

On the Importance of “the Tao Way Follows Nature” in Oil Painting Creation

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Abstract—This paper mainly introduces the importance of ‘the Tao way follows nature’ in oil painting creation and interprets the implication of ‘the Tao way follows nature’ in detail. Meanwhile, the paper elaborates on how the creative thought of ‘the Tao way follows nature’ influences the oil painting creation. In the end, the method of ‘the Tao way follows nature’ in oil painting creation is discussed in the paper.

Keywords—“the Tao way follows nature”; oil painting creation; following nature; sincerity and earnestness

I. INTRODUCTION

“The Tao way follows nature” is a philosophical thought originated by an eminent Chinese ancient scholar Laozi, who is one of the greatest philosophers and thinkers in China and he is the founder of Taoism. He put forward the thought of the simple dialectics, producing a profound influence on development of China’s thoughts and culture. “Tao” consists of the way of nature, way of society and way of human. “Follow” means learning from, following by and abiding by. ‘The Tao way follows nature’ means we should do things abiding by the laws of nature and complying with the wants of nature. Everything across the world has a kind of natural want. If it abides by the natural want, it will be in harmony with the outside world. If it is against the natural want, it will contradict the outside world. The two sentences above imply there is a profound philosophy. Laozi’s philosophy is letting things take their own course. He maintains that we should do things in a plain, simple, human way close to nature. Chinese ancient people’s paintings often took “the Tao way follows nature” as a guiding principle. If we apply the thought of “the Tao way follows nature” into 21st century’s oil painting creation appropriately, it will have practical guiding significance.

II. ON THE IMPORTANCE OF “THE TAO WAY FOLLOWS NATURE”

With the long-term evolution, the art of painting has become a vision limit. Many art forms turn into a common sight from a shock at their birth, in which some of them never lose their attraction and some others hardly arouse our interests. This phenomenon indicates that the art creation has its own connotation and life. An art without connotation and life will be neglected. If we follow the creative thought of

‘the Tao way follows nature’ in art creation, it will bring vitality, vigor and artistic charm with individuality into our works. With the diversified oil painting creation in 21st century, all painters are facing a question which must be taken seriously, that is, how to make the works contain more connotations and vitality and then to appeal to people. What the art is and other similar questions often baffle me. I think this is a hard question every artist can encounter with. After reading many books, I still cannot find the exact answer and I am not sure if there is an exact answer. Then I end up by letting the matter drop. In general, this question is shelved in the end. Since it makes me headache, I still cannot find a convincing answer from many answers. I believe the unanswerable question is where the charm of art is. Art is mysterious and great without a law like a formula, but everyone cannot resist the charm of art. From the Classicism Painting in early stage to various kinds of arts, all of them have been affected by history, society, economy, cultural activities, wars and other factors. Although the arts have been changing and growing, they are expressed by people’s mind, certain conception from people’s bottom of heart, such as Chinese Painting School of Cultural Activities and early German Expressionism and American Pop Art, which originate from people’s spiritual conception. Art, in fact, is a kind of expression of inner behavior. Then what principle do we follow to paint? After reading some books of Laozi and Zhuangzi Thought, it is a good creative thought if we apply the ancient ‘the Tao way follows nature’ into painting. That is, we should follow the natural laws when creating. And we should create arts in a sincere and plain way. If the oil painters use the thought of ‘the Tao way follows nature’ to create, then their creation space will become immeasurably vast in the relationship between human and nature. In the nature, artists will find what they are really thinking in their minds. These days, we are living in a life with many choices, but an individual faces a barren age. Choices belong to the whole world, but which one is mine? Therefore, are we rich or poor? Thus, I would like to take painting as a cause here to participate in the nature to appreciate the beauty of heaven and earth, humanity, nature and life. This kind of art can touch people. Do not assume that people’s materials are so rich that we can be unscrupulous and scornful of natural laws for we are children of earth. All of us know that there are four elements are eternal in this world: heaven, earth, way, and man. What is the relation between the four elements?

The man follows the earth, the earth follows the heaven, the heaven follows the way and the way follows the nature. The way following the nature is an eternal principle. Man cannot develop against the growth law but get along well with the law. Chinese ancient people never declared conquest of nature since the nature is our root, mother of the world. What is the way? The way can be a mother of the heaven and earth. Therefore, how could we go against the nature? Many modern oil painters' creation thoughts contain this thought of the way following the nature. They paint in the nature to let themselves feel gratitude and free from convention. From the other side, it can boost their confidence. In the way of respecting nature, humanity and society, artists can find something in common with viewers.

Chinese oil painter Mr. Dai Shihe believes that we should be mindful of artistic creation with the thought of the way following the nature and with real feelings. We should avoid meaninglessness, fake, affectation and playing tricks; otherwise we assume the fake is true finally. Taking the murals from Sanqing Taoist Palace, Yongle Taoist Temple as an instance, Mr. Dai Shihe believes that they were not only painted realistically but also depicted vividly. Figures from the murals are graphically portrayed with full of energy. It seems like each of them has an interesting past ... The works originate from all living things in the real natural world. Through the interpretation of Mr. Dai Shihe, it is not hard to find that art derives from real life of nature. We should not work behind closed doors for fame and indulge ourselves in meaningless forms but pay attention to experiencing and creating. Unfortunately, many oil painters cannot realize that they are far away from the sincere art, natural world and real life. In the end, they make their works poor and overestimated art.

