

Different variations from the same origin-- An exploration of contemporary lacquer art creation from the perspective of East Asian culture

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Abstract. Lacquer art as a plastic art, derived from the liquid secreted by sumac tree, after 8,000 years of historical evolution, has become one of the traditional arts of China, Japan and South Korea. In contemporary creation, paint artists from these three countries skillfully integrate modern art language, design elements and innovative ideas on the basis of retaining traditional techniques and spirits, showing the spirit of exploration that combines "avant-garde" and "traditional". This article starts from the historical origin of East Asian lacquer art, and sorts out the development status and characteristics of contemporary lacquer art in China, Japan and South Korea.

Keywords: Contemporary art, lacquer art, East Asian culture.

1. Introduction

As a category of arts and crafts with a long history, lacquer art mainly uses the SAP extracted from sumac tree for artistic exquisite creation. For thousands of years, lacquer art, as a precious art, has accumulated profound cultural genes, craft traditions and historical values in East Asian regions such as China, Japan and the Korean Peninsula.

As one of the birthplaces of lacquer art, the production of lacquer at the creative level can be traced back to the late Neolithic Age. As early as the Shang Dynasty (about 1600 BC to 1046 BC), lacquer had already become an important object in the life of the nobility, and gradually, as daily necessities, it was widely expanded to religious, court and other official ceremonial occasions. Compared with China, the history of lacquer art in Japan is relatively short, but it can still be traced back to the Yayoi period (300 BC to 300 AD), and was often used in tea ceremonies, religious ceremonies and aristocratic life. Deeply influenced by Chinese and Japanese culture, the Korean Peninsula's lacquer production largely draws the essence of the lacquer traditions of the two countries, and deeply integrates Chinese and Japanese elements, and then forms its own unique style of lacquer art on this basis.

Up to now, Chinese, Japanese and South Korean contemporary artists still use "paint" as the material medium for contemporary art creation. They have chosen to cleverly integrate contemporary art language, modern design elements and artistic innovation on the basis of retaining the ancient production technology and craft spirit, showing the fierce collision and perfect fusion of "avant-garde" and "traditional". However, it is worth noting that although China, Japan and South Korea are located in the same East Asian cultural circle, their contemporary lacquer art creation has chosen completely different artistic paths in artistic style, visual schema and material application due to their respective cultural attributes and micro-differences in traditional lacquer art techniques.

Based on this, how do Chinese, Japanese and Korean contemporary lacquer art creations stick to the East Asian and native lacquer art traditions? What traditions did they choose to inherit and give up? In the face of the impact of western modern and contemporary art trends, how to innovate the artistic concept, media materials and artistic vocabulary of contemporary lacquer art, and show different artistic features? These are the questions that this paper tries to explore in depth.

2. Pluralism and accumulation -- the exploration of the styles of Chinese contemporary lacquer art

Contemporary Chinese lacquer art is based on tradition, derived from traditional lacquer decoration techniques and aesthetic paradigms, and pays attention to absorbing many foreign cultures. The composition of the unique contemporary attributes of Chinese lacquer art comes from the continuous exploration of nationality, epochal and modernity in the creative practice of contemporary Chinese lacquer art creators, and then forms a diversified artistic outlook and art group.

At present, the appearance of Chinese lacquer art is not achieved overnight, but has evolved continuously with the development of Chinese society. In ancient times, lacquer ware was mainly created to serve the royal palace and nobles. The first half of the 20th century, people's understanding of lacquer was still limited to the protection and decoration of objects in ancient life, and the decorative picture drawn with lacquer was not separated from the three-dimensional objects. The inheritance and teaching of traditional handicrafts were also limited to the relationship between teachers and students. Under the domestic political environment at that time, the cultural concept of "the moon is rounder in foreign countries" was formed. The excessive negation and suppression of traditional Chinese culture made the traditional Chinese aesthetics, which had been accumulated for thousands of years, repeatedly ignored and rejected. This historical context causes the traditional lacquer art, which has a weak folk foundation and is mainly made by hand, to break down in the time dimension.

