Positioning of "Self" and "Other" in the Intercultural Art Communication: a Case Study on Chinese Reverse Glass Painting

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Abstract: The distinction between the Self and the Other is a foundational concept across disciplines such as sociology, philosophy, cultural studies, anthropology, and psychology. This study examines the dynamic processes by which individuals position the Self and the Other in intercultural communication, with particular focus on how people interpret artistic works from unfamiliar cultures through processes of categorization and identity assignment. Ten participants from diverse cultural backgrounds, none of whom had prior expertise in Chinese art, were invited to interpret a Chinese reverse glass painting; the recorded interviews provided the empirical corpus for analysis. Employing Hausendorf's Task–Means–Form analytical model (2000, 2002), the study identifies how participants utilize linguistic strategies—including plural pronouns, evaluative adjectives, geographical indicators, and other discourse markers—to engage in referencing, describing, interpreting, evaluating, attributing, and categorizing. Through these discursive practices, participants negotiate cultural meaning, differentiate social groups, and construct their own identity positions in relation to the unfamiliar artwork. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of cognitive positioning processes within intercultural encounters and offer insights into the broader mechanisms of meaning-making in intercultural art communication.

1. Introduction

As intercultural art exchanges thrive, artworks from diverse cultures increasingly enter the public sphere through exhibitions, social media, films, networks, and other platforms. Intercultural art communication holds not only political, economic, cultural, and aesthetic significance, but also offers audiences experiences that can be exotic, reflexive, and enlightening. As early as the 19th century, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1986) examined the relationship between the Self and the Other, arguing that one's perception of the Self is constructed in relation to the Other. Straub (2019) views the Self and the Other as a word pair whose elements are not ontologically opposed but are dynamically formed through behavioral construction and projection. Similarly, Hahn (1994) suggests that the construction of the Other must always be understood alongside the construction of the Self—and vice versa— since both processes frequently involve differentiation, segregation, and filtration, thereby giving the Other a "paradoxical function" of "self-identification." Intercultural art exchange represents a dynamic encounter between the Self and the Other, where the audience's understanding and appreciation of foreign artworks reflect their own cognitive frameworks and socio-cultural experiences.

Several studies have explored the role of art in intercultural education, demonstrating that art serves as a platform for intercultural dialogue, self-reflection, and the reconstruction of identities (Gao, 2009; Muntean and Vesa, 2019; Argyriadis, Argyriadi, and Drakopoulou, 2023; Fleming, 2023). Conversely, intercultural exchanges have also profoundly influenced artistic creation, reshaping mechanisms, themes, and forms in contemporary art (Mitasova, 2024; Ye, 2024). However, little research has explored how people appreciate and interpret artworks from other cultures, specifically through the lens of Self and Other identity construction. In this study, "interpretation" is narrowly defined as a series of positioning actions based on language, encompassing speaking strategies, cognitive behaviors, and knowledge transfer.

Empirical research at the micro-linguistic level significantly contributes to understanding the construction processes of the Self and the Other. This study is based on Hausendorf's model (2000), which investigates speakers' socio-cultural intentions through lexical, grammatical, semantic-pragmatic, and strategic forms. Hausendorf (2000, 2002) applied this model to examine how East Germans articulate their sense of identity and to explore discourses and vocational roles within the art industry. His approach provides a valuable methodology for analyzing power distance, institutional organization, and identity formation through both verbal and nonverbal expressions.

Cite this article as:

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This study poses the following research question: How do individuals engage with, interpret, and understand artistic works from other cultures by positioning the Self and the Other? The data is drawn from the author's own experiences at a Chinese reverse glass painting exhibition held at the Landesmuseum Hannover. Ten visitors, who lacked prior knowledge in Sinology and art, were interviewed regarding their interpretations of one specific painting from the exhibition. These discussions, which captured the interviewees' personal interpretations, associations, and reflections, were recorded and analyzed. The analysis adopted Hausendorf's model (2000), transcribed the audio data using GAT-II conventions, and incorporated various linguistic perspectives. The study's findings indicate that interviewees continuously negotiated their self-identities in response to unfamiliarity, employing strategies such as ambiguous expressions, object comparisons, and categorizing unfamiliar elements within familiar frameworks.

2. Theoretical background

In this study, "culture" is no longer viewed as a static and bounded concept, but rather as a unity of both material manifestations and socio-cultural practices. According to Straub's culture theory (2007), culture is "a practical system of symbols, knowledge, and directions," which serves as a reference system for "those who participate in it" (Straub, 2007). At the same time, culture is understood as "the result of a process of interaction, communication, or discursive negotiation," characterized by "discursive and/or linguistic distinctions or relations" (Straub, 2007). Culture is both a prerequisite for and a product of human activity, resulting from processes of meaning-making, differentiation, and identity formation. Its dynamic nature illustrates how culture is perpetually reconstructed and redefined through cultural contact between the Self and the Other. Therefore, investigating how individuals engage with others through their actual behaviors and expressions becomes paramount.

Differentiation, as conceptualized by Tajfel and Turner (1969), fundamentally concerns how individuals categorize themselves and others into in-groups and out-groups, fostering collective identification and positive self-concepts. Hirschauer (2014) expands this framework by distinguishing functional and associational forms of differentiation at both societal and interactional levels, introducing the concept of "human differentiation":

(Top: Societal Differentiation – Politics, Economy, Science, Art, Media, etc.
Left: Human Differentiation – Ethnicity, Nationality, Social Class, Gender, Age, etc.
Right: Differentiation of Social Structures – Network, Organization, Community, Group, Interaction, etc.)
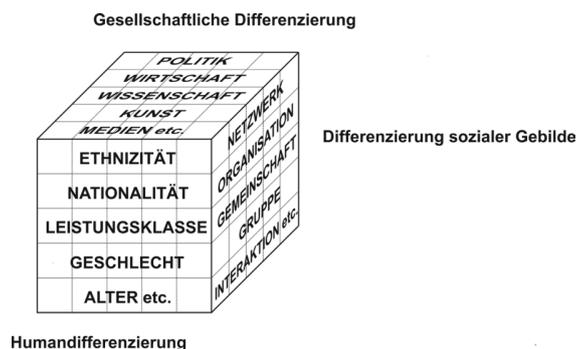

Figure 1: Intersection of Forms of Social Differentiation (Hirschauer, 2014)

From this anthropological perspective, humans are viewed as holistic subjects, not only occupying social roles but also embodying cultural and material aspects such as bodies, languages, and beliefs, situated within the soft culture of society. This intersectional model of differentiation highlights the inherent observer relativity in cultural comparisons, generating unbalanced "us/them" dichotomies and the construction of "alien others." The complexity of this process becomes especially visible in artistic interpretation, where meaning emerges dynamically from the interplay between objective representation and subjective perception, shaped by cultural markers, material-semiotic elements, and reception contexts. Ultimately, differentiation theory underscores the fluid, multi-layered nature of social categorization, revealing how cultural codification, power hierarchies, and observer bias collectively shape human subjectivities in relation to the Self and the Other.

