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A Comparative Study of Early and Late Painting Styles in Zhang Daqian's Lotus Works

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ABSTRACT Zhang Daqian (1899-1983) is an extremely influential painter in the history of modern Chinese painting. Among his works, the lotus paintings hold a special place in Zhang Daqian's artistic career. This paper conducts a comparative study of Zhang Daqian's early and late lotus paintings through quantitative analysis on three levels. Firstly, from the perspective of ink color, a quantitative comparative analysis concludes that the early works are characterized by high brightness, low contrast, and negative skewness. This indicates that the paintings possess a soft, delicate, and bright visual effect, giving a fresh and tranquil feeling. In contrast, the late works are characterized by low brightness, high contrast, and zero skewness, presenting a strong contrast, vivid colors, and visual balance. The color distribution in the late paintings is relatively balanced, forming a stark contrast to the soft style of the early works. Secondly, from the level of visual complexity, it is concluded that the early works have unique texture characteristics, while the late works are more uniform, consistent, and regular in these aspects, with stronger color contrast and dynamics, and more boldness. Finally, by extracting specific elements of "flowers, stems, leaves" for texture strokes and ink color gradation analysis, and applying data quantification-based feature extraction and capturing important data information in MATLAB for data comparison, combined with professional analysis and research on related indicators of the artwork, the comparative results of quantitative analysis of Zhang Daqian's early and late lotus paintings are given, summarizing the quantitative analysis results in descriptive language. The experimental results show that the algorithm has good performance, providing a solid basis for the quantitative analysis and comparative study of Zhang Daqian's lotus paintings from early and late periods, and objectively presenting the style changes from "following the ancient" to "transforming the ancient" in Zhang Daqian's lotus paintings through data.

INDEX TERMS Zhang Daqian; Lotus Works; Ink layers; Visual complexity; Specific elements

I. INTRODUCTION

The tradition of Chinese painting, with its origins in the vibrant era of ancient colorful pottery, has evolved over millennia into a distinct and profound art form. This evolution has been marked by the contributions of legendary painters whose works have become cornerstones of cultural heritage. Among these, Gu Kaizhi of the Eastern Jin Dynasty, celebrated for his "Picture Of Lady Officials"; Wu Daozi of the Tang Dynasty, revered as the "Sage of Painting" for his "Born Of Gautama Buddha"; and Zhou Fang of the Southern Song Dynasty, known for his exquisite depictions of court ladies, stand out. The Yuan Dynasty's Huang Gongwang forever altered the landscape of Chinese painting with "Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains". The Ming and Qing Dynasties saw the rise of artists like Tang Yin, with his

"Contemplating on a Donkey Ride Home", and Zheng Banqiao and Ren Bonian, known for "Bamboo and Rocks" and "Enjoying Coolness under Banana Trees", respectively. In the modern era, Qi Baishi, Zhang Daqian, Li Keran, Xu Beihong, and Li Kuchan have continued this legacy with iconic works such as Qi Baishi's "Ink Shrimp", Li Keran's "The Shepherd Boy", Xu Beihong's "Group of Horses", and Li Kuchan's "Flock of Doves" and "Lotus Flowers".

Among this illustrious group, Zhang Daqian emerges as a pivotal figure in the narrative of modern Chinese art. His body of work is celebrated worldwide for its innovative approach, diverse styles, and vibrant use of color, all of which resonate deeply with cultural traditions[1-7]. Zhang's later works, in particular, are noted for their seamless integration of the essence of traditional Chinese

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