Not long after the founding of New China, Chinese lacquer art was revived under the influence of Vietnamese lacquer painting. The lacquer masters represented by Shen Fuwen and Qiao Shiguang developed the two-dimensional lacquer painting form in the strict craft and production process of traditional Chinese lacquerware. Later, the concept of Western classicism was deeply integrated, which made the development focus of Chinese lacquer art turn to the creation of lacquer painting. However, due to the fault in the development of lacquer art in the early stage, the lacquer painting creation in this stage focused more on searching the roots, and constantly explored how to transplant the traditional lacquer craft into the lacquer painting creation. The high focus on the traditional painting techniques made the lacquer painting creation ignore the discussion on the essence of art, but that is undoubtedly the foundation of modern Chinese lacquer art.

After the reform and opening up, the artistic concept also opened up. The novel and changeable artistic expression of lacquer painting made it shine in the sixth National Art Exhibition in 1984. At that time, Chinese lacquer artists, on the basis of adhering to the beauty of traditional craft, showed a richer artistic style. Their works were either focused on contemporary life, or focused on abstraction and composition innovation on the basis of absorbing western modernist concepts, or pursued artistic conception expression in creation. After the 85th New Wave, lacquer art, which was native to China, was infused with new blood, the voices of discussing the development of lacquer art became more diversified, and the attitude toward traditional culture became more rational and inclusive. While affirming the excellent traditional culture of China, reasonable reflection and criticism were also carried out on it. Different arguments and viewpoints contributed to a wide variety of lacquer art styles. As a result, the development of Chinese lacquer art at this time realized the parallel appearance of craft and art. And gradually divided into two schools of lacquer creators: one focuses on traditional craft techniques and craft requirements, and the other tries to break traditional craft requirements and seek new artistic effects.

Until now, Chinese lacquer art has formed a vigorous development and diversified artistic outlook in a more inclusive and open context. The thinking on the creation of lacquer art is no longer limited to the lacquer painting extended from the traditional lacquer ware, but from the traditional cultural roots of lacquer to the historical and cultural level of affirmation and denial, and gradually establish a perfect aesthetic theory of lacquer art and restore the tradition of lacquer art have become the problems being discussed in Chinese lacquer art at present. In such a discussion, lacquer artists with different artistic concepts, style schools, forms and methods to build and enrich the contemporary Chinese lacquer art, showing two ways. One is to persist in the artistic creation of the continuation of

Chinese traditional lacquer techniques and ways of expression, this traditional lacquer art style pays attention to the inheritance of traditional artistic value. The other is to seek different balance points between tradition and innovation, and then formed three kinds of lacquer art styles:

The first is to highlight the Chinese character, Chinese cultural identity of lacquer art style, with traditional Chinese culture as the theme and performance object, through visual themes and inherent pattern to emphasize the uniqueness of Chinese culture. Shen Kelong, a master of contemporary lacquer art, believes that lacquer has profound intersections in the core of Eastern philosophy and cultural spirit. Therefore, whether it is Buddhist culture as the material of the "View of Freedom - Da Cheng" series of lacquer paintings (Figure 1), or with a certain tendency of abstract life scenes of ancient Chinese people as the theme of the lacquer art work "Flowers for a thousand years" (Figure 2), Shen Kelong has strongly demonstrated the identity of Chinese culture. Shen's lacquer art creation is not bound by the technical standards of traditional lacquer, but takes materials and effects suitable for the language of the picture from the tradition. In his opinion, the contemporary expression of lacquer art lies in the cognition and thinking of the body language of lacquer materials. "Polishing is art, not polishing is art, flat and bright is art, rough and simple is art. It's about what you're saying and how you make the action meaningful [1]." Also reflecting on the ontology language of lacquer materials, lacquer artist Chen Jinhua's works full of Chinese characteristics choose different ways of expression to highlight the Chinese cultural identity, such as his lacquer paintings "Nian" (Figure 3) and "Ancient Rhyme" (Figure 4), which emphasize the painterliness while fully presenting the uniqueness of the ontology language of lacquer.



Fig. 1 Shen Kelong "View of Freedom - Da Cheng" Lacquer, tile ash 120×220cm 2012



Fig. 2 Shen Kelong "Flowers for a thousand years" Lacquer, tile ash, gold leaf 160×180cm 2014



Fig. 3 Chen Jinhua "Big Year" Lacquer, Eggshell 110cm×190cm 2002



Fig. 4 Chen Jinhua "Ancient Remains" Lacquer, eggshell 170×130cm 2007



Fig. 5 Cheng Xiangjun "Lacquer Book" Wood board, linen, lacquer, in lacquer color powder 185×122cm 2009