It is evident that the Self and the Other are not two distinct conceptual categories, but rather dynamic projections. Therefore, this study argues that examining the Self and the Other within intercultural contexts should begin with behavioral research, analyzing how individuals define the Self and the Other and reflect on the relationship between them. This behavioral manifestation is referred to here as "positioning," rather than "understanding," "interpreting," or similar terms. In narrative analysis, Bamberg's theory of positioning (2022) offers a practical model with three layers: the positioning of characters within the story, the narrator's role in specific interactions, and the broader social discourses that shape identity. Bamberg's conceptualization of identity as a fluid process holds significant relevance for this study. However, while acknowledging the importance of narratives and storytelling, this study shifts the analytical focus toward specific language expressions, thereby bridging the gap between macro-narrative analysis and micro-level language use.

This study adopts a qualitative research methodology, drawing on authentic data collected through interviews. By analyzing the interviewees' lexical choices, syntactic structures, grammatical patterns, and rhetorical strategies, the research seeks to illuminate the ongoing process of positioning. This approach enables a nuanced exploration of how individuals discursively construct and negotiate their identities in relation to others within the context of intercultural interaction.

3. Methodology

This study is based on a corpus derived from interviews conducted around a single artwork from the Chinese reverse glass painting exhibition at the Landesmuseum Hannover. Among the 50 paintings displayed in the exhibition, one was selected based on its universally understandable everyday themes, rather than purely religious, mythical, or imaginative themes. Reverse glass painting, a popular form of home decoration during the modern era in China, combines glass craftsmanship with a blend of traditional and Western elements. Its accessibility made it suitable for the interviewees, offering a wide range of possible interpretations. The exhibition thus provided an opportunity to introduce this unique form of modern art to a European audience.

The author actively participated in the exhibition, during which the research questions were formulated and a pilot study was conducted. Following the pilot interview, it was decided to provide the interviewees with more information in advance about the genre of reverse glass painting and the figures depicted in the selected artwork. In order to minimize the author's influence on the participants' responses, the author refrained from asking specific questions during the interviews and instead encouraged the interviewees to express their feelings and opinions based on the introductory text provided. When necessary, the author answered questions related to object identification but avoided interrupting the interviewees' narratives. As a result, the data was collected in a format that is less dialogic and more monologic.

Between March to May 2003, ten interviewees were recruited via email from the campus of Georg-August-Universität Göttingen. The participants were specifically selected for not having backgrounds in Sinology or art, while their nationalities, ages, and academic disciplines were not controlled. Each interviewee received an introductory text via email in advance and scheduled an in-person interview with the author at Café Central on campus. Each interview lasted approximately 10 to 15 minutes and ended whenever the interviewees felt they had concluded their responses. The total recording time of the 10 interviews amounted to 139 minutes. Since the study was originally conducted within the framework of German Studies, the interviews were conducted in German and later translated into English for transcription and analysis. Below is the introductory text that was sent to the interviewees via email:

Here is a Chinese reverse glass painting from the exhibition at the Land's Museum of Hannover. Reverse Glass Painting is an art genre that was widespread in China in the 1980s or 1990s and used for home decoration. The painting below depicts a family in the Ming/Qing dynasty (1368-1912). The boys are gathered around a table, guided by two women as they read. The scene takes place in a garden. Banana trees, mountains and a white wall can be seen in the background.

Please describe the picture according to your own imagination (You can make up your own story for the figures). How do you feel about the painting? What can you associate with the objects and figures in the picture? Is there something similar or different to you? Please do not worry about having said something "wrong", because your own particular interpretation is of most importance!

Figure 2: Introductory Text for the interviewees

Source: Meyer, Rupprecht (2017): BOL Chinesische Hinterglasmalerei aus der Sammlung Mei Lin. Hirmer Verlag GmbH, München.

The basic information about the interviewees is as follows:

Table 1: Information about the Interviewees

Name(pseudonym)	Sex	Nationality	Major
Kara	female	Germany	Chemistry
Yan	female	Tunisia	German as a Foreign Language
Gill	male	South Korea	German as a Foreign Language
Peter	male	Germany	Physics
Fiona	female	Tunisia	German as a Foreign Language
Stefan	male	Germany	Politics
Pearl	female	Belgium	German as a Foreign Language
Ann	female	Kazakhstan	German as a Foreign Language
Alice	female	Poland	German as a Foreign Language
Martin	male	Germany	Economy

Source: By the author

Subsequently, appointments for face-to-face recordings were arranged with each interviewee. Most of the time, the interviewees spoke freely, guided by the introductory text provided in advance. When they asked questions or sought clarification, the author engaged in the discussion, making the interviews resemble conversations between the author and the interviewees.

This study is theoretically grounded in constructionism and phenomenology, aiming to uncover implicit cognitive frameworks through pragmatic expression. From this perspective, the research situates itself within the domains of intercultural communication and sociolinguistics, adopting the "task–means–form" model developed by Hausendorf (2000), which offers a structured approach to analyzing language behavior in specific social contexts. The term "task" primarily refers to the speaker's social behavior, expressed as either a "speech act" (Austin, 1962) or a communicative strategy. A distinction is made between "task" and "speech act," with "task" representing behavior within particular social contexts that may vary depending on the situation, while "speech act" focuses on generalized language strategies such as advice, questions, or contradictions. This study seeks to analyze participants' concrete attitudes and viewpoints in intercultural situations; therefore, the concept of "task" is adopted in preference to "speech act."

At the next two levels, "means" refers to the construction of meaning through semantic and pragmatic analysis, while "form" operates at a more microscopic level, examining lexical items, syntactic structures, grammatical organization, and paraverbal elements.

Foreign experiences in art demand self-reflection, drawing viewers into a "game" between "verbalized concepts" and "aesthetically intangible phenomena" (Gao, 2009). On one hand, aesthetic experiences based on biological perception are continuous; on the other hand, these experiences can be categorized conceptually, allowing the viewer to verbalize and assign values to what they perceive. In this study, all acts of conceptualization and verbalization are examined from the perspective of the construction of the Self and the Other. Through description and interpretation, viewers attempt to process unfamiliar elements by integrating them into their existing knowledge frameworks.

