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From Perception to Image: A Study on Perceptual Translation Pathways in Visual Healing through Natural Imagery

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Abstract: ***Background:*** Nature is not merely an external landscape; rather, it participates in emotional regulation and physical and mental restoration through multiple sensory stimuli, such as plants, scents, light and shadow, and spatial dynamics. The relaxation and restoration that people gain in nature arise from a deep perceptual resonance between the body and the environment. Ecological aesthetics, the biophilia hypothesis, attention restoration theory, and stress reduction theory together indicate that natural healing is not an incidental aesthetic experience, but rather a psychophysical manifestation of the long-term symbiotic relationship between humans and nature. ***Purpose:*** This study aims to explain how natural imagery, through visual translation, transforms light and shadow, water ripples, vegetation, the sensation of wind, airiness, and spatial rhythm into a visible and associative visual language, and to discuss how it evokes natural perception, relieves emotional stress, and encourages direct contact with real nature during viewing. ***Methods:*** This study combines a literature review, theoretical interpretation, and image-based case analyses. It integrates ecological aesthetics, the biophilia hypothesis, attention restoration theory, and stress reduction theory, and conducts a comparative analysis of the author's creative work, *Forest Whispers*, and two additional cases of natural imagery. ***Results:*** The study finds that the healing quality of natural imagery does not arise from the direct representation of natural landscapes, but is instead generated through the interaction of embodied experience, sensory memory, aesthetic projection, and visual order. Visual elements such as water ripples, grass leaves, light spots, transparent layers, blue-green hues, and open space can transform auditory, tactile, visual, and spatial experiences in nature into image cues with an emotional orientation. ***Conclusion:*** The value of visual healing lies neither in replacing real nature nor in creating an insular image-based sense of comfort, but in using natural imagery to open a perceptual channel between humans and nature and to guide viewers toward rediscovering the psychophysical significance of direct contact with real nature.

Keywords: Natural imagery; visual translation; visual healing; emotional restoration; human–nature perception

1. Introduction

Nature serves as a healing resource because of the long-standing vital connection between humans and the natural world. Nature is not only the external environment for human survival but also the foundational field in which perception, emotion, and spiritual experience unfold. It provides food, air, water, and dwelling space, while also nourishing the human inner world through light and shadow, wind, plant scents, humidity, and spatial openness. Zeng's (2010) concept of ecological aesthetics, with its consciousness of a community of life in which humans and nature coexist and flourish, offers an important intellectual basis for understanding natural healing. Human survival and development are inseparable from ecological balance; nature provides both material and spiritual nourishment for human beings, while human behavior also affects the integrity of natural cycles. From this perspective, natural healing is not a one-way comfort

offered by the external environment to the individual, but a process through which the human–nature relationship moves back toward balance. The rhythm of flowing water, the swaying of leaves, the tactile sensation of wind passing over the skin, and the changing brightness of sunlight on the ground jointly constitute a multisensory environmental experience that gradually regulates attention, breathing, and emotion. By reviewing studies on nature contact, nature connectedness, and their benefits in the Web of Science database from 2000 to 2021, Peng et al. (2023) proposed the conceptual system of "nature contact–nature connectedness–nature benefits" and argued that nature possesses material attributes, healing value, social value, and spatial significance. Furthermore, contact with nature and the formation of psychological connectedness promote individual health (Keniger et al., 2013). This indicates that the value of nature is not limited to providing visible scenery; more importantly, it participates in the overall condition of human life through bodily perception, emotional regulation, and psychological connection.

On this theoretical basis, this paper defines visual healing through natural imagery as a form of perceptual guidance rather than a substitute for direct contact with nature or medical treatment. In real natural environments, wind sounds, smells, temperature, and other factors constitute a complete and complex psychophysical experience; visual images mainly trigger psychological associations, emotional buffering, and natural memory through the act of viewing and thus operate more indirectly at the perceptual and psychological levels. Therefore, visual healing is more appropriately understood as a supplementary medium when direct contact with nature is insufficient: it evokes a natural experience through images and enables viewers, within a limited viewing context, to sense once again nature's flow, freshness, softness, and vitality. Studies by Berto (2005) and Hartig et al. (2003) on restorative environments and natural scenes provide experimental evidence for the role of nature images in attention restoration and psychological relief, but this does not mean that image viewing is equivalent to direct contact with nature. More precisely, visual images can, in specific situations, reduce tension, awaken natural memory, and further remind individuals to approach nature again. Broader discussions of nature and mental health from an ecosystem services perspective also support this view (Bratman et al., 2019). Accordingly, the value of visual healing does not lie in creating an image space that replaces nature, but in opening a perceptual channel between humans and nature through images.

