

Exploration of the Influence and Development of Grassland Culture on Contemporary Oil Painting Creation in Inner Mongolia

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Abstract: The progress of the times has promoted the diversified development of oil painting in China, with ethnic minority cultural themes being an important component. The Inner Mongolia region has a vast territory and profound grassland historical and cultural heritage, nurturing countless Chinese people. It is the cradle of nomadic life, and its long history has created its unique artistic aesthetics. Grassland culture has provided an inexhaustible source of inspiration for contemporary oil painting creation in Inner Mongolia. For a long time, oil painting art creation with grassland culture as the theme has emerged one after another. Its unique regional cultural characteristics have expanded the depth and breadth of oil painting creation, and are the endogenous driving force for contemporary oil painting creation in Inner Mongolia. For reference, this article focuses on grassland culture and explores the significance, value, influence, and development of grassland culture in contemporary oil painting creation in Inner Mongolia.

Keywords: Grassland culture; Inner Mongolia; Contemporary oil painting creation; Impact; Significance

Online publication: July 11, 2024

1. Preface

Grassland culture is a unique ethnic culture in Inner Mongolia, formed in a special regional environment as a nomadic ecological culture. It is an important component of China's traditional culture and a shining pearl of the grassland in the Chinese cultural system. Throughout its long history of development, it has formed a unique aesthetic concept. As a unique ecosystem in Inner Mongolia, grasslands have a profound impact on the production and life of local people and have nurtured a unique grassland culture. The creation of oil paintings with grasslands as the theme is an important component of Inner Mongolia's artistic development^[1]. The early Northern rock paintings, the mid-Liao Dynasty "Grassland Painting School", and even the rise of the Inner Mongolia Oil Painting Grassland Painting School in modern times all write magnificent chapters unique to the grasslands, and artistic creations related to grassland culture have always lingered on this vast land. From the perspective of artistic development, most art creations with specific regions and cultures as their themes are relatively limited by cycles. The grassland culture in Inner Mongolia has unique cultural connotations and

depth, which can provide more spiritual sources for art forms such as oil painting. Artists who love this land and respect these cultures deeply hope to showcase the charm of the grassland in the form of oil painting. In recent years, numerous local oil painting artists from Inner Mongolia have emerged. Based on their understanding of this land and culture, they have presented the grassland ecology and the beautiful life of local ethnic groups to the world, and have achieved remarkable results in the field of oil painting creation. Later, local oil painters continued to promote the spirit of grassland culture in their creations, showcasing the customs and landforms of the grasslands, and adding bricks and tiles to the development of national art in China.

2. Exploration of the cultural characteristics of Inner Mongolia grassland

2.1. Ethnic characteristics

The ethnic characteristics are prominent in the grassland culture of Inner Mongolia, which are created by the unique geographical location, climate environment, and cultural environment of Inner Mongolia, and occupy an important position in the grassland cultural system. In the vast grasslands of Inner Mongolia, there have been generations of ethnic minorities, mainly Mongolian, whose living habits and character formation have been deeply influenced by grassland culture, forming a unique cultural system. During the long process of development, they have integrated with grassland culture, and ethnicity has become a prominent feature of grassland culture. In the contemporary oil painting creations in Inner Mongolia, the living environment, character images, and personality traits of the grassland ethnic group are deeply interpreted, showcasing the cheerfulness and boldness of the Mongolian people to the world.

2.2. Religious characteristics

Religious characteristics are a characteristic that most ethnic minorities possess, and the ethnic minorities in Inner Mongolia are no exception. The ethnic minorities here mostly believe in Tibetan Buddhism, shamanism, Lamaism, and so on. Religious culture is gradually improving as it develops, becoming a factor that influences the ideological, political, and economic development of Inner Mongolia. It has a profound impact on the production and life of the local people, giving them a new understanding of morality, ethics, and values. This religious ideology is reflected in their daily lives, serving as a spiritual support and guiding them to forge ahead on the right path. There are many such creations in contemporary oil painting in Inner Mongolia, and they are also an important form of ethnic art, highlighting their special position in the grassland cultural system.

