



On the Influence of Image Aesthetics on Lacquer Painting Art

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Abstract. Lacquer painting is born out of traditional art, and the traditional arts and crafts thought of “craft first” is still embraced by lacquer painting creators. With the help of the dialogue between lacquer painting and image, the aesthetics of image is introduced into lacquer painting creation, and a picture with far-reaching image is constructed, which brings a broader imagination space to viewers. Using the method of case analysis, based on the theoretical basis of image aesthetics, the performance purpose of lacquer painting is achieved. Image aesthetics, as a guide to the creation of lacquer paintings, makes the integration of emotion more free, and makes lacquer paintings more appealing and penetrating. The extension of lacquer paintings in the image field is of great significance to the inheritance and innovation of traditional lacquer painting language in the context of modern art.

Keywords: Lacquer painting · Image Aesthetics

1 The Aesthetic Pursuit of “Vivid Charm”

Sheikh, a famous painter in the Southern Dynasties, put forward the theory of six laws in the Catalogue of Ancient Paintings, which became one of the highest criteria for the appreciation and criticism of China’s traditional painting theory. It is recorded in the Summary of the General Contents of Sikuquanshu: “It is not easy for painters to abide by the six methods” [1]. “Vivid charm” is the first of the six methods, and it is also the most difficult to understand [2]. Vivid charm means that the works and the images portrayed in the works have a vivid bearing and charm [3], and “Vivid Charm” show the life rhythm of Qi as the motive force in artistic creation, namely, painting ontology, painting subject and painting object [4]. Charm was originally a vocabulary used by people’s articles algae in Wei and Jin Dynasties. Because people’s articles algae had aesthetic properties, they often combined the beauty of charm formed by people’s articles algae with the beauty of nature and art, and gradually formed an aesthetic thought with qi as the core. Therefore, people’s articles algae was associated with art, which also provided a theoretical source for the establishment of China’s painting art concept.

“Vivid charm” can be called the soul in the field of China’s painting, and it gradually extends from the original figures and algae to the landscape flowers and birds, and finally falls on the screen. Lacquer painting, as a member of China’s painting form, cannot be

constructed without the painting principle of “vivid charm”, and the aesthetic concept of “vivid charm” still plays a major role in the construction of lacquer painting’s own image theory. The grasp of “Qi Yun” in lacquer painting can be traced back to the pre-Qin period, and the pursuit of “Qi”, “Shen” and “Yun” in Chu lacquer painting is the same as the painting system developed after the Six Dynasties in China. From the unearthed lacquer cultural relics, Chu lacquer painting, as an early decorative painting form with lacquer as the medium, was unique in the pre-Qin art and had an important influence on China’s traditional painting theory. Painted lacquer ware unearthed from No.2 Chu Tomb in Baoshan, Jingmen, Hubei Province, on which is painted a horizontal long scroll lacquer painting composed of willow, car, horse and figures. In the painting, there are Mercedes-Benz chariots and horses, nobles with crested tassels, and several receptionists and servants. The characters are running or sitting, and the dynamics are complex and diverse. The belts are fluttering with the trend, and the dogs are racing for joy. Among them, three members of the entourage presented the instantaneous dynamics of running, with one foot on the ground, one foot hanging in the air and sleeves flying, and the eager state of the characters rushing around was vividly displayed (Fig. 1), and the galloping and joyful state of the hounds between the two willows was also vividly portrayed. The picture is not exquisite and realistic, but the smooth lines outline the image charm of things. The aesthetician Liu Gangji called the lines in Chu lacquer painting “lines with vivid charm”. The flowing lines in Chu lacquer paintings reflect the spirit of life, and it is through concise and smooth lines that the information of life such as qi, spirit and rhyme is highlighted. Since modern times, with the development of modern aesthetic ideas, Mr. Qiao Shiguang, a master of lacquer painting, has connected traditional lacquer art skills with China’s painting image ideas with aesthetic ideas, and conveyed the rhythm of life in new forms and methods. In his work “Water-splashing Festival” (Fig. 2), three or five groups of Dai women wearing gauze dresses, high hair bun and parasols are depicted watching the dragon boat race. Mr. Qiao Shiguang transformed the characters’ form and natural environment in real life into imagery patterns. The characters’ modeling was inspired by Chinese paintings such as “The Picture of a Beautiful Lady with Flowers” and “You Chuntu, the Lady of the State of Guo”, and the “charm” of the characters was the ultimate aesthetic pursuit. The characters in the paintings were vivid and natural, gentle in manner and both in form and spirit. “Whoever gets the qi of heaven and earth to succeed has his own god. If you want to have a pen and ink, you should be not only the shape but also the god” [5]. The generation of charm is inseparable from the display of life, and it also contains the image formed by the creator’s association with specific things. The two are intertwined to create an intriguing image atmosphere. During the Five Dynasties, Jing Hao also expounded his own views on the proposition of “vivid charm”. “Those who are angry, their hearts follow the pen, and they are not confused when they take images; Rhyme, hidden and upright, well prepared” [6]. Through the introduction of the categories of mind and image, the relationship among mind (artist), image (object image), shape (image) and spirit (charm) is dredged, and the generation process of charm is clearly presented. Painting is the aspiration, the spirit of freehand brushwork that runs through the creative process, the level of the painter’s accomplishment, and the painter’s understanding of objects, which is the concrete expression of inner activities [5]. Imagery is an inner activity that refines the typicality of figurative things and implicitly shows the



