

The Path to Healthy Development for Chinese Art in the New Era

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Abstract: This topic is closely centered on exploring how Chinese fine arts can take the road to the healthy development of art, which is of great guiding significance. It is clear that the road of national art development is to carry forward the main theme, promote social justice, guide and infect people with correct public opinion, and better serve the people with excellent works.

Keywords: Chinese art; Road of artistic development; Culture and art; Healthy and upward; Main theme

Online publication: June 6, 2024

1. Introduction

With the deepening of reform and opening up, China's art scene has made great development and progress, and the people's material and spiritual food has been greatly enriched and improved. In the new era, China's art scene is flourishing, with various types of artworks continuously emerging; in the face of a thriving social environment, as art workers, creating art that embodies Chinese characteristics, the spirit of China, positive energy, and promotes social righteousness is a fundamental issue that all artists need to clearly understand in their minds. With a clear direction, what kind of development path should the "development path" of Chinese art be? How to take the road to healthy art development? How can Chinese art be disseminated? This is a subject worthy of study in the art world, which requires a clear main theme and direction and must be discussed clearly.

2. Literature review and discussion

Firstly, the main purpose of our art is to serve the Chinese people and socialism, instead of foreigners. To be appreciated and admired by foreigners can only be a "by-product" of our mainstream art. If even the people of our own country are not satisfied or pleased, how can we expect foreigners to be satisfied? Unless it is "traitorous art," where one betrays their own country, acts according to the whims of foreigners, and shows servile flattery to win the approval of foreign masters. In the end, it will all come to nothing. For those involved in "traitorous

art,” there is no good outcome. They are looked down upon by their own countrymen, and even their foreign masters would not show much respect. They are merely being temporarily used for some unspeakable purpose. As Xun Lu put it, “traitorous art” is like a “stray dog.” In Europe and America, “traitorous art” is also highly marginalized, rarely gracing prestigious venues, and it certainly does not enter their mainstream circles. On the contrary, only the classic works of our mainstream art can enter their highest hall ^[1].

Secondly, we cannot change the direction and policy of our art to cater to the interests of a foreign minority. Currently, some painters indeed have a mentality of admiring and blindly following foreign trends, abandoning Chinese cultural thought, Chinese aesthetics, ideological values, and historical context, and holding foreign art in higher regard. Such thinking will ultimately lead to a dead end, causing great harm and eventually being rejected by society. There is absolutely no future for such thinking! Therefore, we must stay vigilant and keep our eyes peeled in cultural thinking. We must reflect on the works that carry forward the main theme, promote social justice, and reflect the Chinese people’s love of peace, opposition to war, industriousness, resilience, self-confidence, courage, simplicity, and positive, healthy spirit, this is our eternal theme of socialist fine arts. The mainstream fine arts should not mainly focus on the cowards and traitors in the art community. Instead, it should mainly depict and celebrate heroic models that can inspire everyone to learn from and revere them. Some examples of famous paintings include the oil paintings *The Five Heroes of Wolf’s Teeth Mountain*, Chinese paintings *Eight Women Throw Themselves Into The River*, Zhongli Luo’s *Father*, Jianjun Zhan’s *Spring Breeze*, Wenxi Liu’s *Four Generations of Descendants*, Wenbin Wang’s *Work Song*, and so on. This kind of work mainly expresses the spirit of diligence and courage, bravery, perseverance, honesty and simplicity, enthusiastic vigor, etc., they are outstanding masterpieces meant to inspire and move people ^[2].

Our mainstream art should convey positive energy and mainstream consciousness, portraying positive, healthy, uplifting, and beautiful people and events. In this regard, we can only strengthen, not weaken, our efforts. We must never cater to the interests of a minority of foreigners by depicting vulgar, backward, ugly, and ignorant subjects. We need to conduct concrete analysis and maintain our own opinions and stance. This does not mean that negative and ugly things cannot be depicted, but such ugliness should only serve as a foil and contrast to truth, goodness, and beauty. The relationship between the two must not be reversed.

