

PROCEEDINGS ARTICLE

Chinese Landscape Painting From the Perspective of "Integration of Man With Mountains and Rivers"

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ABSTRACT

The proposition of "Integration of Man with Mountains and Rivers" put forward by Guo Xi in *Linquan Gaozhi* (林泉高致) comes down in one continuous line with Zhang Zao's "Learn from Nature, Feel from Heart". The proposition of "Integration of Man with Mountains and Rivers" has an extremely important position in the history of Chinese landscape painting. Guo Xi believes that, when the painter makes an aesthetic observation of the natural landscape from all directions and multiple perspectives, the overall appearance will be more authentic, so that the viewer can perceive the life spirit and cultural connotation of the natural landscape, and the scenery and the emotion are connected and blended, presenting different artistic conceptions. The proposition of "Integration of Man with Mountains and Rivers" has had a profound impact on the aesthetic image and painting creation of Chinese painting after the Song and Yuan Dynasties and even in contemporary times.

ARTICLE DATA

Article History

Received 24 February 2022

Revised 7 March 2022

Accepted 14 October 2022

Keywords

Landscape painting

"Integration of Man With
Mountains and Rivers"

Aesthetic observation

Aesthetic mind

1. INTRODUCTION

The proposition of "Integration of Man with Mountains and Rivers" occupies an extremely important position in the history of Chinese landscape painting. This paper uses the research method of literature review. Guo Xi believes that painters should go into nature and take an all-round and multi-perspective aesthetic observation in the face of natural landscape, in order to understand the life spirit and cultural connotation of it, and make the brushwork skills of the paintings more delicate and the overall look more authentic, bringing viewers different aesthetic impressions. Chinese landscape painting is of high research value in the history of Chinese painting. This idea has had a profound impact on the aesthetic image and painting creation of Chinese painting after the Song and Yuan Dynasties and even in contemporary times.

2. ORIGIN OF THE PROPOSITION OF "INTEGRATION OF MAN WITH MOUNTAINS AND RIVERS"

During the Northern Song Dynasty, landscape painters paid great attention to observing nature, imitated the nature, and made new improvements in practice and theory. Guo Xi prominently represented the achievements of this period. Guo Xi, whose courtesy name was Chunfu, was a native of Wenxian (now Wenxian, Henan) and loved to travel. He drew upon the strengths of others and had a keen sense of landscape. He attached great importance to artistic conception, and his framing and layout were full of novelty, no matter whether it was lofty mountain and steep hill, long picture and large obstacle, or plain and small scenery. Su Shi, Sima Guang and others once wrote poems to praise Guo Xi's landscape paintings many times. Guo Xi's *Linquan Gaozhi* is the most valuable work about painting theory in the Song Dynasty, recording his landscape painting ideas. The book is divided into 6 chapters: *Shanshui Xun* (山水训), *Huayi* (画意), *Huajue* (画诀), *Huati* (画题), *Huageshiyi*

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(画格拾遗) and *Huaji* (画记), recording all aspects of landscape painting, including its origin, image-building, and pen and ink techniques [1]. The appearance of *Linquan Gaozhi* marks that the theory of landscape painting has entered a mature stage.

Linquan Gaozhi · Shanshui Xun mainly records Guo Xi's experience in creating landscape paintings and his aesthetic theories. Guo Xi's status as a painter and politician makes it so. It is not only limited to the theoretical level, but also includes the experience obtained in his creation, which is the quintessence of the whole book [2]. In *Linquan Gaozhi · Shanshui Xun*, Guo Xi clarified that it is necessary to conduct in-depth observation and experience of landscapes, focus on the "Integration of Man with Mountains and Rivers", and pay attention to the changes formed by different angles, seasons, climates and other conditions, viewing the landscape far and near. A painter must "like to paint, be diligent in painting, and fully enjoy seeing the beautiful view", in order to grasp the profound artistic conception in his mind when he paints [3]. This is his personal feeling about the creation of landscape painting since the Five Dynasties and Northern Song Dynasty, and it is also the core idea of his creation. "Integration of Man with Mountains and Rivers" is the only way for the creative landscape painters of past dynasties. All the unique creations of all the great landscape painters in history are all derived from this idea. In the Five Dynasties, Dong Yuan painted the landscapes in the south of the Yangtze River, Jing Hao and Guan Tong painted the lofty mountains and steep hills in the Central Plains and Taihang Mountain, Fan Kuan and Guo Xi painted the plateau scenery in Zhongnan Mountain and Taihua, the father and son of Mi family painted the rainy landscapes, Li Cheng painted the autumn and winter trees in Pingyuan, etc., all of which achieved success through long-term in-depth study of nature. The creation of landscape painting is to express the author's feelings by describing the natural scenery. Natural scenery is an objective existence, thoughts and feelings are subjective perceptions, and landscape painting is the product of the unity and combination of the scenery of the objective world and the feelings of the subjective world. Since ancient times, landscape painting has clarified the creative train of thought of borrowing scenery to express emotions and dialectical unity [4]. The psychological activities of human beings are closely related to the perceptual forms of nature. In aesthetics, the feeling, perception, and performance caused by aesthetic objects have certain emotional factors, and the imagination based on this promotes the expression and expansion of emotions. The saying "standing on the top of the

