

Impact Of “Rise of Burgher Class” On Art: Italian Renaissance Painting

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Abstract. With the further development of Europe's overall economy, the seeds of capitalism began to appear, and cities also emerged. At the same time, the burgher class, the predecessor of the bourgeoisie, began to step onto the stage of history and began to transform society according to the needs of this class. The changes in the art of painting during the Italian Renaissance are closely related to the rise of the burgher class. The values advocated by the burgher class profoundly affected the painting art of this period, and the paintings also became the carrier of the new ideas of the Renaissance, then they further affected every member of society and embodied the social function of art. This article uses document analysis and work analysis methods to collect relevant historical materials and paintings, and conducts analysis based on the social background of the time, exploring the impact of the "rise of the burgher class" on art, and taking "Italian Renaissance painting art" for an example to explore the relationship between the two and clarifies that the class values advocated by the burgher class after the rise played a role in promoting the changes in the themes and connotations of paintings during this period.

Keywords: Italy; Renaissance; Burgher Class; painting art.

1. Introduction

The Renaissance originally referred to the revival of the culture of ancient Greece and Rome. The culture of ancient Greece and Rome is called classical culture, which is opposed to the cultural characteristics of the European Middle Ages [1]. The Renaissance movement broke out at the turning point in European history from the Middle Ages to modern history. The Renaissance was a glorious period in European history. After the long European Middle Ages, along with social and economic development and changes in social classes, new concepts, thoughts, and demands began to appear in European countries. Eventually, everything converged into a force that pushed European society into a new era [1].

The significance of this article's topic selection is to explore the impact of the rise of the burgher class on the art of painting during the Renaissance, so as to realize that art, as a part of the social superstructure, will be directly affected by the corresponding social class. The art of painting during the Renaissance change is one of the phenomena that occurred after being affected by social changes. There are currently many academic studies on the development of cities, the rise of the burgher class, and Renaissance painting art during the Renaissance, but there are still few studies that combine the rise of the burgher class with painting art. The research of this article mainly starts from the social and economic development of the Italian Renaissance, the spirit of humanism, and the development of painting art during this period. After elaborating on the main contents respectively, it further explores the relationship between them. This article mainly uses the literature analysis method to search and read relevant materials and documents and conducts screen analysis and comments on related paintings through work analysis. The above two research methods are conducive to the comprehensive collection of historical materials and information and conduct comparative research with historical materials as the core, which facilitates reasonable induction and summary, so as to draw correct conclusions.

2. Background

The Renaissance movement had different characteristics in different historical periods, and even in different countries, this movement also showed different characteristics. Among them, the Renaissance movement in Italy is recognized as the most prosperous region and has achieved the most brilliant achievements, so it is relatively typical.

During the period from the 14th to the 15th century in the late European Middle Ages, the capitalist economy in Italy further developed and the disintegration of serfdom accelerated. This directly accelerated the emergence of the bourgeoisie, the bourgeois class, into the history stage as a new force. The administrative affiliation of the Italian region during this period was essentially one of the many provinces of the Holy Roman Empire. However, due to the loose local administrative organization of the Holy Roman Empire and the fact that the Italian region was far away from the center of the empire, Italy had a natural advantage in independent development in terms of geographical location [2].

The purpose of the Renaissance was to revive classical culture. Looking at the history of the Renaissance in Italy, Italy during this period has made brilliant achievements in literature, history, law, and other fields. Especially in the field of painting art, the painting art of this period was marked by the unique and typical thoughts and ideologies of the Renaissance.

The art of painting during the Renaissance was divided into several stages. The early painting style was mainly realistic, but after entering the heyday of the Renaissance, with the intensification of humanistic trends and the rise of scientific research, painters began to pursue reality [3]. The reality here is somewhat different from the realistic style of the early Renaissance. After the Renaissance entered its heyday, paintings were influenced by many factors such as humanism and the aesthetic changes after the rise of the emerging burgher class. The subject matter, style, and other aspects have undergone changes that are different from the previous stage. Under the influence of new ideas, paintings have changed from the relatively rigid "realism" in the past to the depiction of real life, which is also in line with the connotation of the humanistic spirit and reflects the requirements of the emerging burgher class.