At the level of "means," the study examines how meanings and connotations are constructed. In addition to continuous categorization, generalizing and hedging strategies are widely observed in the empirical data, often signaling uncertainty and conflict avoidance (Anderson, Carleton, Diefenbach et al., 2019). At the level of "forms," the data includes not only lexical and grammatical features but also rhetorical devices such as metaphor, ellipsis, irony, and narrative, as well as paraverbal features such as prosody, tone of voice, and volume. The findings indicate that positioning the Self and the Other is achieved through multiple, interconnected tasks manifested in language production. Each example illustrates how specific tasks contribute to cultural communication. It is also important to note that these tasks should not be viewed as isolated behaviors; rather, they are often intertwined. Completing one task may simultaneously imply or fulfill additional tasks.

In this empirical study, the positioning of the Self and the Other is summarized across three layers. At the task layer, six tasks are defined: Referencing, Describing, Interpreting, Evaluating, Attributing, and Categorizing. From the data associated with each task, it can be observed that interviewees employ multiple speech strategies ("means"), which manifest in various micro-linguistic forms. It should be emphasized that the listed means and forms do not exhaustively cover all aspects of human communication, nor do they occur in isolation within the data. These lexical, syntactic, textual, paralinguistic, and non-linguistic markers were selected with reference to Hausendorf's (2002) empirical study on the sense of belonging, though certain adjustments were made to fit the specific focus and data of this study. For example, the form of "elliptic sentences" was intentionally included due to the noticeable hesitation displayed by interviewees on this topic. Since interpreting and describing are particularly crucial for art interpretation, "predicate of characteristics" was also added as a category of special interest. For the analysis, the software MAXQDA was used to play the audio recordings while annotating the occurrences of the language markers within the model. Additional means and forms may need to be identified for future studies addressing other topics.

Task	Means	Form
Referencing	Distancing	personal/temporal/local indicator
	Eye-Catching	pronoun plural
	…	apposition
Describing	Guessing	predicate of characteristics
	Comparing	predicate of actions
	…	predicate of attitudes
Interpreting	Metaphorical Interpretation	adjective
	Explaining with Examples	adverb
	…	negation with adversarial junction
Evaluating	Affirmative Evaluating	elliptic sentence
	Dissenting Evaluating	metaphor
	…	irony
Attributing	On Cultural Connotation	prosody
	On Cultural Prototype	
	…	
Categorizing	By Geographical Classification	
	By Stereotype	
	…	

Figure 3: Model of Positioning the Self and the Other. Source: By the author.

4. Results

4.1. Referencing

Referencing constitutes one of the initial steps through which the interviewees engage with the painting, reflecting their first perceptions of the artwork and the process of positioning themselves in relation to it. In this study, the interviewees received an introductory text about the painting and the task via email before the interview and were also allowed to contemplate or conduct brief research on the topic of reverse glass painting. Therefore, their first impressions of the painting are regarded as "referencing" within the context of this study.

4.1.1. Distancing

During the interviews, some participants mentioned that they did not understand this genre of art at all when reading the introductory text and had to conduct online research to learn what reverse glass painting is. The emphasis on their initial difficulties is conceptualized here as a referencing task, through which they position themselves in opposition to the painting, thereby distancing themselves from it. An example of this can be found in the interview with Alice:

```
|000    Alice    okay (-) also ich muss sagen es ist alles als ich das bild angeschaut,
                 okay (-) i must say that that's all what i've seen in this picture,
001              und=äh (.) ja OHne beschreibung,
                 and=ehm (.) yes without description,
002              ähm die also in der datei steht (.) wäre es für mich ein bisschen ↑SCHWIErig↑,
                 Ehm=what i've read in the text (.) it was a little difficult for me,
003              diese situation zu ↑verSTEHen↑,
                 to understand this situation,
004              äh:m also ja zuerst musste ich googeln,
                 eh:m yes first I have to google,
005              was eigentlich hinterglasbild (-) hinterglasmalerei bedeutet weil,
                 what on earth is a reverse glas (-) reverse glas painting because,
006              ich glaube in polen haben wir das !nicht!,
                 i think we don't have it in Poland,
007              das war etwas neues für ↑mich↑.
                 it was something new for me.
```

Figure 4: A fragment from the interview with Alice[2]

Using the emphasized adjectives "difficult" (Alice) and "new" (Alice), she expresses the considerable effort she made to understand the painting. The artwork is described as something new "for me" (Alice)—the personal pronoun "me" indicating an egocentric positioning, where she places the Self in a prioritized position opposite the unfamiliar artwork. The verb "google" (Alice) reflects her action upon first encountering the painting, with "Google" symbolizing "universal knowledge" and "intelligence" in this context, providing her with a systematic framework when faced with something foreign. Furthermore, the mention of the nation's name "Poland" (Alice) and the plural pronoun "we" (Alice) function as markers of group identity, expressing the speaker's sense of belonging. In summary, this sequence demonstrates how the interviewee, when initially confronted with the painting, experiences confusion and seeks external support, thus distancing herself from the artwork. She later attributes this unfamiliarity to national differences, affirming her own identity as "we" (Alice) and positioning the

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[2] The fragments in the following paragraphs come from the data transcript of the study.

painting as "they" (Alice). Distancing oneself from foreign artwork serves as a pragmatic strategy and represents one of the first referencing steps in the process of intercultural art communication.

4.1.2.   Eye-Catching

Another significant referencing strategy is what may be termed "eye-catching." Identifying something as eye-catching is an emotionally charged act. It is random, highly sensory, and individual, yet grounded in the speaker's everyday experiences and socio-cultural expectations. An example of this behavior is observed in the interview when the clothing and hairstyle of the figures in the picture captured attention:

```
000    Ann    was mir so ähm auffällt ist ähm die ↑kleidung↑,
                 what stands out for me is ehm the clothes,
001           die sie TRAgen,
                 that they wear;
002           also ich DENke auch der maler oder künstler hat so (-) gemalt ähm auch so
                 i think the painter or the artist has also (-) painted ehm like this,
003           damit das zueinander passt also .h diese personen tragen dieselbe farbe und dieselbe-
                 so that they pass .h with each other these people wear the same color and-
004           ähm ↑kleidung↑,
                 ehm clothes,
005           und zum beispiel dieses kind und diese ↑frau↑,
                 and for example this child and this woman,
006           dann auch ähnlich also für mich so wie ähm dieselbe KLEIdung;
                 and also similar for me it's like ehm the same clothes;
007           haha ich denke es ist unterschiedlich aber vielleicht wegen der ↑farben↑,
                 haha i think it's different but maybe because of the color,
008           ja und ähm ich finde komisch,
                 yes and ehm i also find it funny,
009           dass diese MENschen,
                 that these people,
010           so ähm gezeichnet oder gemalt wurden weil-
                 so that they pass with each other because-
011           <<acc> zum beispiel du meinst das ist kind das ist kind, >
                 <<acc> for example you think this is a child this is a child,>
012           waRUM sind sie ohne ↓HAAre↓.
                 why don't they have hair.
```