mountain, the feeling seems to permeate the mountain; looking at the sea by the sea, the imagination is like the surging seawater" refers to the realm of "fusion of feelings with the natural setting" [5]. Zhang Zao theorized this artistic experience, put forward the creative idea of "Learn from Nature, Feel from Heart", and objectively discussed the relationship between the subjective and the objective, the creation and the mind in artistic creation. Guo Xi further perfected and developed this idea and came to the proposition of "Integration of Man with Mountains and Rivers", which is one of the fundamental laws of landscape painting creation.

3. AESTHETIC CONNOTATION OF THE PROPOSITION OF "INTEGRATION OF MAN WITH MOUNTAINS & RIVERS"

3.1. Significance of Aesthetic Observation in the Proposition

The first is the direct aesthetic observation. Guo Xi believed: "Generally, it is necessary to observe and experience the natural mountains and rivers in person, so that the artistic conception and style of landscape painting will be revealed". "The artistic conception and style of landscape painting will be revealed" refers to the image of natural landscape. This emphasizes that painters need to have a direct aesthetic observation of natural landscape. Only through the aesthetic observation of natural landscape can painters discover and grasp the aesthetic image of natural landscape. In *Linquan Gaozhi*, in addition to detailed descriptions of landscapes, Guo Xi also had in-depth observations on clouds, stones, flowers and plants. Only with a deep and detailed understanding of them can painters appreciate the beauty of natural landscape. This idea comes down in one continuous line with Zhang Zao's "Learn from Nature". To be able to draw the "original nature of all things", Zhang Zao must first have the skill of "learning from nature", so that the images of all things can enter the mind ("having things in mind") [6,7]. The universe is so huge that it contains all things in the world, which is rich but large in number. If you want to get its "artistic conception and style", you need to be in it. In addition, you also need to like to paint, be diligent in painting, and fully enjoy seeing the beautiful view, that is, to have the love for artistic creation and the spirit of diligence, to see its potential from a distance, to see its style from a close distance, and to have a deep aesthetic feeling for various things. When the aesthetic observation reaches a certain

breadth and depth, it can be "beyond nature". Mr. Xu Fuguan once said: "'like' and 'diligent' are the result of the spirit's liberation and transcendence of various worldly desires to concentrate on the landscape, so that people's vision can be concentrated with the concentration of the spirit, and the artistry of the landscape can be discovered from the concentrated and penetrating beauty of the landscape. Therefore, 'like' and 'diligent' are the spiritual basis for the establishment of the observation of beauty. "Like" refers to the artist's keen interest in objective things, while "diligent" refers to the deep observation of natural things [8]. The core of this discourse is "to fully enjoy seeing the beautiful view", which is the medium that connects nature and the heart, and it is closely related to "Man with Mountains and Rivers", and there are both intersections and differences. "Fully enjoy seeing the beautiful view" focuses on the quantity and breadth of the mountains and rivers viewed, which can be understood as the horizontal breadth. "Integration of Man with Mountains and Rivers" focuses on the depth of digging of the mountains and rivers, which can be understood as feeling the charm of nature from the aspect of vertical precision, refining and summarizing nature from the landscape of natural form to create an image, and integrating the life of nature and the spirit of life of the painter into the work at the same time [9].

