Article

The Pulse Of An Era: Analyzing Reception And Interpretation Of Realistic Oil Paintings Among Art Exhibition Attendees In Chongqing, China

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Abstract: This study examines the reception and interpretation of realistic oil paintings among art exhibition attendees in Chongqing, China, considering the role of social context, art education, media influence and artist's reputation and background. Using a survey methods approach, data were gathered through questionnaires distributed at realism painting exhibitions and analyzed using Partial Least Square-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The findings reveal that art education and the artist's reputation significantly shape art exhibition attendees' interpretation, while social factors and media influence have a less pronounced impact. This suggests a shift in art exhibition attendees' engagement with realistic oil paintings in Chongqing, where individual factors such as education and artist background now play a more dominant role than traditional social narratives. These insights have implications for art educators and cultural institutions. By understanding the evolving dynamics of art appreciation, they can develop strategies to foster deeper public engagement with art and promote a more refined understanding of realistic oil paintings.

Keywords: Realistic Oil Painting; Art Reception; Art Education; Chongqing, China

1. Introduction

Realistic oil painting, with its ability to reproduce the physical world, has historically held significant importance in the art history of China. This artistic expression, particularly after 1976, became deeply intertwined with the social landscape, mirroring cultural transformations and societal ideals (Zhu, 2023). Although realism originated in Western creative traditions, its adoption and adaptation in China, especially after 1976, symbolized more than an artistic trend; it embodied a convergence of philosophy, cultural identity, and artistic expression (Taylor, 2021). Cities like Chongqing, due to their distinct social circumstances, have functioned as key hubs for this artistic development, producing works that reflect both national narratives and local experiences. Comprehending audience perception, interpretation, and interaction with these works yields valuable insights into the role of art and the cultural norms and educational frameworks that shape art appreciation (Yue et al., 2022).

The realistic oil paintings of Chongqing City offer a profound medium for examining these connections. Chongqing, recognized for its historical importance and rapid urban development, provides a distinctive setting where the socio narratives of realism persist (Sullivan, 2023). The

city's creative scene presents an opportunity to explore the relationship between realism and public reception. Nevertheless, few studies have rigorously investigated how factors such as social context, media critique, and art education influence the public's comprehension and interpretation of these works (Burkardt, 2022). Furthermore, as Chongqing evolves into a metropolitan hub, these paintings embody the continual interplay between tradition and modernization, rural and urban, as well as local and global influences.

Despite substantial research on the social backdrop of art in China, particularly state-sanctioned art forms across various historical periods, a void persists in the literature regarding modern audience engagement with these works. In Chongqing, a city characterized by its unique blend of historical and cultural influences, realistic oil paintings often reflect the social environment. However, there is a lack of empirical research on the public's reception and interpretation of these artworks (Zhou & Zhou, 2020). Understanding how diverse audiences, shaped by varying levels of art education, media critique, perceive realistic oil paintings is crucial for comprehending the broader cultural and social context. This is especially important given the significant role public perception plays in determining art's cultural relevance (Wang, 2024).

This research aims to explore the disparity between the production of realistic oil paintings and the art exhibition attendees' reception of these artworks in Chongqing. Public engagement with these paintings is influenced by various factors, including the social setting, access to art education, the impact of media critique, and artist's reputation and background. Despite these influences, little research has examined how these components collectively shape popular interpretations. This study aims to fill that gap by investigating the diverse perceptions and interpretations of realistic oil paintings among different audience segments within Chongqing's distinct socio-cultural. (Peiyi Lyu, 2024).

This study aims to examine the reception and interpretation of realistic oil paintings among art exhibition attendees in Chongqing City, China, concentrating on the social background, exposure to art and art education, the influence of media and criticism, and artist's reputation. The research seeks to illuminate how these factors shape public engagement with realistic art, providing valuable insights into the broader socio-cultural and dynamics of the city.

This research is highly significant for comprehending the reception of modern art in China, particularly in urban areas like Chongqing, where cultural, and social circumstances are perpetually evolving. The study provides a comprehensive examination of the various factors affecting public perception of realistic oil paintings, which could be beneficial for both art historians and contemporary artists. It elucidates the interplay between the social context, cultural conventions, and public perception, emphasizing art's dynamic role in both reflecting and shaping society's discourses (Huang et al., 2021). The study offers valuable insights for art educators, curators, and legislators regarding the significance of art education in fostering a profound appreciation for art. Furthermore, comprehending the influence of media and art criticism on public perception may help facilitate policies that promote a more inclusive and analytical art discourse. This research contributes to the growing body of literature on the influence of cultural values and social context on art interpretation, providing a case study pertinent to China's rapidly evolving cultural landscape and indicative of broader global trends (Huang, 2023).

