



# ART FRONTIER

An International Art Journal / Vol.2, No.3 Jul.-Sep., 2024

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**To cite this article:** Junping Liu, "From Linear to Planar: A Study of the Evolution of Chang Dai-Chien's Artistic Style During His Overseas Period," *Art Frontier* 2, no.3 (September 2024): 65-78, <https://doi.org/10.64212/AEXN4639>.

**DOI:** 10.64212/AEXN4639

**ISSN:** 2835-5490

**EISSN:** 2836-841X

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This article has undergone double-blind peer review.

**Website:** [www.artfrontier.org](http://www.artfrontier.org)

**Email:** [artfrontier2023@outlook.com](mailto:artfrontier2023@outlook.com)

**Publishing Frequency:** Quarterly (March, June, September, December)



# From Linear to Planar: A Study of the Evolution of Chang Dai-Chien's Artistic Style During His Overseas Period

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## Abstract

The predominant approach to studying Chang Dai-Chien in the history of modern Chinese art lies in historical verification. Yet, in recent years, stylistic analysis has become a focal point in art history research. The transformation of style from linear to planar is a significant characteristic of Chang Dai-Chien's artistic creations during his overseas endeavors. This article conducts research in the following aspects: the genesis of Chang Dai-Chien's ink and splashed color style during his overseas period (1949-1956), Western modern art and artists' influence on Chang Dai-Chien's ink splattering and color splattering style, the influence of ocular ailment on Chang Dai-Chien's splashed-ink and splashed-color artistic style, and formation of Chinese-Western fusion splash ink painting. The study of artistic styles during his overseas period not only facilitates a profound understanding of his artistic thoughts and creative methods but also offers insights and inspiration for the development and inheritance of modern Chinese art.

## Key Words

Chang Dai-Chien, splashed ink and splashed color, from linear to planar, ocular ailment, Chinese cultural genes

Heinrich Wölfflin (1864-1945) believed, "Even the most creative genius cannot exceed certain limits established at birth. Not everything can happen at any time; specific ideas can only arise at specific stages of development."<sup>1</sup> After a millennium of development, Chinese painting faced a transformation towards modernity in the twentieth century. During the 1950s and 1960s, renowned artist Chang Dai-Chien adopted the splashed color artistic style. This transition occurred when Chinese painting was transforming, and there was a cultural exchange between East and West. Currently, the study of Chang Dai-Chien's artistic style during this period remains somewhat neglected in the field of art history. Renowned artist and historian Xie Zhiliu (謝稚柳) once remarked, "The most important transformation in Chang Dai-Chien's later years was due to the Seventeen-Mile Bay in California, but most of the research and biographies about Chang Dai-Chien barely mention this period. Some only briefly touch upon it without providing detailed information." Internationally, scholars such as Mark Gibson and the Silicon Valley Asian Art Center have extensively docu-

mented Chang Dai-Chien's overseas works and made significant progress. In China, scholars like Lin Mu (林木) and Li Yongqiao (李永翹) have a long history of research on Chang Dai-Chien. However, there is still a need for systematic and in-depth exploration into the reasons behind Chang Dai-Chien's overseas artistic style. This exploration is not only a key to unlocking the fusion of traditional Chinese art and Western modern art but also an essential aspect of the modern transformation of Chinese painting. This paper primarily focuses on four aspects: the origins of Chang Dai-Chien's splashed ink and splashed color style during his overseas period (1949-1956), the influence of Western modern art and artists on Chang Dai-Chien's splashed ink and splashed color style, the impact of vision impairment on the formation of Chang Dai-Chien's splashed ink and splashed color style, and the influence of the splashed ink painting style since the Tang Dynasty on Chang Dai-Chien's splashed color paintings during his overseas period. Through these investigations, we aim to explore the reasons behind the transformation of Chang Dai-Chien's artistic style during

this period.

### 1. The Genesis of Chang Dai-Chien's Overseas Period Splashed Ink and Splashed Color Style (1949-1956)

Li Yongqiao, the author of *The Chronicle of Chang Dai-Chien*, wrote that starting in December 1949, the 52-year-old “Master embarked on a nomadic life”, although Chang Dai-Chien’s successful art exhibition in New Delhi, India in 1950 primarily featured his Dunhuang murals and earlier works. In May 1952, Chang Dai-Chien’s creation of *Traveling in the Mountains* (figure 1) highlighted a typical work from this period, depicting overseas landscapes and customs using traditional linear techniques. In this work, the background features an exotic bridge and the central theme of traveling in the mountains, while the foreground includes the common elements of flowing water and rocks found in traditional Chinese landscape paintings. In the distance, there is a pa-

noramic view with snow-capped mountains, and the sky is subtly treated with a bluish tint. The artwork is signed in the lower right corner with a long inscription, adding a sense of stability to the composition. The overall style is reminiscent of shallow descent landscape paintings in the style of Shi Tao (石濤). The abbreviated inscription on the artwork reads: “In May of the year, Renchen returned from the Wisdom World Mountain at Mando Race and received this work by passing through the Tiancheng Bridge. Written for Mrs. Yiming, also known as Qingzheng, by Chang Dai-Chien.”<sup>2</sup> It is evident in this work that Chang Dai-Chien used the brushwork of Shi Tao to create overseas landscapes, still incorporating traditional Chinese character depictions. Although he painted overseas scenery, the composition exudes the ambiance of classical Chinese landscape art. It is worth noting that during this period, Chang Dai-Chien had already developed his own mature “Niumaocun (牛毛皴)”. Additionally, Zhang Mengxiu (張孟休) noted,



Figure 1. Chang Dai-Chien. *Traveling in the Mountains* (《遊山圖》). Ink and watercolor, 34×38 cm, 1952.