Figure 5: A fragment from the interview with Ann

The behavioral predicate "standing out" (Ann) is used as a speech strategy to highlight elements that seem particularly different or surprising to the interviewee, which are interpreted as eye-catching in this study. This is followed by a detailed enumeration of the observed features, whereby she supports her subjective perception with concrete examples from the painting. Ultimately, she describes the eye-catching clothing as "funny" (Ann), an adjective that frames the conspicuousness as abnormal. Identifying something as eye-catching represents a strong emotional behavior of positioning the Self in opposition to the Other, whereby the Other is defined as something strange and unfamiliar relative to the Self.

4.2. Describing

This section of the study focuses on the speech task employed by the interviewees when they begin describing the painting. The most unfamiliar aspects of the artwork are extensively explored, accompanied by numerous speculations, inquiries, and associations with personal experiences. It is evident that interviewees frequently respond to the artwork based on their prior knowledge of art and their own cultural backgrounds, often drawing parallels to similar situations they have encountered in their lives. Furthermore, when confronted with unfamiliar elements, interviewees tend to raise their intonations, ask questions, and employ hedges to reduce the degree of certainty in their language.

4.2.1.   Guessing

Notably, the interviewees extensively use phrases of uncertainty, such as "I think" or "It seems to me…," to soften their statements. Rather than straightforwardly describing the painting, they primarily engage in guessing its content, revealing hesitation, lack of confidence, and doubt. In the following example, Ann expresses uncertainty regarding the hairstyle of the figures portrayed in the painting:

Throughout this sequence, multiple question forms are used, and her intonation consistently rises, reflecting her uncertainty and hesitation. The questions are followed by the adverb of causality "therefore" (Ann), which she employs to justify her conclusion that "the child is bald" (Ann). She formulates a hypothesis and then attempts to validate it through reasoning and interpretation of the unfamiliar features. When confronted with unfamiliar artwork, individuals may encounter difficulties in identifying objects situated in unexpected or ambiguous contexts. As demonstrated in this interaction, description may be hindered by uncertainty, and hedges serve as a pragmatic strategy to reduce confidence when engaging with the unfamiliar Other.

```
000    A       das !haar! wird vermischt mit dem hintergrund.
               the hair is mixed with the background.
001    Ann     <<erstaunt> ↑ähm↑? >
               <<estonished> ehm?>
002            also ich sehe zum beispiel !hier! an der ↑SEIte↑,
               i can see here for example by the side,
003            haare und (-) ↑hier↑?
               hair and (-) here?
004            ähm oben keine haare;
               ehm on the top no hair;
005            <<dim> DESwegen kahl meine ich. >
               <<dim>therefore bald-headed i think.>
006    A       also die zwei SEIten gibt es haare und oben kein.
               on the both sides there is hair and on the top no hair.
007    Ann     <<dim> em also du meinst sie haben haare aber nur diese friSUR. >
               <<dim> ehm you mean they have hair but only in this hair style.>
008    A       emm.
               emm.
```

Figure 6: A fragment from the interview with Ann

4.2.2.   Comparing

Another prominent feature in the descriptive process is the use of comparison. Comparison functions as a means of understanding the foreign artwork by relating it to familiar references. In this study, comparisons serve as acts of positioning the Self in relation to the Other, providing practical examples of how interviewees categorize specific characteristics of both themselves and others within the same conceptual framework. The selection of comparative criteria is subjective, allowing interviewees to highlight similarities and differences, thereby positioning themselves either in alignment with or opposition to the artwork. Additionally, interviewees often emphasize differences, attributing them to group-specific cultural characteristics. The following example illustrates how the color of the architectural elements serves as a culturally specific point of comparison:

```
000    Kara    Ähm aber,
               ehm but,
001            wenn wir zum beispiel,
               when we for example,
002            ↑KIRchenfenster↑?
               the window of the churches?
003            die sind meistens BUNter bei uns.
               they are mostly more colorful for us.
004    A       ah ja [ja ja=,
               ah yes [yes yes=,
005    Kara        [genau also das ist generell ein bisschen ↑BUNter↑,
                   [right they are in general a little more colorful,
006            <<p> ist mein [eindruck, >
               <<p> it's my [feeling,>
007    A                    [ja.
                            [yes.
008    Kara    <<fragend> und nicht ganz so ↑grau↑, >
               <<questioning> and not so greylly,>
```

Figure 7: A fragment from the interview with Kara

In this example, the plural pronouns "we" (Kara) and "us" (Kara) are employed to define two contrasting ethnic groups, representing the Self and the Other. The comparative expression "more colourful" (Kara) is used to contrast the vibrant stained-glass windows typical of European architecture with the more muted tones of the painting, implying that European art is generally more colorful than its Chinese counterpart. Both the objects selected for comparison and the evaluative criteria are chosen by the interviewee. In this case, Kara's socio-cultural experiences shape her emphasis on color vibrancy as the comparative criterion. The use of negation "not" (Kara) further underscores the distinction between the two styles, situating the Self within the framework of "our" culture and contrasting it with the Other, represented by the more muted grey tones of the painting.

4.3. Interpreting

According to Hausendorf (2000), the distinction between "interpreting" and "describing" lies in the fact that interpreting involves deciphering the invisible—uncovering meanings, intentions, and significances embedded within the images. These are not objectively existing facts, but rather interpretations constructed both by the painter and by the viewer. Thus, interpretation is deeply connected to social, contextual, and historical factors, which is why it plays a crucial role in intercultural communication. In this process, viewers reflect upon their own cultural frameworks in relation to specific concepts and examine how these are represented in another culture.