The following section will review the existing literature on public interpretation of art, with a specific focus on realistic oil paintings, art education, media criticism, and the social environment of art in China. The methodology section will outline the research strategy, data collection methodologies, and analytical approaches, followed by the presentation of findings and a discussion of their implications for art appreciation and cultural understanding in modern Chongqing.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical frameworks supporting this study are crucial for comprehending the intricate relationship of art, society, and individual perception. These frameworks will contextualize the study within broader academic discourses and establish a foundation for analyzing the specific dynamics in Chongqing in China.

2.1.1 Sociocultural Theory

Sociocultural theory, chiefly linked to Lev Vygotsky's research, asserts that individual development, encompassing cognitive and perceptual processes, is profoundly rooted in and shaped by the prevailing social and cultural environment (Vygotsky, 1978). This study highlights the significance of sociocultural theory in comprehending how the public's reception of realistic oil paintings in Chongqing is influenced by the city's distinctive cultural, social, and historical background. The theory posits that individuals interpret art not in isolation, but within a framework of social interactions, cultural conventions, and historical antecedents. This viewpoint corresponds with the notion that art functions as a cultural artifact, with its interpretation shaped by the collective knowledge and shared values of the society in which it resides (Xing & Pinyonatthagarn, 2023). The longstanding Chinese reverence for realism in art, grounded in centuries of artistic traditions that emphasize meticulous portrayal and historical narratives, significantly influences the public perception of realistic oil paintings in Chongqing.

Furthermore, sociocultural theory emphasizes the significance of cultural instruments, such as language, symbols, and artistic expressions, in influencing human cognition. In the context of realistic oil paintings, these artworks serve as cultural instruments that facilitate public comprehension of overarching social topics (Rybalko et al., 2023). The public's interaction with these artworks extends beyond aesthetic appreciation to include the interpretation of cultural symbols and narratives intricately connected to their social environment (Cole, 1996). Consequently, sociocultural theory provides a comprehensive framework for exploring how Chongqing's cultural and social milieu influences public reception and interpretation of realistic oil paintings. It enables scholars to analyze the overarching societal factors, including the historical and cultural elements that shape public perception and understanding of art (Haotian, 2021).

Realistic oil paintings have historically served as powerful mediums for conveying and interpreting societal ideals, cultural norms, and historical narratives (Onuora et al., 2021). In China, particularly in Chongqing, the public's reception and perception of realistic oil paintings reflect a distinctive amalgamation of social, cultural, and educational factors. This literature review seeks to consolidate recent studies on the elements shaping public perception of realistic oil paintings in Chongqing, including the social environment, cultural norms, art exposure, media influence, and the artist's reputation. Research conducted between 2019 and 2024 provides a framework for comprehending these interdependencies and their influence on public engagement with realistic art.

2.2 Hypothesis Development

2.2.1 Social Context

The social landscape in China significantly influences the public reception of art, especially realistic oil paintings. The Chinese art scene is heavily influenced by official initiatives that endorse artistic styles aligned with national narratives. Realistic oil paintings, distinguished by their technical perfection and depiction of historical and social topics, have gained popularity due to their conformity with state-sanctioned cultural standards (Guo et al., 2022). This

conformity has fostered positive public responses, particularly when artworks emphasize themes of nationalism, historical pride, or social cohesion (Hafne, 2022).

Art has long functioned as an important medium of communication. Within the Chinese cultural context, realistic artistic forms have often been associated with broader social narratives. Recent studies reveal that public perceptions of realistic paintings are often shaped by implicit statements embedded within the artworks (Onuora et al., 2021).

The intricate interplay of art, institutional frameworks, and public perception is especially pronounced in urban areas like Chongqing, where the impact of state ideology on cultural production is more obvious (Montanari & Bergh, 2014). The social milieu frequently informs the themes and subjects explored by artists, shaping how the public interprets their work. Themes reflecting social realities such as urbanization, the working class, and the rapid transformation of Chinese cities resonate strongly with viewers, who often see their own experiences mirrored in these depictions. Public engagement with such artworks is profoundly linked to contemporary social discourses, as audiences perceive these paintings not merely as artistic creations but as reflections of their societal context (Ma, 2023).

H1: There is a significant positive effect of social context on the public interpretation of artworks.