Thirdly, the Party’s policy on literature and art is “letting a hundred flowers bloom and a hundred schools of thought contend,” but this does not mean that every flower can be designated as the “national flower.” Among flowers, there are various sizes, smells, colors, hues, species, etc.; they cannot be treated equally or given the same level of importance. The thousands of years of literary and artistic history worldwide have fully proven that realism is the method of creation and expression that is closest to the masses. It is also the best and most fundamental method of creation. Realism will never become outdated; it has a very strong vitality and inclusiveness and offers broad prospects for development. To create art that is characteristic of China and promotes healthy and uplifting themes, one must adhere to realism. The banner of realism must be held high, without ambiguity or equivocation.

Fourthly, in the creation of art, to produce artworks that embody bravery, fearlessness, resilience, strength, health, positivity, diligence, and simplicity, it is essential to adhere to the principle of unifying “truth, goodness, and beauty” and correctly handle the dialectical relationship between “new” and “beautiful.” The core of politics is “power,” the core of science is “truth,” the core of religion is “god,” the core of ethics is “goodness,” and the core of art is “beauty.” Beauty is the “highest law” in art. “New” does not equate to “beautiful,” and innovation does not equate to the creation of beauty. It is certainly better if something can be both new and beautiful, but if it is impossible to achieve both, one must adhere to beauty, as true beauty is eternal.

Fifthly, for fine art to be considered fine art, it must encompass both “beauty” and “skill.” “Beauty”

involves depicting beautiful people, objects, and scenes. The manifestation of “beauty” must first align with the aesthetic standards of the Chinese people, such as symmetry and balance, layers of depth (near, middle, and far), the relationship between primary and secondary elements, the interplay between the real and the abstract, emotional expression, variations in height and size, artistic conception, tone, the balance between density and sparsity, and demeanor. “Skill” refers to the technical proficiency required in painting. In other words, to develop or conduct research in the field of fine art, one must adhere to the principles of formal beauty and meet the visual aesthetic standards of the Chinese nation. Only then can one create art that has a foundation in national culture and expresses national sentiment.

Sixthly, the deeper the reform progresses and the higher the waves of innovation surge, the more we need to calmly analyze and study the strengths and weaknesses of traditional culture, promoting its strengths and avoiding its weaknesses. We also need to calmly analyze and study the advantages and disadvantages of foreign customs, and firmly resist any nonsense that alienates the public. We must not blindly follow or unconditionally align with them, and we must certainly not fully Westernize.

Seventhly, art cannot be without contemporary relevance, but it must also have national character. National character is the foundation of contemporary relevance; contemporary relevance without national character is hollow. In the Youth Singer Grand Prix, the original style of singing is so artistic and attractive to the audience. Forcing them to abandon their national characteristics, wear Western suits, and sing in the *bel canto* style is foolish and inappropriate.

In the field of fine arts, the primary duty of a calligrapher and painter is to create outstanding works of calligraphy and painting. The highest realm of flower-and-bird painting is charm and interest; for landscape painting, it is artistic conception; for figure painting, it is spirit and character. Regardless of the genre, one must strive for the perfect unity of form and color, form and spirit, subjectivity and objectivity, thought and artistry, content and form, tradition and innovation. This is an artistic truth that will never become outdated. Any artist who wishes to excel in calligraphy and painting must not violate this artistic truth. On the other hand, “The moon has no distinction between ancient and modern when it waxes and wanes; art has no division between new and old, scholarly or rustic.” One should not regard “being novel and different” as the highest realm, nor should beginners be confused by bizarre and eccentric theories; do not mistake careless and messy strokes for “high antiquity,” nor should skewed and slanted forms be taken as “childlike charm”; do not regard the inexplicable as “modern,” nor should incomprehensibility be considered “innovative”; do not take hasty and careless strokes for “simplicity,” nor should ugliness be mistaken for “unconventionality.” Great effort must be made to express beauty that is grand, bold, magnificent, sublime, healthy, profound, enduring, and pleasing to the eye.

