

CHINESE TRADITIONAL PAINTING: RE-INVENTION OF TRADITION IN THE PROCESS OF CHINA'S ECONOMY REFORM

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ABSTRACT

Chinese traditional painting is an important part of Chinese art system and one of the representative roles of Chinese culture. In the past, the research of Chinese traditional painting focused on the artistic style change of Chinese traditional painting but neglected to establish the relationship between the development of Chinese traditional painting and the social background. There is still a gap in the literature in explaining the changes made by Chinese traditional painting to adapt to the new social background after China's reform and opening up. This study aims to analysis the re-invention of tradition of Chinese traditional painting in China's reform and opening process. This study collected data on the development of Chinese painting through field investigation and literature review and analyzed it through qualitative research. This study finds that the artistic core of Chinese painting has not changed. These changes make the ancient traditional art still full of vitality in modern Chinese society. However, social process and art products of Chinese traditional paintings have been reinvented to varying degrees. In the end, researcher analyzed the significance and limitations of this study.

Keywords:

Chinese traditional painting, Re-invention of tradition, China's Economy Reform

Article Received: 18 October 2020, Revised: 3 November 2020, Accepted: 24 December 2020

1. Introduction

Chinese traditional painting is one of ancient Chinese art forms. It developed in different historical periods of China and has finally been recognized by all Chinese people (Hong. 2013). And it has been considered as one of the Chinese traditions in modern society (Guo. 2013). Although the Chinese traditional painting now has been greatly different from the Chinese traditional painting before the reform and opening up in social process and art product. For example, the nostalgic Chinese traditional painting education institutions that emerged after 2000 are designed to satisfy some people's nostalgia, which did not

exist in the past. At this time, the role of Chinese traditional painting is to meet the needs of nostalgia, and its aesthetic function as a work of art has been diluted. But Chinese traditional painting is still one of the traditional arts recognized by Chinese society and Chinese people.

This study applies the concept, the re-invention of tradition proposed by the British researcher E.J. Hobsbawn. He believes that some of the existing traditions have been reinvented, and only those adapted to the social background can be retained (Hobsbam & Langer. 2004). Although these traditions have varying degrees of change in order

to adapt to the new social background, modern people still think that they are the traditions handed down from ancient times (Gao. 2018).

In the past research, it was thought that Chinese traditional painting was a traditional art formed in ancient times and inherited to the present, its creation mode, artistic form and other aspects all inherited from ancient China (Pan. 2012). In fact, Chinese traditional painting has been reinvented in order to adapt to the changes of social background after China's reform and opening up. By comparing modern Chinese traditional painting with ancient Chinese traditional painting, we can find that Chinese traditional painting has changed in social process and art product.

The research objectives of this study include the following two points. First, this study aims to analyze the relevance between art development and social background by studying the re-invention of tradition of Chinese traditional painting after the reform and opening up. This part of the analysis will make up for the blank of the development of Chinese traditional painting after the reform and opening up. On the other hand, the re-invention of tradition is a popular concept in humanities research. The content of this study will expand the scope of this concept. At the same time, it will provide reference for other researchers on research model and concept application.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Chinese Traditional Painting

The research literatures about Chinese traditional painting have appeared in different periods of China, but most of them only studied Chinese traditional painting as art product, and ignored the relationship between Chinese traditional painting and Chinese society and Chinese people (Lv(A). 2013). In the past research, researchers have made

a detailed analysis on the classification, artistic techniques, artistic forms and artistic contents of Chinese traditional painting. These studies will help researchers to understand the past Chinese traditional painting (Lv(B). 2010).

However, researchers have found that Chinese traditional painting as a Chinese tradition is related to the social background. The artistic style of Chinese traditional painting in different historical periods is also based on the social development and the change of people's thoughts at that time. This part of research is missing in the current Chinese traditional painting literature. Therefore, in this study, researcher focuses more on the analysis of the current situation of Chinese traditional painting and its causes, as well as the relationship between Chinese traditional painting and Chinese society and Chinese people.