4.3.1.   Metaphorical Interpretation

George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980), in their influential work *Metaphors We Live By*, emphasize that metaphors are not merely rhetorical devices but essential elements of human cognition, shaping how we perceive reality and act within it. Through the analysis of numerous common metaphors, they demonstrate how metaphors reflect cultural frameworks, modes of thinking, and social relationships. During the interviews, participants' interpretations of the image reflect cognitive processes grounded in conceptual metaphors and their projection from the physical object onto broader socio-cultural categories. The following example illustrates how metaphor emerges in relation to the size of objects:

```
000    Gill    vielleicht sollten bergen eigentlich !viel! größer als diese menschen sein eigentlich;
                maybe in the fact the mountains should be much bigger than these people;
001            aber sie sehen aus so (-),
                but they look like (-),
002            also ich habe irgendwie gesa(gt) ähm gedacht so,
                somehow i've said that ehm thought that,
003            vielleicht ähm damalige chinesische LEUte hatten ah (-),
                maybe ehm the chinese people at that time had ah (-),
004            <<zögernd> ja vielleicht inter:pretiere ich zu viel- >
                <<hesitating> yeah maybe i interpret too much->
005            aber also MENschen und natur sind schon gleichfertig und so weiter daher,
                but the human and the nature are equal or something like that therefore,
```

Figure 8: A fragment from the interview with Gill

The use of the adverb "much" (Gill), together with the comparative "bigger" (Gill), suggests that Gill perceives the size of both the mountain and the figures as highly unusual, evoking for him a sense of strangeness and discomfort. This discomfort is further expressed through his hesitant intonation, elongated sounds, the adverb "somehow" (Gill), and the qualifier "maybe" (Gill), as well as through egocentric expressions like "too much" (Gill). In Gill's cognitive framework, size is metaphorically associated with social significance: when something is large, it carries great meaning or status. Consequently, depicting a person as large as a mountain suggests that the person holds equal significance to the mountain; otherwise, the portrayal feels unnatural. Furthermore, Gill attributes this strangeness to cultural specificity by referencing the collective group "Chinese people" (Gill), thereby generalizing the unfamiliar representation to the entire cultural group and positioning the Self—perceived as normative—in contrast to "Chinese people at that time" (Gill), who are framed as the foreign Other.

4.3.2.   Explaining with Examples

In the interpretive process, interviewees frequently employ the strategy of citing examples drawn from personal experience to support their interpretations. The search for examples functions as a comparative mechanism through which similarities are identified and two cultural contexts are juxtaposed. In this study, listing examples is understood as a step following comparison, where interviewees apply deductive reasoning based on similarities they recognize and further elaborate their interpretations by drawing upon their own cultural experiences. This process engages cognitive relationships that go beyond mere description.

For instance, Gill compares the educational systems depicted in the painting with those familiar to him in Korea, enriching his interpretation by providing detailed explanations of Korean schools.

In this context, the educational systems in Korea are introduced as a comparative reference. The geographical indicator "Korean" (Gill), along with the plural pronouns "we" (Gill) and "us" (Gill), as well as the original term *hag-dang (*학당*)* (Gill), reflect the interviewee's sense of familiarity and cultural belonging while articulating this example. The employment of the adjective "real" (Gill) serves to demarcate the boundary between the familiar and the unfamiliar: the architectural structure depicted in the artwork is perceived as not "real" (Gill) within the interviewee's cultural schema, whereas the "real" school structure exists within the interviewee's own cultural experience. Furthermore, the interviewee observes that there is "usually" (Gill) a male teacher present in the Korean school setting, which he regards as the normative standard. From the standpoint of his cultural framework, the interviewee selects this particular example to support his comparative reasoning, grounding his interpretation in personally accessible cultural referents.

```
000    Gill    Ok haha-
                Ok haha-
001            .h wenn ich vergleich (die schule) mit ↑koreANischer maleREI↑,
                .h when i compare (the school) with korean paintings,
002             wir (-) hatten norMAlerweise so ein-
                We had normally such a-
003            echtes geBÄUde für ähm KINder zum beispiel,
                real building for the children for example,
004            für die zum ↑LERnen↑,
                for them to study,
005             also wir sagen das !hag-dang!,
                we call it the hag-dang (학당),
006             hag-dang,
                hag-dang (학당),
007             ja.
                yes.
008            und da gibt es ein normalerweise so einen ↑MÄNNlichen lehrer↑,
                and there is normally a male teacher;
009            der also ↑lehrt↑ zum beispiel-
                he teaches for example-
```

Figure 9: A fragment from the interview with Gill

4.4. Evaluating

Evaluation constitutes a process by which interviewees subjectively and emotionally assess the painting, drawing upon their prior experiences and cultural frames of reference. This evaluative process encompasses both behavioral and affective dimensions, substantially shaping participants' comprehension, judgment, and contemplation of the artwork as a whole. Since evaluative judgments serve both functional and practical purposes, the interviewees' assessments are distributed along a continuum ranging from affirmation to dissent. In instances of positive resonance, interviewees tend to engage with the artwork; conversely, when confronted with discordance or unfamiliarity, they adopt a more distanced or critical stance. This evaluative spectrum reflects both their level of identification with the content and the extent of perceived cultural dissonance.

4.4.1.   Affirmative Evaluation

It is essential to emphasize that the act of positioning oneself as an outsider, through mechanisms of comparison, contrast, and categorization, does not inherently carry a negative implication or result in rejection. While labeling something as strange, alien, or unfamiliar may carry connotations of otherness, the act of distancing oneself is a common cognitive strategy in intercultural encounters. This section, therefore, examines the circumstances under which individuals position themselves as outsiders while simultaneously striving to establish proximity and mutual understanding with the unfamiliar artwork. Consequently, the present study adopts the terms "affirmative evaluation" and "dissenting evaluation" to provide a more nuanced distinction, intentionally avoiding the simplistic binary of "positive" and "negative" evaluation.

```
000    Pearl   die die leute sind (-) sie sind alle ↑gleich↑,
                the people are (-) they are all the same,
001            aber so ich meine auch die kleine zum beispiel das kind ähm an der rechten seite;
                but I think the little for example the child on the right side;
002            es sieht ein bisschen alt.
                it looks a little old.
003            <<lachend> also ich würde sagen ja;>
                <<laughing> i would like to say yeah;>
004            also vielleicht ist es art-
                maybe it's the style-
004            von chinesische malerei keine ahnung-
                of the chinese painting I don't know-
005            aber ich glaube das ist ein bisschen ↑KOmisch↑,
                but I think that is a little funny,
006            aber es ist ähm (0.25) PEACEful ich weiß nicht wie (heißt das) auf deutsch aber ja-
                but it is ehm (0.25) peaceful I don't know how to (say it) in German but yeah-
007            ja sehr (--) ja ruhig so:-
                yeah very (--) quiet so:-
008            <<acc> ↑das ist↑ ein schönes bild.>
                <<acc> it is a beautiful painting.>
```

Figure 10: A fragment from the interview with Pearl

The employment of the adverb "all" (Pearl) and the adjective "same" (Pearl) functions as a generalizing mechanism in her evaluation, despite the observable non-identical nature of the figures. Pearl subsequently attributes the unfamiliar features to national artistic conventions, stating, "Maybe it's the style of Chinese painting" (Pearl). However, a semantic contrast soon emerges between the evaluative terms "komisch" (which carries a mildly negative connotation in German) and "beautiful" (Pearl), indicating that while the figures and the "old" (Pearl) appearance of the child initially evoke a sense of foreignness, this does not ultimately compromise her affirmative appreciation of the painting. Instead, she continues to recognize a sense of calmness and harmony emanating from the artwork. This evaluative ambivalence is consistently articulated through her use of modal verbs and hedging expressions, such as "I would like to say..." (Pearl), "I don't know..." (Pearl), and the degree modifier "a little" (Pearl), all of which signal an ongoing negotiation of uncertainty and acceptance.