The second is to show the artist's emotions and philosophy with abstract expression techniques, pursuing the freedom of form and color, as well as personalized expression. In Cheng Xiangjun's abstract lacquer painting works, it can be seen that his dilution of the characteristics of the painting. The composition of the picture, the collocation of colors, and the choice of materials and techniques are all derived from the author's inner emotions and pursuit of artistic vocabulary. For example, in his pure abstract lacquer painting "Lacquer Book" (Figure 5), Cheng Xiangjun uses traditional lacquer art as materials and techniques for abstract creation, which provides a feasible reference for the innovative creation of lacquer art. Just as Cheng Xiangjun clearly put forward the point of view that "the important thing is not 'material and craft technology', but the artistic pursuit of the work" in "Thinking on the ontology language of lacquer painting Art [2]". This is exactly the point of view held by the authors who practice the abstract style of lacquer art. This view is also confirmed in Weng Jijun's lacquer works, such as his 2021 "Agglomeration -- Keratinization 2021-1" (Figure 6), which uses traditional materials to create images with rich textures and contemporary features.



Fig. 6 Weng Ji Jun
"Gathering - Keratinization
2021-1" Painting, lacquer
32×44×2cm 2021



Fig. 7 Tang Mingxiu
"Lacquer Garden Bowl"
Bamboo, natural lacquer
6.7×1.8m 1999-present



Fig. 8 Pan Caoyuan "Cavity
(Not an Object)" Lacquer,
mother-of-pearl, pearl, gold,
silver, tin 100×60×10cm 2021

Finally, the experimental lacquer art style breaks the boundaries of traditional lacquer art in an experimental way, trying new materials, new techniques, and new forms of expression. Tang Mingxiu, who founded the lacquer art major of China Academy of Art, is full of breakthroughs in traditional lacquer art and experimental exploration of lacquer as a medium in his works. In Tang Mingxiu's Dunhuang series of lacquer art works, lacquer is only the material of artistic creation. Compared with the lacquer paintings of the same period, which put craftsmanship first, Tang Mingxiu's works are full of experiments and exploration of lacquer craft materials. The huge "Lacquer Garden Bowl" (Figure 7), which is "trapped" in the room, does not consider the final effect or the problem of movement, but begins the endless coating work over and over again after the body is finished. This seemingly aimless labor is more like a kind of experiment and reflection on lacquer. In New generation artist Pan Caoyuan's lacquer art works (Figure 8), the purpose of experimenting and exploring the lacquer medium is also evident. According to her own description of her work, Pan Caoyuan clearly expresses her obsession with the incomplete control of natural lacquer. At the same time, for her, the part that is often defined as "fault" in traditional craft standards is her new inspiration for lacquer art creation, which is undoubtedly a deep subversion of the tradition of lacquer art.

3. To transcend tradition within tradition: Contemporary lacquer art in Japan

The development of Japanese lacquer art originated from a large number of Chinese lacquerware introduced into Japan during the Tang and Song dynasties. However, with the in-depth exploration of lacquer art technology and its inherent aesthetics in Japan during the Edo period, and the integration of Japanese national aesthetic characteristics, Japanese lacquer art gradually formed its own unique

artistic style, and became an indispensable part of the world's lacquer art in the continuous development process.

Japan's lacquer art and East Asia and even Southeast Asian countries in the history of the same mission, the early Japanese lacquer is also for the royal palace and nobility to enjoy one of the utensils, is a symbol of the nobility. However, by the Muromachi period (1336 to 1573), Japanese lacquer art began to gradually focus on the combination of design and daily life, forming a "daily spirit". This concept not only makes the Japanese lacquer art out of the aristocratic class into the people's homes, but also lays the Japanese paint art style with "daily use" as the core. This philosophy continues to today. In addition, in the 13th century Japanese literature and art circles, the "Waka artistic conception" aesthetic style of depicting flowers and plants with naturalistic techniques became the root of the decorative style of Japanese lacquerware. For the daily and elegant double pride, prompting Japanese lacquerware in its long historical evolution process always adhere to the "aristocratic" and "universal" parallel style. Thus, the nobility and the common people jointly promoted the improvement of the level of Japanese lacquer art and artistic characteristics. In contrast, China has prematurely faded out of the daily life of ordinary people, limiting the development of lacquer, so that the development path of Japanese lacquer art and Chinese lacquer art is different.

