

# “Passive” and “Active”: Discussing Two Modes of Traditional Art Education Based on Chinese Art Concept

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## ABSTRACT

The two concepts of "passive" and "active" of Chinese traditional art breed two modes of "passive" and "active" of art education, which contains the theoretical basis of constructing two modes of traditional art education: cultural consciousness. Based on the consciousness of art, traditional Chinese art education can be divided into "passive" and "active". The former was mature from the pre Qin to the Former and Later Han dynasties, and the latter was formed in the Wei, Jin, southern and Northern Dynasties. The signs of its maturity and formation are: both created corresponding artistic practice and theoretical achievements, and established their relationship of the succession of teachings from a master to his disciples. The difference between "passive" and "active" is that the former creates and establishes the relationship between art achievements and the succession of teachings from a master to his disciples based on social culture, while the latter forms the relationship between art achievements and the succession of teachings from a master to his disciples centered on art.

**Keywords:** *traditional culture, artistic concept, the fine arts education, passive and active mode, master to apprentice inheritance*

## 1. Introduction

The two artistic concepts of "passive" and "active" in Chinese art can be used as a theoretical resource to explore the traditional art education mode[1]. The two artistic concepts of "passive" and "active" in Chinese art can be used as a theoretical resource to explore the traditional art education mode. Its basic theory is: first, these two kinds of art concepts contain the basic problems of art theories, such as cultural consciousness, art independence, art history classification, etc., which are the theoretical key to explore the art education mode; second, these two kinds of art concepts gestate the logical structure and development mode of "passive" and "active" art, and the traditional art education is no exception.

In the development of Chinese traditional art education, there are two different cultural concepts, one is social culture, the other is artistic concept. With social culture as the clue, Chinese traditional art education presents a mode based on the past dynasties' society and ideology; With the clue of art concept, Chinese traditional art education presents a model centered on "art". There is an internal logical relationship between these two modes and the artistic concepts of "passive" and "active" in Chinese art. The key is "cultural consciousness". Based on the consciousness of art, traditional art education can be divided into "passive" and "active" forms.

## 2. Two artistic concepts in ancient China and art education

The concept of art is the thought and theory that human beings master art. Chinese art concept mainly includes "passive art" concept and "active art" concept, which involve two important art and cultural issues: first, cultural consciousness; second, different types of art history, namely "art history" and "study history with art materials and phenomena". Based on the consciousness of culture, we can regard the Wei, Jin, southern and Northern Dynasties as the forming period of the concept of "active art", because it is an era of "awakening of human beings" and "consciousness of literature"; based on the different types of art history, we can define the research object of "active art" concept as "noumenon" of art[2]. The research object of the concept of "passive art" is defined as other cultures subordinate to art, such as witchcraft, totem, etiquette, politics, etc. All in all, it can be attributed to the consciousness of culture. In this way, cultural consciousness becomes the basis for judging two kinds of artistic concepts, distinguishing "the history of art" and "studying history with artistic materials and phenomena". The concept of "passive art" was born in the primitive era and has continued for a long time. In this historical process, the concept of "passive art" rarely shows the consciousness of art, but depends on other cultures. The concept of

"passive art" originates from "human intervention in the power of the unknown field between heaven and earth"[3]. The cultural concept of human intervention in the unknown field comes from ancient Chinese witchcraft, totem, myth, etiquette, politics, etc. Under the influence of these cultural concepts, many ancient arts are not really "aesthetic" art, but "art" subordinate to culture. The spiritual and cultural concepts and creative methods contained in this kind of art are not from the "noumenon" of art, but from the subordinate culture of art. Therefore, from the contemporary academic standpoint, this kind of art can be explained by different cultures, such as western culture, religious culture, etc. at the same time, this kind of art is also an important historical material and image evidence for studying art and various cultures.

The concept of "active art" is an idea based on art noumenon. This kind of thought is only applicable to artistic creation, aesthetic and other special artistic activities, and generally does not have other functions. Art based on this artistic concept is a special form and special thing. In other words, the active art is not the historical data and image evidence of human understanding of the world, because this kind of art has the nature of not following the history, surpassing life and departing from reality. It is not an accessory of society, life and reality, but an aesthetic form of artists' expression and sustenance of individual personality and interest, such as calligraphy, literati painting, etc. This active concept of art constitutes the basic characteristics of Chinese art and the important difference between Chinese art and other arts.

Of course, it needs to be explained that the two artistic concepts of "passive" and "active" are relative. Since the Wei and Jin Dynasties, these two kinds of artistic concepts coexist in the history of art. In its development process, there are many overlaps, even a complex situation that is difficult to distinguish. Under the influence of these two artistic concepts, all kinds of artistic phenomena also present the logical structure and development mode of "passive" and "active", and art education is no exception.