Here, perception constitutes the key connection between natural healing and visual design. Lin et al. (2025) argued that perception is an important pathway for natural healing and also a mediating process for explaining how people obtain healing benefits from nature. This view has significant implications for visual design: although visual images cannot present all the effects of real nature, they can transform natural experience into visible image cues through color, form, rhythm, space, and texture, enabling viewers to recall water, wind, vegetation, light and shadow, air, and other natural perceptions while viewing. Therefore, the key to visual healing is not the accumulation of related colors and shapes as symbols, but whether these elements can establish a connection between natural experience and the viewer's perception. This paper therefore raises three interrelated questions: first, how can nature become the intellectual source of visual healing rather than merely a decorative subject in design images? Second, how can natural imagery complete the translation from natural experience to image order within visual language? Third, how can visual healing become a perceptual supplement when direct contact with nature is insufficient, while avoiding exaggerated claims of therapeutic efficacy? Around these questions, this article focuses on the theoretical conditions, perceptual pathways, and design ethics of visual healing through natural imagery and seeks to advance natural images from generalized stylistic expression to analyzable mechanisms of perception and media practice.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Basis

2.1 Nature Contact, Nature Connectedness, and the Gap in Visual Media

The foundation of natural healing research lies in the positive influence of nature contact and nature connectedness on individuals' physical and mental states. Studies indicate that nature contact is not limited to physical presence in real environments, but also includes direct contact, indirect contact, and symbolic contact; viewing nature images, nature documentaries, natural window views, or nature-themed murals can all be understood as forms of indirect or symbolic nature contact (Peng et al., 2023). This view provides an important entry point for visual healing through natural imagery: although visual images cannot provide the spatial enclosure, olfactory change, bodily movement, or environmental immersion of real nature, they can evoke individuals' psychological connectedness with nature through natural imagery, allowing natural experience to re-enter everyday life through visual media.

Nature connectedness further explains the psychological significance of this image-based experience. Mayer and Frantz's (2004) study of the Connectedness to Nature Scale indicates that nature connectedness can serve as an important psychological dimension for understanding ecological behavior and subjective well-being. Research on human–nature relationships also emphasizes that nature connectedness may mediate or moderate the relationship between nature contact and sustainable benefits (Peng et al., 2023). From this perspective, the value of natural imagery is not simply that it allows viewers to "see nature"; rather, it reactivates viewers' closeness to, memory of, and longing for nature through images. Natural elements in images are therefore no longer merely decorative backgrounds, but visual media through which the human–nature relationship is perceived anew. From the perspective of empirical aesthetics, Cardillo and Chatterjee (2025) discuss the potential benefits of nature imagery and visual art in healthcare contexts, which also suggests that the visual effects of natural imagery require further explanation through concrete viewing mechanisms. However, in the existing research trajectory, natural healing studies are mostly concentrated in environmental psychology, health geography, landscape planning, forest therapy, and public health, with an emphasis on the influence of real natural environments on attention restoration, stress relief, emotional regulation, and physical and mental health. Such studies provide an important empirical foundation for natural healing, but they pay relatively little attention to how natural experience is transformed, organized, and communicated in visual media. Conversely, although visual design frequently uses natural elements such as plants, landscapes, light and shadow, water patterns, green palettes, and organic forms, related discussions often remain at the level of stylistic creation, symbolic expression, or aesthetic atmosphere, and insufficiently explain how these natural elements evoke bodily experience, sensory memory, and nature connectedness.

Thus, the research gap addressed in this paper is as follows: when nature enters visual images from real environments, how can the depth of perceptual experience be sustained? How can natural imagery be transformed from decorative formal symbols into a visual medium capable of carrying bodily memory and emotional association? And how can visual images become a perceptual supplement that activates natural perception and guides nature connectedness without replacing direct contact with real nature? The point of departure of this paper is to understand natural imagery within the theoretical framework of human–nature relationships and to regard visual images as a media process through which natural experience is selected, compressed, translated, and reorganized, thereby moving visual healing through natural imagery from stylistic judgment toward mechanism analysis.

2.2 Ecological Aesthetics, Biophilia, and Theories of Nature Restoration

Ecological aesthetics provides a value orientation for visual healing through natural imagery. Zeng (2010) emphasizes that humans are not observers standing outside nature, but subjects whose existence unfolds within relationships among nature, society, and the

self. Natural beauty is moving precisely because it reminds people that they are not isolated individuals, but exist together with the heaven, the earth, all living things, and the environment within an interdependent network of life. Wang's (2022) study of the healing value of natural beauty also points out that if mainstream forest therapy research explains healing only from forestry and medical perspectives, it can easily neglect the aesthetic foundation of natural beauty; natural healing is not only bodily regulation but also the reopening of the mind by the beauty of nature. This perspective suggests that the healing quality of natural imagery should not be reduced to the use of natural subjects; rather, it should be understood as an emotional transformation of natural experience at the aesthetic level.

The biophilia hypothesis explains, from the perspective of life evolution, why humans maintain a deep affinity for natural cues. In *Biophilia*, Wilson (1984) proposed that humans have an innate tendency to attend to and affiliate with life and life-like processes. Kellert and Wilson (1993) further expanded this tendency into an important theoretical perspective for understanding human preference for nature. The perceptual structures that humans developed over long evolutionary periods are closely related to rivers, forests, plants, animals, light, and seasonal change. Therefore, leaves, water patterns, light spots, plant lines, and organic curves in visual design are not arbitrary decorations; they may trigger viewers' affinity for life forms, natural order, and organic processes. This provides a psychological basis for emotional responses to natural imagery in visual media.

