

The Oil Painter Living in the Landscape - Weng Kaixuan

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Abstract: Oil painting landscape is an important part of contemporary oil painting creation. Its content and subject matter comes from nature. The painter uses rich oil painting language to artistically reorganize shape and color, thus endowing it with fresh artistic vitality. Weng Kaixuan is a member of the oil painting landscape painting school in southern China, and has a special liking for natural scenery. His oil paintings continue to grow over time, and styles are constantly changing. This paper analyzes the three parts of Weng Kaixuan's oil painting creation of sketch exploration, idyllic poetry and landscape spirit, to realize the profound connotation of his painting, and try to explore his painting style.

Keywords: oil painting, landscape, sketching, pastoral, artistic conception

1. Introduction

Weng Kaixuan is a member of the oil painting landscape painting school in southern China, and has a special liking for natural scenery. Painting landscapes in nature is something Weng Kaixuan has been doing all his life. He said: "His greatest wish is to look forward to retirement, and can't wait to be in the embrace of nature every day, breathing with the nature he loves [1]."

In Weng Kaixuan's oil paintings, "landscape" has always been an important material for his creation, and most of his creative sources are the scenery that can be seen everywhere in life. He has done oil painting landscape sketches in Chongqing, Gannan, Yungang, Shanxi, Wuxi, Qinghai, Qingdao, Shandong and other places in order to create prosperous works. Watching the landscape does not mean that it is static, innovation is an inevitable choice for an artist with a gradually strong and mature heart. Landscape has always been the subject of his creation, but his creative style has changed over time.

2. Sketch exploration

Oil painting landscape is an important part of contemporary oil painting creation, and its content and subject matter comes from nature. Most of Weng Kaixuan's works originate from sketching landscapes. It can be said that he is an oil painter living in landscapes. Sketching is to describe and record what you see and hear with a pen. Sketching is also the process of his creation. Through sketching, he exerts his subjective initiative to create amazing works.

"Old Town" is a series of works created by Weng Kaixuan when he graduated from Sichuan Fine Arts Institute in the 1980s. The creative theme of this series of works is selected from the old city of Chongqing. With the process of urbanization, the old city is being replaced by a modern city, and the old city is completely changed. Weng Kaixuan created this series of works in the old city of Chongqing, depicting the spiritual outlook of the old city. The pictures are simple and realistic, with a strong sense of form, full of metaphors and symbols.

The tone of the whole picture is calm and desolate, revealing his nostalgia and contemplation for the old city of Chongqing. With the new changes in the old city, he not only recorded the progress of the city, but also expressed his desolate feeling towards the old city. Until the early 1990s, he was still showing the old town, but he just said that at this time, some changes have taken place in his expression. The emotional expression of the old town at this time is less desolate than before, and the picture is simple, like the fantasy world that people long to see.

Weng Kaixuan integrates himself into nature when creating, keeps his mind calm, pays attention to observation and thinking, the whole creative process is a spiritual dialogue with nature. As the ancients said, "learning from nature", taking nature as a teacher and imitating it, Weng Kaixuan's landscape sketching can also be said to be a process of learning from nature. Only by integrating into the natural scenery like Weng Kaixuan can you integrate your own mood into your own pictures, and only then can you create good works. He gets creative inspiration from nature, has a deep respect for nature, and pursues the true nature of nature.

