

The Yi People's Customs in Gao Xiaohua's Writings

Shuang Liu

Sichuan Minzu College, Kangding, 626001, China

Abstract: Artist Gao Xiaohua is a young painter who has made outstanding contributions in the history of modern Chinese oil painting, and was once a representative of the "Sichuan School of Painting". He went to western China to find inspiration, chose the Yi people in Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture, and completed a series of paintings about the Yi people. The group paintings of "Butuo People" and "Yi People" are oil paintings created by Gao Xiaohua with the theme of the Yi nationality. This article analyzes the artistic language of Gao Xiaohua's paintings from the group paintings of "Butuo People" and "Yi People", in order to understand his painting style and to explore the social and historical value and artistic value of his oil paintings.

Keywords: Gao Xiaohua; oil painting; Yi nationality

1. Introduction

Chinese minority-themed painting is a long-standing painting topic. Since the 20th century, a large number of artists have gone into the minority areas to sketch and paint, such as: Zhang Daqian, Guan Shanyue, Ye Qianyu, Wu Zuoren, Pang Xunqin and so on. A large number of excellent works of ethnic minorities have been created, which not only greatly promotes the development of Chinese modern art, but also promotes the exchange and integration of various ethnic groups.

In the late 20th century, artists in New China became interested in minority areas, and Gao Xiaohua was one of them. Gao Xiaohua hoped to find the subject matter that best met his requirements. He set the theme of creation in Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture and went deep into Butuo County, the hinterland of Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture, to create a group of paintings called "Butuo People". The world shows the unique and charming customs of the Yi people.

2. "The Cloth Tow Man" group painting



After the founding of New China, artists who experienced the "Cultural Revolution" turned from "historical memory" to "reality questioning", focusing on new life and new construction. A group of artists were attracted by the culture, customs, clothing, accessories, characteristic buildings, pictures of hard work, and scenes of singing and dancing in the minority areas, and they became interested in the minority areas and went to these places to create paintings. Influenced by such a trend, artist Gao Xiaohua found a creative direction.

Sichuan is rich in cultural resources of ethnic minorities. After visiting Tibet, Inner Mongolia,

Xinjiang and other regions, Gao Xiaohua chose to create sketches in Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture, a place with simple folk customs and rich cultural heritage. In 1983, artist Gao Xiaohua took a bus to the Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture in western Sichuan on a snowy day, and began to understand and experience the life of the Yi people in Butuo County. Here he lives with the local Yi people, which reminds him of the place where he grew up as a child. The artist Gao Xiaohua grew up in western China. He is also very involved in life in Butuo County, and even feels a little kind.

Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture is the place with the largest population of Yi nationality in my country. The prefecture has high terrain and strong ultraviolet rays. The Yi people who have lived here for a long time are affected by the environment. Features. Butuo County is an alpine mountainous area with a very underdeveloped economy and dirt and dust everywhere. The local Yi people face the land every day to "work at sunrise and rest at sunset", and live a half-agricultural and half-pastoral life together. Country atmosphere is strong. The local Yi people are simple and hospitable. With the help of Ari Keqi, a boy from the Yi ethnic group, Gao Xiaohua travels through the streets and countryside of Butuo, looking for an ideal model. When Gao Xiaohua invited Yi people as models for his sketches, they were also very enthusiastic and honest, cooperating with artist Gao Xiaohua's sketch creation.

Gao Xiaohua created the "Butuo People" group of paintings through close-up facial portraits, depicting the life, life and living conditions of the Butuo people in the Daliang Mountains of that era. This group of paintings adopts a small-sized rectangular composition, and uses cool gray tones to make a close-up of the head of each object to be represented, and the work ignores the figure's body. Gao Xiaohua said: "There, every face of the Yi people is full of texture, which makes people feel the characterization of life by time and leave traces of history." He believes that oil paintings contain too many things that images cannot express, such as visual impact, dynamic brushstrokes and so on. [1]

