

Research on the Application of Color Psychology in High School Art Appreciation Courses

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Abstract: With the continuous improvement of China's education system, senior high school art appreciation courses have increasingly demonstrated their prominent role in cultivating students' artistic perception, aesthetic literacy, and mental health. As an interdisciplinary field exploring how colors influence human emotions, cognition, and behaviors, color psychology provides a brand-new teaching perspective and scientific support for senior high school art appreciation courses. By systematically sorting out the core theories of color psychology, this paper conducts an in-depth analysis of its application value in senior high school art appreciation courses, constructs diversified application strategies combined with teaching practices, and explores a scientific teaching evaluation system. It aims to provide theoretical references and practical approaches for optimizing the teaching mode and improving the teaching quality of senior high school art appreciation courses, so as to facilitate the all-round development of students' artistic literacy and mental health.

Keywords: color psychology; senior high school art; appreciation course; aesthetic literacy

1. Introduction

In the system of senior high school art education, art appreciation courses serve as one of the core carriers of aesthetic education. Their core objectives are not only to guide students to perceive the formal and connotative beauty of artworks, but also to cultivate students' aesthetic judgment, cultural comprehension and emotional expression abilities. However, the current teaching of art appreciation courses in some senior high schools still has many limitations: the teaching methods are dominated by teachers' lectures, focusing on the indoctrination of knowledge such as the background and techniques of artworks, while neglecting students' emotional experience and psychological resonance; the interpretation of color elements in artworks remains superficial, failing to deeply explore the psychological connotations and cultural symbols behind colors, which makes it difficult for students to truly understand the artistic value and emotional tension of artworks.

As a basic element of visual art, color is not only a tool for artistic expression, but also carries rich emotional meanings and cultural connotations. By studying the correlation between colors and human psychology and behaviors, color psychology reveals the emotional responses, cognitive changes and cultural differences triggered by different colors, thus providing a scientific interpretive framework for art appreciation courses. In recent years, the application of color psychology in the field of education has attracted extensive attention. Studies conducted by many scholars have shown that integrating color psychology into senior high

school art teaching can effectively stimulate students' learning interest, deepen their emotional experience, enhance their aesthetic ability, and exert a positive impact on the development of students' mental health.

Based on the above, this paper focuses on the application of color psychology in senior high school art appreciation courses, exploring how to break through the bottlenecks of traditional teaching through the in-depth integration of color psychology theories and teaching practice, and construct a more targeted, experiential and effective teaching mode. It is expected to enable students to achieve the dual improvement of artistic literacy and psychological quality in the dialogue between colors and the soul.

2. Overview of Core Theories of Color Psychology

2.1. Basic Attributes and Psychological Effects of Color

The basic attributes of color include hue, lightness and saturation, which directly affect human visual perception and psychological responses. Hue refers to the inherent characteristic of a color, such as red, blue, and green, and distinct emotional associations are evoked by different hues: red is generally associated with passion and vitality, while it may also arouse alertness or tension; blue conveys a sense of tranquility, composure and professionalism, which helps alleviate stress; as the representative color of nature, green symbolizes growth, health and peace, capable of relieving visual fatigue and enhancing a sense of pleasure; yellow is often linked to optimism and vitality—bright yellow can stimulate positive emotions, yet excessive use may trigger irritability [1,2].

Lightness denotes the brightness level of a color. High-lightness colors, such as light yellow and light blue, impart a feeling of lightness and briskness; low-lightness colors, such as deep blue and dark gray, bring about a psychological experience of heaviness and solemnity. Saturation refers to the purity of a color [3]. High-saturation colors, with their vivid and intense tones, can strongly stimulate emotions; low-saturation colors, such as the Morandi color palette, appear soft and restrained, conveying an atmosphere of calmness and profundity [4].

The psychological effects of color do not exist in isolation. Instead, through the combination of hue, lightness and saturation, as well as the relationships of warm-cool contrast and light-dark contrast, they form a complex emotional communication system. This system provides a scientific basis for interpreting the emotional expression of artistic works in art appreciation courses.