2.2 Invention of Tradition

The re-invention of tradition was first put forward by the British researcher E.J. Hobsbawn. In his publications, E.J. Hobsbawn used this concept to analyze six objects, including costumes, rituals, performances and others. After that, other researchers had also applied this concept, including Uyгур circumcision, Taiwan lacquer ware, and national ceremony and so on (Lv. 2011). But in the past research does not include the analysis of Chinese traditional painting (Gao. 2018). In fact, the development of Chinese tradition painting after the reform and opening up conform to the re-invention of tradition characteristics. Therefore, this study will take the re-invention of tradition as the research concept, and analyze the Chinese traditional painting from the two ways of social process and art product

3. Research Methodology

This study adopts qualitative analysis. First, in the

field research, researcher interviewed the practitioners of Chinese traditional painting. The contents include: the development trend of Chinese traditional painting kinds after the reform and opening up, the influence of economic development on Chinese traditional painting, the reform of Chinese traditional painting education, the application of Chinese traditional painting and so on. During the interview, the interviewees included Chinese traditional painting teachers, Chinese traditional painting art dealers, Chinese traditional painting lovers and other groups. On the other hand, according to the previous literatures, researcher collected and analyzed the development of Chinese traditional painting before the reform and opening up, the process of Chinese traditional painting becoming Chinese tradition, the artistic characteristics of Chinese traditional painting and others. Based on these two aspects of information, researcher analyzes the current situation of Chinese traditional painting in order to complete the research on the re-invention of tradition of Chinese traditional painting.

4. The Re-invention of Tradition of Chinese Traditional Painting in the Process of China's Economy Reform

4.1 The Re-invention of Tradition of Social Process: the Introduction of New Educational Model

4.1.1 Application of College Model in Chinese Traditional Painting Education: Re-invention Based on Mentor - Apprentice Model

The formation of Chinese traditional painting education of mentor- apprentice model is closely related to the social background of ancient China. The social status of Chinese traditional painting artists and the audience groups of Chinese traditional painting contributed to the formation of

the mentor-apprentice mode of Chinese traditional painting education.

After the establishment of private ownership in ancient China, the difference of social classes gradually formed, and the privileges of the ruling class and the social elite class began to be reflected in the social life (Wu. 2019). Under this influence, Chinese traditional painting is divided into creation and appreciation. That is, the material and spiritual parts of Chinese traditional painting creation are separated.

The production of Chinese traditional painting is regarded as a kind of lowly work that must be done by the lower class workers, while the aesthetics of Chinese traditional painting is regarded as a kind of noble spiritual enjoyment that only the aristocrats can possess (Fei (B). 2016). The aristocracy of the upper social class possessed these spiritual products and directed and regulated the production of Chinese traditional painting products (Fei (A). 2014). But the Chinese traditional painting production itself, is handed over to servants, artisans, artists and other "inferior people" to complete. Producers of Chinese traditional painting material products were regarded as menial jobs, which were mainly transmitted by teachers to apprentices and by parents to children. Constrained by the economic conditions of ancient China and the traditional education mode of ancient China, the mainstream of Chinese traditional painting education throughout the feudal period was the mentor-apprentice mode.

The backwardness and narrowness of the education mechanism of Chinese traditional painting under the mentor-apprentice model are obvious. It can cultivate artists with a higher level than previous generations, but it is difficult to

promote the innovation of Chinese traditional painting. The artist cultivated in this mode is because what he has received from his master or father is the mode of oriented thinking, rather than the creative thinking ability (Qian. 2006). It is the habit of keeping up with the peak of the former, rather than the courage to go beyond the peak. Therefore conservative, inheritance has become the key word of Chinese ancient painting education, the development of Chinese traditional painting has therefore been limited to a certain extent.

After the reform and opening up, with the continuous improvement of China's social

opening to the outside world, and the western education model has also begun to be introduced into China (Deng. 1989). In the past, the mentor-apprentice mode of Chinese traditional painting was no longer suitable for large-scale Chinese traditional painting education under the new social background, while the western academy mode of education was more suitable for the Chinese society after the reform and opening up. Therefore, the education of Chinese traditional paintings based on the mentor-apprentice model begins to draw closer to the academy model, and the re-invention based on the mentor-apprentice model begins.



