

## Self Existence in Fang Lijun's Oil Painting

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**Abstract:** Fang Lijun is a figure in the forefront of contemporary Chinese art, since China's "reform and opening up" and "85" art trend ". Fang Lijun and his group of new artists have gone through a transformation from focusing on political and historical painting to "self" art analysis. Fang Lijun created "Cynical Realism" with their unique painting language, and at the same time created memorable personalized art symbols - "shaved heads" and "laughing little people". It reflects the absurdity, rebellion and restlessness shared by this generation of people in contemporary society. This article conducts a comprehensive exploration and research through the mature painting symbols created by the other party's own image, and the original source and artistic essence of the "self" image creation oil painting in Chinese contemporary art. Through the painting art of "self" image, we can show that people pay attention to "self" and reflect the real "self". At the same time, we can think deeply about the symbolic painting language of "self" again, and reshape the new value orientation and evaluation standard of contemporary Chinese art.

### 1. Way of Chinese Oil Painting

Oil painting has been spread in China as a technology that can save China, and spread in the land of China. Some young scholars were sent abroad to study, and Western oil paintings were more widely studied and transplanted. In the wind and rain of more than 100 years of China's growth and maturity, foreign oil paintings promoted the improvement of China's education system in disguise. Art education in various schools began to learn from the western art education mode. Chinese oil paintings also entered the learning period, and then gradually moved to the creation period. However, the oil paintings at that time were mostly based on China's national conditions. They were relatively weak in the use and skills of oil painting language, and they required continuous efforts and innovation.

In the 1980s, China's oil paintings gradually matured, and they were full of vitality as spring. This was also the foundation for the full recovery and prosperity of art in the 1990s. The artists unraveled the shackles of art in the past few years, and began to look for the true emotions and national accumulations that were buried in them. A large number of Western ideas and artistic concepts have been learned and passed down by Chinese artists. They are eager to learn and progress, and the Chinese art scene has a scene of prosperity. It was also during this period that Chinese oil paintings were moving in a multi-level and diversified direction. As the artists borrowed a lot from Western literati science and art materials, post-modernism, psychoanalytic theory, deconstructionism, symbolic aesthetics, imageology, hermeneutics, and stream of consciousness flowed like floods. Chinese artists take the initiative to accept foreign cultures: new ideas, new ideas and new languages, which makes them enjoy learning. They only strive for the innovation and development of Chinese art. In recent decades, China's economic take-off, social changes and people's active thinking are the main factors that promote the influence of Western Thoughts on China. The collision of Chinese and Western ideology and culture produces bright sparks, which is a leap in the history of Chinese art.

In the contemporary painting, we have to mention the painter - Fang Lijun, who is one of the few "realistic" painters in the contemporary Chinese oil painting. He used the painting language of ridicule, ridicule and exaggeration to show his attitude towards life, "ruffian" flavor is full, and also reflects the contemporary people's "rebellious" psychology. Symbolic painting symbols, humorous artistic elements and the needs of popular culture in the market are combined in their paintings. A

kind of “vulgarity” and a kind of “weirdness” are gestated, which impact the elegance and beauty of traditional aesthetics. His paintings show people's kitsch and ugliness more directly, thus expanding people's aesthetic standards of art. Painting has also changed in form. It is not the harmony, balance and order in traditional painting. He makes the composition of paintings very exaggerated, and brings the kitsch and ugliness to the extreme. It has never been seen in traditional art. They use realistic “ugly” to show a natural painting, subjective art is presented to the viewer. “In fact, the new generation of art used the techniques of the realism of the college to fully express the 'meaningless state of mind', providing spiritual preparation, performance opportunities and paving the way for the impact of Cynical Realism.” [1].

Chinese artists combine the essence of Western painting with Chinese native art, gradually getting rid of the unilateral painting model and making Chinese art a sense of the times. Chinese art faces a diversified survival reality, and artists are also rapidly adapting the art path that suits their own development. Contemporary art has broken the traditional culture, ideal culture, and elite culture, and has moved toward popular culture and business culture. Great changes have taken place in the form of art and culture. Chinese art circles are re examining their own aesthetic standards, and Chinese oil paintings are also participating in innovation. In terms of artistic language, artists show the general psychology and spirit of this generation through their “self” artistic image. Artists pay more attention to the psychological state and emotional experience of “self”, so as to show the painting subject under the new aesthetic standards.