Fig. 1. Painted casket side painting unearthed from No.2 Chu Tomb in Baoshan, Jingmen, Hubei



Fig. 2. Qiao Shiguang, Songkran Festival

essential characteristics of things. The expression of lacquer painting image should take the charm as the core, create a “vivid” image atmosphere in the process of balancing the two, and realize the aesthetic pursuit of image with both form and spirit. The imagery application of “vivid charm” is an organic blend of image and spirit, which has strong artistic appeal and far-reaching enlightenment to the creation of lacquer painting.

2 The Artistic Concept of “Learning from Nature, Learning from Nature”

The aesthetic theory of “nature is made by foreign teachers, and the heart comes from China” advocates that the creation of painting should learn from nature, observe and understand everything in the world, achieve “having a well-thought-out plan”, and then integrate inner feelings for aesthetic creation. “Nature from outside is the source of the heart in China” is the artistic creator’s exposition and poetic refinement of the nature law. Yao Zui also put forward the theory that “all things stand in the mind, and thousands of things are worshipped in the infinite” in the catalogue of continued paintings. [7] “Nature” is also the deep realm of China’s magnificent art, and every grass and tree in nature shows beautiful and warm temperament. It can be seen that the realization of the aesthetic image goal of “gaining the source of mind” and “establishing everything” needs the premise and foundation of “learning from nature”. “Getting the source of mind” is

the ultimate goal of “teacher’s nature”. After observing all natural things, we should extract images from their natural states, and then transform them from images in our eyes into images in our chests. This transformation is an aesthetic image produced by the melting and processing of the painter’s aesthetic consciousness, that is, the combination of “emotion” and “scenery” [8]. In the Tang Dynasty, Wang Wei wrote that “when painting landscapes, the intention comes first”, and Zhang Yanyuan mentioned in the *Records of Famous Paintings of Past Dynasties* that “the intention comes first, and the painting is full of intention” and “although the pen is not comprehensive, it is intentional”.

It is a unified process, a process from objective concreteness to subjective image, that is, a process in which the subjective “mind source” actively transforms and sublimates the objective “nature” in the process of painting creation. “Nature by foreign teachers” is not a copy of natural machinery, but a sketch of Qian Shan in the mind with the spirit as the pen, so as to achieve “things are in the spirit house”. “Getting the heart from the heart” means that painting should be calm and calm, pay attention to the role and position of “heart” in painting creation, and pay attention to inner feelings, so as to achieve the aesthetic psychology of “the unity of things and me”. Lacquer painting, as a member of the painting category in China, should be subordinate to painting in the image expression of lacquer painting. Lacquer painting should not be bound by the idea of decoration, but should pursue the externalization of spiritual ontology. Hegel emphasized the subject spirit of painting in Aesthetics, and thought that painting “must require the soul of this subject to pay attention”. Mr. Li Zhiqing, one of the promoters of lacquer painting in China, created landscape lacquer paintings such as *Wuyi Scenery* (Fig. 3), taking the magnificent mountains and rivers of the motherland as the key carrier of his own creation. His works include endless mountains and rivers, leafy trees and colorful light. According to the memory of Li Lao’s disciples, he often observed the meteorological changes in nature and the things around him, whether it was the morning clouds, the dusk flying clouds, the ripples of running water, the tidal flowers and the waves, and even the leaks in the house. He said that these “can all be teachers and can all be decorated” [9]. Mr. Li Zhiqing showed the wonderful images of natural life and the vivid artistic conception of the world’s plants, mountains and rivers in all aspects, and also conveyed the artist’s understanding of the spirit of in-depth exploration and study of art and the tempering of life. The lacquer painting “House” (Fig. 4) can be said to be a perfect combination of China ink painting and lacquer materials. The painting was originated from Mr. Wu Guanzhong’s ink painting, and Mr. Qiao Shiguang used lacquer to present the image of Jiangnan water town in the ink painting, making “paint and ink understand each other” a reality. As the hometown of Mr. Wu Guanzhong, Jiangnan Water Town is well aware of every brick and tile. The composition of white walls and black tiles one after another has formed a rich and diverse picture, which has generated endless aesthetic feeling. The architectural modeling choice in the painting abandons most details, and only retains the most recognizable structural features of the building. Only by knowing the structure of the building clearly can we draw the Jiangnan water town in our hearts in a few strokes. The overall color is black and white, with only a small amount of embellishment of red, yellow and green, which breaks the monotony and oppression brought by black and white, but also adds interest to the picture. In the painting, the shadow is not realistically expressed, but the relationship between light and shade is hidden in casual changes.