3. The Burgher Class and Humanistic Spirit in the Late Renaissance

3.1. The Development of Cities and the Rise of the Burgher Class under the "Italian Model"

The Renaissance movement was essentially an ideological emancipation movement, and advocating the spirit of humanism was the core of this movement. What led to the development of this movement and added endless vitality to this movement is the burgher class that was born along with the further development of capitalism. The main body of the "burgher class" is citizens from the city. The basic manifestation of the overall strength of a class is the increasing influence of the class as a whole. The ability of the burgher class in Italian cities to dominate this Renaissance movement depended on their huge influence during this period. The source of influence is the improvement of the overall economic level and social status of the burgher class.

The path of urban development in Europe can generally be divided into two models, namely the "British and French model" and the "Italian model" [2]. In the first model represented by the United Kingdom and France, although the status of the city continues to rise with the development of the city and the strength of its citizens, because the country's political system is strictly feudal, even if the city can obtain some Although the autonomous power is still restricted by the feudal system, that is, the king or the feudal lord, it cannot burst out real urban vitality. In contrast, due to special geopolitical conditions and economic location advantages, Italy's urban development has taken a completely different path from that of cities in Western European countries. In the northern part of Italy, especially represented by Florence, the city during this period existed as a relatively independent political unit, known as an urban republic. With the further development of capitalism, merchants and craftsmen in the city gradually took control of the political power of the city and gradually got rid of

the shackles of the feudal system. Cities developed under the "Italian model" have unique advantages in terms of the external environment. The burgher class here has greater freedom to change social reality according to the needs of this class. And this is one of the important reasons why the center of the Renaissance is Italy.

Take Florence, the most famous and prosperous urban republic in Italy and the center of the Renaissance, as an example. From an economic perspective, Florence has experienced a century of development starting from the 13th century. Finally, in the fourteenth century, the largest and highest-level wool textile industry and financial industry system in Europe at that time was established [2,4]. Benefiting from the rapid economic development, a large number of merchants and craftsmen gathered in the city. At the same time, in the rural areas surrounding the city, serfdom had been abolished as early as the 13th century and replaced by the sharecropping system. On the whole, Florence's economic situation has been smeared with a strong capitalist color, which naturally laid the economic foundation for changes in the content of the "superstructure" such as the city's political system and citizens' thoughts.

3.2. The Rise of the Humanistic Spirit

Promoting the spirit of humanism is the central idea of the Renaissance movement. As the burgher class grows stronger, the political status of citizens in the city also continues to improve. The bourgeoisie became a political force capable of promoting the values they advocated. In relatively free-thinking Italian cities, secularization has become an irreversible trend during this period. Vibrant Italian urban life had a strong impact on secular culture, and urban citizens decided to distance themselves from the conservative religious traditions of the Middle Ages, retaining only part of them in schools and universities [5]. Under this trend, the contradiction between the secularization of thought and the asceticism advocated by traditional religion during this period has become difficult to reconcile. At this time, the burgher class urgently needed to establish an ideological system to impact and replace traditional religious thought. Therefore, humanistic thought was born.

The focus of humanistic thought is to pay attention to each individual and shift the focus of all areas of society from "God" to "human beings" themselves [6]. Humanists fully absorbed the humanistic spirit from the classical culture of ancient Greece and Rome to criticize obscurantism, asceticism, and other doctrines advocated by the medieval church. Humanism advocates affirming human dignity, protecting human freedom, and affirming human rights to pursue happiness in this world.

The humanistic thought of this period profoundly influenced many fields. For example, in science, under the advocacy of humanistic ideas, scientists in this period began the process of pursuing truth and courageously exploring objective principles between things. Science is no longer theology but is based on conclusions drawn from studying the objective world. This also directly promoted the early integration between science and technology, such as the compass that emerged after the combination of astronomy and navigation technology [7]. This all reflects humanism's opposition to the nihilistic and metaphysical world and advocates the value of paying attention to real life and the objective world. Not only in the scientific field, but humanistic thought also profoundly affected the field of painting art and promoted the progress of painting art in this period from many aspects.

4. Italian Painting Art during the Renaissance

4.1. Early Renaissance

Before the Renaissance, especially during the Middle Ages, the art of painting was usually in the service of religion. Generally speaking, medieval paintings are usually dominated by book illustrations, represented by illustrations of the Bible [2]. When the art of painting serves religion, the subject matter and techniques of the painting will show great limitations. When the new ideas advocated by the Renaissance affected the field of painting art, Italian painting art began to change.

