

# Visual Order and the Creation of Artistic Ambience in Realistic Composition of Ink-and-Wash Figure Painting

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## ABSTRACT

Since the introduction of realistic modeling concepts into ink-wash figure painting, the composition of these works has undergone a profound restructuring of visual order. From a formal analysis perspective, this paper explores how realistic composition seeks a balance between traditional Chinese compositional principles and Western concepts of realistic space, and further analyzes how this restructuring of visual order influences the generation and transformation of the work's artistic atmosphere. The study argues that the realistic composition in contemporary ink-wash figure painting has formed a unique logic of "form-structure-meaning"-establishing a rational visual order through focal perspective, proportional relationships, and spatial layers, while simultaneously creating a poetic, atmospheric space through traditional techniques such as negative space, the interplay of solid and void, and variations in density. This fusion of dual structures enables realistic figure painting to transcend the limitations of objective representation, achieving an aesthetic realm where the "visible" and the "sensible" are unified.

## KEYWORDS

Ink-wash Figure Painting; Realistic Composition; Visual Order; Creation of Artistic Atmosphere; Formal Analysis.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Composition, referred to as "composition" or "layout" in traditional Chinese painting theory, constitutes the organizing principle of the formal language of painting. In his "Six Principles," Xie He of the Southern Qi dynasty proposed "composition and positioning," placing it alongside "vitality and rhythm" and "bone structure and brushwork" as core principles of painting [1]. This concept emphasizes that composition is not merely a formal arrangement but is also crucial to the generation of the painting's spiritual vitality and rhythm.

The composition of traditional ink-wash figure painting follows a unique visual logic: unconstrained by focal perspective, it pursues a fluid viewpoint that is "open to exploration and habitation"; it does not seek a realistic reproduction of physical space, but rather creates an idealized space through techniques such as the interplay of solid and void, density and sparseness, and openness and closure. However, since the 20th century, with the introduction of realist modeling concepts, figure painting composition has faced new challenges-how to adapt to the spatial order requirements of realist modeling while preserving the charm of traditional compositional principles? How can figures rendered through linear perspective be harmonized with the traditional pictorial structure of scattered-point perspective? These questions have become central to the formal exploration of contemporary ink figure painting. This paper aims to systematically analyze the formal characteristics and aesthetic orientations of realistic composition in contemporary ink figure painting from the dual dimensions of

visual order and the creation of artistic conception, revealing its unique logic of “form, structure, and connotation.”

## **2. COMPOSITIONAL CONCEPTS AND SPATIAL AWARENESS IN TRADITIONAL INK FIGURE PAINTING**

### **2.1. Aesthetic Principles of Traditional Composition**

The composition of traditional Chinese figure painting follows a unique set of aesthetic principles. First is the concept of “capturing momentum” (取势)-the composition as a whole must possess a dynamic rhythm of opening and closing, rising and falling, and the arrangement of figures must conform to the flow of the painting’s vital energy. In his *\*Random Notes from the Painting Zen Studio\**, the Ming dynasty artist Dong Qichang emphasized: “When the ancients executed large-scale scrolls, they used only three or four parts of the space, thereby achieving a sense of composition” [2]. This pursuit of “momentum” elevates traditional composition beyond the mechanical arrangement of objects, transforming it into a visual vessel for the flow of vitality and rhythm. Second is the dialectical treatment of “density and sparseness, solid and void.” In *\*Hua Quan\**, Da Chongguang of the Qing Dynasty noted: “When placement is discordant, the painted areas often become superfluous; when solid and void give rise to one another, the unpainted areas all become exquisite realms” [3]. This principle emphasizes that the composition must feature contrasts between density and sparseness, as well as a mutual resonance between the depicted and the implied. Through the technique of “treating white space as black,” even the blank areas become an organic component of the artistic atmosphere. In figure painting, this approach not only avoids a sense of crowding but also provides the figures with breathing space. Third is the hierarchical order of “distinct primary and secondary elements.” Traditional figure painting adheres to the principles of “the main figure large, the secondary figures small” and “the main figure detailed, the secondary figures sketchy.” By varying the size, level of detail, and positioning of figures, the main subject is highlighted, creating a clear visual hierarchy. This approach reflects both Confucian ethical concepts and formal compositional requirements-establishing a clear visual center within the composition.