Chinese traditional art education as a whole embodies the way of "master apprentice inheritance". With the development of art culture and the enrichment of art documents and image materials, the traditional art education of "master apprentice inheritance" gradually shows a broader meaning. "Teacher" refers to master (teacher), art relics, or "ancient" and "nature", or "art culture" in general, or even various cultures; The objects of "transmission" and "inheritance" are not only art skills and techniques, but also art concepts, even social and political cultures; "Inheritance" is not only "inheritance", but also "innovation"; the object of "inheritance" is not only art, but also art's "cultural space" and "art spirit". Therefore, the traditional art education has rich connotation. The logic system that promotes the formation, develop and evolution of the rich connotation of traditional art education is the mode of traditional art education.

As an important development mode of traditional art education, master apprentice inheritance is an important way of art inheritance, talent training, aesthetic creation and art creation. This mode, since the birth of the primitive

society, shows two different cultural concepts in its development process, one is social culture, the other is art culture. With social culture as the clue, traditional art education presents a mode based on social culture; with art culture as the clue, traditional art education forms a mode centered on art. These two modes have an internal logical connection with the two artistic concepts of "passive" and "active". It can be said that, based on the consciousness of art based on cultural consciousness, traditional art education has formed two modes of "passive" and "active".

### 3. Model One: "Passive" Art Education

"Passive" art education, that is, art education mode subordinate to social culture, is a logical system of art education, which is centered on the social culture subordinate to art. The practical result of this mode -- art form, not art consciously, but art assisting other cultures; The mentoring relationship in this model is not a relationship centered on fine arts, but a relationship based on social culture. The model of art education theory, not to art or art education as the center, but around the elaboration and play of social culture, only in the content will involve art and art education.

"Passive" art education and "passive" art concept have the same development path. Their origins can be traced back to the original era. In the Pre-Qin and Former and Later Han dynasties, they developed into a mature mode. After the Wei and Jin Dynasties, they crossed and overlapped with the "active" art education mode.

From the perspective of prehistoric painted pottery, jade, rock painting, and the regular inheritance of the shape and pattern of the original painted pottery, it can be inferred that there was an art education between parents and children, tribal leaders and members in the primitive society. To interpret the art education in the primitive society, we can think that it is based on the art education of witchcraft culture in the society at that time, that is, "passive" art education. First, the educational relationship between parents and children, tribal leaders and members is not art centered. Second, the results of art education, such as painted pottery, jade, rock art, are not conscious art, but subordinate to other cultures. In this sense, the art education in the primitive society is a "passive" art education attached to the witchcraft culture.

"Passive" art education developed into a mature art education mode in the Pre-Qin and Former and Later Han dynasties. Its mature signs include: first, the emergence of bronzes, Terra Cotta Warriors of the Qin mausoleum, sculpture of the Han Dynasty, stone portraits, brick portraits and other art forms; second, the emergence of the achievement of "KAOGONGJI" with the attribute of art teaching materials; third, the establishment of a "teacher-student relationship" based on social culture.

These achievements have also become an important basis for the interpretation of the characteristics of "passive" art education in this period. In a word, the practical achievements of art education are all "passive" arts that belong to specific social, political and other cultures. The

second is "KAOGONGJI" similar to art teaching materials, which is not an art centered work, but a "passive" art teaching material. Third, the relationship between master and apprentice and the "GONGSHI" and "BAIGONG" in art creation are the "passive" participants in art education and creation.

First of all, the "passivity" of practical achievements in art education. Examining the works of art in the pre Qin and Former and Later Han dynasties is not a conscious art. For example, the terra cotta warriors and horses of the Qin Dynasty, on the whole, have a huge momentum, but from a specific image, these terra cotta warriors are some rigid and sluggish looking terra cotta warriors. This effect is related to Qin Shihuang's great spirit of "one person in the world" and his life concept of fearing death and pursuing the integration of life and death. In other words, the terracotta warriors show a cultural concept of life and death, ghosts and gods mixed with the world.

Secondly, "KAOGONGJI" as a "passive" art teaching materials. Indeed, "KAOGONGJI" is an ancient book based on the experience, knowledge and technical specifications of creation at that time. In this respect, the book can be regarded as an art teaching material. However, this is only a "passive" art teaching material. Because the contents of art and art education involved in this book are not art centered documents, but "craftsman system", which belongs to "craftsman that promulgates process specifications and imparts experience and skills"[4]. If "KAOGONGJI" is regarded as an art teaching material, it is just a collection of dogma form education methods, and "BAIGONG" is only in the "passive" state of "creation".

