

Contemporary Art on Realistic Subjects in the New Era of Lacquer Painting

Zhihao Ye¹ & Xinyun Jiao²

¹Guangdong Polytechnic Normal University, Guangzhou, China

²Universiti Sains Malaysia, USM Penang, Malaysia

Correspondence: Xinyun Jiao, Universiti Sains Malaysia, USM Penang, Malaysia.

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Abstract

By using lacquer painting creation with realistic themes as an example, this essay will examine the primary issues with lacquer painting creation with realistic themes in the context of the modern period. It will summarize the key pathways and construction expansion choices for lacquer painting creation with realistic themes by analyzing the creative issues and traits of lacquer painting with realistic themes, and it will provide the future path perspective that may be supported. Modern lacquer paintings with realistic topics suffer from a loss of pictoriality, a weakening of pictoriality, and a lack of aesthetic merit. Lack of creative integrity and originality; little aesthetic effect; lack of a modern viewpoint or historical significance. It is clear that there is a “tendency to profit,” and commercialization results in repetition and homogenization. A few representative lacquer paintings and artworks have been examined by the author. By emphasizing the incorporation of styles from other forms of painting and increasing the lacquer painting’s creative expressive language, the author offers answers. The development of lacquer paintings with realistic subjects in the context of the new period is suggested as well as workable solutions.

Keywords: new age, fine arts, creation, problems, lacquer painting

1. The Current Development of Lacquer Painting on Realistic Themes

Painting with realistic themes means choosing persons or events from significant societal historical moments as well as things from everyday life. Since China’s reform and opening, a significant number of traditional lacquer paintings with realistic subjects have appeared, owing to the government’s considerable efforts as well as the artists’ steadfast support and ongoing involvement. Art galleries, museums, and urban history organizations favor the development of realistic topics as a significant aesthetic manifestation of the historical narrative.

Mr. Shui Tianzhong, a renowned art critic, once said that the subject substance, main characters, descriptions of events, and statements of ideas in realistic paintings are only given life again when the artist’s sincere sentiments and creative passion are placed into the production. A work’s aesthetic expression can reveal the artist’s actual emotions and distinctive perspective of commitment and introspection. It is important to consider the organic connection between the choice of the subject matter and the structuring of the creative concept, particularly in the case of lacquer painting on realistic subjects. It is feasible to fulfill the demand for optimal penetration and presentation of the expanding and contagious force of the work while also satisfying the need to expound on the subject matter of realistic topics.



Figure 1. Works by contemporary lacquer artists (a.b.c)

The pieces shown above are by several modern lacquer artists, and while they all use pure methods, they all have the issues mentioned above to differing degrees. Western colorism is only repeated in Figure 1(a). Colorism disdains all styles of painting and concentrates solely on the expressive power of color. Frequently, the artwork consists only of a few distinct colors combined, or it may even be entirely one color. The influence of Western modern art is more of a violation of established painting conventions. Going for simple copying and repetition without considering the moments when the West has experienced worry and concern for the future of humanity since the Second World War makes little logic and neither creates a new visual impact nor affects the audience's emotions. Its lack of pictoriality and lack of emotional expression by the artist is the issue it portrays.

The author refers to "Handkerchief," Figure 1(b), as a representation of his early experiences. The work's choice of dismal colors and hard lines and contours more closely matches the rigid, sad sensations brought on by industrial mechanization, losing its impact of eliciting warm memories of the mother symbolized by the handkerchief.

A commercially produced work of sheer skill, Figure 1(c) has no significant methodological flaws.

The major issue is that it lacks any distinctive style or creative features and is extremely homogenized. And at that point, it is just a lacquer art product. This is how the so-called commercial drive has harmed lacquer art.

2. Problems in the Creation of Lacquer Paintings with Realistic Themes in the Context of the New Era

Both in terms of the ubiquity of other genres and the distinctiveness of lacquer painting, there are issues with the production of realistic lacquer paintings in the modern day. The primary issues are seen in the following four categories in terms of the art of expression, presentation, embodiment of ideals, and embodiment of historical concerns:

(1) The absence and weakening of pictoriality, resulting in the weakening of readability in the creation of lacquer works.

