



Confirmative Praxis ADAA7002 Report

Fragments of my Memory

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MA Illustration

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Introduction

On 7 October 2023, a fierce armed conflict erupted between Israel and Hamas-led Palestinian armed groups, the fiercest war in decades since the Yom Kippur War (El Deeb, 2023). Through the videos shot by war journalist Liang Jin, the endless pain and sadness caused by the conflict are deeply felt. Human beings are so small in the face of war that we are acutely aware of the need to cherish the days of peace, for it is these ordinary days that make up precious lives. I thought about how to relate ordinary moments to paintings and found that when I presented these moments through paintings, they seemed to leap off the canvas and solidify into a work of art. This makes the moment no longer just an instantaneous moment but becomes a visual memory. This treatment brings a profound experience to the viewer, giving new meaning to the memory of life and making it an eternal artistic beauty.

Memory as a transmitter connecting past, present, and future, plays a key role in our understanding of the present and our conception of the future. It is not just a simple accumulation of perceptual memories but also includes subjective choices. A deep and inseparable relationship is established between memory and painting. Painting as a form of expression is not only a projection of the artist's memories but also a link between the viewer and past times and emotional experiences. In the medium of visual art, the flow of memory through time is rejuvenated, and it becomes a common emotional field between the viewer and the artist.

As an illustration student, I want to combine my knowledge and skills with theory and think about how they meet in practice. This Report mainly uses literature review and image analysis methods. Through the collection and collation of literature related to memory and painting, I combed the vein's development and analysed its artworks from the undertaking reasons and processes. Through analysing the cases of contemporary artists, exploring the selection of individual memories and creative themes, analysing the use of memories in personal creation and how they are

presented through restructuring and fictionalization, and combining with my creative practice, exploring how to realise the expression of memories in the context of painting, this report completes a reflection on the pulse of the current creative practice of personal painting. My practice uses jigsaw puzzles as the basis of creation, presenting personal memories through painting, media, photography, collage, and other forms to form a visually impactful artwork.

Chapter One —Theoretical Explorations of Memory and Images

Memory is not about presenting past events in a currently understood way. We do not remember events by re-comprehending them. Rather, the past sorrow itself is preserved by remembering the sorrowful event. The things remembered must be things previously perceived or known. I remember the Venus transit in 1769. Therefore, I must have perceived it at the time, or I could not remember it now. Our first knowledge of any object of thought cannot be through memory (Copenhaver, 2018). Memory can only perpetuate or renew what was previously familiar to us.

An in-depth exploration of the term "memory" reveals that a branch of memory, Episodic memory, plays a crucial role in the artist's paintings. Episodic memory is not only related to the creators but also closely linked to the readers' interpretation and appreciation. The concept of episodic memory was introduced by the Canadian psychologist Endel Tulving in 1972. It refers to the memory of an individual directly recording his or her own experience, i.e., the memory of an event that occurred at a certain time and place that the individual personally experienced, using space and time as the coordinates (Clayton, Salwiczek, Dickinson, 2007). Two basic forms of Episodic memory extraction exist Recognition and Recall. The recognition highlights the fact that when information is presented again, individuals can recognise events or events that they have experienced, perceived, or thought about. This involves factors such as the solidity of the information, the time over which the event was experienced, and the environment in which it occurred.

In the process of recognition, people make an orderly reorganisation in their minds of the Episodic memory of what they have seen. Recall means that individuals use their imagination to recall specific information, constructing attitudes and distinctive details based on past experiences. Recall is usually based on associations, but can be easily disturbed during information extraction, leading to gaps in information that are difficult to extract. In this case, the individual may make connections that produce

memory fiction (Jonathan, 2016). Episodic memory provides a source of inspiration for artistic creation, and at the same time, the formation and extraction of Episodic memory is a dynamic and multi-level process and understanding it from multiple perspectives helps to understand the nature of memory more comprehensively.

