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A Study on the Relationship between the Development of Handicrafts and the Innovation of Painting Art in the Ming and Qing Dynasties

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Abstract

During the Ming and Qing dynasties, China's handicraft industry developed rap-idly, especially in the fields of textiles, ceramics, papermaking, and pigments. The breakthrough development of handicrafts in the fields of textiles, ceramics, papermaking, pigments, etc. not only promotes the prosperity of the social econ-omy, but also directly affects the innovation of painting materials, thereby giving birth to the diversification and style transformation of artistic creation. This arti-cle will explore the specific impact of handicraft industry development on the in-novation of painting art materials, analyze the changes in painting art creation and expression forms caused by these innovations, and their historical signifi-cance.

Keywords

Ming and Qing Dynasty handicraft industry; Painting materials; Painting Inno-vation

1. Introduction

The Ming and Qing dynasties (1368-1912) were one of the important periods in Chinese history where social, economic, cultural, and artistic development flour-ished. In these two dynasties, the development of handicrafts reached unprece-dented heights. There have been significant breakthroughs in technology and pro-duction scale in handicraft industries such as textiles, ceramics, papermaking, and pigments.

On the basis of inheriting the experience of previous generations, China's handicraft industry has gradually formed a regional and specialized production mode. The Jiangnan region, relying on a developed water transportation network and com-modity economy, has become the core area of handicrafts such as textiles, pa-permaking, and ceramics. The silk industry centers represented by Suzhou and Hangzhou not only produce a large amount of high-end fabrics for use by the court

and the people, but also promote technical standardization (such as the improvement of jacquard machines) and production efficiency through the "official supervision and commercial operation" model[1]. These fabrics are not only used for clothing, but also become important materials for painting and calligraphy framing, and their texture and patterns directly affect the visual presentation of the artwork. The development of the ceramic industry is also significant, and the production technology of ceramic pigments (such as stable firing of underglaze colors) provides a reference for the innovation of painting pigments. The production of Xuan paper in Jing County, Anhui Province reached its peak during the Ming and Qing dynasties. The optimized ratio of Qingtan bark and Shatian straw made the paper both flexible and ink absorbing. This characteristic not only satisfies the pursuit of "brush and ink charm" in literati painting, but also gives rise to the differentiation between "sheng xuan" and "shu xuan" - the former is suitable for freehand ink splashing, while the latter is conducive to meticulous brushwork[2]. In addition, the large-scale production of the paper industry has reduced material costs, allowing painting to gradually penetrate from the "elegant play" of the literati class to the urban class, indirectly promoting the popularization of art.

The prosperity of these handicrafts not only meets people's daily needs, but also has a profound impact on the innovation of painting materials. As an important art form, painting presents different effects under different base materials, and the selection of painting materials is more diverse and enhances the artistic expression of painting [3]. During the Ming and Qing dynasties, with the advancement of handicrafts, painting materials underwent significant improvements in quality, variety, and production techniques. The innovation of painting materials such as paper, paint, and canvas has provided artists with richer creative methods and broader expressive space. At the same time, the advancement of these materials also reflected the superb level of handicraft technology at that time.

This article will explore how the development of handicrafts during the Ming and Qing dynasties promoted the innovation of painting materials. By analyzing the specific progress of handicrafts and their impact on painting materials, we can better understand the changes and development of painting art during this period. Aim to reveal the interactive relationship between handicrafts and painting art, and explore the significance of this relationship in historical development.

2. The Development of Handicrafts in the Ming and Qing Dynasties

According to historical records, during the Ming and Qing dynasties, multiple handicraft hometowns emerged in many parts of China, and some regions were renowned for their handicraft skills, greatly promoting the prosperity of their respective areas[4]. This indicates that the social economy at that time was relatively prosperous and stable, providing important guarantees for the handicraft industry, among

which the textile industry, ceramic industry, paper industry, and pigment production were particularly prominent. The development of these handicrafts not only greatly enriched people's material life, but also had a profound impact on culture and art.