“Upon closer reflection, I believe that this new style of ‘Niumaocun’ was not haphazard but completely in line with the ancient principle of ‘bold strokes and meticulous refinement’. Bold strokes give life to the vitality and spirit, while meticulous refinement reveals skill and cultivation. From a certain perspective, I believe this new style of ‘Niumaocun’ was the genesis of Chang Dai-Chien’s later ‘splashed ink’ and ‘splashed color’ techniques. The principle of splashed ink painting is ‘bold application of ink, meticulous refinement’.”<sup>3</sup>

Chang Dai-Chien’s *Niagara Falls*, created in 1953 (figure 2), was inspired by his visit to Niagara Falls in the autumn of that year, accompanied by Wang Jiqian (王季遷) and Wang Yachen (王亞塵). “The bizarre and massive rocks on both sides of the river are extraordinarily beautiful, and at the end there is a cascading waterfall, creating a world of its own. Although Master Chang had traveled extensively and seen the beauty of nature and human craftsmanship, he still nodded in admiration when he saw this amazing sight. Following this, Master Chang and his party also visited Watkins Glen. This place resembles a miniature Three Gorges of the Yangtze River. They entered the valley from the mountaintop and saw a stream at the bottom of the valley, with cliffs on both sides, and only a ray of sunlight was visible. They walked slowly along the stream, and the winding valley had waterfalls hanging on the sides, creating a mesmerizing scene with splashing water and echoing sounds in the empty valley. Master Chang was amazed by the beauty of this place.”<sup>4</sup> This artwork faithfully captures the grandeur of the American waterfall. The fundamental technique of the painting still primarily relies on his earlier linear drawing method. The trees and waterfalls in the surroundings are handled using traditional Chinese methods for rendering trees and mountains. Furthermore, the depiction of the figures in the scene continues to use the approach of classical Chinese figures without incorporating the appearance of local American characters. “In 1953, during Chang Dai-Chien’s first visit to the United States, he was immersed in traditional painting, familiar with various styles and genres in the history of Chinese painting. When he painted *Niagara Falls*, he transformed this magnificent scenery into a Chinese painting.”<sup>5</sup> Compared to his previous work, this piece tends to have more detailed greenish landscapes. It also leans closer to Western painting regarding composition and color choices, gradually departing from classical Chinese landscape constraints. However, it can be said that Chang Dai-Chien’s creations during this period still reflect a style in transition, which can be observed in works like *Emigration* (《移居圖》) created in Argentina in the

same year, and *Wind and Rain Destroying the Courtyard Flowers* (《風雨摧落庭花作》) from 1951. These works represent a transitional phase in his style, where he continues to use traditional brushwork to depict overseas landscapes.

In 1954, Chang Dai-Chien, while constructing the Bade Garden in Brazil, also created a painting titled *American Watkins Valley Scenery* (《美國沃特金斯峽穀景色》) based on his visit to American landscapes the previous year. This painting was done in a typical linear style. In February 1955, he produced *Ink Landscape with Mountains and Waters* (《水墨山水通景》), which marked a return to tradition. In this artwork, the primary focus was on using lines to depict the imagery of riverside villages, various trees, and a distant landscape, essentially representing a traditional landscape scene. However, by the spring of 1956, Chang Dai-Chien changed his approach when creating *Mountain Garden Sudden Rain* (《山園驟雨》) and *Shattered Ink Landscape* (《破墨山水》) in his own Badeland Garden. The artwork began to deviate from his previous overall linear style. He experimentally incorporated flat ink splattering, as recorded by Li Yongqiao in *Chang Dai-Chien’s Chronicle* in 1965: “In the spring, while recovering at Badeland Garden, Mr. Chang Dai-Chien remained tirelessly dedicated to artistic exploration. One day, after the rain, he observed the misty, rain-soaked trees in the garden and, using the shattered ink technique, painted *Mountain Garden Sudden Rain* achieving unexpected results. Mr. Chang later told his friends, before this, I was entirely copying the ancients without any change. From this painting onwards, I discovered that I didn’t have to use the methods of the ancients; I could use my own.”<sup>6</sup> In this artwork, you can see the artist accidentally using ink splattering to depict the imagery of a violent rainstorm, primarily using ink density variations to replace some line-based elements. He covered the fragmented lines with a simple, block-like brushwork, and the top portion of the painting indicates the use of ink splattering. The lower right corner is depicted with dense ink, while the upper left side fades out, capturing the impending rainstorm in Badeland Garden. This painting carries the poetic essence of Su Shi’s verse: “Dark clouds churn like ink, unable to obscure the mountain; white raindrops leap and scatter, like pearls falling into a boat.” The lower portion of the painting offers a very simplified depiction of the mountain, trees, and houses. This artwork represents Chang Dai-Chien’s initial attempt at transitioning from a linear to a flat style, which is why certain elements may appear rough and not fully matured. The artist’s excitement and joy when first experimenting with ink splattering on mountain scenes are



Figure 2. Chang Dai-Chien. *Niagara Falls* (《納嘉納福大瀑布》). Ink and water-color, 1953-54.

aptly captured in his poetry: “In the dead of night, the old man’s pure excitement awakens, startling his wife and children from their slumber. Overturning the inkwell, he cannot contain the ink, like summer clouds surging out, forming a mountain in a day.”<sup>7</sup>

## 2. Western Modern Art and Artists’ Influence on Chang Dai-Chien’s Ink Splattering and Color Splattering Style

Looking at Chang Dai-Chien’s artistic journey, his early period in China was primarily characterized by the emulation and study of traditional Chinese painting, with a predominant focus on linear techniques. This included his early studies of Shi Tao and his emulation of Dunhuang art. As Chang Dai-Chien ventured abroad, his art transformed from a closed to an open approach. Even during his travels in Europe in the early twentieth century, where he visited numerous art museums, his work began to be influenced by Western painting styles, particularly Impressionism and Cubism. These influences are evident in his works, as he began experimenting with modern ways to portray traditional Chinese cultural themes. “If a person can combine the strengths of Western

and Chinese painting, blending Western formal beauty with the spiritual beauty of China, they are incredibly talented. However, achieving such a high artistic expression requires diligent and dedicated practice. Otherwise, with a slight oversight, one can fall into confusion and become something that doesn’t quite belong to either world,”<sup>8</sup> as Chang Dai-Chien notes. While living abroad, he continued to explore the transformation of Chinese traditional painting styles. Building upon the foundation of traditional Chinese ink splattering techniques dating back to the Tang and Song dynasties, he developed his method of color splattering. This technique fused elements of Chinese ink painting with Western artistic influences, resulting in a unique style. Chang Dai-Chien’s experiences living overseas enriched his artistic style, infusing his works with innovation and multicultural elements while respecting Chinese traditions. As a result, his works hold a significant place in the history of Chinese painting and have earned acclaim in the international art world.