2.2. Cultural Symbolic Meanings of Color

The meanings of color exhibit distinct cultural differences. Under different cultural backgrounds, the same color may carry entirely opposite symbolic connotations. In Chinese culture, red symbolizes joy, auspiciousness and vitality, and is commonly seen in important occasions such as the Spring Festival and weddings; yellow was once an exclusive color for the imperial family, representing nobility and power; in traditional contexts, white is associated with funerals and conveys a sense of sorrow. In Western culture, by contrast, white symbolizes purity and holiness, and is the preferred color for wedding gowns; red stands for passion and love, while it may also imply danger; black is frequently used in formal occasions to express solemnity and gravity, and it is also related to grief and mystery [5,6].

The cultural symbolic meanings of color serve as an important carrier for artists to express their creative intentions. Understanding this dimension helps students gain a deeper grasp of the cultural connotations of artistic works. In senior high school art appreciation courses, guiding students to recognize the cultural differences of color is an important approach to enhancing their cultural comprehension.

2.3. The Correlation Between Color, Emotion and Personality

Psychological studies have demonstrated that color not only triggers universal emotional responses, but also maintains a close correlation with individual personality traits. According to color—personality analysis, individuals who prefer warm colors (such as red, orange and yellow) tend to be passionate, optimistic, extroverted and highly proactive. By contrast, those who favor cool colors (such as blue, green and purple) are

more likely to be calm, rational, reserved and composed, with a strong focus on contemplation and harmony [7]. Meanwhile, people who have a preference for neutral colors (such as black, white and gray) usually pursue simplicity and rationality, and possess a strong sense of independence.

This correlation provides a theoretical basis for personalized teaching in art appreciation courses. By observing students' color preferences, teachers can gain a deeper insight into their personality traits, design teaching activities that better cater to their psychological needs, and thus achieve the goal of teaching students in accordance with their aptitude.

3. The Application Value of Color Psychology in High School Art Appreciation Courses

3.1. Deepening Artwork Interpretation and Enhancing Aesthetic Appreciation Ability

In traditional art appreciation courses, the interpretation of artworks mostly focuses on such dimensions as techniques, composition and historical background, while color psychology provides an emotional and psychological perspective for artwork interpretation. The color selection and combination in an artwork are often a direct reflection of the artist's inner emotions and creative intentions [6]. For instance, in Van Gogh's *The Starry Night*, the cobalt blue night sky forms a striking contrast with the lemon-yellow stars and moon. The cold and quiet tone of blue symbolizes the artist's inner loneliness and struggle, whereas the brightness of yellow implies a persistent pursuit of hope. The emotional tension constructed by this color combination constitutes the core of the artwork's artistic charm (Figure 1).



Figure 1. *The Starry Night* by Vincent van Gogh.

Integrating color psychology knowledge into appreciation courses can guide students to shift from seeing colors to interpreting colors. By analyzing the color attributes, contrast relations and psychological effects of artworks, students can understand how artists convey emotions and express ideas through colors. This process can not only improve students' color sensitivity and aesthetic judgment, but also help them establish an interpretation logic of color-emotion-intention, thereby deepening their understanding of the artistic value of artworks [8].

3.2. Evoking Emotional Resonance to Facilitate Mental Health Development

Senior high school represents a critical period for adolescents' psychological development. Factors such as academic pressure and interpersonal relationships are prone to trigger negative emotions including anxiety and depression. As a pivotal platform for aesthetic education, art appreciation courses possess inherent potential for emotional catharsis and psychological healing. The integration of color psychology further amplifies this value. As a medium of non-verbal communication, colors can directly resonate with students' emotional spheres.

In art appreciation classes, guiding students to perceive the emotional experiences evoked by different colors—such as the tranquility of blue, the serenity of green, and the vitality of red—enables them to identify their own emotional states [9]. Meanwhile, analyzing how artists convey intricate emotions through colors (e.g., the anxiety

transmitted by the scarlet sky and distorted lines in Edvard Munch's *The Scream*) helps students recognize the universality of negative emotions, thereby fostering emotional resonance and psychological solace (Figure 2).