During the Ming and Qing dynasties, the cotton textile industry in the Jiangnan region also experienced significant development. Not only did it form several cotton textile centers, but it also became a common household business, and the traditional handicraft industry also underwent changes[5]. Suzhou, Hangzhou and other places serve as important centers for the silk industry, producing a large number of exquisite fabrics such as silk and brocade. The advancement of textile technology not only improves the quality and aesthetics of products, but also enables these high-end fabrics to be widely used for framing paintings, enhancing the overall expressive effect of painting art; From the works of the Ming and Qing dynasties, it can be seen that there has been a significant improvement in the popularity, craftsmanship level, and styling of Ming and Qing ceramics. Their style is closer to the lives of ordinary people, reflecting a wider social dimension and further promoting the prosperity of ceramic art[6]. Ceramics are not only widely used as daily necessities, but also become important works of art. The improvement of ceramic pigment production technology has also provided new materials and processes for the innovation of painting pigments, such as the influence of blue pigment in blue and white porcelain on painting blue pigment. In addition, papermaking technology made significant progress during the Ming and Qing dynasties. During the Tang and Song dynasties, most of the Xuan paper used was made from fibers as long as the bark of the bamboo tree. However, during the Ming and Qing dynasties, the raw material for Xuan paper papermaking evolved from the bark of the bamboo tree to the bark of the green sandalwood. The tough fibers of the green sandalwood bark combined with the short fibers of rice field sand and grass greatly improved the ink properties of Xuan paper[7]. Therefore, Xuan paper has become the preferred material for calligraphy and painting creation due to its excellent ink absorption, flexibility, and durability. Xuan paper production centers such as Jing County in Anhui Province have continuously improved their production processes, enhanced the quality of paper, and greatly promoted the development of calligraphy and painting art. Especially during the Ming and Qing dynasties, there was a significant improvement in the variety and quality of pigments. The widespread use of mineral pigments and plant pigments makes the colors in paintings more rich and long-lasting. Advanced pigment purification technology and processing techniques make pigments colorful and stable, providing a wider range of choices and higher expressive power for painting art creation.

The prosperity and technological progress of handicrafts in the Ming and Qing dynasties laid a solid foundation for the innovation of painting materials. The development of these handicrafts not only improved the quality and variety of painting ma-

terials, but also directly promoted the innovation of painting techniques and the evolution of artistic styles.

3. The Influence of Handicraft Development on the Innovation of Painting Art Materials

The painting materials of the Ming and Qing dynasties continued to use the paper, silk, brush, ink and pigments of previous dynasties, mainly including paper, silk, gauze, silk and cloth, which were the most basic painting media[8]. The development of handicrafts made the innovation of painting materials in the Ming and Qing dynasties more rapid. The fine production of Xuan paper, the purification of pigments and the improvement of processing techniques, the diversification of mounting materials and the improvement of auxiliary materials such as ink and brushes have all provided a solid material foundation for the art of painting. These high-quality materials enable artists to exert their imagination and skills more freely when creating, explore new expression methods, and enrich the techniques and forms of expression in painting.

3.1. Innovation of paper

During the Song and Yuan dynasties, silk or linen paper was commonly used in painting, which had weak ink absorption and limited the blending effect of ink and wash. Paper making technology made significant progress during the Ming and Qing dynasties, especially the production process of rice paper reached new heights. Xuan paper has superior ink absorption and flexibility, making it particularly suitable for ink and wash expression in Chinese painting. Its lightweight texture and strong durability not only enhance the quality of paintings, but also encourage artists to explore new techniques such as wet painting and ink splashing, enriching the expressive forms of Chinese painting. Taking the "River Flower Painting Scroll" by Ba Da Shan Ren as an example, it utilizes the permeability of Sheng Xuan to create a moist texture of lotus leaves and a vast artistic conception of mountains and rocks through the "ink accumulation method" layer by layer. This technique relies on the rapid absorption and diffusion of moisture by paper, and without the innovation of Xuan paper, it would be difficult to achieve the natural expression of this freehand style.

3.2. Innovation of pigments

The progress of handicrafts has brought about significant innovations in pigment production. The use of mineral pigments and plant pigments is more extensive and meticulous, making the colors of paintings more diverse, stable, and long-lasting. The improvement of pigment purification and mixing techniques has made colors more vibrant and full, which not only expands the artist's creative space, but also enhances the visual impact and artistic expression of the work. Taking " azurite" as an example, traditional mineral pigments need to be ground and mixed with glue

multiple times, but Ming and Qing craftsmen improved grinding tools (such as Jingdezhen porcelain mortar) to make the pigment particles more delicate and greatly increase color saturation. At the same time, the popularity of plant dyes such as locust yellow and madder red injected fresh vitality into flower and bird paintings.

3.3. Innovation in framing

The prosperity of the textile industry has provided high-quality framing materials, such as silk, brocade, etc. These high-end fabrics not only enhance the aesthetics and artistic value of paintings, but also strengthen their preservation and durability. High quality mounting materials enable works to better resist the erosion of time, maintaining their original colors and details. High density fabrics such as Song brocade and silk have become the preferred mounting materials for palace paintings due to their wear resistance and decorative properties. Taking the painting 'Ming Xuanzong Xingle Tu' as an example, its framing is made of woven gold brocade, which not only protects the painting's heart, but also enhances the royal charm of the work through rich patterns.