Chang Dai-Chien made multiple trips to Japan, France, and Brazil to participate in artistic exchanges, and his artistic style varied in the art scenes of these different locations. In the early 1950s, Chang Dai-Chien traveled to France to participate in international art exhibitions and engage in deep interactions and collaborations with local artists. During this period, his artistic style was influenced by Western art, emphasizing the use of color and intensifying explorations of spatial composition and form shaping. While in France, he began to experiment with Western painting mediums such as oil painting and incorporated elements of modern art into his works. In 1953, Chang Dai-Chien visited Brazil to participate in the Rio de Janeiro International Art Exhibition and met local artists and cultural figures during the event. His artistic style was influenced by Brazilian folk art during this art exchange, resulting in an emphasis on vibrant colors and flowing forms. At the same time, his art took on a livelier and more spirited artistic atmosphere.

Chang Dai-Chien exhibited different artistic styles during his art exchanges in France and Brazil, influenced by the art of distinct cultures. He drew new artistic inspiration from these experiences, continually expanding and developing his artistic style. He became a prominent representative of the fusion of traditional Chinese art and modern Western art. In 1956, upon the invitation of Georges Salles, the director of the Louvre Museum in France, Chang Dai-Chien organized the “Chang Dai-Chien Exhibition of Dunhuang Cave Murals Reproductions (《張大千臨摹敦煌石窟壁畫展》)” and the “Chang Dai-Chien Recent Works Exhibition (《張大千近作展》).” After the exhibitions concluded, Chang Dai-

Chien, disregarding the objections of many, proactively contacted Pablo Picasso (Translator Companion). On July 29<sup>th</sup>, at noon, Chang Dai-Chien and his wife met with the 75-year-old Picasso at his castle residence, resulting in an East-West cultural exchange summit. During this meeting, the 57-year-old Chang Dai-Chien observed the works that Picasso created after studying Chinese painting. They discussed concepts from Chinese culture, such as the Five Colors of Ink and Emphasizing Expression Over Likeness. Picasso appreciated Chang Dai-Chien's calligraphy performance and gained insight into Chinese cultural concepts. Simultaneously, Chang Dai-Chien experienced the essence of Western modern art up close, which had a significant impact on his subsequent artistic style. The exchange between these two masters brought the collision of Eastern and Western cultures into proximity. Chang Dai-Chien recalled, "In my imagination, there is no fundamental difference between Eastern and Western art. It was the same when I started and remained the same when I reached the highest level. There may be some regional customs and differences in tools that account for distinctions in the artwork."<sup>9</sup> During this exchange, they took a photograph together (figure 3) and exchanged artwork. Picasso presented Chang Dai-Chien with a *Spanish Shepherd Portrait* (《西班牙牧神像》), and Chang Dai-Chien gifted Picasso *Bamboo in Ink* (《墨竹圖》). Later, Chang Dai-Chien's color splattering style succeeded

tremendously and influenced overseas artists such as Zao Wou-Ki.

Chang Dai-Chien made several trips to Japan for artistic exchange activities, and during this time, his artistic style underwent some changes. In 1956, he visited Japan for the first time and was influenced by Japanese ink painting and calligraphy. This led to an increased emphasis on contrast and layering in his work and a heightened focus on line expression and brushwork. His brushwork became more fluid in the works from this period, and the compositions and sense of depth on the canvas became richer. During the 1960s, Chang Dai-Chien visited Japan to participate in international art exhibitions and engage in deep interactions and collaborations with Japanese artists. During this time, his artistic style continued to evolve, with an increased focus on the use and expression of color. His works gradually exhibited more pronounced color contrasts and conveyed a livelier and more lyrical emotional expression. Chang Dai-Chien's artistic exchanges in Japan profoundly impacted the evolution of his artistic style. He drew new artistic inspiration from these experiences, broadened his artistic horizons, and continued to explore and develop his style. When examining the evolution of his artistic style, Chang Dai-Chien emerges as an outstanding Chinese painter who experienced different phases and style changes throughout his artistic career. Researchers have com



Figure 3. Chang Dai-Chien and Picasso met in the garden of Picasso's historic castle. On July 29, 1956.

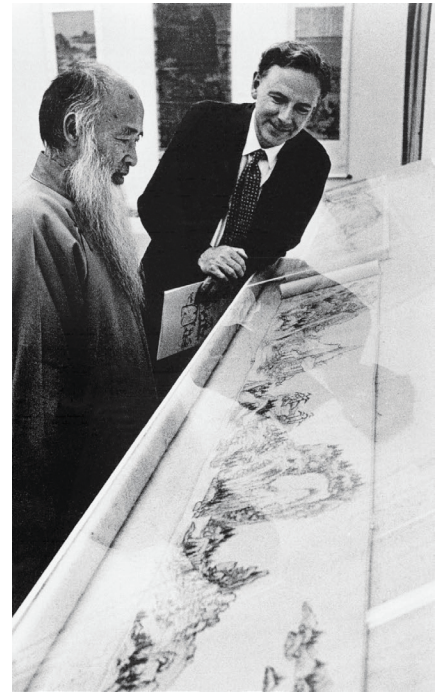


Figure 4. Curator Michael Sullivan (蘇立文) and Chang Dai-Chien in conversation at an art exhibition at Stanford University Museum in the United States.

pared and analyzed Chang Dai-Chien's artworks from various periods and regions to explore the changes and evolution of his artistic style during his overseas exchanges. For instance, some scholars have pointed out that his artistic style transitioned from the traditional gongbi (工筆) style to a more free and expressive style during his time in France and the United States. His exposure to external cultures during his overseas experiences profoundly impacted his art.