2.3. Ecological characteristics

Inner Mongolia's vast grasslands have nurtured unique ethnic characteristics and spirits of ethnic minorities in its long history of development. Ethnic minorities have grown and formed unique ecological characteristics in such an environment. The ethnic groups in the region all demonstrate a sense of environmental protection and reverence for nature, whether in terms of lifestyle, behavior habits, or thinking patterns. This thinking habit is deeply embedded within the ethnic groups, as they have a unique understanding of life, nature, and survival, and a deeper understanding, which is the fundamental essence of the grassland cultural system. The traditional people of Inner Mongolia live by mountains and rivers, and their source of livelihood can be said to be mostly the gift of nature. Therefore, the ethnic reverence for nature in this region is unparalleled, which is reflected in oil paintings and can better stimulate more people's ecological and environmental awareness ^[2].

2.4. Regional characteristics

Different regions nurture different ethnic customs and promote different national spirits, which are the

foundation for the survival of each ethnic group. The regional characteristics of Inner Mongolia and the development of grassland culture are closely related to its geographical location. Most of it is located on the Mongolian Plateau, and the natural landscape and cultural customs are influenced by the region, making grassland culture a self-contained system. To adapt to the regional environment, the ethnic groups in this region have made adjustments in various aspects of production and life in the long-term development, gradually forming the existing way of life of nomadic ethnic groups. This has led to unique personalities and aesthetic styles among the people in the grassland area and created the inherent qualities of heroes and freedom among the minority ethnic groups, which is the imagery expression of oil painting creation.

2.5. Humanistic characteristics

The humanistic characteristics are an important manifestation of the personality traits, inner emotions, and inner qualities of the people of Inner Mongolia. The people of Inner Mongolia are straightforward, generous, hospitable, and resilient, and their long-term coexistence with nature has created the resilient and beautiful qualities of the Mongolian people. This excellent quality is integrated into modern and contemporary oil painting creation to bring spiritual power to the world, allowing grassland culture to be passed down from generation to generation.

3. The artistic expression of grassland culture in contemporary oil painting creation in Inner Mongolia

The creation of oil paintings with grassland culture as the theme presents different appearances, but they are rooted in the fertile land of grasslands and grow together under this blue sky. Upon careful analysis, it is not difficult to find that modern and contemporary oil paintings in Inner Mongolia exhibit common patterns^[3]. The reason behind this is the subjective consciousness formed by painters living in grasslands for a long time and through continuous practice. Grassland culture is rooted in the hearts of every Inner Mongolian oil painter and is presented in their works during creation. These artistic languages have formed a unique “grassland style” visual artistic expression in Inner Mongolia’s modern and contemporary oil paintings, bringing together various grassland cultural elements in the oil paintings and presenting a unique charm to Inner Mongolia’s oil paintings.

3.1. Broad visual spatial composition

Composition is the first step that a painter takes on the canvas after conceptualizing it in their mind. It is the initial presentation of the painter’s psychological “preset”. Therefore, the composition of a painting not only reflects the painter’s understanding of abstract things, but also implies creative experience, which includes personal life experience, personality, and other artistic perceptions. For Inner Mongolian oil painters, it is the long-term artistic feedback of being immersed in grassland culture, and the strong visual impact brought by the grassland, making artistic creation inseparable from grassland culture. The grasslands are boundless, and living in grassland culture naturally broadens people’s horizons and hearts. Therefore, oil painters with grassland culture themes usually construct their paintings with a “flat and distant” overlooking space. For example, in landscape oil paintings, the distant horizon is presented, with herds of cattle and sheep dotted in the vast land. Observing the oil painting in detail makes people deeply feel the grandeur of “the sky is like a dome, covering the four fields”. Contemporary oil painters in Inner Mongolia often carry a painting box to walk between the grasslands for the best framing, in order to better showcase the sense of hierarchy in their works. Regardless of the form of oil painting, it always creates a broad and infinite sense of silence, and the works also deeply contain the spiritual essence of the nomadic people. The works of different painters have their own strengths,

and the prominent themes are also different. For example, some works depict the vast and boundless land of Inner Mongolia, where grasslands are like a mother's embrace that embraces all things; Some works showcase the unique scenery of the grassland, with herdsmen, cattle and horses, and felt bags. These small paintings contain infinite grassland culture. Many contemporary grassland cultural oil paintings in Inner Mongolia adhere to the principle of simplified and summarized composition but provide endless imaginative space for the paintings.