The symbolic “self” is not limited to the painter's own appearance and clothes, but a huge carrier endowed with artistic significance. Today, with the rapid development of the economy, the art of “self” creation of painting not only has Western art style, but also has a certain relationship with the aesthetic standards of China's new era.

Fang Lijun is an indispensable painter in the contemporary Chinese art scene. After the Chinese 85 art trend, many contemporary artists have made great achievements, and Fang Lijun is no exception. He irreplaceably became the leader of “Cynical Realism”. He used his unique painting language and exaggerated techniques to express “self” and examine society. The image of the big mouth and the grotesque and indifferent expression reveal the imbalance in society. Fang Lijun's works are ridiculous humorous subjects. While laughing at himself, he is also ridiculing some of the problems in society. The works themselves contain the helplessness of the world's wisdom and self-deprecation. Fang Lijun felt that he could not change the society, so he mocked “self”, and the boredom permeated from the marrow filled the whole picture. This is a kind of group art, which not only has “self”, but also has the content closely related to “self”, and uses the humanistic view to retain the original intention of “self”. In the content of painting, the work transcends the aesthetic definition of “Scar” art. Instead of worrying about politics and history, artists can project their vision on themselves. They express the life of the people around them, “self” emotion and so on, and narrow the distance between the painting and the people. Such works are endless in the contemporary art world, with different methods and forms, which all reflect the “Humanistic” thought to varying degrees.

## **2. Fang Lijun's “Self” Oil Painting Creation**

“His bald head image chooses himself and his friends as models, which makes this kind of ridicule become a kind of self ridicule, and thus becomes an image of self escape from the meaning system.” [2] Li Xianting evaluates Fang Lijun's theory. Fang Lijun, like many young painters, participated in the 89 'art movement. From the 85 'art trend to the 89' art movement, Fang Lijun has been combining his works with Chinese contemporary art to create the new art language in this period. As a participant and promoter, he pushed Chinese art to a new stage. On February 5, 1989, “China Modern Art Exhibition” was held as scheduled. The organizers put pop art, behavior art and installation art in the most prominent place in the exhibition hall. It is hoped that learning from the west to China's cutting-edge art can give Chinese audiences a shocking effect, so that the cutting-edge art can be widely recognized and spread in China. The media also reported on the exhibition as a slap in the face. Unfortunately, the public did not seem to accept the new art as the curator

expected. The whole exhibition was more like a farce and eventually ended. It seems that it is still a more challenging thing to change the aesthetic standards of the public in the short term. But this does not dampen the heads of young painters. Just as the curator of the “Chinese Modern Art Exhibition” said: “The exhibition itself is an active attack on reality.” In art, the most important thing is the sincerity of the artist chasing art. heart of. With this heart, we will not be driven by interest, but will be more aggressive in exploring and discovering art.

Fang Lijun happened to live in an era of diversified art development. Chinese traditional aesthetic standards have been challenged by cutting-edge art, and Fang Lijun has joined the ranks of perfecting new art. In an era where you can arbitrarily create. In an era where there is a quiet space to think carefully about the “self.” In an era of giving painters more spiritual food, new artists no longer stick to the dust. “Our era seems to be an era of compromise. The old avant-garde art spirit has lost the foundation of the past, and traditional art no longer sticks to its sacredness.” [3] Fang Lijun is a madman who liberates the “self.” As early as in ancient China, scholars and literati had the kind of “maniac” that was high and self-deprecating. To satirize the feudalism by being unrestrained and unruly, to achieve a kind of spiritual self liberation. Fang Lijun has some similarities with the ancient literati. He constantly creates the new art of “heavy taste” and challenges the psychological limit of the audience. He used his own unique vision to capture the real problems, and in the most realistic art form, he painted the thinking of reality on the canvas, forming Fang Lijun's world view. Using “self” image to show his ideology, in order to reach the resonance with the audience, using his unique artistic language to activate the life potential of magic cutting-edge painting in China.

