

Research on the Development form of Chinese Contemporary Oil Painting in Recent 30 Years

Zhiyu Wang

School of Art, Anhui University of Finance and Economics, Bengbu, Anhui 233030, China

Abstract: This paper analyzes and discusses the development form of Chinese contemporary oil painting in the past 30 years, and thinks that in the past 30 years, after the baptism of Western cultural thoughts, postmodern thoughts have been deeply rooted in the hearts of Chinese people. Under this background, Western modern culture has brought rich topics to Chinese oil painting, and Chinese oil painting language is also transforming under the impact of Western artistic thoughts. This paper also summarizes the two aspects of Chinese contemporary art criticism during the period of 1990-2020. This paper holds that only by accurately grasping the characteristics of The Times and starting from the simple life can contemporary Chinese oil painting see the truth, goodness and beauty of art from life, and only by returning to the real "contemporary" can it absorb the essence from it and have enduring vitality.

Keywords: Chinese Oil Painting; Modernity; Development Form.

1. Introduction

Oil painting is an important art form. Combing and analyzing the development forms of contemporary Chinese oil painting in the past 30 years will help to deeply understand the artistic context of the development of contemporary Chinese oil painting and provide useful references for promoting the high-quality development of oil painting art in the future.

2. The Rich Topics Brought by Western Modern Culture to Chinese Oil Painting

After the baptism of Western cultural trends in the 1980s, postmodern thought has been deeply rooted in the hearts of Chinese people since the 1990s. Nietzsche and Hegel became the sustenance for young artists to express their critical spirit. The wind of liberalism and humanism has been blowing all over China. In terms of artistic style, abstract expressionism, once famous in Western art circles, is declining, and pop art occupies the market. In addition, easel painting, including oil painting, is no longer the entirety of "art". It became more popular to respond to the subject matter in a variety of ways. Installation art, new media art, or to put it bluntly, materials and media are no longer a single way to classify works of art. Under modern western culture, the exploration of Western philosophy and the introduction of new artistic methods have once again become new topics for Chinese artists to create. In other words, it is not that Chinese artists have absorbed the same culture of Western society and produced the same thinking at the same time, but that these popular Western cultures, as a cultural phenomenon, and a possible direction, have found some topics for Chinese artists who are at a loss to explore in China.

Under the background of the introduction of Western female art theories into China in the 1990s, Chinese female artists, especially Chinese female oil painters, gradually began to re-examine their position in the historical development. As a new generation of knowledgeable women, Chinese female oil painters began to explore new creative

themes that could express themselves, and they examined the rigid real society with a more perceptual perspective. At the same time, sex and the body as concepts were re-interpreted and expressed in oil paintings.

In the 20 years since the 1990s, Chinese oil painting has completely got rid of the shackles of mere exploration of content. At that time, the discourse background of Chinese oil painting became richer, which was part of the gradual inheritance and development of Chinese painting art in a sense. At the same time, after absorbing these modern western cultures, Chinese oil painting inevitably entered the global contemporary art discourse system automatically.

The concept of "experimental" has influenced the development of Chinese oil painting since the 1990s not only in terms of content, but also in terms of creative thinking, opening up a new level of oil painting creation. Under the coverage of "experimental" orientation, the material characteristics and creative language of oil painting itself have been hidden from the signifier, and the signification of art has been explored in a purer context.

Since the 1990s, the nature of oil painting as easel painting has become complicated with the development of Chinese society and the change of residents' lifestyle. Artists who painted oil began to observe how others observed the world, and ordinary people unexpectedly got more ways to get visual pleasure in addition to painting. The "image" brought the artistic, elitist, metaphysical concept of the "oil painting" back to reality.

Political pop came into being in this context. In the 1950s, Pop art grew barbarously in New York, trying to overthrow abstract expressionism and explore the relationship between art and popular culture. In 1957, Hamilton defined "pop" as: popular (designed for the masses), ephemeral, expendable (forgettable), cheap, mass-produced, youthful (aimed at youth), witty, sexy, mischievous, seductive, and big business. When Pop art came to China, it turned into an artistic methodology. Chinese artists combined the political scars left behind with the disintegrating society they now face to create political pop. Big business is the immediate cause of it. Pop image method "killed" a blood way in the contemporary art circle, and Chinese oil painters quickly reacted after

mastering this method. Various image reproduction and the graphic language evolved from Pop style appeared in Chinese oil painting for many times in the following 20 years.