Drawing on Western realistic painting techniques, the group of paintings of "Butuo People" breaks through "false, large and empty", expressing ordinary people and telling the special customs and living conditions of the Yi people in Liangshan. The painting selects the local Yi people in Butuo County, takes adult men as the main objects, and presents them in the form of portraits. Each small work is centered on the head of the character, and the background is flattened with white, or there is a little background. The faces of the characters are mainly portrayed, and the portraits of the characters are very vivid against the bright background. Gao Xiaohua used heavy texture and exaggerated techniques to depict the primitive and simple appearance of the "Yi-flavored" Butuo people, highlighting the loftiness and greatness of the working people, and also showing the painter's sympathy and respect for the working people. Each image in the picture is only a partial close-up, but it still can't hide the original ecological atmosphere hidden in the picture, the unique ethnic habits formed during the historical evolution of the Yi nationality and under the actual situation, full of "Yi-flavored" smell of tobacco and alcohol. Smell, sweat, oil, earth, the five flavors are mixed, and it is vivid in the painting.

The paintings in the "Butuo People" group have obvious anxiety and anticipation. The brushwork is extensive and dignified, which surpasses the record-style portrait sketches and forms a visual image with the artist's unique aesthetic feeling. Gao Xiaohua deeply experienced the smell of fireworks in the real world from the rich life of the Yi people, absorbed the nutrients, and turned to the concern, sympathy, and desire and understanding of traditional culture in real life." [2]

Artist Gao Xiaohua's "Butuo People" group of paintings depicts one after another simple and unpretentious cloth Tuo people with heroic brushstrokes. The expressions of each character are different, showing Gao Xiaohua's keen perception and emotion of the psychological state of the Yi people. An extremely realistic set of works.

3. "Yi People" series of paintings

Artist Gao Xiaohua once said: "If art does not repeat others, it must first not repeat itself. If art must break through others, it must first break through itself." Gao Xiaohua advocates continuous innovation and cannot be static in order to promote the development of art.

In the late 20th century, the artist Gao Xiaohua brought the group paintings of "Butuo People" with the theme of the Yi nationality to the United States, which were highly appreciated by the American art circle. During the exhibition, many people asked about the characters in Gao Xiaohua's oil paintings: "Are they Tibetans? Are they Indians?" The costumes of the characters are not enough to explain the all-round state of the depicted objects. So Gao Xiaohua decided to go back to Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture in the future to observe and experience the living habits and living conditions

of the Yi people.

A few years later, Gao Xiaohua once again created the "Yi People" series of paintings based on the Yi people. During this creation, Gao Xiaohua read a lot of books on the history and literature, and read and studied the Yi people. In order to make the image more suitable for the Yi people, Gao Xiaohua returned to Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture for inspections and sketches many times. After nearly ten years of hard work, he finally completed the "Yi People" series of paintings. The "Yi People" series of paintings focuses on women and children of the Yi nationality. With superb realistic skills and precise modeling ability, they vividly and vividly depict the characteristics, customs and living habits of the Yi people.

Gao Xiaohua's "Yi People" series of paintings was created by him in the United States. Since he had the opportunity to have close contact with the truly high-level Western oil paintings and original works of masters during his study in the United States, he carefully observed oil paintings and temporary paintings, and was especially fascinated by classical classics. The works of the painters Vermeer and Ingres, those works had a profound influence on the creation of his "Yi people" series of paintings. The "Yi People" series of paintings he created are no longer the "bitter" images of the "Moppers" group paintings, but sweet images dominated by women and children, with lyrical and quiet backgrounds, full of the taste of classical painting. Gao Xiaohua expresses the unique temperament and charm of Butuo Yi women through the depiction of women in daily life. Mr. Jin Shangyi commented on Gao Xiaohua's creation, saying that "what the author wants to capture is the unique beauty of oriental women's gentleness, tenderness, quietness and delicacy." [3]