"In the development of modern lacquer art in Japan, the origin of lacquer art, lacquer art education and lacquer art exhibition are important foundations[3]", Zhou Jianshi, professor of Tsinghua Academy of Fine Arts, wrote in the article "Research on the development basis of contemporary Japanese lacquer Art". After the Meiji Restoration in 1868, Western culture and design styles flooded into Japan, and the local traditional lacquer art was greatly squeezed. In addition, the cost and construction period were more in line with the rapid development of social needs of ceramic products into the market, the continuation of traditional Japanese lacquer art was facing great challenges. However, after the "Westernization", the Japanese quickly reflected on the relationship between their own traditional culture and Western culture. In an in-depth analysis of Japanese aesthetic consciousness, Masayuki Kurokawa wrote, "As for the influence of the Western worldview, I believe there is nothing wrong with reflecting on one's own deep cultural identity. In fact, deep in our hearts, we still adhere to the Japanese aesthetic consciousness.[4]"

As Yanagi Muneyoshi wrote on how to bring craft from ancient times into the future: "Beauty in craft, and therefore in society, cannot be found without a strong organization, a solid union, a normal order and a complete system. And in these things the form of the beauty of the craft can be read.[5]" Japanese traditional lacquer technology can continue to develop, and accumulate enough world reputation and national characteristics of lacquer technology signboards at present, can not be separated from the integration of "association groups" in The Times. In the 20th year of Meiji (1887), the Japanese government set up the "Lacquerwork Course" in Tokyo Academy of Fine Arts; in the 40th year of Meiji (1907), the "Imperial Art Exhibition" agreed to set up the "Imperial Art Department"; since 1913, the annual "Japan Industry and Commerce Exhibition" has been held; in the twelfth year of Showa (1937), the "Japanese Lacquer Art Academy" was established... A series of initiatives promoted the initial goal of "revitalizing modern lacquer art" in Japan. Then, since 1955, Japan has continuously selected "Holders of Important Intangible Cultural Property in Japan". These "human national treasures", with government funding and the respect of the whole society, have passed on the traditional Japanese lacquer learning model in an orderly manner. Therefore, the contemporary Japanese lacquer artists need to go through a long and strict training of traditional lacquer techniques before making personalized art creation. This makes the traditional Japanese lacquer art aesthetics and rigorous craft techniques become the foundation of contemporary Japanese lacquer art.

The "Japan Modern Arts and Crafts Exhibition" for the purpose of "using craft to express the idea of beauty" was founded in 1964, which promoted Japanese lacquer from "practicality" to "art appreciation". "' Japanese Traditional Craft Exhibition ', 'Japanese art Exhibition' and 'Japanese Life Craft Exhibition' are also known as the three major school exhibitions, namely 'Traditional school', 'Japanese art Exhibition School' and 'Life School'.[6]" The various lacquer works in exhibitions

correspond to the three styles of contemporary Japanese lacquer art: the "traditional school" which focuses on "practicality"; the "modern school" which makes non-practical works on the basis of "Japanese art Exhibition"; the "life school" which combines the new art form and the practical life, and is between the traditional school and the modern school.

The lacquer works of the "traditional school" are mainly from the hands of "holders of important intangible cultural property in Japan" and their disciples, and their lacquer works emphasize the inheritance and innovation of craft technology, patterns and shapes on the basis of classical aesthetics. Murose Kazumi, who was designated as an "important intangible cultural property holder" of Maki-e in 2008, all her lacquer works revolve around Maki-e, the traditional Japanese lacquer craft. From his work "Tengyou era" (Figure 9), it is easy to see that the meticulous study of traditional techniques, materials, and shapes, as well as the patterns of traditional Japanese aesthetic characteristics, bring out the unique delicacy and magnificence of lacquerware. In addition, in recent years Ogura Norihiko has been conducting exchanges and promotion of traditional Japanese lacquer culture among countries and universities, and he is also one of the representatives of traditional Japanese lacquer artists. No matter his exquisite lacquer works (Figure 10) or figurative lacquer paintings (Figure 11), all of them show Ogura Norihiko's strong craft ability and traditional aesthetic training.