In the long run, such emotional experiences and resonance can assist students in establishing a healthy emotional cognition, learning to relieve stress and regulate emotions through art appreciation, and enhancing psychological resilience. These outcomes lay a solid foundation for their mental health development.

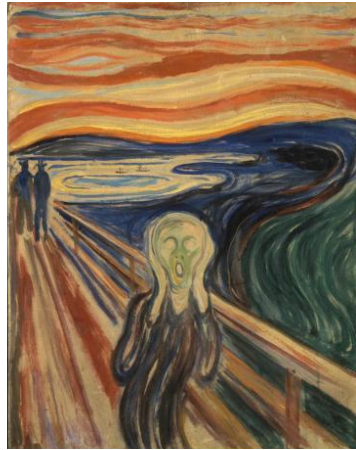


Figure 2. Munch's *The Scream*.

3.3. Stimulating Learning Interest and Optimizing Classroom Teaching Atmosphere

Traditional art appreciation courses are predominantly lecture-based, featuring a monotonous teaching format that often leads to students' inattentiveness and low participation. The application of color psychology injects new vitality into classrooms. By creating color-related teaching scenarios and organizing interactive color experience activities, it can effectively stimulate students' learning interest and enthusiasm for participation.

Color boasts strong visual appeal. Displaying artworks with vivid colors and rich emotional connotations can instantly capture students' attention. Designing thematic discussions such as Color and Emotion and Color and Culture, and encouraging students to share their perceptions and interpretations of color, helps foster an equal and open classroom atmosphere. Carrying out color practice activities—for instance, asking students to select corresponding colors based on their emotions to interpret works, or attempting to reconstruct the color tones of artworks—enables students to deepen their learning experience through hands-on participation [10,11].

This vivid and interactive teaching model reverses the passive learning paradigm in art appreciation courses, placing students at the core of the learning process and effectively enhancing the practical effectiveness of classroom teaching.

3.4. Broadening Cognitive Horizons and Promoting Interdisciplinary Knowledge Integration

Color psychology is an interdisciplinary field that integrates knowledge from multiple disciplines including psychology, sociology, cultural studies, and neuroscience. Integrating it into high school art appreciation courses can break down disciplinary barriers, guide students to understand artworks from diverse perspectives, and realize the integration and transfer of interdisciplinary knowledge [12]. In art appreciation classes, students not only acquire color-related knowledge and appreciation methods in art, but also access content such as emotional theories in psychology and cultural differences in sociology.

For example, when interpreting artworks of the Renaissance period, students can combine historical knowledge to understand the humanist ideological trends of that era, and apply color psychology to analyze how the use of colors in works reflects the awakening of human nature. When appreciating traditional Chinese landscape paintings, they can draw on traditional cultural knowledge to comprehend the color philosophy embodied in ink and wash painting, and use psychological theories to explore how the application of black, white and gray conveys the tranquil artistic conception of harmony between humans and nature.

This interdisciplinary learning approach broadens students' cognitive horizons, cultivates their critical

thinking and knowledge integration abilities, and provides solid support for their all-round development.

4. Application Strategies of Color Psychology in High School Art Appreciation Courses

4.1. Constructing a “Color Psychological Decoding” Teaching System to Deepen Artwork Appreciation

4.1.1. Selecting Classic Artworks and Establishing a Framework for Color Psychological Interpretation

Teachers should select milestone artworks in the history of art in accordance with teaching objectives, and construct a teaching content system centered on color emotional decoding. In the process of artwork selection, it is necessary to take into account diverse styles and cultural backgrounds, ensuring that the selected works feature typical characteristics of color psychological expression. For instance, in Western art, teachers may choose *Sunflowers* by Vincent van Gogh (the expression of vitality through warm color tones), *The Scream* by Edvard Munch (the conveyance of anxiety via morbid color hues), and the works of Giorgio Morandi (the tranquil artistic conception presented by low-saturation colors) (Figure 3) [13,14]. In Chinese art, representative options include *A Thousand Li of Rivers and Mountains* by Wang Ximeng (the grandeur and harmony embodied in blue-green landscape paintings) (Figure 4), the artworks of Bada Shanren (the aloofness and tranquility conveyed by the black and white tones of ink wash painting) (Figure 5), and folk paper-cuts (the auspicious implications represented by high-saturation colors).

