

# The Dilemma and Challenge of Plastic Art in the Age of Image

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**Abstract:** *The progress and development of natural science in recent years brought with big data, artificial intelligence, Internet of things and cloud computing as a representative of the fourth industrial revolution for human society, human society further towards digitization, electronic image is changing the way people perceive, It is because of the change of observation method that the traditional plastic arts have fallen into a dilemma and anxiety. originally it must be through a lot of training and study hard in the day after tomorrow to the precision of plastic arts, now only need to print out the electronic image, by printing blue paper or coating the back of electronic manuscript with lead dust, tracing and rubbing the outline of the object on the front of the manuscript with a pen can get the outline of the object. Although such mechanized operation is convenient, but it caused the loss of works of art; We should be natural and mental harmony embodied in the picture, refused to the mind of draw on advantage, but in the face of technological progress and electronic image generalization, and realistic cost of the painting inspection, we should go to explore how to adapt to development, and can bring the results of rational utilization of science and technology, in the service of plastic arts and make corresponding contributions to the development of art; While using electronic images to paint, we also need to consider its copyright issues. The copyright of photographic works is generally not paid attention to in China. When arts use electronic images, these issues are urgently needed to be discussed and cannot be avoided, and the above issues are covered in this paper.*

**Keywords:** *plastic arts; The artistry of the work; Image Age; The copyright consciousness*

## 1. Introduction

Western art originated in ancient times, and cave mural art can be regarded as the earliest plastic art left by prehistoric people. There are several main views on the origin of Western art. The ancient Greek philosopher Socrates and others have proposed that art originates from human's imitation of nature. In order to record the shapes of objects, human beings use the artistic technique of painting. The British anthropologists Edward Taylor and James Fraser argued that art originated from the ancient practices of witchcraft. Schiller and Spencer argue that art originates from the play of human beings for the purpose of expressing excess experience; Marxist anthropology also develops in the direction of more latitude on the research of the concept of "art originates from labor". Also related to the origin and development of Chinese painting, Mr. Zhou Jiyin concluded that there are three kinds: The first is inspired by the gods and created by the sages; The second is the same origin of painting and calligraphy Eight Diagrams, pictographs; The third is Chinese painting and all the same art, originated from the labor theory. To sum up, no matter where art originated, plastic arts have played a certain role and complexity in human history, which is irreplaceable. However, the irreplaceable plastic arts have encountered great difficulties and challenges in the graphic era.

## 2. The lack of artistry of plastic art works in the age of image

In 1939, a Frenchman named Daguerre made a major breakthrough in photographic technology on the basis of the predecessors. His invention was basically the same as the photographic technology used in modern times. The development of photographic technology and natural science has brought a great crisis to the expression of traditional plastic arts, and also posed a great challenge to the plastic arts in the image age. An ancient Chinese book, Erya, says, "Painting is a form." This is a description of early Chinese painting. In today's era, we are no longer satisfied with the images or dynamic images of

things shot by convenient electronic devices. We can even present the effects of multi-dimensional space through certain scientific and technological means. Painting is fundamentally different from electronic images. Each step of the original painting creation is full of unknowns and interesting. Unlike the direct recording of electronic images, no artist, no matter how skilled, can reproduce 100 percent of his or another works. Because each work is as big as the painter's spiritual temperament, personality cultivation, the spirit of The Times, social customs and other organic products. As small as the painter's level of education, hardness and softness, painting mood, physiological state, modern artists have blurred the boundary between electronic images and traditional plastic arts, resulting in the loss of artistic quality of contemporary painting. Chernyshevsky once said, "Beauty is life." Today art and participation in subtle transformation of our real life, at the same time, the creation and development of the 21st century Chinese fine arts fit closely the development of our country and all kinds of current event hot spot, present art works to build and display the national image of China in the new period, the image age for modelling the impact of the art to be reckoned with.