Fig. 9 Murose Kazumi
"Tengyou era"
Lacquer, mother-of-pearl
10.2×21.4×33.2cm
2023



Fig. 10 Ogura Norihiko
"Azalea"
Lacquer, mother-of-pearl
14.0×13.5×28.5cm
2022



Fig. 11 Ogura Norihiko
"Roussillon"
Lacquer, gold dust
14×28×1.4cm
2020

The "modern school" focuses on breaking through the traditional process, aesthetic and modeling of Japanese lacquer art, as well as the conceptual level of innovation, with "Japanese art Exhibition" lacquer art works focusing on "creativity" as the representative, mainly producing non-practical works. As an early practitioner of transforming traditional lacquer into a new style of contemporary art, Takahashi Yukihiro's works focus on breaking through the limitations of lacquer products with daily tool properties. Instead of making practical lacquer objects, he creates purely ornamental lacquer works. He is not limited to the medium of his creation, the traditional black and gold in Japanese lacquer art is only a bridge to the expression of his artistic creation style. It can be said that Takahashi's lacquer works(Figure 12) fully practice the "lacquer god" Gonroku Matsuda once said that "design is the fundamental use of technology and materials.[7]" Nobuyuki Tanaka, who also pursues traditional lacquer art, uses traditional lacquer technology and pure artistic creative thinking to think about the root relationship between nature, the universe and human beings, as well as the cycle and regeneration of life. Whether it is "Orga 2022 S-2" (Figure 13), which is extremely smooth and round with all the body red, or "Inner side-Outer side" (Figure 14), which is 220 cm high and decorated inside and outside, the beautiful curves all show Tanaka's pursuit of smooth and bright objects in the aesthetic appreciation of traditional Japanese lacquer art. Unlike the traditional Japanese lacquer art around the concept of practical three-dimensional objects, Chie Aoki use lacquer as a medium to create large-scale sculptures works, and pushed it in a different but lifeful way from tradition. In an article written by Chie Aoki, describing in detail the entire process of creating her work "BODY 09-1 -- Impact" (Figure 15), "For me, lacquer sometimes reflects my own existence like a mirror, and sometimes it is

dark and can make people feel such terror and beautiful life force.[8]" With her extreme exploration of traditional Japanese craftsmanship, she creates works that express her own artistic philosophy, in her own words, "the way I put myself in my shell shows in my work.[8]"



Fig. 12 Takahashi Yukihiro
"Fossiliferous Forest" Lacquer
60×47×18cm 1996



Fig. 13 Nobuyuki Tanaka
"Orga 2022 S-2" Lacquer,
linen 31×28×23cm 2022



Fig. 14 Nobuyuki Tanaka
Inner side-Outer side
Lacquer, linen
220×158×85cm 2005



Fig. 15 Chie Aoki
"BODY 09-1 - Okizuki -"
Lacquer, linen, styrofoam
95.89×110.01×190.02cm
2009



Fig. 16 Nagatoshi Onishi
"Flowery Clothes"
Lacquer, linen, gold leaf
65×12×37cm
2016



Fig. 17 Terumasa Ikeda
"Lightning limitless incense"
Lacquer, mother-of-pearl
56×56×14mm
2021

The "life School", which lies between "traditional school" and "modern school", focuses on the clever combination of new art forms and seeks a balance between daily practicality and artistry, among which professor Nagatoshi Onishi of Tokyo University of the Arts is the representative figure of "life school". Onishi once said in an interview: "Culture is something that needs time to be cultivated on the one hand, and once lost on the other. I think it's hard to get back to the original state. So I think you can't go back to the past, you have to make new creations. The benefits of lacquer must be rediscovered...[9]" In his works(Figure 16), the traditional concept of creating by relying on traditional practical objects has been weakened step by step, but the extreme pursuit of craftsmanship remains unchanged, and the expression of artistic ideas was constantly improving. Terumasa Ikeda, a graduate of Kanazawa University of Art and Technology, uses highly glossy mother-of-pearl as decorative material and traditional mother-of-pearl inlay asa technical technique, and uses a practical type of mother-of-pearl inlay in a delicate stack that is completely different from the traditional lacquer art aesthetic (Figure 17). The emphasis on history and traditional craftsmanship has been defined in previous studies of Japanese lacquer craftsmanship as having an "antique skill and craft humanity" side. [10] However, in Ikeda's lacquer works, lacquer had been given a freer expression than before, which also revealed more potential possibilities of lacquer technology.