Figure 1: *College Model of Chinese Traditional Painting Teaching*

Under the new social background, the college education of Chinese traditional painting also began to rise rapidly. Higher education institutions such as specialized fine arts colleges and comprehensive universities throughout China have set up Chinese traditional painting major, Chinese traditional painting department and Chinese traditional painting teaching and research office. At the same time, the newly established Chinese traditional painting education system follows the teaching system of other subjects,

establishing a four-year undergraduate education system, and a two-year or three-year master's education system.

At the end of the 20th century, the trend of the industrialization of Chinese education and the implementation of the national policy of "merging colleges and universities" and "expanding the scale of enrollment" made Chinese traditional painting education shift from elite education to mass education (Qi. 2014). So far, 27 universities in China can award master's and bachelor's

degrees in Chinese traditional painting. Almost all Chinese universities offer Chinese traditional painting courses or Chinese traditional painting knowledge lectures.

In addition to the introduction of the western education system, art gallery, exhibition and other art modes have also been introduced into the Chinese traditional painting education (Qi. 2014). At present, the graduation mode of most Chinese traditional painting education institutions adopts the way of graduation exhibition and graduation defense at the same time to judge whether students have reached the qualification of graduation and obtaining the degree (Chen. 2016).

The introduction of the model of western college provides a better development foundation for Chinese traditional painting. The increasing number of people who understand and learn Chinese traditional painting provides a new impetus for the development of Chinese traditional painting. At the same time, the integration of western college model and traditional model provides a perfect teaching system for the education of Chinese traditional painting. The perfect and scientific teaching system makes it possible for Chinese traditional painting to inherit and develop more rapidly. In general, the re-invention of Chinese traditional paintings based on the mentor-apprentice model is a success.

4.1.2 The Rise of Nostalgic Chinese Traditional Painting Education Institutions

The Nostalgic Chinese traditional painting education institution is a new form of Chinese traditional painting for bonding with Chinese society. The purpose of such organizations is not to require students to master Chinese traditional

painting skills, but to satisfy students' nostalgia and experience the artistic atmosphere of ancient China. The rise of educational institutions of nostalgic Chinese traditional painting is based on two changes in Chinese society after the reform and opening up.

First of all, after China's reform and opening up, along with China's economic development and social opening to the outside world, Chinese society and traditional Chinese traditional painting culture are constantly influenced by western modern culture (Liu. 2013). Before entering the 21st century, due to the lack of government guidance and policy support, the influence of Chinese traditional culture and art has been declining (Xi. 2007). Since the beginning of the 21st century, the Chinese government has issued protection policies related to culture and art many times to encourage and support the development of traditional culture and art, which has promoted public and private educational institutions to attach importance to traditional culture and art (Fu-Lin. 2019). The educational institutions of nostalgic Chinese traditional painting are part of the private education, and the educational institutions of old-style Chinese traditional painting are gradually rising under the promotion of national policies and private funds.

Nostalgia, on the other hand, is an emotion that most people have. It is the remembrance of someone or something that was good in the past. Nostalgia runs through the whole process of the development of human society, especially in the period of high social development, change and turbulence. This is because when society develops rapidly or changes or even becomes unstable, people will miss their past peaceful and tranquil life more and regard nostalgia as spiritual

sustenance (Ye. 1989). Since China's reform and opening up, the society has been developing rapidly and scientific and technological innovation has been changing with each passing day. While people are enjoying highly developed scientific and technological civilization, they are also facing great pressure from work and life. At this point, the nostalgia for the slow pace of life in the past will naturally emerge and become a social phenomenon.

Since the reform and opening up, Chinese society has been changing all the time, and entering the 21st century has come to a critical period of transformation. Urbanization brings a fast-paced, high-stress life (Deng. 1989). At the same time, the aging population also expands the nostalgia group. Social and economic transformation has brought about changes in people's work and lifestyles and values (Xin. 2018). Keeping up with the pace of technological change is not easy for most people. At such times, memories of childhood and even the imagination of "ancient" life help people escape the present for a while and return to the familiar past, thus providing a psychological comfort. Therefore, in contemporary society, nostalgia provides people with a spiritual destination. This has created a huge audience for the education of nostalgic Chinese traditional painting, and the government and society are willing to provide financial support for the education of nostalgic Chinese traditional painting.