Take China's oil painting creation in the image era as an example. Now the Chinese government is vigorously developing thematic art creation projects. Projects such as exhibitions and competitions on thematic art creation have made great progress and continued deepening in the activities held by artists associations of autonomous regions in various provinces and cities, and have also received the support of artists. In order to save painting time and energy, finish their works before the deadline more efficiently, and pursue personal fame, wealth and honor brought by exhibitions, many artists gradually formed the mechanized oil painting creation process under the influence of the profit-oriented mentality. Many realistic oil paintings directly present the electronic screen in front of the audience. The composition and Angle keep the maximum range of the digital camera lens, and even keep the perspective relationship of the camera. The deformation of the objective objects in the photos is not processed, and the color effect of the picture is also copied from the digital image. The bright part is seriously exposed without color tendency, while the dark part is monotonous and dull, which is almost an objective reproduction of the lifeless "digital oil painting". The author does not think through the mind, directly in the outline of the shape of the reference color in the picture. Such works, which are not created by the fusion of subjective emotions, lack the painting traces of "doing something", the picture is lifeless and spiritless, and the overall feeling is almost stiff and restrained. In this way, it will cause the loss and weakening of the painting, thus losing the artistry of the painting, without the "painting flavor". The impact of the image age on plastic arts cannot be underestimated.

This kind of oil painting can no longer be called "painting", but "making painting". There are not many such works, especially young artists, but these "craftsmanship" realistic oil paintings are often accepted and recognized by the public because of their considerable commercial value, decorative quality and extremely short creation cycle. Like ancient Chinese literati painting and the painting, the author of the literati paintings the "morale", "yiping", pay attention to pen and ink interest, emphasizes verve, and pay attention to the literary accomplishment, and the expression of artistic conception in the painting [Zhou Jiyin compiled. Chinese painting: collection · classification · annotation · research [M]. Jiangsu fine arts publishing house, 2013:792;]. Chinese painter Zhang Daqian pointed out: "Painting is not equal to sketching, photographing, copying the original, but to have a choice, artistic conception, to add one's own feelings." Ancient Chinese painting has always emphasized "Outside the creature, the heart source." It requires the painter to have both the shaping of objective things and subjective emotions, and express them in the picture. Meanwhile, artistic imagination should be different from the real objects and images. Qi Baishi once said, "The beauty of painting lies in its likeness and unlikeness. It is too likeness to be kitsch, not deceit." This is the unique view of Chinese literati painting for modeling, is the painting art of freehand brushwork, not the art of "reproduction".

Only in this way can we create the artistic model of "reaching the emotion, shaping the sadness and joy" to express the feelings and thoughts of the author, is the release of the author's personal life experience, and also expresses the unique aesthetic taste of the Chinese nation. The China Artists Association held the 13th National Art Exhibition to Celebrate the 70th Anniversary of the Founding of the People's Republic of China. The National Art Exhibition is a five-yearly event to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China. 595 works were selected from the works selected by provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions, 90 of which entered the Beijing exhibition area, including 12 award-winning nominated works. The award nomination oil painting work, A Scream (Figure 1), by Chen Xinyu, a Shansi-born Chinese painter, this is an oil painting work with an extraordinary cultural flavor of humanistic atmosphere of Loess Plateau in North China. Through some specific artistic treatment, the author makes the texture of the canvas look like the creases on the paper surface, just like the texture of sand grains on the Loess Plateau, giving people a thick texture. A group of characters in the picture adopts the method of plane processing, simplifies the

individual details and three-dimensional effect, boldly uses the black line to stroke the color block with high saturation of the figure, carries on the decorative processing, and expresses the spatial relationship before and after the figure group image through the exaggerated way of foreshortening effects. The composition of the whole painting is bold and novel, the colors are bold and uninhibited, and the characters are simple but vivid, which well shows the bold and unrestrained characteristics of the region of the Loess Plateau and the spiritual connotation of simplicity, which exactly conforms to the tension shown by the name of the work "A Scream".



*Figure. 1 A Scream*

It is also a work that won the 13th National Oil Painting Area nomination works award - The Song of Happiness (Figure 2), painted by the Chinese Guangdong painter Luo Wenyong, its style and the connotation of the atmosphere is completely different. The oil painting The Song of Happiness depicts a happy scene in which a little girl in a white gauze skirt sings for her pregnant mother. The whole painting is placed in a quiet room with a harmonious and beautiful atmosphere and warm and natural colors. The author has realistic skills, The facial expressions of the characters are gentle and vivid, full of laughter, the skin texture is mellow and flawless, the skin seeped through with a faint flush, the body forms are relaxed and elegant, and the form of expression has the nature of stage drama. In the painting, the mother is sitting in front of the piano, holding the unborn baby in her belly with a smile, enjoying the happy singing of the little girl. The whole painting has a sense of live demonstration. The little girl's song seems to spread through the ears of every viewer, even to the soul. Compared with "A Scream", it highlights the warm and gentle spirit of the painters in southern China. These excellent painters are able to combine the shaping of objective things and subjective emotions together to present paintings with different styles and individual characteristics for everyone.