4.4.2. Dissenting Evaluation

Within the context of intercultural art communication, interviewees also express dissenting evaluations, manifesting in feelings of aversion, skepticism, or rejection toward certain aspects of the artwork. While affirmative evaluations typically arise from points of resonance grounded in participants' cultural experiences, dissenting evaluations often emerge from perceived contradictions or conflicts between the social norms embedded in the artwork and those within the interviewee's cultural frame of reference. In such cases, participants actively reflect upon elements in the painting that violate their expectations, prompting a reassessment of cultural divergences. The following example addresses the notion of beauty ideals as a salient component of social norms:

```
000   Kara    also-
                so-
001           aktuell ist ja;
              currently it's like;
002           <<acc> der schönheitsstandard ist eher (-)-
              <<acc> the beauty standard tends to be like (-)-
003           dass man schön BRAUN sein will dass man viel zeit DRAUssen verbringt, >
              that one wants to get tanned that one spends a lot of time outdoors. >
004   A       Ja ja-
              Yes yes-
005   Kara    und !so! blass würde also ein bisschen krank ausschauen-
              and so pale like this looks a little sick-
              <<acc> wie ich jetzt auch mal keine ahnung- >
              <<acc> it's like if he were having I don't know->
006           ↓FIEber↓ hätte oder so.
              a fever or something like that.
```

Figure 11: A fragment from the interview with Kara

Kara employs the temporal indicator "currently" (Kara) to contrast the present with the past, projecting her modern standards of beauty onto the depiction within the painting. She conveys her surprise through the adjective "pale" (Kara), preceded by the adverb of degree "so" (Kara). Further, through the use of the adjective "sick" (Kara) and the simile "having a fever" (Kara), she assigns a distinctly negative connotation to the pale complexion presented in the artwork, associating whiteness with illness or physical frailty. When articulating a dissenting evaluation, the interviewee employs a common speech strategy aimed at softening the critical tone. This is illustrated through her use of the adverbial modifier "a little," the subjunctive form "were" (Kara), and the modal particle "like that" (Kara), which collectively mitigate the forcefulness of her assessment.

In dissenting evaluations, interviewees typically position themselves in opposition to the imagery presented in the artwork. Although the evaluations in this study are discussed along a continuum with positive and negative poles, it must be acknowledged that, within intercultural communication, individual evaluations of art are highly variable. Such variability reflects complex underlying social and psychological factors that should be carefully considered and analyzed.

4.5. Attributing

Attributing refers to the cognitive-linguistic process through which specific characteristics are identified and assigned as belonging to a particular social or cultural group. In this process, certain traits are accentuated as core group markers, while others are minimized or subordinated. Attributing thus represents a fundamental step in differentiating the Self from the Other. From a linguistic perspective, it is crucial to observe the categories and evaluative standards interviewees employ when attributing socio-cultural meaning to specific objects, how they transfer elements of their cultural knowledge onto unfamiliar artworks, and how they simultaneously reflect on the implicit cultural meanings embedded within their own society during intercultural art encounters.

4.5.1. On Cultural Connotation

The fluid and dynamic nature of culture, as described by Straub (2007), is particularly evident in how individuals interpret and assign abstract meanings to cultural materiality. When confronted with artworks from unfamiliar cultural contexts, interviewees frequently draw upon personal experiences and established cultural norms to infer the intended meaning or cultural purpose behind the objects depicted. Notably, many interviewees in this study interpreted the use of dark colors in the painting as symbolically negative, often associating such hues with melancholy or sadness.

```
000    Fiona    die FARben finde ich ein bisschen ↑dunkel↑,
                i find the color a little dark,
001             und ähm es macht einen eindruck für mich das ist ein bisschen bisschen ähm-
                and ehm it gives me an impression that is a little ehm-
002             TRAUrig ist,
                sad,
002             ähm obwohl es die familie wenn die familie zusammen sind,
                ehm although it's the family when the family are altogether,
003             sollte das nicht !sein!,
                it's shouldn't have to be like this,
004             vielleicht weil sie (--) nicht so so eng,
                maybe because they (--) are not very close,
005             aber sie (-) ich weiß es nicht;
                but they (-) i don't know;
006             also bei uns in tunesien ja <<acc> essen die familie Immer zusammen-
                for us in Tunisia yes <<acc> the family always eat together-
007             machen Immer was zusammen essen zusammen->
                always does something together eat together->
008             die mutter der vater sie sind immer so ein bisschen !streng! mit den kindern,
                the mother the father they are always a little strict with the children,
008             und: ähm (--) was noch-
                and ehm (--) what's more-
```

Figure 12: A fragment from the interview with Fiona

The initial impressions of most interviewees regarding the painting are characterized by descriptors such as "grey" (Fiona), "sad" (Fiona), and "negative" (Fiona). This perception aligns with the cultural connotation that dark colors carry negative societal meanings, particularly when contrasted with the context of family representation. Fiona, for example, articulates her interpretation of the family scene using several evaluative adjectives: "dark" (Fiona), "sad" (Fiona), "not very close" (Fiona), and "strict" (Fiona). Within her cultural framework, grey symbolizes sadness and adversity. When applied to a familial scene, this color conveys an impression of emotional distance and a lack of warmth or affection among family members.

To soften her critical evaluation—recognizing that depictions of unhappy families are relatively uncommon in artistic traditions—Fiona employs various mitigating strategies, using qualifiers such as "a little" (Fiona), "maybe" (Fiona), and "I don't know" (Fiona). In contrast, when discussing her own cultural group, she expresses greater confidence, asserting that "the family always does something together" (Fiona). In this statement, her speech becomes notably more emphatic, particularly through her repetition of the adverb "always" (Fiona), which underscores a strong sense of cultural belonging and normative familial cohesion within her own cultural identity.