According to Liu Liqiang's book, "We are not able to accurately recognise in all situations(2003, P165). "When the memory is strong and the old and new impressions are consistent, recognition may occur smoothly and instantaneously. However, if there are changes in the things and environments that we have been exposed to in the past, the process of recognition may become blurred. As a result, Episodic memory in the mind presents itself as a memory constructed from many fragments. Through the intervention of prior knowledge and perceptions, we were able to direct these fragmented Episodic memories for efficient restructuring(Liu,2003). At the same time, in the process of recall, the extractor imagines and constructs past experiences based on his or her attitudes and perceptions, due to the difficulty of extracting information. In the experiment referred to in Frederic Bartlett's Recollections, participants were invited to read a North American Indian folktale called "The Ghost Story" and then to recall it over some time. Because the participants were unfamiliar with the English narrative tradition, the story sounded incoherent(Bartlett, 1995, P76). As a result, the experimenters experienced memory gaps in their recollections, leading to the fictionalization of the gaps in the story. As Bartlett talks about "We do not reproduce original events or stories, but reconstruct them based on our existing mental condition (1995, P79)." People are influenced by their knowledge structure when recalling, and not only do constructs occur, but also fiction from time to time.

The process of extracting episodic memory is not just a recollection of a specific time but a mechanism that causes memories of other events related to it. Memory as a unique and complex psychological process, presents itself in a fragmented state, in which Episodic memory, like a vivid picture of life, permeates our daily experience. Imagine a family sitting around a table filled with the aroma of delicious food,

enjoying a warm family dinner, with fine tableware, family laughter and even specific jokes or traditional moments forming a vivid and precious picture. These situational fragments may be a momentary image, a passage, a specific atmosphere, or a certain feeling. They are not simple reproductions of scenes but are constructed through the unique perceptions and experiences of individuals. These fragmented Episodic memories become a rich memory material bank for painting, providing a source of inspiration. Through his own experience, the creator superimposes and extends the images of the past, present, and future, presenting them in the picture. This method of creation not only enables the art to form a more abstract and richer way of expression, but also the artwork can express the complex emotions and concepts more intuitively, and provides the viewer with more space for interpretation and thinking.

Chapter Two: Artist cases and artworks

In the Critique of Pure Reason, Kant argues that our knowledge is limited to the realm of appearances and that we have no direct access to ultimate reality. He argued that our perceptions are determined by the structure of our minds and that we impose certain categories and concepts on the raw data of our senses (Kant,1908) . Some artists have been influenced by Kant to believe that reality or nature is merely representation or illusion. If one is confused by it, one can easily fall into a view that is both superficial and shallow. In turn, it is only by destroying the world of appearances according to one's understanding that one can create false images and fictional events. In other words, it is by recoding and interpreting images from the outside world that the individual can express his or her true feelings about the real world. It is recognised that no one can grasp the whole of this era, we are just one of the countless fragments (Zhang, 2006). Such a perspective makes art a unique response to individual experience and complex reality, highlighting the quest for a deep understanding of the world.

As Danto points out "For contemporary artists who prefer to develop a pluralistic process of self-consciousness and self-realization of their images (1981, P67). " The creation of painting is no longer an objective reproduction of the external world translated into the content of pictorial experience. It becomes a medium of communication, a means of memory shared by the public. Painters create a unique personal artistic style by expressing their own unique regional cultural backgrounds and memories of images formed in the context of their upbringing. The image memory is given a new meaning through the coexistence of the present time and the past time axis. Artists' visual representations of the way memory is reorganized are varied, with some drawing on images, some on photographic photographs, some on depictions of real scenes, and so on, thus presenting a diverse range of visual effects. This chapter discusses how artists express their memories in their work by analyzing individual artists' cases to gain insight into the stories behind the work.

