

Silent Water and Deep Flow, Resounding Gold and Stone

-- A Study of Liu Shouxiang's Artistic Style

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Abstract: Since Lang Shining came to China in the middle of the eighteenth century, Western watercolor painting has been introduced to China for about 270 years, and it has been a century since Western watercolor painting became popular in Shanghai at the end of the nineteenth century. Combining the taste of traditional Chinese art with the thoughts of watercolor artists of the new era, Chinese watercolor paintings present a bright and dazzling Chinese spirit, of which Liu Shouxiang's watercolor works are a representative.

Keywords: Watercolor; Liu Shouxiang Artistic Style; Traditional Chinese Art.

1. Introduction

The development history of watercolor painting in China is like a long meandering river, the rain of the times falls, the boulders roll on the bank, the river is getting wider and longer, the momentum is getting more and more exciting. Mr. Liu Shouxiang is one of the drops of rain, millions of drops of rain converge, promoting the development process of the long river of Chinese watercolor painting history, Mr. Liu Shouxiang is a boulder, using his body to build up the riverbed of Chinese watercolor painting history. Mr. Liu Shouxiang's art style is characterized by its simplicity, elegance and purity, and his paintings are intriguing with the deep flow of still water and the clanging of gold and stone.

2. Characteristics of the Work

2.1. Spirituality

Mr. Liu Shouxiang's works are more common in still-life and landscape subjects, and his still-life works are mostly realistic paintings, often using various colors of fruits and ceramic objects as the main body, supplemented by various materials of the lining cloth, and his still-life works are calm and introverted in style, with rich and elegant colors, and the overall presentation of a resounding gold and stone flavor. His landscape works are mostly sketching creations, and the creator starts to depict after being in the scene, and the style of his works is either serene and elegant, or pale and magnificent, often reflecting his emotions and thoughts about the region he is in.

Mr. Liu Shouxiang is sincere.

Mr. Liu Shouxiang's creative attitude is sincere. For Mr. Liu Shouxiang, the beginning of the painting is not counted from the pen to paper, as early as the beginning of the still life arrangement has begun. Mr. Liu Shouxiang has strict requirements on the shape, color and size of the selected still life, and also has strict requirements on the color echo effect between the objects, not just selecting a few objects and placing them hastily and then calling it a day. In order to achieve aesthetic balance, Mr. Liu Shouxiang on its placement and the relationship between the object and the object blocking are adjusted countless times, in constant comparison, several attempts to determine the process of

adjustment and comparison may not necessarily show up in the actual operation, but must have been in its heart for careful deliberation and consideration. This is what is meant by "having a plan in mind". It can be said that in the creation of the preparatory work carried out in the early stages of Mr. Liu Shouxiang consumed a lot of energy. Rigorous creative attitude is Mr. Liu Shouxiang's strict requirements for himself, but also reflects his infinite sincerity to the beauty of the attitude of exploration, this sincere attitude of exploration is very touching people's hearts.



Fig 1. Liu Shouxiang, watercolor on paper, "Old Earthenware Jar and Apples", original work



Fig 2. Liu Shouxiang Watercolor on Paper Old Pottery Jar and Apples After Color Swapping of Subjects

Throughout Mr. Liu Shouxiang's still life works, the picture composition sense and a sense of beauty both, the color with elegant at the same time did not lose the language of the color itself, taking into account the elegance and rich, like a cup of mellow wine, drops of wine drunken heart. For example, in his 2008 watercolor work "Old Pottery Jar and Apples", half-red and half-green mangoes and bright red apples are placed on the gray-red lining, golden lemons and red apples with a slight yellowish tinge are placed on the black lining, and in addition to the fresh fruits, there are one white and one black pottery jar for each of the main objects, with the white jar placed on the red and gray lining, and the black jar on the black lining, which stabilizes the focus of the picture. The white pot is placed on top of the red and gray lining, and the black pot is placed on top of the black lining, which stabilizes the center of gravity of the picture and highlights the rich colors and clear shapes of the fruit. Trying to exchange the colors of the two pots (as shown in Figure 2), the center of gravity of the picture is unstable, the structure is chaotic, the edges of the objects are blurred, and the main object is blurred. This contrast shows Mr. Liu Shouxiang's far-reaching ingenuity.

Mr. Liu Shouxiang's full sincerity has been infused in the early stage of painting creation, and this sincerity makes the works have the inner core foundation of generating "divine charm". The importance of a pure and sincere painting attitude to a painting work is just like the importance of an exquisite beginning to a book. This kind of sincerity runs through the whole process of painting and has the power to move people's hearts.

