

The Development of Chinese Aesthetics in the 1960s - Taking Aesthetic Theory and Fine Art Paintings as Examples

Bingxin Zhu^{1*}, Yuchen Liu¹

¹ Zhejiang Normal University, JinHua, Zhejiang Province, China

Email Address

2025883373@qq.com (Bingxin Zhu)

*Correspondence: 2025883373@qq.com

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Abstract:

This paper studies the general situation and purpose of the development of aesthetics in Chinese academia in the 1960s by analyzing the foreign aesthetic theory books introduced in the 1960s, as well as the important discourses and paintings on aesthetics in the domestic academic circles. It is found in related information: first, in the 1960s, Chinese academia eagerly absorbed foreign nutrients to make up for its own deficiencies, trying to establish a satisfactory scientific aesthetic system; Secondly, the development of aesthetics was closely related to political environment, and the creation of paintings was related to political activities; finally, Marxist thought got deep into the development of Chinese aesthetics, and artists went deep into the masses to depict works of “socialist realism”. All these studies and practices are the Chinese people’s search for the lost national soul and the urgent expectation for national rejuvenation.

Keywords:

Aesthetics, Development, National Soul

1. The Historical Background of the Development of Chinese Aesthetics in the 1960s

From the breaking of the country gate to the founding of New China, the people had experienced a century of ups and downs, and the development in all aspects lags far behind the West and need to be improved. After the founding of New China, with the stability of the country, the improvement of economic level and cultural level, people pay more and more attention to the construction of spiritual level. With the motivation of strengthening the country and benefiting the people, “aesthetics” has become an important part of the development of literary and artistic theory. In the 1950s and 1960s, the Chinese art circles carried out relatively comprehensive and in-depth research on aesthetic issues, and launched a large discussion on aesthetic issues. The discussion revolved around issues such as “what is the essence of beauty”, “what is the sense of beauty”, “objectivity of beauty”, “the relationship between realistic beauty and artistic beauty”, etc [1]. At the same time, Western aesthetics is also

developing rapidly. China actively absorbs important content of Western aesthetics, strives to integrate with international aesthetics research, and wants to draw nutrients from it to promote the development of Chinese aesthetics. After the founding of New China, the government strengthened ideological construction and strengthened the guiding position of Marxist ideology, which deeply influenced the development of aesthetics. In the 1960s, although the development of Chinese aesthetics was precarious, it was still gaining momentum.

2. A Summary of the Study of the Heritage of Western Aesthetics Theory

In the 1960s, Marxist thought, as the guiding ideology of building society in New China, influenced and guided the development of Chinese aesthetics. Some scholars tried to establish a scientific aesthetic system under the guidance of Marxism. These scholars believe that to accomplish this arduous task, there must be substantial theoretical preparation. In addition to the basic theoretical research on aesthetics, the following two points must be done: "First, we must combine specific artistic practice and go deep into various art departments to study architecture, sculpture, painting, music, literature, drama, etc. from the perspective of aesthetics. Second, we must study the history of aesthetics and systematically summarize the aesthetic heritage of China and foreign countries." [3]

The book "The History of Western Aesthetics" is a systematic summary of foreign aesthetics by editors Ru Xin and Yang Yu. The book summarizes the development history of Western aesthetics. The content includes Plato's aesthetic thought in ancient Greece and Aristotle's criticism of it; Plotinus' aesthetic thought; Lessing's aesthetic view; Kant and the aesthetics of eighteenth-century England; Hegel's Theory of Tragedy; Schopenhauer's Thought; On Chernyshevsky's Criticism of Hegel's Aesthetics. In the last article "On Chernyshevsky's Criticism of Hegel's Aesthetics", the editor affirmed Chernyshevsky's recognition that different classes have different beauty, but at the same time, he also pointed out that Chernyshevsky has not been able to get rid of the influence of idealism, and he has not deeply explored the forces under which the development of aesthetics changes and develops [4]. But at the same time, he also pointed out that Chernyshevsky has not been able to get rid of the influence of idealism, and he has not deeply explored the forces under which the development of aesthetics changes and develops. In the 1960s, China introduced aesthetic works from many countries, including the United Kingdom, France, and the Soviet Union. Chinese scholars gave their own understanding and views while translating foreign aesthetic works. Representative works of aesthetics include the French Henri Ajer's "Overview of Film Aesthetics"; Poland's Lisa (Lissa, Z.) "Music Aesthetics"; Soviet Kremlev (Ю.Кремлев) "Soviet Union", etc. Most translators will write their translation goals, thoughts or opinions on the book in the book to guide the reader's reading. "Overview of Film Aesthetics" is Ajer's basic opinion on film aesthetics. He believes that the value of film is mainly in that it can spiritually satisfy people's requirements to "transcend this world full of pain". The translator Xu Chongye translated this book and introduced it to China in 1963. He believed that Ajer exposed the aesthetic position of idealism and formalist aesthetics when citing various schools. This makes Ajer unable to make a correct evaluation of various film theories, let alone analyze the most fundamental and principled characteristics of socialist realism that distinguish it from critical realism [5]. It can be seen from this that Xu Chongye stood on the standpoint of materialism and opposed idealism. "Music Aesthetics" was