In the age of the image, with the rise of virtual digital technologies, the proliferation of images and the overload of visual information. We are challenged to reconstruct the relationship between the reproduction of new paintings and archetypes, and need to think about how to assimilate and reflect reality, and how to create paintings of unique depth within this visual tide (Li,2018). The German painter Gerhard Richter created a new form of artistic expression, "photo-painting", in which he looked at photographs in a completely new way and used them as paintings that offered him a new perspective. For example, In his work, Ema (Nude on a staircase) (Fig1), Gerhard Richter deliberately creates a sense of mystery and ambiguity in the image, which is fixed at the moment when the nude woman is descending the stairs, and we can't get any information about the person, the time and the place from the image. This work is more like a photograph from the visual point of view, the visual center of the picture is overexposed, and the edges and details of the nude woman are blurred out. Richter used an almost flawless technique that is a visual reproduction of a photographic painting, transforming the way he recorded the mirror image into his perception of things as well as his inner emotions.

In many of Gerhard Richter's artworks, he specialises in using family photographs, newspaper pictures, or blurred photographs as source material. In his work Domplatz (Fig 2), through repeated obliteration and deletion, he ignores details while blurring the overall image of the picture. In this way, he taps into the nostalgia, sentimentality, and banality of ordinary photographs, creating a sense of distance between the viewer and the image in time and space. This creative technique makes the viewer feel the hidden emotions in the picture more deeply, presenting a unique artistic experience. Relying on online images alone can no longer adequately meet the needs of artistic expression. Therefore, there is a need to rethink the relationship between painting and image and to explore ways to realise innovation in painting. In the process of tracing the history and memory embedded in the image, the nature of the object of things and a certain consensus of the artist are explored.

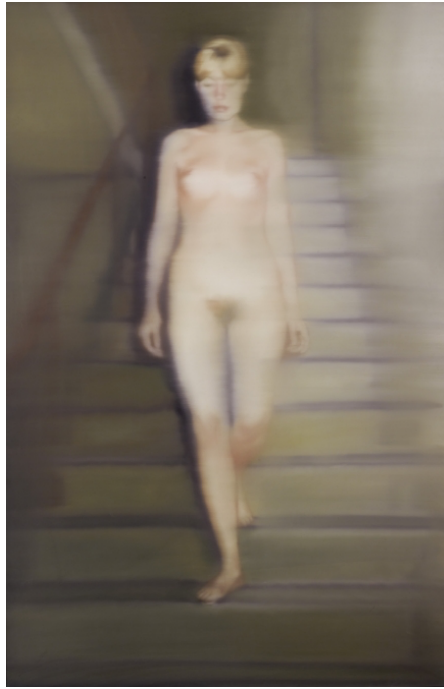


Fig 1.Gerhard Richter.(1966). *Ema (Nude on a staircase)*,[Oil on canvas]At Ludwig, Cologne, Germany



Fig 2. Gerhard Richter.(1968).*Domplatz, Mailand (Cathedral Square, Milan)* [Oil on canvas]Photography source from Sotheby's

Zhang Xiaogang's oil painting, *Bloodline-Big Family* (Fig 3), is deeply influenced by René Magritte and expresses the artist's fascination with family and collectivity. This

is a series he has been working on since 1993, inspired by old family photographs. The figures in the work are expressionless, dressed in Mao-era clothing, with similar facial blotches. Although the figures are not entirely realistic, they share similar stony faces and lifeless extensions. A red "bloodline" connects the members of the family in the painting, emphasising the blood ties of family relationships (Chen,2012). Zhang Xiaogang intends to leave a group portrait archive of that era in China, and the construction of this group portrait is framed, consisting of certain concrete visual symbols and abstract atmospheric feelings. Big Family uses the composition of a family group photo but is different from a photograph. The series does not have specific portraits of individuals but creates symbolic figures that reflect the Chinese cultural context of a specific era. The whole series of works once again presents the characteristics of the family in the 90's, conveying the unique family relationship, collective relationship, and even social structure in China, forming a collective memory of the era. The artist exists in the form of visualization in the paintings to formalize the author's inner thoughts on the relationship between photographs and memories.



