

# Zhou Chunya's Peach Blossom Series Reading

Shuang Liu\*

Sichuan Minzu College, Kangding 626001 China

\*Corresponding author

**Abstract:** Zhou Chunya, one of the representatives of contemporary Chinese expressionist painting, has drawn more and more attention for his artistic achievements. The "Peach Blossom" series of works are representative works of Zhou Chunya's art reaching a new height. This article analyzes this series from the aspects of subject matter, color and emotion, in an attempt to better interpret Zhou Chunya's painting language and creative thinking.

**Keywords:** Zhou Chunya, oil painting, peach blossom

## 1. Introduction

As one of the representatives of contemporary Chinese expressionist painting, Zhou Chunya has drawn more and more attention for his artistic achievements. He used oil painting as his expression material, combined Chinese landscape complex with German expressionism, and used unique oil painting techniques to show the traditional temperament of Chinese culture. Zhou Chunya once said: "What is really valuable is what is in the progressive tense. The reason why tradition has become tradition is actually due to today people's recognition of past, and it is due to our collective memory and understanding [1]."

## 2. Subject matter

The subject matter of painting is only the matrix of creation and the carrier of the painter's "borrowing things to express his will". Only by grasping the truest and most soul-touching feelings in the heart can we create works of art that move the audience. As for the choice of painting themes, Zhou Chunya has changed from flowers, birds and trees in traditional Chinese paintings to bamboo and rocks. In the end, he chose the ever-changing and relaxed "mountains" as the new subject of his creation. He uses Western oil painting as a medium and uses the freehand brushwork of traditional Chinese painting as the expression technique. Zhou Chunya has created a series of "mountain and stone" works with rich implicit charm and distinctive personality. The success of the "Mountain Stone" series was a good start. In the subsequent artistic creation, Zhou Chunya kept exploring and summarizing, reducing the complicated and simplifying, using the pen to be more affirmative, and the color became more intense, gradually forming a highly recognizable personal artistic symbol.

Peach blossoms first appeared in the background form in Zhou Chunya's "Green Dog" series of works, and this unintentional attempt to insert willows later became the cornerstone of Zhou Chunya's artistic creation to new heights. When Zhou Chunya and his friends were drinking tea and enjoying peach blossoms in Longquanyi, Chengdu, they were deeply attracted by the peach blossoms in the mountains and plains. The peach blossoms in Longquanyi, Chengdu are different from the gentle and beautiful peach blossoms in Jiangnan and other places, but they are full of charm, graceful and varied. In Chinese tradition, peach blossoms, like plum orchid, bamboo and chrysanthemum, are endowed with special charm and meaning. Usually, people are accustomed to associate charming and graceful peach blossoms with eroticism and sex. Its coquettish and exciting colors and fleeting flowering period just coincide with the most primitive emotional impulses in people's hearts. At that time, it coincided with the peak of Zhou Chunya's love with his third wife, which brought him a strong desire to create.

The official creation of the "Peach Blossom" series of works began in 2005. In the same year, Zhou Chunya obtained a calligraphy couplet for Gong Qinggao, a sage of the late Qing Dynasty. The title of the calligraphy couplet is "On the lake, the eyebrows are in the distance, and the peach blossoms are thin in front of the wind." In this elegant and romantic speech, Zhou Chunya realized the ambiguity, lust and vitality of the peach blossom, which is also the highest aesthetic realm pursued by his "Peach

Blossom" series. . Zhou Chunya's "Peach Blossom" series continued until 2012, during which more than 50 outstanding works were produced. Bright colors and freehand brushstrokes are the most notable features of Zhou Chunya's "Peach Blossom" series. This is also the most numerous and most influential batch of works in Zhou Chunya's artistic career so far. The "Peach Blossom" series of works created by Zhou Chunya has pushed his personal artistic style and thought to a new height, and has also attracted attention at home and abroad. Mr. Li Xianting, known as the "Godfather of Chinese Contemporary Art", said to Zhou Chunya when he commented on Zhou Chunya's "Peach Blossom" series: "Your Peach Blossom series has reached a high level, and you have transformed the tradition of Chinese literati painting through oil painting. The peach blossom is imaged, and it inherits the erotic tradition of Chinese poetry, intentionally or unintentionally. You are a modern person, you have many romantic encounters, and more importantly, you do not regard this kind of romantic encounter as a bad thing, but accept it with enthusiasm, love It is so beautiful in your heart that you can create the erotic painting image of peach blossoms, which is your greatest success [2]."