The second is the multi-angle aesthetic observation. It is mentioned in *Shanshui Xun*: "The images you see are different depending on the viewing angle. This is the so-called 'the shape of the mountain needs to be seen from various angles'. In this way, one mountain actually has the shape of hundreds of mountains". Guo Xi believed that in order to discover the nature of aesthetics and create an aesthetic image, the painter must observe the natural landscape from multiple angles. Because the aesthetic image of natural landscape is not a single plane, nor is it a fixed object. In philosophy, there is the theory that "people cannot step into the same river twice", which proves that things are constantly moving and changing, explaining the time attribute of all things in development. The aesthetic image of natural landscape is multi-sided and changeable. Only by taking appropriate multi-angle observation, can painters discover the beauty of nature infinitely and grasp its vivid and rich aesthetic nature. Guo Xi also once said: "In spring and summer, the mountain you see is like this, and in autumn and winter, the mountain you see is like that. This is the so-called 'different scenery of four seasons'" [10]. With the change of seasons, the natural scenery will also change accordingly. By understanding the landscape from different seasons and climates and

capturing subtle changes, the displayed aesthetic image will also be different. In the multi-angle observation, what Guo Xi values most is looking far into the distance. The characteristics of the landscape can be grasped from a close look, and the momentum of the landscape can only be grasped by looking at it from a distance, without being limited by the part, thus creating the artistic conception of high, profound and flat landscape paintings.

The image of landscape painting is the combination of "meaning" and "image", the artistic conception is the blending of "meaning" and "mind", and the depiction of scenery is for the purpose of "sustaining feelings and implying meanings". Only when the meaning and the scenery meet, the scenery and the emotion are connected, and the scenery and the emotion are blended, the "artistic conception" can be produced. "Artistic conception" is the soul of landscape painting, which not only includes the image of natural landscape, but also the feelings of the painter. When creating, the painter should not only simply depict the scene, but also pay attention to the real feeling of the natural landscape, which is the spiritual condition for aesthetic observation.

3.2. Significance of Aesthetic Mind in the Proposition

Artistic creation comes from the imitation of nature, but the beauty of nature cannot automatically become the beauty of art. For this transformation process, the artist's inner affection and construction are indispensable. The most important proposition of Guo Xi's "Integration of Man with Mountains and Rivers" is to emphasize that painters should have "the mind of forests and mountain springs". It means that the painter should go beyond fame and fortune, not to have a narrow and deathly still mind, but to have a pure, pleasant and vigorous mind, and to observe the natural landscape with a pure heart. This is the subjective spiritual condition for realizing aesthetic observation. Without this condition, it is impossible to realize aesthetic observation. Even in the case of directly facing the natural landscape, it is still impossible to discover the aesthetic nature. Such an aesthetic mind is necessary not only for the creation of art, but also for the appreciation of art. Guo Xi said: "There are also rules for viewing landscape paintings. If you look at them with the mind of forests and mountain springs, their value is high, and if you look at them with an extravagant mind, their value is low". In Chinese culture, nature is not a cognitive object independent of people, but an organic whole that blends with people. The natural landscape is the

materialized form of the human spiritual world, and the human spiritual world is the reflection of the feelings of natural landscape, and the human and the natural landscape interact and blend with each other. Xu Fuguan once said: "That is, the human spirit, of course, must be transcended by the spirit of the landscape. However, the characteristics of Chinese culture not always make it gone forever when transcending; at the same time of transcending, it is the settlement of the present, and the present is settled in the landscape... The place where people and nature blend is the criterion chosen to be recreated" [11]. When people and landscapes reach the realm of blending, the painter entrusts his life to nature and opens up a wider world in nature.

The "齐 (斋) to calm the mind" mentioned in *Zhuangzi · Dasheng* (庄子·达生篇) also refers to "the mind of forests and mountain springs". For viewers, only with "the mind of forests and mountain springs" can they discover the aesthetic value of works of art, and feel and grasp the aesthetic image of works; for painters, only with "the mind of forests and mountain springs" can they discover and express the beauty of natural landscape, integrate them with their own feelings, and create a unique aesthetic image, which is different from pure viewers.

4. INFLUENCE OF THE PROPOSITION OF "INTEGRATION OF MAN WITH MOUNTAINS AND RIVERS" ON CHINESE LANDSCAPE PAINTING

In Guo Xi's cognition, when faced with simple things, painters can try their best to use their imagination to observe the shape and shadow of things; when faced with more complicated things, painters should not be bound by the rigid thinking of the world, but should go into nature and fully experience the beauty of the real nature. In this way, the painters' own painting concepts and skills will be improved, which is the value of "Integration of Man with Mountains and Rivers". Guo Xi pointed out the problems of the landscape painters at that time included: lack of aesthetic mind and artistic thinking ability, lack of a certain breadth and depth of aesthetic observation, lack of in-depth thinking about the natural landscape seen, and lack of refinement and generalization effort.

"Man with Mountains and Rivers" requires the painter to be immersed in nature, to combine the distance and close view, to have a comprehensive understanding of the mountains and rivers, to combine the big potential with the small quality, and finally create a work of art.