Fig 3. Zhang Xiaogang.(1998).Bloodline-Big Family No.2[Oil on canvas] Photograph source from Artist

Pete Doig's painting process is often based on elements of memory accumulated through life experiences as the most fundamental tone of his work (Li,2022). Among them is PeteDoig's White Canoe, created by restructuring his memories through images. White Canoe was inspired by the film Black Friday (Fig 4), which he saw and was fascinated by the footage. In the picture a woman dressed in white sits in a canoe, her body bent over the side of the boat with her arm resting on the side of the boat caressing the calm surface of the lake. The lake around the boat was like a mirror reflecting the surrounding woods. This shot looped in his mind over and over again.

In the coming years, he repeatedly created works on the theme of the white canoe, gradually fading the direct line of the image and resorting to the reconstruction of memory with the help of images, attempting to incorporate episodic memory and personal emotions into the canvas. In the process of creation, the artist draws on the painting techniques of the masters and collides the images with his memories to form his unique painting concepts and creative methods. The artwork in the text was created by Peter Doig in 1990 (Fig 5). The white canoe in the picture is in the visual centre of the picture, a white canoe quietly resting in the centre of the lake, glowing under the moonlight, surrounded by a forest, as if in a dream, but you feel a trace of anxiety. Many of Peter Doig's works follow a similar approach, in which he uses video material not in its entirety but chooses to introduce parts of the image that correspond to his reality (Ouyang,2020). When people recognise an image, they go through the process of seeing and feeling, forming a momentary image or sensation, and the creator, through the brush and canvas, restructures the image from memories with the present image to present the world as the painter perceives it. The images carry the structure, atmosphere, and colours of our memories and show familiar scenes. Through the images in episodic memory, the creators cleverly use memory restructuring and combine video materials to achieve a visual reproduction of these memories.



Fig 4. *Black Friday*. Photography source from Movie Capture



Fig 5. Peter Doig.(1990).*White Canoe*[Oil on canvas] Photograph source from Artist

Among contemporary Western artists, Luc Tuymans is one of the important painters of the 1980s. Luc Tuymans studied film production and returned to painting, where photography became an important element of his work, with close focus, framing, cropping, and other photographic techniques. Tuymans draws from film, television, and video imagery, and his representations of events and ideas are not entirely clear. He believes that re-presentation may not be entirely correct, that memory is subjective and confusing, and that the content of memory must be re-established. The artist

creates blurred fragments and details through subtle clues, just like our fragmented memories. Tuymans believed that painting was something that could not directly replicate what was truly essential, that it was not realistic, and that there was a distance between painting and actuality. When the subject of the work becomes a photographic image, in addition to the figurative expression of inner emotions, he uses a new context to change the colour of the image, cutting its meaning to produce a new original text in a way that is like the system of memory. The work "Amnesia" (Fig 6) has the oval composition of a Chinese painting, with free use of brushes and colours, and three Chinese characters "Ji Yi Shi" written at the bottom of the painting. What is more interesting is that the artist has juxtaposed an all-black image next to it, which highlights the theme of amnesia and gives it a unique charm.



Fig 6. Luc Tuymans. (1980).Amnesia[Oil on canvas photograph source from Artist

Episodic memory's ability to provide a rich material resource for drawing creation stems from its ability to store sounds, movements, and emotions. This episodic memory is full of personal real emotion, which is more accurate for the expression of creation. Many great works of art have been created in the context of the painter's own experience. They are created by recreating a reorganised situation. Taking Francisco Goya's The Shootings of May Third, 1808 as an example (Fig 7), this work demonstrates Goya's exemplary use of Episodic memory stored in his mind to express his true feelings. The overall tone of the picture is dark, with a strong light shining on the body of the insurgents in the middle. The expressions and movements of the