Chang Dai-Chien's time in California was a significant period in his life. This period he profoundly impacted his artistic career, starting with his visit to the Bay Area in 1956 to see Zhang Shuqi (張書旂) and later settling in Carmel. Carmel is a picturesque town on the west coast of the United States, known for attracting numerous artists and intellectuals. Here, Chang Dai-Chien was exposed to Western culture, particularly modernist painting, which influenced his art. In Carmel, Chang Dai-Chien continued to develop and innovate his splattered-ink technique. He explored various materials and techniques, making his splattered-ink artworks more colorful and contemporary. Despite being in the Western world, Chang Dai-Chien maintained his love and dedication to Chinese traditional culture. He continued to create traditional Chinese painting themes like landscapes, birds, and flowers, along with modern works incorporating Chinese cultural elements. During this period, Chang Dai-Chien was invited by local curators and galleries to participate in various art activities. In 1967, renowned art historian Michael Sullivan (1916-2013) curated a special exhibition for him at Stanford University Museum (figure 4). The beautiful natural landscapes of Carmel inspired Chang Dai-Chien's work, and he often depicted the surrounding scenery, creating numerous pieces showcasing California's coastline and natural landscapes. During his creative phase in Carmel, Chang Dai-Chien was inspired by Western modernist painting and remained steadfast in upholding Chinese painting traditions, resulting in a unique artistic style.

Chang Dai-Chien made multiple visits to the United States to participate in artistic exchange activities, where he experienced the new trends and currents of Western modern art. During these activities, his artistic style went through some changes.

In the late 1950s, Chang Dai-Chien traveled to the United States, beginning several years of traveling and lecturing. In his poem *Moving to Carmel, USA* (《移家美國卡米爾》), he wrote: "The four mountains are all centuries-old pines, and beneath the pines, a new addition of a venerable palace; With the green pines, I was once acquainted, but now I've become the master." This poem vividly expresses his joyful state of mind. During this

period, he engaged in deep interactions and collaborations with American painters and artists. He discussed artistic creation methods and techniques with local American artists and conducted research and drew inspiration from contemporary art movements such as abstract expressionism. In the United States during this time, Chang Dai-Chien focused more on the expression of color and contrast and boldly incorporated abstract forms and geometric elements into his works. He also started experimenting with Western painting color concepts on a larger scale and intensified his spatial and formal composition exploration. His style during this period became more free, bold, and modern. In summary, Chang Dai-Chien's artistic exchange activities in the United States were influenced by the trends in Western modern art, resulting in a certain degree of change in his artistic style. Through interactions and collaborations with Western artists, he expanded his artistic perspective, gained new insights, and continually explored and developed his artistic style. Research on Chang Dai-Chien's overseas artistic exchange experiences is extensive, encompassing his interactions and creative experiences in different countries and periods. These experiences had a profound impact on his artistic style and ideas. Researchers have conducted extensive studies by reviewing literature, interviewing relevant individuals, analyzing artistic works, and investigating locations where Chang Dai-Chien lived and worked overseas. These studies include his interactions with Picasso during his exhibitions in France, his lectures and exhibition experiences in the United States, his creative and exchange experiences in Brazil, and his exhibition activities in Japan, among others.

### 3. The Influence of Ocular Ailment on Chang Dai-Chien's Splashed-Ink and Splashed-Color Artistic Style

In 1957, Chang Dai-Chien experienced a significant turning point in his life and artistic development. This period marked a transition in his artistic style from detailed to hazy. "In June, Mr. Chang directed the workers to build an artificial hill in his Bade Garden, often personally participating in the work. One day, he saw several workers moving a huge rock for the hill and decided to help. However, he exerted too much force and suddenly felt his vision darkening. He was immediately assisted back indoors to rest. Mr. Chang initially thought he would recover in a few days, but to his surprise, his vision remained the same after several days, with blurred vision. He went to the San Paolo General Hospital for an examination, and it was determined that the capillaries in