2.2.2 Exposure to Art and Art Education

Exposure to art and the caliber of art education profoundly affect the public perception of realism in oil paintings. In China, art education has historically prioritized technical proficiency, particularly in realistic methods such as drawing, painting, and sculpting. This skill-based focus has fostered an audience that values the technical proficiency evident in realistic artworks (An & Nie, 2023). However, disparities in access to art education result in varying levels of art enjoyment and interpretative skills within the population.

Urban centers like Chongqing benefit from a vibrant cultural environment, featuring art institutions, museums, and galleries that provide citizens with greater access to art compared to rural areas. Research indicates that individuals with more exposure to art whether through education or cultural participation demonstrate deeper critical engagement with artworks, leading to interpretations that go beyond surface-level aesthetics (Liang et al., 2022). Such exposure fosters an informed public that appreciates not only the artistic process but also the thematic complexity and historical significance of realistic paintings.

Recent reforms in Chinese art education that prioritize critical thinking, art history, and cross-cultural comparisons have significantly increased public engagement with art (Carlyle, 2020). These educational transformations are equipping viewers with the analytical tools necessary to comprehend the broader implications of artworks, enabling more nuanced interpretations that consider social and historical (Xu & He, 2021). Research demonstrates that these advancements in education have fostered a more discerning public, one that perceives realistic paintings not merely as skillful replicas but as intricate cultural artifacts (Kardum et al., 2020). As such, the level of exposure to art and the quality of art education play a crucial role in shaping public perception. Increased exposure and education cultivate a more informed audience capable of appreciating the complexities of realistic art, thereby enhancing the interpretative conversation between the artwork and its viewer (Guo et al., 2022).

H2: There is a significant positive effect of exposure to art and art education on the public interpretation of artworks.

2.2.3 Media and Criticism

Media and art criticism play a crucial role in influencing public perception of realistic oil paintings. In China, the media serves a dual purpose: promoting art and influencing public interpretations. Traditional and digital media outlets, such as television, print, and social media, provide spaces for discussing, critiquing, and disseminating art to wide audiences (Zhao et al.,

2020). These media outlets frequently contextualize artworks within specific narratives, profoundly impacting how the public interprets them (Burnett, 2023).

Art criticism functions as a conduit between the artwork and its audience, providing professional analyses that can either enhance or diminish the perception of a painting. Critics of realistic oil paintings often emphasize the artist's technical proficiency, thematic substance, and the social ramifications inherent in the artwork (Oosterlinck et al., 2023). Public involvement with such critiques deepens their comprehension, enabling viewers to interpret paintings from more informed perspectives that consider both the artist's intent and broader societal contexts (Hatch, 2024).

Social media has democratized artistic discourse, allowing public participation in discussions that were once restricted to professional reviewers (Stanley-Baker, 1992). Platforms such as WeChat, Weibo, and Douyin enable users to share their interpretations, interact with others, and contribute to a collective understanding of art (Little, 1985). This participatory culture has broadened the range of interpretations, blending professional analysis with individual reflections (Chen & Li, 2022). The media's portrayal of art, especially realistic paintings, plays a significant role in shaping public perception. How an artwork is categorized, whether as a patriotic symbol, a social critique, or a purely aesthetic piece greatly impacts its reception (Burnett, 2000). Media narratives frequently correspond with overarching social contexts, fostering interpretations that accord with national or cultural themes, hence guiding public reception in particular manners (Wu et al., 2023).

H3: There is a significant positive effect of media and art criticism on the public interpretation of artworks.

2.2.4 Artist's Reputation and Background

The artist's reputation and history profoundly influence public interpretation of their oeuvre (Rothko, 2023). In the Chinese art market, where the artist's personality is closely intertwined with the artwork, the public frequently evaluates the artist's personal history, accomplishments, and public image when interacting with realistic paintings (Fang & Zhou, 2021). Esteemed painters with established reputations are frequently assessed within the context of their overall oeuvre, impacting the interpretation of certain pieces (Croizier, 2023).

An artist's history, including their education, influences, and associations, significantly impacts public opinion (Zhang et al., 2020). Artists trained at esteemed universities or with international exposure are frequently perceived as infusing sophistication and varied influences into their work, hence elevating audience acceptance (Quanjin & Simatrang, 2024). Conversely, artists grounded in traditional Chinese art forms are frequently lauded for their authenticity and commitment to cultural heritage, resulting in interpretations that highlight continuity with Chinese artistic traditions (Archer, 2022; Wang et al., 2020).

