

The Borrowing and Conversion of Chinese Contemporary Art to Traditional Landscape Painting-- Take Xu Bing's the Story behind Series as an Example

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ABSTRACT. *The overall characteristics of the cultural development of the contemporary world are as follows: mutual integration and crossing and pluralistic symbiosis. On the one hand, the culture of developed countries attracts and assimilates the culture of developing countries. On the other hand, the classic and unique elements of the culture of developing countries have become the new elements of the culture of the developed countries. Thus, a new world culture of diversity and symbiosis is gradually formed.*

KEYWORD: *Global cultural context; Chinese traditional landscape painting; Local art experiences Contemporary conversion*

1. The context of traditional borrowing and transformation

1.1 Global cultural context

The cultural characteristic of today's globalization era is the coexistence of multiple forms of culture. With the development of the world's mechanized, electronic and information industries and the great changes of the concept of the times, the overall characteristics of the cultural development of the contemporary world are as follows: mutual integration and crossing and diverse co-existence. On the one hand, the culture of developed countries attracts and assimilates the culture of developing countries. On the other hand, the classic and unique elements of the culture of developing countries have become the new elements of the culture of the developed countries. Thus, a new world culture of diversity and symbiosis is gradually formed. Fan Dian, the president of China Central Academy of Fine Arts and China Artists Association, compares the era of globalization to a "ocean era" in which different cultural river converge on the sea and collide with each other, mutual reaction, and mutual fusion. Different cultures are all factors of ocean waves. As a result, we should try to find our own position in the fluctuation of such a sea that we cannot grasp at all. With the help of modern science and technology and economic model, the pluralistic traditional culture has obtained a broader active space for the renewal and the fusion, in which every nation culture should focus on self innovation, also often draw appropriate nutrients from other national cultures. In kassel Documenta, more and more important works are created by artists from developing countries such as Africa, Latin America, eastern Europe and India, which are completely reversing the exhibition tradition of mainly white artists. It can be seen that the rise of regionalism culture is unstoppable. It not only presents the cultural consciousness and confidence of various nationalities and regions, but also expresses the current spiritual appeal and proposition.

1.2 Characteristics of the development of Chinese art

When the door of reform and opening up was opened, a rich variety of completely new western art styles and schools were introduced into China, which dazzled the artists at that time. Since the 1980s, Chinese contemporary art mainly expresses the theme and content of Chinese native art by borrowing western artistic concepts, language forms and philosophical thoughts. Faced with the individualized language and unique style of western art, Chinese artists hardly have time to choose and think. At the same time, the bankruptcy of the old order makes them have to find the spiritual support and destination, the foothold of self and art again, but the possibility of finding support and base point in a reality that is itself turbulent and changing is very small. In this case, we turn our attention to the philosophical literature related to the "renewal of ideas" in the west. As far as contemporary art is concerned, we have not yet formed our own value system of contemporary art. Borrowing western values and methods is like living in a foreign country. It is possible to encounter the distortion and

assimilation of western cultural concepts to Chinese art anytime and anywhere. Of course, any kind of value judgment can not be established. At present, more and more people begin to consciously recognize the self-identity of Chinese culture. Under such circumstances, participating in international art activities and borrowing western cultural concepts and methods may eventually become a stage in the process of establishing their own value system. Generally speaking, the relationship between Chinese contemporary art and western cultural logic is one of cooperation, conflict, identity and subversion. After nearly 100 years of history, modern Chinese culture has formed a highly mixed state. We rediscover the traditional resources to acquire the tradition that can be integrated and activated with the contemporary era. For thousands of years passed down the unique ideas, wisdom, tolerance and verve proposition like our own genes profoundly affects us, but can't go into the Chinese modern discourse system. Therefore, Chinese contemporary art has turned to explore the core of traditional culture, and through the transformation of Chinese traditional art language, it has a certain contextual connection with the form of Chinese traditional language, and at the same time, it is in line with the self-expression and aesthetic appeal of current Chinese people. If we have a deep insight into and grasp of the essence of Chinese art spirit, Chinese contemporary art will be able to establish a foothold in the exchange with the world culture and win a free creation of a broad art world.