3. The Change of Chinese Oil Painting Language

The voice of oil painting in the Chinese art market and the world art market cannot be separated from the great changes in the painting content of the post-60's oil painters. The post-60 oil painters were born after the founding of the People's Republic of China, experienced the Cultural Revolution, the 85 New wave, the reform and opening up, and gradually witnessed the transformation of oil painting in every stage of Chinese society. They adapted and updated their "techniques". It wasn't until consumerism came along that artists realized that art was gradually becoming art. The commercial identity of works of art had completely changed, and the artists who created the art also faced "commodification". And who pays for art collides violently with "art for art's sake." Post-60s artists struggle between the spiritual world and the material world, trying to find their own position, and in the face of the onslaught of consumerism, Chinese oil painting is also involved in this economic flood.

Successful works in the international art market soon became a paradigm that spread throughout the Chinese art world. In the above discussion on pop art, I mentioned that the visual revolution brought about by consumerism "brainwashed" everyone's aesthetic style. Since then, the expansion of oil painting style gradually began to develop in a vertical direction. More and more artists painted in similar styles or used similar painting methods. Is making money art bad art? Does a picture that is paid a high price become kitsch? Do paintings that are popular in the marketplace lose their critical touch? The moral mission of the artist and the commercial benefits brought by the market economy make the artist's profession full of contradictions. Zhu Zhu criticizes: "From that moment on, our avant-garde art seems to be doomed to a contradictory fate: On the one hand, the special political and historical reality requires artists to assume social responsibility, carry out moral criticism, and act as the tongue of conscience; On the other hand, art has its own moral law, that is, it pays attention to language and form itself, transcends real life as much as possible, and creates another world full of joy and fantasy. Thus, just as the American literary critic Helen Vendler once described a form of writing as "hovering between the urgency of witness and the urgency of pleasure," our artists are always hovering between these twin exigencies.

The art market uses numbers to swing the balance between "the urgency of witnessing and the urgency of pleasure", and through such a third-party way, stimulates everyone to have more or less contact with art. Of course, the art market is not the only way to judge whether an art work is good or bad, and there seems to be a great contradiction between the price of a temporary price in the market and the value of the oil painting itself, but we can see a phenomenon in the reflection of the art market driven by consumption. After 1990, In the development of painting language, Chinese oil painting is not one-sided toward Western contemporary art, and the art market can not completely control the value of oil painting. If many post-60s artists are constantly exploring how to be more avant-garde and more contemporary, then at the same time, many artists are struggling with the tide of consumerism and gradually settling down.

The identity labels of oil painters and artists, Chinese oil painters and contemporary artists are known between the individuality and commonality of Chinese works of art, between the national and other perspectives. As early as 1991, Zeng Jingchu said in response to the question of "Rebuilding China's Elite Art" : "Personality is universal, and the expression of personality is human instinct. However, personality is always unified with the commonness of nation and class. No matter what kind of writing we do, strictly speaking, there is no purely objective reflection, there is always some subjective element of the author. This is why we should incorporate commonalities into our personalities. As for this kind of personality, is it true that if you import it, you are better than us, and if you do not import it, you cannot embody it?" [2] As we can see in this small clip, by the 1990s, the discussion about whether China is contemporary or contemporary China has become a mainstream topic. The vigorous development of the New wave brought countless new topics and accelerated the speed of the fission of Chinese art styles.

4. The Predicament of Chinese Oil Painting after Modernism

The trend of modernism not only brought new graphic language, creative ideas and themes to Chinese oil painting; At the same time, this colorful situation also brought some difficulties to Chinese oil painting and Chinese contemporary art.