In the process of interpretation, teachers are supposed to guide students to establish an analytical framework of “color attributes—psychological effects—creative intentions”. First of all, analyze the basic color attributes of the artwork, such as hue, lightness, saturation, as well as the color contrast relationships. Secondly, based on color psychology theories, discuss the emotional experiences evoked by these colors, for example, the vitality brought by warm tones and the calmness induced by cool tones. Finally, combined with the historical background of the work and the artist’s life experience, explore the creative intentions and emotional expressions behind the color selection. Take the appreciation of Lin Fengmian’s works as an example: analyze how his application of vivid colors reflects the yearning for modernization. When interpreting Zhang Daqian’s works, discuss how the rich color layers convey the inheritance and innovation of traditional culture.



Figure 3. Works by Giorgio Morandi.

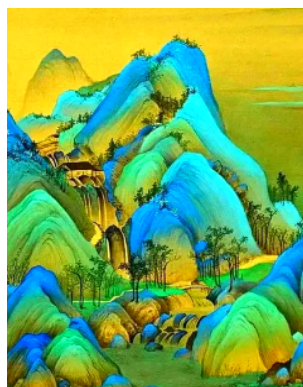


Figure 4. Wang Ximeng, *A Thousand Li of Rivers and Mountains*.



Figure 5. Works by Bada Shanren.

4.1.2. Introducing the “Color-Mind Mapping” Project to Strengthen Independent Inquiry

To enhance students’ independent inquiry ability, project-based learning centered on the “Color-Mind Mapping” initiative can be implemented. Following the thread of artistic style evolution or emotional themes, students are divided into groups, with each group selecting a research topic—such as “Color Emotions in Impressionist Art” or “Color Symbolism in Eastern and Western Religious Art”—to explore the psychological mapping mechanisms of colors in canonical artworks.

For instance, in the theme of “Color Emotions in Impressionist Art”, group members may select masterpieces like Claude Monet’s *Water Lilies* (Figure 6) and Pierre-Auguste Renoir’s *Dance at Le Moulin de la Galette*. They can then analyze how Impressionist painters conveyed distinct emotional atmospheres by capturing the dynamic color changes under natural light [15]. In the theme of “Color Symbolism in Eastern and Western Religious Art”, students conduct a comparative analysis of the application of gold and red in Chinese Buddhist murals versus the use of blue and white in Western Christian paintings, exploring the symbolic connotations and psychological effects of colors across diverse religious cultures.

Through a series of steps—including literature review, group discussions, and presentation of findings—students delve into the intricate connections between color, psychology, and culture. In the presentation phase, students are encouraged to visualize their research outcomes in innovative ways, such as designing color-psychology analysis charts or creating micro-videos interpreting the emotional implications of colors in artworks. This approach serves to reinforce the overall learning experience.



Figure 6. *Water Lilies* by Claude Monet.

4.2. Integrating Experiential Teaching Activities to Enhance Emotional Resonance

4.2.1. Launching the Interactive Activity of “Color-Emotion Association”

In classroom teaching, an interactive session themed “color-emotion association” is designed to help students intuitively perceive the psychological effects of colors. For instance, teachers display color cards with

varying hues, lightness, and saturation—such as bright red, deep blue, light green, vivid yellow, and dark gray—and ask students to quickly associate them with corresponding emotional vocabulary (e. g., joy, sorrow, calmness, excitement, solemnity) while sharing the rationale behind their associations.