originally written in 1950-1951, during the construction period of the people's democratic country. "The Problem of Music Aesthetics" is Lisa's nourishment from the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin. A work on music aesthetics, created under the guidance of Marxism, with the aim of correcting the ideas of music theorists and music practitioners who are still caught up in the idealist concept of art. The author believes that the problem to be solved in musical aesthetics is to "explore the links of the causal relations that link the acoustic image of a musical work to its social premises, and to connect the acoustic image to its content extremely scientifically." From this, it can be seen that the author has a strong socialist tendency and tries to establish a scientific music aesthetic system under the leadership of Marxism. This book was translated by Liao Shangguo and Liao Naixiong and his son in 1962 and introduced into China. At the end of the book, there is a message from the editor of the Chinese publishing house. The editorial department believes that this book will be helpful to the discussion of aesthetic issues in the domestic music theory circle⁶. In addition, in 1962, Yang Chengyin and Sun Yuesheng translated the book "Introduction to Marxism-Leninism Aesthetics" written by the Institute of Fine Arts Theory and History of the Soviet Academy of Arts. It is mentioned in the book that "the purpose of this book is not to comprehensively clarify the aesthetics of Soviet music, but only to discuss some of the issues that we consider to be the most important in the aesthetics of Marxism-Leninism". From this, we know that the aesthetics of music in this book is closely related to Marxist-Leninist thought [7]. When "Introduction to Marxism-Leninism Aesthetics" was introduced to the domestic market, it was specifically mentioned in the publication instructions that the book had been out of stock for many years, and it still had reading reference value for Chinese readers and aesthetic theory research at that time. From this we know that Marxist thought is deeply rooted in the hearts of the people. Almost at the same time, the aesthetic works such as "The Problem of Soviet Music Aesthetics" and "Principles of Marxism-Leninism Aesthetics" are all closely related to Marxist thought and aesthetics.

Chinese scholars eagerly absorb the nourishment of Western aesthetics to irrigate the sprout of modern Chinese aesthetics. Marxist thought has been deeply rooted in the hearts of the people and in-depth aesthetic research.

3. Development of Domestic Aesthetics

In the 1960s, domestic aesthetic research was still very hot, and articles and books on aesthetics still spewed out, and a hundred schools of thought contended. The idea of the people's main body status in Marxist thought fits with the times, resulting in a large number of works with the theme of the working people and the revolutionary spirit. At the same time, in order to strengthen the guiding position of Marxist ideology, aesthetics research and politics are closely linked, and even in the later period, the state of aesthetics serving politics appeared. Aesthetics is completely politicized, politics hinders the development of aesthetics, and literature and art become a tool for political domination.

The aesthetics of Chinese modern independent research was developed from the Chinese modern aesthetic thoughts of Wang Guowei and Cai Yuanpei, and completed the transformation during the great discussion of aesthetics in the 1950s and 1960s. Representatives of the academic discussion include Zhu Guangqian, Li Zehou, Zong Baihua, Zhou Gucheng and so on. This big discussion established the epistemological

aesthetics research paradigm, and at the same time it also cultivated and cultivated a large and powerful research team.

Judging from the paintings in the 1960s, under the guidance of Marxist thought, aesthetics and politics were linked, depicting the revolutionary spirit, and at the same time, painting also entered life and linked with the working people. A group of painters who have studied in the Soviet Union have created a large number of works of revolutionary spirit under the influence of Soviet realism and the spirit of the Anti-Japanese War. For example, Luo Gongliu created Comrade Mao Zedong in Jinggang Mountain, Jinggang Mountain Landscape, and Tunnel Warfare (both oil paintings created in 1960-1965). Lin Gang's The Struggle in Prison (1962, oil on canvas); Wu Biduan's Lenin Meets the Chinese Volunteers (1960, linen print), Lenin Talks to Chinese Volunteer Soldiers (1960, woodcut), Chairman Mao and the People of Asia, Africa and Latin America Together (1960, gouache), and many more. These works recall the arduous struggles of the war period and inspire the people to build their country. During the same period, the provincial art associations organised artists to reach out to the masses and join the working life of the people. 1963 saw the Guizhou Art Association Branch launch a symposium on the creation of prints, and the documents of the meeting mentioned the need to study documents such as Chairman Mao's "Helpful Attitudes at the Yan'an Symposium on Literature and Art", as well as the lack of works that profoundly reflected social life at the time, and the lack of a new bright image of the new socialist construction. The aim of the conference was to allow artists to raise their level of thought, reach out to the masses and integrate with the workers, peasants and soldiers [9].

In 1964, the provincial branches of the Art Association organised artists to go to the countryside, allowing painters to participate in socialist production and create related propaganda paintings, involving many provinces such as Inner Mongolia, Yunnan, Guangxi and Jiangsu [10]. This series of activities has promoted the development of rural art education, and has a certain significance in improving people's aesthetic level and ideological quality.

1966-1976 During the ten-year Cultural Revolution, aesthetic thought was politically exploited and evolved into a complete "anti-realism" [11]. During this period, politics grasped the lifeblood of literature and art, and aesthetics obeyed and served politics. As a result, politics seriously hindered the development of aesthetics.

4. Conclusions

The intrinsic motivation of modern Chinese aesthetics was to strengthen the country and to find the lost soul of the nation. Whether it was the great debate on aesthetics, the bundling of politics and aesthetics, the learning and absorption of Western aesthetic theories or the organisation of artists into social labour education, etc., it was essentially the nation's self-help for its own culture, its fear of being bullied, its expectation of national strength and its catching up with international development trends after the founding of New China ... Aesthetics The process of development was as tortuous a path as the process of nation-building. The loopholes and adverse effects that arose during the development of aesthetics in the 1960s will also inspire future generations of aesthetic studies. This article draws conclusions from only limited information, with many loopholes and flaws, and more theoretical study and inquiry will be undertaken in the future.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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