

# Analysis of the Impact of the Dissemination of Western Learning to Orient on the Teaching of Modern Chinese Painting

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## Abstract

By comparing the characteristics of traditional Chinese painting teaching with the modes of modern Chinese painting teaching after being influenced by Western Studies, this paper takes the Dissemination of Western Learning to Orient as the background of the times. It clarifies the richness and innovation of Chinese painting teaching in form, content and method, then summarizes the meaning of this change, and finally reflects on its malpractice and the problems arising from it.

## Keywords

The Dissemination of Western Learning to Orient; Western Style; Eastward Trend; Chinese Painting Teaching; Influence; Innovation.

## 1. Introduction

The dissemination of western learning to orient and the exchange of Chinese and Western paintings can be traced back as far as the Ming Dynasty. In the tenth year of Wanli in the Ming Dynasty, Matteo Ricci, an Italian Catholic Jesuit missionary, and others were sent to China as missionaries. While promoting their teachings, they also brought to our country paintings and artworks that represent religious images--Christ and Madonna. Not only that, they also spread the theory and creation methods of Western painting in my country, and there are many scholars, thus objectively promoting the integration of Chinese and Western painting. The works of painters such as Zeng Jing in the late Ming Dynasty are strong evidence.

In the Qing Dynasty, another Italian missionary, Lang Shining, was involved in painting at court. It uses traditional Chinese pen and ink materials to draw images with western light, shadow, light and dark and focus perspective effects. Followers, too, have laid the foundation for the deep integration of modern Chinese and Western painting art and the transformation of Chinese painting teaching.

In modern times, while China has been reduced to a semi-colonial and semi-feudal society, advanced intellectuals have studied Western advanced science and technology with the ideas of "teacher's long skills to control barbarians," "middle school as the body, Western studies as the use," and then learned to learn from Western countries' ideology, culture, social system, etc. Modern Chinese painting teaching is based on the traditional teaching model through learning Western art concepts and methods and Western art education system.

## 2. The Main Modes and Characteristics of Traditional Chinese Painting Teaching

### (1) Teacher-taught Painting Instruction

As the main mode of traditional Chinese painting teaching, teacher-taught painting instruction, in short, is the teaching method of "master leads apprentices", and on this basis, a certain relationship between teachers and teachers has emerged. Zhang Yanyuan said in the second volume of "The History of Famous Paintings" in "The History of Teachers Teaching the Northern

and Southern Dynasties": "If you don't know the teachers' teaching, you can't talk about painting." Xue Shi was in the Health Association." In the mid-Ming Dynasty, the four schools of the Wu family were all painters who first learned to paint from their contemporaries. Shen Zhou studied under Chen Kuan, Wen Zhengming learned from Shen Zhou, and Tang Yin and Qiu Ying both served under Zhou Chen. These historical facts are the strong evidence of the traditional Chinese painting teaching taught by the apprentice.

The teaching mode of apprentice-teacher has the advantage of teaching by words and deeds. Scholars can see the teacher's teaching demonstration in person, and through continuous practice and teacher's advice, they can master certain painting skills more efficiently. Not only that, "master leads apprentice" is also conducive to play the role of teaching students in accordance with their aptitude.

## (2) Teaching of Painting at the Royal Academy of Painting

The Royal Academy of Painting in the true sense started from the end of the Tang Dynasty and the beginning of the Five Dynasties, but the scale of creation at that time was not large, and the teaching of painting was still in the exploratory stage. After that, all dynasties in China have inherited this tradition: attracting talents, conferring painting positions, and incorporating into special Royal Painting Academy institutions to meet the aesthetic needs of the royal family and nobles, and play the role of decorating walls and singing praises.

Of all the painting academies of the Song dynasty, is the most extensive. Not only did many Song emperors love art, but even Emperor Huizong was personally involved in the art of painting. Not only was he highly accomplished in his own art, but his contribution to royal art education was also enormous. Under his strong advocacy, a large number of painting staff and a complete education system were established, gradually forming an important part of the traditional Chinese painting style - the 'Academy' - and thus the 'School of Painting' was formally The school of painting was thus formally established.

The teaching of the Royal Academy pays great attention to the comprehensive cultivation of painting students. Most of the painting students entered the academy to study and work through the imperial examinations. The subjects of the examinations were mostly poems and phrases, such as "Return of Flowers and Horseshoe Fragrance," "Wild Mountain Zanggu Temple, Lone Boat Recently" and so on. What's more, in the curriculum of painting, the four works of "Shuowen," "Erya," "Dialect," and "Shiming," which cultivate the painter's poetic and literary ability, are among them.