From traditional themes to the "Mountain Stone" series to the later famous Green Dog series and Peach Blossom series paintings, Zhou Chunya uses various painting themes as the matrix for his artistic expression, through a unique perspective, with the help of strong colors and heavy brushstrokes express personal temperament.

### 3. Color

An artist's special growth environment and social background form their unique artistic language [3]. Zhou Chunya has been a witness of important historical periods such as "scar" art, 85 new wave, political pop, etc., but he has never belonged to any faction. He has always maintained an independent and bold spirit in the process of creation, and has always been try hard to find your own unique position.

"The pink color that is all over the mountains and plains flows with a flirtatious charm that makes people's blood flow, making me feel the rhythm of the original life force [4]." The eclectic compositional form is a major feature of the "Peach Blossom" series of works, giving people an unrestrained spirit flamboyant feeling. Sometimes a sturdy peach blossom branch stretches straight into the picture like the arms of a mighty and majestic warrior, and sometimes the peach trees are lined up from near to far like graceful girls; Sometimes slender and beautiful; sometimes peach blossoms are blooming, coquettish and charming, sometimes withering, sad and lonely. When Zhou Chunya was working on the picture, he always painted the picture very full, but there was a blank space between the brushstrokes, similar to the blank effect in Chinese painting, so that the foundation of the canvas could be easily and naturally revealed, and the brushstrokes of the picture revealed. A strong sense of rhythm that feels relaxed and natural. In terms of color, Zhou Chunya tried his best to express his innermost feelings through color. By making subjective adjustments from aesthetics, he used green and red with strong contrast in a large area in the picture, which is full of visual tension. Green gives a feeling of vitality, purity, tranquility and relaxation, while red gives a strong impulse and excitement. In addition, Zhou Chunya, who was influenced by German Neo-Expressionism, applied the effect of the natural flow of toning oil to the picture, making the picture more bold and free and easy. The charming peach blossoms compete with each other in Zhou Chunya's pen, showing full and vigorous vitality.

### 4. Emotion

In the "Peach Blossom" series of works, most of the works depict a pair of vaguely imaged Yehe men and women under the delicate blooming peach blossoms, indulging in their innate lust. Throughout history, men, women and sex have always been the eternal themes of discussion. Zhou Chunya said that the "Peach Blossom" series depicts "sex and emotion" - the innate desire of human beings. The splendid peach blossoms and the wild red male and female figures are strangely juxtaposed. This combination dissolves the barrier between human beings and nature. It also blurs the boundary between sin and morality, indulges sincere and instinctive fantasy in a flowing color emotion, and completely releases and detonates human's natural attributes in a grand scene - gentle and violent[5]. The stimulating colors and strong contrasts of the pictures often force the audience to be unable to escape, and they have to take off their inner hypocrisy and re-examine their most genuine emotions.

"Peach Blossom Red Man" is a work he created in 2006 (see Figure 1). A peach blossom in full bloom rises from the bottom left of the picture to the top right of the picture. The strong branch divides

the picture into two, scarlet the stamens, the bright pink petals, and the peach blossoms intentionally exaggerated by the painter bloom freely in the picture, revealing a strong vitality. Behind the peach blossoms, a pair of red naked bodies are enjoying the joy of fish and water, breaking the silence of the flowers silently. It shows the instinct of life directly and without a bit of shyness, especially under the impact of the bold freehand brushstrokes and the bright red and green contrasting colors, it makes people imagine in an unconscious state, and exposes the id's impulsive response to "eroticism" . [6] Passionate men and women echo each other with wanton blooming peach blossoms, showing exuberant vitality. The two are perfectly integrated, breaking the boundaries between man and nature. The calm white and blue background forms a strong contrast with the red human body, revealing the loneliness after a burst of passion. The short flowering period is a metaphor for the reincarnation and fleetingness of life. The peach blossoms are in full bloom, implying the unease of withering, and revealing the natural freedom and limitations of all things. The blossoming of peach blossoms is the bliss of life; the falling of peach blossoms is unstoppable sadness. The peach blossoms are in full bloom for a short time as a metaphor for the vigorous and fleeting love of love, and it can also be understood as an instant gain and a loss that cannot be possessed forever. The contradiction between infinite nostalgia and physical mortality [7].