As the two groups of audience, the public and the artists, faced with the influx of Western artworks, they often walk on the edge of the rupture between the two concepts of tradition and modernity. Art reception, as the last link of art production, is presented through exhibitions held in public Spaces. However, for China, since the 1990s, art exhibitions have assumed the function of lagging presentation. Since the 20th century, Impressionist paintings were introduced to China at an early stage and have become the focus of Chinese art education. For art students, the teaching of "color" they come into contact with is based on Impressionism. In the early days when there were no Western art exhibitions in China, artists and the public could only vaguely see the faces of these works through black and white prints. However, the Soviet-style socialist realism training method with Maximov's oil painting training class as the core filled the higher art education in China. According to the Soviet system, four departments of Chinese painting, oil painting, printmaking and sculpture were established in colleges and universities. The influx of Western art exhibitions finally combined these black and white "theories" with "practice". However, the public's viewing method of Western paintings has changed to learning with awe from the very beginning. The deified works of Impressionism and realism have gone from art to textbooks. The subsequent boom in contemporary art and these Western exhibitions as paradigms seem to have been abruptly cut off. The aesthetics of mass art are both black and white. Contemporary art is often described as "incomprehensible", while classical art is summed up as "painted images".

In addition, the call for the nationalization of Chinese oil painting has been heard for hundreds of years. In 2004, the symposium on the nationalization of the development of Chinese contemporary oil Painting was held, which pushed this issue to the climax of discussion again. Since the 20th century, not only art, literature, film, opera and other fields of

literature and art have been entangled in the problem of modernization and nationalization. However, the call for "localization" based on the populist consciousness is a double-edged sword for the development of contemporary Chinese oil painting. On the one hand, the call for national art prompts many artists to actively participate in the exploration of new artistic expression with their own national characteristics. On the other hand, mistakenly equating "populism" with the development of national art will restrict artists from absorbing diverse cultures. Since the 1990s, there have been three underlying reasons for the discussion on the nationalization of Chinese oil painting. The first is the trend of Westernization of contemporary art works in China after the 1990s, which has led to anxiety about the cultural identity of Chinese oil painting. The anxiety caused by the Western center is actually that the face of Chinese contemporary oil painting is changing too fast and developing too fast under the impact of Western modern culture. What Chinese oil painters have to face is how to avoid being "otherized" in China under the strong tide of Western contemporary art. In order to occupy a place in the international art market, on the one hand, Chinese contemporary oil painters are exploring how to integrate the strong Western culture into their works, so that the Western art world can accept Chinese contemporary art in an easier way. But on the other hand, under the gaze of the Western art world, the accepted Chinese contemporary painting language has been absorbed into the western criticism system imperceptibly, and has become a member of the world art. Second, after the 1990s, the cultural mentality of the rise of great powers made Chinese artists begin to think about the possibility of the reconstruction of national culture. First of all, we should discuss the national culture under nationalism. In his book *Interlingual Practice*, Liu He talked about Lu Xun's investigation into the issue of "national character" and said, "Under his influence, Chinese intellectuals in nearly a century had a collective plot on the issue of national character. They defined, sought, criticized and reformed Chinese nationality, but often did not consider the historical premise of the existence of the discourse itself. After 1980, Chinese intellectuals revived the century-old question: 'What has gone wrong with Chinese national character?' There seems to be an answer." [3] As a part of the development of contemporary art, if viewed in the context of the global art environment in the past 30 years, Chinese oil painting, like the development history of contemporary art in other countries, is in a state of savage growth of self-exploration. Our nationalized oil painting dispute is to place itself in an imaginary Western context of the "other" position to judge, then such a comparison itself does not have any practical significance. Third, under the background of globalization, the evaluation criteria of Chinese oil painting have changed greatly, and how to balance the boundary of "national" or "world" has become a problem. After 1990s, many oil painters went abroad to Europe and the United States one after another. In foreign countries, they still regard themselves as Chinese artists, based on the cultural foundation of their own nation, while absorbing the artistic schools, trends of thought, and creative methods of other countries. Many artists have also brought this experience back to China. The boundaries of this criterion are sufficiently blurred, both ethnically and materially.

5. Discussion of Chinese Contemporary Art Criticism during 1990-2020 and Prospect of Chinese Oil Painting

The methods of contemporary art criticism have flooded into China along with a series of cultural ideas from western capitalist countries. Due to the particularity of China's national conditions and social forms. The voice transmitted from the West to China has also changed in this land and triggered more complex discussions.