4. Being nourished by nature: Contemporary lacquer art in Korea

Lacquerware and lacquercraft in Korean history developed in a similar direction to that of China, both centering on the use of the aristocratic class. However, the reasons for this choice and the contemporary path of the two countries are different. Under the economic stance of "building a nation through culture" and seeking the identity of local traditional lacquer art, South Korea's contemporary lacquer art shows the development mode of integrating civil and fashion roads. In recent years, cultural exchanges have formed more thinking about lacquer and more diversified expression forms. Both the traditional Korean lacquer art centered on mother-of-pearl and the contemporary Korean lacquer art creation are full of the influence of nature.

According to historical research, lacquer-making techniques were introduced to the Korean Peninsula as early as the Yin and Zhou dynasties in China. However, limited by geography and natural conditions, the resources of *Toxicodendron vernicifluum* in Korea were relatively poor, and lacquer became a more valuable material. In addition, under the feudal system, Korean society was clearly divided into classes, and lacquer became the symbol of the aristocratic class in ancient Korea, and created the unique appearance of Korean lacquer. First of all, due to the low resource output of lacquer in South Korea, it is difficult for South Korea to produce lacquerware with large use and loss of raw lacquer such as carved lacquer. Secondly, the Korean Peninsula surrounded by the sea on three sides has rich Marine resources, which makes the "gold and silver flushing-exposure" and "mother-of-pearl inlay" introduced by the Tang and Song Dynasties of China in the Silla period have a fertile soil to take root and develop, and then gradually develop into the "thin mother-of-pearl inlay" with the characteristics of the Korean Peninsula. As Jō Okada wrote in his study of mother-of-pearl from the Goryeo period, "Goryeo's Mother-of-pearl", "I do not believe that this technique was introduced by the Goryeo Dynasty from the Tang Dynasty when they unified the Silla, but that it evolved gradually to national style during the Goryeo era.[11]"

In the 1960s and 1970s, due to the reckless introduction of Western culture in the process of modernization of Korean society, even conservative lacquer technology has not been able to get rid of the brand of simple imitation and blind takeism. Even in the 1970s, in order to protect traditional culture, South Korea began to implement the "important cultural property protection measures" similar to Japan, and the government cultural agency set up a special "intangible cultural property" selection and management department. However, none of the above measures of the Korean government showed good effects during this period. The situation did not improve until 1980, mainly due to four factors:

First, in order to promote the development of modern lacquer art in South Korea, South Korea first increased investment in lacquer art education. In 1980, the South Korean government began to set up an independent lacquer craft major in universities, and it has been developed in various lacquer craft exhibitions and competitions. This makes the Korean lacquer art gradually popular, and it also promotes the transformation of the Korean lacquer art from traditional to modern.

Secondly, in the late 1980s, South Korea established the modern lacquer Artists Association, whose members are mainly composed of university professors, graduate professional students and lacquer artists who have been engaged in the teaching and research of lacquer art creation for a long time. With the support of the government and private foundations, the association holds a national exhibition of lacquer artists every two years, and publishes catalogs, organizes seminars and other academic activities.

In addition, the Korean government has set up a special qualification verification system for lacquer art practitioners, identifying three types of personnel: "lacquer skill holders", "motherlay processing skill holders" and "cultural property repair skill holders". The division of the three types of lacquer art related skill holders and the protection of the Korean government's cultural policy on the processing technology of motherlay also maintain the cultural signboard image of "motherlay" as the traditional characteristics of Korean lacquer art to a certain extent.

Finally, during this period, under the influence of foreign students and western forms of modern art expression, Korean lacquer art works that are more decorative than practical gradually appeared.

In the aspect of life utility, because of the collision of culture and ideas, it also shows the exploration of the trend of Westernization. It considers the possibility of mass production while insisting on handmade, and considers the way of coexisting with modern technology while continuing the traditional lacquer process. This prompted South Korea in the 1980s set off an upsurge of discussion on the re-understanding of craft techniques and traditional craft concepts, Korean lacquer art gradually lifted the opposition with modern craft, and the process of Korean lacquer technology to find the local language was more dynamic.

In modern times, South Korea's lacquer art mainly takes practicality as the main core of design and production. Among them, the creation of Jeon Yong-bok is a representative, he believes that "lacquer has a special ability to protect precious things for 10,000 years. If carefully and delicately applied in a traditional way, lacquer will take on a beautiful color that no other paint can imitate.[12]" Therefore, Jeon Yong-bok placed his works in a completely different carrier and volume from his previous lacquerware, and devoted himself to integrating the traditional lacquer art naturally into the modern era. In his opinion, only by integrating lacquer into the living space can we truly continue the Korean tradition. As a result, the development of Korean lacquer art from modern to contemporary was also centered on the inheritance of local traditional crafts. And showed the continuous innovation of traditional crafts in the process of gradually enriching the national spiritual world. Contemporary South Korean lacquer art is also in the stage of continuous exploration, the current South Korean lacquer art creation group can be roughly divided into the following two categories: one is in the traditional craft and carrier in the search for artistic "traditional school", the other is to maintain the experimental spirit of lacquer art, in the field of new art to explore the new method of decorating traditional craft "innovative school".

