



A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF BAROQUE, ROCOCO, AND CHINESE LANDSCAPE PAINTING: DEFINITIONS, HISTORICAL CONTEXTS, AND AESTHETIC CHARACTERISTICS

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Abstract

The objectives of this study: 1) To conduct an in-depth analysis of Baroque, Rococo, and Chinese landscape painting in terms of their definitions, historical contexts, aesthetic concepts, and technical characteristics. 2) To synthesize Baroque and Rococo elements into the creative process of contemporary Chinese landscape painting. 3) To investigate the reception and aesthetic evaluation of integrated works among art professionals and exhibition audiences. The study employed qualitative research methods, including literature review, comparative stylistic analysis, and semi-structured interviews with artists, educators, and curators. **Findings indicate that** the dramatic chiaroscuro, dynamic compositions, and emotional intensity of Baroque art, combined with the delicate colors, curved decorative lines, and intimate subjects of Rococo, have provided valuable resources for innovation in Chinese landscape painting. When integrated with traditional Chinese brushwork and philosophical concepts, these elements foster a hybrid visual language that resonates with both Chinese cultural heritage



and global art audiences. This research contributes to cross-cultural art studies by offering theoretical and practical insights into aesthetic knowledge management, enhancing the creative potential of Chinese landscape painting in the 21st century.

Keywords: European Baroque Paintings; Rococo Paintings; Chinese landscape painting; The creation of contemporary

Introduction

The topic “Analysis of European Baroque and Rococo Paintings Towards the Creation of Contemporary Chinese Landscape Paintings” emerges from the intensified global artistic exchanges and the growing cultural interdependence between the East and the West in the modern and contemporary periods. Landscape painting, as a major form of artistic expression, occupies an important place in both European and Chinese art histories, albeit with distinct philosophical foundations, aesthetic goals, and technical traditions. In Europe, the 17th and 18th centuries witnessed the flourishing of two influential artistic styles—Baroque and Rococo. Baroque painting was known for its grandeur, dramatic contrasts of light and shadow (*chiaroscuro*), dynamic composition, and powerful narrative expression, qualities often employed to serve religious and political agendas (Bukdahl, 2017). Rococo painting, emerging as a reaction to Baroque’s seriousness, emphasized elegance, decorative finesse, pastel tones, and intimate subject matter, often depicting aristocratic leisure and romanticized scenes (Magnusson, 2017; McKay, 1994). These stylistic movements contributed significantly to the evolution of Western visual culture and shaped the global perception of European art.

Meanwhile, Chinese landscape painting, deeply rooted in Confucian, Daoist, and Buddhist philosophies, has prioritized spiritual resonance and the harmonious relationship between humanity and nature. Rather than focusing on strict realism, it seeks to evoke an artistic conception that integrates the physical and the metaphysical (Turner, 2009; Cao & Kong, 2014). Its compositional principles, brush-and-ink techniques, and use of void space embody a distinct aesthetic logic that contrasts sharply with European approaches to space, light, and form. From the late 19th century onward, as China opened its doors to Western influences, a significant number of Chinese artists traveled to Europe to study academic painting, oil techniques, and modernist styles (Xing et al., 2023;



Hao, 2018). This led to the gradual incorporation of Western elements—such as linear perspective, volumetric modeling, and oil-based color layering—into Chinese landscape painting. Artists like Xu Beihong, Lin Fengmian, and Wu Guanzhong pioneered methods of integrating Western visual languages into traditional Chinese formats, creating hybrid styles that reflected both national heritage and global modernity (Li & Mahsan, n.d.; Baomar & Sanad, 2021).

In the 21st century, this intercultural artistic dialogue has deepened under the forces of globalization. The challenge for contemporary Chinese landscape painting lies in how to preserve its philosophical essence and unique visual identity while embracing the aesthetic knowledge of European Baroque and Rococo (Yuan, 2024; Zhang, 2018). Such integration is not merely a stylistic choice but also a cultural negotiation, shaping how Chinese art positions itself within the global art system. This study is significant because it addresses a gap in existing scholarship: while comparative aesthetic studies between Chinese and European art exist, few have systematically examined the aesthetic knowledge management of Baroque and Rococo painting and its application in contemporary Chinese landscape painting. Understanding how these styles can be effectively localized, reinterpreted, and innovatively combined will provide theoretical support for the sustainable development of Chinese painting in the global era.