Marketing and institutional backing significantly influence public perception by promoting certain artists and contextualizing their work within specific storylines. When an artist is depicted as a cultural ambassador, social commentator, or technical virtuoso, it can profoundly impact the reception of their paintings (Gryglewski et al., 2020). Public interaction with an artist's work is frequently influenced by these representations, resulting in interpretations that are determined as much by the artist's reputation as by the artwork itself (Jiang & Ren, 2022).

Consequently, the artist's reputation and history serve as essential frameworks for the perception and interpretation of realistic paintings. The interaction between the artist's personal narrative and their artwork enhances audience comprehension, fostering a richer and more nuanced interpretative experience.

H4: There is a significant positive effect of an artist's reputation and background on the public interpretation of artworks.
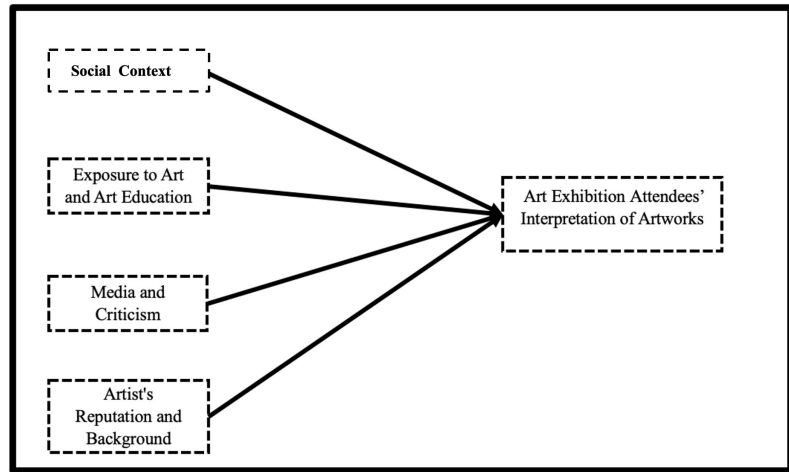
2.3 Conceptual Framework

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the study

3. Methods

3.1 Data

The data for this study was collected during a series of figure painting exhibitions held in Chongqing, China, between 2023 and 2024. These exhibitions included Strugglers of The Times—a collection of figure paintings showcased at the Chongqing Art Museum, the Chongqing Art's Market Open June event featuring the 2023 graduation works of the Sichuan Academy of Fine Arts, and the collection exhibition at the Art Museum of the Sichuan Fine Arts Institute. In celebration of the 75th anniversary of the founding of New China, the Strugglers of The Times - Figure Painting Exhibition was held at the Chongqing Art Museum from June 19 to June 30, 2024. Sponsored by the Chongqing Art Museum (Chongqing Painting Academy), the exhibition featured over 40 figure paintings from the museum's collection, spanning Chinese painting, oil painting, printing, and other genres. These works, created by artists from various historical periods, vividly depict the realities of their respective eras. The exhibition attracted 15,155 in-person visitors over 11 days.

For this study, 237 questionnaires were distributed to attendees, of which 37 were completed incorrectly. A total of 200 valid questionnaires were selected for analysis. The objective was to examine public reception and interpretation of realistic oil paintings in Chongqing, China. Specifically, the study sought to analyze the relationships among variables to determine correlations and regressions related to the dependent variable. It is posited that factors such as social context, exposure to art and art education, media and criticism, and the artist's reputation and background, influence public interpretation of artworks in the figure painting exhibitions.

The questionnaire was divided into three sections:
· Section A: Focused on demographic characteristics, including gender, age, ethnicity, educational attainment, and occupation.
· Section B: Addressed the dependent variable.
· Section C: Contains questions related to the independent variables of the study.

A survey methodology was employed to assess public reception and interpretation of realistic oil paintings in Chongqing, China.

3.2 Model Development

The primary focus of this study is to examine public reception and interpretation of realistic oil paintings in Chongqing, China, through the lens of Sociocultural Theory. Key drivers

influencing public interpretation of artworks (PIA) include the social context (CPC), exposure to art and art education (EAE), media and criticism (MAC), and the artist's reputation and background (ARB) as observed in the figure paintings exhibition in Chongqing. These factors were analyzed based on the four characteristics outlined by Le (2021). Previous research has demonstrated that these elements effectively elucidate behavior in the context of art appreciation.