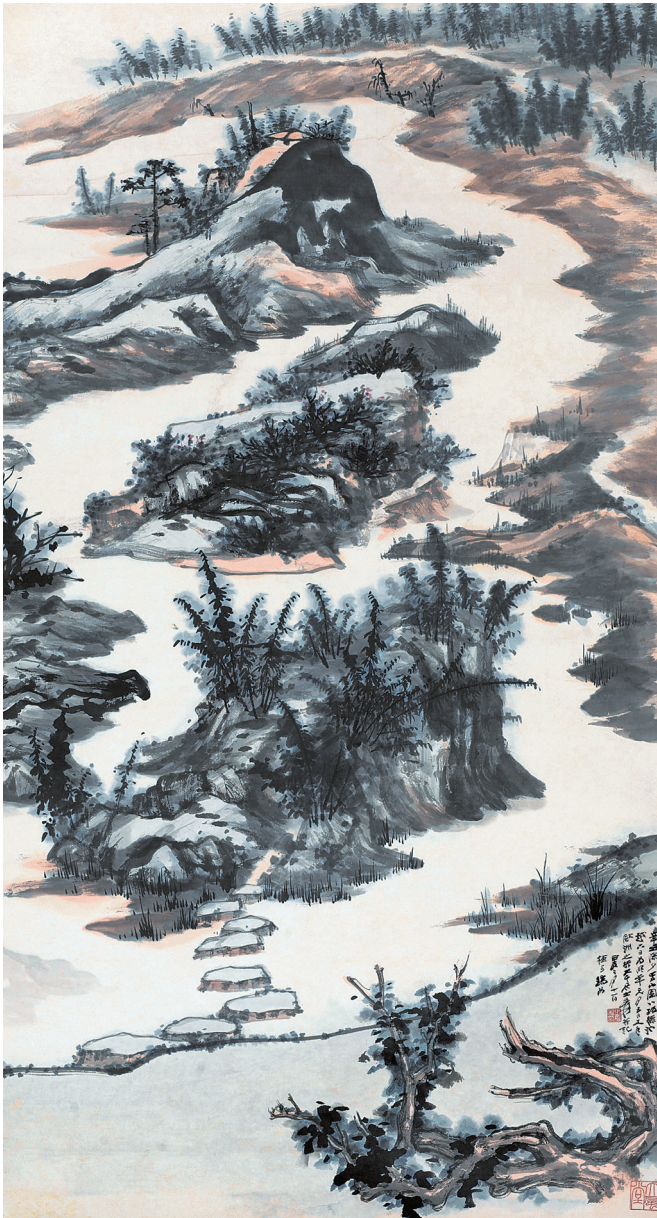


Figure 5. Chang Dai-Chien. *Bade Garden Eight Virtues Pond*. Ink, and color on paper, 172×93.5 cm. 1961.



Figure 6. Chang Dai-Chien. *Memories of Visiting Emei* (《憶遊峨眉》). Color on paper, 136.8×69.5cm, 1963.

his retina had ruptured due to excessive exertion. The doctor advised that he should avoid straining his eyes, must rest quietly, and was strictly prohibited from painting.”<sup>10</sup> His eyesight was affected, preventing him from continuing precise and accurate painting. In 1959, he created *Swiss Landscape* (《瑞士山水》), which used an “old wine in a new bottle” artistic technique, and showed a tendency towards a more misty and hazy style in the texture, brushwork, pointillism, and tree painting compared to the previous period. “In less than ten years, he developed his later splashed-ink and splashed-color style, a fusion of various factors: Western modern art trends, especially Larry’s abstract expressionism, a re-

examination of the non-traditional Po Mo tradition that could be traced back to the Tang Dynasty (618-906), and declining vision no longer allowed him to work meticulously. Chang’s late style culminated in an immortal painting—*Five Gorges Gorge and Sailboats in the Clouds*. Colors and ink flow freely throughout the entire painting, capturing the awe-inspiring grandeur of the artist’s birthplace and the mysterious atmosphere of the Yangtze River. Below the towering cliffs of the gorge is an ancient and multi-segmented cypress tree, vividly reminiscent of the cypress trees swaying in the wind in Carmel, California, where Chang Dai-Chien spent a long time before settling there in 1968. The collision of East

and West in Chang Dai-Chien's late paintings brought a modern transformation to ancient traditions."<sup>11</sup> This is especially evident in the 1961 work *Bade Garden Eight Virtues Pond* (*Shanyuan Badechi*, 《山園八德池》) (figure 5), where the artist has already presented a clear visual impact driven by ink and color rendering. In this artwork, he used a Western observational composition approach to convey the depth of the landscape. This is quite different from the traditional Chinese landscape painting, which typically employs the three-distance technique. This painting is relatively rare among Chang Dai-Chien's works, and it's speculated that it is the result of Chang Dai-Chien's sketching in his Bade Garden.

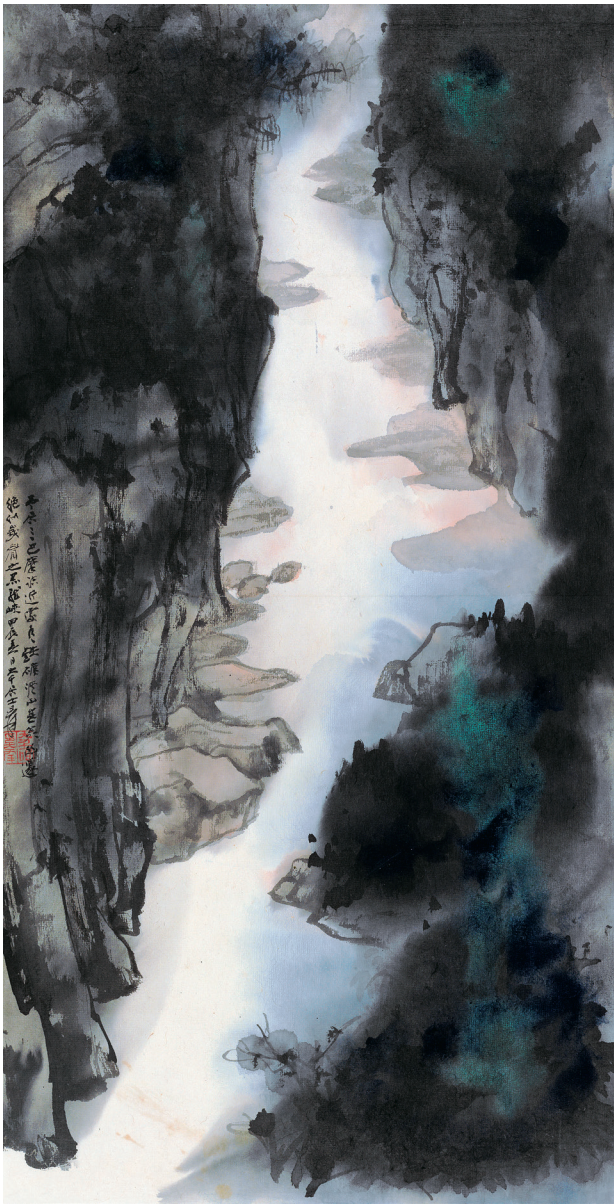


Figure 7. Chang Dai-Chien. *Crimson Maple and Soaring Waterfall* (《丹楓飛瀑》). Ink on paper, 136×68cm, 1964.

