

Study on College Students' Printmaking Creation

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Abstract—Printmaking teaching is an important component of education of fine arts in colleges and universities, and the printmaking is college students' ultimate goal. As for the college students, first of all, they should understand the development background and orientation to create printmaking; second, they should be cultivated to master various skills of printmaking creation, and be cultivated in terms of their divergent thinking ability. We should guide students to give play to the specific character of the works on the premise of paying attention to reality, to seek subject matters for creation from daily life. Only in this way can college students develop their printmaking creation smoothly and obtain outstanding achievements.

Keywords—*printmaking; cultivation; specific character; life; printmaking creation; college students; divergent thinking*

I. INTRODUCTION

Printmaking is a kind of painting made on the printing plate made of various different materials by printing on manual made printing plate (wood plate, stone plate, copper plate, zinc plate, linoleum block and other varieties). Printmaking is a kind of painting favored by Chinese people in the first half of the twentieth century, especially the woodcut printmaking, because the manufacturing of it is simple. As a result, wood printmaking became the most important way for propaganda in the liberated area. In the current society with advanced technology, however, the artistic forms and technologies change rapidly, so the printmaking also encounters its bottleneck inevitably. On the one hand, printmaking tends to be marginalized in the structure of Chinese fine arts, and more people starts to focus on oil painting or traditional Chinese painting; on the other hand, the reduction of formal language and the passivation of printing plate and skills make the printmaking art mark the low. Facing such condition, how to develop the printmaking creation of college students? First of all, we should start from its essence:

II. UNDERSTANDING OF PRINTMAKING DEVELOPMENT TREND

It is necessary for the college students majored in printmaking to understand more about the history, current situation and the future of printmaking, so that students may stand steadily on the basis of history, accumulate based on variety and style and progress on the path of creation.

A. History

Printmaking is of a history of thousands of years in China. First of all, it is a kind of tool for culture propaganda, and later it is developed into an independent art. However, the printmaking before 1930s is all duplicated printmaking. The newly-emerging woodcut advocated by Mr. Lu Xun starts China's history of printmaking creation in 1931, and 70 years has passed since then. With respect to the newly-emerging printmaking and ancient duplicated printmaking, differences exist not only in their manufacturing technologies, but also in the essence of artistic function and actual meaning. The newly-emerging printmaking is closely related to the liberation of Chinese nation and inseparably linked to the masses since its emergence, becoming an important component of the literature and art for China's revolution and the main force of left wing art in the 1930s. Printmaking painter emerged on the history stage with double-identity of artist and soldier, playing a huge role in the ideological education. The newly-emerging printmaking grows, develops and expands in the fierce struggle of the masses.

The understanding of printmaking history may enable people to see the progress and the glorious achievements of newly-emerging printmaking obtained over the past 70 years. In addition, we can also draw the precious historical experience from it, so that college students can be beneficial from the references and enlightenment in printmaking development and creation teaching.

B. Variety

Currently, the varieties of printmaking have been developed to copper plate, stone plate, silk-screen plate, blow-molding plate, zinc plate, linoleum block, object plate, comprehensive plate, computer and photographic technical printmaking from the traditional woodcut. Wood printmaking, however, is still favored by many artists. The reason is that it is easy to be made, and that direct, general and pure language and its own natural grain make other paintings unable to keep pace with it. For instance, the rich carving skills, distinct contrast of black, white and grey colors, special treatment of carving texture and so on are all conducive to the full and delicate expression of author's artistic ideology and creation intention.

C. Style

The printmaking skills become more abundant thanks to the verified printmaking varieties. It has broken the simple

mode of the past in terms of form and expression language, and formed the multivariate situation. Printmaking art works comprise specific painting and abstract deformation; some works create a kind of specific context environment relying on the expression method of super-realism and the structure of crossing and misplacement, rendering the works certain spirit connotation and academic style. For instance, in the *Nightfall in Ujimqin*¹ the work winning gold award in the 13th National Printmaking Exhibition, the thick and sharpened knife skills, distinct outline have broken the expression technique of traditional woodcut. With the addition of artistic expression forms, such as deformation, abstract, exaggeration, of western painters of Picasso, Matisse into traditional printmaking skills, it provides the works of national subject matter an international artistic language and height.



Fig. 1. The *Nightfall in Ujimqin* by Liu Baoping.

An out-of-print colored woodcut work *Wilderness* winning gold award appeared in the 16th National Printmaking Artistic Exhibition in 2002. The so-called out-of-print colored woodcut refers to a manufacturing method generated in the woodcut technique exploration in the 1980s. It is carved while printing via a wood plate according to painter's design, to complete the colored printing task of multiple color printing plates. When the printing of the works is completed, all the previous color printing plates disappear, with only the last color printing plate left, making reprinting impossible, hence the name of "out-of-print". The out-of-print colored woodcut use the same plate for each printing, so it is not hard to fix the position of papers, and it's not easy to displace. The painter can design the color and structure of the picture at his own will, without taking overprint deviation in color printing excessive colored plates and overprint deviation in color printing into consideration, which makes the picture color complex, and this is unattainable by the traditional colored woodcut.