The "traditional school" lacquer art works are mainly from lacquerware made by the "important intangible cultural goods" designated by the state and their inheritors. Hyungman Lee, who was awarded the title of lacquer craftsman No. 10 of the Important Intangible cultural Goods by the state in 1996, inherited the traditional Korean mother-of-pearl lacquer craft and constantly explores the art of keeping pace with The Times in the lacquer art works made by using the traditional mother-of-pearl lacquer technique. Hyungman Lee wrote in his article "The artistry of Korean traditional mother-of-Pearl Lacquer", "Only by making creative crafts according to the needs of modern life with traditional handicraft materials and techniques can the traditional mother-of-pearl lacquer craft be inherited and promoted.[13]" In his works (Figure 18), the exquisite materials, rigorous techniques, and national artistic language all testify to Korea's strong local culture and its inheritance of traditional craftsmanship. As the No. 113 important intangible cultural property granted by the state, Soohwa Jeong's work "Moon Jar" (Figure 19) is based on the traditional Korean white porcelain moon jar. The collision of color matching with The Times and traditional techniques fully demonstrates the fresh charm of traditional Korean lacquer techniques and materials.



Fig. 18 Hyungman Lee
"Mother-of-pearl
Association" Lacquer,
mother-of-Pearl 46×33×32cm
2000



Fig. 19 Soohwa Jeong
"Moon Jar" Lacquer,
mother-of-pearl
54×54×56cm Age
unknown



Fig. 20 Kim Sungsoo "Cosmic
Space" Wood, lacquer, mother-
of-pearl 111×162 cm 2018

The "innovative school" Korean contemporary lacquer creators still adhere to the traditional Korean lacquer craft, but these traditional craft materials are applied to more art fields as decoration, highlighting the experimental spirit in application and highlighting new artistic ideas in exploration. As Sang-Oh Kwon said in an interview: "Although we are not free to invent in the expression of traditional things, we should never forget to find new possibilities in the expression method and content.[14]" In contrast to Chinese contemporary painting, which occupies half of the country with lacquer painting, the contemporary lacquer art works of South Korea are mostly three-dimensional and rarely flat. Kim Sungsoo, the first chairman of the Association of Modern Lacquer Artists, used traditional techniques and materials to express his artistic ideas and create his flat lacquer painting "Cosmic Space" (Figure 20). In Kim Sungsoo's opinion, "The natural lacquer painting skills with the new painting rules have yet to be developed, and my work is only in the experimental stage. I want to dress up our traditional craft field in a way that goes into this new field.[15]" Oh Goohwan, who has the same idea of traditional lacquer techniques and materials as Kim, insists on traditional wood lacquer techniques. His work "Story Flower" (Figure 21) shows his dual thoughts on tradition and modernity. In Oh Goohwan's opinion, lacquer is a traditional craft medium, but it can also be created as pure art. "Pure art is a basic work using traditional techniques and materials", "art is not a physical reproduction of things, but a subjective reconstruction of myself". [16] Whether it is the experimental exploration of the image and decoration in the living space, or the experimental exploration from the perspective of pure artistic appreciation, the contemporary lacquer artists of the "innovative school" are all created around this idea.



Fig. 21 Oh Goohwan
"Story Flower"
Wood, lacquer H
85cm 2011

Fig. 22 Chung Haecho
"Rhythm of the Five
Color Luster 1302"
Lacquer, Hemp Each
12×12×12cm 2013