### **2.2. Fluid Viewpoint and Imaginative Space**

The most fundamental characteristic of spatial awareness in traditional ink-wash figure painting is the “fluid viewpoint.” Unlike the fixed-focal-point perspective of Western painting, traditional Chinese painting employs “diffuse perspective” or “multi-point perspective,” allowing the viewpoint to move freely within the composition. This spatial concept stems from Chinese philosophy’s unique understanding of the relationship between space and time-space is not a static container, but rather a “spatio-temporal continuum” unified with the flow of time. In figure painting, the use of a fluid viewpoint grants the composition immense freedom. Artists can freely combine figures and scenes from different times and spaces according to their expressive needs. Gu Hanzhong’s *\*The Night Banquet of Han Xizai\** juxtaposes scenes from different time periods within a single composition, using the clever division of a screen to create a continuous narrative of time [4]. This composition breaks the constraints of physical space and time, transforming the painting into an idealized psychological space. Another characteristic of the fluid viewpoint is the observational approach of “viewing the small through the large.” In his *\*Dream Brook Essays\**, the Song Dynasty scholar Shen Kuo criticized Li Cheng’s perspective technique for “lifting the corners of the roof,” advocating instead for “viewing the small through the large, just as one views a rockery” [5]. This approach emphasizes that the painter must transcend the limitations of a fixed viewpoint, grasping the subject from a holistic and comprehensive perspective to endow the composition with a transcendent, omniscient viewpoint.

## **2.3. Patterns of the Relationship between Figures and Background**

In traditional figure painting, the relationship between figures and the background follows a unique formal logic. In early figure paintings, the background was often simplified or omitted, with figures presented through the technique of “leaving space for the viewer to imagine”—as the saying goes, “figures larger than mountains, water unable to overflow”—where the figure, as the absolute subject, occupies the central position of the composition. This treatment detaches the figure from its specific environment, transforming it into a symbol of some concept or spirit. As landscape painting matured, the relationship between figures and the background became more nuanced. During the Tang and Song dynasties, figure painting began to place figures within specific landscape settings, giving rise to the compositional model of the “narrative figure painting.” However, this environment remained idealized—the forms of mountains, rocks, and trees conformed to the overall rhythm of the composition rather than strict natural spatial relationships. The relationship between the figure and the background was one of “homological structure”: the figure’s movement resonated with the contours of the landscape, together forming a cohesive whole characterized by the flow of vital energy [6]. At the core of this relationship lies the cosmological view of “the unity of heaven and humanity”—figures are not subjects in opposition to nature, but rather an integral part of it. Within the composition, figures, landscapes, trees, and buildings are all homogeneous entities, collectively participating in the circulation of the universe’s vital energy.

## **3. THE RECONSTRUCTION OF VISUAL ORDER THROUGH REALISTIC FORM**

### **3.1. The Introduction of One-Point Perspective and Spatial Unity**

In the early 20th century, with the introduction of Western realist painting, one-point perspective began to influence the composition of ink-wash figure painting. In his *\*On the Reform of Chinese Painting\**, Xu Beihong explicitly stated: “We should preserve the excellent aspects of ancient methods, revive those on the verge of extinction, reform the inferior ones, supplement the inadequate ones, and integrate the adoptable elements of Western painting” [7]. Perspective was regarded as a key element among the “adoptable” techniques, serving to address the “shortcomings” in the spatial representation of traditional painting.

The introduction of linear perspective endowed the pictorial space with unprecedented unity. The proportional relationships among figures, their sizes relative to distance, and the overlapping of foreground and background all adhered to scientific visual logic, forming a continuous, rational spatial order. Jiang Zhaohua’s *\*The Displaced People\** is a landmark work in this regard—the figures in the composition are arranged in a front-to-back relationship according to the principles of focal perspective, with distant figures gradually diminishing in size, creating a profound sense of spatial depth [8]. This treatment ensures that the figures no longer appear as flat, two-dimensional arrangements but exist as authentic and credible spatial entities. However, the application of focal perspective also brought new challenges. The traditional “viewing the small through the large” approach was replaced by a fixed viewpoint, and painters lost the freedom to arrange space and time as they wished. How to maintain spatial unity without sacrificing the expressive power of traditional composition became a challenge that realistic figure painting had to resolve.