The Renaissance art that is currently recognized arose in the Tuscany region of central and western Italy. The Tuscany region had a relatively developed economy and was a gathering place for new ideas during the Renaissance. Florence mentioned above is located in this region. Renaissance art is not only painting art but also includes many fields, such as sculpture, architecture, etc. In these fields, new styles were continuously applied and widely spread. At the same time, the painting art represented by Cimabue also began to be influenced by Renaissance art in other fields and began to transform towards the pursuit of reality. Cimabue's works are one of the origins of the new style of Renaissance painting. His concepts and techniques were truly carried forward by his student Giotto, who started the Renaissance in the field of painting [2].

Giotto was born in Florence. It is said that he had extraordinary observation and painting talents since childhood. After Cimabue discovered Giotto's talent, he took him to Florence to study painting. Giotto's entire apprenticeship coincided with the beginning of the Italian Renaissance. At this time, Florence's urban economy had reached unprecedented prosperity, and coexisting with it was a relatively relaxed and active political atmosphere. Giotto's artistic path started in this social atmosphere, which also laid a good ideological foundation for Giotto to become a leading figure in Renaissance painting art.



Fig. 1 "Ognissanti Madonna" Giotto

Take Giotto's work "Ognissanti Madonna" as an example (Fig.1). Compared with another painting with a similar theme by Giotto's teacher, Cimabue, "Santa Trinita Maestà" (Fig.2), in the main part of the picture, the image of the Virgin in Giotto's painting is obviously more realistic than the image of the Virgin painted by Cimabue. The Virgin's face and body are no longer stereotyped, and her facial expression is kinder and gentler. In terms of the structure of the picture, there is an obvious perspective relationship between the steps below Giotto's work, although the perspective relationship is not accurate [8]. However, in Cimabue's works, the spatial relationship between the arch at the bottom of the painting and the building on the steps is obviously not clear enough. In terms of the use of visual space, there is a gap with Giotto's technique.



Fig. 2 "Santa Trinita Maestà" Cimabue

4.2. Human Culture and Secularization of Painting Art

After entering the sixteenth century, the Italian Renaissance entered its heyday, and the painting art of this period had been deeply integrated with humanism. Under the influence of the new trend of humanism, after the development of the fifteenth century, human beings have used their own rationality to discover the truth of the objective world and have made great achievements in many disciplines. At the same time, with the further development of science and technology, the art of painting has also integrated the results of scientific research and entered a new era of development.



Fig. 3 "Mona Lisa" Leonardo da Vinci

A major feature of painting art during the heyday of the Renaissance was its emphasis on the portrayal of real people's personalities and the deconstruction of people's inner world, which is the core of human culture in paintings. In the representative work "Mona Lisa" (Fig.3) by Leonardo da Vinci, one of the "Three Masters" of Renaissance art, the meaning of the smile on the protagonist's

face has been discussed until nowadays [9]. In another work Leonardo da Vinci's "Lady with an Ermine" (Fig.4), an animal and a woman coexist in the same frame, which was regarded as an amazing move at that time. The woman's hand caressing the ermine in the painting also reflects the natural kindness of an ordinary person in daily life [10].



Fig. 4 " Lady with an Ermine " Leonardo da Vinci

In addition to attaching importance to the depiction of "people" and implementing the spirit of humanism, the painting art of this period also fully expressed the artist's admiration for classical culture. In the masterpiece "The School of Athens" (Fig.5) by Raphael, another of the "Three Masters", the author brings together many great philosophers from the past life in a narrative way that spans time and space. This also fully expresses its tribute to the rational spirit and humanistic spirit of ancient Greece [6].



Fig. 5 "The School of Athens" Raphael

The influence of the humanistic spirit on paintings is not only reflected in the emphasis on the depiction of people's inner world but also in the emphasis on depicting the secular and objective world in painting themes. During the heyday of the Renaissance, scenes from secular life became one of the popular themes in painting art. "The Fire in the Borgo" (Fig.6) is a famous mural by Raphael. The picture describes people's true reflections during the fire. The people fighting the fire, the frightened

people, and the people running away in the painting are all drawn from daily life. The author's purpose in depicting the young man rushing to save people from the fire on the left side of the picture is also to praise human beings' courage and indomitable spirit [11].