After the contemporary artists group the “self” image, they become the carrier to express the living state of people. The “self” theme painting needs to add new meaning, in order to enrich the central idea that artists want to express. They use the painting mode of metaphor, exaggeration and banter to transform the image of “self”, and finally highlight the meaning of “I” in painting, giving the audience a deeper thinking space. The metaphor of “self” subjectively reflects the painter's questioning of real problems. The theme of “cynicism” has become a symbol of their independence. Fang Lijun’s paintings have a clear attitude. The “shadow” visual impact is strong in the paintings. It is the result of the artist’s re-elevation of the symbolic theme of “self”. Fang Lijun said to his “heads”: “The starting point of my work is to speak in the simplest and most understandable language, so I am not afraid to meet the audience, not afraid to establish such a relationship with the audience, I am not even afraid. There is such a contradiction with the audience” [4].

In any case, Fang Lijun “betrayed” traditional aesthetic standards and value orientations, and there was no factor in the works that left a little traditional aesthetic. More is replaced by big red and green, and the characters are rough and charming. The delicate feeling of the “self” creative subject has to let me admire the imagination of the painter and analyze his mental experience of “pain and happiness”. Someone said this to him: “Fang Lijun's work is a kind of downright ‘beauty’ devastating.” He has brought his own kitsch characteristics to the extreme. The picture technique is like the artistic effect of montage. Those “heads” stand by the water, stand under the sky, stand in the mountains, smirk, hippie, squinting, and laughing without hesitation... The “screaming” of the lungs is the personal experience of each of our readers. “On the practical level, people are real, both as life and ‘experience’ in life. This life is real and individual.” [5] Fang Lijun believes that art and life are always connected. It's not enough to paint in the studio. It's easy to seal yourself and your works of art. If you don't get close to the group, you will become a lunatic. As a result, Fang Lijun has more contacts with the society, expanded his material level, paid attention to life and “self”. “Creation needs choice. Choice depends on personality, which affects the state of life and the way of life. Choice is one's own observation, feeling, thinking and judgment of life. Choice is one's own artistic proposition. Choice is one's own undisguised affirmation of one's personality and preference and natural expression of one's inner feelings. [6] Fang Lijun shows the humanistic spirit in an irrational, personal and joking art mode, which is also the personal embodiment of the painter after independent thinking, and constitutes Fang Lijun's unique choice. Fang Lijun experienced the society with “self” and then reflected on the society, which finally

determined the inner exaggeration of the absurd figures in his paintings. Fang Lijun's painting always keeps a dialogue with the “self” heart, putting the “self” ideal, emotion and viewpoint on the canvas to achieve constant repetition of the “self” inner thinking. Therefore, “it marks a sense of humanity and psychology of contemporary people” [7].

### **3. Thinking and Enlightenment of “Self” Existing Form Painting**

“Self” theme oil painting has fully absorbed the concept of western contemporary art in Chinese contemporary art. With the gradual integration of western modern art and post-modern art, China's reform and opening up has also promoted the development of Chinese art in terms of diversification, globalization and nationalization. As we continue to absorb the nutrients of Western contemporary art, we must strengthen the development of our own national art, base ourselves on local art, and develop art forms with Chinese characteristics. The use of foreign art as a powerful condition for the development of Chinese art has made Chinese art continue to advance on a tortuous path.

Many contemporary artists paint their own images, and the “self” image naturally serves as the theme of painting. Their paintings are diverse in form, their paintings are clear in emotion, and their painting language is distinct. Presenting an absurd kitsch in front of the public and being judged by the public on-demand, this is the true expression of contemporary art “self” painting creation. The work reveals a variety of “ugly states”, reflecting the current people's thinking about the traditional “beauty” and the reflection of the “self”. Among them, there are many emotional ideas about “self”, which contradict with the social reality and reveal the living state of contemporary people without any disguise, as if they are warning us to think about the human-oriented principle. “This is mainly reflected in the following aspects: first, record, condense and restore the real life mode of Chinese people, show the humanistic connotation of different historical stages in extensive and true details, and show the actions and values of people in social life. Second, with a rich, free and diversified personal view, it shows a composite observation of the individual existence of Chinese people “[8].