Attention restoration theory and stress reduction theory further explain how nature enters psychological and physiological recovery processes. Kaplan (1995) argued that fluctuations on water surfaces, cloud-shadow changes, leaf movements, and forest light and shadow in natural environments can attract people with relatively little attentional effort, thereby allowing fatigued directed attention to recover (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989). Ulrich et al.'s (1991) study of stress recovery explains from emotional, attentional, and physiological perspectives that, after stress, nonthreatening natural environments are more likely than many urban environments to produce stress-recovery effects. Ulrich's (1984) earlier study of window views also suggests that natural scenery is not merely an aesthetic background, but may influence physical and mental recovery during rehabilitation. Hartig et al.'s (2014) review of nature and health further indicates broad connections between natural environments and public health. Together, these theories show that natural healing is not an abstract poetic imagination but has multiple foundations in ecological philosophy, evolutionary psychology, environmental psychology, and physiological restoration.

It should be noted that existing research on natural healing has already explained in considerable depth the positive effects of real natural environments on physical and mental recovery, emotional regulation, and nature connectedness, thereby providing an important theoretical basis for this paper. However, these studies are mostly centered on natural environments, restorative landscapes, or nature contact experience itself, and they still offer insufficient discussion of how natural experience is extracted, translated, and organized once it enters visual media. At the same time, although visual design frequently employs plants, water patterns, light and shadow, green palettes, and organic curves, it often remains at the level of stylistic expression, symbolic use, or aesthetic atmosphere, and the mechanisms through which these elements evoke bodily memory, sensory association, and nature connectedness remain unclear. The contribution of this paper lies in redefining natural imagery not as a natural subject or "healing style," but as a perceptual translation structure through which natural experience enters image language, thereby establishing an analyzable mediating pathway between natural healing theory and visual design research.

2.3 Core Concepts and Analytical Framework

Based on the above literature review and theoretical foundation, this paper further defines four core concepts: "natural imagery," "perceptual translation," "visual

healing," and "perceptual evocation," and explains their logical relationship within the analytical framework of "from perception to image." This section provides conceptual boundaries and a theoretical framework for the subsequent research methodology and image-based case analysis.

(1) "Natural imagery" is the foundational concept of this paper. It is not the direct reproduction of natural objects, but a visual expression formed after natural experience has been processed through perception, memory, and aesthetic transformation. Natural imagery, as used here, includes natural cues such as trees, water, grass, and light and shadow, as well as the emotional experience and semantic associations that the subject assigns to these cues. Therefore, natural imagery is not merely a natural subject or decorative symbol, but a mediating form that connects external nature with the subject's perceptual experience.

(2) "Perceptual translation" is the core analytical concept of this paper, referring to the process through which natural experience is transformed into visual language. Wind sensation, water sound, humidity, light, touch, and spatial atmosphere in nature cannot be directly replicated by images; instead, they are distilled and reorganized through visual elements such as color, form, line, rhythm, texture, transparent layering, and blank space. For example, waveforms can convey a sense of flow, plant lines can suggest wind and growth, and blue-green hues can evoke coolness and vitality. Perceptual translation is concerned not with natural elements themselves, but with how natural experience is organized into a visual structure that can be perceived and associated.

(3) "Visual healing" defines the mode of image effect discussed in this paper. Healing here does not refer to a medical therapeutic effect, but to the possibility that images may stimulate perceptual memory, emotional association, and psychological grounding through natural cues. Its theoretical basis comes from theories of nature restoration, the biophilia hypothesis, and nature connectedness research. In other words, visual healing emphasizes the psychological support produced by images as media, rather than replacing direct nature contact or professional treatment.

(4) "Perceptual evocation" further clarifies the value orientation of visual healing. This paper argues that the significance of natural imagery lies not only in providing comfort during viewing but, more importantly, in activating viewers' perceptual relationship with nature. On the one hand, it evokes bodily memory, sensory association, and emotional experience; on the other hand, it redirects this experience toward real natural environments. Therefore, perceptual evocation emphasizes a process from image to nature: images can serve as an entry into natural experience, but cannot replace nature itself.

Based on these concepts, this paper adopts "natural benefits–image translation–perceptual evocation" as its overall framework and presents it diagrammatically in Figure 1. Natural benefits explain why the study is valid; image translation explains how natural experience enters visual language; and perceptual evocation explains where image viewing ultimately leads. To avoid confusion among pathways, this paper further understands "natural experience–imagery extraction–visual organization–perceptual activation" as the internal operational process of "image translation," rather than as another parallel framework. Natural experience provides multisensory sources; imagery extraction selects and abstracts natural cues; visual organization forms image order through color, form, rhythm, and space; and perceptual activation points to the natural associations and emotional responses that viewers generate while viewing.