Chang Dai-Chien's joy knew no bounds upon discovering the therapeutic effects of consuming winter mushrooms for his eye ailment. He promptly picked up his brush and created the painting *Winter Mushroom* (《冬菇圖》). The composition featured over a dozen winter mushrooms arranged rhythmically, employing an extremely concise brushwork and ink rendering style. He inscribed the following words on the painting: "In the fasting room, Zhiliang (referring to himself), always living in the mountains. By consuming them, all seven apertures became enlightened. I had an eye disease, and in November of the Dingyou year (referring to a specific year), I sought treatment in Tokyo. I have always had a strong craving for winter mushrooms, which the Japanese call 'shītaké'. At the time, they were in season and very delicious and affordable. I consumed them daily and gradually felt an improvement in my eyes. I created this painting and, for half a year, did not pick up a brush. I inscribed a poem about winter's essence on top to commemorate the joy of that time."<sup>12</sup> These documents are sufficient to confirm Chang Dai-Chien's eye ailment and its perplexity to the artist's creative process. The artwork *Valley of Solitude* (《幽壑圖》) created in 1964, introduced extensive use of ink and rendering effects. However, some firsthand witnesses believe that Chang Dai-Chien's eye ailment did not significantly impact him, as his foundational techniques had already reached a level of mastery that could not be influenced. One statement by Meng Xiaodong, in particular, resonates with an appreciation for Chang Dai-Chien's enduring skills, regardless of his eye condition. She opines that even if Chang Dai-Chien had an eye ailment, his decades of painting had undoubtedly honed his mastery, suggesting that even with his reduced vision, he could continue to create remarkable art.<sup>13</sup>

During this period, mainly due to his move to the United States to treat his eye ailment, Chang Dai-Chien settled in California. His eye condition significantly shifted his artistic style towards simplicity and developing a hazy aesthetic. Chang Dai-Chien is considered an important figure in the history of modern Chinese painting; his creative work is deeply rooted in traditional Chinese painting, and he simultaneously drew inspiration from modern art. Notably, after coming to the United States, he had the opportunity to visit major modern art museums and closely engage with American modern art.

While he received medical treatment for his eye condition in the United States, Chang Dai-Chien organized important art exhibitions and achieved success, gaining widespread recognition in society. His time spent in California and other locations significantly impacted



Figure 8. Chang Dai-Chien. *Swiss Snowy Mountains* (《瑞士雪山》). Silk painting, 173×344cm, 1965.

his art, as he was influenced by the local natural surroundings and social milieu, which expedited a gradual transformation of his artistic style. During his residence in California, Chang Dai-Chien's visual acuity was to some extent impaired, leading to his ability to perceive only blurry images. The reduced vision had some influence on his artistic creations, resulting in subtle changes in his artistic style. During this period, his works became increasingly abstract and blurred. He began to employ larger brushstrokes and more indistinct lines, with the details in his works no longer as clear as they used to be. "Overnight studying is already forgotten, the mist brings no direction as old age. From knowing to being laughed at by children, ten times are read at a line."<sup>14</sup> He portrayed landscapes using larger color blocks and an emotional approach, conveying his inner feelings onto the rice paper rather than focusing solely on the precision of forms. In his works created in California, he placed greater emphasis on the use of color to accentuate emotions and expressions, resulting in more vibrant colors in his pieces.

Although his diminished eyesight challenged his creative process, Chang Dai-Chien maintained his creativity. He utilized abstract and blurred elements to convey emotions and his inner world. The works from this period still hold profound artistic value, demonstrating his resilience and creativity in the face of physical challenges. In his "Self-Preface to the 40-Year Retrospective Exhibition", Chang Dai-Chien wrote, "At the age of sixty, my vision suddenly dimmed, and I could

no longer painstakingly work. Everything I created from then on was about reducing strokes and breaking ink. The world considered it innovation; I called it a vision of abstraction, so what was new for me?"<sup>15</sup> Due to his eye condition, Chang Dai-Chien could no longer work as he used to. Everything he did was aimed at reducing the amount of ink and brushwork.

#### 4. Formation of Chinese-Western Fusion Splash Ink Painting

The formation of splash ink paintings can be traced back to various factors within Chinese painting history and cultural traditions. Chinese painting history has always had a strong spirit of experimentation. Splash ink painting emphasizes the importance of emotion and expression. There's a saying: "Ink is called splash ink, mountain colors are called splashed green, grass colors are called splashed green, and splashing is the most effective way to convey the artistic atmosphere in painting."<sup>16</sup> This technique allows artists to convey emotions and artistic essence most effectively. It allows artists more freedom to express their inner emotions and feelings, free from the constraints of traditional painting forms. Splash ink painting is often more abstract and emotionally driven, emphasizing the artist's emotions and creativity. The inspiration for splash ink painting often comes from natural environmental phenomena like rain, water flow, or mountain ranges. These elements hold significant importance in Chinese culture, and

splash ink painting conveys the beauty of nature by emulating its power and dynamics. The emergence of splash ink painting is also influenced by the development of traditional Chinese painting. It found its place within traditional painting genres like landscapes and bird-and-flower painting, blending with the traditional painting style to create a unique artistic approach.

“Looking at the spatiotemporal factors, the evolution of splash ink painting has undergone a historical logic from innovation to traditional formalization. It started innovatively in the Tang Dynasty when the passion and



Figure 9. Chang Dai-Chien. *The Scene of the Transcontinental Highway*. Ink and color on paper, 130×61.5cm, 1965.

tension of expressing ‘novelty’ through unconventional and audacious ink splashing were appreciated by poets and literati. However, it was also dismissed by some traditional artistic value systems. In Chinese art history, this ink splashing has remained at the fringes of linear historical development, experiencing periodic resurgences in the Tang, Ming, and Qing Dynasties. Prominent figures like Li Rihua (李日華), Chen Jiru (陳繼儒), and Dong Qichang (董其昌) in the Ming Dynasty reinterpreted and promoted it, followed by the ink splashing practices of Xu Wei (徐渭) and Zhu Da (朱耷). During the Qing Dynasty, artists like Fang Xun (方薰), Sheng Dashi (盛大士), Shen Zongsai (沈宗賽), Wang Gai (王概), Shi Tao, and the Four Wang (四王) were enthusiastic about the concept of splash ink, and their works, to varying degrees, echoed the ingenious application and stylistic continuation of splash ink.”<sup>17</sup> *The Scene of the Transcontinental Highway* (《橫貫公路一景》, figure 9) is a classic example that combines traditional Chinese Tang Dynasty splash ink techniques with the use of green and blue colors, creating a feeling reminiscent of classic landscape paintings in both composition and style. In summary, the formation of splash ink painting is a natural extension of the Chinese painting tradition, reflecting the artist’s exploration of experimentation, emotion, and nature. This technique not only provides artists with a new way of expression but also offers audiences a holistic experience.