In modern times, the crisis of the nation, the impact of the dissemination of western learning to orient, and the change of the social system, the teaching system of the Royal Academy of Painting ceased to exist with the disintegration of the feudal system.

## 3. The Impact of the Dissemination of Western Learning to Orient on the Teaching of Chinese Painting

In modern times, Western culture and art poured into China with the backing of strong economic strength, and with the clichéd Chinese painting style of the late feudal dynasty and the turn of the modern era,, Kang Youwei, the leader of the 1980s Reform, put forward: "Chinese paintings of modern times are extremely decayed. That's it!" He also pointed out, "If the old traditions remain unchanged, then Chinese painting should be extinct." Therefore, he issued the idea of "combining Chinese and Western for a new era of painting" in "Wanmu Caotang Collection of Paintings"[1].

In the reform of fine arts, the remarks of artists and art educators who have received Western-style art education have become more powerful. In 1918, Xu Beihong gave a speech on "Methods of Improving Chinese Paintings", saying that "the decadence of Chinese painting

studies has reached the extreme today." He advocated the improvement of Chinese painting with Western "realism". "Those who are good in ancient methods should keep them, and those who reject them should follow them; those who are not good should change them; those who are not enough should increase them, [2]

It can be seen that the transformation of Chinese painting is imperative. However, how to fundamentally solve the problem of innovation? In the final analysis, it was education that was the starting point. Therefore, specialized art academies and art education institutions have emerged as the times require, and the traditional teaching of Chinese painting was substantially transformed.

### (1) Changes in Teaching Formats

Although the ancient Chinese model of teaching Chinese painting as a 'master-apprentice' had the advantage of being taught by example, the resources of teachers were extremely limited, and the target audience was also more restricted. However, the establishment of Western-style art schools has gone some way to ameliorating this problem. The most influential of these institutions were the Shanghai Fine Arts College, founded by Liu Haisu and his friends, and the Hangzhou National Academy of Fine Arts, of which Lin Fengmian was the headmaster.

It is precisely because of the establishment of these art academies that Western art education methods and content incorporated into Chinese painting teaching are implemented.

### (2) Enrichment and Innovation of Teaching Content

In terms of technique, the teaching of traditional Chinese painting mainly focuses on the teaching of "brush and ink", from the "brush technique" of "using the brush in the middle", "outlining, chapping, rubbing, dotting and dyeing" to the "ink technique" of "five strokes and seven inks" proposed by Huang Binhong. "and the 'ink method' of 'ink in five colours', to the 'five strokes and seven inks' proposed by Huang Binhong. The method of "five strokes and seven inks" proposed by Huang Binhong. At the same time, the comprehensive cultivation of poetry, calligraphy and painting theory is also an important part of the teaching content. In his book *A History of Chinese Art*, Mr. Hong Zaixin states, "Wen Zhengming learned his literature from Wu Kuan, his calligraphy from Li Yingzhen, and his painting from Shen Zhou[3]." It is evident that traditional painting teaching placed great emphasis on comprehensive cultural cultivation.

However, the teaching of Chinese painting has changed considerably in recent times, with its incorporation of systematic Western methods and concepts of teaching painting.

#### 1. Sketching

In Western concepts of art education, sketching is the foundation of the plastic arts. Modern Chinese art educators influenced by Western studies have placed it at the forefront of the teaching of Chinese painting while improving traditional Chinese painting.

The main purpose of sketching training is to solve the problem of how to shape the relationship between light and dark and space in the plastic arts. In traditional Chinese painting, the relationship between light and dark is referred to by the term 'yin and yang', 'towards the sun is yang, behind the sun is yin' (of course, 'yin and yang' has a richer connotation, so I will not elaborate too much here). With the intervention of Western painting, Chinese art educators gradually began to learn and teach the principles of sketching relationships between the three main surfaces (light, dark and grey) and the five main tones (highlights, midtones, light and dark junction lines, reflections and projections). Throughout his life, Mr Xu Beihong advocated that sketching was the foundation of all plastic arts, including Chinese painting, and he made it the primary compulsory subject when he developed the syllabus for Chinese painting during his tenure at the Art Department of the Central University. "In the process of the 'transformation of Chinese painting' he advocated incorporating and converting sketches into brush and ink - Xu Beihong-style brush and ink - to form 'brush and ink containing elements of

sketching', incorporating elements of sketching such as a certain scientific realistic modelling[4].