characters in the painting are full of fear, anger, and indignation. The neatly arranged soldiers on the right side of the picture convey a cold, brutal atmosphere. Both the figures and the atmosphere of this painting come from the artist's Episodic memory of the scene. Having witnessed the events with his own eyes, he has a deep Episodic memory of the time, place, and background of the events, as well as the brutal suppression and mass murder by the French army. The ability of episodic memory to store an individual's recollection of a specific time, place, and event created Goya's *Guns of the Third of May in 1808*, where he used reproduction to extract authentic information from his resource material and reorganise it in his memory. He used reproduction to extract authentic information from the reorganized resource material, and then through the collation and processing of the authentic material, he achieved this heart-wrenching and shocking masterpiece.



Fig 7: Francisco Goya. (1814) *The Shootings of May Third, 1808* [Oil on canvas] At Museo del Prado, Madrid

On the whole, through the profound excavation and reconstruction of Episodic memory, these artworks not only enrich the language and expression of painting

creation but also enable the viewer to feel a more genuine and personalized emotional resonance in the works. This in-depth analysis of individual experiences and memories makes art creation go beyond simple image reproduction into a more profound and thought-provoking field. As Episodic memory continues to be explored and enriched in the creation of paintings, young artists have also been inspired to experiment with this creative direction, opening up more diverse and creative possibilities for the future of art creation. In this unique artistic intersection, the story of memory is shared between the viewer and the artist, and the paintings become a bridge through time and precipitate emotions, interweaving individual memories with the viewer's perceptions to form a unique experience rich in depth and emotional resonance. This way of creation not only makes the artwork more artistically appealing but also makes it a unique and precious cultural heritage that offers reflection and understanding of the past, present, and future.

Chapter Three: Memory and Image Transformation and Practice.

Exploring the different visual representations of memory recombination and memory fiction that occur in the process of extracting episodic memory, both in the form of Recognition and Recall, in the creation of paintings. Under the premise of personal specific memory, I extracted interesting events in my daily life to create my ideas. In my creation, I break the conventional spatial order and proportion relationship, give up part of the daily logic, and reorganised the fragmented daily events in episodic memory in a fragmented way to show feedback feeling of the surrounding world to me.

Julie Bacon's paintings, especially works such as the one shown in When I Leave Home (Fig 8), profoundly narrate the artist's daily life experiences through the discourse of abstraction. In her descriptions, she expresses how she tends to feel overwhelmed by the objects and various influences around her when she steps out of the house. This feeling leads her to re-examine everything around her from the perspective of shapes and colours, creating an overwhelming and vivid experience (Mao,2014). This narrative allows us to understand the extreme capacity to synthesize reality, she uniquely incorporates elements of her surroundings into her creative process, creating an atmosphere of integrated forms and colours through abstract expression. This atmosphere spreads quickly over the supports, creating a primitive and chaotic "transformation" that gives the viewer an immersive, intense, and enriching artistic experience. This extreme ability to perceive a synthesized reality does not come from disorder or improvisation but from a long and painful path of synthesis and experimentation. Julie Bacon demonstrates the painstaking effort required of the artist in this process, through constant practice and experimentation, to reach the point of synthesizing the various elements. The sense of space and weight in this process may be profoundly influenced by other artists or cultural environments, making abstract art a form of expression that is both independent and profound. Therefore, abstraction is not

simply derived from chaos, but through the artist's prudent fusion of various influences, a unique and powerful art form is ultimately presented.