Lacquer painting is a vital statement of the creative meaning and worth of a piece of art, as well as an organic synthesis of the artist's creative skill and personality. The over-reliance on digital image processing and the over-pursuit of the "technique only" theory, which causes lacquer works to focus only on the processing of techniques and the adjustment of images to the neglect of the embodiment of artistic values, are what primarily show the lack of painting in the current creation of realistic lacquer paintings, directly depriving the artist of the crucial process of thinking and recreating. The selection of a topic, its amplification, and its production differ greatly from the digital modification of an image. The artist's bold artistic vision and rigorous creative idea have been replaced with mechanical, emotionless, and fancy alterations, repairs, and manipulations, which will make the work far less current, legible, and artistic.

(2) The dilution and reduction of infectiousness, resulting in the weakening of the infectiousness of the creation of lacquer paintings.

The primary inspiration for lacquer paintings comes from the lacquer painter's own life experiences. However, many artists claim that it is challenging to express their creative interest in the truth of life due to the pressures of current fast-paced existence, which leads to strict repetition, copying, and replication." We do not strive to produce, but to innovate," (Note 1) claims Cheng Xiangjun. According to the author, there are other factors to consider when evaluating a lacquer work than its ability to accurately depict the events or its use of exacting materials. The demand to create lacquer paintings of realistic topics that are tidy, detailed, and realistic is not necessarily the end objective; such a loss of creative impact and a weakening of artistic cohesiveness cannot generate works that affect the times.

(3) The weakening and fading of contemporaryity has led to a blandness in the expressive nature of lacquer painting.

The artist uses a variety of electronic devices to present the novelty of his works through digital processing to enhance and rearrange different color combinations. However, this approach lacks a contemporary experience of dialogue with the times, and the stereotypical digital color image processing hardly conveys the concern of the times under the cultural identity of the new era. Second, the artist employs a range of techniques and is utterly technically focused, devoting a great deal of time and effort to technical production without giving any thought to how to enhance the meaning and aesthetic expression of the work. As a result, contemporary lacquer works are essentially cosmetic and place a greater emphasis on technique than meaning, ignoring the in-depth investigation of emotion.

(4) The emergence and growth of a tendency towards profitability has led to a loss of thoughtfulness in the creation of lacquer works.

Current lacquer painting contests on contemporary issues are many and sporadic, forcing artists to produce works in order to keep up. With such a competitive structure and style of thinking, lacquer painting would unintentionally lose its rigor and creativity. One of the primary issues and unfavorable characteristics of modern lacquer painting on realistic topics is this propensity for profit. In the short term, the chase of money and fame has supplanted the creative expression of genuine sentiments and emotions. However, it is still challenging for such works to endure in the context of the times. In modern art, which is both a test and a fight between formalism and realism, maintaining inner purity and serenity of mind is a challenging challenge.

3. The Development Path of Lacquer Painting on Realistic Themes in the Context of the New Era

The author believes that there are three significant building pathways for the development of lacquer paintings on realistic themes in the framework of the new period based on an examination of the existing status of lacquer painting works on realistic themes.

(1) By strengthening the language of artistic expression in lacquer painting, the focus is on the stylistic absorption of different types of painting.

By enhancing the language of artistic expression in lacquer painting, the expression of brush strokes and strokes of meaning should not be disregarded in terms of artistic expression and perception. Color usage is personalized, and opportunities for fuller color expression are sought for. It should also emphasize the incorporation of styles from other forms of painting, including fresco, rock, silk, ukiyo-e, abstract, etc. However, stopping at technique planning is insufficient.

The new period of art should place greater emphasis on taking inspiration from others and developing a distinctive and comprehensive linguistic expression system for lacquer painting. The emphasis is on the artist's capacity to leave the studio and engage with the world outside, getting close to people and the natural environment. Instead of placing themselves on a pedestal, artists should be inspired by the Western Romantic style of painting and concentrate on expressing their emotions, using lacquer painting as a tool to convey their core concepts.