Research Objectives

1. To conduct an in-depth analysis of Baroque, Rococo, and Chinese landscape painting in terms of their definitions, historical contexts, aesthetic concepts, and technical characteristics.
2. To synthesize Baroque and Rococo elements into the creative process of contemporary Chinese landscape painting.
3. To investigate the reception and aesthetic evaluation of integrated works among art professionals and exhibition audiences.

Literature Reviews

This chapter reviews literature and research relevant to the study “Analysis of European Baroque and Rococo Paintings Towards the Creation of Contemporary Chinese Landscape Paintings.” The review covers definitions, concepts, historical developments, aesthetic principles, and related studies on

European Baroque painting, Rococo painting, Chinese landscape painting, and contemporary creative literature, concluding with relevant national and international research. European Baroque Painting: Baroque painting, emerging in Italy in the late 16th century and flourishing in the 17th century, was distinguished by grandeur, emotional intensity, and dynamic composition. It aimed to immerse viewers in the subject through dramatic contrasts of light and shadow (*chiaroscuro*), powerful narrative scenes, and an integration of painting with architecture and sculpture (Bukdahl, 2017). While initially associated with the Catholic Counter-Reformation, Baroque painting also extended to secular themes, including mythology, portraiture, and still life. The style's name possibly derives from the Portuguese word *barroco* (irregular pearl) and was once used to describe the overly ornate or bizarre (Hatzfeld, 1948).

Baroque aesthetics contrasted with the Renaissance's emphasis on balance, rationality, and restraint. Wölfflin's principles distinguishing Baroque from Renaissance art—such as painterly versus linear form, depth versus plane, unity versus multiplicity, openness versus closure, and relative clarity versus absolute clarity—highlight the movement's preference for dynamism, openness, and unity of effect, often creating a sense of infinite space and dissolving boundaries between the arts (Gaudieri, 2020). Baroque painting evolved through three phases (Dahiya, 2022): Early Baroque (1580s–1620s), emphasizing naturalism and emotional engagement, seen in the works of Annibale Carracci and Caravaggio; High Baroque (1620s–1670s), reaching theatrical and ornamental heights, exemplified by Gian Lorenzo Bernini and Peter Paul Rubens; and Late Baroque (1670s–1720s), shifting towards refinement and classical restraint, paving the way for Rococo. Notable artists include Peter Paul Rubens, whose *The Consequences of War* (1637–1638) serves as a visual allegory of the Thirty Years' War (Chmelinová, 2014 (BIB); Honig & Heinen, 2020 (BIB), and Claude Lorrain, who pioneered idealized landscape painting with works like *Seaport with the Embarkment of the Queen of Sheba* (1648) (Anderson, 2020).

Rococo Painting: Rococo painting developed in early 18th-century France as a decorative, intimate alternative to the grandeur of Baroque. It originated in interior decoration and expanded into painting, sculpture, and the decorative arts (McKay, 1994). Key traits include pastel and light tonal color palettes, asymmetrical flowing compositions, the use of curves and ornate motifs such as shells and foliage, and themes of leisure, love, and playful mythological scenes

(Magnusson, 2017; Cernica, 2009). Notable artists include François Boucher, whose *Apollo Revealing His Divinity to Issé* reflects Rococo's refined mythological narrative (Hryszko, 2023; Hoff, 1966), and Jean-Honoré Fragonard, whose *The Swing* epitomizes playful sensuality (Stein, 2003). Antoine Watteau's *Pilgrimage to Cythera* introduced the *fête galante* genre, blending courtship scenes with pastoral elegance (Lima, 2015). Chinese Landscape Painting: Chinese landscape painting, or *shan shui hua*, centers on expressing mood and philosophical ideas rather than realistic depiction. It integrates poetic imagination with the representation of mountains, water, and sky, emphasizing harmony between humanity and nature (Cao & Kong, 2014; Turner, 2009). The genre evolved from symbolic landscapes in the Six Dynasties to the monumental compositions of the Song Dynasty, and later to the literati traditions of the Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties (Loehr, 1973). Core features include the "three distances" (*san yuan*): high, deep, and level perspectives; expressive brushwork and ink tones; and the use of voids to imply infinite space (Law, 2011; Liu, 2021).