3.2. Imagery modeling and freehand brushwork

The success of oil paintings lies not only in providing readers with a strong visual impact but also in the beautiful imagery. Among them, "meaning" mainly refers to the subjective conception of the artist, while "image" refers to the image of the painting. Image is the basic connotation of the painting, the internal meaning of the painting, and the artistic image that the author processes and extracts objectively existing things, which can better affect the emotions of the viewer. Since its development, Inner Mongolia oil painting has been deeply influenced by grassland culture and combined with traditional imagery painting techniques in China. More and more painters are willing to choose freehand and lyrical forms of artistic expression. The nomadic ethnic group has lived on the vast and boundless grasslands for generations, and their free and heroic temperament is deeply ingrained. The oil painting creation with grassland culture as the theme naturally presents the same character, and the imaginative creative techniques vividly interpret the unique national character of Inner Mongolia, which is the success of the work. The creation of character oil paintings in grassland culture contains imagery techniques. The nomadic people usually have a hero complex, and they worship national heroes very much. This exemplary spirit gives the nomadic people a very resilient character. Therefore, when creating oil painting characters, painters will highlight their characteristics, highlighting their optimistic, resilient, and heroic spiritual qualities. This form of artistic expression reflects the painter's understanding of grassland culture, inheriting the spirit of grassland culture, and making the connotation of the painting more profound^[4].

If imagery is the subjective expression of an artist's consciousness, then freehand brushwork highlights the artist's technique^[5]. In terms of painting techniques, the creation of oil paintings with grassland culture as the theme combines realism and freehand brushwork. The lines do not require precise production, but focus more on emotional expression, integrating with traditional artistic aesthetic concepts, and using the local language of Inner Mongolia to express national spirit. The traditional art community in our country has a creative theory of "comprehension" versus "reality", which means that painting creation is not a highly realistic depiction of the real world, and there is no need to deliberately seek realistic creative concepts. Instead, it focuses on the painter's inner perception of the world, nature, and life, and reflects the artistic realm through his paintings.

4. The influence of grassland culture on contemporary oil painting creation in Inner Mongolia

4.1. The unique tension of color

Color is the eternal theme of oil painting creation, and different tones give people different visual perceptions, highlighting the different meanings of the work. It is an important part of the oil painting creation process. Artists from different regions use different meanings of color in their oil paintings based on their living environment and ethnic customs. The thoughts, emotions, and cultural connotations expressed by different colors have their own merits. In terms of oil painting creation under the background of the Two Rivers culture, red represents joy and peace, giving people a beautiful impression and symbolizing the occurrence of beautiful things, such as red flags. White represents sadness and is often used in sad situations. During times of war,

white represents surrender and is an unlucky symbol. However, in grassland culture, the symbolic significance of colors is sometimes completely opposite. In grassland culture, white is a symbol of purity and beauty, such as the unique Hada of the Mongolian people, which includes white. There are still many color differences like this, which demonstrate the uniqueness of grassland culture and have a profound impact on the contemporary oil painting creation in Inner Mongolia. The ethnic minorities in Inner Mongolia advocate colors such as white, blue, and gold, and often present these colors in artistic expressions, showcasing the unique ethnic charm of the Mongolian region.

4.2. Impact of appearance

From a specific external perspective, many vivid images contained in grassland culture can be applied in modern and contemporary oil painting creations, showcasing the unique cultural charm of grasslands while also making Inner Mongolia's cultural system known to more people, promoting the sustainable inheritance of the grassland cultural system. The images in grassland culture, such as horses, oboes, various plants, minerals, etc., often appear in modern and contemporary oil paintings in Inner Mongolia. For example, as an important partner of the nomadic people, horses bring many conveniences to the nomadic people in times of inconvenient transportation. Their position in the hearts of the Mongolian people is unshakable, and their position in grassland culture is irreplaceable, with noble symbolic significance. Therefore, the image of horses is often used in oil painting creation and is highly praised. Even different colored horses have different symbolic meanings, which are external expressions of people's longing for a beautiful life. For example, the image of women also occupies an important position in grassland culture, symbolizing the continuation of life and nurturing the entire nation. Therefore, in grassland culture, the image of the mother is holy and noble, which brings many inspirations to oil painting creation and is the classic image of oil painting works.

