

The Expression of Economic Construction Theme in the Creation of Nationalization in Chinese Oil Painting

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Abstract: There are few studies on the application of economic construction themes to the creation of nationalization in Chinese oil painting. Thus, the researcher tries to take the oil paintings depicting the economic construction theme in *The Art of the Party* as samples and use observation and documents to conduct research. This research aims to summarize the source of themes and creative characteristics of Chinese artists by observing the content of their works and analyzing historical documents. In addition, this research focuses on discussing the specific process of Chinese artists expressing economic construction themes, analyzes their creative characteristics, and finally tries to generalize the methods and regularities for Chinese artists to express the content of theme during the analysis process.

Keywords: Economic construction theme; nationalization; Chinese oil painting; expression; process

1 Introduction

The creation of nationalization themes in Chinese oil paintings is a sustainable research topic, and there is still a lot of research space. In the existing research, Xu Yanan [1] explores the formal language of the nationalized creation of oil paintings by expressing Tibetan themes. Zhou Rongqing [2] explored the nationalization of Chinese oil painting by analyzing natural themes, social themes, and local customs themes. Hu Chaogen [3] analyzed the practical exploration of the nationalization of oil painting during the Republic of China by analyzing figure themes, landscape themes, and still life themes. The researcher found that there has been no research on the use of economic construction themes to explore the creation of nationalization in Chinese oil painting. Therefore, studying this topic can fill the gaps in existing knowledge and has research value and necessity. The researcher tries to take three oil paintings in *The Art of the Party* as samples, observe the content of the works, and combine with second-hand historical documents to analyze the specific process of Chinese oil painters using economic construction themes to explore the nationalization of Chinese oil paintings, and methods of expressing the theme.

2 Methods

This study is qualitative and relies on images and textual data. Therefore, this study will adopt a qualitative research approach. In terms of data collection methods, the researcher will use observation and documents to collect relevant images and text documents. Then, the researcher will use narrative analysis and content analysis to analyze the data and try to obtain information that answers the research questions.

3 Results

Through data analysis, the researcher found that the economic construction themes describes the development of the rural economy and is derived from events that happened in real life. Chinese artists use unique creative techniques to depict economic construction themes, expressing the meaning and spirit of Chinese farmers who still maintain an optimistic attitude when facing difficulties and strive to find solutions to solve difficulties.

4 Discussion

Through research, the researcher found that the research achievements on the economic construction themes have not yet been expressed in the research on the thematic creation of the nationalization of oil paintings. Therefore, the discussion of this study has two main contributions or significance. First, this study can fill the gap in existing research. Secondly, this study can provide a reference for future researchers who want to study the thematic creation of nationalization of oil paintings.

5 The Study of Artworks

5.1 *Great Production Movement in Nanniwan*

In October 1938, during the Anti-Japanese War, the anti-Japanese base areas led by the Communist Party of China encountered great financial and economic difficulties and fell into the predicament of having no food to eat, no clothes to wear, and no quilt to cover them. Based on this, Mao Zedong called on soldiers and civilians to carry out large-scale production labor without affecting the war. In 1940, Wang Zhen led the army and civilians to reclaim the deserted Nanniwan, planting fruits and vegetables, and raising cattle and sheep. After several years of struggle, Nanniwan has become a prosperous place full of crops, cattle and sheep [4]. In 1964, Jin Zhilin's oil painting *Great Production Movement in Nanniwan* (see **Figure 1**) was created based on the historical event of production labor in Nanniwan.

In 1959, Jin Zhilin accepted the commission from the China Military Museum and began preparations for the creation of the *Great Production Movement in Nanniwan* under the guidance of General Wang Zhen, who led the land reclamation of Nanniwan. To complete the creative commission, Jin Zhilin personally went to Nanniwan, Yan'an City, Shaanxi Province to experience local life, collect creative materials, and find creative inspiration [5]. After

meticulous consideration, Jin Zhilin decided to use the scene of soldiers and civilians resting in the fields while chatting about household affairs during land reclamation work in Nanniwan as the creative content.



Fig. 1. *Great Production Movement in Nanniwan* Source: *The Art of the Party*

During the specific creation process, Jin Zhilin encountered difficulties in the structure of the picture, that is, how to use the loess mountains in northern Shaanxi Province and the close-up scenes to highlight the storyline and unify the character image into one picture. To solve this difficulty, Jin Zhilin walked all the mountains in Nanniwan, accumulated materials through sketching, and finally decided on the current composition of the painting. After deciding on the composition, Jin Zhilin [5] took the draft to Wang Zhen for review. After seeing the draft, Wang Zhen praised the painting as the most realistic picture among the paintings expressing the Nanniwan production movement and encouraged Jin Zhilin to paint the painting well.

During the creation process, to express the completeness of the large picture, Jin Zhilin used the smoke produced by burning tree straws in the fields to connect the scenes before and after the picture and create a contrast between the front and back levels. In addition, Jin Zhilin uses a bird's-eye view to combine the nearby labor scene with the distant mountains, which not only makes the entire scene appear broader but also highlights the details of the character scenes in front. In the use of color, Jin Zhilin used yellow as the key color of the picture, which not only highlights the color of the Loess Plateau but also creates a warm, positive, and uplifting atmosphere for the painting.