### **3.2. The Precision of Proportional Relationships and Visual Hierarchy**

The demand for precise proportional relationships in realistic modeling profoundly altered the visual hierarchy found in traditional composition. In traditional figure painting, the size of a figure primarily depended on the importance of their social status—the principle of “the master large, the servant small” served as a formalized symbol of hierarchy. In realistic modeling, however, the size of a figure

depends first and foremost on its spatial proximity, and social hierarchy must be expressed through other means.

This shift has endowed the composition with a more authentic visual experience, but it has also led to a weakening of expressive power. The explicit hierarchical cues of traditional composition have vanished; the composition has become more “objective,” yet it has lost some of its symbolic resonance. Contemporary painters have responded to this change in various ways: some highlight the main figure through positioning—placing it at the visual center of the composition; some through variations in the detail of brushwork—rendering the main figure with precision while keeping secondary figures relatively simple; and some through the intensification of movement and expression—making the main figure more visually compelling [9].

Fang Zengxian’s *\*The Storyteller\** is a particularly successful example in this regard. In the composition, the storyteller is positioned slightly to the left of center, surrounded by a crowd of listeners. Although, according to perspective, the figures in the front row appear to be roughly the same size as the storyteller, the artist successfully establishes him as the visual focal point through his raised right arm, his passionate posture, and the concentrated gazes of the surrounding figures [10]. This approach not only adheres to the spatial logic of realism but also preserves the traditional hierarchy of primary and secondary elements.

### **3.3. Enrichment of Spatial Layers and Creation of Depth**

Another significant contribution of realistic modeling is the substantial enrichment of the painting’s spatial layers. In traditional figure painting, spatial layers were primarily achieved through foregrounds and backgrounds as well as contrasts in density, resulting in relatively limited depth. Realistic modeling, however, introduces techniques such as “near large, far small,” variations in solidity and transparency, and atmospheric perspective, enabling the composition to achieve rich spatial layers ranging from the immediate foreground to the distant background. This creation of spatial depth is primarily achieved through the following methods: first, depicting distance through variations in the size of figures—figures in the foreground are large and solid, while those in the background are small and translucent; second, establishing a front-to-back order through occlusion relationships—figures in the foreground partially obscure those in the middle ground, and figures in the middle ground partially obscure those in the background; third, by using the varying intensity and texture of ink to suggest spatial distance—with darker ink in the foreground and lighter ink in the background; and fourth, by using perspective cues on the ground to guide the viewer’s gaze into the depth of the composition [11].

Zhou Sicong’s *\*The People and the Premier\** serves as a model for the treatment of spatial layers. The composition centers on Premier Zhou Enlai, surrounded by people from all walks of life. The figures in the foreground are rendered in meticulous detail with dense ink; figures in the middle ground are gradually simplified, with ink tones becoming lighter; figures in the background are reduced almost to outlines, blending seamlessly with the background. This layered receding treatment not only creates a sense of realistic spatial depth but also avoids the stiffness that results from the mechanical application of the “near large, far small” principle [12].

## **4. CHARACTERISTICS OF VISUAL ORDER IN REALISTIC COMPOSITION**

### **4.1. Methods of Constructing the Visual Center**

In realistic composition, the construction of the visual center is a core challenge facing the artist. In traditional composition, the visual center is primarily achieved through techniques such as central positioning, enlarging the main figure, and leaving blank space around it. In realistic composition,