Additionally, a “scenario-color matching” activity can be designed. Specific scenarios are presented, including “expressing longing for hometown”, “depicting the prosperity and anxiety of cities”, and “showcasing the tranquility of nature”. Students are then required to select appropriate color combinations and explain how these colors convey the emotions corresponding to the given scenarios. For example, warm orange-yellow tones can be adopted to express homesickness; high-saturation contrasting colors are suitable for depicting urban prosperity intertwined with anxiety; and soft blue-green tones can be used to showcase the serenity of nature.

Such interactive activities can stimulate students’ sensory experiences and emotional expression, enabling them to deepen their understanding of the psychological effects of colors through practical engagement.

4.2.2. Implementing the Practical Activity of “Color Healing” Appreciation

Drawing on the application concept of colors in psychotherapy, a practical appreciation activity themed “color healing” is carried out. To address emotional issues such as stress and anxiety commonly faced by senior high school students, artworks with emotion-regulating functions are selected to guide students to achieve mental relaxation and emotional catharsis through appreciation.

For example, students with severe anxiety can be guided to appreciate artworks dominated by blue and green—such as Claude Monet’s *Water Lilies* and traditional Chinese blue-green landscape paintings—analyzing how these colors induce a sense of calm and relief. For students with low spirits, artworks featuring warm tones—such as Vincent van Gogh’s *Sunflowers* and folk New Year paintings—are recommended to help them perceive the vitality and hope brought by colors.

During the appreciation process, teachers can guide students to conduct meditative appreciation: closing their eyes, listening to music related to the artworks, visualizing the color palettes of the works in their minds, and perceiving the emotional changes triggered by these colors. Subsequently, students share their appreciation experiences and discuss how the colors of the artworks influence their emotions. This practical activity helps students master the skill of regulating emotions through art appreciation and enhance their psychological adjustment abilities.

4.3. *Decoding the Symbolic Meanings of Colors in Light of Cultural Contexts*

4.3.1. Developing Thematic Teaching of “Color Culture Decoding”

Targeting the cultural symbolic meanings of colors, we design thematic teaching content of “Color Culture Decoding”. By comparing the symbolic connotations of colors across diverse cultures and historical periods, we guide students to comprehend the cultural implications behind colors and enhance their cultural literacy.

For instance, with the theme of *A Cultural Journey of the Color Red*, we contrast the connotations of joy and auspiciousness associated with red in Chinese culture with the symbols of passion and danger represented by the same color in Western culture. Centering on the theme of *The Dual Symbolism of White*, we analyze the implication of sorrow conveyed by white in traditional Chinese funeral culture versus the symbol of purity embodied by white in Western wedding traditions. Taking *Yellow: Power and Sacredness* as the theme, we explore the noble status of yellow exclusive to the imperial family in ancient China as well as the sacred connotations of yellow in Western religious art.

In the teaching process, specific artistic works can be incorporated for in-depth analysis. For example, the extensive use of red in traditional Chinese Spring Festival paper-cuts conveys the cultural emotions of joy and family reunion. The application of blue in the Western religious painting *Madonna and Child* symbolizes the purity and sacredness of the Virgin Mary. The adoption of yellow in Egyptian murals represents the sacredness and eternity of the sun god.

4.3.2. Organizing Creative Practice of “Color Culture Reconstruction”

On the basis of understanding the cultural symbolic meanings of colors, we organize creative practice activities themed “Color Culture Reconstruction”, enabling students to transform the theoretical knowledge they have learned into practical capabilities. For example, students are required to design a piece of decorative painting with distinct cultural characteristics by integrating traditional Chinese cultural elements with modern color aesthetics. Alternatively, they can select a Western artwork and attempt to reconstruct it by adopting the traditional Chinese color system, thereby expressing new cultural connotations.

For example, students can combine the blue-and-white color scheme of blue-and-white porcelain with modern geometric composition to create a decorative painting, conveying the integration of traditional culture and modern life. Or they can reconstruct Van Gogh’s *The Starry Night* by using traditional Chinese ink-wash tones to depict the tranquility and depth of the night sky, endowing the work with oriental cultural charm. During the creative process, teachers should guide students to reflect on the cultural basis for color selection, ensuring that the color expression of the works is consistent with the cultural themes.