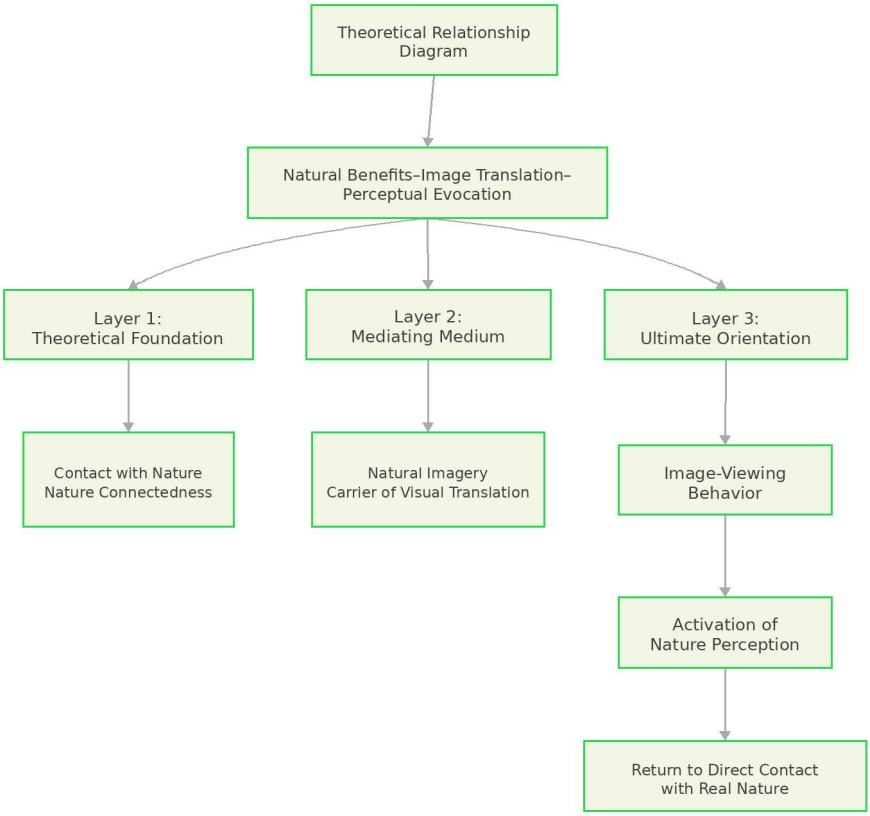


Figure 1. Theoretical Relationship Diagram: Natural Benefits-Image Translation-Perceptual Evocation
Note. Created by the author(s).

3. Research Methodology: A Perceptual Translation Framework

3.1 Research Objects and Material Sources

This qualitative study is situated at the intersection of design studies and art theory. Its purpose is not to verify, through experimental data, whether a particular image can produce immediate or medically defined healing effects, but to establish an interpretive framework suitable for studying visual healing through natural imagery and to analyze how natural experience, through imagery extraction, visual translation, and image organization, generates a visual language with emotional orientation and perceptual evocation. Because visual healing involves complex experiences such as psychological response, emotional change, bodily perception, and nature connectedness, any direct assessment of its healing effects still requires empirical methods such as interviews, questionnaires, eye-tracking experiments, emotional scales, or physiological feedback. Within the scope of this study, the discussion proceeds primarily from three levels—theoretical basis, visual mechanism, and image cases. The healing quality refers to the possibility that visual images evoke natural perception, emotional association, and psychological grounding, rather than providing direct proof of actual therapeutic effects.

In terms of image materials, this paper takes the author's nature healing visual work *Forest Whispers* and its "translation diagram of natural perceptual cues" as the core analytical object, and combines them with Claude Monet's *Water Lilies* (1906) and William Morris's *Trellis* (1862) as reference cases. *Forest Whispers* is not a realistic reproduction of a particular natural landscape; it takes forest environments, lake water, grass foliage, air, and light and shadow as sources of natural experience, and processes them imagistically through visual elements such as water ripples, grass foliage, blue-green palettes, transparent layers, light spots, linear rhythm, and blank space. It thus presents the transformation from natural perceptual cues to visual forms relatively clearly. Furthermore, the inclusion of the Monet and Morris cases is intended to avoid the

interpretive circularity that may result from relying entirely on the author's own work and to enhance the referentiality and persuasiveness of the analysis through comparison among different types of visual materials.

In the specific analysis, this paper treats *Forest Whispers* as an image sample for studying the pathway of visual healing through natural imagery, rather than as a single work for display. The wave forms in the work are used to examine the visualization of flow, water-sound association, and auditory rhythm; grass foliage and plant stems are used to examine the image expression of tactile experience, wind sensation, and growth; the blue-green palette is used to analyze how natural colors create a visual atmosphere of freshness, calmness, and vitality; transparent layers are used to analyze the expression of airiness, humidity, and spatial lightness; and light spots and blank space are used to analyze the generation of visual rhythm, emotional pauses, and psychological buffering space. Monet's *Water Lilies* and Morris's *Trellis* respectively serve as reference objects for natural light and color, plant rhythm, planar ornamentation, and visual order, illustrating that visual healing through natural imagery is not limited to a single medium or style.

Based on these materials, the paper conducts image-based case analysis under the conceptual framework established in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 does not repeat conceptual definitions, but instead focuses on research objects, material sources, analytical procedure, and research scope, so as to clarify the hierarchical relationship between the theoretical framework and research methodology.