The questionnaire consists of six questions designed to assess all variables. The structure and format of the questions were adapted from previous studies, including those by (Le, 2021). (Falahat et al., 2019; Liew, 2015), (Aji et al., 2020), (Yean Sien & Falahat, 2015) and (Falahat et al., 2019) to evaluate social context (CPC), exposure to art and art education (EAE), media and criticism (MAC) and artist's reputation and background (ARB), respectively. Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale, where "1" indicates strong disagreement and "5" represents strong agreement. This methodology is consistent with approaches employed in earlier studies (Amin et al., 2011; Muhson et al., 2012).

3.3 Data Analysis

This study employs Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) to assess factors affecting household financial fragility. PLS-SEM is a variance-based technique commonly employed in predictive and explanatory research (Hair Jr et al., 2017; Sarstedt et al., 2022). It is particularly suitable for handling small sample sizes, non-normal distributions, and formative constructs (Hair Jr et al., 2014). The analysis was conducted using SmartPLS version 4.1, applying PLS-SEM to both the measurement and structural models.

The measurement model evaluates validity and reliability through various metrics. Convergent validity was assessed using Factor Loading (FL), Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Cronbach's alpha, and Composite Reliability (CR). For validity, FL and AVE values must be $\geq$ 0.5, while CR and Cronbach's alpha values should be $\geq$ 0.7 (Hair et al., 2014; Hair et al., 2018). Discriminant validity was verified using the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) assessments. The goodness of fit for the model was evaluated using the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR).

The subsequent phase entails evaluating the structural model by analyzing the coefficient of determination (R^2), the cross-validated redundancy measure (Q^2) derived from the blindfolding procedure, and the statistical significance and relevance of the route coefficient. The blindfolding test was employed to calculate Stone-Geisser's Q^2 value, which serves as an evaluative standard for the predictive precision of the PLS path model. A Q^2 value exceeding 0 indicates that the structural model possesses predictive significance (F. Hair Jr et al., 2014).

To assess the adequacy of the model concerning the included variables, this study employed the R^2 reference values. An R^2 value of 0.25 is considered inadequate, 0.5 is deemed moderate, and 0.75 is classified as substantial. The threshold value for an acceptable R^2 depends on the research context. In numerous domains, an R^2 value of 0.10 is considered acceptable, particularly in the context of forecasting financial instability (Hair et al., 2018).

Data for this study were collected using a structured questionnaire. The survey consists of four primary sections: demographic information and the assessment of factors affecting financial fragility, assessed through closed-ended questions. A Five-Point Likert scale was used to measure responses, with 1 indicating strong disagreement and 5 indicating strong agreement. Eutsler & Lang (2015) argue that a five-point Likert scale achieves optimal outcome diversity while minimizing bias.

4. Results

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 provides an overview of the respondents' profiles. The data reveal that the majority of respondents (60%) were aged between 36 and 50 years. Females constituted 154 (77%) of the total 200 respondents. Additionally, 47% of the respondents had attained a master's degree, and 33% were employed.

Table 1 Test Results

Descriptive Statistics			
Characteristic		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	46	23
	Female	154	77
Age	a. 18 – 35	28	14
	b. 36 – 50	122	60
	c. 51 – 65	36	18
	d. 65 and above	10	5
Highest level of education completed	College	41	20.5
	Bachelor's degree	53	26.5
	Master's	94	47
	Doctorate	8	4
Occupations	Student	31	15.5
	Businessman	41	20.5
	Private sector Employees	49	24.5
	Government sector employee	66	33
	Semi-government sector employee	13	6.5

4.2 Structural Equation Modelling

Smart PLS was utilized for structural equation modeling following a two-step approach (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). This methodology minimized the interactional influence between the structural and measurement models. Initially, the measurement model was analyzed to examine the validity of the observed items and their corresponding constructs. Subsequently, a composite structural model was generated to evaluate the relationships between exogenous variables and endogenous constructs.

Table 2 Test Results

Confirmatory factor Analysis					
Construct	Items	loading	rho_A	CR	AVE
Public interpretation of artworks (PIA)	PIA1	0.886	0.937	0.952	0.799
	PIA2	0.909			
	PIA3	0.908			
	PIA4	0.881			
	PIA5	0.886			
	PIA6	0.880			
Social context (CPC)	CPC1	0.929	0.954	0.963	0.838
	CPC2	0.941			
	CPC3	0.899			
	CPC4	0.908			
	CPC5	0.901			