Figure 2. Left Qiao Shiguang, *The Lady with Dressing*, 45 x 60 cm, 1978, lacquer

Figure 3. Upper right Ancient Egyptian fresco

Figure 4. Lower right Qiao Shiguang, *Peasant Movement Seminar in Guangzhou*, 320 × 160 cm, 1977, lacquer

The woman is seated on her side with her arms, legs, and feet all in a frontal posture in Qiao Shiguang's "Madame with Dressing" (Figure. 2), which is obviously based on the "frontal law" idea of ancient Egyptian murals (Figure. 3). This bodily form does not follow the rules of artistic anatomy. However, the torso and face are frontal. Although it is obvious that his point of view is foreign, the Chinese-inspired use of color, subject matter, and cultural symbols make it a successful transfer. Guangzhou Peasant Movement Workshop, Figure. 4, has a decidedly antique Chinese border painting feel to its subject matter, composition, and color application. He absorbed Michelangelo's painting technique, as seen by the sculptural sense of volume in the white jade pagoda in China and the wooden cottonwoods in front of the door. The picture combines Western painting approaches while retaining maximum compatibility with traditional Chinese painting. It uses a Western scientific viewpoint and treats light using Launcelot's light and dark method.

(2) The brush and ink should follow the times, exploring new styles and building a contemporary identity for lacquer painting.

It is crucial to employ lacquer painting to preserve history and the passage of time, preserving it as a timeless "time capsule," and to produce lacquer paintings with contemporary subjects that are genuine to the times.

Interactive lacquer artwork by Huang Zixin Time Dripping (Figure. 5) addresses the idea of time and life. The design of it in three dimensions — sound, light, and electricity — is what makes it stand out the most. It explores aggressively the idea of combining various media with lacquer painting or lacquer art. It portrays the enigmatic depths of the cosmos through the combination of sound, light, and lacquer effects. The role simultaneously combines several techniques, including the finger-press gradient lacquer process, the plain lacquer process, and the lacquer fat stripping process, yet harmoniously unifies them in a single piece. This has positive ramifications for the investigation of the lacquer art language.

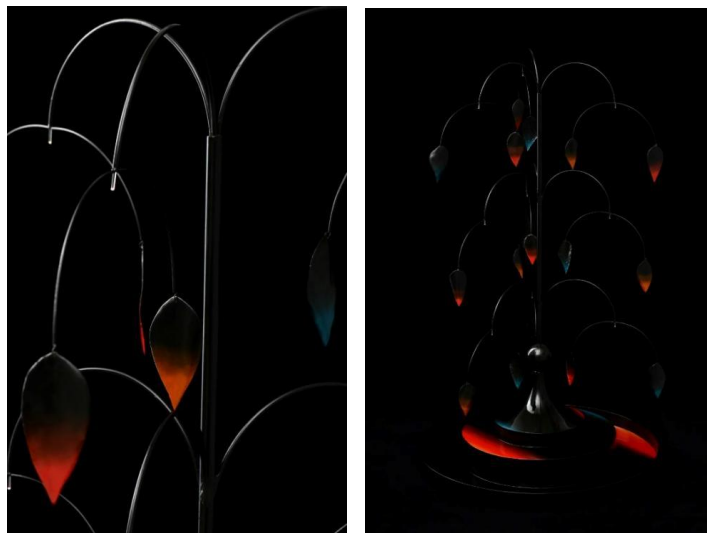


Figure 5. Huang Zixin's 'Time Drops' Lacquer interactive art installation

(3) The focus is on the emotional expression of the work, with the subjective thinking of the artist.