Fig. 23 Kim Seol "Wood
Core Lacquerware"
Wood, lacquer
45×23×22cm 2013

The "innovative" lacquer artists who create according to the traditional characteristics of the functionality of lacquerware, or use modern life utility tools as the carrier, and then decorate with natural lacquer and traditional craft techniques, or explore more diversified images and decorations of lacquerware in living space on the basis of traditional modeling techniques. Among them, Chung Haecho (Figure 22) and Kim Seol (Figure 23) make works using life utility as a carrier, exploring forms with traditional materials and techniques of lacquer. KimJiseo, who broke through the traditional lacquer carrier form to create contemporary jewelry, fully explores the dual functionality of lacquer art and decoration in her works (Figure 24). There are also experimental contemporary lacquer works that focus on art itself and explore pure artistic appreciation and artistic concept expression. Among them, Jung Yongju captures natural changes as far as possible in his creation (Figure 25), and uses lacquer techniques and materials to freeze the modeling of moments. In Jung Yongju's view: "In other spatial forms other than the earth, neither matter nor man can exist. Therefore, there is no possibility of the existence of other standards of beauty than nature, so the standard of beauty must also take nature as the starting point, there is no other way.[17]" On the other hand, Eun-kyung Koo's works use traditional materials and techniques to show more modern artistic language and ideas. Her work "Door between" (Figure 26) takes doors as image materials and uses lacquer and mother-of-pearl to express the possibility of new works in harmony with traditional and modern art.



Fig. 24 KimJiseo
"DREAM1" Lacquer,
marble, sheepskin, paper,
gold leaf, gold dust, silver,
copper Dimensions
unknown Age unknown

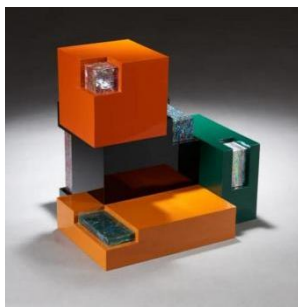


Fig. 25 Jung Yongju
"Structural Dialogue"
Birch plywood, lacquer,
mother-of-pearl
35×32×35cm 2019



Fig. 26 Eun-kyung Koo
"Door between" Lacquer,
mother-of-pearl 150×162cm
2019

5. Summary

Lacquer art, a kind of liquid secreted from the toxicodendron vernicifluum as the main medium, blends different colors, attaches to various material carriers, thus making creation and coating open to the infinite possibilities of the plastic arts. Lacquer in East Asian cultural exchange has a history of more than 8,000 years, from discovery to prosperity to decline, until today is mentioned again. Such twists and turns show the development of its long heritage and circulation.

China, Japan and South Korea, which are located in the same East Asian cultural circle, have chosen to skillfully integrate contemporary art language, modern design elements and artistic innovation in their contemporary lacquer art creation on the basis of retaining ancient production technology and traditional craft spirit. Contemporary lacquer artists from China, Japan and South Korea show a constant exploration of the fierce collision and perfect integration of "avant-garde" and "tradition" in their creation.

However, due to the differences in the historical process, national scenery, aesthetic characteristics and cultural quality of lacquer art, the artistic style, visual illustration and material application of contemporary lacquer art in China, Japan and South Korea show the path of alienation. In each period, on the one hand, they choose to balance and reconcile the contradiction and connection between local traditional lacquer art and the influence of western modern and contemporary art trends in different ways; on the other hand, under their own contemporary cultural context, they innovate the artistic concept, media materials and expression vocabulary of contemporary lacquer art, releasing the charm of contemporary lacquer art with the same distinctive national cultural attributes:

In China, contemporary lacquer art has always maintained the respect and inheritance of traditional crafts, and actively absorbed the intervention and influence of Western art elements, paying attention to the expression of personal feelings and aesthetic concepts, forming a growing and diversified art group and artistic outlook. Japanese contemporary lacquer art maintains a delicate balance between tradition and modernity, and fully highlights the Japanese aesthetic characteristics and craftsman spirit that pay more attention to simplicity, practicality and the style of Wabi-sabi while integrating into Western design and aesthetic concepts. Korean contemporary lacquer art conforms to the native lacquer tradition created by the natural environment, pays attention to the combination of contemporary aesthetic and traditional values while praising nature, and shows more modern sense and international style in color application and modeling design.

Chinese, Japanese and Korean contemporary lacquer art, their common origin from the longest history of Chinese lacquer art, and in the East Asian cultural perspective of the interaction of influence. But, because of the lacquer art itself "lacquer" as the center, and the wide range of media, in China, Japan and South Korea under the respective cultural attributes of their own style. They are different

variations from the same origin. However, what is particularly meaningful is that the infinite creativity of contemporary lacquer art is precisely in the East Asian culture to blossom its unique charm of openness and inclusiveness.

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