Fig. 3. “Wuyi Scenery” Li Zhiqing

On the basis of the continuation of scattered perspective, the spatial layout combines the ideas of modern painting. The picture is full but not mixed and chaotic, and there is a tendency to extend outside the painting, which makes people feel that they are in the scenery of Jiangnan town, which seems simple but full of meaning. The lacquer painting *Eternal Memory* (Fig. 5) drawn by Mr. Li Yongqing is a freehand painting of the heavens and the earth, mountains and rivers, and vegetation. It is a vivid display of China’s traditional aesthetic theory, full of rich spirit of “the unity of things and me” and imagery aesthetics, giving people a kind of spiritual enjoyment. Whether viewed from a distance or from a close distance, it gives people an open visual space and infinite reverie. The emergence and construction of image lacquer painting can not be separated from the interaction between subject and object, and “nature from outside, heart from inside” is an important way of thinking to transform the beauty of nature into the beauty of art. The painter Yun Nantian recorded in the “Tijie Temple Map”: “Looking at the landscape, a grass and a tree, a hill and a valley, all of which are created by the spirit of Jiean, are not owned by the world, and their images are in the table of Liuhe, which is glorious beyond four o’clock” [10]. That is to say, the scenery in the painting is not imitated from foreign objects. On the basis of aesthetic care and description of objective things, the aesthetic subject needs to integrate the subject’s “spiritual thinking”, that is, artistic conception, aesthetic imagination, aesthetic composition and other elements to carry out internal artistic processing, refine the artistic expression of objective things, and thus sublimate them into aesthetic images, and then present the aesthetic images and the feelings of objective things with paint as the medium and techniques as the way. In the end, the artistic works presented are not the meaning of the objective phenomenon itself, but have a deeper meaning.

3 The Aesthetic Consciousness of “Being Out of Shape”

“Being alike from form” originated from *Twenty-four Poems Description*, which is the principle and method of artistic image-building put forward by Tang Sikong-tu. As a kind of freehand brushwork aesthetic way that emphasizes the likeness of spirit, it advocates that the spirit is not bound by the form, breaks the constraint of the form, creates infinite reverie and shows vivid artistic effects in a modeling way that deviates



Fig. 4. "House" Qiao Shiguang



Fig. 5. "Eternal Memory" Li Yongqing

from the image. Lacquer painting is born out of arts and crafts, and the research and application of the law of formal beauty is more in-depth. Excellent artists have created a series of excellent works through in-depth study of formal beauty, but lacquer painting, as a painting language, should pay attention to the transmission of the essential feelings of things in addition to formal beauty. Lacquer painting should also get rid of the shackles of "form", take "God" as the center, and seek the transcendence of artistic spirit in the current artistic context. The image expression of lacquer painting can be said to be a description of the essence of things, which lies in the picture.