4.5.2. On Prototype

A prototype is defined as the most representative or typical example within a given category (Rosch, 1973). Prototype theory plays a central role in cognitive processing, as individuals frequently compare unfamiliar cultural objects with prototypes drawn from their own cultural frameworks, which may vary substantially across different cultures. Consequently, attempts to comprehend the Other often reveal the constraints imposed by one's own prototypical structures.

For example, with regard to the concept of "mountain," divergent prototypical understandings lead to interpretive discrepancies among the interviewees. In traditional South Chinese garden design, artificial stone mountains are commonly integrated alongside ponds, streams, bridges, and flower beds, allowing the literati to enjoy a miniature representation of nature within their personal spaces. As part of Chinese interior decorative practices, miniature mountains may even be placed in potted arrangements on tables, a practice that remains fashionable among the literati to this day. The painting examined in this study depicts such an artificial mountain, which is significantly smaller than a natural mountain. This representation challenges the interviewees' conventional prototype of a mountain and serves as a point of interpretive discussion.

The mountain depicted in the painting is approximately the same size as the figures, which conflicts with Ann's prototypical conception of a mountain. The use of the modal verb in the subjunctive mood, "should have been" (Ann), indicates a discrepancy between the artwork and her experiential expectations. The subjectivizing phrase "for me" (Ann) further positions the interviewee in contrast to the depiction, emphasizing the personal nature of her perception. She employs a predicate of origin—"come from"—stating, "I come from a very mountainous country" (Ann), thereby reinforcing the credibility of her prototypical experience. Through the use of the plural pronoun "we" (Ann), she interweaves her individual experience with collective cultural memory,

reinforcing her cultural belonging and affirming the presence of "high mountains" as characteristic of her cultural group. The use of ellipsis at the conclusion suggests that she attempts to avoid potential conflict by softening her contradictory assessment through expressions of uncertainty.

```
001     Ann     ja ok aber:-
                yes ok but:-
002             warum?
                why?
003             <<lachend> ich meine berge sollten ja sehr !hoch! sein, >
                <<laughing> i think the mountains should have been very tall,
004             das ist mir nied(rig) für mich, >
                they are low for me,>
005             also ich komme aus einem sehr geBIRgigen ↑land↑,
                i come from a very mountainous country,
006             und dann wir haben sehr hohe berge und das wäre für mich wirklich-
                and then we have very tall mountains and for me that would be really-
```

Figure 13: A fragment from the interview with Ann

4.6. Categorizing

Categorizing, in this study, is conceptualized as the cognitive and linguistic process of logically organizing phenomena into distinct groups based on one's social experience and cultural background in response to external stimuli. It involves an interplay of various cognitive functions, including perception, memory, and judgment. In the context of intercultural encounters, categorization often occurs implicitly and tacitly (Quasthoff, 1973), guided by culturally specific attributes that serve as criteria for classification. This section illustrates how interviewees employ various categorization strategies as a fundamental mechanism in differentiating the Self from the Other.

4.6.1. By Geographical Classification

Geographical markers—whether referencing countries, regions, or continents—are frequently employed in the interview data. When cultural characteristics are framed in terms of geographical indicators, they are generalized as emblematic traits of a specific nation or region, thus constructing collective identities for ethnic or cultural groups. In doing so, interviewees simultaneously assert their own national identities, thereby establishing a relational opposition between the Self and the Other.

```
000     Yan     ich denke (-) das ist ja typisch ↑chinesisch↑,
                i think that is typically Chinese,
001             weil ähm also-
                because ehm-
002             di:e kleidung:-
                the: clothing:-
003             das ist ja (-) ganz normal in china zu ↑SEHen↑,
                that is (-) very normally seen in china,
004             und auch äh:m der ↑TIsch↑,
                and also eh:m the table,
005             aus ↑HOLZ↑,
                of woods,
006             wenn ich DIEsen tisch sehe,
                when i see this table,
007             dann denke ich ↓JA↓ es kommt beSTImmt ähm entweder aus china,
                then i think yes it definitely comes ehm either from China,
008             oder aus JApan.
                or from Japan.
```

Figure 14: A fragment from the interview with Yan

For instance, Yan describes the painting as "typically Chinese" (Yan), whereby the adverb "typically" combined with the geographic label "Chinese" serves to assign specific regional attributes to the artwork. She substantiates her claim by noting that the clothing depicted is "normally seen in China" (Yan), despite her having never visited China personally. In this instance, "normal" functions not as a simple adjective but as an evaluative predicate

informed by second-hand cultural knowledge. Yan further characterizes the table in the image as "made of wood" (Yan), attributing its possible origin to "either from China or from Japan" (Yan). Her confidence in ascribing national characteristics is reflected in her use of adverbs such as "definitely" (Yan), the coordinating conjunction "either...or..." (Yan), and the affirmative assertion "yes" (Yan). By referencing Japan as a plausible alternative within the same cultural sphere, she emphasizes the perceived geographical and cultural proximity of the two nations. Through such generalizations, the interviewee constructs an image of China—or more broadly, "Asia in general"—that is shaped by mass media, accumulated knowledge, and shared cultural imaginaries.

4.6.2. By stereotype

The concept of stereotype was introduced into social psychology by Walter Lippmann (1922: 96), who characterized stereotypes as "the guarantee of our self-respect" and "the projection upon the world of our own sense of our own value, our own position and our own rights." Within this framework, stereotypes are understood as a form of cognitive shortcut, facilitating the rapid assimilation of unfamiliar information by fitting it into pre-existing mental schemas. As Jonas and Mast (2007) explain, stereotypes often carry a prejudicial dimension, reinforcing negative evaluations of groups and the emotional biases associated with them:

```
000   Fiona    ja ich glaube das wars-
                yes I think that was-
001              das ist ein super schönes ↑bild↑,
                this is a very beautiful painting,
002              und sagt einfach so viel über über die !asiatische! kultur dass die ähm !kollekTIV! ist,
                and tells us much about the asian culture which is ehm collective,
003               und !faMIlienorientiert! sind,
                and family-oriented,
004              ja (-) also das und die die ↑wichtige ROlle↑,
                Yes (-) that and the important roll,
005              die mutter spielt;
                which the mother plays;
006              das ist extrem klar die wie wichtig ist die die rolle der mutter;
                that is extremly clear how important the the roll of mother is;
007              obWOHL das ist nicht so so klar in unsere gesellschaft-
                although that is not so clear in our society-
008              sie denken zum beispiel ich glaube,
                they think for example I think,
008              wenn sie menschen über asiatische länder reden oder AUCH arabische länder-
                when people talk about the Asian countries or also the Arabic countries-
009              sie denken die mutter sind nicht wichtig;
                they think the mothers are not important;
```

Figure 15: A fragment from the interview with Fiona

In this study, stereotyping is examined as a social mechanism that enables individuals to make sense of unfamiliar cultural phenomena by categorizing the Other into familiar conceptual frameworks. Accordingly, categorization often draws upon culturally embedded stereotypes.

