

The Historical Context and Cultural Foundation of Thematic Art Creation in Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan Regions

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on thematic art creation in Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan regions, and deeply analyzes their historical development process and profound cultural foundation. By sorting out the artistic creation status of different historical stages in various regions and combining with relevant data and literature this paper reveals their unique evolution path under the collision of diverse cultures, as well as the important significance of local cultural inheritance, the manifestation of the spirit of the times, and regional cultural exchange. The aim is to provide theoretical basis and research reference for a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the art culture of Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan regions.

Keywords: Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan regions, Thematic art creation, Historical context, Cultural foundation.

1. INTRODUCTION

Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan regions occupy a unique and important position in the cultural map of China. Its unique historical process and diverse cultural integration background have nurtured distinctive thematic art creations. In depth exploration of the historical context and cultural foundation of thematic art creation in Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan regions has significant value in enriching research on Chinese art history, promoting cultural exchanges between regions, and inheriting and promoting excellent Chinese culture.

2. THE HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF THEMATIC ART CREATION IN HONG KONG REGION

2.1 Early Development and Colonial Cultural Influence (Mid-19th Century to Mid-20th Century)

After Hong Kong became a British colony in the mid-19th century, Western culture began to flood in on a large scale. In the field of art, Western painting styles and techniques have gradually

spread. According to research by Hong Kong art historians, there were already some Western painters active in Hong Kong at that time, such as George Chinnery. He created a large number of works depicting local customs and traditions in Hong Kong, and his painting style blended Western realism with the capture of Eastern sentiment, which had a certain demonstrative and inspiring effect on local painters in Hong Kong. From the collection data of relevant art institutions, it can be seen that Chinnery created over hundreds of works during his time in Hong Kong, which have become important physical materials for studying the integration of early Hong Kong art and Western culture.

During this period, local art creation in Hong Kong also developed amidst difficulties. Traditional Chinese folk arts, such as paper cuttings and New Year pictures, are still popular among the people. However, due to the influence of colonial rule, their development space is squeezed to a certain extent. Some local painters in Hong Kong have begun to attempt to combine traditional Chinese painting techniques with Western painting concepts. For example, Bao Shaoyou (1892-1985) went to Japan to study painting and returned to

Hong Kong to engage in art education and creation. His works often choose traditional Chinese landscapes, figures, etc. in terms of themes, but absorb Western elements such as perspective and color in painting techniques. According to incomplete statistics, Bao Shaoyou created over a thousand paintings throughout his life, many of which were exhibited in local and overseas Chinese communities in Hong Kong, and played a driving role in the initial formation of Hong Kong's art style.

In the 1920s to 1940s, artists, scholars, and collectors such as Liu Haisu and Zhang Daqian from Beijing, Shanghai, Guangdong, and other places visited or migrated to Hong Kong, forming the phenomenon of "interaction between the North and South painting circles" in the history of modern Chinese art, laying the foundation for the birth of modern ink painting art in Hong Kong.

2.2 Economic Takeoff and Diversified Art Period (Mid-20th Century to Late 20th Century)

After the mid-20th century, Hong Kong's economy rapidly rose, the social environment underwent tremendous changes, and art creation also entered a stage of diversified development. The Hong Kong Arts Centre was established in 1977. According to its statistics, in the ten years after its establishment, it held over 500 art exhibitions covering various art forms such as oil painting, traditional Chinese painting, printmaking, sculpture, etc.[1] These exhibitions had provided a broad display platform for Hong Kong painters, promoting communication and integration between different art styles and schools.

During this period, Hong Kong's thematic art creation began to focus on urban life and social phenomena. Like the painter Lv Shoukun (1919-1975), he created a series of works with abstract expressionist style based on the urban landscape and daily life of Hong Kong. In his paintings, elements such as high-rise buildings, streets and alleys in Hong Kong often appear, but through unique brushstrokes and color applications, the works are endowed with strong emotional and spiritual connotations. From the analysis of Hong Kong art criticism articles at that time, it can be seen that Lv Shoukun's works have sparked widespread discussion in the Hong Kong art community, and his innovative artistic style is regarded as one of the important symbols of the development of modern art in Hong Kong.

2.3 Before and After Hong Kong's Return and the Awakening of Local Consciousness (Late 20th Century to Present)

Before and after Hong Kong's return to the motherland, the local consciousness of the Hong Kong art industry gradually awakened, and thematic art creation paid more attention to the exploration and expression of Hong Kong's local cultural identity. On the occasion of Hong Kong's return, the Hong Kong Museum of Art held the "Hong Kong Art Biennial", which specifically set up an exhibition area on the theme of Hong Kong's return. According to official data from the exhibition, nearly a hundred works were exhibited in this exhibition area, which presented the significant historical event of Hong Kong's return from different perspectives, such as the historical origins between Hong Kong and China, and the expectations and joy of Hong Kong people towards the return.[2]

For example, the series of printmaking works "Ode to Hong Kong's Return" created by painter Wang Wuxie expresses the theme of Hong Kong's return to the embrace of the motherland through symbolic techniques. The iconic buildings of Hong Kong in the picture blend seamlessly with the mountains and rivers of China, with bright colors and profound meanings. This series of works has been exhibited in multiple cities in Hong Kong and mainland China and has received widespread praise, further inspiring Hong Kong painters' enthusiasm for local theme creation. After the return, Hong Kong's thematic art creation continued to deeply explore the local cultural connotations, such as the expression of Hong Kong's traditional fishing village culture, Lingnan culture, etc., while also actively participating in national cultural construction and international cultural exchanges.