Fig 8. Julie Bacon. (2020). *When I Left Home* [Drawing] Photography source form Artist

The eyes in my painting (Fig 9) are influenced by Julie Bacon's abstract paintings and inspired by bits and pieces of my everyday life. The last three months of my life have been full of colourful experiences but also accompanied by a series of stresses. I hope to express my feelings during this time through this artwork. I have divided the image into three parts. The middle part with glowing eyes represents my desire for life and my hopes for the future. This part expresses the positive, hopeful side of the pursuit of a better life. At the top of the picture, the various shapes symbolise my deep thoughts on various things such as my studies and future, and the chaotic thoughts in my brain. This part reveals the complex and disturbing dimensions of life, reflecting my thoughts and challenges on various issues. The combination of lines and shapes below the eyes is feedback on life, which shows both the positive, beautiful side of life and the negative, troubled side. This section presents a deep understanding of my life experiences and is an abstract reflection of the variety of experiences in life. The whole work is not a direct presentation of real memories, but a fictionalization through my feelings as a way to show my abstract understanding of this time.

The pursuit of abstract art lies in the creation of novel forms and images that, unlike real-world representations, are better able to express the artist's inner emotions and thoughts. It is through this abstraction that my paintings pursue uniqueness in form and image, thus presenting my unique interpretation of life experiences. Through this work, I try to use the language of art to convey my unique perspective on the world, showing my deepest emotions and thoughts.



Fig 9. Yuan lin. (2023)*Fragments of my memory*. Illustration by the author.

In my creative process, especially in the (Fig 10) piece, I chose to use a birthday scene that I remembered fondly as inspiration. Although the fictions of memories often contain some elements of real experiences, in this creation I was not constrained to completely recreate the real scene. Instead, I present the elements abstractly, highlighting my painting style and unique interpretation of art. During the creative process, I emphasise the beauty of the intermingling of feelings from memories and emotions of the present. By skillfully blending abstract lines with elements extracted from real memories, I strive to create a painting that allows the viewer to feel the emotions I experienced and resonate with the birthday memories. The purpose of this painting is not only to reproduce a fragment of a birthday scene but also to convey my personal emotions and inner experience of that memory through art. Therefore, the illusion between image and reality co-constructs a real connection between life and art,

between artist and viewer. This way of creation not only shows my interpretation of real life but also pursues a unique sense of beauty in artistic expression so that the viewer can have deep emotional resonance when examining the works.



Fig 10. Yuan lin. (2023)*Fragments of my memory*. Illustration by the author.

Throughout the work, I focus on personal memories as inspiration for my creations, viewing them as an accumulation of impressions of past activities, feelings, and experiences. The diversity of memory is reflected in multiple factors such as environment, time, and perception. The five senses, which serve as the medium through which we perceive the world, can also evoke and link memory areas in the brain, which include vision, hearing, smell(Fig 11), touch (Fig 12), and taste. In the process of creation, I am not only limited to the traditional way of painting but also use collage, multi-materials combined with painting, different touches of wool, different flavours of scented paper, and other artistic techniques. By incorporating these sensory elements into the work, it attempts to evoke the memories and emotions associated with them within the mind. The jigsaw puzzle serves as the basis for the creation of a total of 21 jigsaw puzzles. Each piece of the puzzle carries a different

memory and a different feeling, and putting these fragmented memories together forms an important part of my individual life experience. Each puzzle represents a different theme and is created through a combination of hand drawing, photography, digital painting, real things, and photographs, making the whole work richer, more three-dimensional, and diversifying the way of creation. Showing that each of my memories is different and unique (Fig 13). Although I tried to accomplish many of the ideas I had in mind during the creation of this piece, I feel some regret that I was not able to adequately present the auditory portion of the piece. Negligence on the front end resulted in insufficient time to prepare on the back end. In the end, my practice work was influenced by the above six artists, presenting my memories through remodelling and fictionalization. The whole work has achieved my expected effect. I am very grateful to all of you for your careful guidance and help in the creative process.