4.4. Using Micro-videos to Support Teaching and Innovate Instructional Forms

Developing Color Psychology Micro-videos to Facilitate Knowledge Delivery Leveraging the vivid and intuitive nature of micro-videos, we can create teaching videos centered on color psychology to support in-class instruction. The content of these micro-videos may encompass three core modules:

- (1) Exposition of fundamental color psychology theories, including the basic attributes of colors and their psychological effects;
- (2) Analysis of color psychology in canonical artworks, such as the color contrast and emotional expression in *The Starry Night* and the color philosophy embodied in *A Thousand Li of Rivers and Mountains*;
- (3) Introduction to color-related cultural knowledge, such as the symbolic meanings of colors across diverse cultural contexts.

The production of micro-videos should emphasize the integration of interest and professionalism. It can adopt diverse formats, including animations, case analyses, and expert interviews, complemented by vivid visuals and sound effects, so as to help students comprehend abstract theoretical knowledge. For instance, when explaining color contrast, animations can be used to demonstrate the visual impacts generated by warm-cool color contrast and light-dark contrast. When interpreting *The Starry Night*, the analysis of how Van Gogh’s use of colors reflects his inner emotional fluctuations can be combined with his life story.

In classroom teaching, micro-videos can serve as a tool for pre-class introduction, in-class explanation, or post-class consolidation. For example, playing a micro-video before class can introduce the theme of color psychology and stimulate students’ interest; playing artwork interpretation videos during class can assist teachers in their lectures; sharing extended micro-videos after class can guide students to engage in autonomous learning.

Launching “Micro-video Creation” Extension Activities Students are encouraged to work in groups to create micro-videos themed on “Interpretation of Color Psychology in Artworks”. They can select their favorite artistic works, and based on color psychology theories, analyze the works’ color application, psychological effects, and creative intentions. The format of these micro-videos can be flexible and diverse, such as interview-based, lecture-style, or scene-reproduction formats.

For example, one group chose Claude Monet’s *Water Lilies* for their micro-video project. The video first presents the overall composition and local details of the work. Then, group members respectively explain the basic attributes and psychological effects of colors, analyze the reasons for Monet’s color choices by combining his creative background, and finally share their own appreciation experiences.

Through micro-video creation, students can not only deepen their understanding of color psychology and artistic works but also enhance their comprehensive abilities, including video production, team collaboration, and verbal expression. After the completion of the works, they can be displayed and exchanged in class, fostering a positive learning atmosphere.

4.5. Constructing a Diversified Evaluation System to Ensure Teaching Effectiveness

4.5.1. Developing Multi-Dimensional Evaluation Criteria

Jointly with art education experts, psychologists, and frontline teachers, we formulate evaluation criteria covering four dimensions: cognition, emotion, practice, and culture [16]. Specific evaluation indicators and score ranges are established for each dimension (as shown in Figure 7).