The artist needs to be able to reflect and return to the core of art, which takes time to settle, rather than producing a lot of "great jumps" or repetitive self-expressions out of habit. Art is a time and space-limited soliloquy of the intellect that allows for introspection. Artists must read, reflect, and be in a relaxed frame of mind for in-depth reflection in order to produce masterpieces that will withstand the test of time. The pursuit of financial gain must be resisted in favor of the expression of one's thoughts and feelings. opposing trends and insisting on expressing one's own identity as opposed to going with the flow. to give more opportunities for creative expression of interest and the structuring of value dimensions for the production of contemporary realistic lacquer paintings. At the same time, the heritage element of realistic lacquer painting creation in the future is a crucial element that must not be overlooked. It enables lacquer paintings to be incorporated into contemporary living spaces and public spaces, making them a part of the living landscape, uniting lacquer painting with contemporary life, and enhancing the transmission of values and emotional attitudes.

Arctic by Chen Jinhua (Figure. 6) depicts the bitter cold of the white Arctic sky with sparse brushstrokes. The impact of the incomplete underpainting at top and bottom right emphasizes the condition of the work between finished and unfinished, separating the aesthetic topic from the “painting” and the “reality,” a perverted manifestation of the Western contemporary painting genre’s philosophy of “process over outcome.” The concept of “process above outcome,” popularized by the Western contemporary painting school, is distorted in this piece. The lacquer’s texture is extremely artistic and full of strong brushstrokes, evoking Titian’s style of painting. The mood he creates with his strong brushwork is not scary, but rather an admiration of the tremendous forces of nature standing in a sublime attitude. He depicts the intense cold of the Arctic, rather than the “bitter cold.” A spiritual core that dates back to 17th century Romantic painting, art is an externalization of human might; it reflects the courage and pride of man in overcoming and conquering nature. In contrast to Figure. 1(a), it is a study of its meaning rather than just a repeat of a Western school of painting. This sets it apart as a successful borrowing distinguished by fervor, thoughtfulness, and contagiousness.



Figure 6. Chen Jinhua, The North Pole, 70 x 70 cm, 2020

Naturally, if the core ideas of the aforementioned three growth pathways can be put into practice, whether for the individual artist or for the viewpoint of the audience and the pertinence of the times, it will be feasible to produce lacquer paintings with realistic subjects more successfully.

4. Conclusion

First, the capacity of the artist to incorporate his or her own life experiences, practical experiences, and authentic sentiments into the production of the lacquer painting is key to the accomplishment of a great lacquer work. By showcasing a variety of artistic interests and a secular environment, lacquer works have a special capacity for artistic advancement, emotional impact, and creative expression. Second, it is crucial to repeatedly deliberate and be exact while choosing lacquer painting topics in order to accurately describe the main characters and communicate events in realistic situations. A significant factor in the success of a lacquered work is the artist’s capacity to choose the most precise topics with a clear, creative vision. The capacity of the artist to fully unite the particular of the medium, the serendipity of production, and the originality of expression, once again in contrast to the creation of other forms of painting, is what makes lacquer works so essential. The primary indicator of whether a lacquer work can be both emotionally real and artistically expressive is how the artist’s life emotions, technical abilities, and literacy ideals are expressed in it. The art must be current, capturing the attitudes and sentiments of the times as well as the thoughts and feelings of the people of today.

Contemporary lacquer painters should concentrate on absorbing styles from other genres by bolstering the lacquer painting creative expression language in the setting of the new period of significant development of realistic themes. Boldly experiment with new aesthetics and enhance lacquer painting’s current appeal. Defy popular opinion and insist on expressing one’s own personality rather than going with the flow. By relying on the principles of the Western Romantic school of painting, emphasizing the expression of emotion, and employing lacquer painting as a tool for the expression of the artist’s central concept, the artist is able to move beyond the studio and into everyday life and avoid being a shelf artist. In the aftermath of the enormous advancement of

realistic subject matter, lacquer painting will once more exhibit its distinctive appeal by insisting on keeping up with the times and investigating advances. It will also reemerge in current values and return to modern life.

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Note

Note 1. Yuan Hao. Lacquer painter Cheng Xiangjun: Let lacquer painting innovate and develop in inheritance and integration. https://www.sohu.com/a/106286165_119727. 2016-07-17.

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