¹ The Thirteenth Printmaking Works Exhibition, in the picture, the sunlight at nightfall shines on the bodies of the family, which reflects the simple living condition of Mongolian people, and the realistic painting and plaint style reflect the strong local characteristics.

These works reflect the constant innovation, reform and progress of printmaking art in terms of expression skills. As a result, the college students should not only know the history and development trend of the printmaking very well, but they should also master different carving skills, printmaking varieties and expression forms, to lay solid foundation for the printmaking innovation and creation, and to lead the development and progress of printmaking in the future.

III. PAYING ATTENTION TO LIFE AT ANY MOMENT

The reform and development of an art is closely related to the social background of the then society. In the current society of information times, art is of huge volume and wide range. Printmaking art is favorably received for beautifying and decoration of public environment, and the personal collection. As the exploration and demonstration of pure art, printmaking should be deeply rooted among the people, and be close to people's life. For instance, Mr. Chao Mei, the printmaking painter in Heilongjiang Province, devoted himself to the development and construction of the Great Northern Wilderness when he was 27 years old in 1958, and the creation of a brand new school started since then. This unforgettable experience makes this artist connect to the black earth inseparably. 99% of Mr. Chao Mei's works describe the black earth and sing the praises of Heilongjiang. In his art career of more than 50 years, he has deep love for and was sentimentally attached to the black earth, took root in this fertile soil with his noble heart filling with artistic passion and extensive mind, and eulogized the Great Northern Wilderness with deep love using his pen which was filled with imagination and creativity. As a pioneer of the painting school of the Great Northern Wilderness, he created more than 400 excellent works. Mr. Chao Mei explained the highest state of art with his own actual action, and created a large quantity of printmaking works that are close to life and the masses.

Art should be close to life and society, and in turn, life should push the development of art, whether in terms of economy, social culture, or self-character, to play a decisive role in artistic creation.

First of all, with respect to economy, printmaking, as a subject of art, has much higher requirement than other paintings in terms of materials and tools. In 1980s, the flooding of numerous painting schools makes modern printmaking be treated coldly, and the innovation of plate materials also facilitates such condition to certain degree. In addition, the rapid development of social economy and the emerging of many new materials and technologies also provide vast development space for printmaking creation to certain extent.

Second, with respect to social culture, the progress of social culture also plays very important role with the driving of economy. To achieve the printmaking creation, innovation should not only be made in printmaking plate materials, but the most important thing is the pursuit and innovation of the creation content. However, entering into the society and social culture and reflecting the life are the eternal topics of

artistic creation. Therefore, paying attention to society and life is the best method for the development of art.

Last, art is unique with regard to self-character. It is not a fixed thinking mode, but the displaying of self-character. Artistic creation is from society and life, while the self-expression of creation subjects originates from us. Each creator has the art, subject, and the way he wants to express. As a result, the style and individual character are generated. Art is changed and innovated constantly thanks to their own styles and the flamboyant character, so does the printmaking.

As a result, we should pay close attention to social life at any moment in the teaching of printmaking creation of college students, to seek the commonplace, story and art from life. We should cultivate students' passion for life and their enthusiasm for the tour. We should also cultivate students to describe the ordinary things, stories and art in daily life. And then, conduct the printmaking creation, reflect the artistic value of printmaking creation, and achieve the value dynamic role of printmaking creation.

IV. CULTIVATING STUDENTS' CREATION ACTIVITY

In the printmaking creation teaching of college students, we should pay attention to the cultivation of students' divergent thinking, and tell them what is creation, why we make creations, how much time should we spend to learn about creation, is it classified, and what is the association to understand the above problems.

As for the above questions, it is believed that each student, no matter the gender, position or nationality, can use the divergent thinking to associate the key words and images in his/her mind, to associate the creation scene, creation content and creation method. This is the start and the base of divergent thinking.

In the modern times, the rapid computer media and excessive images are unable to parallel an idea or an internal demand. As a result, we should pay more attention to respect thinking in the printmaking creation teaching of college students, and tell them the basis and initial intention of thinking, because thinking direction can facilitate and improve the progress of divergent thinking. Students should create with the feeling of observation and life experience from different perspectives of creation thinking, so that they can start their association by observing certain details of life, and they will associate constantly. This just like following-up of linkage in the Internet, students will consider more linkages unconsciously. In this way, the common and individual characters of each student can be given into play in full, and the creation starting point of each student can be found out, to inspire the students' creation enthusiasm, and to excavate students' creation activity to the largest extent. In teaching, we should pay attention to guide students to consider the problems using divergent thinking, lead students to think using words, painting, or color (single color or multiple colors), while the thinking progress is unnecessary to be too artistic. A positive work is of certain vitality and energy itself, and to create such a work can help you concentrate yourself in creation. You will like a very strong laser beam when you are focused: it is accurate taking

creation goal as orientation, which is abnormally powerful; hence an excellent creation is produced. For instance, at the time of initial creation, students are required to display all the previous pictures, sketches, words, expression forms and expression techniques of the subjects (words, static objects, figure, scenery, scene etc.) relating to life which are the more the better, classify the above data according students' creation objective or perspective, to establish target project, target theme, and then plan the target creation content and process. It is believed that students will be of quick thinking by the targeted and oriented divergent thinking training constantly in the way abovementioned.