When artistic creation detaches from other things, such as green mountains and clear waters, universe and nature, spring flower and autumn moon(love stories), flesh and blood and love and hatred... Without them, do you think your works are powerful? When you begin to question everything and go against everything, it is the moment that your life is bleak. Then why don't we come back to the nature? We should return to nature in an age of extravagance, where we can arouse the tenderness in our heart and make a perfect immersing. In fact, each of us can be a good painter. The moment we sense 'the Tao way follows nature', the art we create can fly over mountains with free wings and it can take you soar in the blue sky. If modern oil painters create works with this lofty artistic spirit and sincere artistic feelings, it equals a process of carefree journey, since the way they create works not only enrich the works but also enrich people's life.

Russian painter Eremeev is a great artist who builds the work of art follows his inner perception for nature. He has a peaceful mindset that admires nature. The essence of multiple artistic genres is embodied in his work, which is always in a natural manner. He refused to chase the unquestioning trend that is always veering, varied from pursuing complicated photographic structure to being radiant in color, following a specific ideology to utilizing a novel skill. The most admirable distinction of Eremeev's works is

that he likes drawing the most natural side of things and presenting the side on the canvas in a natural way. It can be inferred that drawings are the presentation for the will of nature but not the assignment for painters. A significant characteristic of such artistic genre is "the Tao way follows the nature". Under the influence of such faith, message delivered in paintings is always the sense of simplicity, sincere, natural and visual enjoyment. At the first glance, Eremeev's works do not impress a viewer with any excitement or soul-stirring feelings. Yet a sense of yearning comes up when you look back at the works. Under the guiding principle of "the Tao way follows the nature", painters are more likely to depict common scenery and ordinary characters in our daily lives. The ordinary people in our lives are indeed the dearest relatives who claim to be protected with most of our attention. In addition, amongst his portraits, Eremeev always combines scenic views with the main character. It is worth mentioning that he painted countless pieces of portraits for his wife Swetlana, who played a key role in his life and painting career. She became a popular model that appeared frequently in lots of portraits after their first encounter in 1960. They respected and assisted each other and shared mutual aspiration and interests for their whole lives. Their deep attachment and concomitance for each other that lasted more than half a century turns into a fairy tale that truly exist in reality. Eremeev always maintains a peaceful mind during artistic creation and stays away from pursuing fame and wealth. Instead of ending up being mediocre, he keeps the spring of his inspiration spouting all his life. The secret lies in his angle of view that helps him capture the common but touching moment in life. The difference between a painter and common people is that he finds the magic and subtle essence while others sense nothing but normal one. The natural world is full of splendid landscapes, but we always tend to ignore them. Nevertheless, Eremeev brings masterpieces to this world by picturing the mundane. It is not only the painter has distinct sights of views, but also a faithful heart for painting. Thus, what he sees is something that reaches the bottom of heart. The colors being used by Eremeev are not magnificent but just plain and simple. The ingenious aspect of his paintings is the combination of suitable and harmonious colors. And it also delivers his aspirations accurately. It is the vivacious life that he discovers from nature.

"The Tao way follows the nature" means that artists must create for the sake of art. It asks painters to convey their ideology and emotion with doubly sincerity and deep thoughts. Paintings reflect the pursuit of art from the heart of painters. For instance, Van Gogh is a talent of applying "the Tao way follows the nature" method. In his works, he captured the harmony and sentiment of human and nature. Scenes like hurrying farmers couple wishing to go back home in the background of sunset, rural couple lay on the haymow napping, golden rye and azure sky, the sunflowers in full blossom ... What makes him so successful? The reason lies in the ideology of "the Tao way follows the nature", which stimulates his inspiration and makes his works appears with unparalleled booming vitality. It is a eulogy for life and appreciation for nature to paint with

genuine and earthy method. Overall, “the Tao way follows the nature” requires painters to draw with heart. The image would always linger around viewers’ mind accordingly.

III. CONCLUSION

Although “the Tao way follows the nature” and “to let the mind soar free from the material things” are the mindsets of ancient Chinese people, they can be the positively guiding eminent for art creation in oil painting. Artists should leave trivial things behind and focus on the description of natural alternation of seasons and the vicissitudes of human. All the worthy things, sunshine, air, mountain, woods, lake and ocean, snow, the elders and youngsters, should be included in each individual piece of infectious painting. The admiration and nostalgic feeling for nature motivates the desire for clam and harmony within urban people, who are trapped in cities being busy and weary, feeling insecure and restless all the time. Thus, works abiding by “Tao way” can be ‘Yang Xin’, which means nourishing the inner world. How does the inner world of human works if it can be referred as a repository? Chuang Tzu (a Chinese philosopher) once mentioned two Chinese characters “Bao Guang”, which means always keeping a cultivated mind and let the nature of life shine. Everyone hopes to be the utmost winner that stronger than others in the competition of modern society. But is this mentality necessarily right? The true meaning of “Bao Xin” lies in endowing life with lasting luster but not casting boundless brilliance which is stronger than anyone else. Once an oil painter maintains a mind of peace, nature and tolerance, his works would be infinitely meaningful and cherished.

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