5. Exploration of the significance of grassland culture in contemporary oil painting creation in Inner Mongolia

The times are advancing, the economy is developing, and national culture is also not static and unchanging. It is constantly updating and changing with the passage of time. Grassland culture has always been the root of ethnic continuity in Inner Mongolia, and is a unique cultural system that plays a crucial role in modern and contemporary oil painting creation. Therefore, we need to continuously deepen the exploration of grassland cultural resources, provide new interpretations of ethnic art resources, explore the practical significance of grassland culture in contemporary oil painting creation in Inner Mongolia, further activate the historical value of grassland culture, and promote its vitality in development.

5.1. Enriching resources for oil painting creation

Grassland culture has strong regional attributes and is the root of Inner Mongolia's artistic development^[6]. Deepening the exploration of grassland cultural resources is not only an effective path for ethnic art to achieve sustainable development, but also the inheritance and protection of grassland culture, promoting its rejuvenation with new aesthetic qualities. In recent years, the development of grassland culture has received high attention from the local community, with various types of cultural activities emerging one after another. Through in-depth summarization and scanning of grassland culture, and the use of visual art culture to carefully sort out the development process of nomadic ethnic groups, it further interprets the importance of grassland culture, promotes further exploration of grassland culture by local ethnic art, and highlights the significance of grassland culture in the development of ethnic art. It can be said that there is no shortcut on how to tap into grassland

culture and enrich ethnic art creation resources. Art creators need to deeply explore the vast and boundless grassland area, delve into folk customs, explore, excavate, and record, enrich their creative resources, deeply integrate grassland culture with oil painting creation, enhance the aesthetic taste of oil painting creation, and fully interpret the value of grassland culture.

5.2. Enhancing the artistic connotation of oil painting creation

Grassland culture has become an important component of traditional culture over time and is a cultural treasure in Inner Mongolia. However, any culture should constantly evolve and innovate with the changes of the times. Traditional cultural resources cannot be inherited and developed solely through surface reproduction. Only by deeply processing and creating them, and exploring their cultural connotations, can they conform to contemporary aesthetic concepts and maintain the vitality of culture in the development of the times. The grassland culture, through continuous excavation and utilization, generates new value, and its cultural connotations are reinterpreted, becoming new resources and inspiration for oil painting creation and even the art field. This is the process of enriching grassland culture and promoting its continuation and inheritance. It is worth mentioning that creators should avoid imitation and replication when using grassland cultural resources, clarify the importance of innovation, and demonstrate the unique charm of cultural resources. Oil painting creation requires the creator to have a highly sensitive thinking, a keen eye that penetrates the surface, and a high sense of innovation to deeply express self-awareness and resonate with viewers. In today's rapidly developing economy, the value of culture should be highly valued, and culture should be protected to ensure the application of cultural resources in the field of art, and to ensure that oil paintings do not become a mere formality. Contemporary oil painting creators in Inner Mongolia need to delve into the internal structure of grassland culture and have a firsthand understanding of cultural connotations to gain cultural recognition for their works. The inheritance and development of grassland culture need to keep up with the pace of the times, require creative inheritance, integrate the aesthetic of ethnic art with the development of the times, and make oil painting creations shine with the glory of the national era.

6. Conclusion

As a unique cultural system in Inner Mongolia, grassland culture is an important component of China's traditional culture. In the context of the new era, to maintain the vitality of grassland culture, it is necessary to creatively develop and inherit it, integrate it with the factors of the times, and shine with new brilliance in the development of the times. In addition, its influence on the contemporary oil painting creation in Inner Mongolia is extremely profound. It enhances the connotation of oil painting creation, endows oil painting with new era value, endows oil painting works with new aesthetic value, enhances the artistic background of oil painting creation, provides inexhaustible inspiration for the development of the art field, and promotes the parallel development of culture and art. We should increase the protection and inheritance of grassland culture to ensure its eternal vitality.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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