

The Interpretation of Children's Paintings

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Abstract: The pursuit of truth, goodness and beauty by human beings constitutes the history of human civilization. Psychology pays more attention to the research of seeking truth and respecting kindness, but the research on aesthetics is not enough. Research on children's aesthetic psychology can reveal the general laws of children's aesthetic psychology development, so as to guide teachers to carry out art education for children according to the laws and characteristics of children's aesthetic psychology development, thereby improving the quality and effect of art education. This paper mainly analyzes the progress and blank of children's aesthetic psychology by combing the existing research of their aesthetic psychology.

Keywords: Children's Paintings; Aesthetic Imagination; Aesthetic Emotion; Aesthetic Understanding

1. Relevant concepts

Children's paintings generally have two interpretations: the broad sense and the narrow sense (Chang, 1995). In a broad sense, the term 'children's paintings' is used to refer to paintings created by minor children. To a certain extent, this term applies providing the child is using their own creativity leading to the creation of interesting characteristics, and the reaction to the childlike mentality of the works.

Children's paintings' in a narrow sense refers to children's paintings, without any other factors. However, children's simple strokes or copying works created by adults cannot be regarded as purely children's paintings.

Usually, children's paintings are paintings created in childhood. In this study, the term 'children's painting' is defined as the imaginative painting by children of a specific age.

2. Interpretation of children's paintings by adults

2.1 How to read children's paintings

Malchiodi believes that in the study of children's painting, the first step is to take the view of 'do not know'. Although art has similarities in form, content, and style, taking the view of 'do not know' regarding children's paintings will make us respect the children's individual creations and show that children's paintings have many different meanings. The second step is to create opportunities to understand the different characteristics of children's development and change related to painting performance, including cognitive ability, emotional development, interpersonal communication skills, and physical and mental characteristics. The third step is to accept and expect that every child has a different orientation to art. If children like a certain color, image, or composition, they will use them frequently in their normal painting. Researchers cannot influence the understanding of children's artworks because of personal preferences, that is, whether they attract or do not attract you, cause or do not cause you to react strongly, and whether you like or dislike them. In order to better understand the meaning of children's paintings, children's paintings need to be considered in various contexts. Children's paintings not only express emotion but also reflect interpersonal relationships and both physical and mental characteristics, and they are closely related to the age stage of children's painting development (Malchiodi, 2005).

In 'Healing through Painting', Gregg M. Furth, an American psychologist, argues that the central question when looking at a child's painting for the first time is how it conveys a feeling to the viewer. After looking further at the picture, we can ask the following questions: What are the characteristics of the picture? What is the center of the picture? What is missing? What hidden meanings can be found? What is the size, shape, and direction of motion of the object in the picture? Are there different angles of view, ellipsis, shades of expression, arcs, circles, underscores, handwriting, transparent places, tails, or distorted figures in the picture? And what is repeated? When observing a painting, we should first grasp the initial impression

of the painting but should not rush to determine which type of painting ‘belongs’, and nor should we rush to study the content of the painting. Secondly, we should consider the size, specification, and quality of the drawing paper, pay attention to the focus of the painting, consider what the painter wants to say through the painting, and assess how it is displayed in the process of drawing. Finally, we should connect our feelings about individual elements and treat them as a whole. Children convey many things in the picture that are not directly said. If we want to understand the children’s painting in-depth, we must first study the ‘appearance’ of a painting, and find out the center, uniqueness, color, intensity of the content in the picture, and the distribution of the picture. However, children’s paintings cannot be understood and explained only from the ‘appearance’. Secondly, to obtain a deep understanding of a child’s painting, the viewer must have patience, perception, and strong interest. If you can see the process of painting, this will bring a lot of inspiration to understand the picture. Again, connect yourself to the children’s paintings and put yourself in the picture. Finally, if adults can integrate their experience and creative enthusiasm into painting and seriously understand the children’s unrestrained creativity, this will help them to understand children’s paintings (Bangert, 2010).

Before children develop to distinguish size, the units in the painting are considered equal in size. When a certain characteristic is not distinguished, the child depicts it in the simplest way. Sometimes, in order to maintain the simplicity and symmetry of the style structure, children sacrifice the lifelike nature of the picture. In the stage where children cannot distinguish well the directional development, the differences between one direction and another are expressed in vertical relation. Sometimes, children ignore the visual features of their work and look around when they write, focusing only on the movements of arms, wrists, and fingers. In the process of interpreting children’s paintings, especially regarding children of kindergarten age, if they can arouse their emotions and combine action stimulation with visual stimulation, it may be more conducive to the development of interpretation (Arnheim, 1998).