The essence of "Integration of Man with Mountains and Rivers" lies in the word "integration", which indicates that the painter has gone through scrutiny and life experience [12].

The guiding ideology of modern landscape painter Jin Dong's creation is the "Integration of Man with Mountains and Rivers". He pays attention to imitate the nature outside, often goes out to sketch, and travels to famous mountains all over the country. Facing the beauty of mountains and rivers and the wonders of forests and mountain springs, he often falls into a state of ecstasy. In the process of sketching, Jin Dong has an in-depth experience and understanding of the structure of natural landscape and its changes in different time and space conditions and climatic conditions, such as the four seasons, morning and evening, the bright or dim, and the distance and height. He has a deeper understanding of the techniques and composition of traditional landscape painting, and creates without being limited by the framework of landscape painting, expressing the real feelings given by real mountains and rivers of nature. Most of his works find a view looked down from a high place with vivid portrayal, giving people a sense of open vision. The picture is clear and natural, not only depicting the grandeur of the mountains, rivers and the earth, but also sighing for the harmonious coexistence of people and nature. It embodies Jin Dong's love for the mountains and rivers of the motherland, and also contains the desire and pursuit of nature by people living in the hustle and bustle of the city. Landscape painter Zhang Baodong believes: "The most important way to paint well is to paint with 'heart', with wholehearted devotion and wholehearted love. Diligence is the means by which one makes up for one's dullness. Only with diligent painting, observation, and sketching, and learning from tradition and nature, can a painter draw good works of art. It is necessary to observe and study the alternating changes of nature for a long time, absorb the essence of nature, master and apply it to creation, pursue it as my life career with the concept of 'harmony and unity of natural laws', and enable me to learn and pursue artistic perfection". Art relies on innovation, and creation not only requires the basic skills of the painter, but also reflects the painter's artistic accomplishment and aesthetic viewpoints, which is the unity of artistry and ideology. Zhang Baodong has been insisting on sketching in nature for decades, getting close to nature, getting to know nature, and integrating his true feelings into nature. His paintings are the expression of his thoughts and talents, reflecting his deep affection for the motherland's nature and his pursuit of a better life.

Gu Anguo, Hu Wei and other landscape painting artists also pay more attention to sketching, and regard sketching as one of the main means of Chinese painting creation. They comprehend the traditional techniques of the ancients in real mountains and rivers, exactly confirm the mountains and rivers in their minds, and explore the philosophy of the mountains and rivers. The artistic conception constructed by one mountain, one tree, one flower and one grass in their works are all new artistic creations that are not limited by ancient paintings.

All artistic activity arises from direct aesthetic observation, it is necessary to use Guo Xi's "the mind of forests and mountain springs" to observe the natural landscape from multiple angles, in order to achieve the artist's creative realm of "forgetting everything, forgetting the body and abandoning knowledge" until the unique scene in the work is fully demonstrated. Namely, the root and noumenon of all things in the universe are an artistic interpretation of "Tao". Contrasted with the large number of imitated and plagiaristic works today, they don't belong to the category of art. The artistic pursuit of Jin Dong and Gu Anguo is to strive for the unity of truth, goodness and beauty. They have the heart of freedom and awe for creation, and moreover, a sincere heart. For modern landscape painters, the realm of "harmony between man and nature" pursued by traditional literati is farther and farther away [13]. However, there are still many painters who let themselves free, actively seek materials in nature, and establish the connection between their paintings and nature, and the connection with history, time and life experience in the realistic landscape, experiencing the overlap of natural landscape, cultural landscape and historical landscape, as well as the overlap of emotional landscape and ideological landscape.

5. CONCLUSION

The proposition of "Integration of Man with Mountains and Rivers" has been elaborated and perfected by many philosophers and artists, and has had a great influence on the painting creation. The greatest significance of this proposition is that painters pay attention to nature, attach importance to sketching, combine with the painter's own mind and emotion in the process of creating works in the face of natural landscape, and use the way of observation and the influence of ideas. The landscape paintings created are the painter's subjective and objective combination, and the relationship between nature and the heart. Nature is the premise of high-quality

landscape painting, and the heart is the guarantee of the connotation of landscape painting [14]. Too many objective factors will result in a lack of artistry in landscape paintings, and too many subjective factors may cause the paintings to be remote from life. The idea of "Integration of Man with Mountains and Rivers" is an important theory guiding the creation of landscape painting in contemporary landscape painting. With the continuous development of the times, landscape painting is also constantly developing, and at the same time, this idea has also been endowed with new meanings, affecting the process of landscape painting.

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