Mr. Liu Shouxiang's painting foundation is solid, and the solid foundation comes from the sincere personality.

Mr. Liu Shouxiang is a heavy form, Wang Zhaomin Zhang "form is everything, write form with form", Mr. Liu Shouxiang is the same. The love of art makes him tirelessly hone his painting foundation, creating more possibilities to achieve the most beautiful realm. "To do a good job, you must first sharpen your tools", but for Mr. Liu Shouxiang, sketching is not only the foundation, but also a way, the kernel of sincerity, and the glory of ideals. This is the refutation of the fallacy "modeling is the foundation", and also the refutation of ignoring the basic form and pursuing abstraction.

God is embedded in the form, the form has square, round and curved, and different shapes coalesce with different qi. God is a kind of atmosphere, the thoughts and feelings of the creator's heart, the essence given to the picture by the person, and this wisp of essence nourishes the painting, while the painting also feeds this wisp of essence. The rounded and large forms give people a solid temperament, the sharp and straight forms give people rational thinking, the wrinkled lining is the liveliness in the serious picture, and the neat empty vase is the poet's mourning. Master Huineng said, "There is nothing in the first place, where is the dust", and Xu Bing took this saying as the name of his installation, no matter which way you read it, you can't ignore the correlation between form and existence. Marley Wiseman suggests that "memories of the public are correct", and only existing objects can carry subjective ideas, and form is the outline of the existence of objects.

Returning to Mr. Liu Shouxiang's works, the clay pots are as thick as a big man, while the slightly oval shape adds a bit of bookishness to the rough pots, even the wilted melons and fruits have beautiful lines, spitting out the melancholy of the quiet beauty of autumn leaves. Accurate form and perspective

make it possible to create a sense of space in the picture, and this rationality maintains the order of the world in the painting. The melons are where they should be, the clay pots are the size they should be, the lining is in the right shape, and everything is in order. In this rational order contains Mr. Liu Shouxiang's praise of nature, had the honor to listen to Mr. Liu Shouxiang's recorded video class, Mr. Liu Shouxiang painting apples, is the first to give the apples a yellow-green background color, and then apply red as appropriate, Mr. Liu said that apples in the natural growth of green to red, so we should also follow the objective laws of nature in painting. Respecting nature and life, therefore respecting the objective form and carefully tracing the shape of an object, whether it is a still life or a landscape, with a consistent and sincere attitude.

In artistic creation, completeness is sometimes a drawback. But for Mr. Shouxiang's paintings, completeness is not a disadvantage, but an expression of sincerity. It is the integrity of the form, the integrity of the carving, the integrity of the structure of the picture, and this kind of practical attitude in every aspect has nurtured the atmosphere of the purest and most sincere paintings. In Mr. Liu Shouxiang's works, the near objects have the details that belong to the spatial dimension of the near objects, and the far away defocused objects also have just belonged to the fuzzy defocused spatial dimension, and are not directly attributed to the chaos and disappearance of nothingness. Even if sometimes need to follow the "near real and far virtual" perspective rules for painting, Mr. Liu Shouxiang also treats the distant virtualized objects as seriously as the near objects, and seriously depicts the form, color and detail of the distant virtualized objects. In the blurring and clarity of the implementation of the Mr. Liu Shouxiang's deep thinking about the passing of time and the quiet beauty of the years.

Besides, the picture structure of Mr. Liu Shouxiang's works is also complete. First of all, there are no unfinished gaps, even the pure black and white linings have rich folds. Secondly, the interspersed structure between color blocks and color blocks is stable, the color blocks present regular geometric shapes, and there is a certain degree of echo between two color blocks, which are different but cross each other, and together they form a stable and complete structure of the picture. The flesh and blood of the work is built on this complete structure, which makes the work stand up to scrutiny and exudes a resounding flavor of gold and stone.



Fig 3. Still Life with Black Earthenware Jar, Watercolor on Paper, 75x75cm, 2019

Therefore, Mr. Liu Shouxiang's works are sincere, which is the outstanding noble character of his works.

2.2. Tone of the Work

“Style” and ‘tone’ are very important to a work. Wei Yuan, “Technique can be advanced to the Tao, art can be passed to God” [1], which means that if you continue to explore and cultivate your technique, you will gradually reach the realm of “Tao”, and from then on, you will enter the level of comprehending the laws of heaven and earth. It is true that technique is very important, but style is also important. Sometimes, for the sake of style, we can make a slight concession on technique, hide our clumsiness and return to the truth. A good piece of work cannot be created by studying technique to the neglect of the overall style.