	CPC6	0.891			
Exposure to art and art education (EAE)	EAE1	0.913	0.967	0.973	0.88
	EAE2	0.943			
	EAE3	0.954			
	EAE4	0.946			
	EAE5	0.933			
	EAE6	0.908			
Media and criticism (MAC)	MAC1	0.879	0.898	0.92	0.741
	MAC2	0.871			
	MAC3	0.854			
	MAC4	0.839			
	MAC5	0.899			
	MAC6	0.848			
Artist's reputation and background (ARB)	ARB1	0.848	0.939	0.953	0.801
	ARB2	0.889			
	ARB3	0.910			
	ARB4	0.916			
	ARB5	0.911			
	ARB6	0.854			

4.2.1 Measurement Model

Due to modifications in the instrument, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted to evaluate the model's fit to the data. The factor loadings for the study's variables are presented in the table above. For factor loadings to be considered adequate, they should exceed 0.5, with an optimal threshold of 0.7 or higher (Hair Jr et al., 2014). Numerous studies indicate that factor loading estimates should ideally exceed 0.5 (Chen & Tsai, 2007; Hulland, 1999; Truong & McColl, 2011). Table 2 shows the item loadings and CR values. The scales used in the study demonstrated values above the recommended threshold of 0.70. Additionally, all constructs exhibited AVE values beyond the recommended threshold of 0.50, confirming robust convergent validity.

The HTMT method was used to assess discriminant validity. To evaluate the discriminant validity of the research variables, both the HTMT ratio and the Fornell-Larcker criterion were employed. According to Fornell and Larcker (1981) criteria, the square root of the AVE must exceed the correlations among the constructs. As shown in Table 3, the square roots of the AVE values for all constructs exceeded their respective correlation values, confirming the attainment of discriminant validity. Additionally, Table 4 presents the HTMT values for each construct, all of which were below 0.9, further indicating adequate discriminant validity (Henseler et al., 2009).

Table 3 Test Results

Discriminant validity (DV) using HTMT's approach					
	PIA	CPC	EAE	MAC	ARB
PIA_					
CPC	0.733				
EAE	0.792	0.892			
MAC	0.762	0.857	0.873		
ARB	0.81	0.784	0.825	0.793	

Table 4 Test Results

Discriminant validity (DV) using Fornell and Larcker's Approach					
	PIA	CPC	EAE	MAC	ARB
PIA	0.894				
CPC	0.68	0.861			
EAE	0.744	0.819	0.895		
MAC	0.721	0.789	0.824	0.916	
ARB	0.772	0.74	0.787	0.76	0.938

4.2.2 Assessment of Structural Model

The Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) serves as a metric for assessing the suitability of the research model. The SRMR values for the saturated model (0.052) and the estimated model (0.051) were within the acceptable range, as outlined by Gao, Waechter, and Bai (2015), with an SRMR value below 0.080 indicating model fit. The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) was used to test for multicollinearity. The VIF values ranged from 1.041 to 3.601, all below the threshold of 5 (Hair Jr et al., 2017), confirming the absence of multicollinearity. A structural model was developed to evaluate the proposed relationships, assuming that each construct is both reliable and valid. To assess the hypotheses and the constructed model, a bootstrapping technique with 5,000 resamples was applied, following by Hair Jr et al. (2014) protocols. The results, presented in Table 5, corroborated H2, with a significant relationship between Exposure to Art and Art Education (EAE) and Public Interpretation of Artworks (PIA) ($\beta = 0.43$, t = 4.111, p < 0.001). The effect of the artist's reputation and background (ARB) on public interpretation of artworks (PIA) was also significant (β= 0.236, t = 2.063, p < 0.04), supporting H4. However, the public interpretation of artworks (PIA) was found to be independent of social context (CPC) and media and criticism (MAC), as evidenced by the results ($\beta = 0.178$, t = 1.245, p < 0.214; $\beta = 0.028$, t = 0.219, p < 0.827), leading to the conclusion that H1 and H3 were not supported.

Table 5 Test Results

Structural Model Assessment					
Paths	β	Mean (M)	T Statistics	P Values	Decision
CPC -> PIA	0.178	0.197	1.245	0.214	Not supported
EAE -> PIA	0.43	0.422	4.111	0.000	Supported
MAC -> PIA	0.028	0.032	0.219	0.827	Not supported
ARB -> PIA	0.236	0.224	2.063	0.040	Supported

Table 6 Test Results

Effect size and Multicollinearity		
Construct Relationship	f²	VIF
CPC -> PIA	0.051	1.735
EAE -> PIA	0.025	2.918
MAC -> PIA	0.086	3.923
ARB -> PIA	0.167	3.057

Coefficient of determination (R^2). **The coefficient of determination for the construct of public interpretation of artworks (PIA) is moderate, with R^2 = 0.656 and modified R^2 = 0.649. This**

indicates that 65 percent of the variation in the public interpretation of artworks (PIA) is explained by the variables of social context (CPC), exposure to art and art education (EAE), media and criticism (MAC), and the artist's reputation and background (ARB). According to Hair et al. (2017), R^2 values of 0.75, 0.50, and 0.25 for endogenous constructs are categorized as considerable, moderate, and weak, respectively(Hair Jr et al., 2017).