In the early 1990s, with the end of the Cold War, Western ideological hegemony spread throughout the world. At that time, "Orientalism" also became another stand to criticize the expansion of global imperialism and Western hegemony. Since 2000, post-colonial issues have become more and more the focus of contemporary art criticism. Whether the creation of Chinese oil painting is localized or non-localized, and whether Chinese labels are used or not, these issues have penetrated into the contemporary criticism system more deeply. Wang Nanming once wrote in his criticism of Gao Ming Lu: "When such a cultural post-colonial order is offered to us artists, what else can Chinese artists and the Chinese critics and Chinese curators working together make a promise of 'Chinatown culture'? In fact, the honor of Chinese contemporary art in the international order depends on the degree of self-post-colonial performance, because we have these artists and works of post-colonial performance, so we also have a post-colonial Chinese contemporary art history.

Lu Mingjun (2008) said, "More often, through the analysis of the works themselves, various associations of modernity are revealed. It is neither simply rejecting or accepting the West, nor blindly embracing or rejecting itself, but giving the specific issues covered by the work, effectively targeting and presenting the possible internal relations between aesthetics, society (economy) and politics, as well as between ancient and modern China and the West." [5] Although the background of contemporary art criticism has become more complex since 2010, the game between contemporary art criticism and Chinese contemporary artists has developed in the process of mutual promotion and confrontation. Artists cannot create without the feedback of critics, and critics, like the public eyes facing the society, enable more aspects of contemporary art to be presented, and the concepts of West and East are endowed with richer meanings in such multifaceted criticism. Since the 1990s, contemporary art criticism has gone through two generations of critics, from introduction to development to absorption. In the face of a more complex historical background, we can only look forward to all the voices that may appear in the future.

As the expression of the postmodern cultural form, the rampant use of images deepens the contradiction between visual commercialization and art, especially easel painting. After 1990s, Chinese contemporary oil painting still retains the characteristics of easel painting, but the concept behind it has also undergone some changes. Since the image era, easel painting has added a visualization idea, that is, after the images have been created through other media, easel painting can be used as a tool carrier to express them. Artists who used to use easel painting as their only means of expression have acquired more abundant communication tools through media.

Contemporary Chinese oil painting has become a hard-to-define category after 2000. Chinese contemporary oil painting has become a difficult category to define after 2000. First of all, the concept of oil painter has disappeared. Artists who

once painted only oil began to experiment with more materials in order to enrich the visual expression of their work. It is difficult for us to use a painting material to summarize all the artistic creation methods of an artist. Instead of the word "oil painter", it is "artist". Secondly, the strict meaning of oil painting has been dissipated. After the strict meaning of oil painting was dissolved into images, a large number of FMCG images flooded the canvas without thinking, making the future development direction of easel painting even more confused.

6. Conclusion

Culture is related to a nation's identity and fortunes. There are many important elements in the fine traditional Chinese culture. "Take the essence and discard the dross" is the classic explanation of absorption and progress in Chinese culture. Even today, in the face of the accelerating process of globalization, cultural types and social trends are constantly enriched; Chinese oil painting is still adhering to this sentence to forge ahead. As a part of easel painting, the history and future of Chinese oil painting will not disappear under any social impact. This article combs and analyzes the development of Chinese contemporary oil painting in the past 30 years. Only by accurately grasping the characteristics of

The Times and starting from simple life, can contemporary Chinese oil painting see the truth, goodness and beauty of art from life to life. No matter what kind of culture, what kind of thoughts of disturbance, as long as we base on the present and return to the real "contemporary", we can absorb the essence from it and discard the dregs. Only in this way, Chinese contemporary oil painting will have enduring vitality.

References

- [1] Zhu Zhu. Grey Carnival: Chinese Contemporary Art since 2000 (Jing)[M]. Guangxi Normal University Press, 2013:64.
- [2] Zeng Jingchu. Discussion with the author of "The Elite Art of Rebuilding China" [J]. Fine Arts, 1991(02) : 60-62.
- [3] Liu He. Interlingual Practice: Literature, National Culture and Translated Modernity [M]. Beijing: Sanlian Bookstore, 2002: 89.
- [4] Wang Nanming. Ten Steps Backward: A Review of Gao Ming Lu's "Chinese Modernity" [J]. Art Review, 2004(7) : 48-51.
- [5] Lu Mingjun. Whose Criticism? What modernity? -- Review of the Value and Practice of Contemporary Art Criticism (1990 -) (II) [J]. Museum of Fine Arts, 2008(01):226-243.