3.4. Innovation of Ink Painting

The manufacturing technology of ink was further developed during the Ming and Qing dynasties. Various types of ink such as pine smoke ink and oil fume ink have significantly improved their quality. The use of high-quality ink makes the lines of paintings and calligraphy works smoother and the colors fuller, enhancing artistic expression. In addition, the production process of brushes has also been significantly improved, which is more in line with the needs of artistic creation.

In addition, with the development of handicrafts, the production cost of painting materials has decreased, enabling more ordinary people to get in touch with and participate in painting creation. Painting is no longer the exclusive domain of the nobility and scholars; ordinary people can also afford painting materials and participate in artistic creation. For example: In the Song Dynasty, ink achieved the manifestation of its "quality" and gradually entered a stage where "material was hidden but quality was revealed". The most direct example of this is the emergence and popularity of the aforementioned "collected ink" in the Ming and Qing dynasties - this means that ink was no longer merely a pigment for calligraphy and painting, but became a symbol of the scholar's status and the crystallization of their spirit. People would spare no gold or silver to obtain a fine piece of ink. In fact, it is the pursuit and yearning for the virtues of a gentleman and the status of a scholar[9]. This change promoted the popularization and massification of art, enabling painting art to be widely spread among all social strata and, to a certain extent, also facilitated the development of handicrafts.

The progress of handicrafts not only provided more abundant and high-quality materials for painting art, but also promoted the innovation of painting techniques and styles. The innovation of materials enables artists to express their creativity more

freely, explore diverse expression methods, and promote the prosperity and development of painting art. The innovation of painting art materials during the Ming and Qing dynasties reflected the close connection between handicrafts and culture and art, providing valuable experience and inspiration for artistic creation in later generations.

4. The impact of material innovation in painting art on creation and expression forms

The impact of material innovation in painting art on creation and expression forms. Material innovation directly promotes the evolution of artistic styles. With the popularity of freehand literati painting style in the painting field since the Ming and Qing dynasties, as well as the rise of stele studies in the calligraphy field, the demand for paper performance in this period's calligraphy and painting style tended to favor Xuan paper with good ink permeability and lubrication properties[10]. Such forms of artistic creation have formed through the innovation of painting materials to reflect different forms of expression. The formation and development of this artistic style are closely related to the use of high-quality rice paper and rich pigments. The diversity and high quality of materials provide necessary support for the fine depiction and color application of literati paintings, enabling them to reach new heights in artistic expression.

4.1. Diversification of techniques

The use of new rice paper and high-quality pigments allows painters to try various painting techniques. The superior water absorption of Xuan paper is suitable for wet painting techniques, splashing ink techniques, etc., enhancing the expressive power of ink painting. The innovation of pigments has also made color techniques more diverse, prompting painters to make bold attempts in color application, such as heavy colors, light magenta, etc., making works more vivid and diversified in color expression.

4.2. Evolution of artistic styles

The innovation of painting materials has promoted the diversification and evolution of artistic styles. The use of rich and colorful pigments and high-quality paper makes painting works more exquisite in color expression and detail depiction. This change promoted the development of literati painting, forming an artistic style that combines poetry, calligraphy, and painting. Literati painting emphasizes artistic conception and expression, and the innovation of materials provides technical support for the formation of this style, making the works more expressive and culturally profound.

In addition, the use of high-quality painting materials greatly enhances the preservation and durability of the artwork. The application of high-end materials such as rice paper and silk enables paintings to better resist the erosion of time, maintaining

their original colors and details. Many art treasures from the Ming and Qing dynasties have been preserved to this day thanks to the superior properties of these materials. This is of great significance for the inheritance and protection of cultural heritage, enabling future generations to appreciate and study the artistic achievements of this period.

5. Conclusion

The interaction between Ming and Qing handicrafts and painting art is essentially a typical case of technological innovation driving artistic innovation. The advancement of papermaking, textile, ceramic, and pigment production technologies has provided higher quality and richer materials for painting creation. These material innovations not only enriched the techniques and styles of painting, but also promoted the popularization and development of art. These innovations and developments during the Ming and Qing dynasties provided valuable experience and inspiration for future artistic creation, becoming an indispensable and important chapter in the history of Chinese art. The interactive relationship between handicrafts and painting art vividly demonstrates the profound impact of technological progress on culture and art. This two-way interaction not only shapes the unique appearance of Ming and Qing painting, but also inspires contemporary art research: the study of material properties should become an important dimension of art history analysis.

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