3.2 Analytical Procedure and Research Scope

The analytical procedure consists of four main steps. First, a literature review is conducted; studies on nature contact, nature connectedness, ecological aesthetics, biophilia, attention restoration theory, and stress reduction theory are reviewed to clarify the theoretical sources and research boundaries of visual healing through natural imagery. Second, material selection occurs; *Forest Whispers* is used as the core case, while Monet's *Water Lilies* and Morris's *Trellis* serve as reference cases, forming a comparative relationship among visual design, painting, and decorative pattern. Third, image interpretation is performed based on the conceptual framework in Chapter 2; formal elements such as color, form, line, rhythm, space, texture, and blank space are analyzed in relation to natural experiences such as water sound, wind sensation, tactile memory, airiness, and light and shadow perception. Fourth, pathway induction is developed; on the basis of the case analysis, the study summarizes how natural experience forms an emotionally oriented pathway of perceptual translation through imagery extraction, visual organization, and viewing activation.

The scope of this paper is mainly limited to theoretical interpretation and image-based case analysis. The healing quality discussed in the article is not direct proof of actual therapeutic effects, but refers to the possibility that images of natural imagery images may evoke natural memory, emotional association, and psychological grounding during viewing. Therefore, the conclusions of this paper belong to theoretical construction and analytical hypotheses concerning visual healing pathways; they still require further verification through viewer feedback, questionnaires, eye-tracking experiments, emotional scales, or physiological feedback.

4. Image Translation and Case Analysis

To proceed with the analysis, it is necessary to clarify how images are interpreted within this study. Section 4 does not compare Monet's *Water Lilies*, Morris's *Trellis*, and *Forest Whispers* merely as cases of artistic style. Instead, it places them within the framework of "perceptual translation" and examines how natural experience is extracted, organized, and activated in different visual media. Specifically, the analysis unfolds on three levels. The first is formal identification, which identifies visual elements such as color, form, line, rhythm, space, texture, and blank space. The second is perceptual correspondence, which analyzes how these formal elements relate to natural experiences

such as water sound, wind sensation, tactile memory, airiness, and light and shadow perception. The third is semantic induction, which examines how these perceptual cues jointly form viewing mechanisms of emotional relief, psychological lingering, and nature connectedness. On this basis, Section 4.1 first explains why natural imagery can shift from landscape representation to a perceptual medium; Section 4.2 summarizes natural imagery translation strategies in different media through Monet and Morris; Section 4.3 returns to *Forest Whispers* to analyze its integrated visual translation; and Section 4.4 further summarizes the role of color, form, rhythm, and space in forming a healing order.

4.1 From Landscape Representation to Natural Imagery as a Perceptual Medium

As defined in Chapter 2, natural imagery is understood as the perceptual expression of natural experience after it enters visual media. This section first explains why it differs from ordinary nature images. Natural imagery is not the mechanical reproduction of natural landscapes, but the result of the mutual generation of natural objects and subjective experience. The concept of "imagery" is not a simple depiction of external objects, but a symbolic form produced after objective things enter human perception, emotion, and spirit. Trees, water, rocks, flowers, grasses, clouds, mist, and light and shadow in nature are, in themselves, natural objects; after they are viewed, remembered, associated, and transformed, they become natural imagery with emotional warmth. Relevant art research points out that imagery is a complex symbolic entity formed by the fusion of objective objects and subjective spirit; natural imagery includes natural elements or images of natural environments and is expressed and transformed in artistic media into visual forms with distinctive meanings (Zhu, 2024).

Therefore, the core of natural imagery does not lie in whether it "looks like nature," but in whether it can preserve natural perceptual experience and emotional meaning. Water can point to flow, coolness, and calm; vegetation can point to growth, softness, and renewal; and light and shadow can evoke temperature, air, and spiritual tranquility. Many natural images in Chinese artistic traditions do not merely reproduce flowers, birds, mountains, and water, but use the moon, flowing water, plum blossoms, bamboo, rain, and mist to express emotion, character, and spiritual realm. Thus, ordinary nature images emphasize presenting nature, whereas healing-oriented natural imagery emphasizes enabling viewers to feel nature again. The former remains at the level of visual appearance, while the latter enters embodied experience, emotional memory, and nature connectedness.

This distinction explains the value of natural imagery in visual healing research. Ordinary nature images often aim at object representation and emphasize the recognizability of scenery. Healing-oriented natural imagery, by contrast, emphasizes the transformation of perceptual experience and whether images can open emotional space during viewing. In other words, this study is concerned not with whether natural elements are accurately depicted, but with whether natural experience can regain breath, temperature, and emotional depth within images.

4.2 Natural Imagery Translation Strategies in Different Media

After clarifying that natural imagery functions as a perceptual medium, this section further discusses how natural experience is transformed into visual order in different media. To avoid the limitations of analyzing a single work, this paper selects Claude Monet's *Water Lilies* (1906) and William Morris's *Trellis* (1862), in addition to *Forest Whispers*, as reference cases. The two works belong respectively to painting and decorative pattern, yet both center on natural imagery and transform natural experience into a visual structure that can be viewed continuously through their own formal systems. These two cases are introduced not to conduct an art-historical comparison of styles, but to examine how natural imagery in different media shifts from natural objects to perceptual experience, and from external landscape to visual order.

