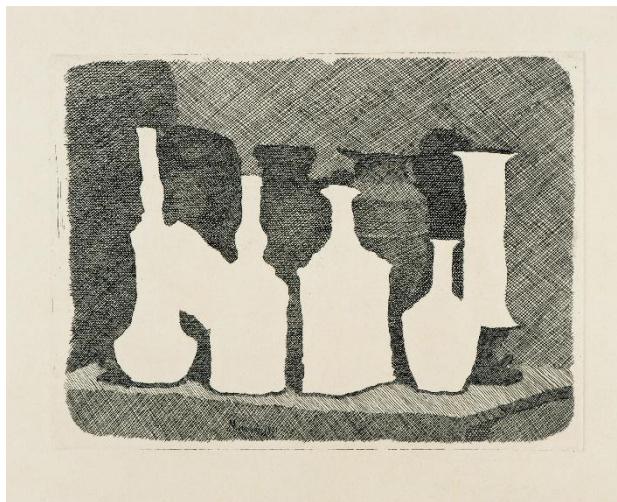
Furthermore, art creation often encourages bold experimentation and risk-taking, even embracing failure. Artists frequently learn from their failures and use them as a source of inspiration to further drive their creative process. Mistakes and failures are often considered an essential part of artistic creation. Therefore, the experimental nature of sketching is particularly important for contemporary artists.



Taking Giorgio Morandi as an example, he devoted himself to exploring the issue of stylization in art and, in the early 1930s, began focusing on the unique black-and-white language of printmaking. His initial idea was to amplify the black-and-white relationship within his compositions, which

led him to significantly increase the blank areas in his works. This enhanced the depth of the blacks and the purity of the whites, thereby intensifying the contrast between them. Through the use of this black-and-white language, Morandi successfully strengthened the visual impact and artistic expressiveness of his print works.

However, after creating several similar works, Morandi began to feel dissatisfied with the results. He believed that this stark black-and-white contrast was not truly what he was pursuing. This led him to rethink the effects in his compositions. During his exploration, he gradually shifted away from focusing on the contrasts of light and shadow and instead concentrated on the shapes and structures of objects. Similar to his oil paintings from the same period, Morandi embarked on an in-depth study of object forms. To better understand the shape of objects, he even conducted exercises related to positive and negative space, deepening his understanding of still life forms and compositional structure.



This approach of observing positive and negative space gradually became a habit for Morandi, a characteristic that can be clearly seen in his later works. He began to pay more attention to composition, expressing his observations and feelings through the refined depiction of forms and the optimization of the arrangement. This transformation not only elevated Morandi's printmaking to new heights but also influenced his painting creations, becoming an important part of his unique artistic language.

The Organic Unity Between Sketch Thinking and Painting Creation

Thinking

Sketch drawing is a vital component of painting and should not be isolated from other forms of material creation. Morandi's art, whether in oil painting or printmaking, exhibits a unique style and characteristic. Even without vibrant colors, viewers can easily recognize his work. This is because Morandi organically unified sketch thinking and creative thinking in his artistic process. Through his creative mindset, he applied his thoughts to the handling of the forms, lines, and tonal values of objects. As a result, each piece of his work reflects a distinctive quality and character.

Sketch thinking emphasizes the concept of "thinking" because it is fundamental to artistic creation, relying on the artist's perspective and way of viewing the world. Only then can they find an effective way to express the subject matter they wish to convey. Sketch thinking, as the core of experimental sketch drawing, is a key approach to exploring and forming effective modes of expression.

The ability to reproduce objects through complete observational sketch drawing is only a small part of the foundational skills of art creation, and this part has become less important today. Artists generally believe that the true foundational skill is the formation and establishment of artistic thinking. Sketch drawing should be seen as a way of thinking, a process that is intrinsically connected with the creator. It is a process of experimentation that involves observation, thought, selection, experimentation, research, and presentation, driven by an inner need. By developing sketch thinking, one can focus on cultivating self-awareness and self-construction, and through targeted experimentation and skill-building, come closer to expressing inner thoughts that are personally meaningful. This is what leads to spiritual elevation and is the most valuable pursuit for the artist.

In Morandi's artistic creation, whether in the black-and-white works using etching techniques or in his oil paintings with subtle and richly varied colors, his works are far more than simple objective reproductions. They are deeply intertwined with his inner emotions and perceptions, as well as his exploration and expression of artistic form.

In conclusion, contemporary creators should move beyond the perception that sketch drawing is separate from other forms of artistic creation. They must develop a deeper understanding of the essence and principles of artistic creation and fully utilize creative thinking to produce works that embody a deeper artistic spirit.