

Observing the Photorealism Painting Through Zheng Xie's "Bamboo Syllogism"

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ABSTRACT

Modern art has developed for nearly a hundred years, and the art of painting has broken through the "three-dimension" and moved towards the "multi-dimension", and paintings in various forms of expression emerge in endlessly. The traditional mode of artistic thinking no longer allows people to fully understand the essence of art. Photorealism, which originated in the United States in the 1970s, is still sought after by many artists, but there are also estheticians who have questioned this and they believe that photorealism suppresses the subjectivity of painters and is "pseudo art." This paper takes the Chinese traditional aesthetic thought "bamboo syllogism" as a perspective to explain photorealism painting. Through comprehensive analysis and comparative research methods, this paper analyzes the photorealism painting, and explains it with case analysis method, and finally analyzes the "spirit" of the photorealism painting art.

Keywords: *the bamboo in the eye, the bamboo in the chest, the bamboo in the hand, photorealism painting*

I. INTRODUCTION

Zheng Xie, the leader of the "Eight Eccentrics of Yangzhou" in the Qing Dynasty, once stated in "Banqiao's Inscription on Orchid and Bamboo" that, "I woke up early to admire bamboo in the riverside inn in autumn. In the morning, the smoke, the shadow of the sun, and the steam of dew were floating among the scattered bamboo branches and dense bamboo leaves. Appreciating such a beautiful scenery, I couldn't help being inspired by a strong desire to paint. Actually, the bamboo that I wanted to draw in my heart is not the bamboo that I saw in my eyes. So when I was just ready to write after grinding some ink and unfolding the paper, the painting I drew always changed suddenly, not as good as expected. This was because the bamboo drawn by my hand was not the bamboo that I wanted to draw. All in all, the imaginary artistic conception will always surpass the sentiment in the painting. This is the unchangeable law. And the interesting charm expressed beyond the fixed format painting method is a kind of external mechanism that can be understood beyond the world. Only in the world of painting can there be such a performance." [1]

He expounds the relationship between nature, subjective thoughts, and works, and vividly summarizes the three processes of artistic creation, which is later called the "bamboo syllogism", that is, from "bamboo in the eyes" to "bamboo in the chest" and then to "bamboo in the hand", laying a theoretical foundation for the formation of traditional Chinese aesthetics.

II. MAIN BODY

After the industrial revolution, the world has developed towards globalization, integration, and intelligence. The technological level has been continuously improved. And the appearance of cameras has made people doubt traditional paintings. In the general environment, the photorealism storm in the United States in the 1970s happened to fulfill Danner's statement that "the production of artworks depends on the spirit of the times and surrounding customs". The main feature of photorealism is to use modern photographic techniques to make objective and realistic depictions of photographic results. Intuitively speaking, it is a realistic style based on photos and extremely clear descriptions of objects. Because of the particularity of the creative process and the works created, photorealism painting was not recognized by people for a long time, and some people even criticized it for not being artistic.

As everyone knows, art expresses the author's thoughts, feelings, outlook on life, and world outlook through specific vehicles and media, and painting is only one of the expression languages. "Bamboo syllogism" originated from the East, and photorealism painting originated from the West. In a certain context, it represents the difference between Chinese and Western cultures. Westerners often like to do art for the sake of art, and their works are aristocratic and pay special attention to the beauty of form, while Chinese people like the freedom of Chuang-tzu, pure and simple

life, and pursuit of pure and simple beauty, and their works have a strong informality. Faced with various differences, this paper tries to use Zheng Xie's "bamboo syllogism" to observe photorealism painting, re-examine the conjunction between "bamboo syllogism" and "photorealism painting" from different angles, and find the tacit understanding of art.

A. *The bamboo in the eye*

The bamboo in the eye, the real bamboo in nature, and the things seen in the eyes are the "nature". Painting belongs to visual art. In short, it depicts the real objects seen by the eyes on the medium. "Seeing" is its most important feature. Therefore, Zheng Xie believes that "the bamboo in the eye" is the first step in painting. To paint, one must first draw on the "nature" seen by the eyes and it is impossible to paint without objective objects. And the "bamboo in the eyes" of surrealist painting is actually a photo, which uses the photo as the only objective object in the painting. According to Heidegger's understanding, although the photo exists in nature, it is man-made object. It seems to be a bit contrary to "nature" in this way. However, if the painter wants to take a photo, he must first take the "object" from the nature, and this "object" is the "object" that the painter carefully displays according to his own thoughts and ideas, and in this way, it is not difficult to understand that photos are also objective objects in "nature". The "managing position" in Xie He's "theory of six principles of painting" of the Southern Qi Dynasty actually refers to the "objects" in photorealism. Here, the painter painstakingly manages thoughts, feelings, and inspirations and condenses them in "objects", then takes photos, and then uses the painting techniques he has mastered to paint them. The photo is actually the "bamboo in the eyes", which is basically consistent with Zheng Xie's understanding of the "bamboo in the eyes". However, if the step of taking "objects" is omitted, in other words, if one steals other people's photographic works to create works, then the artistry of photorealism painting at this time appears pale and weak. Therefore, the author believes that the prerequisite for photorealism painting is to conceive the "object" and recreate the work in order to reflect its artistry and ontology.