Contemporary Creative Literature: Contemporary Chinese artists often experiment with combining traditional brush-and-ink methods with Western oil painting, photography, or digital media, leading to hybrid forms of landscape art (Jing, 2023; Jie et al., 2024). Oil painting provides opportunities for rich color layering, tonal depth, and textural diversity, making it an effective medium for integrating Baroque and Rococo characteristics—such as atmospheric perspective and decorative detailing—into Chinese landscapes (Li & Mahsan, n.d.; Baomar & Sanad, 2021). **Related Research:** Chinese scholars have studied the adaptation of Western perspective and *chiaroscuro* into ink painting pedagogy, noting both the creative potential and the risk of stylistic homogenization (Hao, 2018; Xing et al., 2023). International studies examine cross-cultural hybridization in art as a postmodern strategy for negotiating identity and heritage in a globalized world (Yuan, 2024; Zhang, 2018).

Research Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research design to analyze the aesthetic characteristics of European Baroque and Rococo paintings and explore their integration into the creation of contemporary Chinese landscape paintings. The

methodology was designed to address the research objectives and hypotheses through systematic data collection, analysis, and interpretation.

Research Design: The research adopted a descriptive and analytical approach, combining literature review, visual analysis, and qualitative interviews. This design allowed for in-depth exploration of the formal, compositional, and conceptual elements of Baroque and Rococo paintings. The study emphasized the interpretation of aesthetic elements rather than quantitative measurement, aligning with its focus on art creation and theory (Baomar & Sanad, 2021; Jing, 2023) **Population and Sampling:** The population comprised five key groups relevant to the research focus: 1) Contemporary Chinese artists incorporating Western techniques into landscape painting. 2) Art educators specializing in Chinese painting, Western painting, or art theory. 3) University and art school students engaged in cross-cultural art practices. 4) Curators and exhibition planners involved in presenting hybrid artworks. 5) Art audiences, including both professional critics and general visitors. A purposive sampling strategy was applied to select participants for interviews, ensuring that the sample represented diverse perspectives from each group. The inclusion criteria required that participants possess direct experience or expertise in either European art history, Chinese landscape painting, or the integration of the two traditions (Li & Mahsan, n.d.; Xing et al., 2023).

Research Instruments: Three main research instruments were employed. First, a literature review was conducted to collect secondary data from scholarly books, journal articles, exhibition catalogues, and museum archives (Cao & Kong, 2014; Turner, 2009). Second, a visual analysis framework was developed to examine formal and stylistic characteristics, such as composition, light and shadow, color palette, and decorative elements (Hryszko, 2023; Honig & Heinen, 202). Third, a semi-structured interview guide was prepared to obtain insights from artists, educators, and curators regarding the practical challenges and benefits of integrating Baroque and Rococo aesthetics into Chinese landscape painting (Bukdahl, 2017; Magnusson, 2017).

Data Collection Procedures: The research proceeded in three stages. The first stage involved gathering and reviewing relevant literature to establish the theoretical foundation of the study (Dahiya, 2022; McKay, 1994). The second stage comprised the selection and detailed analysis of representative artworks from both European and Chinese traditions. The European selection included

works by Peter Paul Rubens, Claude Lorrain, François Boucher, Jean-Honoré Fragonard, and Antoine Watteau (Chmelinová, 2014; Anderson, 2020). The Chinese selection included both traditional masters and contemporary artists engaging in stylistic integration (Law, 2011; Jie et al., 2024). The third stage involved conducting in-depth interviews with selected participants, focusing on their perspectives on aesthetic synthesis, creative process, and audience reception (Hao, 2018; Yuan, 2024).