Figure 2: *Adult Students in Nostalgic Educational Organization.*

In terms of educational objectives, the educational objectives of nostalgic Chinese traditional painting educational institutions are quite different from those of universities or colleges. The purpose of educational institutions of nostalgic Chinese traditional painting is to meet the aesthetic needs of students, their curiosity about Chinese traditional painting and the needs of nostalgic consumption. As a result, nostalgic Chinese traditional painting education institutions cover a wider range of students, usually without strict examination and age restrictions. The age of students in such institutions can usually be covered from preschoolers to retired adults.

Nostalgic Chinese traditional painting education institutions are the result of Chinese traditional painting education adapting to social background after China's reform and opening up. The educational institution of nostalgic Chinese traditional painting is different from the educational mode of ancient Chinese traditional painting. At the same time, it is different from the mainstream college model of Chinese traditional painting education. It does not aim to train

Chinese traditional painting artists or obtain a degree for the purpose. It is a special educational model to meet the needs of Chinese society to spread traditional culture and meet the needs of social nostalgia business.

4.2 The Re-invention of Tradition of Art Product: the Rise of Urban Chinese Traditional Painting

After China's reform and opening up, the process of economic development and urbanization is accelerating. Great changes have taken place in the living environment and social environment of Chinese people, and the contents that did not appear in the past began to enter the vision of Chinese traditional painting artists.

In the past, traditional Chinese landscape paintings always focus on the natural landscape and try to show the harmonious relationship between Chinese traditional painting artists and nature. The humanistic spirit of traditional landscape painting also comes from the aesthetic view of self-reflection and avoiding noise in traditional culture (Yang, 2011).

Based on the economic development of ancient China, the urbanization process appeared slowly in the history of China. Therefore, there were a small number of urban theme landscape paintings appeared in ancient Chinese traditional painting. For example, "Riverside Scene at Qingming Festival" by Zhang Zeduan in the Song Dynasty depicts the scene of the capital streets in the Song Dynasty, and this painting has become a representative work of ancient city-themed landscape paintings.

However, most of these works, which focus on palace, street and city life, are completed for political tasks. This hindered the mainstream landscape artists' emotional expression and personality publicity, so it was not welcomed by

the artists at that time (Fred, Kleina, Christine & Mamia, 2012). At the same time, due to the limited scale of ancient Chinese cities, only a few artists had the opportunity to live in cities. Therefore, urban landscape painting has not formed enough influence in the development history of Chinese traditional painting.

After China's economic reform and opening up, with the development of economy, China's urbanization process accelerated. Urbanization has become one of the most obvious characteristics of China's economic development after the reform and opening up. Eastern coastal cities, special economic zones, capitals, municipalities directly under the Central Government and provincial capitals began to modernize and develop toward metropolises (Cui, 1992). Small and medium-sized cities throughout China have also entered the modernization drive (Deng, 1989).

Under such circumstances, traditional themes are more and more difficult to reflect the current living situation of contemporary people, and the expression of traditional landscape painting is also more and more difficult to express the feelings of contemporary people (Li, 1985). The contemporary urban landscape and the living conditions of urbanites begin to become a new expression object of landscape painting. The urban theme of landscape painting breaks through the limitation of traditional landscape painting, which makes the traditional landscape painting subject begin to contain more contents in line with the aesthetics of the times. Landscape painting in aesthetic concept, subject range, expression and other aspects began to have a new expansion. The garden in the city center, the tall buildings, the crowds of people, the billboards of the business district and the night view of the city have all

become the new theme of landscape painting after the reform and opening up.

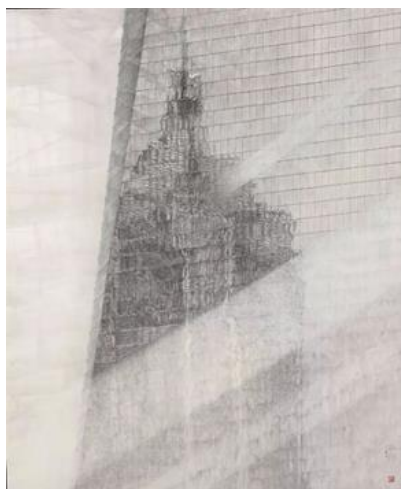


Figure 3: *Urban Chinese Landscape Painting.*

In the Chinese traditional painting work above, the glass curtain wall of modern architecture is taken as the main body of the picture, reflecting the image of ancient Chinese traditional architecture on the curtain wall. In art content, it realizes the combination of modern urban theme and traditional theme. In Art Technique, light and shadow effects in western paintings are absorbed, which increases the sense of space in the picture.