B. *The bamboo in the chest*

The bamboo in the chest and the bamboo in the painter's mind are the subjective thoughts. When the painter sees bamboo, he will think about how to paint the bamboo, and he will have an idea of what to paint. For example, he will know how to compose the picture, how big the picture is, and what material to use, etc. As the saying goes, "having a well-thought-out plan, thoughts' going ahead of pens", the soul of a good painting lies here, and it embodies all the painter's artistic accomplishments and subjective feelings. And

the photorealism painting is based on the composition, color, shape, line and other information provided by the photos. It seems that the process of "bamboo in the chest" is not reflected at all. This is the fundamental reason why people criticize the lack of artistry of the photorealism painting.

But it's not true. Before there were no photos, photorealism painting had already conceived the composition, color, and shape of the picture. The painter had already thought of all the objects that should be represented in his heart. Of course, those who steal other people's photography works are excluded. Here, photorealism painting actually has the "bamboo in the chest" first and then has the "bamboo in the eyes", so it appears that there is no "bamboo in the chest" process.

C. *The bamboo in the hand*

The bamboo in the hand is the work itself. The appearance of the works is based on the premise of "bamboo in the eyes" and "bamboo in the chest". After the first two steps of brewing, works with their own unique language are gradually created. But "the bamboo in the hand" is different from the "bamboo in the eyes" and the "bamboo in the chest". "Bamboo in the hand" is not only different from nature, but also different from the objects conceived in the heart. Because usually painters "have grandiose aims but puny abilities", and if they "have grandiose abilities but puny aims", they will become artisan-painters.

Danner once said: "The purpose of an artwork is to express a major or prominent feature, that is, an important concept, which is more clearly and completely expressed than actual objects. In order to achieve this, the artwork must be a totality composed of many interconnected parts, and the relationship between the various parts is changed in a planned way"[2]. The artwork here is what Zheng Xie calls the "bamboo in the hand". In photorealism painting, the quality of the work directly depends on the superb level of the painter's drawing skills. A painter with good skill draws more figurative and finer details than photos, and in fact he expresses more clearly and completely than actual objects. For example, the early works of Leng Jun, a leading figure in Chinese realism painting, were photorealism paintings. The fineness of the pictures he painted completely exceeded the pixel limit of contemporary mainstream cameras. On the contrary, painters with poor skills can't fully express photos.

So does a painter with good skills "have grandiose abilities but puny aims"? Does a painter with poor skill "have grandiose aims but puny abilities"? In fact, a painter with good skill draws more detailed than photos, which means that he has superb skills, which has gone beyond the scope of photos, and is another innovation. He zooms in on the details, which derive

from photos but are higher than photos and are beyond reality. In a sense, it also belongs to surrealism. It expresses more clearly and completely than actual objects. This is the charm of photorealism paintings. However, painters with poor skills have not yet reached the height of photorealism painting.

In Xie He's "theory of six principles of painting" of the Southern Qi Dynasty, "vivid artistic conception" is its essence. He believes that the "bamboo in the hand" must be vivid to have "strength of character". And the photorealism painting emphasizes the reproduction of photos, transcending photos. Its "strength of character" is embodied in the depicted individuals, and the "strength of character" is reflected in more fine details. One is humane, and the other is more objective.

III. CONCLUSION

To sum up, in fact, photorealism painting requires painter to first have the "bamboo in the chest" and then the "bamboo in the eyes" is obtained by taking pictures and finally the "bamboo in the hand" is presented. It is also the continuous sublimation of these three processes, from which real works of art beyond reality can be obtained. A Western classical philosopher once said that painting is a process of "self-rape". One needs to "rape" himself dozens or even hundreds of times, until "he is a mass of bruises", then the work appears. How to understand this undisguised and incisive remark? Borrowing from Zheng Xie's "bamboo syllogism", during the painting process, the painter first sees the "bamboo in the eyes" and then thinks of the "bamboo in the chest", and later, "the bamboo in the hand" of the work will appear. When you are in the process of painting, you will find that the "bamboo in the hand" simply can't reach the artistic height of "bamboo in the eyes" and "bamboo in the chest". Through constant modification, the painter forces himself to change the "bamboo in the hand" to be more like "bamboo in the eye" or "bamboo in the chest", and the repeated modification is a process of "rape". After making countless revisions, the painter's accumulated artistic accomplishments in his life are all used up, and he doesn't know how to start, and the work finally appears. This "rape" process and Zheng Xie's "bamboo syllogism" are actually similar in different ways, but Western philosophers understand it as a relatively dynamic process, and Zheng Xie's "bamboo syllogism" is a relatively static process. It is not difficult to find that despite the large differences between Chinese and Western cultures, the ideas of artistic works from conception to creation to presentation are basically the same. Therefore, works of art are the embodiment of human civilization and are unique wealth of mankind.

Today, when painting expressions are diverse and show great crossover, great integration, and great tolerance, the prosperity of painting represents the

extremely high material level of people. In the spiritual world, people hope to see paintings in various forms of expression. Whether it is the elegant Chinese paintings of informality or the extremely detailed photorealism painting, it brings people spiritual enjoyment. However, out of consideration for the purity of painting, the author believes that the "bamboo in the hand" of current Chinese painting should pay more attention to the individual's subjective emotional expression, adhere to the Chinese artistic spirit of "vivid artistic conception", the basic idea of "managing position" and the artistic concept of not forgetting the original intention, and keep improving to shape contemporary Chinese painting art.

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