On the tortuous road of art development, artists find that with the changes of the times, the creation form of art can catch up with the rapid pace of social development only if it is constantly diversified. Artists create “self” symbolic paintings, so that they have more artistic persuasion, so that works can occupy a place in the market economy of contemporary art. Artists put people's honing in real life and their attention to “self” life in a new painting language, and abandoned the elegant style in traditional aesthetics. “Sacrifice” painter's personal image, add their own thoughts and feelings, dramatic painting design, constantly impact the traditional aesthetic evaluation standard. “Bareheaded” and “laughing” come from the depiction of one's own image without exception. Such self-deprecation has formed the unique artistic language of this generation. At the same time of “commonness”, it also adds a real portrayal of people's “personality” due to the influence of social hierarchy. The artist uses the symbols of “Laughter Little Man” and “Buttered Skin” as the expression of painting, using different scenes and spatial transformations, and the same person playing different social roles to achieve the true idea of the artist's reality. The artist's painting purpose is not the original intention of the artist. The plot of “narcissism” and publicity is not the true meaning of the artist's painting. The real purpose of the artist is to remind people of the problems of social reality through such artistic creations and to reflect on our own humanistic cultivation.

Contemporary art has repeatedly repeated the definition of “self” in the melting pots of Western modern art, Western postmodern art, and Chinese native art. In fact, its interpretation has been hard to say. “Now when people discuss these issues, there is a concept that is often confused. The so-called rebelliousness or independence is academic or spiritual, and we often mix this spiritual will with their attitudes towards life. Together, a rebellious person is not necessarily enemies in life, he may be friendly to anyone. Someone asked me how I lived, I said that hope is a wild dog life, mainly It is to take its independence and freedom. But I will also add that sometimes the wild dog may fall in love with the dog, not that it is going to become a domestic dog or to go to the owner. Sometimes he will bite the dog, which does not mean that he will always be the enemy of the dog. [9] When these contemporary artists absorb the essence of western contemporary art, they do not

mean that they have abandoned the foundation of traditional art to them, nor have they given up the beautiful plot of normal people's life. On the contrary, they pay more attention to “self” and real life, and more integrate these artistic concepts, plus their own artistic concepts. In the end, we will create new and cutting-edge art that conforms to our own artistic style and the trend of contemporary art.

Fang Lijun's works have a magic power, which makes more and more people know and recognize his works, just like his special brand. Fang Lijun's “bald head” has really impressed many people and has become a shining symbol of contemporary Chinese art. According to his own personal experience, he made this success from an accident to a necessity. This kind of inevitable thanks to those unknown factors: the influence of the background of China's century old oil painting. The influence of western modern art and the powerful teaching of Academy of fine arts. The artist's own efforts and China's reform and opening up of a good market economy have all contributed to his success in contemporary art. Those high and terrible auction prices are staggering, but in a sense they show the public's demand for contemporary art. Fang Lijun's works have a very strong sense of the times and are the special meaning given to the works in our time.

In artistic creation, we transform the subject object into a certain art form to perceive its artistic value. As a perceptual emotional concept, art is very straightforward. There is no real unique standard in art to measure the true meaning of art. Things are often composed of a combination of many complex faces. From which angle of art can only reflect one aspect of the object, what the artist can do is to present the true “self” to the viewer as much as possible. A novel aesthetic standard requires the accumulation of the former and the hard search of the latter. Artists always try to find the reality of art and perfect art through their own creation, but they are always troubled by such problems. They constantly admit and deny their own art, and repeatedly create to find the idea of art in the ideal level. In the context of contemporary art, we should break the understanding of the traditional art pattern and establish a new measurement standard of art and culture, just as Liu Chun said: “contemporary art is an art focusing on society, history and culture This involves two standards to measure artistic language. First, you need to see whether the language accurately reveals the cultural problems that the painter wants to show; second, you need to see whether the language has special appeal “[10].

The artist is involved in the creation of “self” theme painting and puts his unique appearance into the work. In recent decades, Chinese contemporary artists have found the influence of Chinese market economy on contemporary art. With the development of market economy, the art market becomes more and more virtuous, and artists have more space to pursue their own artistic language. However, we should also see some disharmonious phenomena. Due to the good development of the art market, artists have made great profits, while the abuse of artistic symbols is also worrying. Excessive emphasis on economic pursuits will lose the original intention of artistic creation. The real artist is to innovate art while constantly writing art history. In the era of unprecedented development of Chinese art, we must seize this good opportunity to push Chinese contemporary art to a higher level.

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