Through the summary of the adult interpretation of children’s paintings, researchers believe that children’s paintings are “not known”. It is important to respect children’s feelings about the individual picture; Unconditional acceptance of children’s different orientations to painting works is very important. It is necessary to connect the feelings of individual elements in children’s paintings and treat these feelings as a whole, so that the researchers’ personal feelings and emotional preferences cannot be brought into the process of children’s interpretation of children’s paintings.

2.2 What children’s paintings tell us

The paintings of children convey to us their colorful world and the phenomena of their intellectual kingdoms, which can be used as a means of communication or as a bridge between adults and children. Bangert (2010) believes that the beauty of children’s paintings expresses their health, vitality, strength, softness and vividness. This is closely related to the psychological and physical development of children. Recalling the past and understanding the present play an important role in expressing the content of children’s paintings. Spiral lines can express children’s new experience in the process of movement, circles can express their own experience of “boundaries”, and the axes in the picture can further express and consolidate their sense of direction in the space developed by getting up early. The simplicity of children’s pictures is because children use as distinctive and clear a perspective as possible to show the content of the picture. In the eyes of children, all creatures are the same, so animals are personified. Children never hesitate to express their inner feelings and the external world at the same time; So perspective appears in the picture. The imbalance in picture proportion is due to children drawing important things up and giving less focus to less important content (Eisner,2010).

Ron Field believes that the artistic features of children can be divided into perceptual tactile and visual patterns, which can be distinguished by different painting styles. When children grow up, they face the world in one of two ways. Those children with a perceptual tendency belong to visual type and observe the world as bystanders, look at all phenomena without exaggeration, have no feelings for the phenomena encountered, and do not provide input. The objective characteristics of visual phenomena are what they perceive, so these people’s paintings tend to be realistic. Tactile children tend to draw pictures of feelings they experience in the process of perception rather than pictures that reproduce the visual characteristics of objects. Generally speaking, children’s paintings contain rich information; Painting is one of the important expressions of children’s chapters and is closely related to children’s physical and psychological development. Different children have different types of art perception, so we should pay attention to the characteristics of different children; when we do not see

the process of children painting, we cannot use these pictures to judge the development of children.

3. Study on children's aesthetic psychology

The study of children's aesthetic psychological structure, that is, their aesthetic psychological function and aesthetic psychological form, is a psychological structure formed by the subject in the long-term aesthetic practice, which is composed of aesthetic ideal, aesthetic taste, and aesthetic ability. It also refers to the composition of special psychological activities caused by aesthetic objects, including perception, imagination, understanding, emotion, and other factors. Together with the intellectual structure and ethical structure, it constitutes the psychological and cultural structure of the subject and plays a positive role in the aesthetic activities of the subject (Zhu & Lv, 1989).

The aesthetic psychological structure of preschool children mainly includes aesthetic perception, aesthetic imagination, and aesthetic emotion. The content of children's aesthetic perception is emotional expressiveness, which is obtained through the form of gestalt perception. Children use a multi-channel in aesthetic perception. This multi-channel not only combines language with non-verbal movements, expressions, and other body movements but also has the synesthesia between different feelings. Children grasp the meaning of artistic texts more intuitively. Their aesthetic imagination is the process of aesthetic image. Compared with adults, children's images are more emotional, vivid, and rich, including both the memory of daily life experience and more subconscious elements. In aesthetic imagination, children's feelings are accompanied by specific images without the limitation of time and space, forming a kind of situation where they do not distinguish between things, realizing God and image travel in the realm of reality and surrealism, and obtaining aesthetic enjoyment. Children's aesthetic feelings are the result of their empathy. Empathy makes children blur the boundary between self and non-self to obtain more pure and strong emotion. It is an explicit peak experience. This kind of aesthetic emotion is closely related to children's life activities. Only those objects selected or felt by children's own hearts can give them aesthetic pleasure (Kong, 2004).

In general, the aesthetic psychological structure of children is a kind of psychological structure with tension, which is composed of the collective unconscious, individual unconscious, and conscious experience. It is similar to the aesthetic psychology of adults but also more open than that of adults as well as more rich and vivid than adult aesthetic images.

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