Monet's *Water Lilies* presents a perceptual translation centered on light and color, water surface, and a sense of floating. The painting weakens a clear horizon, spatial depth, and narrative structure, allowing water surface, lotus leaves, reflections, and light and shadow to form an open field of viewing through color flow and interwoven brushwork. The viewer's gaze is difficult to fix on a single object; instead, it moves slowly among water, plants, and reflections, producing a noncoercive, low-pressure, and lingering visual experience. This mode of viewing approaches the feature of "soft fascination" in attention restoration theory: it attracts attention without creating a compulsory cognitive burden. Thus, the natural imagery of *Water Lilies* does not depend on clear object representation to generate meaning; rather, through the weakening of light, color, fluctuation, and spatial boundaries, it turns nature into a visual environment that can be perceived immersively. This mode of translation is comparable to the organization of ripples, light spots, and transparent layers in *Forest Whispers*. *Forest Whispers* does not replicate a specific natural landscape; instead, it extracts perceptual cues such as "flow," "moisture," "coolness," "light," and "airiness" from the forest-lake experience, and reorganizes them in design form through blue-green hues, ripple lines, semi-transparent color layers, and circular light spots. Compared with Monet's painterly capture of instantaneous light and color, *Forest Whispers* places greater emphasis on the induction and transformation of natural perceptual cues. Together, the two works show that the healing meaning of natural imagery need not rely on the precise depiction of natural objects; it can also be generated through a flowing visual order, an open viewing rhythm, and a soft perceptual atmosphere.

Morris's *Trellis* embodies a structural translation centered on plant patterns and ordered structure. Unlike Monet's capture of instantaneous natural sensation, Morris incorporates vines, leaves, flowers, birds, and grid structures into a continuous decorative system, enabling natural forms to enter everyday space from external landscapes. The plants in the image are not presented in a freely growing state; rather, they form stable visual rhythms through repetition, interweaving, and symmetrical relationships. Its value does not lie in representing a specific natural site, but in transforming the logic of natural growth into a visual order that can be embedded in living spaces. The implication of this translation for *Forest Whispers* is that visual healing through natural imagery does not occur only in painterly representations of nature; it can also enter everyday environments through patterns, motifs, and visual design. Compared with Morris, *Forest Whispers* does not pursue strict geometric repetition but forms gentle rhythmic relationships within a relatively free composition.

The two reference cases show that visual translation of natural imagery includes at least two strategies. The first is a perceptual strategy centered on water surface, light, color, and spatial openness, emphasizing the flow, floating, and immersion of natural experience. The second is a structural strategy centered on plant forms, repeated patterns, and spatial order, emphasizing the rhythmic presentation of natural forms in everyday environments. The terms "perceptual strategy" and "structural strategy" do not replace the methodological framework of Chapter 3; rather, they refer to two modes of visual organization summarized within the stage of "image translation." The former emphasizes the atmospheric presentation of natural experience, while the latter emphasizes the ordered organization of natural forms. *Forest Whispers* forms an integrated strategy between the two and provides a reference for the case analysis in the next section. As shown in Figure 2, Monet's *Water Lilies* and Morris's *Trellis* exemplify two distinct translation modes: perceptual translation through light, color, and spatial openness, and structural translation through repeated plant forms and visual order.



Case A. Claude Monet, Water Lilies (1906)



Case B. William Morris, Trellis wallpaper (1862)

Figure 2. Reference Cases: Natural Imagery Translation in Monet's Water Lilies and Morris's Trellis
Note. Composite created by the author(s) from public-domain images available via Wikimedia Commons.

4.3 Integrated Visual Translation in Forest Whispers

After explaining the mediating properties of natural imagery and summarizing perceptual and structural strategies through Monet and Morris, this section returns to the core case of *Forest Whispers* to analyze how it integrates these two strategies in concrete image organization and further evokes embodied experience and sensory memory.

Natural experience is essentially multisensory. People do not perceive the natural environment only through sight, but also through hearing, touch, smell, spatial sense, and bodily movement. Lin et al. point out that perception is the bridge through which humans enter into relations with nature; natural healing depends not only on natural objects themselves, but also on how subjects interact with nature through the senses (Lin et al., 2025). This view suggests that visual healing does not directly "draw" the five senses, but instead uses visual language to evoke natural sensations preserved in bodily memory, making viewing an entry point for cross-sensory association.

In *Forest Whispers*, this cross-sensory translation is mainly reflected in the visual organization of natural cues. Ripple lines, through continuous, looping, and slightly undulating line rhythms, evoke water sound, flow, and coolness. Foliage forms, through direction, density, and extension, suggest wind sensation, touch, and growth experience. Blue-green and light-blue hues jointly establish color associations among plants, water, air, and open space, giving the image an atmosphere of freshness, humidity, and slow breathing. Transparent layers and blank space weaken visual pressure and provide visual room for light, air, and distance. Circular light spots resemble both forest light patches and water reflections or air bubbles, making the visual experience light, loose, and inviting to linger. Thus, the natural imagery in *Forest Whispers* does not correspond to the meaning of a single natural element; it is generated collaboratively by multiple perceptual cues within the same image.

