

# 4000 Word Critical Practice Submission

MA PAINTING Fangfei Hu (18013122)

**Research question-**

**Whether and how painting can help people find clam and inner peace , and thinking about the relationship between environment and people**

**Abstract -**

As an individual who has personally experienced living in a simple room for several months, a strong loneliness overwhelmed me. During the lock down, I experienced slight anorexia, insomnia , lack energy in the morning and full of negative emotions. I missed the nature and freedom so much so I was shocked by the truth that when the city was unblocked, I was no longer willing to go out. I have got used to living indoors gradually. I believe this is not my own experience. This experience made me very interested in two things.

The first is to think about the relationship between human beings and environment, is that we decide the environment we live or being changed by environment.

The second is to discover the power of painting. During the lock down, my painting helped me get over. And I wonder, what factors in painting can bring such results, or can lead human emotions?

## Key words -

Inner peace, the power of color, creating a world, nature,  
the relationship between environment and people

I have noticed that nowadays more and more young people tend to live homebound lives, and tend to live alone and avoid the society of others. People generally tend to buy bigger houses, but the living space we actually need seems to be getting smaller and smaller. As small as a space with a computer, a TV, a comfortable sofa and a sleeping place. As long as take-out can be delivered, people can survive. More and more people enjoy their free time by choosing to face the computer at home instead of going outside, riding a bike for a ride or seeing the natural scenery. Some people may have fantasized that there will be a day, I don't need to go out, go to the company or school to socialize, I can stay at home all day, watching movies and eating popcorn. But no one has expected, all those fantasies came true one day, which was only caused by a sudden outbreak of plague. In order to control the spread of virus, countries all over the world have implemented large-scale lock-down. Different from expectation, the choice of whether or not to go out is no longer in our own hands. There is no need to worry that too much exhausting socializing, because it has been banned. People even lose the right to enjoy the natural scenery outdoors and get together with friends. For a

long time, a strong sense of loneliness will breed, and bring mental health, especially for those who need to live alone for several months.

As an individual who has personally experienced living in a simple room for several months, I would like to share a some experience. At first, the supermarket near my home was the only place I could go. I was full of negative emotions, I was irritating, listless, and in a daze, and also got slight anorexia, insomnia and lack energy in the morning. I felt like I was a bird locked in an iron cage. After a period of time, I accepted the current status and began to calm down. I started reading and drawing, my life gradually returned to the right track. Finally, I fully adapted. Surprisingly, when the city was unblocked, I was no longer willing to go out.

It's like a beast being domesticated generally. When the beast completely lost its wildness and became an accessory of human beings, he was no longer willing to run back to the grassland.

I believe this is not my own experience. This experience made me very interested in two things.

The first is to think about the relationship between human beings and environment, how did human choose their living environment and change the

nature to build our living environment, and how being changed by natural environment.

As the familiar environment living in is changing, we cannot stay the same, so how many people are aware of the happening changes, should we accept them passively or change ourselves subjectively, and how should we face our new self?

The second is to discover the power of painting. During the lock down, I wondered, facing such a disaster, what can art do? As an artist, what can I do to , at least , get myself together ? So I started to draw illusory dream worlds to comfort myself , and also hope them can help more suffering people. It turned out, it worked, my constant painting behavior played a very important role in adjusting my mentality. That is why I would like to continue painting novel rooms and I want to know whether and how painting can help people find clam and inner peace. If possible, what factors in painting can bring such results, or can lead human emotions?

### **Color and peace**

When it comes to what can help finding clam and inner peace, my first thought is a warm and peaceful artistic style. As a visual medium, color can play a vital role. I got a deep understanding from Japanese people's preference and color palette. Japan is famous for its preference for the

natural, warm and fresh style. From photography, painting, to design language, all reflect the Japanese people's taste and the control of color.

Muji has become a well-known grocery brand in recent years, especially for Asian culture. Its products involve a series of daily necessities such as clothing, home and food. Muji's minimalist, natural-returning design concept and philosophical attitude are the most impressive, but what I care about is the design team's choice of colors, the meaning of specific colors, and the calm feeling of matching together.