In addition, sketches have unique advantages in grasping the shape of the image and making quick swings, which are similar to traditional freehand paintings. Therefore, Chinese painting educators not only use it as an aid in their creation, but also incorporate it into classroom teaching to train students to quickly capture modeling ability. To this day, in the teaching of Chinese painting in higher education, students' modeling ability is still cultivated.

## 2. Perspective

Traditional Chinese painting has a unique perspective - 'scattered perspective'. "As Guo Xi said, "the shape of the mountain moves step by step" and "the shape of the mountain is seen from every side". "In this way, "there is one mountain and the shape of tens of hundreds of mountains".[5] This is the embodiment of a unique Chinese cosmology.

The Chinese did not have a scientific theoretical system of perspective, but they understood the principle of focal perspective as 'large near and small far', as evidenced by the early art theorist Zong Bing's statement in the Southern Dynasty that 'if you go a little wide, you will see a lot less'[6].

Of course, 'large near and small far' is only one of the characteristics of perspective. In addition to focal perspective, angular perspective is also used more widely in paintings. It was art educators such as Liu Haisu who taught the two rules of perspective to more students and contributed greatly to the development of Chinese painting in a more realistic direction. "The curriculum standards for the new school system drafted by Liu Haisu, He Yuan, Yu Youfan and Liu Quping required in terms of theory that students be taught 'the horizon, the principal point, the vanishing point, and the laws of distance and size, the law of perspective of parallel lines, and the law of angular perspective.'" [7]Not only that, but Mr Liu Haisu also implemented his educational philosophy with in-depth artistic practice. In his work 'Sketching in West Lake Park', the vanishing point is to the right of the horizon line, and from near to far, the pedestrians gradually shrink, the road gradually becomes narrower, and the pagoda and willow trees gradually lower. This is a picture of typical focal perspective.

## 3. Colour Science

"As a form of colouring, the 'colouring with the class' (Xie He) has been used in the creation and teaching of traditional Chinese painting. It is true that this method has a traditional cultural connotation, but it has gradually tended to become programmatic in the course of history. On the other hand, from the Tang dynasty onwards, Chinese painting saw the decline of green and green landscapes and the rise of literati ink and wash landscapes, with ink and wash becoming the main form of colour expression in Chinese painting. The rationale for ink and wash as a creative medium can be traced back to the thought of Laozi, who believed that colour was not the essence of an object, but only served to dazzle the eye, as the saying goes, "Five colours make the eye blind", and therefore proposed that "the sage is a belly, not an eye". This is why it is said that "the sage is for the belly and not for the eyes". "Colour" and "flamboyance" as appearances form a clear opposition to "belly" and "substance" as essences. This is why it is written in Wang Wei's 'Landscape Tactics' that 'among the ways of painting, ink and water are the highest; the nature of nature is the origin, and the work of creation is the result'.

However, in the eyes of the innovative art educators of the modern era, a single, programmed colour was not sufficient to represent the rich world of colour, and the theory on which this was based was the Western principles of optics and colour theory. In the Western study of light and colour, objects are not only presented to the eye as intrinsic colours, but are also influenced by environmental colours. Furthermore, colour changes according to the light, as evidenced by the differences between the series of Rouen Cathedral painted by the Impressionist Monet at different times of the day and night. In this way, the range of colours that can be expressed in

painting becomes extremely rich. The colours of the horses in Mr Xu Beihong's Chinese painting Three Horses are clearly influenced by the colours of their surroundings, even as the whole environment is a reproduction of the colours of the objective.

As colour science continues to gain ground in the creation and teaching of Chinese painting, contemporary figures such as He Jiaying, Zhang Mimi and Gao Xi have emerged who have perfectly combined the principles of light and colour with traditional Chinese brushwork.

#### 4. Anatomy

The study of the skeleton, muscles and the relationship between them in art is known as 'artistic human anatomy', a discipline that has had a great influence on the teaching of Chinese painting. The works of Xu Beihong and his pupil Jiang Zhaohe are ample evidence of this. Although both Xu Beihong's Yugong Yishan and Jiang Zhaowei's The Flowing People use traditional Chinese brush and ink materials, the shapes and proportions of the human body in both paintings are very precise and conform to the principles of Western anatomy, which is very different from the traditional Chinese concept of 'responding to objects and picturing them'.