It is important to note that the R^2 value reflects the explanatory power of the sample used and does not necessarily indicate predictive performance beyond that sample (Shmueli et al., 2019). This study employed the PLS-predict methodology, focusing on the acceptability of the E-Fraid construct as the primary objective. The results show that the Q^2 is greater than zero, indicating predictive relevance. However, the Root Mean Squared Error (RMSE) and Mean Absolute Error (MAE) metrics of the PLS-SEM model do not exceed those of the linear naïve model. Nonetheless, the model in this study demonstrates significant predictive power (Shmueli et al., 2019).

Effect size and predictive relevance. Cohen's f^2 is used to determine the effect size of variables within the model, reflecting the alteration in R^2 when an external construct is removed. According to Hair et al. (2017), f^2 values are interpreted as 0.02 (small effect), 0.15 (medium effect), and 0.35 (large effect). As shown in Table 6, the overall f^2 values range from 0.051 to 1.593, indicating varying levels of impact among the constructs.

Additionally, predictive relevance was analysed utilizing Stone-Geisser's Q^2, which evaluates the predictive importance of the independent variable on the dependent variable(Hair Jr et al., 2017) (Hair et al., 2017). The Q^2 value for the acceptance of the E-Fraid variable is 0.618, exceeding the minimum threshold of 0. This demonstrates that the model has strong predictive relevance, as the observed values are accurately reconstructed.

Table 7 Test Results

	Coefficient Determination and Blindfolding Output		
	R Square	R Square Adjusted	Q^2
AEF	0.656	0.649	0.618

5. Discussion

The study provides an in-depth analysis of the factors affecting public engagement with and interpretation of realistic oil paintings in Chongqing. The findings revealed critical insights into the intricate relationship between social contexts, exposure to art and education, media influence, and the artist's reputation in shaping public perceptions of art. This discourse synthesizes the findings related to the hypotheses and overarching theoretical frameworks, considering their implications for art interpretation in Chongqing and other metropolitan centers across China.

The findings did not support the hypothesis that the social context significantly influences public understanding of realistic oil paintings (H1). The analysis revealed that while the social environment remains historically significant, it may no longer exert as direct an influence on modern public interpretations as previously expected. This challenges the conventional perception of art in China as a medium predominantly shaped by official narratives, suggesting a shift in public interaction with art in the context of a rapidly modernizing culture. A potential explanation for this finding is the growing influence of factors such as globalization, digital media, and personal experiences, which extend beyond the local social environment. The results indicate that although the social context in Chongqing is noteworthy, its direct influence on art perception appears to be waning as elements like individual exposure to art and education gain prominence. This transition may indicate wider societal transformations in China, where art is increasingly perceived as a means of personal expression rather than solely a state-endorsed instrument of ideological propagation.

The research provided substantial evidence supporting the hypothesis that exposure to art and art education significantly affects public interpretation of realistic oil paintings (H2). This discovery emphasizes the pivotal role of education and exposure in determining how individuals interact with and comprehend art. In Chongqing, similar to other metropolitan centers, individuals with greater access to art education and diverse art genres exhibit a higher capacity for appreciating and critically engaging with realistic oil paintings. This corresponds with sociocultural theory, which asserts that cognitive and perceptual processes are deeply intertwined with social and cultural environments.

The study underscores the significance of art education in fostering a well-informed and discerning populace, adept at recognizing the intricate elements of realistic art. With ongoing educational reforms in China prioritizing critical thinking and art history, public involvement with art is expected to evolve, demonstrating a deeper comprehension of both traditional and modern art forms. The findings also reveal that disparities in art education and exposure lead to varying levels of art appreciation across the population.

These insights carry significant implications for policymakers and educators, highlighting the necessity for more inclusive art education initiatives that connect many segments of society. By expanding access to art education, cities like Chongqing can cultivate a more culturally literate and engaged populace, better equipped to interact with and derive meaning from artistic expressions.

