

# The Artistic Conception Beauty of "Poetic Dwelling" in Modern Chinese Ceramic Art

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## ABSTRACT

Heidegger's ontological aesthetics transcends the dichotomy of subject and object, which is very different from the traditional metaphysical aesthetics of the West, and is closer to the aesthetic spirit of Eastern philosophy — "artistic conception" (意境). As the aesthetic embodiment of the philosophical wisdom of "harmony between man and nature", "artistic conception" represents the highest theoretical achievement of Chinese classical poetics and aesthetics. Artistic conception is an extremely rich and brilliant achievement of aesthetic culture and it is a universal aesthetic theory in the laws of Chinese artistic creation and appreciation. The beauty of artistic conception is also naturally reflected in Chinese modern ceramic works. The artistic conception has several characteristics of being "empty and full", "poetic", etc., which secretly are in harmony with Heidegger's existentialistic aesthetics, as if a dialogue spanning time and space across a thousand years. Thereby, the artistic spirit of the East and the West can exchange and dialogue, and it is precisely through this dialogue that people can reveal the beauty of the artistic conception of the "poetic dwelling" of modern Chinese ceramics.

**Keywords:** Modern ceramic art, Poetic dwelling, Artistic conception, Aesthetics.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Heidegger played an important role in the history of Western philosophy because he broke through the metaphysical thinking and the dichotomy of subject and object that had long dominated Western philosophy. Western philosophy has a traditional cognition that human beings have the subjectivity of cognition. Everything in the world, except human beings, is placed outside the subject and becomes the object of cognition of human beings (the subject), with the result that the whole world becomes an objectified object, located outside the subject. Heidegger believed that it was necessary to return to the philosophy of the ancient Greek era, especially Parmenides' basic idea of "identity of thinking and being", to change this dichotomy of thinking and being. In fact, "identity of thinking and being" doesn't mean that the subject and the object are the same, but the existence is revealed through human activities, there is no such thing as a dichotomy between subject and object, and man is the display and disclosure of being.

## 2. HEIDEGGER'S "POETIC DWELLING"

Heidegger's super-dichotomous mode of thinking has important aesthetic breakthrough significance. He fundamentally criticized the imitation tradition of dualistic opposition between subject and object, and believed that non-objective and non-object "thinking" must be used to open the door to a new aesthetic world, or that the world itself is an aesthetic world. Based on this logic, Heidegger proposed a new theory of language. He believed that it is wrong to only treat language as a tool for logical deduction and expressing ideas. Language itself is an existence and it should not be obscured from its essence and aesthetic connotations by what it expresses, while the question of the essence of language can clarify the state of human existence. Heidegger wrote: "The essence of language is not merely a tool of understanding. This rule fails to touch the essence of language at all, but only points out a result of the essence of language. Language is not only one of the many tools that people have; on the contrary, only language offers the possibility of being in a

state of openness. Only language can own the world". [1] Language is by no means just a tool used by people to express. Language itself is an existence. Words are not just abstract symbols, but "traces" left or engraved on everything in the world. This trace keeps everything in the world in a clear and open state of existence, and also gives human beings a path to understand their own "existence". That's why Heidegger said, "Language is the home of existence".

This concept is of extraordinary significance. At this moment, people deeply realize the meaning of language as existence itself, which not only serves the object that language wants to express, but is the very ontology of existence. So it is not a world of subject and object, but a world in the sense of phenomenology, a field of existence, and "what is actually 'living' here". [2] Heidegger embodied the world. He said: "Map games call the purity of heaven and earth, gods, and human beings the world". [3]

As a result, Heidegger, based on the existence of "Dasein", sought a philosophical mode of thinking with the goal of poetic dwelling. In addition, art language, as the way of existence itself, allowed people to find "the home of existence", and in the world of art language, people lived in a "poetic dwelling". This kind of thinking of seeking a poetic homeland found a spiritual harbor for those modern human beings who had been forced into a dead end by extreme modernity. From this, people began to reflect on their own way of being as "human beings", began to reflect on the deep-seated problems of the Western traditional metaphysical way of thinking, and found that it had some similarities with the spirit of distant Eastern philosophy.

### **3. THE BEAUTY OF CHINESE ARTISTIC CONCEPTION**

As mentioned earlier, the poetic dwelling and the Eastern philosophical spirit coincide. The Eastern philosophical spirit is pre-modern in general and is fundamentally different from existential aesthetics, but they do have similarities. The most representative ones are the "harmony between man and nature" in the spirit of Chinese philosophy and the "artistic conception" in the spirit of Chinese art.