In 2000, Shenzhen held the "First Urban Landscape Painting Exhibition" again, which became a grand event in the field of theoretical discussion and artistic practice of urban landscape painting. In December 2006, the Shenzhen Art Museum held the Fifth Shenzhen International Painting Biennale "Chinese Urban Landscape Painting". In November 2009, the Shenzhen - Hong Kong Urban Ink painting exhibition was held. In the same year, the Ningbo Art Museum held "Impression • City -- Contemporary Urban Landscape Painting Nomination Exhibition". These activities not only promoted the continuous development of urban landscape painting, but also expanded the influence of urban landscape painting.

The urban landscape painting after the reform and opening up shows the following characteristics. Combining traditional aesthetics with modern aesthetics, the works retain the characteristics of Chinese traditional painting techniques, and have a strong aesthetic sense of the times and a new aesthetic artistic conception (Pan, 2012.). Color has broken the good use of black and white form of Chinese traditional painting, forming a more colorful art form of expression.

Contemporary urban landscape painting is the evolution of the theme of ancient Chinese traditional painting, promoting the re-invention of Tradition of Chinese traditional painting theme. However, this re-invention of tradition is not rebellious or anti-traditional, but on the basis of tradition. The emergence of urban-themed landscape paintings is not a departure from traditional art, but an enrichment and development of traditional art. It is an exploration of the law of traditional art, a better expression of real life, and a true reflection of individual unique thoughts, emotions, and aesthetic interests. It is the embodiment of Chinese traditional painting's re-invention of tradition in the process of reform and opening up.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

After the reform and opening up, Chinese traditional painting reinvented the tradition in two aspects: social process and art product. As a result, the current Chinese traditional painting and the past Chinese traditional painting in the participator, mode of communication, artistic style, creative techniques and other aspects have been very different. However, the artistic core of Chinese traditional painting did not change in this process. Chinese traditional painting can still express the status quo of Chinese society, show the spiritual

pursuit of Chinese people, and reflect the aesthetic characteristics of Chinese culture.

Therefore, the reinvention of Chinese traditional painting in the course of China's reform and opening up is successful and necessary. The current Chinese traditional painting has been better integrated into the Chinese society after the reform and opening up without changing the core of art. At the same time, the current Chinese traditional painting still can reflect the change of social background through the original artistic concept.

5.1 Significance of Research

For Chinese traditional painting, the content of this study has improved the development of Chinese traditional painting after the reform and opening up and made up the gap in relevant literature. More importantly, this study proves that Chinese traditional painting is successful in adapting to the new social background after China's reform and opening up. Prior to this, some researchers believed that any reinvention of Chinese traditional painting would change the artistic core of Chinese traditional painting. Pure Chinese traditional painting should continue to inherit ancient Chinese traditional painting, rather than innovate. Through this research, it is proved that the reinvention of traditional adapting to the social background will only benefit its own development but will not change its essence.

For the research concept, this study expands the application of invention of tradition and gives a new explanation to the specific content of the concept. On the other hand, this study can provide reference for researchers who also use this concept. This research can be used as a model of this kind of research to provide guidance for other research topics.

5.2 Limitations and Future Research Direction

This study describes the reform of Chinese traditional painting after the reform and opening up, and analyzes the phenomenon shown in it. However, there are still a few limitations in this study. First of all, the sources of information in this study are based on field investigation and literature review. In the process of field investigation, interviewees may make subjective judgments about the development of Chinese traditional painting based on their personal occupation and standpoint. This phenomenon can be further analyzed by collecting as many opinions as possible from interviewees, so as to avoid errors. On the other hand, in this study, insufficient attention has been paid to low-level folk artists. But they are also part of the development of Chinese traditional painting. Therefore, in future studies, attention should be paid to the role of different groups in the transformation of Chinese traditional painting.

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