“The broken ink method is traditional in our country but has not been used for a long time. Laozi said: ‘Get within the circle, transcend the exterior of the image.’ This state is not easily achieved, seeming yet not seeming, within it there is an image. What more can be said?”<sup>18</sup> Chang Dai-Chien employed traditional splashed-ink techniques and splashed-color methods, giving his art a similar appearance and connecting it with the abstract expressionist art produced internationally at the time, even though he had his unique painting philosophy. Chang Dai-Chien boldly adopted traditional splashed-ink methods overseas and connected them with international abstract art. Despite his distinct painting philosophy, Chang Dai-Chien’s inheritance of traditional Chinese splashed-ink techniques was an important aspect of his artistic career. His creations blended traditional techniques with modern elements, making him a modern inheritor of the Chinese painting tradition. Chang Dai-Chien once said to Hou Beiren (侯北人), “Li Rihua of the Ming Dynasty said, ‘The splashed-ink artist uses ink with exquisite subtlety, the brushwork is not visible, it’s as if the ink were splashed out of one’s ear.’ Before painting, the hills and valleys take form in one’s mind. During painting, the ink is splashed and color is used as

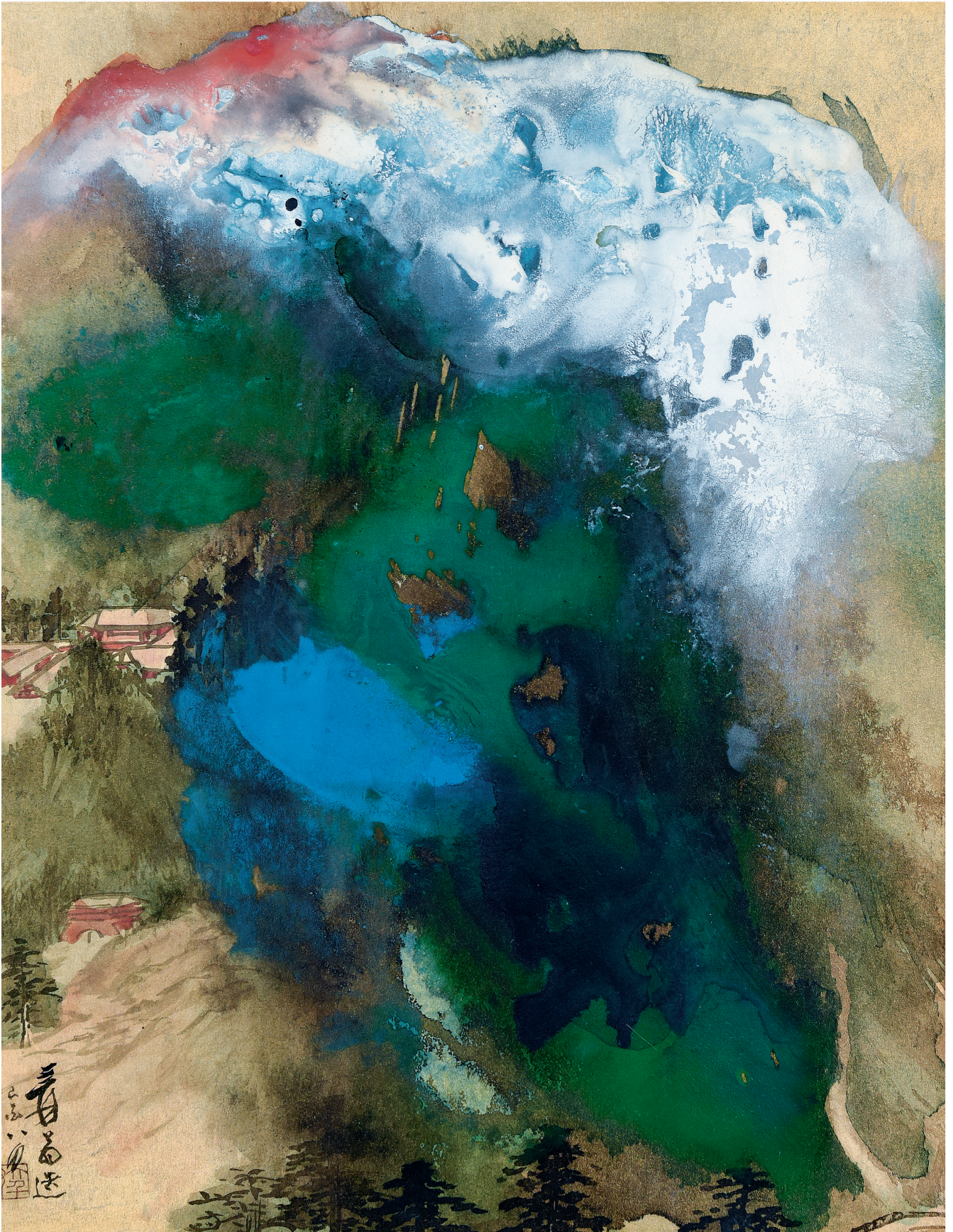


Figure 10. Chang Dai-Chien. *Qiong Feng Xue Yong Tu* (《琼峰雪拥图》). Gold leaf and color on paper, 53×41cm, 1969.