Quasthoff (1989) posits that stereotypes frequently manifest as categorical statements of the type "What is how" (e.g., "Germans are hardworking"). Such categorical reasoning is evident in the interviewees' assertions that "the Asian culture is collective" and "the Asian culture is family-oriented." Fiona further employs the behavioral predicate "play a role" (Fiona), intensified by the adjective "important" (Fiona), to articulate her perceptions of maternal roles both within her own culture and within Asian cultures. This reasoning leads her to identify commonalities in family values across cultural groups. Although Fiona utilizes geographic markers such as "Arab" and "Asian," she ultimately reframes both as part of a larger cultural collective in which maternal roles are consistently undervalued. In this context, Arab and Asian cultures are similarly positioned as societies where women are frequently portrayed as subordinate.

The analysis further demonstrates that the interviewee's self-positioning remains dynamic, fluctuating in real-time as she reflects upon her lived experiences and acquired knowledge, negotiating her cultural interpretations throughout the interaction.

5. Discussion

This study has explored how individuals appreciate and interpret artistic works from other cultures through the theoretical lens of the Self and the Other. By centering the analysis on intercultural art communication, the study directs attention to both the cognitive mechanisms involved in differentiation and the potential for intercultural engagement through artistic experiences. The findings demonstrate that interviewees actively construct dynamic identities of both the Self and the Other across three analytical levels: task, means, and form. In navigating unfamiliar cultural material, participants observe, describe, interpret, and evaluate artworks based on their own cultural repertoires, while simultaneously negotiating specific elements within broader socio-cultural contexts.

The conceptual model developed in this research delineates six primary intercultural tasks: referencing, describing, interpreting, evaluating, attributing, and categorizing. Each task is accompanied by a distinct set of pragmatic strategies, termed "means", which serve to mediate participants' attitudes and manage potential cultural tensions. These means are manifested linguistically at the "form" level through lexical choices, grammatical constructions, rhetorical patterns, and prosodic features. Empirical data drawn from interview transcripts were analyzed according to these levels, revealing the diverse linguistic and cognitive strategies participants employed when engaging with foreign artistic material.

Table 2: The following table summarizes the principal findings of the study:

Task	Means	Purposes and Functions of the Means
Referencing	Distancing; Eye-catching	To connect or distance oneself from the artwork; to formulate first impressions
Describing	Guessing; Comparing	To express uncertainty; to activate prior experiences; to seek similarities and contrasts
Interpreting	Metaphorical Interpretation; Explaining with Examples	To apply conceptual metaphors; to contextualize within socio-cultural frameworks; to substantiate interpretations
Evaluating	Affirmative Evaluation; Dissenting Evaluation	To express affective responses and subjective assessments
Attributing	Cultural Connotation; Cultural Prototype	To transfer knowledge and cultural experiences; to assign cultural meanings
Categorizing	Geographical Classification; Stereotyping	To group cultural elements into recognizable categories and existing schemas

Source: By the author

Importantly, the objective of this study has not been to catalog how Western interviewees interpret Asian culture from a standpoint of cultural essentialism. Rather, it has sought to move beyond geographical and cultural reductionism by illuminating shared cognitive processes that emerge across diverse cultural encounters. While participants in this study originated from varied cultural backgrounds, their interpretations were similarly shaped by personal associations, prior knowledge, and culturally embedded frameworks. In this sense, the act of interpretation involves continuous processes of evoking, recalling, mobilizing, transferring, and synthesizing previous experiences, which participants use to make sense of unfamiliar cultural objects.

Crucially, these cognitive activities were not exclusively grounded in the artwork itself but were often directed toward broader generalizations about cultural groups. Consequently, the interviewees engaged in an ongoing negotiation of proximity and distance in relation to the cultural Other, perpetually adjusting their perceived relationships through knowledge transfer and cultural comparison.

Furthermore, these findings underscore the significant role of art as a dialogical space for intercultural engagement. The aesthetic experience of encountering unfamiliar art possesses the capacity to interrupt habitual ways of seeing, thereby preparing viewers for unexpected encounters with difference. As audiences engage with foreign art, they continuously update their internal knowledge systems, develop more nuanced criteria for aesthetic judgment, and negotiate personal and collective meanings.

In this context, educators and facilitators of intercultural learning may play a vital role by guiding audiences to reflect upon their evaluative processes and encouraging reflexivity. Viewers may be prompted to ask: *How do I arrive at my evaluation? What prior knowledge informs my interpretation? What social structures underpin my perception?* As Müller and Kluwe (2012: 77) observe, the narrative of art is not restricted to the "conveying of knowledge to a small circle of experts," but is instead "contextualized within the experiential horizon of a broader audience." Art thereby functions not merely as an object of aesthetic appreciation, but as a medium for intercultural communication and dialogue. Inviting audiences into such reflective conversations fosters deeper perspective-taking and enhances intercultural understanding.

6. Conclusion

This study has offered an in-depth investigation into the cognitive processes and linguistic behaviors that underlie intercultural encounters with art. By focusing on how individuals position themselves and others while interpreting unfamiliar artistic material, the study contributes new insights into the micro-level mechanisms of intercultural meaning-making.

Nevertheless, while the present findings yield important implications for intercultural art communication, they also open several avenues for future research. For instance, further inquiry is warranted into the factors that contribute to successful intercultural communication: *What specific behaviors foster mutual understanding? How might these processes vary across different cultural contexts or communicative domains?* Moreover, beyond the domain of art, similar mechanisms may be observable in other spheres of intercultural interaction, such as education, politics, or workplace communication.

Additionally, the present study highlights the value of ethnographic and discourse-analytic methodologies in capturing the dynamic and situated nature of intercultural exchange. However, longitudinal studies are also needed

to explore how such processes unfold and evolve over time. Future research might thus fruitfully investigate the long-term development of intercultural competence as individuals engage in repeated and sustained intercultural interactions.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares that he/she has no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Author contribution statements: Zhang plays an important role in collecting the data, writing the essay, and developing the manuscript.

Ethical Consideration statement: Not applicable. This study did not involve human or animal studies.

Data Availability Statement: Data is available at request. Please contact the author for any additional information on data access or usage.

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