however, due to the constraints of focal perspective, these techniques must be harmonized with spatial logic. Contemporary ink figure painting has developed various methods for constructing the visual center. The first is the “central focal point” approach—placing the main figure near the center of the composition, with the movements and gazes of surrounding figures directed toward the center, creating a strong centripetal structure. Lu Chen’s *\*The Locomotive Engineer\** employs this structure: the veteran engineer occupies the center of the composition, with the gazes and movements of the surrounding workers directed toward him, giving the painting a clear visual focal point [13]. The second is the “contrast-highlighting approach”—using contrasts in light and shadow, solid and void, and density to highlight the main figure. In realistic depictions, contrast can be created by rendering the main figure in meticulous detail while simplifying the background, causing the main figure to stand out from the surroundings. Liu Guohui’s *\*Qiu Jin\** employs this technique: Qiu Jin’s facial features and the drapery of her clothing are rendered with fine detail, while the background is merely lightly rendered with pale ink, making the figure exceptionally prominent [14]. The third approach is the “dynamic-oriented style”—guiding the viewer’s gaze through the figures’ movements and postures. The movements of the main figure are typically the most expansive and expressive, while those of secondary figures are relatively restrained, naturally drawing the viewer’s attention to the main figure’s dynamics. This treatment aligns with the principles of visual psychology while maintaining the vitality of the composition.

#### **4.2. Rhythm of Density and Spatial Division**

Although realistic modeling requires spatial depth, outstanding painters are never satisfied with merely creating depth; instead, while maintaining spatial logic, they meticulously handle the composition’s spatial division and the rhythm of density. This is precisely what distinguishes Chinese painting from Western realistic painting—the composition is both a spatial depth and a planar composition.

The treatment of the rhythm of density is first reflected in the distribution of figures. Based on the needs of the composition, the artist organizes figures into several groups of varying density, creating “breathing spaces” of alternating solid and void between these groups. These “breathing spaces” serve both as spatial passages and visual pauses, ensuring the composition remains rich in content without appearing cluttered. Wu Shanming’s figure paintings demonstrate exceptional mastery in this regard; he often leaves several blank spaces within dense groups of figures, allowing the composition to breathe freely rather than feel stifled [15]. Second, it is reflected in the contrast between dense and sparse lines and ink washes. The lines of the main figures are dense and rich in detail, while those of secondary figures and the background are sparse and simplified. This contrast between density and sparseness not only reinforces the hierarchy between primary and secondary elements but also creates a rich visual rhythm. Dense areas are as “tight as a drum,” while sparse areas are as “open as a field,” generating tension through this contrast. Thirdly, this is reflected in the division of planes. Through careful arrangement of the figures, the artist creates several planes of varying sizes and shapes; the interplay and combination of these planes constitute the pictorial structure. This deliberate construction of the pictorial structure adds a dimension of formal composition to realistic figure painting, beyond the realm of spatial depth [16].

#### **4.3. The Treatment of Real and Virtual Elements and Visual Guidance**

The treatment of real and virtual elements is one of the core compositional techniques in Chinese painting, and it has undergone new developments in realistic figure painting. While traditional treatment of real and virtual elements primarily serves to create artistic atmosphere, in realistic figure painting, it also undertakes the tasks of spatial representation and visual guidance. In terms of spatial representation, the interplay of the real and the unreal is used to reinforce the relationship between foreground and background—the near is real, the far is unreal; the main figure is real, the secondary figures are unreal; the clear is real, the blurred is unreal. This treatment aligns with the spatial logic

of focal perspective and can reinforce it. The difference lies in the fact that in Chinese painting, the real and the unreal are not merely visual but also involve brushwork and ink—the “unreal” is not simply blurred but a subtle treatment imbued with the aesthetic quality of brushwork and ink [17]. In terms of visual guidance, the interplay of solid and void is used to direct the viewer’s gaze. Through contrasts between solid and void, the artist guides the viewer to begin at the solid elements and gradually extend toward the void; or, conversely, to be drawn by the void and focus on the solid. This guidance transforms the viewer’s experience of the painting into a rhythmic psychological process rather than a simple scan. Yuan Wu’s historical figure paintings demonstrate unique ingenuity in the handling of solid and void. In his series *\*Anti-Japanese United Army Paintings\**, he often renders foreground figures with extreme realism, employing thick lines and intense ink; midground figures gradually fade into the background, with broken lines and light ink; while the background is almost entirely dissolved, leaving only faint traces of ink. This stark contrast between the real and the illusory not only creates a profound sense of space but also imbues the composition with a dreamlike quality reminiscent of historical memory [18].

