

Study of female consciousness in Frida Kahlo and Pan Yuliang's self-portraits

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Abstract

With the awakening of female consciousness, female artists at home and abroad began to think about their own existence value. They began to get rid of the narrow creative methods and themes in the past, observe things and themselves from the perspective of women themselves, integrate their personal experiences and inner feelings into their painting themes, and create their own unique artistic style. Mexican female artist Frida Kahlo and Chinese female painter Pan Yuliang in the Republic of China have great differences in their regions, countries and even living backgrounds, but their paintings clearly reflect the female consciousness. This paper makes a comparative study of the female consciousness in the self-portraits in the painting art of the two artists, analyzes their self-portraits from the perspective of women, understands how they depict the inner world of expectation with the perspective of female painting language, explores the existence value of women themselves, drives the awakening of feminism, and observes and analyzes the painting characteristics of the two female artists. It has some enlightenment to the creation of domestic female artists in the future, and has certain guiding significance to the creation of fine arts in the new period of our country.

Keywords

Pan Yuliang; Frida Kahlo; Self-portrait; Female consciousness.

1. Introduction

Mexican artist Frida Kahlo and Chinese painter Pan Yuliang are both among the most important female artists in the 20th century and have made remarkable achievements in the field of painting. Although they come from different countries, there are commonalities in their paintings. Self-portraits are their prominent artistic characteristics.

2. What is female consciousness?

"Female consciousness refers to the position of women as subjects in the objective world. Conscious awareness of function and value. Specifically, it means that women can consciously realize and fulfill their historical mission, social responsibility and life obligations, and clearly know their own characteristics, and participate in the transformation of nature and society in a unique way, affirming and realizing their own needs and values." This is also a more appropriate definition of the concept of female consciousness. That is to say, on the basis of consciously realizing and fulfilling their missions, responsibilities and obligations, women can also confidently recognize that their unique insights can play a certain positive role in the development of society and affirm their own value. The emergence of female consciousness stems from the launch of the feminist movement, and the western feminist movement has promoted the emancipation of female thought to a large extent. Inextricably linked to male culture and tradition from the beginning, feminism sought to bring a fresh perspective to women's issues. In 1971, Linda Nochlin published "Why Are There No Great Women Artists?" in *Art News*. The article is one of the most important events in the history of feminist thought.

Start feminist research. The development of female art makes female artists start to think about their own independent self-worth. They observe things and social phenomena around them from a female perspective, and create paintings with their own unique thoughts and emotions. These paintings are endowed with women's special character, and their female consciousness is reflected in their paintings, which are called female paintings.

3. The life of Frida and Pan Yuliang

3.1. Historical background

As early as 1929, Virginia Woolf published a *Room of One's Own*, which proposed that female literature should have its own artistic characteristics from the perspective of literature, taking women's thinking and life as the writing object, and issuing the voice of a woman. Feminists continue to express their views to the society, and the society is also thinking about the idea and the movement, and more and more people begin to wake up and join the camp of feminists. Frida Kahlo was born in 1907 in a middle-class family. The era she lived in was the early feminist movement in Western society. The feminist movement was formed on the basis of social and political life, advocating women's equality and freedom and encouraging women to step out of the family into the society and give full play to their value. Inextricably linked to male culture and tradition from the beginning, feminism sought to bring a fresh perspective to women's issues. Therefore, feminists in this era are no longer limited to individual women and seek for female value recognition psychologically. Let women become the same existence as men.

Pan Yuliang was born in the Republic of China in the East. Before the 20th century in China, the status of Chinese women did not receive significant attention, and there were very few female artists who really engaged in painting. However, since the Republic of China, especially after the May Fourth Movement, with the spread of Western culture, the concepts of freedom, equality, democracy and other artistic thoughts flooded into China. Many artists began to accept the idea of Western painting, and oil painting was introduced to China as a new painting technique, forming a new trend against China's feudal ideology. Feminism began to rise in the 1980s and gradually became an important social trend of thought and cultural phenomenon. Under the influence and influence of the above culture, female painters have their own understanding, their outlook on life, their attention to themselves, their attention to the living situation, and the emergence of Chinese female consciousness. Under this background of *The Times*, they have thus carried out a new exploration of the expression of painting.