Finally, the relationship between master and apprentice and the passivity of art creation. There are two kinds of participants in art education and creation in the Pre-Qin and Former and Later Han dynasties, one is the aristocrat, the other is the maker of "GONGSHI" and "BAIGONG". The former is the controller of art education and creation, the owner of art discourse, the latter is mainly the owner of art skills, the direct producer of art works, and the direct participant of art education. Although the "GONGSHI" and "BAIGONG" directly manufacture the art works and directly participate in the art education, they do not have the right to speak for the art education and creation. Therefore, "GONGSHI" and "BAIGONG" are only the creators of "passive" art and the "passive" participants in art education. This "passivity" causes the "passivity" of the relationship between teachers and successors and the creation of fine arts.

The above is not only the state of art education from the primitive society to the pre-Qin and Han dynasties, but also the symbol of the formation and maturity of "passive" art education, and at the same time, it is an important basis to interpret the characteristics of "passive" art education. The "passive" mode of art education developed well in this period. In the subsequent evolution process, on the one hand, it was closely combined with social, political and other cultures, and on the other hand, it was integrated with the "active" art education. Specifically, it was further developed in the Buddhist sculpture activities from the Wei and Jin dynasties to the Sui and Tang dynasties, and

interacted with the "active" art education in the painting institutes and painting activities of the Five Dynasties and the Song Dynasty, which gradually declined in the Yuan and Ming dynasties.

#### **4. Mode two: "active" art education**

"Active" art education, that is, art education mode of conscious development, it is an education system centered on art. The mode can be interpreted from two aspects: the behavior and the result of art education. On the one hand, Master and apprentice establish a kind of art centered relationship; on the other hand, the theoretical results of art education show a theoretical consciousness, and the practical results show an independent form. These two aspects become the basis of constructing the "active" art education mode, and are also important factors to interpret the characteristics of the "active" art education mode. The characteristics of this education mode can be summed up by the key words of "consciousness" and "independence", which are mainly manifested in the behavior consciousness and result independence of art education.

The development path of "active" art education is consistent with that of "active" art concept, that is, it was formed in the period of Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties. The signs of its formation are as follows: first, a close Master and apprentice relationship centered on fine arts has been established; second, a conscious theory of fine arts has been created, especially a similar book of fine arts teaching materials "The popular praise of painting in the Wei and Jin Dynasties"; third, an independent artistic form has been formed, such as calligraphy and literati painting. These three aspects are not only the sign of the formation of "active" art education in the period of Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties, but also its achievements, and also the key to explain its characteristics.

First of all, the self-consciousness of teacher-student relationship. It is recorded in the records of famous paintings of all dynasties: Sima Shao, Emperor Ming of Jin, followed Wang Zhen, Wei Xie followed Cao Buxing, Gu Kaizhi, Zhang Mo and Xun Xu followed Wei Xie, Dai Kui followed Fan Xuan, Dai Kui's son, Dai Bo and Dai Bo's younger brother Dai Yong, and at the same time, followed his father, etc[5].

The relationship can be divided into three categories: one is the family succession; the other is the vertical succession, the most prominent feature of which is the "generation separation" between painters; the third is the horizontal succession, which mainly refers to the "mutual imitation" and "turn benefit many divisions" between painters[6]. For example, Gu Kaizhi, Zhang Mo and Xun Xu all took the Wei Xie as their teachers, and all four were painters of the Western Jin Dynasty. The inner essence of these inherited is "the consciousness of art". For example, the key to the establishment of "mutual imitation" and "turn benefit many divisions" of horizontal inheritance is the consciousness of creation. Only the conscious art creation can lead to the occurrence of multi teacher,

imitation and choice. In a word, all these inherited relationships are based on art consciousness.

Secondly, the consciousness of art theory. Mainly reflected in the emergence of a large number of art theories, the in-depth interpretation of art ontology, function, aesthetics and other issues that highlight art consciousness, especially the arisen of the "The popular praise of painting in the Wei and Jin Dynasties" with the nature of art teaching material.

A large number of art theories emerged. First, metaphysicians and literati in the Wei, Jin, southern and Northern Dynasties talked about art, and literature, philosophy, aesthetics and other works discussed art endlessly. Second, there were many special works about art, such as Xie He's ancient paintings, Zongbing's landscape painting preface, Wang Wei's description of painting and so on.

These art theories have made an in-depth analysis of the problem of painting consciousness, these art theories are the key to the consciousness of art theory. For example, Gu Kaizhi's theory of "vivid depiction" deeply discusses the creation and aesthetic problems of figure painting, Wang Wei's "drawing the body of space with a pen", Yaozui's "imitating nature with heart" and other propositions, discussed the creation of painting and other issues. Xie He's "six methods" are not only the creation principle of painting, but also the criticism standard of painting[8]. Zong Bing's theory that "the mind is empty and the mind is quiet, and the mind can travel thousands of miles while sitting and watching painting" deeply discusses the aesthetic and functional problems of landscape painting. The above shows the consciousness of painting. The basic setting of these theories for painting consciousness is that painting is an independent spiritual category, and a special form of reposing the personality and interest of the author.