The artistic value of “sketches” cannot be denied, but sketches can never replace grand monumental works, such as Michelangelo’s *David*, Delacroix’s *Liberty Leading the People*, Millet’s *The Gleaners*, Repin’s *Ivan the Terrible and His Son Ivan*, and other classic masterpieces, which forever radiate the sublime and noble artistic brilliance.

Lastly, individuality is the foundation of regionalism, regionalism is the foundation of nationality, and nationality is the foundation of universality. The more nationalistic, the more universal. In the global art arena, uniformity among nations is unnecessary; what is needed are flowers of art with distinct national characteristics. We must establish the distinctive features and healthy development path of Chinese fine arts. For artists, it means excelling in personal artistic creation. Producing top-notch works brings glory to the nation and enhances the country’s brilliance. Individuality is the foundation of all characteristics. Works by Baishi Qi, Beihong Xu, Zhaohe Jiang, Keran Li, Tianshou Pan, Zuoren Wu, Jianjun Zhan, Zhou Huang, Shangyi Jin, Yimin Hou, and

others are highly individualistic, representing outstanding contemporary Chinese art. The paintings of da Vinci, Michelangelo, Raphael, and Titian are outstanding representatives of Italian art; Rubens represents 17th-century Flemish art; Rembrandt's paintings represent 17th-century Dutch art; Velázquez is the most famous painter of 17th-century Spain. Repin, Surikov, and Levitan are outstanding representatives of Russian art; David, Ingres, Delacroix, Millet, Courbet, Monet, and Van Gogh are masters representing 19th-century French painting ^[3].

Love of peace and opposition to war; love of democracy and opposition to dictatorship; love of science and opposition to ignorance; close to life, close to reality, close to the masses, concerned about life, concerned about society, concerned about the environment, concerned about nature, this is the truth that artists all over the world must abide by. Establishing a “distinctive image of Chinese art” must also follow these “principles.” No nation or country in the world will appreciate dirtiness, incivility, ugliness, rudeness, violence, or ignorance ^[4].

Beihong Xu said it correctly: “ But if China really unfortunately falls to the point where nothing stands out, I will ask you, what face does your internationalism have?” Therefore, it is said: Chinese fine arts must establish a “Chinese-characteristic artistic image” in the world, ultimately relying on meticulously crafted works of artists who dedicate themselves to research and hard work, and they must walk their own path. As long as there are truly touching works that move people, sooner or later they will gain recognition from the world and history ^[5].

3. Conclusion

In short, to shape a Chinese artistic image with the spirit and demeanor of the Chinese nation, art must effectively reflect the voice of the people. It is imperative to adhere to the principle that art must serve the people, which is also crucial in determining the future and destiny of our country's cultural and artistic endeavors. Only by firmly establishing the direction of “serving the two” (serving the people and socialism) and the policy of “the two hundred” (striving for excellence and promoting mass art), and truly making art centered around the people, can we better serve the people. Following the main direction and remembering the core issues, the most fundamental aspect is to create and produce outstanding works worthy of our great nation and era ^[6]. Presenting works that depict the brave and fearless spirit of the Chinese people, national unity, simplicity, unity and friendship, and the pursuit of peace and happiness, reflecting the aesthetic pursuits of the Chinese people, and integrating ideological, artistic, and appreciative qualities, are offerings to the people. These are the works that the people love, affirm, praise, and recognize ^[7]. This is a fundamental requirement that the Party puts forward for the literary and artistic front. Therefore, we must adhere to the stance of Chinese culture, always uphold the purpose of art serving the people, inherit and promote the aesthetic genes of Chinese culture, showcase Chinese aesthetic style, persist in and promote the Chinese spirit. This is the mission and responsibility of us contemporary literary and artistic workers. We should boldly dare to say “no” or discard those low-level and vulgar works ^[8].

Disclosure statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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