"Artistic conception" is the core concept of the Chinese artistic spirit, and it has a high degree of compatibility with the Chinese philosophical spirit

of "harmony between man and nature". The term "artistic conception" was first proposed in the Tang Dynasty and was derived from "imagery". In modern times, Wang Guowei refined and explained it theoretically, making it the highest state of Chinese traditional art spirit and the highest theoretical generalization of the inherent nature of art. [4]

There are two concepts in the artistic conception, "emotion in harmony with surrounding" (意与境浑) and the "harmony of art and Taoism" (艺与道谐). Among them, "emotion in harmony with surrounding" emphasizes the artistic experience of the unity of subject and object of "emotion" and "surrounding", and "harmony of art and Taoism" emphasizes that art is a harmonious way of existence. In these two aspects, the Chinese artistic conception aesthetics and Heidegger's existentialist aesthetics are secretly compatible, providing an opportunity for the exchange and dialogue between Chinese and Western aesthetics.

The birth of the artistic conception requires the integration of the subject's subjective feelings and the object to achieve the degree of mutual integration, creating an artistic realm of "harmony between man and nature". It is still an important category in the aesthetic system. "The concrete life of the universe is the object, and it is to enjoy its color, order, rhythm and harmony, so as to catch a glimpse of the deepest reflection of the self; to turn a real scene into a virtual environment, create an image as a symbol, and embody and materialize the most distant soul of mankind, is what is called the 'artistic realm'. The realm of art lies in beauty". [5]

This passage shows that from the emergence of artistic conception, to the artistic characteristics, and then to the level of artistic conception, it needs to integrate multiple factors to achieve in a variety of ways. It is an open artistic creation that always runs through all the aesthetic categories in China.

### **4. THE BEAUTY OF THE ARTISTIC CONCEPTION OF "POETIC DWELLING" IN MODERN CERAMIC ART**

The beauty of Chinese artistic conception lies in its artistic conception, and what it pursues is a solemn, quiet and natural state. "Aplomb" implies that it is not intentional, but rather a matter of course. "Hibiscus rising out of water with natural embellishment" allows art to emerge quietly and makes the existence clear. Heidegger pointed out

that if people want to truly enter the world of "poetic dwelling", they must "transform their usual way of expression into a simple and unusual thinking experience", and "For this world of poets, we can never grasp it according to the categories of literature and aesthetics". [6] Therefore, the broad and profound modern ceramic art (a comprehensive art combining water, mud, fire, glaze and other materials and carriers; an art pursuing the unity of opposites between one and many, mind and matter, entry and exit, dynamic and static, blankness and actuality, and constancy and change; an art expressed in the various aesthetic categories like form and spirit, thick and light, dry and wet, near and far, and solid and void) must be grasped as a whole from the combination of Heidegger's poetic dwelling and Chinese artistic conception theory.

#### ***4.1 The Aetherials Beauty — the Artistic Expression of Blankness and Actuality***

The relationship between blankness and actuality is ubiquitous in traditional Chinese art. It expresses the rich artistic interest and spiritual core with the contrast and combination of the tangible and the intangible. As a plastic art, how does ceramic art reflect the poetic artistic conception through the concept of blankness and actuality?

The most common relationship between blankness and actuality in Chinese paintings is realized through leaving blank space, which makes the picture present an ethereal and elegant sense of beauty and poetry. However, ceramic art is based on a three-dimensional form, with different carriers. In addition, modern ceramic art has richer and more complex creative materials and techniques, so the blankness and actuality nature of its artistic expression needs to be further distinguished. However, one thing is certain, that is, ceramic art and painting art belong to visual art in terms of aesthetics, so their aesthetics in space, color and texture must have similarities.

Since ancient times, Chinese artists have been good at dealing with the blankness and actuality relationship of space. Unlike the Western perspective that follows the rule of subject and object, Chinese people often project the spiritual realm into the spatial processing of artistic works. Therefore, the artistic expression of blankness and actuality is not only an ethereal, magnificent and profound sense of the universe and reflections on life, it is also the only way for the Chinese people to gather blankness and make good use of materials

as well as the expression of the artist's spatial consciousness in his creation.

The poetic and artistic conception of Chinese modern pottery can also be expressed from the space's surrendering of blankness and actuality: The glazing color is not deliberately used to completely cover the blank and the base color. The incompleteness, blankness, and silence of the vacant place are intentionally or unintentionally showing the poetic silence and infinite affection. All works have the distinction of blankness and actuality, which is the dissolution of the boundary between the subject and the object, the poetic dwelling, and of course the beauty of the artistic conception.

The color relationship of many materials used in ceramic art also follows the relationship of traditional Chinese art picture tone. In this environment, the incompleteness, damage, non-practicality, and blank space of modern ceramic art can be contrasted with the exquisite images ingeniously depicted on the screen, thereby triggering a complete imagination of reality in the viewer's aesthetic acceptance, conveying the beauty of flow, poetry, and ideals, making the entire ceramic art work tend to be of "poetic perfection".

