

## Chen Xiaojiang 陈晓江: *Advocating for the Arts* 提倡艺术应有的途径

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近来中国社会上对于艺术的倾向，在西洋画方面，比较兴盛一点，足见新艺术权威的影响，多少已经震动到社会上面去，使社会上的事事物物，都从时代的艺术镜里照出来，这就是时代的艺术化，再明瞭地说一句：中国三四年前的美人，从现在潮流的晴光里照出来，一定有不同的地方，这不同的地方就是潮流的变迁，潮流变迁就是时代的艺术化，所以要表示时代精神，非从艺术上去奋斗不可，要在艺术上奋斗，须先从光明的大道上走，才有美满的效果。

In recent times, Chinese society has shown a greater interest in art, with Western painting (*xiyanghua* 西洋画) enjoying a particularly avid interest.<sup>1</sup> One can see that New Art (*xinyishu* 新艺术) has somewhat shocked society, its influence wide-reaching.<sup>2</sup> This is the embodiment of art in our times. To be specific: In China, what was considered beautiful in the physical appearance of a person three or four years ago, viewed in a modern-day setting, could not possibly align with the aesthetic norms of today. The difference is the change of the trend, as well as the embodiment of art. Therefore, to express the spirit of the times, it is necessary to struggle in art. And in struggling, we must follow the path of light. Then, and only then, can we achieve a satisfactory effect.

我现在只从西洋画上说，我们要研究西洋的绘画，一定要把西洋画上的轨道来认定，然后依这一条轨道的次序去走，这就是研究西洋画的根本问题，辩明了根本的途径（之后），再从此下一番诚恳的呆笨的工夫才好，绝不能越过这层阶级的，好像小孩子初学走路的时候，当然是一步一步慢慢的行动，绝不会起初就学跑，是一样的道理。但是观察我们中国现在的新艺术，恰像小孩子不会走路，就在那里学跑，大多数已经越过好几步的阶级，在根本上没有相当的经过，就在表面上涂起大红大绿的色彩，自认为新派，岂可成立，从形式上看，似乎很热闹，考究彻

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<sup>1</sup> Until the mid-19th century, western painting (西洋画) was primarily concerned with representational and Classical modes of production, after which time more modern, abstract and conceptual forms gained favor. (See: W. Stephen Croddy, *Explaining Modernism* (Aesthetics and Philosophy of Arts, 2008)).

<sup>2</sup> “新艺术” refers to Art Nouveau, which is a "Art deco" movement that originated and developed in Europe and the United States in the late 19th century and the early 20th century, and has a considerable influence in the art.

底，非常危险。

When we study Western painting, we should identify the paintings according to the perspective of Western painting, and then follow it. Herein lies the fundamental problem with studying Western painting, and it is only after a steady path has been identified that one can allow oneself to make sincere and foolish attempts in their work; we must not skip this stage in the process. Just like when children learn to walk, they walk, slowly, step by step, rather than run at first. The same logic applies here. But when we look at New Art in China today, it is just like children who cannot walk, but try to run. Most of them have already omitted several steps, without a proper process at all. They paint the surface of their canvases with bright reds and greens, thinking such is the new school. How could this be true? On the surface, their approach may seem bold and lively, but it is in fact very dangerous.

现在来讲到绘画在根底上的研究，那就是素描了（铅笔本炭），这种练习，果然在初学时要注意，也就是一个研究绘画的人，终身的练习，并没有一种年度的学习，欧洲时常有许多鬓发苍白的老作家，天天到研究所去做铅笔和木炭的练习，色彩方面，像水彩画粉画，都可作为是一种旅行野外的速写，并不列入一种正式的地位，油画是有正常的价值，并有终身研究的必要，所以欧洲的作家，在存在的时候，是没有研究的结束。像巴黎美术学校，没有毕业期限，拿年来做标准，则满了 30 岁，就不能再校研究了，所以他们的作家，完全抱研究的宗旨，在作品上就得到纯粹有根底的表现。

Now let us talk about the study of the fundamentals of painting. There is sketching (*sumiao* 素描) (with pencil and charcoal).<sup>3</sup> Although this sort of practice should certainly be emphasized early in an artist's career, it should be continued throughout one's life, and not simply limited to a year of learning. In Europe, there are often many old grey-haired painters who study how to do pencil and charcoal exercises every day. Paintings such as watercolor (*huicaihua* 水彩画) can be regarded as a kind of quick sketch (*suxie* 速写) of outdoor travel; this practice is not afforded formal status. However, oil painting has a normal meaning, and is

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<sup>3</sup> A sketch is a quick, informal drawing done freehand. Most sketch artists use pencil, charcoal, graphite sticks, or ink to compose sketches. Some may use colored pencils or pastels to add color. Artists can control the shading and depth of a sketch by smudging and altering how hard they press when drawing (See: Diana Davies, *Harrap's Illustrated Dictionary of Art and Artists*. (Harrap's reference, 1990)).

deserving of lifelong study. Therefore, European painters have no end of study in their lifetimes. L'École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts, for example, does not have a deadline for graduation, but takes age as a key criterion. If prospective students are over 30, they cannot enrol. Therefore, European artists, totally committed to the aims of their studies, have achieved an unadulterated, grounded expression in their work.