The emergence of Gu Kaizhi's "The popular praise of painting in the Wei and Jin Dynasties" is a sign of art education consciousness in this period. In the book, Gu Kaizhi discusses the key points of "copying" from the selection of model and copy, the relationship between hands and eyes, the application of ink and color, and the priority of pen use. It is particularly noteworthy that there are two important messages about the theory of art education in "The popular praise of painting in the Wei and Jin Dynasties": first, "the size of many paintings I have created is two feet and three inches"[9], Gu Kaizhi narrates the size of his paintings as the first person, combining with the first sentence of the article, "anyone who is going to make a copy should first explore the following points"[9], we can see that Gu is telling disciple he knows the size of his own painting. When you copy it, you should "look for it first". It can be concluded that Gu's painting is a model for teaching his disciples to draw. It also shows from one side that Gu Kaizhi wrote "The popular praise of painting in the Wei and Jin Dynasties" on the basis of his painting and educational practice; Secondly, "the gain and loss of one image, if you don't understand the magic of" right ", Gu Kaizhi expounds the painting theory of" communicating with God "in the theory of" imitating ", which also fully embodies the unique educational wisdom.

Therefore, it can be said that "The popular praise of painting in the Wei and Jin Dynasties" is a self-conscious art education document[9].

Finally, the consciousness of art education practice results. Calligraphy and painting, the unique art form of China, present a conscious aesthetic pursuit in this period. Calligraphy, in particular, shows a strong sense of self-consciousness and independence, which is embodied in "the emergence of a large number of works; the formation of a universal style; the quality of works reaches the peak; the formation of classic norms"[10]. There are many explanations given by predecessors. I will not elaborate on them. In this period of painting, there are no popular paintings. We can feel the consciousness of painting from some related documents. For example, Wang Wei is good at painting and calligraphy" I like mountains and rivers. When I go for it, I feel like it"[11]. "Shi daoshuo and Wang Wei learned from xunxu and weixie together, Wang Wei got xunxu and weixie's similarity in spirit, Shi daoshuo got xunxu and weixie's similarity in shape"[12], and his understanding of painting realm "flying in spirit, mighty in thought"[13]. It can be seen that Wang Wei's landscape painting should win by "meaning", and it is the aesthetic form of the author's freeing spirit, being suitable, trusting spirit and expressing spiritual realm. Therefore, the paintings of Wang Wei and others are a kind of art form to express personal interest and emphasize individual spiritual realm, which is a kind of conscious art.

According to the relationship between teachers and students, the theory of fine arts and the consciousness of practical achievements in the phenomenon of Fine Arts in the Wei, Jin, southern and Northern Dynasties, the "active" mode of fine arts education has been formed in this period. These three aspects of self-consciousness are not only the standard of forming the "active" art education mode, but also the result of the "active" art education mode, and the key to explaining the characteristics of the "active" art education mode.

In the course of its development, the art education mode of "active" and the literati art and literati cultural activities have mutual assistance. With the evolution of literati painting, it presents a trend of development, prosperity and decline, that is, it reached the peak in Song and Yuan Dynasties, and declined in the late Qing Dynasty after the development of Ming and Qing Dynasties. At the same time, the art education mode of "active" and "passive" presents overlapping. In the art academies and painting learning activities of the Five Dynasties and the two Song Dynasties, the art education mode of "active" and "passive" presents a harmonious art phenomenon.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Generally speaking, the two artistic concepts of "passive" and "active" of Chinese traditional art, on the one hand, breed different development modes of "passive" and "active" of various artistic phenomena. on the other hand, contain important artistic theoretical problems such as

cultural consciousness and different types of art history, These theories are the key to the construction of "passive" and "active" art education models. Based on the consciousness of fine arts based on cultural consciousness, there are two education modes in traditional Chinese Fine Arts Education: "passive" and "active". The former was formed in the primitive society, mature in the Pre-Qin and Han Dynasties, and the latter in the Wei, Jin, southern and Northern Dynasties. In the later development process, the two show a kind of overlapping phenomenon. As far as their respective characteristics are concerned, the practice and theoretical achievements of art education, as well as the established relationship between teachers and students, are the literature materials and image evidences to interpret the two modes of art education. The corresponding practical achievements, theoretical achievements and teacher-student relationship are different from "passive" and "active". The creation and establishment of the "passive" art education mode is based on the art achievement and teacher-student relationship of social culture; the creation and establishment of the "active" art education mode is a kind of art achievement and teacher-student relationship centered on "art". To clarify the formation, maturity and characteristics of the two modes of art education will help us to further understand the theoretical character and significance of traditional art education and make it more capable of interpreting Chinese history and culture.

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