The hypothesis that media and art criticism significantly influence public interpretation of realistic oil paintings (H3) was not substantiated. This research indicates that while media and criticism contribute to public discourse around art, their direct impact on individual perceptions appears to be less significant compared to factors such as personal exposure and education. This shift may be ascribed to the growing democratization of art interpretation facilitated by digital platforms.

In this participatory digital culture, individuals are more inclined to develop and share their own perspectives rather than depending exclusively on professional evaluations. Social media, in particular, has facilitated a more participatory culture, as public interpretations are influenced by a multitude of voices rather than solely by traditional media and criticism.

The study offered substantial evidence supporting the hypothesis that an artist's reputation and history significantly influence public interpretation of their work (H4). This discovery reinforces the crucial role of an artist's identity and background in shaping the public's perception and comprehension of their work. In Chongqing, where the art market and cultural landscape are rapidly evolving, an artist's reputation exerts a considerable impact on the reception and interpretation of their work.

This outcome aligns with principles of art criticism and aesthetics, indicating that public involvement with art often extends beyond the artwork itself to include the artist's personal background, accomplishments, and overall oeuvre. Esteemed artists, especially those with formal education and notable accomplishments, are frequently evaluated within the broader context of their contributions to the art domain.

The findings indicate that public interpretation of art involves both the substance of the artwork and the narrative surrounding its creator. This underscores the significance of marketing and institutional backing in shaping public opinion of art. By highlighting the artist's background and accomplishments, institutions can enrich the interpretive experience for audiences, fostering deeper and more multifaceted engagement with the artwork.

6. Conclusions

The study offers significant insights into the aspects affecting public engagement with and interpretation of art within a swiftly modernizing metropolitan environment. The findings reveal a multifaceted interplay between education, media, social milieu, and the artist's reputation, with education and art exposure emerging as the predominant determinants shaping public understanding. The decreasing direct influence of the social environment and media on public interpretation highlights a transformation in the perception of art in contemporary China. This transition suggests that traditional influences are being supplanted by the growing effects of globalization, digital media, and individual experiences, which increasingly shape cultural consumption.

The significant impact of education and the artist's standing underscores the importance of fostering art appreciation through inclusive educational initiatives and the intentional promotion of artists. These results carry significant ramifications for policymakers, educators, and cultural organizations in Chongqing and beyond. Improving access to art education and exposure is essential for fostering a more informed and engaged public. Additionally, comprehending the dynamic role of media and an artist's reputation can help institutions maneuver the changing landscape of public art interpretation effectively. The findings of this study have significant implications for comprehending public engagement with art in urban China, particularly in rapidly growing cities like Chongqing. The significant impact of art education on public perception highlights the necessity for more extensive and accessible art education initiatives. Policymakers and educational institutions must prioritize integrating art education into cultural development strategies, ensuring that diverse populations can engage meaningfully with and understand art.

Secondly, the waning influence of the social backdrop in public interpretation indicates a cultural shift in how art is consumed and comprehended. As individuals increasingly rely on personal experiences and global influences, cultural institutions must adapt their policies to prioritize forging personal connections with art, moving beyond traditional social narratives. The findings underscore the changing influence of media and art criticism in shaping public discourse. With the proliferation of digital platforms democratizing art interpretation, conventional media and critics must embrace interactive and inclusive strategies to remain relevant in fostering public engagement. The pronounced influence of the artist's reputation on public perception indicates that the narrative around the artist holds equal importance to the artwork itself. Cultural institutions and the art market should implement strategies that emphasize the artist's background and accomplishments, cultivating a more profound relationship between the audience and the artwork.

Future research should investigate the changing dynamics of public interpretation of art by integrating broader and more diversified contexts beyond Chongqing, as indicated by the study's findings. This involves conducting comparative analyses with other prominent cities in China or foreign contexts to comprehend how regional social environments, cultural conventions, and art education frameworks variably affect public interaction with realistic paintings. Future research should incorporate digital art platforms and the expanding influence of social media on public perception, as these contemporary channels have progressively democratized art interpretation and critique. Integrating longitudinal methods that monitor temporal changes would yield significant insights into the evolution of public reception in conjunction with societal upheavals, encompassing alterations in cultural values and technical progress. Broadening the demographic focus to encompass younger audiences, particularly for new art forms arising from cross-cultural influences, will facilitate the understanding of the evolving interpretive frameworks that characterize contemporary art enjoyment in China's swiftly transforming cultural environment..

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