## **5. THE TRANSFORMATION AND GENERATION OF YIJING IN REALISTIC COMPOSITION**

### **5.1. The Aesthetic Implications of Traditional Theories of Yijing**

Yijing is a core concept in traditional Chinese aesthetics, referring to the emotional resonance and spiritual imagination evoked by artistic imagery. Wang Changling of the Tang Dynasty first proposed the concept of “Yijing” in his work *\*Poetic Principles\**, classifying it into three levels: the realm of objects (wujing), the realm of emotions (qingjing), and the realm of artistic conception (yijing) [19]. Since then, Yijing has gradually become the highest aesthetic realm pursued by both Chinese poetry and painting. In traditional painting, the creation of Yijing primarily relies on the technique of “the interplay of the real and the unreal.” The concrete elements in the composition evoke specific visual sensations, while the abstract elements (empty space, omission, and implication) stimulate the viewer’s imagination and associations. This interplay of the concrete and the abstract allows the composition to transcend finite forms and point toward infinite meaning. As Yun Shouping of the Qing Dynasty observed: “People only know that the painted parts are the painting; they do not realize that the unpainted parts are also the painting” [20]. In traditional figure painting, artistic conception is primarily conveyed through the subject’s expression, posture, and the interplay between the figure and its surroundings. An excellent portrait must not only capture “resemblance in form” but also “convey the spirit,” allowing the viewer to sense the subject’s inner world. At a higher level, figure painting must also convey a transcendent spiritual realm through the subject—whether detachment, compassion, detachment, or grandeur.

### **5.2. The Constraints and Possibilities of Realistic Composition on the Creation of Poetic Ambience**

The introduction of realistic composition has both imposed constraints on the creation of poetic ambience and opened up new possibilities. In terms of constraints, focal perspective and precise modeling render the composition more objective and concrete, posing a challenge to the subtle beauty of traditional poetic ambience, which is characterized by “words that end but meaning that is infinite.” When everything is clearly laid out before the viewer, the scope for imagination is narrowed. However, realistic composition also offers new possibilities for creating artistic conception. First, authentic and believable depictions of figures make emotional expression more direct and powerful. The impact of the starving and freezing refugees in Jiang Zhaohua’s *\*The Displaced People\** stems precisely from their high degree of realism [8]. This sense of realism makes it easier for viewers to empathize, thereby immersing them in the emotional atmosphere created by the painting. Second, a

scientifically organized spatial order enhances the immersive quality of the composition. When viewers believe the depicted space is authentic and credible, they are more likely to “enter” the painting and develop a psychological connection with the figures within. This sense of immersion provides a new psychological foundation for the creation of artistic conception. Third, realistic techniques allow for a more refined depiction of characters’ expressions and movements, elevating the “capturing of the spirit” to unprecedented heights. Through their mastery of anatomy, perspective, and light and shadow, contemporary painters can more accurately capture and express subtle facial expressions, rendering the figures more vivid and lifelike [21].

### **5.3. From “Explorable” to “Tangible”: The Unique Character of Realistic Artistic Ambience**

Traditional landscape painting pursues an artistic ambience of “explorability and habitability”-the painting should evoke a sense of being immersed within it, making the viewer linger and lose track of time. This ambience is a spatial one, emphasizing the harmonious coexistence of humanity and nature. In contrast, the artistic ambience of realistic figure painting exhibits a shift from “explorability” to “tangibility.”