Data Analysis: Data were analyzed using thematic analysis for textual and interview materials, and formal analysis for visual data. Thematic analysis involved identifying recurring concepts, such as compositional strategies, philosophical underpinnings, and audience interpretations (Zhou & Ma, 2025; Zhang, 2018). Visual analysis entailed comparing compositional arrangements, brush techniques, and color treatments in Baroque, Rococo, and Chinese works (Hryszko, 2023; Anderson, 2020). These findings were then synthesized to address the research objectives and hypotheses. **Validity and Reliability**

To ensure validity, the research instruments and analytical frameworks were reviewed by academic experts in art history, Chinese painting, and cross-cultural aesthetics. Triangulation was achieved by comparing findings from literature review, visual analysis, and interviews. Reliability was reinforced through consistent application of the visual analysis criteria across all selected artworks and by maintaining transparency in the coding of interview transcripts.

Results

This chapter presents the findings of the study, structured according to the research objectives and hypotheses. The discussion integrates insights from literature, visual analysis, and expert interviews, focusing on the influence of Baroque and Rococo paintings on the creation of contemporary Chinese landscape paintings. In place of statistical tables, the analysis employs comparative case studies of representative artworks.

Findings Related to Research Objective 1: Analysis of Baroque, Rococo, and Chinese Landscape Painting

The comparative analysis revealed that Baroque painting contributes a sense of drama, spatial depth, and emotional tension to visual composition. Key features include the use of chiaroscuro to create strong light-dark contrasts, dynamic and asymmetrical arrangements, and integration of narrative into landscape settings (Bukdahl, 2017; Dahiya, 2022). In contrast, Rococo painting offers a softer visual language, with pastel color harmonies, ornamental linework, and themes emphasizing leisure, intimacy, and decorative beauty (Magnusson, 2017; McKay, 1994). Case Comparison: Claude Lorrain's *Seaport with the Embarkment of the Queen of Sheba* (1648) demonstrates the Baroque approach to idealized landscapes, combining classical architecture with luminous atmospherics (Anderson, 2020). In a comparable Chinese context, dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains by Huang Gongwang achieves depth and monumentality through ink modulation rather than tonal color gradients (Law, 2011).



Figure 1: Claude Lorrain, *Seaport with the Embarkment of the Queen of Sheba*, 1648, Oil on canvas, 148.5 x 194 cm, London, England.

Source: Anderson, H.R. (2020). *Claude Lorrain's Great Escape: An Exploration into the Human Connection with Landscape Painting* (Doctoral dissertation).



Figure 2: Huang Gongwang, dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains
Source: <https://www.google.com>.

Jean-Honoré Fragonard's *The Swing* (1767) represents Rococo's focus on movement, elegance, and playful sensuality (Stein, 2003). A parallel in Chinese art might be found in certain late Ming-garden scenes, yet the Chinese works are more restrained in emotional expression and avoid overt eroticism (Loehr, 1973).



Figure 3: Jean-Honoré Fragonard, Happy Hazards of the Swing, 1767, oil paint, 2' 8" x 2' 1," Wallace Collection in London.

Source: Brashear, C. L. (2015). The Representation of Games in 18th-Century Rococo Painting: Differences in the Discourse Between Children and Adults.

Findings Related to Research Objective 2: Synthesis of Baroque and Rococo Elements in Contemporary Chinese Landscape Painting

Interviews with contemporary Chinese artists revealed that integrating Baroque's chiaroscuro and Rococo's ornamental qualities can enhance visual richness and emotional appeal without undermining traditional Chinese compositional principles. For instance, oil-painted landscapes incorporating Chinese ink-inspired brush textures allow for a fusion of Eastern and Western spatial treatments.

Several artists noted that adopting Baroque's dramatic light sources can increase the "narrative power" of a Chinese landscape, while Rococo's pastel color palette can soften the overall tone, making it more accessible to modern audiences. However, they cautioned that overuse of decorative elements risks shifting the work's focus away from the philosophical depth central to Chinese aesthetics.

Findings Related to Research Objective 3: Audience Reception

Feedback from curators and exhibition visitors suggested that hybrid works often attract wider audiences, particularly those less familiar with traditional Chinese ink painting. Viewers expressed appreciation for the technical skill and cross-cultural dialogue embodied in such works. Some experts, however, emphasized the need for balance, warning against excessive Westernization that could dilute the distinct cultural identity of Chinese landscape painting.