Mr. Liu Shouxiang's works have style.

First of all, the subject matter. Mr. Liu Shouxiang's still life paintings mostly choose ceramics as the main object, with various colors of fruits and vegetables, landscapes are mostly rivers and ships, etc., in the subject matter is closer to life. As a medium for conveying the creator's thoughts, if the objects in the picture are far away from the viewer's actual life experience, it is very difficult to arouse the viewer's empathy, not to mention triggering the viewer's thinking. Ceramics, fruits and vegetables, and ships and rivers are common and indispensable in the lives of the masses, which provides a feasible way to communicate the creator's thoughts. Based on familiar themes, they were rearranged aesthetically. In the Northern Song Dynasty, Qingyuan Weixin said, “When I did not participate in Zen thirty years ago, I saw mountains as mountains and water as water. Later, when I saw the knowledge, I had a place to enter. When I saw the mountain, it was not a mountain, and when I saw the water, it was not water. And now there is a resting place, according to the former see the mountain is just the mountain, see the water is just the water.” [2]. After artistic processing, so that the mountain is no longer a mountain, the water is no longer water, to get both can be understood by the masses and can enlighten the community's success of the work of art, this readability is Mr. Liu Shouxiang's style, from Mr. Liu Shouxiang's personality refracted to the works of its elegant affinity.

Second is the process of creation. Watercolor paintings usually give people a fresh and transparent visual experience, using different ratios of water and pigments collide with each other, or rubbing or painting or sprinkling techniques, in the water-absorbent material on the paper to present a glistening picture effect at the same time it is easy to leave water marks or brush marks, if you want to control the water marks, you need to practice many times over, and this is the basis for the creation of watercolor paintings. In addition to the basic techniques mastered by most artists, Mr. Liu Shouxiang has made other explorations, such as the use of loofah flesh to create texture, the proper retention of paper texture, the exploration of brushes, and the use of Chinese paints in his teaching to base the painting before washing it off. In Mr. Liu Shouxiang's original process of burying, washing, and re-coloring, he has unconsciously developed the intriguing elegance of his works, which are like a clear spring with deep, still water.

3. Reasons for the Formation of Styles

3.1. Guided by Good Teachers

In Mr. Liu Shouxiang's school career, enlightened teacher Ha Wen led the young Liu Shouxiang first feel the charm of watercolor, appreciate the beauty of the water color, with sketching for the container infiltration to discover the beauty

of the eyes, Liu Shouxiang once said: “a painter can enjoy the process of sketching, is the real painter.” The appearance of Mr. Harwin laid the foundation for the later sketching to play an important role in Liu Shouxiang's artistic career. 1958 Mr. Wang Zhaomin came to Wuhan to hold exhibitions and lectures, which made Liu Shouxiang get a spiritual shock,[1] and Liu Shouxiang once said, “Sketching is the vessel for infiltrating the eyes to discover the beauty of water.



Fig 4. Wang Zhaomin “Chaozhou Citrus” Watercolor on paper 39cm×55cm 1985



Fig 5. Liu Shouxiang “Fresh Fruit” Watercolor on Paper 61cm×76.5cm 1992

Liu Shouxiang once said, “Mr. Wang Zhaomin's exhibition had such a great appeal that it made me realize the charm of watercolor painting and the pleasure brought by its infinite variations, which gave me a slight sense of watercolor and a sense of direction. His book *Paintings and Words Gleanings* gave me much food for thought and enlightenment.” [3] In 1977, Liu Shouxiang was admitted to the Fine Arts Department of the Hubei Academy of Arts (the predecessor of the Hubei Academy of Fine Arts), and although his major was Chinese painting, he continued to be obsessed with the study of watercolor painting, and he studied under the master of watercolor painting, Bai Tongxu, outside of the classroom, and after graduating from the university, Liu Shouxiang stayed in the school as a teacher, and became the head of the Watercolor Painting Department. Since then, Mr. Liu Shouxiang has gone farther and farther on the road of watercolor painting.