我们中国在新绘画上，仅有十年来的初步，在过渡时代，更应富在基础上着手，一步一步的进行，万不要提起什么派，什么派，在欧洲果然派别很多，他所成功的派别，是从几世纪来有统系上的变迁，有历史上时代的关系，且作家他自己并不知道是什么派，是他研究的结果，后人来认定他是什么派，所以新学说的种种派别只能做我们参结而已，现在提起派别的说话，我就略微简单的说几句。

We, in China, only have ten years of experience in New Art. In this transitional time, it is important to proceed step by step on the basics, and to never refer to any one school of painting (*huapai* 画派). There are indeed many schools of painting in Europe. The success of any one school is due to the systematic changes and the historical context of different periods over many centuries. Additionally, the artist himself does not know what kind of school his work belongs to. His work is simply the product of his studies; later generations decide which school of art he represents. Therefore, the various schools stemming from new doctrines can only serve as a reference for us. Now, when it comes to schools, I shall just say a few words.

当欧洲现代艺术的发达，法国要算是第一而巴黎尤其中心点，每年的展览会，大小差不多有数一百次的多，在社会上认定旧派为成立的代表作品，最新派方面的作品，虽在表现很多，但是在社会上鉴赏并不认为成立的一派，所以我们要想到现在中国人研究西洋画，一定要在根本上去研究，表现自己的个性，开展国家的文化，以供鉴赏者初进的引导，不必在派别上去做无意义的工夫，因为欧洲他们有这样深的根本，尚且最新派不能成立，何况我们中国在萌芽时代，所以我上面说的不能越过的阶级，就是这层意思。

When referring to the development of modern European art, the French are superior. Paris is particularly important, where every year almost a hundred art exhibitions are held. In society,

the old school of painting (*jiupai* 旧派) is regarded as the established school, and any works belonging to the new school of painting (*xinpai* 新派) are not considered as such.<sup>4</sup> Although one will observe many expressions of enthusiasm for new school paintings, societal appreciation is not considered a valid school. Therefore, when Chinese study Western painting, we must focus our attention on the fundamentals, expressing our own personality and developing our national culture, with a view to providing an introduction for the foreign connoisseur to Chinese aesthetics. It is unnecessary to make efforts in identifying with a particular school. Europeans have a strong artistic heritage, so much so that not even the latest school can enter upon the established. Moreover, China is in the sprouting period. This is the stage I referred to earlier when I said we must not shorten the process of our study of Western painting.

在鉴赏上面，他们欧洲人对于艺术，无论哪一类人，似乎都有点美感思想，懂得艺术的所以然，于是对于鉴赏上也有了一种能力的判断，议论上也有了一种公正的发表。

In terms of appreciation, no matter what kind of people they are, nearly all Europeans seem to have some understanding of aesthetics and how art works. Therefore, they have the ability to judge and appreciate art, as well as expressing fair comments.

我国人在研究西洋画，既然很少，而能了解西洋画真意的人更少，所以社会上的人们，在鉴赏的时候，无非看看画上的色彩就是了，不能拿自己的判断力来分别画的是非，这一层缘故，就是我国民众少受美感教育，是不能怪他没有程度看画的程度幼稚。

In China, few people study Western painting. Even fewer people can fully understand the true meaning of Western painting. Therefore, when Chinese society come to admire a particular work of Western painting, they just look at the color on the painting; they cannot identify whether the painting is excellent or not based on their own judgment. This can be explained

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<sup>4</sup> In the early 20th century, the Chinese art circle called the study of western modern painting "new school painting" to distinguish it from the classical realistic painting. "New school painting" mainly refers to the avant-garde paintings such as fauvism, cubism and surrealism, and also includes the styles of some impressionists and post-impressionists.

by the Chinese public's lack of aesthetic education. We cannot simply put this down to naivety on their part.

所以要使得民众受有鉴赏的能力和美感的思想，完全要在倡导方面去做，做的方法，从最简单上说，有两种，一种是展览会，一种是文字上的宣传，展览会的效果，能引起民众脑筋，当中有画的一件东西，文字上面能使得鉴赏的人们趋向是非的途径，纠正他薄弱的判断力，若然拿以误传误，妄肆是非的文字来倡导，那么一般民众就盲从到一条黑暗的路上去了，所以在文字上宣传发表议论的人，负有极重大的责任，非但在责任上有重大关系，且在人格要保守信仰，在态度上要维持诚恳，所以我希望作家要有纯粹根本的研究，议论家要有负责信仰诚恳的态度，那么我们中国新艺术前途有无穷的希望。

Therefore, in order to enable the public to have the ability to appreciate art and to acquire aesthetic sensibilities, it is entirely necessary to engage in advocacy. There are two simple ways to do this: one is through art exhibits and the other is through disseminating information. The effect of an exhibition is to inspire the public to think. Information can provide the public with a way of distinguishing right from wrong, correcting their weak judgment. If we advocate with misunderstandings and ridiculous literature on art, then the general public will be confused. Meanwhile, those who advocate and comment on painting should have a great sense of responsibility. Additionally, people who take responsibility for advocating need to preserve their personal integrity and uphold sincerity. Therefore, I hope that painters have a pure and grounded education, and that art critics have a responsible and sincere attitude. If this can be done, there is endless hope for the future of our own Chinese New Art.