3. Idyllic

After the 1990s, Chinese landscape oil painting has developed in an all-round way. According to their own aesthetic needs, artists continue to refine and purify their own artistic language and form their own unique style. Weng Kaixuan's creative thinking has changed, and his style has also changed. In the mid-1990s, Weng Kaixuan walked out of the city and into the countryside. He created a series of works with the theme of "Homeland", and works with imagery aesthetic characteristics. The whole creative style reflects a kind of artistic conception of a freehand landscape painting, showing a series of oil painting landscapes with imagery style through the natural scenery seen. The mountains, water, houses, etc. in his paintings are far away from the hustle and bustle of the city, showing a calm and comfortable image. He is like an ancient pastoral poet, deliberately expressing a hermit feeling. The use of oil painting to express a kind of artistic conception of Chinese painting reflects the longing of many contemporary people for "pastoral". In the eyes of ordinary viewers, the landscapes he wrote are extremely ordinary: a road, a forest, a corner of a courtyard, a corner of the forest... They are unremarkable, simple and natural. However, it is these inconspicuous "landscapes" that are neglected by urbanites in the daily visual experience, but Weng Kaixuan can draw a series of unique works with the help of his brush. Because he has a pair of eyes that find beauty, he can keenly capture the beauty that others cannot. Although Weng Kaixuan's works originated from sketching, he is not only a representation of the objective world, but also uses his own expression to describe the beauty he sees, showing the beauty of a unique artistic conception in daily life. In the eyes of Weng Kaixuan, these daily situations not only have their own unique aesthetic mood, but also reflect a civilization different from urban life, expressing a life that is far away from the hustle and bustle of the city and returns to the original, so as to evoke the urbanites to lose their ideal pastoral Aesthetic sentiment afterward. He Guiyan, a young critic of the Sichuan Academy of Fine Arts, commented on Weng Kaixuan's works, "Landscape is nothing but an appearance, an emotional channel, and what it carries and speaks is always the artist's thinking about nature, culture, life and many other issues."

French philosopher Danner wrote in "Art and Philosophy": "The production of works of art must be completely consistent with the environment, and what kind of environment will produce what kind of works of art [3]." The production of works is closely related to the author's life. The era is closely related to the surrounding customs. Weng Kaixuan created the "Ruins" series around 2000. He paid attention to the continuous replacement and development of social civilization with the progress of society, and the destruction of nature by social development. At the same time, he was full of expectations for the arrival of new social civilization. The works of this series express Weng Kaixuan's lament for the past years, and also reveal his desire and expectation for the new world. He Guiyan, a young critic, believes: "In Weng Kaixuan's works, Ruins is endowed with a double meaning, that is, in the scorching and desolate stains of the picture, human beings are full of violent damage to nature, and they are also quiet and peaceful. A ray of life is revealed in the tragic atmosphere [4]." Ma Yiping once commented on him: "Under the shell of reality, he injected his spiritual longing for this world, and he used his inner vacuum cleaner to remove the original existence in the world. He insisted on creating this idyllic pastoral garden, and this is exactly the common spiritual aspiration of contemporary people who have suffered too much reality burden [5]."

4. The spirit of landscape

In order to have Chinese characteristics in Chinese landscape oil painting, it must draw nourishment from traditional culture and combine it with localization and regionalization. Many artists explore the use of oil painting landscapes to express China's sense of the times and the nation, carry forward the national spirit, and emphasize the expression of the artist's personality.

Weng Kaixuan's paintings of snowy landscapes have distinct spiritual power and are full of "landscape spirit". At the same time, they also broaden the expression of landscape oil painting,

inheriting the excellent cultural spirit of the Chinese nation spirit” to construct Chinese-style oil paintings.



Weng Kaixuan 寂静的山村系列之2 120x130cm 布面油彩 2014年

Figure 1: The second part of “Silent Mountain Village Series”



Weng Kaixuan 寂静的山村系列之6 120x130cm 布面油彩 2014年

Figure 2: “Silent Mountain Village Series” No. 6

“Silent Mountain Village Series” (Picture 1) and (Picture 2) are works created by Weng Kaixuan in 2014. This series of works depicts a winter village, with a large area of white and gray as the keynote, with a little bit of warmth color, the whole picture is elegant. Although depicting winter, there seems to be a taste of sunshine, revealing a hint of warmth. In the picture, the fog-shrouded village is silent, not the hustle and bustle of the big city, but more of a tranquility. In the composition of the picture, he mostly adopts the large scene from the top down, which is a test of the painter’s overall control and control ability, and also reflects the painter’s broad-mindedness. The scene in the picture is white and foggy. The snow blocks or snow layers with different layers and perfect composition covered from the mountain are full of water brushstrokes, showing the spirit of empty, quiet and bright landscapes. The depiction of the mountain village is as intoxicating as a paradise.