1.3 Cultural confidence

Art is closely related to politics, economy and other factors. It is difficult to completely draw a line between each other. While China's economy is developing at a speed that amazes the world and forms a huge force, Chinese culture also dances to the rhythm of cultural globalization. Since the beginning of the new century, more and more Chinese artists have participated in various international art exhibitions, and China's outward development momentum is also very good. Some of the exhibitions received unexpected responses, such as "contemporary Chinese ink painting in Italy" and "contemporary Chinese ink painting in America", which were highly praised by the international art world. With the support of national cultural policy, Chinese art has accelerated its pace to the world. Among the Chinese art exhibitions held in Europe, the number of Chinese contemporary art exhibitions has obviously increased. The cultural vanguard of contemporary China has been paid attention to by European museums and galleries and occupied more exhibition space. This shows that in today's world, Chinese contemporary culture and art are playing an important role in international cultural exchanges with the huge energy contained in them. Thousands of years passed down these unique ideas, wisdom, tolerance and verve proposition contains a perennial contemporary value, we need to return to their own traditions for art idea culture idea support, further to activate it with today's wisdom, thus it become the important support, we create today and the support is to make Chinese art no matter which aspect to present on the international stage, can have a powerful inner strength.

2. Contemporary transformation of landscape painting.

2.1 The borrowing of landscape schema

Xu Bing's *The Story Behind* series is a typical case of contemporary transformation of traditional landscape painting. Xu Bing used the ready-made materials that can be seen everywhere in life, such as hemp silk, dried plants, rice paper, fish line and other wastes, and they were installed behind the frosted glass board. From the front, it is a beautiful and elegant traditional Chinese landscape painting with Oriental charm, but when the audience sees the messy objects on the back of the installation, they can see the real source of the landscape painting in the air. These items and the distance of the ground glass make up artist modelling language, when the stuff behind directly in contact with the ground glass, the other side of the glass objects will show a clear image, when objects with frosted glass at intervals, positive shows become blurred image, which create a Chinese ink painting shading effects on rice paper. Xu found a meeting point between Chinese painting and nature by drawing on nature. His works look like landscape paintings, but in fact there is neither landscape nor painting. The reason why Xu's way of "transplanting flowers and trees" presents this visual effect is that on the one hand Chinese painting has very strong symbolic and systematic characteristics, because Chinese people are good at image thinking, which is related to hieroglyphics, namely the initial culture and the later development trend. Therefore, the fundamental part of Chinese people's view of things is always symbolized and conceptualized. Unlike western countries' rational logical analysis and reasoning. In Chinese landscape paintings, a stone can represent a mountain, which means all mountains. A branch can represent a tree, and this tree means this kind of tree. On the other hand, Traditional landscape paintings pay attention to the change of the level of composition, through art of composition or layout will present the mountains of overlapping peaks and scattered feeling of far and near, and then through the change of ink to the virtual and real effective treatment, to enhance the level of

the whole work and space on the effective extension, thus create a distant artistic atmosphere. Traditional painting is the scene reflected by light, through canvas, rice paper, pigment, and using the principles of perspective, light and shadow modeling, color science into a two-dimensional plane. When we looking at the painting, what we see is a direct painting that depicts the feeling of space light and objects on a material plane. Xu Bing uses the symbolic characteristic of Chinese painting, grasps the special relationship between painting and nature, and uses “light painting” to reproduce the artistic conception created by bold brushwork and contour lines of typical Chinese painting. He used three-dimensional materials instead of traditional brush and ink, extending the tradition of Chinese traditional painters to depict landscape scenery on two-dimensional paper in a realistic way, borrowing and activating the modeling features of traditional landscape painting.

2.2 Transformation of painting techniques

The brushwork of Chinese landscape painting, that is, the brushwork and ink technique produced by the brush, is extremely rich. The ancient landscape painters created rich and diverse painting techniques in their artistic practice. In Xu's works, he fully absorbed and drew on the characteristics of these traditional painting techniques, but he recreated the effects of these painting techniques with discarded materials that had nothing to do with the brushwork. Take *The Story behind III* for example, it is a re-created work based on the landscape paintings of Gong Xian, a great ancient painter. Gong Xian developed a unique technique of balding brush, which use wrinkle method and rub method repeatedly to express the strong landscape forms. Xu creates a more pioneer form of expression, namely different plants, such as brown from a street in the west of Suzhou city, Zhangjiagang hemp, in mount resentments, branches and leaves of carefully selected in Ling Yan mountain and so on. Those material produced the same feeling of the original landscape techniques. Xu created an illusion of rich texture picture through realistic material. Comparing it with the mess material ,there is a huge contrast between the two sides. The story behind is not a complete works by Chinese paintings with ink and brushwork, however, it is the borrowing of Chinese traditional painting characteristics and principle, then transforming it in the form of contemporary art, and reconstructed the spirit of Chinese painting successfully. This transforming broke the traditional cognitive of Chinese painting , it tells us that the essence of Chinese landscape painting is not those who survived the objectification of ink and brushwork, but those living spirit communication, which is the way for us to understand Chinese culture as well. As Xu explained, “light is richer and more subtle than any direct painting of material materials. The contrast between the delicacy of” light painting “and the rough and sundry is the reason why the artistic language of this work takes effect. In the audience's brief experience of watching, there is a transition between the beauty of art and the most irrelevant objects on both sides of a piece of glass, which is confirmed by the eyes. “What is the beauty of art, of painting? What is its support?” “And the question came up.” Xu transformed the symbolic statement of hundreds of years of history back to material reality, juxtaposed traditional cultural symbols with other visual symbols in cross-context and collage, making them seem familiar but unfamiliar in real. Through the mutual reference of significance, they acquired new meanings in the satisfaction and frustration of the recipient's expectation vision.