3.2. Life experience

Frida Kahlo was born in Mexico City in 1907 to a German-Jewish painter and photographer, William Kahlo, and a mother of mixed Spanish and American Indian descent. For Frida, the pain has been with her throughout her life, including polio as a child, muscle atrophy in her right leg, non-uniform leg length, often wearing long skirts to cover physical defects, and a car accident at 18, which broke multiple bones all over her body and completely flattened her right foot, although Frida's life was not in danger, but also caused lifelong disabilities and even infertility. In her short life, she has undergone many surgeries, and the pain has always been with Frida. It is also because of this that Frida's themes run through pain and her perseverance. Her unique soul and artistic attainments in painting attracted her teacher Diego Rivera, Diego Rivera was a famous fresco master in Mexico at that time, and the two people became fond of each other and became husband and wife. Their union was described by Frida's mother as "elephant and dove". But as an artist and socialite, Diego is born with a romantic, wild nature, and believes that sex and love can be completely separated, which is completely different from Frida's view of love, causing them to experience a complex process of divorce and remarriage. In Frida's

creation, she is inspired by her painful experiences, and she infuses her own emotional experiences into her works with a unique language of painting. When Frida died in 1954, she left a note that appeared to express her feelings about death: "May it be good to leave, and may I never return."

Pan Yuliang was born in Yangzhou, Jiangsu Province in 1895. During the Republic of China, the politics, economy and culture of Western society all had a great impact on Chinese traditional art. She was brought up by her uncle from childhood, uncle compulsive gambling, 13 years old, Pan Yuliang was sold to Wuhu a brothel to pay off gambling debts. In 1912, it was a turning point in Pan Yuliang's life, she met the first noble man in her life - Pan Zanhua, who later became her husband. Pan Zanhua, appointed to the customs supervision of Wuhu, Anhui Province, graduated from Waseda University, was an early member of the Tongmeng Association. He was a upright and upright man and a learned patriot. His speech and manmanlike behavior had a great influence on Pan Yuliang's life. She showed her unique talent in painting, Pan Zanhua first asked her to follow the painter Hongye teacher painting, Hongye teacher is Pan Yuliang embarked on the path of art enlightenment teacher. Subsequently, she was admitted to the Shanghai Academy of Fine Arts in 1920 to study painting, and was also the first female student enrolled in the Shanghai Fine Arts College. Although she only spent ten months in the Shanghai Fine Arts College, she learned Western painting in the fine Arts College, which laid the foundation for her future study in France. In 1924, Pan was admitted to the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux Arts in Paris, where he studied with Professor Lucien Simon. In 1928, Pan Yuliang returned to China and taught in Shanghai Art College, but was forced to leave his hometown under the imprisonment of traditional feudal ethics. From 1937 until her death in France in 1977, more than 4,000 of her works were sent back to China and preserved by the Anhui Provincial Museum. Many of her works were collected by Western museums, art galleries and private collections, and she was awarded several MEDALS of the Western art world.

In the same era, Frida and Pan Yuliang, two great female painters living in different countries, picked up the brush to paint their inner world almost at the same time after experiencing the twists and turns of life. The two female painters have been insisting on self-exploration and self-realization, and a large number of self-portraits are their good proof.

3.3. Chance and personality

Canadian Suzanne Barbezat described Frida as a Mexican rose watered with suffering, which also reflects the strong vitality of Frida. Frida has experienced three life tribulations: car accident, marriage, miscarriage, and her three tribulations have made her re-deconstruct herself and use the brush to splash the vigorous energy deep inside her body. She does not give in to the suffering and pain she faces. She is tough, independent and individual. She records her own story through her painting creation and expresses her strong determination. She was a Mexican Communist revolutionary fighter, and she loved her country. Her painting style is unique in its own way. In the eyes of the Mexican people, she is a fierce, heroic artist.

If Frida is a Mexican rose watered with suffering, Pan Yuliang is a plum blossom born in the wind in the cold winter. Her painting style is unique in its own way. Pan Yuliang's artistic achievements are inseparable from her unrestrained personality. In her works, she is mostly masculine. Her students have described her personality as similar to that of boys, with a loud voice and a blunt temper. Pan Yuliang's life was complex and changeable. On the one hand, her previous experience in broomhouse would be ridiculed by the secular public opinion; on the other hand, she brought a new interpretation of the subject matter of painting, using the female body as the painting language to communicate with herself. She used the body painting to interpret her inner voice, dare to oppose the feudal ethics and advocate the liberation of women. All the hardships and experiences also cast her resolute character, but also achieved her career in painting, and realized her independent value as a woman.