When people step into MUJI stores, they will find that the main colors of products are white, beige or wood color. Compared with the colorful goods in other shops in the same downtown area, MUJI is very quiet, as if it had found a quiet color in the hustle and bustle of the city. Here, the simple and elegant theme color can meet people's psychological needs of quiet and relaxation. Each color gives people a different psychological feeling.

- White: with pure, bright and naive feeling.
- Gray: with elegant, gentle, ordinary and moderate feelings.
- Beige: It has original, natural and healthy feeling.
- Black: mysterious, silent and deep feeling.

What surprised me even more was that I found that MUJI fully considered the harmonious relationship between man and environment in the choice of color.

Isn't this exactly what I want to explore?

This involves an important feature of Japanese culture, that is, attaching more importance to the relationship between objects and environment than to objects themselves. In such a noisy business environment, MUJI has attracted many consumers' desire to buy because of its simple and elegant style.

“Nothing too flashy like random pops of neon hues; instead, stick to an earthy, neutral palette of grays, whites, creams and the odd gray-blue, khaki or olive green. These colors complement well with the natural materials used – a core design element in most MUJI-inspired homes.”

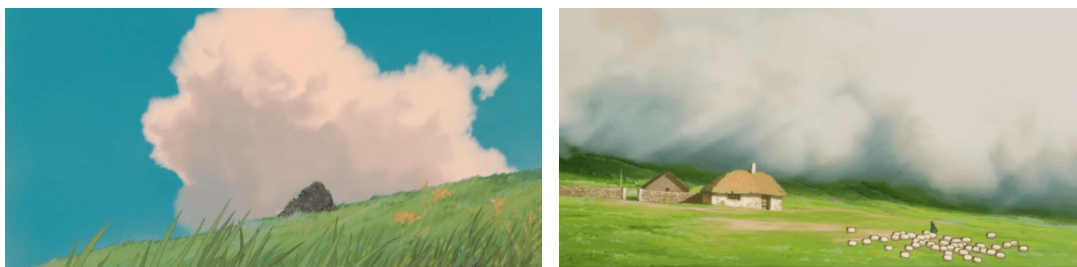
(qanvast article,2018)

Miyazaki Hayao's painting style and color talent is another direction that I am interested in and study. I am looking for both color use and warm atmosphere effect.

I am always captivated by the scene of grassland and countryside in animations . You can almost feel the warm and pleasant sun shine on the grassland through the clouds. Low-saturation green, large-area sky and

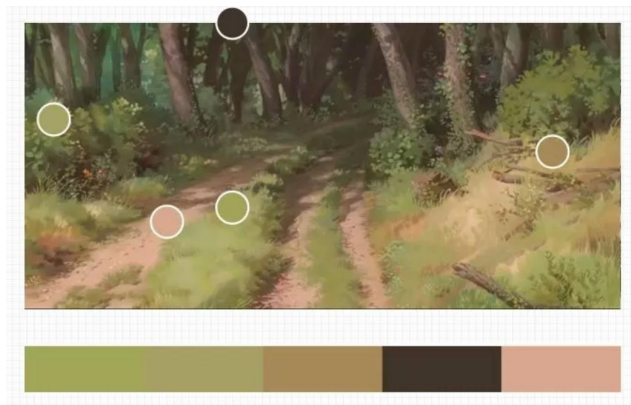
slowly floating clouds can easily lead people's thoughts follow clouds to a distant place , along with anxiety and tension. There is a magic in Miyazaki Hayao' s movies that can make people think that they are in the scene, like they can step into the forest, listen to insects and even feel the moisture brought by the breeze. But how? and why?

“... another important element found in all of Miyazaki's work is his deliberate and poetic use of color,...Colors affect people psychologically; they make us feel emotions. Think of any color and ask yourself what it represents. Does red represent passion, love, anger, and danger to you? What about green? Does it represent nature, immaturity, and corruption? Filmmakers have been using color as a storytelling device even before the invention of color film.” (V Ren é e, 2017)