*Figure 1: Zhou Chunya, Peach Blossoms, 2006*

"Peach Blossoms Shallow Depths" (see Figure 2) is a work created by Zhou Chunya in 2010, quoted from Yuan Zhen's "Peach Blossoms" "Peach blossoms are shallow and deep, like even shades of makeup. The color atmosphere of the whole picture is fresh and bright, and the peach blossoms in full bloom are charming and moving. The blooming peach blossoms are better integrated with the blue sky and green grass in the distance, which looks natural and beautiful. In the processing of the background, the random brushstrokes reveal alternate blue and white backgrounds, making the whole picture appear atmospheric and vivid. The blooming time of peach blossoms is very short but extremely prosperous, which is in sharp contrast to the silence behind the flowers, which will make viewers feel pity and sadness. The blossoming and falling of flowers is very similar to the life course of a person from birth to youth, middle age to old age and death. "Peach Blossom" is artist Zhou Chunya's rational thinking and presentation of life.

In works such as "Peach Blossoms on the Other Shore", "A Few Branches in Spring", "Small Peach Blossoms with Thin Faces in Front of the Wind", and "Flowers Flying with the Flowing Water", the scenes of naked men and women mingling with each other have been eliminated, leaving only the description of the peach blossom itself. Zhou Chunya once said in an interview: "In the past, I painted flowers just to practice the use of color. Later, I realized that flowers themselves can also become a theme of creation." In his writing, flowers have become a very symbolic meaning. the theme, inheriting the Chinese tradition [8]. In "Peach Blossoms on the Other Shore", the painting skills are more proficient, and the smooth freehand brushstrokes reveal Zhou Chunya's passionate and unrestrained character. Against the backdrop of the plump peach blossoms, the branches appear strong and powerful, like the arms of a strong man waving in the spring breeze. Some of the peach blossoms in front are

blooming recklessly, and some are still flower bones, budding. In the distance, against the backdrop of yellowish crops, azure lake water and blue sky, it is particularly dazzling, showing strong vitality. In terms of expression techniques, there are obvious brushstrokes with traditional Chinese freehand brushstrokes, either smearing or dotting, or inadvertently hooking, pulling, poking, and rubbing. Compared with the previous works, this painting is fuller in composition and more natural in the expression of the artist's personal thoughts and emotions.



Figure 2: Zhou Chunya in the shallow depths of peach blossoms, 2010

Through the rough and bold brushstrokes in the "Peach Blossom" series, people can directly feel the painter's full passion and free-spirited character. Throughout the "Peach Blossom" series of works, we can clearly see the artist's efforts and explorations in expressing his personal artistic thoughts over the past few years.

## 5. Conclusion

When talking about his artistic creation, Zhou Chunya said: "If the picture does not reflect me, then there is no me, and the painting has failed. The key is how exciting the picture is. If it can evoke a different feeling from the audience that is different from Modigliani's, it means that I am repeating it and I have failed. If it can evoke another feeling from the audience, then that feeling is mine." [9] Zhou Chunya He was deeply influenced by German Expressionism and had a special liking for traditional Chinese literati paintings. He used Western oil painting as a medium to paint peach blossoms with freehand brushstrokes similar to those in Chinese painting. However, the peach blossoms in his paintings are contrary to the gentle and tactful peach blossoms in traditional Chinese literati paintings. Among the paintings that do not pay much attention to the object of expression and focus on expressing the subjective thoughts of the painter, Zhou Chunya's works have a very high degree of recognition, and the painter's personal symbols are vivid and unique. He used oil painting as the expression material, combined Chinese landscape complex with German expressionism, fully displayed and expressed the temperament of the Chinese people, and played a pivotal role and significance in the entire history of contemporary art.

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