“Tangible” is first and foremost an emotional resonance. Realistic figure painting evokes the viewer’s emotional engagement through authentic, believable human figures and a concrete, palpable atmosphere. In Zhou Sicong’s late-career series *\*Highland Scenes\**, the depictions of Tibetan compatriots do not pursue aesthetic perfection but instead move the heart with their unadorned authenticity [12]. What viewers perceive in these figures is the hardship of life and the resilience of the human spirit-a sensation that is direct, concrete, and intense. “Tangible” also refers to a psychological immersion. The spatial order created by realistic composition makes it easier for viewers to project themselves into the scene depicted. When viewers believe the scene is authentic, they unconsciously imagine themselves there, sharing a moment with the figures in the painting. This psychological immersion makes the creation of artistic conception more personal and immersive. “Tangibility” also serves as a catalyst for reflection. Excellent realistic figure paintings not only move viewers emotionally but also provoke intellectual contemplation. The figures and spatial relationships within the composition often embody the artist’s reflections on life, society, and history. This contemplation is not conveyed through didacticism but is subtly transmitted to the viewer through visual imagery [22].

### **5.4. The Modern Transformation of the Interplay Between the Real and the Void**

In realistic composition, the traditional technique of “the interplay between the real and the void” has undergone a profound modern transformation. The “void” is no longer merely blank space or omission; it has acquired richer forms of expression. One such transformation is “using the real to represent the void”-using highly realistic imagery to evoke transcendent associations. In Li Bo’an’s *\*Leaving Bayankala\**, the very realism of the depictions of Tibetan compatriots becomes a symbol in itself-symbolizing the resilience of life and the power of faith [23]. Here, “the void” is not the blank space on the canvas, but the spiritual significance carried by the images. Another transformation is “the superimposition of the real and the void”-the simultaneous use of realistic and freehand techniques within the same composition to create a multi-layered visual experience. Figures in the foreground may be rendered with high realism, while those in the middle ground are gradually simplified, and figures in the background are rendered entirely in an abstract, symbolic manner. This treatment takes the viewer on a visual journey from the concrete to the abstract, from the tangible to the intangible, yielding a rich aesthetic experience [24]. The third transformation is “depicting the concrete within the void”-filling the spaces traditionally left blank with concrete objects, yet rendering these objects in a way that imbues them with a sense of the void. For example, a background rendered with light ink serves as a concrete spatial environment while simultaneously possessing an

ethereal quality due to its hazy, blurred nature. This approach maintains the richness of the composition while preserving room for imagination.

## **6. ANALYSIS OF COMPOSITION TYPES IN CONTEMPORARY REALISTIC FIGURE PAINTING**

### **6.1. Focus Perspective-Dominated Type**

This type of composition adheres to the principle of focus perspective, seeking spatial unity and visual realism within the painting. Artists strictly arrange figures and scenes according to the principles of “near large, far small” and “near solid, far vague,” endowing the composition with a strong sense of depth and realism. Representative figures of this compositional style include Xu Beihong and his followers. Xu Beihong’s *\*The Foolish Old Man Removes the Mountains\** employs strict focal perspective, with figures arranged according to spatial distance and precise proportional relationships, creating a grand spatial scene [25]. This compositional approach is well-suited for depicting epic, grand narratives and is capable of creating a powerful visual impact. The advantage of focal perspective-dominated compositions lies in their spatial unity and strong sense of realism, but the disadvantage is that they can easily fall into mechanical treatment of distance, losing the unique planar charm of Chinese painting. When contemporary painters use this composition, they often compensate for this shortcoming through the calligraphic quality of brushwork and the expressive power of lines.

### **6.2. Traditional Composition with Modern Elements**

This type of composition seeks to retain the aesthetic charm of traditional composition while moderately incorporating the spatial concepts of realistic modeling. Artists do not strictly adhere to linear perspective but freely adjust the size and distance of figures according to the needs of the composition, while simultaneously suggesting spatial relationships through techniques such as the interplay of solid and void, and the balance of density and openness.

Jiang Zhaohua’s *\*The Displaced People\** is a classic example of this compositional approach. Although the figures in the painting are arranged in varying sizes according to spatial distance, the composition as a whole retains the unfolding style of a traditional handscroll. The viewer’s perspective flows across the canvas, creating a continuous narrative of time [8]. This treatment achieves a realistic sense of space while preserving the viewing experience of a traditional handscroll. Liu Guohui’s historical figure paintings also belong to this category. In his compositions, he often enlarges the main figures and reduces the secondary ones, not strictly adhering to the perspective rule of “near large, far small.” Yet, through the dynamic interplay of the figures and the variations in ink density, he still creates credible spatial relationships [14]. The advantage of this composition lies in its ability to maintain the expressive power of traditional composition while achieving a realistic spatial effect.