The "Yi people" series of paintings mainly use the colors unique to the clothing of the Yi nationality, among which red, yellow and blue are used the most. The bright and dark background of Yi people's clothing, coupled with the repeated appearance of the three primary colors of red, yellow and blue in the picture, not only plays the role of echoing the picture, but also has a visual impact. These colors are harmoniously unified in the overall tone, with a simple beauty. The use of ambient color is as close to the natural color of the object as possible, and fine-tuned according to light and turning points. For example, in "Sewing", the painter placed three people who were sewing and waiting for sewing with their children on their backs in front of a house with red brick walls. The house was the original color used. There is a canvas that is pulled up by a simple drawstring above the head of the sewing person to block the wind and rain. The color tone on the canvas is slightly changed from the natural color due to the light. The three figures are dressed in Yi style clothes, mainly black and blue. The collars, cuffs of the clothes and the blankets carrying the dolls are embroidered with auspicious patterns in red, yellow and other colors. The overall color is relatively fresh. The Yi people who are sewing are serious, the people waiting to sew are carrying dolls on their backs and stand quietly with their right arms on the sewing machine to support their bodies hard work. The faces of the three figures are all blushing due to the strong ultraviolet rays of the plateau, which are presented to the audience through the painter's delicate brushstrokes.



Gao Xiaohua has conducted in-depth research on the culture of Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture. The "Yi People" series of works depicts the costumes, lacquerware, yellow umbrellas and

living customs of the Yi people, showing the beauty of Yi culture. For example, the hostess in the center of "Caravan" is holding a yellow umbrella, and the far right side is also painted with Yi people holding a yellow umbrella. The bright yellow of the umbrella is consistent with the color of the earth in the background; she and The little girls in front of them all wear pleated skirts specially decorated by the Yi people, with blue and red matching; the women in the middle wear long silver ear cords on their ears, and a rectangular silver ornament on their necks. It looks very pure against the black top. Gao Xiaohua used artistic techniques to deal with the pleated skirts of Yi women and matched them with slender white ear threads, emphasizing the slim and straight line beauty of women, and endowing women with a noble and elegant temperament.

Another example is "Girl with a Wooden Bird", a bust depicting a girl from the Yi nationality. Gao Xiaohua used classical expression techniques to carefully describe the hats, earrings, hand accessories worn by the Yi girls, the tops they wore, and the lacquerware they placed, making them elegant, delicate and delicate. Hats, earrings, jewelry, clothing, lacquerware and other objects are typical representatives of Yi culture in shape, color, pattern and symbols. Gao Xiaohua's "Yi People Series" creation is based on his in-depth research on Yi culture. He uses Yi costumes, yellow umbrellas, lacquerware, etc. for symbolic expression, and shows the charm of Yi culture in an aesthetically pleasing way. The depiction of cultural symbols of ethnic minorities in Gao Xiaohua's "Yi People" series of paintings visually presents the beauty of Yi ethnic art. Works such as "Girl with a Wooden Bird", "Mother and Son" and "Warm Winter" were created by artist Gao Xiaohua when he was abroad, and also expressed his longing for his hometown and the spread and inheritance of Yi culture. Jin Shangyi commented in "Selected Oil Paintings of Gao Xiaohua Yi People": "Although he does not think that he is deliberately pursuing the nationalization of oil painting, in his oil painting works with academic temperament, the national spirit that flows naturally appears." [4]



4. Conclusion

China in the 20th century was an era of rapid development and the coexistence of primitive legacy. Gao Xiaohua's paintings focus on the people at the bottom of China's social transformation from the perspectives of the real life and national culture of ethnic minorities. This theme is very stable. Whether it is Gao Xiaohua's works created abroad or in China, it all reflects his care and sympathy for people in society, and gives his works a human touch. In his works, there are nostalgia for the past, as well as attachment and deep affection for the gradually lost traditional culture. Out of this feeling, the author wants to convey a hazy ideal beauty.

China's ethnic minorities have rich and colorful cultures, and each ethnic group has corresponding cultural customs. Even the same ethnic group will have many cultural differences due to regional differences. Before creating, artists should go deep into ethnic areas, pay attention to the cultural

factors behind ethnic costumes, architecture, rituals, and beliefs with a rigorous academic attitude, and accurately grasp the aesthetic connotation and characteristics of ethnic minority cultural symbols.

In this era of rapid development, the culture of ethnic minorities also needs to be constantly developed and innovated. The creation of ethnic minorities is also the inheritance and promotion of their culture, so that more people can understand the culture of ethnic minorities, enhance ethnic unity, and strengthen ethnic strength.

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