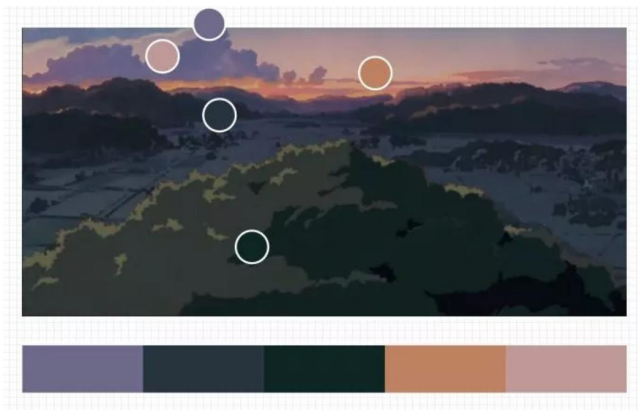
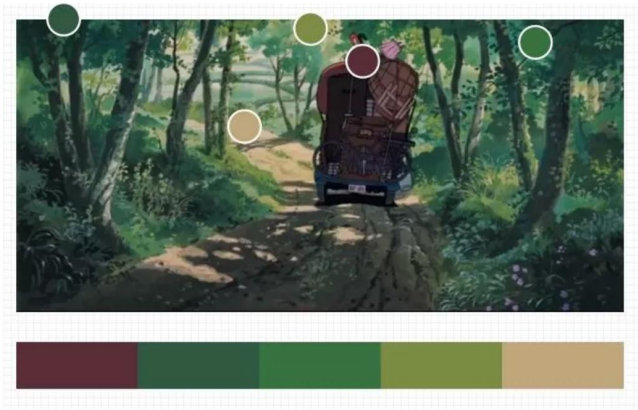
In Miyazaki Hayao's works, the most common elements are: sky (flying), countryside and strange animals.

Due to the preference for pastoral themes, Miyazaki Hayao's films use green extensively. Because the film style is mainly warm, warm colors are used more, such as yellow and red. While cool colors such as blue and purple are used in dark parts. When the picture is mainly warm, the color palette gives people the feeling of freshness. This fresh feeling roots from the low saturation and low contrast, even in the dark, the picture does not use too cold pure black.



When the color takes main tones as cool and dark, it is composed of light gray, gray and other intermediate tones, and dark purple and blue purple are commonly used in the specific dark part. Again, through the decrease of brightness and the relative decrease of saturation, the picture can achieve a plain and cool feeling.





After rewatching six Miyazaki Hayao films again,I summed up the two most touching reasons of his works except palette-- healing & real-life living.

- Healing can also be called "warmth".

No matter how many fighting scenes and miseries there are in the film, Miyazaki Hayao has a way to turn the whole story into a healing ending. The ending may not be the most satisfactory, but it must make people smile, even with no meanings.

- real-life living

Although the characters and plots in Miyazaki Hayao's films are very imaginative, magical and strange. But when it comes to depicting life, that man can still show the ordinary live routine incisively and vividly.

Such as Chihiro's family travels by car, cooking pictures in almost every movie, Sophie looking into the mirror before going out, which is very similar to what we looked like before going out.

All those elements together makes the movie that makes viewer feel walking into a world that is made up of both reality and spectacular fantasy.

### **The power of color**

When the research went deeper, I realized that color has so much power to manipulate people's moods and emotions. And everything in our lives could connect with the philosophy of color.

“Marketers use them all the time to inspire customers to buy products or communicate the idea of a company or brand. Think about it, which colors come to mind when you think of fast food? Red and yellow, right? You've got McDonald's, Carl's Jr./Hardees, KFC, Burger King, Sonic, In-n-Out — the list goes on. Why do all of these fast food companies use these two colors in their logos? It has everything to do with the psychology of color. Red says "hunger" and "appetite", while yellow says "happy" and "friendly". Even the combination

of the two colors communicates speed. So, according to color theory, when you see a red and yellow sign you think, "Whoa! I'm hungry, that place looks friendly enough to make me happy, and I can be fed in no time at all!" (V Ren é e, 2016)

Although each color has its own meanings, emotional responses to each color should vary greatly based on culture and context. But we can refer some universal principles , there is one highlighted by Plutchik's Wheel of Emotions.



Plutchik's Wheel of Emotions

Those researches are so helpful that I can use into my “novel rooms” and created a series of fantasy worlds with rooms as the space background. There are more elements and mood than previous works.