*Figure. 2 The Song of Happiness*

Artists need to abandon the utilitarian mentality and never reach for what is beyond their grasp. They should seriously study painting and regard art as a career that requires lifelong learning. Only in this way can they create visually and psychologically shocking works of art and reflect the artistic charm of the works. It can be said that the convenience of electronic image brings artists a big challenge whether to overcome the temptation of profit and the psychology of eager for quick success. Since July 2020, the Chinese Artists Association and other artists association launched the 2020 National Artists "Focusing on Poverty Alleviation" Activity, inviting artists from all over the country to go to Xinyu, Jinggangshan and other places of the new rural construction points, poor villages sketching, describing the great changes in the mountain villages. More than 100 artists walked into the farmyard, the fields, to

explore the story of poverty alleviation, with full enthusiasm to create a number of excellent works [October 24, 2020 18:44 source: People's Daily Online - Jiangxi Channel]. A straw shows which way the wind blows, this type of sketching art creation activity just shows that artists begin to consciously develop their art creation towards the direction of getting close to people's lives. They are eager to return to nature and learn from nature. They are not imaginations, arbitrary fabrication, to conduct stylized electronic image creation stylize electronic image creation, but the "blending of scenes" after real experience and realistic sketching. The daily life of the public is the source of artistic creation, and the art works created based on life have a strong purpose of social education, ideological tendency and timeliness of art. Once painting breaks away from the foundation of life, painting will be like water without a source, gradually drying up and losing vitality. Once the plastic arts lose their artistic character, the works are just like the duckweed in the water, and the only ones have verdant and no support.

### 3. Reasonable reference of plastic arts to image resources

Today, with the vigorous development of electronic technology, we also need to look at the influence of electronic images on plastic arts dialectically, and make good use of technology reasonably. The progress of science and technology is the result of the development of The Times, society and even the improvement of comprehensive national strength. The relationship between the progress of science and the development of art has been constantly reconsidered. As an invisible hand, science and technology also promote the progress of art. For example, in the Western Renaissance, Leonardo da Vinci mastered in perspective, chiaroscuro and planing techniques to create immortal works such as the Mona Lisa Smile. Caravaggio projected the image of the object onto the canvas by using optical equipment and the principle of pinhole imaging to depict the shape of the object more accurately. The color principle of Impressionism is also based on the development of optics. It can be seen that the development of art develops with the progress of society, which is in line with the law of development of things.

In the same way, the development of Chinese painting in plastic arts develops with the progress of the social era. In the early stages of the development of Chinese painting, pictographs were emphasized. The early plastic arts can be regarded as the imitation and simple reproduction of nature and human behavior created by the coordination and cooperation of human eyes and hands. From the original definition of "painting is form" in Erya in ancient times to the "vivid portrayal" proposed by Gu Kaizhi in the Eastern Jin Dynasty, people have been not simply satisfied with describing the appearance of objects, but on this basis, they pursue the inner charm and begin to emphasize the "spirit" of the object. Aesthetics "lifelikeness" is the core of traditional Chinese painting, the southern dynasty Xie He in his book Ancient Painting Article Recorded summed up the method of "six methods", later known as the "Xie He six methods", which put forward "lively", "draw shapes against objects" two method, again in addition to need to depict the object shape, performance the spirit and temperament of objective things. Later, Chen Yu of the Southern Song Dynasty proposed that "it is difficult to write the heart"... The development process of Chinese painting from "writing form" to "writing spirit" is not a short duration of time. After a long period of exploration, the "ancient people" also held various different opinions on the art theories of "predecessors". The essence of Chinese culture embodies the minds of countless artistic sages. Until "contemporary people", we are faced with the impact of new painting methods on traditional plastic arts. At this moment, we have to re-examine the development of Chinese plastic arts in the era of electronic images with scientific and technological progress.