Discussion of Research Hypotheses

The findings support Hypothesis 1: integrating Baroque and Rococo aesthetics into Chinese landscape painting significantly enhances visual expressiveness. This is achieved through expanded tonal ranges, richer surface textures, and more dynamic spatial organization.

Hypothesis 2 is also supported: hybrid works tend to receive higher audience engagement and positive critical reception. Nevertheless, the degree of acceptance varies based on the cultural background of the audience. Western viewers often value technical hybridity, while Chinese audiences may be more concerned with the preservation of traditional themes and brushwork authenticity.

Theoretical Implications

The study confirms that aesthetic knowledge management can serve as a bridge between cultural heritage and innovation. Baroque and Rococo elements, when selectively integrated, do not necessarily compromise Chinese artistic identity; instead, they can act as catalysts for creative renewal. This finding aligns with cross-cultural art theories suggesting that hybrid forms enrich, rather than replace, traditional expressions (Zhou & Ma, 2025; Yuan, 2024).

Step Number	Research steps	Main Activities	Purpose and expected results
1	Historical Research	Systematically study the historical background, style characteristics and techniques of Baroque, Rococo and Chinese painting	Provide a theoretical basis for cross-cultural aesthetics and techniques for creation
2	Method Summary	Combining three painting traditions, summarizing and proposing a new oil painting creation method	Form an operational integrated creative plan
3	Sketch creation	Draw multiple preliminary sketches based on the fusion method	Visualize different creative ideas as a basis for expert review
4	Expert selection	Invite experts in the field of painting to select the most promising sketches	Screen out projects that can be further developed
5	Expert Interviews	Semi-structured interviews with experts to understand their reasons for choosing sketches	Get feedback on composition, color, theme, and cultural integration
6	Official creation	Complete the creation of contemporary art works according to the final plan	Transforming theoretical findings into exhibitable artworks
7	Exhibition	Exhibit finished works in public art spaces and provide explanatory materials	Showcase research results and promote public participation
8	Audience Survey	Distribute questionnaires at the exhibition site to collect visitor satisfaction and feedback	Assess the artistic value and cross-cultural acceptance of works

Table1: Research steps and instructions.

Discussions

The results of this study reinforce the premise that cross-cultural aesthetic integration is not merely a matter of visual combination but also a process of philosophical negotiation and technical adaptation. The fusion of Baroque's

chiaroscuro and spatial dynamism with Rococo's pastel tonalities and ornamental curves, when thoughtfully embedded into Chinese landscape painting, generates a hybrid visual language that retains the meditative spirit of Eastern art while offering the heightened sensory engagement characteristic of Western traditions.

This research contributes to the discourse on cultural hybridity in visual arts by demonstrating that selective incorporation of foreign elements can function as a catalyst for creative renewal rather than a threat to cultural authenticity. The "Creation-Feedback-Recreation" cycle proposed here provides a structured model for sustaining the balance between tradition and innovation in artistic practice.

This research combines formal analysis methods commonly employed in Western art history with practical documentation of contemporary oil painting creation, supplemented by real-time feedback from exhibition sites. This triangulated research approach not only ensures theoretical rigor in the integration of cross-cultural aesthetics but also guarantees its feasibility in artistic creation.

The findings indicate that such hybrid works have the potential to attract more diverse audiences both domestically and internationally. They are capable of transcending cultural boundaries, stimulating aesthetic interest among different groups, and hold value for display in international art exhibitions, public art installations, as well as commercial spaces such as hotels and restaurants. Furthermore, during the creation and exhibition process, the participation of local framers, artisans, and installation teams has directly generated economic benefits and employment opportunities, thereby fostering a synergistic relationship between artistic innovation and community development.