Fig 11. Yuan lin.(2023) *Fragments of my memory*. Photography by the author



Fig 12. Yuan lin.(2023) *Fragments of my memory*. Photography by the author

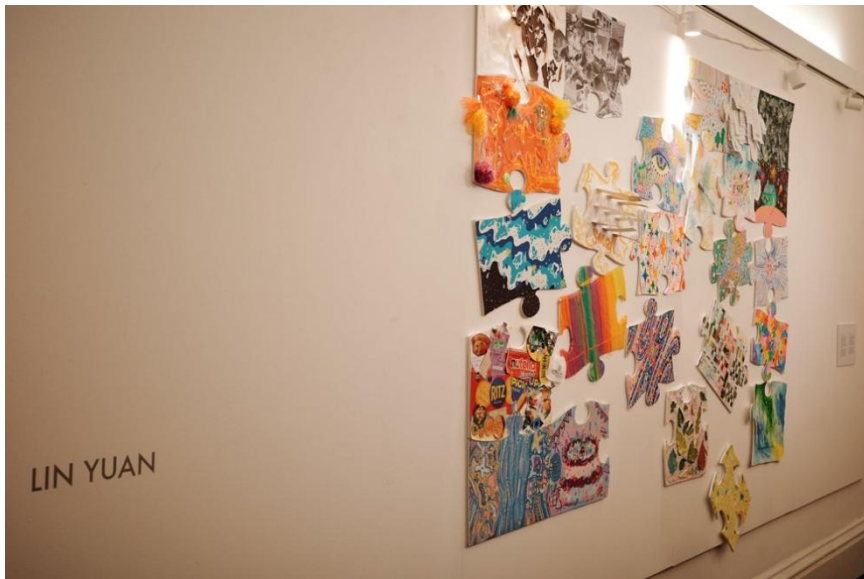


Fig 13. Yuan lin. (2023) *Fragments of my memory*. Photography by the author

Conclusion

In today's background of global development of society and culture, the intermingling of information leads to the great changes and development of the times, and material interests fill all corners of the world. In this ever-changing world, it is precious for art to return to nature, to the artist's heart, and to the true nature of life. In the background of information explosion and material prosperity, art provides a channel for people to seek inner peace and truth. Each generation of artists is rooted in their own upbringing and cultural soil, grasping the pulse of the times with a keen sense of humour.

In their artistic creations, they continue to explore and innovate through deep reflection on nature, heart, and life, injecting new inspiration and vitality into their art. In this process, the artists' creations are subconsciously governed by subjective factors such as personal experiences, aesthetic concepts, and individual interests, making each artist's work a unique expression. In the creation of paintings, no matter what kind of theme, colour, language, or mode of expression the painters choose, they are all deeply influenced by their life experiences, aesthetic concepts, and personal interests. Painting is no longer a simple imitation and reproduction of the objective world, but the objectification of the artist's emotions through a specific painting carrier, in pursuit of a more profound spiritual reality. Through the waving of the paintbrush, the artist integrates his deepest emotions and unique understanding of life into his works, creating works with a unique artistic language and deep connotation. The expression of this emotion not only gives the work more depth and connotation but also provides the viewer with a more intimate and empathetic experience. Through the penetration of emotions, artworks not only reflect the artist's unique interpretation of the world but also inspire the viewer to think and feel about art. In this ever-changing era, the return to emotional truth becomes the power of art, bringing people a precious experience of seeking peace and depth in a fast-paced life.

In the process of creative exploration, artists draw on situational memory for inspiration, presenting a diversity of extraction methods. This paper focuses on how memory reorganisation and memory fictionalisation affect paintings, revealing the uniqueness of different artists in their creations. Through colours, shapes, and lines, the viewer discovers visual memories and opens a time box of individual and collective experiences. At this point of intersection, the artwork becomes a bridge through time and precipitates emotions. Intertwining the individual's memory with the viewer's perception forms a unique experience rich in depth and emotional resonance. As the application of situational memory in the creation of paintings continues to be enriched and developed, young artists, should continue to absorb and learn from our predecessors, and try to explore more possibilities in the direction of "situational memory" in the creation of paintings. This kind of exploration will open new paths for us to create art that is more diversified and creative.

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