5.2 1978 Nian 11 Yue 24-night Xiaogang Village

In 1978, due to China's backward economic system and policies, farmers' enthusiasm for production was restricted, resulting in a large number of farmers in Anhui Province who had not yet solved the problem of food and clothing. To solve the problem of food and clothing for the people, the Chinese government decided to lend land to farmers for farming without confiscating grain. This policy stimulated the enthusiasm of farmers. Xiaogang Village, Fengyang County, Chuzhou City, Anhui Province implemented the *household contract responsibility system* and contracted the fields of the production team to 18 farmers according to the responsibility system. On the night of November 24, 1978, Yan Junchang, captain of the Xiaogang Village production team, convened 18 household heads to discuss a method of household contracting. Finally, the farmers pressed their fingerprints on the land contract responsibility letter and started large-scale grain production [4]. In 1999, Wang Shaolun's oil

painting *1978 Nian 11 Yue 24-night Xiaogang Village* (see **Figure 2**) was created with this historical background as the theme.



Fig. 2. *1978 Nian 11 Yue 24-night Xiaogang Village* Source: *The Art of the Party*

Before preparing to create, Wang Shaolun first went to Xiaogang Village, Fengyang County, Chuzhou City, Anhui Province to live for a period, where he did sketches and collected creative materials. When Wang Shaolun was experiencing life in Xiaogang Village, he had been thinking about how to express the changes in Xiaogang Village. After communicating with the villagers in Xiaogang Village, he set the scene in 1978 when 18 farmers in Xiaogang Village signed their names and pressed their fingerprints on the land contract. Wang Shaolun encountered a difficulty during the creation process, which was how to express 18 figures in one picture. To restore the scene as much as possible, Wang Shaolun gathered 18 farmers in his rural hometown and found an empty house to ask them to perform specific actions. Wang Shaolun took pictures with a camera as a reference for the figure's image.

The composition of the painting is relatively compact. The part illuminated by the oil lamp in the middle forms a triangle, which is the visual center of the painting. It is like a rallying point, bringing together farmers on the left and right, expressing the hope of 18 farmers who are determined to launch a grain production movement together and change their poor living conditions. In addition, the oil lamp is the only light source, which makes the contrast between light and dark in the picture very strong. In terms of character creation, Wang Shaolun was loyal to historical facts and used realism techniques. The images of 18 farmers showed different psychological states through different facial expressions. For example, in the front row on the left side of the picture, close to the oil lamp, the young man with his fingers covering his mouth is looking attentively at the old man who is pressing his fingerprints on the contract, as if he is already thinking about a strategy. The middle-aged man leaning against the wall on the right is smoking and looking down in thought as if he is worried about bad consequences. Through the delicate portrayal of figures, Wang Shaolun expressed the spirit and courage of the farmers in Xiaogang Village to break through and innovate when facing difficulties.

5.3 *The Thousand Years of Land Turned Over*

After the peaceful liberation of Tibet from China on May 23, 1951, some Tibetan rulers wanted to retain the feudal serfdom system and launched a rebellion. In March 1959, the Chinese government quelled the rebellion and implemented democratic reforms. Tibet abolished serfdom and freed serfs and slaves. The Chinese government distributed land, cattle, and sheep to serfs, allowing them to transform from slaves into masters. This reform policy greatly promoted farmers' enthusiasm for production. Since 1960, Tibet's per capita GDP and total grain output have increased yearly. Through democratic reforms, Tibet has changed the current economic and social development status and made the Tibetan people live a prosperous life [4]. In 1963, Dong Xiwen's oil painting *The Thousand Years of Land Turned Over* (see **Figure 3**) was created based on this historical event.

In 1961, to celebrate the new social scene of serfs turning into masters, the Chinese Artists Association organized painters to go to Tibet to sketch, and Dong Xiwen was one of the participants. When Dong Xiwen was experiencing life in rural areas of Tibet, he realized that land is the foundation of working people's lives. Therefore, he decided to select the scene content at the moment when the Tibetan people are cultivating the land. During the creative process, Dong Xiwen encountered a dilemma: how to add a lively atmosphere to the still picture. One day, when Dong Xiwen was sketching in the field, a Tibetan woman was plowing the field with a yak, and her skirt happened to be blown up by the wind. This scene inspired Dong Xiwen.



Fig. 3. *The Thousand Years of Land Turned Over* **Source:** *The Art of the Party*

During the specific creation, Dong Xiwen used an upward perspective to conceive the painting and used the perspective rules of large near and small far to create a sense of depth in the front and back of the picture. In terms of character creation, the woman plowing the field in front bends down with a smile to push the rake and the yak forward, and the yak's expression also seems to be smiling, creating an atmosphere of cheerfulness and joy of a farmer turning over and becoming the master. In addition, Dong Xiwen also meticulously painted the soil. He used large brush strokes and color blocks to represent the soil shoveled by the plow. In addition, two yaks raised their legs and moved forward on the loose soil, which further enhanced the agility of the painting. The color processing creates a strong contrast. The golden yellow of the grass in front and the blue of the sky behind form a cold and warm contrast. The black land and snow-capped mountains form a black-and-white contrast. This method of expression not only makes the picture appear wider but also highlights the figures in front.

6 Conclusion

By studying these works, the researcher found that when Chinese oil painters applied economic construction themes to the creation of nationalization of oil paintings, there were some common regularities in the expression methods. First of all, there is a real historical event behind each work, and they all like to find content that can express their artistic thoughts in real events. Secondly, the creative process emphasizes real feelings. After Chinese artists decide on a theme, they will live in the place where the theme takes place to collect creative materials and inspiration, instead of staying at home and relying on imagination. Finally, Chinese artists often encounter confusion in the specific creative process, and then find solutions in specific life, and express them with unique creative techniques. In addition, through specific research, the researcher tries to fill the knowledge gaps in the research on the creation of nationalized themes in Chinese oil paintings and provide references for ideas and directions for future research.

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