Like other arts, to create printmaking, the creation theme and content should be determined first of all, and then display them through different printmaking variety. Of course, the establishment of printmaking theme is inseparable from the idea and technique expressed by the printmaking variety. For instance, the woodcut effect, copper plate effect, silk-screens effect and so on. This requires teacher to guide and demonstrate in teaching and students to try, experience and discover constantly in exercises.

Therefore, expanding students' divergent thinking, giving play to the innovate awareness, and cultivating students' creation activity is the priority in printmaking creation teaching of college students.

V. HIGHLIGHTING INDIVIDUAL CHARACTER IN CREATION

Art comes from life and reflects life. To create a work with specific character, we should carefully taste life, understand life, and feel life, and we should also observe with sharp vision and think with clear mind, to recognize life and social life, experience life, and learn to discover the beauty around us. We should absorb from the excellent works, seize the essence from the phenomena of life, to pay attention to life, society and the times with endless interest, so as to experience it, get enlightenment from it, and stir the creation inspiration.

For instance, *Dance on Plain. II*² (oil print woodcut) created by Zhang Minjie, the work winning gold prize in the Fifth Osaka International Modeling Art Festival, as for it, Jilumi Shinoda, a member of the review committee said at that time that "The work winning gold prize uses traditional technique, but the content it tells people gives much food for thought. With regard to cultural background, there is essential difference between eastern and western countries. This work enables us to experience the thickness of spirit and an energetic atmosphere using the oriental technique, reflecting the profound theme between human and nature." In this work, the author reflects the spirit of Chinese nation's cultural connotation using woodcut, and is praised widely.

² The Fifth Osaka International Art Show, many people are described in the work as if their life is driven by the external force and bursts out strong impact. The author describes the bold, unconstrained and simple images of the farmers in northern area vividly utilizing their movement and gesture.



Fig. 2. The Dance on Plain. II by Zhang Minjie.

The creator of each printmaking is a member of artistic creation, as the living experience, ideological awareness, natural endowments, temperament, artistic mastery, interest are different, and the pursuing artistic expression are completely different from the effect. As a result, artistic individual character is produced. Such unique artistic individual character will make the created work attractive among other artistic works. As for many famous printmaking painters those we are familiar with, we will remember their works, style and individuality by their name. For instance, the German printmaking painter Keqin Huizhi, pays full attention to the poor and helpless people, and reflects them using her own powerful pen and knife. She is unable to save them, so she expresses her criticism and protest with her life and art. The images of tragic mother and daughter and angry people in her works mobilize the strong dissatisfaction of people at the lowest level of society toward the society. For instance, in the woodcut *Mother and Son*, and copper printmaking *Group Pictures of Textile Works*, the large block of ink white and sharp and powerful knife skills in the picture, the gesture of waving arms and shouting loudly and the needy and tired face are described vividly. Mainei Caiqin from Belgium, Fafuersiji from the former Soviet Union, Zhaitengqing from Japan, Kent from America and so on, their works focus on the times trend closely, having bright individual style and strong social color.

In the printmaking teaching, a kind of language --- printmaking language should be explored deeply in addition to mastering the aforementioned. We all know that an artistic language exists in art, and similarly, printmaking also has its unique language.

Under the modern artistic context, the printmaking language is transforming from "accurate technique" to the carrier of "conveying ideas, and expressing painter's individuality". The exploration process of "language" by Chinese printmaking painter is also the hard process of deep understanding and excavating of local cultural tradition; on the basis of that, the achievements and works of individual experience explain the magnificent core and appearance of

China once again in depth from a new perspective and a new level. Printmaking artistic workshop association is the continuity of such spirit. When "the formal language takes up the secondary position and enters into the level of symbols decoration", both the characteristics of impression and the printmaking plate materials are changed thanks to technology development. For instance: Liao Shaozhen's utilization of the multi-dimensional printmaking space is more mature in the water-free stone printmaking; the synthetic materials of Tang Chenghua enable the language and boundary of printmaking to be more coordinated, and so on. There are many other artists exploring and excavating printmaking language continuously in their own created works, so that the printmaking language is extended in a better way, making printmaking language develop from simple to comprehensive, from plane to three dimension, and from static to dynamic.

VI. CONCLUSION

Printmaking should be based on the modern conditions, and carrying out innovation with firm determination and carrying forward the tradition is a must. If printmaking is put at the low position in contemporary art, then it is impossible to carry on it. Printmaking is the best carrier for the art to walk into life; therefore, the practicability of printmaking as an artistic work should not be neglected.

Through the above analysis and summary, in the printmaking creation teaching of college students, the teacher leads the student to understand and master the basic knowledge and background of printmaking; guide students to cultivate divergent thinking, the creation activity, and the life observance ability, which are the fundamental elements. Then, college students are encouraged to create the works with artistic specific properties and the works with ideological connotation in combination with modern printmaking language and comprehensive techniques, so as to generate resonance with the society and the world.

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