2.3 The absorption of philosophy in Chinese landscape painting

The origin and development of Chinese landscape painting art contains the worship of the pioneers of the age of mythology from the landscape development of pure view of the universe, Jin people given virtual sanctification, fantastic landscape aesthetic, and cover the Confucian thoughts about “the doctrine of the mean”, the way of the Tao theory, Buddhism's theory of “zen” and other spiritual origins of landscape art. Since ancient times, mountains and rivers contain rich philosophy that nourishes the temperament of the Chinese people. The Confucian sage Confucius put forward the idea that “the virtuous are happy with mountains and the wise with water”, and Meng Zi developed the idea of “the unity of man and nature” on this basis. The “natural way of Taoism” explained by Lao tzu, the founder of Taoism, and the “free and easy tour” advocated by Zhuang Zi on the basis of this idea, both of which contain people's thinking on the relationship between man and nature. In his *The Story Behind* series, Xu not only explores the relationship between the borrowing and transformation of elements of contemporary art and traditional landscape painting, but also explores the relationship between man and nature in the contemporary context. In *Meditation on Nature*, one of a work in *The Story Behind* series, Xu uses the combination of 2 d images and 3 d space, the real trees and painting trees interlace, collision, and integration of the natural environment and the landscape of the canvas, use force the uncontrollable nature of natural light, makes works along with the change of time and present a different effect, more truly reflect the change of natural light, and creation of artificial plants, lighting and shading appear very harmonious. He combines the solitude of the woods with the light and shadow generated and the trees, hills and rocks on the canvas to break the boundary of the canvas and blend into the nature, like returning to the original. Xu shows

how a work of art from the mechanical material into a new full of thoughts and feelings and that is a fact of this reality is unable to express through other channels, so as to realize the outer appearance and inner content between the dynamic transformation.

3. Conclusion

The Story Behind series creatively transforms the traditional Chinese landscape resources into a contemporary one, providing an oriental landscape painting different from the west, and also providing a reference and inspiration for the transformation of Chinese contemporary art. Tradition is undoubtedly the most important proposition of Chinese contemporary art, cultural genes determine the today's life is dependent on the traditional. Whether in the traditional as a symbol of a large number of works, or misappropriation of traditional and modern collage of a large number of works, are almost unanimously appears as a kind of traditional and contemporary conflicts, or variations, is a product of nature, is the social development brought about by the mutations. *The Story Behind* series gives rise to a new perspective of this linear thinking mode from tradition to modern times, which represents the tradition that has not been destroyed is full of spirituality, and it condenses the kind of order we yearn for, and the chaos of its back forms unity disorder, ugliness and original in the picture. There is only a transparent glass in the middle, which is similar to a kind of illusion, and the principle revealed by it is similar to the skeleton view in religion. The truth to be reached is all idealized creation. From this point of view, Xu Bing's position is contemporary and it is anti - traditional. But on the other hand, Xu paid tribute to the tradition in his creation. Using a large amount of time to depict the original works of the ancients, carefully using a pile of junk, to outline, texturing, rendering the fog and dense, light and ethereal Chinese artistic conception, its mood and escape from the secular, the mood of the ancients in the landscape is consistent, but changed the contemporary time and space. In this tradition there is an openness to the contemporary because there is an internal consistency rather than a superficial connection. And in the contradiction between the tradition and a return to traditional, *The Story Behind* more deep layer, is that it reveals the refused to the tradition of disillusionment, traces of images, with every specific sources of material, in spite of the recognition, is a living history, the task of the artist, is how to create a scene, make a new lease on life in the past.

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