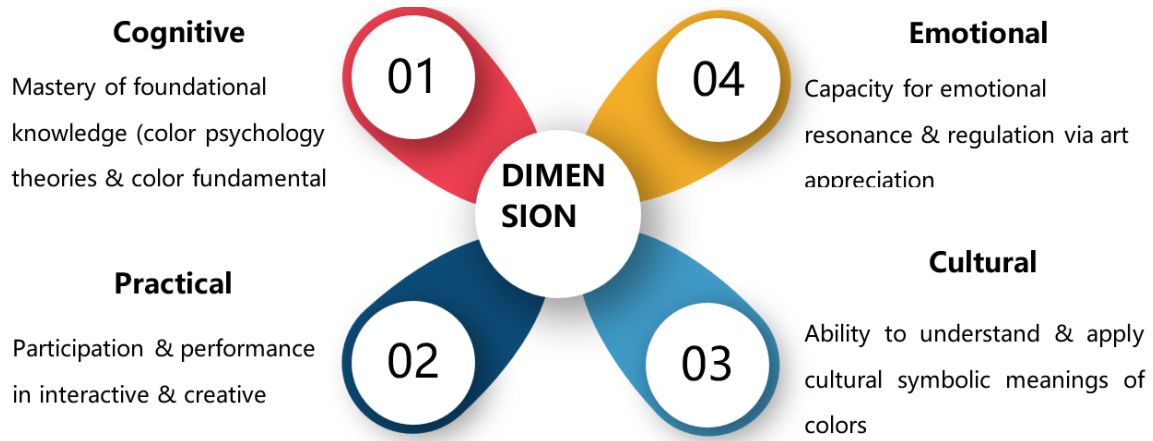


Figure 7. Four Dimensions of Evaluation Criteria.

For instance:

(1) Cognitive indicators include “Able to accurately describe the fundamental properties of color” and “Able to analyze artworks using color psychology theories”.

(2) Emotional indicators include “Able to express authentic emotional experiences during appreciation” and “Able to regulate personal emotions through art appreciation”.

(3) Practical indicators include “Active participation in classroom interactive activities” and “Production of high-quality micro-videos”.

(4) Cultural indicators include “Understanding the symbolic meanings of colors in diverse cultural contexts” and “Able to integrate cultural elements into creative works”.

4.5.2. Adopting Diversified Evaluation Methods

A comprehensive and objective assessment of students’ learning outcomes is achieved by integrating formative evaluation with summative evaluation, quantitative evaluation with qualitative evaluation, and self-assessment with peer assessment. Formative evaluation focuses on documenting and analyzing the learning process. This can be realized by establishing Color Appreciation Learning Portfolios, which record students’ performance in classroom interactions, group inquiry, micro-video creation, and other sessions—including participation status, work outcomes, and reflective summaries. Based on these portfolios, teachers can timely track students’ learning progress and provide targeted guidance and feedback.

Summative evaluation can be conducted in forms such as artwork exhibitions, written tests, and oral defenses. For example, students may be required to submit a Color Psychology Interpretation Report that analyzes the color application and psychological effects of a specific artwork; alternatively, they may deliver an oral defense to elaborate on their understanding of the application of color psychology in art appreciation [17].

In the self-assessment and peer assessment sessions, students are encouraged to reflect on their own learning processes and outcomes, while engaging in mutual evaluation and learning from each other. For example, after micro-video presentations, students conduct self-assessments to share their creative ideas and gains; their peers then provide comments highlighting strengths and improvement suggestions. Teachers synthesize the results of self-assessment and peer assessment to deliver comprehensive evaluations and guidance.

5. Conclusions

The application of color psychology in senior high school art appreciation courses is not only an innovation in educational methods, but also a response to the demand for students' all-round development. Its core value lies in building a bridge between works of art and students' minds through the unique medium of color, transforming art appreciation courses from knowledge imparting to emotional experience, from skill learning to literacy improvement, and from a single-discipline approach to interdisciplinary integration.

This study finds that the application of color psychology in senior high school art appreciation courses has multi-dimensional values: it can deepen the interpretation of artworks and enhance students' aesthetic appreciation ability; stimulate emotional resonance and promote the development of mental health; optimize classroom atmosphere and boost students' learning interest; broaden cognitive horizons and cultivate interdisciplinary integration competence. To realize these values, several application strategies can be adopted, including constructing a "color psychological decoding" teaching system, integrating experiential teaching activities, interpreting the cultural symbolic meanings of colors, using micro-videos as auxiliary teaching tools, and establishing a diversified evaluation system.

Looking ahead, with the continuous advancement of educational reform, the application of color psychology in senior high school art appreciation courses will embrace broader prospects. Teachers should constantly update their educational concepts, improve their interdisciplinary literacy, actively explore innovative teaching models, enable color psychology to truly serve students' all-round development, and inject sustained impetus into the improvement of the quality of senior high school art education.

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