On the one hand, "writing God in form" is only a breakthrough of "God" to "form", so "being apart from form" in "Poetry Description" is the independence of "God" to "form" [11]. Not bound by the shape, but seeking the charm, to some extent, abandoning the concrete information of things and using exaggerated or abstract "shape" are helpful to express the inherent essential characteristics and spiritual beauty of aesthetic objects. Teacher Chen Enshen also put forward the argument that "painting comes before painting

and art comes before technology” in “Thoughts on Lacquer Painting”. “Lacquer painting creation should not only have the formal beauty of painting, but also show the artistic expression of painting, with painting as the main part and lacquer art as the auxiliary part” [12]. Therefore, the artistic creation of lacquer painting attaches importance to emotional images, and does not stick to the concretization of objective objects. Through subjective refining of objects, we can understand the natural environment and personality characteristics of objective things and realize the transformation from entity “shape” to image “shape”. Take Tang Zhiyi’s “Fishing Boat Drifting” (Fig. 6) as an example, the picture depicts a group of Hui ‘an women waiting for men to go fishing and return home at the seaside. The characters in the works use concise and general facial descriptions, abandoning the details of the characters, and focusing on expressing the feelings of four Hui’ an women who are anxious and flustered waiting for the signal that their husbands return safely; Four women with different shapes have their hands on their chests, nodding their heads and looking far away, and they have inner fears, one hand on their faces and the other on their shoulders, etc. The characters show exaggerated, dancing-like dynamics, and convey flustered emotions and images to every viewer; Two children specially shaped in the picture are interspersed between adults, and the innocence of children is in sharp contrast with the anxiety of adults. The character dynamics and facial descriptions in the painting deviate from reality, but they convey the hesitation and anxiety of the characters in the painting when they are waiting and the strong impression that Tang Zhiyi can’t erase when he sees this scene.

On the other hand, leaving the form is not a scribble, but a sketch. It is based on a large number of concrete images, which are summarized, refined and sublimated by the artist’s subjective processing and transformation. For example, Shi Tao’s “Searching for the peak of the hall to draft” and Li Keran’s “Taking one and refining ten” all emphasize that the painter’s modeling is refined and outstanding from the extensive. [13] In a series of works created by lacquer painting artist Chen Han, such as *A Corner of Clear Scenery* (Fig. 7), *Liu yuan Qingyin*, *Breeze and Bamboo Music* (Fig. 8), the oriental image is displayed from a new perspective by learning and drawing lessons from China’s traditional ink and wash aesthetics. In lacquer painting, pavilions, misty rain, weeping willows, strange rocks, pine and bamboo and other elements are often presented, which are reflected on the screen through subjective conciseness and generalization. When enjoying it, it seems that you can see the wind blowing leaves and the moon entering the cold pavilion, which are not illusory, but the concrete integration of reality. Therefore, the images conveyed by the picture will be different due to the different perceptions of the viewers, but this scene is not a mirage-like illusion, but a sublimation of the reality. The image graphics given to the picture by “being out of shape” is a breakthrough in time and space. The infinite scenery in the world can only be intercepted and reflected in the picture, while the image can break the limitation of ancient and modern and vision, and everything can be gathered between square inches. Looking at the past and the present in an instant, caressing the whole world and the moment, we must create an open image outside the painting, break through the shackles of concreteness and break through the boundaries of time and space. [13] The breakthrough of the time-space boundary is mainly through breaking the rules of time, such as organically organizing people or scenery in different times and seasons according to the law of beauty. The way to break through the space can



Fig. 6. “Fishing Boat Drift” to Tang Zhiyi, “Fishing Boat Gone” won the Fujianren Lacquer Painting, was exhibited in the 10th National Art Exhibition in 2004, and was selected in the “10th National Art Exhibition - Winning Works Collection”

break through the shackles of perspective, freely express the shape and space of things, and create an image space based on concreteness, regardless of the visual truth; it can also be a way to break through the constraints of space by leaving blank space, which is exclusive to Chinese painting, but a way. The black paint brings to the picture can also be all-inclusive, arousing the association of various entities and creating a thousand miles in a short distance. Virtual reality and reality coexist, and all the places without painting are wonderful and tend to be infinite.



Fig. 7. “A glimpse of the Qing Dynasty” Chen Han



Fig. 8. “Breeze Bamboo Music” Chen Han

4 Conclusion

Lacquer painting, as a new kind of painting sprouted in the modern art environment, has brought lacquer painting with oriental charm to the world stage through the continuous exploration of Chinese lacquer painters in a diversified cultural environment. As the core of China traditional culture, image emphasizes the creator’s explanation of the inner world. Under the modern ideological trend, we should not blindly follow the trend, but should be rooted in the traditional aesthetic thought and the study of lacquer painting ontology, which can give full play to the expressive force and inclusiveness of lacquer materials. On the basis of adhering to traditional skills, we should seek a breakthrough from the unique image aesthetic thought of the East, and highly integrate the painting language of lacquer with the image concept, further develop and improve the new technical language system of contemporary lacquer painting, and better realize the contemporary transformation between traditional media and painting styles.

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