4. The concrete embodiment of female consciousness in Frida and Pan Yuliang's self-portraits

After the car accident, Frida's first self-portrait was born named "Self-Portrait in Velvet". With ruddy face and elegant expression, she wore red velvet red robe, exposing her slender neck and a pair of elegant Botticelli hands. She shaped herself into a healthy woman with upright and indifferent attitude in her painting. In stark contrast to the reality of the pain of a car accident. Frida paints with her own body to express her heart. After Frida suffered the betrayal in her marriage, the female consciousness in her body continued to appear, and in 1940 she created "Self-Portrait with cut hair", the top of the picture wrote: "Love you, my long hair is waist, do not love you, all cut off", this sentence seems to be Frida's disappointment to her husband Diego Rivera, but also reflects her own courage. In the painting, she takes off her old Tenwang clothes, puts on a large black suit and leather shoes, and cuts off her long hair. The picture of her is full of male features, and the only remaining female features are earrings, which are proof of the existence of Frida's female consciousness. The same is true of the Broken Spine, created in 1944, where the character is in ruins, bare upper body, the middle pillar goes straight through the body, her spine is broken, her body is studded with nails, the largest nail is driven into the heart, Frida painted her face with tears, and throughout the picture, you can reflect her physical pain, this is her true portrayal. It represents her painful life experience. With naked physical pain and undisguised sex, Frida conveys her mental and physical suffering. All these constitute Frida's unconscious spiritual pursuit. Her self-portraits take women as the theme and reveal female consciousness through the depiction of herself and others. According to Frida's self-portrait, despite the numerous scars left on her body, she never looked broken and out of control, and she always had a calm and resolute face, with direct and fearless eyes.

Frida said, "People think I'm a surrealist, but I'm not. I never paint dreams. I paint my own reality." From Pan Yuliang's large number of self-portraits, we can also deeply understand that each self-portrait of the artist has a kind of self-analysis and care ability. Pan Yuliang's self-portrait has obvious personal tendency, which is the reconstruction of self. On the one hand, it is the cognition of inner female consciousness, and on the other hand, it is the expression of self different from reality. Her self-portrait made in France in 1940 is the ideal beautification of her own, the outside world described Pan Yuliang plain appearance, facial features are not outstanding, so the self-portrait intentionally painted himself as a slender eyebrows, temperament and graceful. Pan Yuliang, for the inferiority of the subconscious female identity, armed himself with the appearance of the male character, used the male vision to see, and was in a position of "being watched". In the self-portrait created in 1945, he placed himself in front of the window, his eyes were sad, and the flowers in the vase had a feminine symbolic meaning, and his self-emotion began to emerge. At this time, Pan Yuliang appealed his self-emotion to himself in the painting, and began to pursue his self-value, shifting from "being watched" to describing himself to the viewer. In the 1949 printmaking self-portrait, the eyes are provocative, the eyebrows are raised, and the forehead is slightly wrinkled, which completely breaks the gentle and elegant female image in the male eyes and begins to explore the value of women themselves.

5. The artistic influence of female consciousness in Frida and Pan Yuliang's self-portraits

Frida and Pan Yuliang's self-portraits and the female consciousness embodied in them have had a profound impact on contemporary art creation. Their lives are both painful and gorgeous. Frida and Pan Yuliang's self-portraits come from life, and art comes from life, and Frida is influenced by Western culture. By endows her self-feeling and inner world into the picture, she

hopes to awaken her self-awareness, and transform the pain she experiences in reality into creation, which is also the way for her self-realization. Pan Yuliang, as an Oriental woman, carries the implicit tradition in her bones, and expresses her inner feelings with the help of foreign objects in painting to realize her exploration of female consciousness. Although they are two different painting styles, they are able to express their ideas and feelings with brushes in every stage of life, and they are all pursuing self-awareness and realizing the value and significance of their own existence. These are all worthy of artists to explore and study, their self-portraits of "female consciousness" is not only a reflection of their personal artistic achievements, but also to the development of female painting has made outstanding contributions.

6. Peroration

From the horizontal perspective, the characters of Frida and Pan Yuliang are created by the social culture in which they live. Even though they go through hardships constantly, they dare to face their own pain and break the shackles of traditional culture with tenacious perseverance. Finally, they break through themselves and realize the self-worth of a woman. From the longitudinal point of view, their self-portraits reflect a strong female consciousness. From the analysis of the self-portraits of Bifrida and Pan Yuliang, we can know that female consciousness is the product of a specific era background. The female consciousness embodied in the work is the result of women's independent struggle. They used the female painting language to depict the inner world of expectation and explore the existence value of women themselves, which led to the awakening of feminism and encouraged the creation of female artists in the future.

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