From the perspective of image structure, *Forest Whispers* does not simply stack natural elements, but establishes a transitional relationship between the real scene and the imagery structure. The upper part of the work uses a photograph of a forest lake as its base and overlays linear grass leaves, water ripples, light spots, and geometric color blocks on the real natural scene, shifting the natural scene from a representational image to a perceptual image. The lower part further abstracts the real landscape, retaining only perceptual cues such as water ripples, green plants, transparent color layers, circular light spots, and flowing curves, so that nature no longer depends on a specific location but becomes a psychological field that can be viewed, associated, and emotionally projected. Through this transition from real scene to imagery structure, the work presents the internal translation logic of "natural experience-imagery extraction-visual organization-perceptual activation."

This mechanism enables *Forest Whispers* to form a clear relationship with the two reference cases discussed above. Monet's *Water Lilies* emphasizes the immersive viewing experience formed by water surface, light and color, and floating sensation; Morris's

Trellis emphasizes the rhythmic order between plant forms, repeated structures, and everyday space. *Forest Whispers* recombines the two in a design context: it uses ripples, light spots, and transparent layers to create a flowing and lightweight perceptual atmosphere, while using foliage lines, repetitive rhythm, and color layering to construct a relatively stable image order. Therefore, *Forest Whispers* is not an extension of a single reference case, but an integrated mode of visual translation between perceptual and structural strategies.

Berto's (2005) study of restorative-environment images shows that viewing natural-environment images with restorative characteristics helps restore attentional capacity. Hartig et al.'s (2003) study of restoration in natural and urban field settings also demonstrates, from the perspective of environmental differences, that natural contexts are more likely to support psychological restoration experiences (Hartig et al., 2003). These studies do not mean that *Forest Whispers* itself has already been proven to have direct therapeutic effects, but they provide theoretical and empirical references for the capacity of natural-imagery images to generate psychological relief and attention restoration. On this basis, the analysis of *Forest Whispers* in this paper should be understood as a study of perceptual-translation pathways: it examines how images organize natural experience through formal elements, how they mobilize viewers' sensory memories of water sound, wind, light, air, and plant growth, and how these visual cues jointly constitute an emotionally oriented viewing environment.

Therefore, Figure 3 is not simply an explanatory diagram of elements, but a translation pathway of natural perceptual cues in *Forest Whispers*. The blue-green palette constructs coolness, humidity, and a sense of breathing; ripples and curves organize a flowing rhythm, shifting viewing from static recognition to slow roaming; foliage and plant forms connect touch, wind sensation, and life growth; and light spots and transparent layers create airiness and psychological buffering space. Together, these elements form an integrated image structure: they preserve the multisensory sources of natural experience while transforming them through visual order into a picture atmosphere that can be lingered in, associated with, and perceived. Thus, the case significance of *Forest Whispers* lies in showing how natural imagery evokes embodied experience and sensory memory through visual translation, rather than proving that a particular work can directly "heal" viewers.

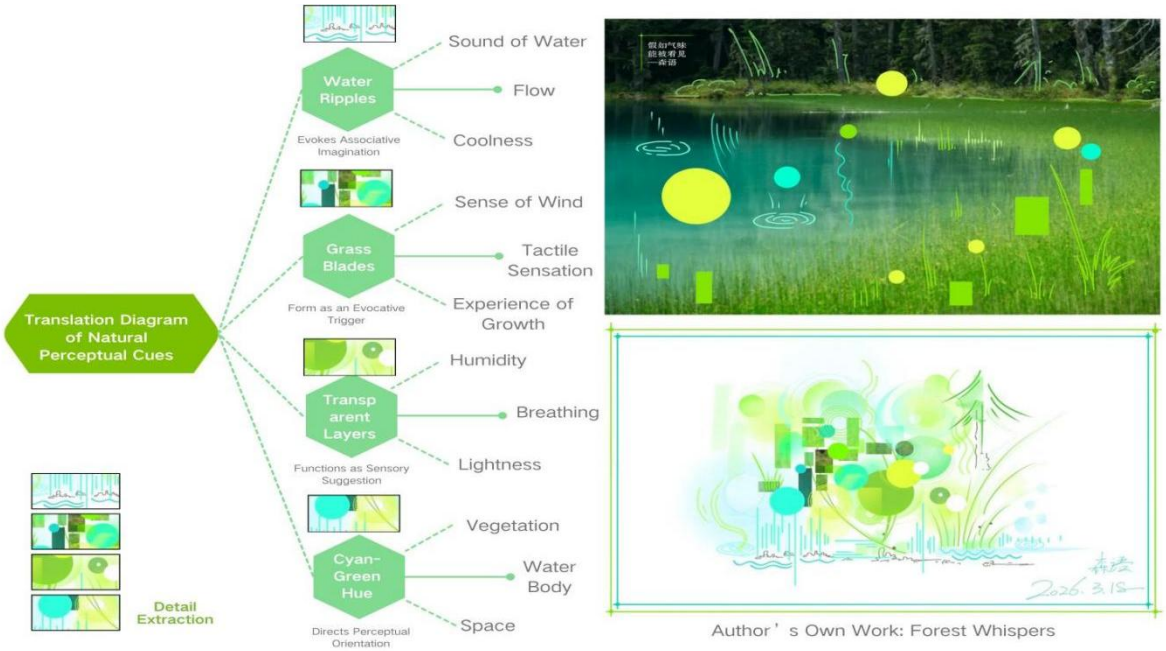


Figure 3. Translation Diagram of Natural Perceptual Cues
Note. Created by the author(s).