Part of *novel rooms No.20*, (2020)

## Creating a world

I tend to build a universe that can be used to escape from real life troubles. It exists in a ordinary room missing furniture, or only having a few. And no matter how empty the room is , I always leave a window in each room as the connecting to two spaces, like a crossing door to our life. I had a dream that we can escape from our world to the universe on paper to enjoy the beauty of fantasy. It is a beautiful dream that these rooms will be able to bring comfort, relax and peace. I think somehow it is similar to the content of fairy tales.

Such as “the nutcraker and the four realm” and “Alice in wonderland” .

I also wish that this series can show hope to the depressing people as well as fairy tales.

Trouble is nothing matter. Hope is there, a direction is there ahead. Be clam and have faith.

The concept of creating a world also exist in my another work

“ wonder-mirror ” , I will describe more in that part.

### **the relationship and connection between people and environment**

It is all that I want to talk about the connection between painting and peace here, and then it comes to my thoughts on the relationship and connection between people and environment. There is a word in Chinese traditional language called "Fang Yuan"(Square-circular). The original meaning refers to the environment within a certain range, and also refers to the rules and standards. In this work, I tend to apply square and circle to the expression of environment.

“Fang Yuan is an position description term that specifies the area within a radius.

(1) Environment

(2) Square and round. Also refers to the shape and character of things.”

“Fang refers to the method and criterion, which is the framework and the foundation of being a man; Roundness is harmony and sophistication. Together is the philosophy of life.”

There is an old saying in China,

“You can’ t draw circles and squares without compasses and squares.” —  
No right shape can be formed if not done according to specifications./Nothing can be accomplished without following norms and standards.

Chinese ancestors expressed their philosophy of life with the words that originally expressed the environment, which shows that the environment and people’s life have been inseparable since ancient times.

Because being influenced by Chinese culture for a long time, and China is the environment where I grew up, I used many Chinese elements in an installation to represent the environment around me. For example, the shape and the way of the expression of mountains and river in Chinese traditional painting.



We have our special rules of mountain drawing, only half of them are painted, and the bottom is blank, which means the mountains are very high that higher than clouds . The top of the mountain should be seen harsh sharps and edges, and the mountain should not be alone, there need to be a group, which occupies most of the picture, in order to express a magnificent and spectacular scenery.

It is much simpler to draw rivers. Most of the rivers can be seen as left blank, from my understanding, there are two reasons. The first is that there are already too much ink making mountains, in order to avoid being too heavy and dark, leave the paper blank to find a balance. It also can explain why mountain and river always show together in traditional paintings. Second is the definition of "artistic conception" in Chinese philosophy.

The area without brushed but with meanings is called the virtual tone, while mountains are the real. The combination of virtual and real

is the “artistic conception” of Chinese painting.



Mountains-and-waters landscape painting is a main category. Sometimes, there are other subjects appear along with. For example, sporadic old tree trunks or pine trees, or a boat parked on the invisible water surface.

Combining these elements, I cut out the shape of distant mountains with black cardboard, and took a round mirror as the base of my installation, and my blank river. In order to enrich the expression of language and to bring more fun, I did not continue to use cardboard to make the shape of the boat, but used origami to fold a three-dimensional white boat.





*Wonder-mirror (2020)*

black and white are all the colors I added to this device, and every color else completely depends on the mirror reflecting from surrounding environment.

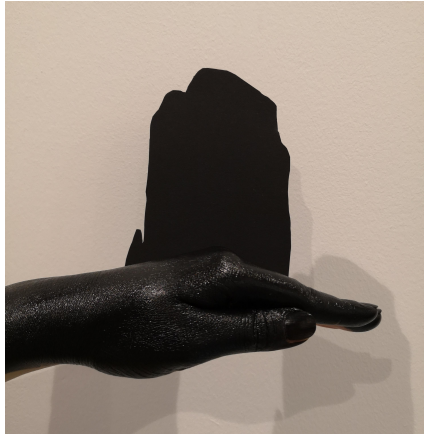
In this way, a new landscape will occur with the black mountain in distance, a boat floating on water, and the water so clean that can reflect the everything in the air. Through a mirror, fake scene became a part of real view. And what is real became the background of a fake landscape. At the same time, the combination of the two environments reflects the concept of the combination of virtual and real.