Therefore, the artistic expression of the combination of blankness and actuality has triggered the formation and expression of the poetic artistic conception of modern ceramic art. Blankness can create environment, so that modern ceramic art is both subjective and objective, abstract and concrete, which has both the factor of reproducing the objective image and the inner connotation of expressing the subjective spirit. This observation of the object and the self, the compatibility of the object and the self, and the unity of subject and object constitute the artistic conception thinking mode of modern Chinese ceramic art. This is a process of unification of subject and object and a simple depiction of people who are not satisfied with objective external things: people try to seek "poetic dwelling" from the soul, so as to reach the highest realm of "harmony between man and nature" and then convey the beauty of aetherials and poetry of modern ceramic art.

#### **4.2 *The Poetic Beauty — the Abstract Expression of the Realm Beyond Image***

The basic characteristic of poetry, which is different from other aesthetic categories, is that it is born in but larger than the image. It often shifts from the concrete "actuality" to the uncertain "blankness", and then transforms into a more complex "actuality", thus triggering an infinite artistic conception. In the artistic creation of modern ceramic art, the creator makes good use of the natural beauty of ceramic materials in the artistic conception of the work, triggering the viewer's association with the natural artistic image, thereby achieving a quiet and infinite poetic beauty.

Heidegger believes that the essential meaning of art lies in the cognitive mode of bringing the present to the unconcealed state as the non-present. It reveals the field of existence in a non-universal and abstract way. Similarly, Chinese artistic conception aesthetics also emphasizes the transcendence of art over concrete objects and enters a broader and far-reaching realm of original meaning, namely, the realm of "Tao". This is because of a basic feature of artistic conception: the transcendence from finite to infinite. This transcendence is embodied in Chinese philosophy, namely, the pursuit of "Tao". Although Heidegger's philosophy doesn't explicitly open up the topic of "image out of images" in the artistic conception, its emphasis on "nothingness" also plays an enlightening role in Western philosophy, close to the spirit of Eastern philosophy and aesthetics.

"Full of merits and accomplishments, but people live in this land poetically", as an interpretation of the poem Holderlin, Heidegger said: "Poem will not fly across the ground so as to abandon the ground and float on it. On the contrary, it first brings people to the earth, makes them belong to the ground, and then makes them enter the habitat". The meaning of existence doesn't lie in the pursuit of the ultimate transcendence, but in the understanding of the true meaning of "existence" from reality, and there is no need to seek a surreal spiritual realm from nothingness.

Some modern ceramic works also pursue a realm beyond image, conveying a self-evident artistic feeling. Therefore, people summarize the artistic expression of modern ceramic with poetic beauty. By grasping this relationship well, ceramic artistic works can acquire the artistic conception of "making it clear through words and fully conveying

the meaning", and even "the appropriateness of words and the profoundness of meaning". No matter what the artist wants to pour out, or what the audience is affected by, it is all the feeling brought by the external image. Modern ceramic art is a way for the creator to feel the thoughts in his head, grasp the creative imagery, deal with the subject matter of the work artistically, express abstractly, respect the characteristics of the ceramic materials, and then integrate with the material techniques to produce a poetic conception.

In addition to the artistic technique of image abstraction, modern ceramic art creation sometimes only shows a part of the whole, so as to highlight the beauty of ceramic materials and achieve the beauty of the comprehensive artistic conception of the realm beyond image. In other words, this kind of painting with "internal blankness and external actuality" creates vivid and complete reality and infinite interest.

Chinese people like to pursue indescribable external emotions, which are a kind of artistic conception embodied in time and space. The ceramic artist uses the eyes of the soul to sculpt vivid sceneries and uses melody to organize a harmonious state. At this time, modern ceramic works are like music in the air, presenting a musical spatial state, creating a highly emotional living space and a time-space combination full of musical pleasure. This is the essence of the space-time language of poetry, and modern ceramic works embody a poetic realm. Therefore, the modern ceramic artistic conception that seeks to transcend "the realm beyond image" presents a kind of poetic beauty, which can be said to be the most natural aesthetic feature in the modern ceramic artistic conception.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

The beauty of poetic and artistic conception of modern Chinese ceramics can be expressed from the space's surrendering of blankness and actuality. In the incomplete, blank, and damaged places of the vacant place, the silence and infinite affection are displayed intentionally or unintentionally. At this time, the boundary between the subject and the object melts, like a poetic dwelling, which is an indescribable emotion. And this kind of emotion is the beauty of artistic conception embodied in time and space, and it is the pursuit of poetic beauty that transcends "the realm beyond image". These are all aesthetic characteristics in the artistic conception of modern ceramic art.

In short, Heidegger's poetic dwelling and the beauty of Chinese artistic conception are like a dialogue that spans time and space across a thousand years. As a result, the artistic spirit of the East and the West can exchange and dialogue, and it is precisely through this dialogue that people can reveal the beauty of the artistic conception of the "poetic dwelling" of modern Chinese ceramics.

## **AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS**

Lin Cai wrote and revised the paper, while Ling Zuo collected the data.

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