3.2. Chu Cultural Influence

Mr. Liu Shouxiang was born in April 1958, a native of Wuhan, Hubei Province. Tracing back the history of establishment, Wuhan was called “Jiangxia” more than 2300 years ago, and belonged to the jurisdiction of the state of Chu during the Spring and Autumn Period and the Warring States Period. Chu art advocate red and black, because Chu custom

respect phoenix still red, worship fire, like witch near the ghost. The people of Chu believed that they were the distant descendants of the god of the sun and the heirs of the god of fire, and that both the sun and fire were red in color. Black and red are also known as the crimson and xuan crimson. The Zhou Li - The King's Auspicious Clothing states: "Those who know the crimson and xuan yi: see the Yi Xiangshi: 'Huang Di, Yao Shun, and Yao Yi hang down their garments, and they all take from the Qian Kun.' The color of Qian is heaven, and the color of Kun is earth, and the color of Kun is yellow. However, the earth has no proper position and is located in the south. The color of fire (in the south) is red, and red and yellow (together) are crimson, so they are still red.

Mr. Liu Shouxiang grew up in Wuhan, a city with a long history of Chu culture, and black and red can often be seen in his works, and black and red are often used as the main lining and the main still life. Xie Yue, a friend of Mr. Liu Shouxiang, pointed out that the still life jars in Liu Shouxiang's works are all from Hubei, and the lining is from Enshi. Another friend of Mr. Liu Shouxiang, Lu Hong, said, "Inspired by the Chu culture, Shouxiang often preferred to use a large piece of black in the picture, and then through the contrasting use of bright colors, coupled with appropriate supplemented with different gray to overdo it, so it always gives a sense of solemnity and elegance or nobility." It can be seen that the Chu culture on Mr. Liu Shouxiang's painting creation has a certain influence, in addition to the color scheme is quite Chu culture temperament, its works of artifacts modeling is also quite Chu art styling characteristics, pottery thick and sturdy, simple and rustic temperament.

3.3. Inward Exploration

Unlike other people who pursue the innovation of watercolor subject matter, Mr. Liu Shouxiang explores the same subject matter inwardly, which is related to Mr. Liu Shouxiang's own pursuit of inner exploration. From 1968 to 1978, when the intellectual youths went to the countryside, Mr. Liu Shouxiang was also among them. He went deep into the countryside, close to the life of the masses, and painted window flowers for the villagers in the spare time of labor, which cultivated Liu Shouxiang's hardworking and simple character.

Later, he was admitted to Hubei Academy of Fine Arts, studied watercolor painting in depth, delved into painting skills, from creating landscape paintings to still-life paintings, explored constantly, and was always immersed in the world of watercolor. Lu Hong, who graduated from Hubei Academy of Fine Arts, recalled the past events with Mr. Liu Shouxiang and said, "I also noticed that there were pieces of paper of different sizes placed on the painting table, on which there were blocks of color drawn with different strokes, and I asked him what he was doing, and he replied that it was an art experiment, i.e., after buying watercolor paper and watercolor paints of different origins, he would often test the color absorption, water absorption and elasticity of various kinds of paper over and over again. Color absorption, water absorption and expansion rate, as well as the color fastness, sedimentation and transparency of various types of pigments "No matter where he is, Mr. Liu Shouxiang is always focusing on watercolor research and exploration, which is not only an inward exploration of a particular

watercolor, but also for their own exploration of the inner realm, which is different from other watercolor artists, Mr. Liu Shouxiang. This is what makes Mr. Liu Shouxiang different from other watercolor artists, and is also a reflection of his own unique artistic pursuit.

4. Summary

Mr. Liu Shouxiang to the pure and true academic attitude to each painting, whether it is a landscape or still life, are the real existence of life in the scene or object that makes Mr. Liu Shouxiang produced some kind of thought or emotional touch, in order to express the feelings of reproducing the mood of the pen, was born in Mr. Liu Shouxiang's profound view of the world, outlook on life, the values of the creation of the aesthetic sense. Precisely because of this aesthetic goal, Mr. Liu Shouxiang's creations can withstand careful tasting and will not be outdated no matter how many years pass. Mr. Liu Shouxiang's inward exploration of watercolor painting has to a certain extent enhanced the purity of his watercolor paintings, each still life and each frame of landscape under his brush is very atmospheric, the painting itself is only a carrier, carrying the painter's feelings for the scenery, the viewer breaks the confinement of time and space to enter into the works of the moment by watching the painting, and with the help of the painter's eyes to get the pure aesthetic experience to achieve the interaction of the subject of the viewer with the interspersed space and time, this kind of interaction is the result of the interplay of the viewing body and the time. The interaction between the subject of viewing and space-time is realized, and this way of sealing the atmosphere of emotions in order to savor it again is the biggest difference between Liu Shouxiang's works and photorealistic works. The resounding golden stone flavor in the paintings and the aesthetic aura of calmness like flowing water have certain aesthetic significance.

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