### **6.3. Constructivist Exploration**

Influenced by Western modern constructivism, this compositional style treats the formal structure of the painting itself as the primary focus. Artists are no longer content with merely reproducing objective space; instead, they actively organize and arrange pictorial elements to create visual structures with a strong sense of form.

Lu Chen’s late works represent this direction of exploration. In pieces such as *\*Qingming\**, he abstracts figures and landscapes into basic geometric forms, using combinations of dots, lines, and planes to create compositions rich in rhythmic sensation [26]. Although this compositional approach also draws on realistic modeling, it places greater emphasis on the formal autonomy of the composition, making realistic elements serve the needs of the overall composition.

Zhou Jingxin's "Water Margin Figures" series also reflects a constructivist tendency. He exaggerates and distorts the figures' forms, using dense lines and blocks of color to create a strong visual rhythm; the spatial relationships between figures are no longer physical but formal [27]. This exploration expands the compositional language of realistic figure painting and offers new possibilities for the creation of artistic atmosphere.

#### **6.4. Experimental Imagery Space**

This type of composition is dedicated to exploring a "third space" that differs from both traditional scattered-point perspective and Western focal perspective. Artists attempt to create a psychological and emotional space, allowing the pictorial space to correspond directly with the viewer's inner feelings. Tian Liming's works represent this direction. Through his "integrated line and wash" technique, he allows figures and backgrounds to interpenetrate, creating a hazy, dreamlike spatial effect [28]. This space is not a reproduction of physical space, but rather a presentation of emotional space-the figures seem to inhabit a poetic atmosphere where reality and dreams merge into one. Chen Mengxin's meticulous figure paintings also explore the possibilities of this imaginative space. By juxtaposing scenes from different times and spaces within a single composition, and through dense lines and ornamental colors, he creates a visual world that is both real and illusory [29]. This space defies physical logic yet conforms to psychological logic-the painting becomes a direct externalization of the inner world.

### **7. CONCLUSION**

The introduction of realistic modeling has profoundly restructured the visual order of ink-wash figure painting. The establishment of focal perspective, the refinement of proportional relationships, and the enrichment of spatial layers have endowed the composition with unprecedented spatial unity and visual realism. This restructuring of visual order is both a borrowing from Western realistic painting and an intrinsic necessity for the development of Chinese painting itself. Realistic composition has not dissolved the concept of "yijing" (artistic conception), but rather facilitated its modern transformation. The shift from "experientable" to "sensible" has transformed "yijing" from a traditional spatial experience into an emotional one. Through authentic and believable figures and a tangible spatial atmosphere, realistic figure painting evokes emotional resonance and psychological immersion in the viewer, forming a new "realistic yijing." The composition of contemporary realistic figure painting exhibits a developmental pattern characterized by the coexistence of diverse approaches. Various compositional types-including those dominated by focal perspective, those integrating traditional compositional principles, those exploring Constructivism, and those experimenting with symbolic space-develop in parallel, influencing one another and collectively enriching the formal language of ink figure painting. The future development of realistic composition requires seeking a more organic fusion between visual order and the creation of artistic conception. We must avoid the formalist tendency of sacrificing artistic conception for the sake of realism, while also guarding against the naturalist tendency of neglecting form in pursuit of artistic conception. Truly outstanding works should represent a perfect unity of visual order and artistic conception-evoking an emotional resonance through rational formal arrangement. From a broader perspective, the exploration of realistic composition in ink-wash figure painting is, in fact, a microcosm of Chinese painting's quest for self-renewal within a modern context. It seeks a third path between the Western tradition of realism and the Chinese tradition of imagery, preserving national characteristics while absorbing foreign influences, thereby contributing unique Chinese wisdom to the development of world figure painting. This exploration continues, and its future form warrants our ongoing attention and in-depth study.

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