In summary, the teaching of modern Chinese painting has absorbed the artistic methods and principles of drawing, colour, focal perspective and anatomy, while the painter's comprehensive training in poetry, literature and calligraphy has to some extent been weakened.

### **4. The Significance, Disadvantages and Derivative Problems of the Change of Painting Teaching in Modern China Prompted by the Impact of the Dissemination of Western Learning to Orient**

#### (1) Significance

The dissemination of western learning to orient has gradually promoted the transformation of Chinese painting teaching. To a certain extent, it has shaken the tradition of Chinese painting, especially literati painting, "heavy road and light weapon," "ink opera" and "self-entertainment." They have made indelible contributions to the Chinese people's struggle for national independence, the people's liberation and the modernization of socialism.

The dissemination of western learning to orient and the east prompted changes in the teaching of modern Chinese painting, laying a solid foundation for the formation of a complete and modern teaching system for Chinese painting in China. Since the early days of the establishment of the modern Western-style art schools in China, the principles and methods of Western painting were systematically introduced into the classroom teaching of Chinese painting, thus broadening the horizons of Chinese painters and art students and giving them a richer and more varied way of understanding and expressing nature, society and life. In addition, these principles and methods have also effectively enhanced the expressive abilities of Chinese painting students: sketching and sketching have developed their modelling skills; perspective has given them a systematic and scientific knowledge and understanding of spatial relationships, which they can then express in their pictures; and colour science has overturned the traditional formulaic approach to colour in Chinese painting. The anatomy of the human body in art provides an objective method for Chinese painters to understand and represent the human body.

After the founding of New China and the new period of reform and opening up, the teaching system of Chinese painting became more and more complete, and today, in the new era, the major art academies and comprehensive universities in China are still using this teaching system.

#### (2) Disadvantages

The introduction of Western art theories and methods has brought the spirit of realism and a scientific approach to realism to China, especially in the case of brush painting, which has been

truly remarkable in its representation of real-life subjects. Indeed, the study of Western painting theories such as anatomy, composition, perspective and light and shade should focus on addressing the scientific approach to modelling. However, the development of modern academic Chinese painting teaching today has led to an overemphasis on the scientific nature of modelling methods and the simple use of the theoretical and practical tools of Western painting as the basis of Chinese painting teaching, resulting in the neglect of the modelling methods and aesthetic characteristics of traditional Chinese painting (imagery, brushwork, chapter and formula, etc.), as can be seen in the teaching of Chinese painting in some of today's comprehensive universities.

### (3) Derived Issues

The dissemination of western learning to orient profoundly changed the teaching system and the content of modern Chinese painting, and a series of questions arose from the changes. The most prominent of these was the question of 'which is the basis of Chinese painting: drawing or calligraphy', a question that is still debated in academic circles today.

When discussing how to deal with the established artistic techniques, Shi Tao said in his "Painting Quotations" that "I work for a certain family, not a certain family for me". I think that Shi Tao's remarks provide inspiration for the solution of the above problems. In the process of students' learning, sketching is to solve the problem of modeling, and the learning of calligraphy is to solve the problem of the national artistic characteristics of the line of Chinese painting. Both should be 'for my use' learning tools and processes. Thus, when we approach Western art methods today, Therefore, when we treat Western art methods today, we should also have the spirit of Shi Tao's treatment of ancient methods. Foreign artistic methods must not be a tool to limit the artist's creation, but should be a means for the artist to express himself.

## 5. Conclusion

In essence, the artistic principles and methods of Western painting have been used in recent times as a means of improving the professional abilities of students in the teaching of Chinese painting, and the means should never be taken as the artistic goal. More importantly, they are means to deepen students' understanding of the plastic arts and to equip them with practical methods to express their aesthetic thoughts and emotions appropriately. In addition, the mere use of the tools and materials of Chinese painting, while ignoring the aesthetic characteristics of Chinese painting, is a superficial skills of lack of national spirit, and far removed from the core of Chinese painting, and teaching in this way lacks vitality. However, the teaching of Chinese painting in this way is not only contemporary but also national in nature, as it is based on the principles of Western art and the training of the means and methods of observation, as well as the inheritance of traditional Chinese painting concepts of imagery and aesthetic characteristics.

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