It is not impossible for us to take advantage of the achievements of modern electronic imaging technology. Field sketch and collecting material should take into account many realistic factors: the local climate conditions, local conditions and customs, language and culture, regional policy, Investigation funds, spend time, physical condition, painting ability, picture save and transportation and so on, the limitations of practice and the degree of difficulty is also much larger than expected. After all, sketching investigation is not tourism, which requires sketchers to have strong self-restraint and endurance. The most important thing is that they have sufficient investigation funds, which is difficult for those artists who lack project support and income, and the duration of investigation will be greatly reduced. At this time, the creative materials collected by photographic equipment during sketching will play a important role. Combined with on-site sketching drawings, the intervention of software such as Photoshop, and technical means such as cutting and collage to apply filters and arrange composition, the artist can have a clear plan and foresee the effect of the works. On this basis, the rendering effect of the picture is transformed to a basically satisfactory degree, so as to complete the works without finalizing the draft with paper materials, saving consumables and avoiding waste. In the fast-paced

information age, electronic images can also be used as a part of material collection for reference. After all, excellent photographic works can also trigger inspiration and enlighten thinking, or can be an old saying in China "form does not destroy content". Electronic images affect and impact our sensory world, and the use of images by artists has become normal. Since we can't resist the progress of The times and society, we need to take the essence of electronic image resources and make rational use of them to conform to the trend of the epoch. However, we should recognize the boundary between plastic arts and mechanical images. It emphasizes the importance of artists' subjective artistic thinking as a bridge of communication when "recreating nature". We should actively respond to various crises and challenges hidden behind plastic arts in the era of image extension, and studies the rational use of image resources to better serve the development of plastic arts. We should always use electronic images as a subordinate tools for artistic creation, and dominated by people's inner artistic spirit. Just like books as a medium of information dissemination, they can be used for learning, but only by learning and thinking can they better enlighten people's minds.

#### **4. The copyright of drawing using electronic images**

Under the background of the Internet era, since we want to use electronic images and modern technology to better serve arts, the copyright of electronic images should not be ignored. Respect for intellectual property rights is the concentrated embodiment of artists' personal moral cultivation. China's current copyright law has stipulated the protection time of the photography works is 50 years after published, and the protection time of the literature, art, music is for life and 50 years after death, compared with it, photography copyright protection is short, that ownership is not easy. There are also problems such as not easy to identify the ownership of copyright, low cost of infringement and difficult to protect rights.

Different from the copyright issues of general literary works such as poetry, novels and essays or simple photographic works, the actual situation we need to discuss is more complex: We draw from an electronic image, whether it is infringement. After all, for a skilled artist who is accustomed to using photographic works as reference, the work is usually presented with the author's personal emotional intention and layers of subjective filters, and will not be copied from the original work either from the perspective of plastic arts or from the use of color. If the image itself belongs to the author's collected material, we don't have to talk, but it is "The era of national photography", digital image through the Internet, computer, mobile phone since the end of the service and network media to spread fast and efficient replication, we can easily download to use all kinds of Electronic pictures without attribution to paint pictures. In this way, it seems difficult for us to judge and define whether there is infringement, but it can not be a shield for the artists to disrespect intellectual property rights.

The Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee held the 25th collective study session on strengthening intellectual property protection in China on the afternoon of November 30, 2020. On January 1, 2021, the Civil Code of the People's Republic of China came into force, and a corresponding chapter was added to the part concerning intellectual property. China's relevant legal provisions are also being further improved, which reminds art practitioners to learn and abide by the relevant legal provisions, with a serious and rigorous attitude towards this issue.

There are about the relationship between the painter's character and painting, Chinese painting theory has always emphasized that "Have good character before you learn to paint", "the morality is excellent, not only everyone likes his works, more admire the people." To sum up, it can be seen that in Chinese painting theory, the importance of the painter's moral cultivation for painting creation. Respect for intellectual property rights is also the most basic and ideal aesthetic and moral requirements of artists. To strengthen the protection of intellectual property rights and enhance legal awareness is what artists should strive to practice in their artistic activities. We need to improve the copyright awareness of the whole society and make reasonable and legal use of electronic image resources and related materials.

#### **5. Conclusion**

The traditional plastic art has encountered a major challenge brought by mechanical images. Contemporary artists have replaced the traditional sketching process with the direct depiction of electronic images. The shortcuts created in the image age weaken the artistic thinking and re-creation ability of the creators, and directly cause the lack of the "Painting interest" of the art works. It seems

very difficult to master the plastic arts through painstakingly training sketching in the pictorial and fast-food society. However, cameras and mobile phone lenses cannot replace human eyes, so it is necessary for artists to make reasonable use of science and technology to provide convenient resources for art creation, abandon the aesthetic interest of commercialization and secularization, and return to the true nature of art. Art practitioners need to establish awareness of intellectual property rights protection and follow relevant laws and regulations while using convenient image resources. In the category of art, we may have a kind of integrated thinking, the traditional plastic art and modern electronic images, the two things can fully complement each other, there is no need to restrict our activities to a designated area.

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