4.4 Healing Order in Color, Form, Rhythm, and Space

After comparing the reference cases and analyzing *Forest Whispers*, this section no longer continues the discussion of a single work, but further summarizes the formal conditions under which visual healing through natural imagery may be established. After a multisensory experience enters images, it does not automatically produce healing meaning. Only when color, form, rhythm, and space are organized into a relatively coordinated, low-pressure, and inviting visual structure can natural imagery shift from the presentation of elements to an emotional order.

Color first undertakes the role of setting an emotional tone. Natural color systems such as green, blue-green, light blue, and yellow-green can establish associative relationships among plants, water, sky, and sunlight. Yet their healing quality does not derive from the symbolic meaning of a single color, but from the overall atmosphere produced by relationships of brightness, saturation, and transparency among colors. Soft, clear color relationships with a sense of airiness can reduce the intensity of visual stimulation and create a psychological feeling of calm, freshness, and openness. Thus, color is not only the surface representation of natural objects but also an important medium for regulating viewing rhythm and emotional temperature.

Form and rhythm give natural experience a visible structure. Circular shapes, curves, ripples, organic lines, and plant forms possess a strong affinity and can weaken the tension brought by sharp forms and strong contrasts. Repeated lines, density variation, layered superposition, and compositional rhythm give static images a sense of time close to natural movement. Natural rhythms such as rippling water, wind through grass, and moving light and shadow are not directly copied in images, but are reorganized through line direction, formal relationships, and spatial intervals. Space and blankness provide psychological buffering, preventing images from becoming crowded or oppressive and forming a viewing environment that can breathe and be lingered in.

Therefore, color, form, rhythm, and space are not independent visual elements; rather, they jointly constitute a perceptual atmosphere within the same image. Color establishes the emotional tone, form provides natural cues, rhythm guides the movement of the gaze, and space creates psychological pauses. When these elements are coordinated with one another, the image is no longer only a collection of natural elements, but becomes a visual field that can be bodily perceived. The viewer's gaze moves slowly among different forms, and viewing shifts from object recognition toward emotional immersion.

From the perspective of the perceptual mechanism of natural healing, this visual order reflects the integrated interaction among multiple forms of perception. Research on natural healing perception indicates that mechanisms such as response sequence, influence pathways, and synergistic effects exist among different perceptual types, but multisensory interaction studies close to real nature contexts still require further development (Lin et al., 2025). The research value of visual healing through natural imagery lies precisely here: it does not reduce natural experience to a single visual symbol, but attempts to transform multisensory experience into a formal order that can be organized by images. The key is not whether the image realistically reproduces nature, but whether it can generate an emotionally oriented viewing experience through coordinated color relationships, soft formal structures, slow visual rhythms, and open spatial layers.

5. Conclusion

This paper has discussed perceptual translation pathways in visual healing through natural imagery and responded to the core question of how natural experience is reorganized through image language and, during viewing, evokes perceptual memory, emotional association, and nature connectedness. The study shows that natural imagery is neither the direct reproduction of natural landscapes nor the simple assembly of natural

elements; instead, after natural experience is selected, distilled, and organized, it forms a visual order with emotional orientation.

The main finding of this paper is that natural experiences such as light and shadow, water ripples, vegetation, airiness, and spatial rhythm can be transformed through visual elements such as color, form, line, rhythm, texture, and blank space into image structures that can be viewed, associated with, and lingered in. Monet's *Water Lilies* and Morris's *Trellis* respectively reveal two modes of translation—perceptual strategy and structural strategy—while *Forest Whispers* integrates the two in a design context, enabling natural experience to appear in images as a visual field that can be perceived and emotionally projected. Theoretically, the contribution of this paper lies in demonstrating that natural imagery should no longer be regarded merely as a natural subject or decorative symbol, but should be understood as a perceptual organization structure through which natural experience enters visual media. This shift helps establish an analyzable mediating pathway between natural healing theory and visual design research. Practically, the paper suggests that visual design should attend not only to formal beauty and image style, but also to how images carry embodied experience, sensory memory, and nature connectedness. At the same time, it must be made clear that the value of visual healing through natural imagery does not lie in replacing direct nature contact or in claiming that images possess medical therapeutic functions. Rather, it lies in establishing a perceptual entry into natural experience through images, enabling visual design to play a supplementary role in emotional care, perceptual guidance, and nature connectedness.

This paper also has clear limitations. It mainly employs literature analysis, theoretical interpretation, and image-based case reading, and has not yet tested viewing responses through viewer feedback, questionnaires, eye-tracking experiments, emotional scales, or physiological feedback. Therefore, the discussion of "healing quality" in this paper remains a theoretical construction and pathway hypothesis rather than proof of actual therapeutic effect.

Future research may further select different types of natural imagery as stimulus materials and combine emotional self-reports, attention restoration scales, nature connectedness scales, eye tracking, heart-rate variability, and skin conductance responses to examine the influence of color order, formal structure, rhythmic organization, and spatial layering on viewers' psychological feelings and willingness for nature contact, thereby advancing visual healing through natural imagery from conceptual construction toward design research with stronger evidentiary support.

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