Conclusions

Through a systematic analysis of the aesthetic characteristics of European Baroque and Rococo paintings, combined with the core techniques and philosophical essence of Chinese landscape painting, this study has achieved results on both theoretical and practical levels. The oil landscapes on paper created in this research incorporate Baroque's dramatic chiaroscuro and spatial depth, Rococo's delicate pastel tones and ornamental curves, while preserving the void composition and poetic expression of Chinese landscape traditions. The resulting visual language merges Eastern philosophical thought with Western visual

dynamism. Findings from on-site exhibition surveys and interviews indicate that such hybrid works appeal to audiences across cultural backgrounds: those interested in Western art are drawn to the visual effects, while viewers familiar with Chinese landscapes discover fresh aesthetic experiences within a familiar cultural framework. The study validates two hypotheses: (1) moderate integration of Baroque and Rococo techniques can significantly enhance the expressive power and visual tension of contemporary Chinese landscape painting; (2) hybrid works tend to receive more positive evaluations and emotional resonance in multicultural contexts, although acceptance levels vary depending on the audience's cultural background. Future research could incorporate quantitative surveys and cross-regional touring exhibitions to assess the dissemination potential and commercial value of this creative model in different cultural markets. Moreover, the creation and exhibition process demonstrates that local art production chains can gain new employment opportunities and economic benefits through participation in such cross-cultural artistic practices, fostering a mutually beneficial relationship between artistic creation and community development. (The following section will present images of oil landscape works on paper and photographs from the exhibition site.)



Figure 4: Zhang Jian, The End of the World series, 2023, 40×19cm

Source: Photographed by the author himself.



Figure 5: Exhibition site

Source: Photographed by the author himself.

New Knowledges

This study proposes a “Creation–Feedback–Recreation” cross-cultural aesthetic cycle model, systematically mapping transferable elements from Baroque and Rococo painting—such as chiaroscuro, compositional depth, and ornamental curves—into the philosophical and technical framework of Chinese landscape painting. Rather than a simple stylistic transplantation, the model emphasizes continuous evaluation of the compatibility between artistic elements and cultural context throughout the creative process.

For the first time, this research integrates formal analysis methods commonly used in Western art history with on-site practical documentation of contemporary oil painting creation. Multiple oil landscape works on paper were produced as experimental samples to test varying degrees of Baroque dramatic lighting and Rococo soft color harmonies. Expert reviews and audience feedback

were then incorporated to iteratively refine the creative strategies. This methodological approach offers a replicable empirical pathway for cross-cultural art studies.

Practical results demonstrate that applying the spatial voids and brush-textured strokes of Chinese landscape painting to oil landscapes on paper—while incorporating Baroque spatial depth and Rococo’s airy tonal palette—can preserve Eastern poetic sensibilities while significantly enhancing visual expressiveness. Exhibition feedback revealed that such hybrid works not only increase audience engagement but also stimulate reflections on the dialogue between Eastern and Western art. Furthermore, displaying these works in public spaces such as restaurants and hotels extends their social influence and creates economic and employment opportunities within local art production chains.

Recommendations

Future research should build upon the current qualitative findings by incorporating large-scale quantitative surveys to obtain more comprehensive and statistically persuasive data on audience feedback. In addition, cross-regional touring exhibitions held in different cultural contexts, both domestically and internationally, could enable comparative analysis of how cultural backgrounds influence audience perception and acceptance. In terms of presentation formats, multi-sensory experience design can be considered—for example, the integrated use of lighting, sound, and spatial arrangement to create an atmosphere that resonates with the theme of the work—thereby enhancing emotional resonance and audience engagement. Such environment- and context-based display strategies can offer audiences a deeper level of immersive experience while expanding the potential of hybrid works in various exhibition spaces. Furthermore, interdisciplinary collaboration remains an important pathway for expanding research and creation; working with experts in architecture, interior design, and public art can enrich display approaches and extend the application of hybrid works into urban and commercial spaces, thus enhancing the social influence and practical value of cross-cultural art.

Suggestions

During the creative process, artists should remain attentive to maintaining cultural balance, ensuring that the incorporation of Western elements does not diminish the philosophical essence and compositional principles of Chinese landscape painting. On this basis, it is recommended to systematically document every stage of the creative process—from conceptual sketches to final exhibition—as such records can serve as valuable case studies for academic research and as instructional material for art education and professional training. Moreover, incorporating community engagement activities during exhibitions, such as art workshops, lectures, or interactive dialogues with audiences, can deepen public understanding of cross-cultural aesthetics and foster a broader appreciation of the arts. Finally, the creation and presentation of hybrid works should emphasize sustainability by adopting environmentally friendly materials and low-carbon production methods, thereby aligning with global trends in sustainable art practice and setting a responsible example for future cultural creation.

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