I chose black and white because they are both the collection of every colors.

-Black is the collection of all painting colors .

-White is the collection of all light colors.

I didn't forget that my interest was to explore the meaning of people in the environment, so I tried to add a part of my body to the whole work. I painted my left hand black as a part of the mountain.



I also tried to hold the base with my hand, like holding the mountain and the scenery in the water, as if holding the heaven and earth, as if the world were in my hands. It can also highlight the important role of people in shaping the environment, and the human is always an important component of changing environment.

By the way, I planed not only to show the installation itself in the exhibition, but also to post the photos taken on the wall next to the installation. Because only displaying the installation itself would lack the human interaction, In that case, this work is incomplete. There are two mirror devices with different styles, another is made to express my current living environment in Britain.

This time I want to highlight the natural environment. People naturally like to be close to nature. The epidemic made people miss nature, and it was summer, which was supposed to be the best time to go out to enjoy landscapes and go travel, but time was spend in the room. I painted the colors I missed and those

can express spring and summer on paper and cut them into simple triangles and circles, fixing them on a square base together with a round mirror. This time, I mainly want to highlight the surrounding scene. The device itself is all composed of the simplest geometric figures. (Triangle, circle, square) It is hard to see the intuitive meaning, but many interesting results are obtained when placed in different environments. And environment will give the meaning.



*Wonder-mirror (2020)*





If watching from a certain angle, the edge of the mirror is disappearing into the air, as if these sharp, solid figures actually grew from there. The reality becomes virtual, and the two spaces from the mirror and that belongs to are linked, which coincides with the idea of a crossing door in my “novel rooms”.



Perhaps in my subconscious, I always believe in the existence of a parallel world, isn't this kind of fantasy always mysterious and exciting? By the way,

I did not consider the concept of parallel world in the beginning, until I saw an instruction of Leandro Erlich's Dalston House.



For artistic practices and methodologies, mirror is always a good friend to make fantasy visual results. Because they are familiar objects, by reflecting what is put in front of them can reveal new ways of observation. And Leandro Erlich could be a master of using mirrors. He built a horizontal wall lying on the street, and members of the public are encouraged to lie horizontally on the ground with a 45-degree angle positioned mirror overhead, which creates the illusion that people are standing on, suspended from, or scaling the building vertically. And the reflection world in the mirror could be seen as a parallel world, it is weird, but funny. It brought an agravic illusion and experience to the public. Through the mirror, the public can actually get into that parallel world, making posture, experiencing a delight travel. That is why this device is so welcome. And I feel connected. It shared a same purpose with the fantasy world I'm seeking --bringing joy.

I am a person who likes fantasy, and I believe that for an artist, it is conducive to the formation of imagination and creativity. I hope that one day, my imagination will grow and create an image and a world as classic as Totoro.

## Conclusion

Muji's designs are close to nature and simple and unadorned, Miyazaki Hayao is good at painting childish delight and emphasizing warmth of daily life, so these works are relaxing and intimate, besides, they are clever color user. Colors close to nature and colors that can be found in nature often make people feel comfortable. In addition, learning what each color does to an individual emotional and psychologically can open doors for my storytelling capabilities, since the emotion I want to evoke is calm and peace, I can get the help from color. Like mild colors, low tones and weak contrast, they can give people a romantic, natural and gentle feeling. Using this color in the picture or design can often bring warm effect. In addition, human beings and nature keep influencing each other both in ancient times, and now, it is hard to say which has had a greater impact on another. Human beings have damaged nature, changed nature, and even created new species in nature, which are

the effects of human beings on the environment. On the other hand, because the environment condition changed, large-scale human migration happened. As the same specie, we dress differently, build houses with different materials, have different living habits and eat different food, only because of the different living environment. I am not willing to make a conclusion of which is greater, but hope by considering the relationship between two to remind the importance of our living environment, and do not be arrogant, keep protecting the nature, our world.

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Disorganize, Sudden and Joyful Visual Illusions of the Argentine Artist Leandro Erlich

2018.2.27 [Tue] Courtesy: Art Front Gallery and Ruth Benzacar Galeria de Arte

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