if being poured or sprinkled. While painting, the splashed colors fully reveal the textural effects.”<sup>19</sup> Chang Dai-Chien pioneered his splashed-ink technique, combining it with traditional Chinese ink painting to create expressive and distinctive works of art. His splashed-ink technique is a highly controlled method that involves splattering, patting, or pouring ink and pigments onto the canvas to create various forms and textures. Chang Dai-Chien’s splashed-ink works are both abstract and expressive. “During the flourishing period of art reform in the early Qing Dynasty, renowned artworks from the Forbidden City were displayed to the public, but collectors from both northern and southern regions kept their collections



Figure 11. Chang Dai-Chien. *The Secluded Valley* (《幽谷圖》). Gold leaf and color on paper, 124x

hidden. Due to this, Western-style facsimiles became available, allowing scholars to study and reproduce these artworks. This practice extended back to the Song, Yuan, and early Ming dynasties, driven by a prevailing trend. With the evolution of artistic styles and influences, it became a strong foundation for the flourishing of the art of our nation, far surpassing that of the Qing Dynasty.”<sup>20</sup> Chang Dai-Chien conveyed emotions and themes through this technique while maintaining the ink charm of Chinese traditional painting. His splashed ink works typically feature a bold and expressive style, emphasizing emotions and freely flowing brushwork. This makes his works unique within the context of Chinese painting, yet they still capture the essence of Chinese art.

Chang Dai-Chien was dedicated to preserving the traditions of Chinese painting, particularly landscape and bird-and-flower painting. His splash ink technique was a modern approach to conveying the spirit of Chinese culture and philosophy. Chang Dai-Chien once said, “Color forms the base, emphasizing thickness and age, which is the method of the ancients.”<sup>21</sup> Chang Dai-Chien’s inheritance of traditional Chinese splash ink techniques reflects his innovative spirit and respect for tradition in his artistic creations. His works hold a significant place in the history of Chinese painting while also exerting a profound influence on modern art. As Ba Dong (巴東) once summarized: “The artistic form of Chang Dai-Chien’s works inherits from the Four Monks of the Ming and Qing dynasties, focusing on the ink and brushwork of the Yuan and Ming periods. When he arrived in Dunhuang and saw the grandeur of the color application in the murals from the Sui and Tang dynasties, he was deeply moved. His artworks’ dedication and spirit of devotion left a strong impression, and they cannot be compared to the ‘lively and elegant’ literati paintings.”<sup>22</sup> His exploration and innovation of traditional Chinese painting techniques in splash ink and color painting combined ink and color to create expressive and vivid works. This innovation holds significant importance in the history of Chinese painting. Examining it from a socio-historical context, researchers currently believe that Chang Dai-Chien’s overseas artistic exchange activities were related to his artistic pursuits and the socio-historical context of that time. For example, his exchange activities in the United States in the 1950s occurred during a period of improved relations between China and the United States, providing favorable opportunities for his artistic exchanges. These cultural exchanges also contributed to the development of various activities related to East-West culture, economy, diplomacy, and more. Overall, the current state of research on Chang Dai-Chien’s overseas artistic exchanges is quite rich, aiding

in a better understanding of his artistic achievements and cultural legacy. Simultaneously, these studies provide valuable insights into promoting the exchange and integration of Chinese and Western cultures. On a personal level, Chang Dai-Chien experienced an important transformation and a complex period in his artistic style during his time in California. The influence of American modern art and its emphasis on abstract art strengthened his ability to effectively integrate traditional Chinese splash ink techniques with modern art, developing his unique splash ink style. Chang Dai-Chien's splash ink paintings have diverse forms, including traditional emulation, realism, and modern styles, allowing him more artistic freedom and adaptability to different themes and styles. His deep feelings of homesickness in California led to the construction of Chinese gardens, the cultivation of Eastern plants, and the reflection of these themes in his artwork and poetry content. Chang Dai-Chien's artistic creation in California was rather complex, involving the effective combination of traditional splash ink techniques with abstract art and a significant transformation of his style from complexity to simplicity. This journey was filled with various themes and works reflecting his deep homesickness, making his works not just simple artistic images but also complex social contexts.

Wolfflin believed that art history exhibits cyclical changes, where different artistic styles reappear throughout history. Early Chinese art styles emphasized flat representation, but from the period of the Five Dynasties and onwards, linearity was emphasised. The shift of modern Chinese painting towards flat representation is seen as an inevitable cyclical return. Chang Dai-Chien's flat-style splashed color paintings combine elements of traditional Chinese painting with Western modern art concepts. This reflects his respect and understanding of multiculturalism. As a result, this cultural fusion gives his works global appeal. His splashed color paintings are valued for their innovation, cultural fusion, emotional expression, and diversity. These works hold an important place in the history of Chinese painting and are widely recognized in the international art world. Chang Dai-Chien's overseas artistic career and style transformation provide valuable insights and data for understanding the development of modern Chinese art on a global scale. His integration of Western artistic elements into traditional Chinese painting holds significant importance for cross-cultural studies.

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Planning project of Higher Education Institute of North China Institute of Science and Technology, "Research on Design Curriculum System of Service Emergency Management Education" (Project No.: HKJYGH202101)

Editor: Gao Pengfei

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## 從線性到平面——張大千海外時期藝術風格演變及形成原因研究

劉軍平

**摘要：**中國現代藝術史上歷史考證的方式主導在張大千研究中，然而，風格學已經近些年成為藝術史研究的焦點，從線性到平面的風格轉型是張大千在海外藝術創作的重要特點。本文研究了張大千海外時期潑墨潑彩風格（1949-1956）、西方現代藝術對張大千潑墨潑彩風格的影響、眼疾對張大千潑墨潑彩藝術風格的影響、張大千中西融合潑墨畫的形成等方面。張大千在海外時期藝術風格學的研究不僅可以深入瞭解其藝術思想和創作方法，還可以為中國現代藝術的發展和傳承提供借鑒和啟示。

**關鍵詞：**張大千；潑墨與潑彩；線性到平面；眼疾；中國文化基因