Fig. 6 "The Fire in the Borgo" Raphael

The spirit of humanism was the core of Italian painting art during the heyday of the Renaissance, and under the influence of the spirit of humanism, the themes of the paintings of this period began to become increasingly secular. The driving force behind the widespread spread of the humanistic spirit and the gradual secularization of themes was the change in social class composition during this period. With the rise of the burgher class and becoming a powerful social force, humanism became a weapon for them to fight against the oppression of traditional religion and theology, and the secularization of paintings also met the aesthetic needs of the burgher class.

4.3. Burgher Class Values Displayed by Painting Art

The transformation process of the characteristics of the paintings of this period is not a historical accident but has inevitable reasons. The rise of humanism and the process of secularization of the themes of paintings can only be realized under a certain social background. The economic development of Italian regions promoted the growth of the burgher class, thereby promoting the rise of cities, and the rise of cities provided suitable soil for "new art" to thrive.

As a part of the product of social spiritual civilization, art ultimately serves the majority of people in society. During the Middle Ages, due to the oppression of the church and the overall cultural atmosphere of society, art became a propaganda machine for religion. With the development of history, when the new economy and new political system with capitalist characteristics become the mainstream of society, and the emerging burgher class takes control of social ideology, art will naturally break away from the constraints of religion and return to its original track, play its original role. Therefore, the painting art of the Renaissance is essentially an art that belongs to the emerging burgher class and reflects the values and needs of the emerging burgher class.

The main body of the burgher class is the merchants and craftsmen in the city. Under the background of economic prosperity, the wealth owned by individuals continues to increase, and the economic aggregate of the society also increases [12]. At this time, the asceticism advocated by the original church conflicted with the hedonism that accompanied the increase in wealth. As a result, the emerging burgher class began to advocate the right to pursue happiness in this world. When "anti-ascetic" appeal is concretely reflected in paintings, it will prompt the subject matter of the paintings to transform from single religious themes to secular themes. Even for paintings with religious themes, painters will inject a secular atmosphere into them, conveying the spirit of humanism to people.

The connotation of the humanistic spirit advocated by the burgher class during this period was complex, but the core point of view was to affirm the value of "people", which was also contrary to the values advocated by the medieval church. The best way to embody the value of "people", or to embody the value of any objective thing, is to depict it naturally and restore the original beauty of things in the objective world without modification, and this also led to the painting of the Renaissance. The work has a naturalistic tendency. Painters during the heyday of the Renaissance strived to discover the original beauty of things, which was reflected in their works. When they depict characters, they should show the characters' emotions from the inner world of the characters. Leonardo da Vinci's "Mona Lisa" and "Lady with an Ermine" both reflect the humanistic view of painting art in this period.

Throughout Italian society during the Renaissance, the humanistic spirit advocated by Art Nouveau was in line with the development trend of the times and had a strong universality. Therefore, not only did the Burgher class advocate new art forms and themes, but the general public also actively participated in artistic life, making Renaissance art and the entire people form a synergy and achieve a virtuous circle. It is within this cycle of conscience that Renaissance art has great vitality and persistence, flourishing in the fifteenth century and spreading throughout Europe in the following century. As long as the social economy continues to develop, the number of the burgher class will grow, and Renaissance art can influence every member of this emerging class with its universal values, allowing Renaissance art to continue to grow and progress, and spread its distinctive advanced ideas.

5. Conclusion

The research results of this article show that the changes in painting art during the Renaissance in Italy were essentially caused by social changes and progress. When a new social class steps onto the historical stage and new demands are put forward, art often becomes the best propaganda weapon to serve the interests and will of this class. From this, it can be further seen that as a class in society, the power of the burgher class is still limited after all, although at this time they have the ability to dominate the discourse and leadership of society. Therefore, the reason why the new art infused with the spirit of humanism can gain endless vitality is inseparable from the support of people from all walks of life in Italian society at that time.

This study provides more valuable reference significance for other researchers in the same direction in the future. The research topic provides a new entry point for the academic community: It connects the dynamic changes of a social class such as the rise of the burgher class with the dynamic changes of Renaissance art, that is, the ideological field, and explores the inner relationship between the two, which provides future research and new perspective.

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