The painting “Silent Mountain Village Series” has been treated with simplicity, but the fish ponds, fields, trees, houses, etc. in the scene can still be seen. Weng Kaixuan’s pictures depict very ordinary content, as if it were the real situation of a small winter village. The picture is quiet and simple, simple yet rich in connotation, which can arouse people’s yearning for a natural home. In his writing, he created an ideal realm, which makes people unforgettable and intoxicated. Viewers of his paintings can easily integrate into the picture, feel a sense of transparency brought by natural landscapes, release people’s souls, and express people’s pursuit of returning to nature.



Figure 3: Jiangnan Spring Snow Series No. 23, oil on canvas, diameter 85cm, made in February 2020



Figure 4: Jiangnan Spring Snow Series No. 23 (partial)



Figure 5: Jiangnan Spring Snow Series No. 23 (partial)

In 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic broke out, and the epidemic spread rapidly. The country adopted grid community management in a timely manner. No one could move around without permission, and everyone had to press the pause button. People had to isolate at home. The first snow in the beginning of the year fell in everyone's heart, indicating that the new year is extraordinary. The artist stayed at home to meditate, let the soul return to its place, and wanted to find back what was lost. Weng Kaixuan created the "Jiangnan Spring Snow Series", the 23rd of this series (Fig. 3) (Fig. 4) (Fig. 5) is based on individual small scenes of Jiangnan water towns, depicting the bridgeheads under the rushing snow in the south of the Yangtze River the water town looms in the quiet gray-white. Wu Peng shuttles back and forth in the water town, and the horned branches in front of and behind the house are interspersed. Although people stay at home, their hearts have gone far. From a distance, the painting looks like a real scene, and if you look closely at the corresponding brush strokes, precise description, the priority of brush strokes, and the rhythm of virtual and real, make the picture full of charm. Paintings are not only the result of landscape sketching, but more importantly, the free play of the painter's subjective freehand. The artist expresses the feeling of the mist on the water surface after the snow to the fullest, and it can be seen that the whole picture has a hazy feeling. The pictures are delicate and quiet, and the poetic landscape oil paintings reflect the painter's love for nature. Sketching in a cold snowy day is

very difficult, and the extreme cold is unbearable for ordinary people. Because it was too cold to paint snow scenes, Weng Kaixuan completed a series of snow scene creations indoors. “The snow scene is simple, quiet, elegant, and high. Apart from the glitz and the noise, the mountain tops, roofs, branches, and snow on the field ridges outline a picture that is both ethereal and real [6].” When he painted snow scenes, he made in-depth and detailed descriptions of the scenes. The white and vast snow scene was well expressed, and the overall sense of tone was grasped just right.

Weng Kaixuan loves snow scenes. Most of his oil paintings of snow scenes use cool gray tones to express the emptiness and loneliness of the snow. In addition, he skillfully uses black and white, just like the ink smudges in Chinese landscape paintings. It plays the role of adjusting the color balance, embodies the “beauty with simplicity”, and achieves the realm of “extremely imaginary”. He purifies his own painting language, integrates the main objects, forms his own unique element symbols, and constructs his own painting schema.

The spirit of landscape is injected into oil painting, which provides another possibility for landscape oil painting, and it is also an innovation. It not only reflects the contemporary but also continues the tradition. It shows a unique oriental sentiment in oil painting, which is the best fusion of Chinese and Western reflect.

5. Conclusion

Weng Kaixuan boldly integrates China and the West in a series of works, interweaving the realism of the landscape with the freehand interest of the landscape. Using oil painting to express the artistic conception of Chinese painting can be said to be a result of his continuous exploration. Oil painting that depicts Chinese national temperament is the inevitable destination of Chinese art, and it is also the future prospect of oil painting art.

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