3. THE HISTORICAL TRAJECTORY OF THEMATIC ART CREATION IN MACAU REGION

3.1 Religious and Secular Art During the Portuguese Australian Period (16th Century to Mid-20th Century)

Since being occupied by Portugal in the 16th century, Macau has become an important window for cultural exchange between China and the West. In terms of art, Western religious art has been widely spread and developed in Macau. A large

number of church buildings were built in Macau. According to historical and cultural research data on Macau, more than 20 churches were built between the 16th and 19th centuries,[3] decorated with exquisite religious artworks such as murals and sculptures. For example, the sculpture on the front wall of St. Paul's Cathedral (memorial archway of Ruins of St.Paul), which combines the artistic style of the Western Renaissance with the oriental cultural elements, has become one of the landmark works of art in Macao.

Meanwhile, secular art in Macau is also quietly developing. Some local painters in Macau have been influenced by Western painting and have begun to create landscape paintings, figure paintings, and other works with Macau characteristics. Such as Lamqua (Guan Qiaochang), he was a famous Macanese painter in the 19th century, skilled in oil painting. His works often depict the ports, streets, and figures of Macau, and his painting style combines the characteristics of Western realism with an observation and understanding of local culture. From the collection of Lin Gua's works in the Macau Museum, it can be seen that his paintings are relatively vivid in color application and excellent in the expression of light and shadow effects, providing valuable materials for the study of early secular art in Macau.

3.2 Modern Transformation and Multicultural Integration (Mid-20th Century to Present)

After the mid-20th century, Macau society gradually moved towards modernization, and art creation also faced transformation and development. The Macao Cultural Bureau and other relevant institutions have begun to attach importance to the promotion and inheritance of local art and culture, and have held a series of art exhibitions and cultural activities. According to statistics, since 1980, the average number of various art exhibitions held in Macau each year has been between 30-50,[4] covering works by local painters and domestic and foreign artists.

In terms of thematic art creation, Macau painters pay more attention to the integration and expression of diverse cultures in their works. For example, the works of painter Wu Weiming often focus on the historical architecture and cultural heritage of Macau. In his creations, he uses modern painting language to reinterpret Macau's cultural symbols, such as combining elements of Macau's A-Ma Temple and Portuguese architecture with

modern geometric shapes to create unique visual effects. His works have been exhibited multiple times in Chinese and international exhibitions, such as at the "Venice Biennale Macau Pavilion", showcasing Macau's unique multicultural charm to the world and promoting the exchange and dissemination of Macau art on the international stage.

4. THE HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF THEMATIC ART CREATION IN TAIWAN REGION

4.1 The Art Revolution During the Japanese Occupation Period (Late 19th Century to 1945)

At the end of the 19th century, Taiwan became a colony of Japan, and during this period, Taiwan art creation was deeply influenced by Japanese art. In 1895, the Qing government signed the Treaty of Shimonoseki with the Japanese government, ceding Taiwan to Japan as a colony. The Japanese government followed the experience of Western colonial rule and stationed the Taiwan Governor General's Office to rule over Taiwan. In the early stages of colonization, the Japanese colonial authorities strengthened their unification of Taiwan mainly by "suppressing resistance against Japan" and "seeking financial independence", with the aim of stabilizing the situation on the island. The Japanese colonial government promoted Western style art education in Taiwan. According to statistics from Taiwan's educational history, during the Japanese occupation period, there were over 10 art schools and related educational institutions established in Taiwan.[5] These institutions have trained a group of Taiwan region painters with a foundation in Western painting.

For example, the painter Huang Tushui studied sculpture at the art school in Tokyo, and his works blend Western sculpture techniques with local Taiwan region cultural elements. His creation of "The Water Buffalo Group" is based on the common water buffalo in Taiwan and uses realistic techniques to create lifelike water buffalo images. It caused a sensation in the Taiwan region art world at that time and is regarded as one of the important symbols of modernization in Taiwan region art. At the same time, in the field of painting, some painters in Taiwan region began to draw inspiration from Japanese painting styles to create works with themes such as landscapes and figures. For example, Yanyue Taofu's paintings feature images of Taiwan's

indigenous people, with bright colors and unique decorative elements.

4.2 *The Rise and Development of Local Art After World War II (1945 to Present)*

After the end of World War II, Taiwan returned to the embrace of the motherland, and art creation in Taiwan region began to awaken and develop its local consciousness. In the 1950s and 1960s, local art groups such as the "May Painting Society" and the "Eastern Painting Society" were successively established. According to relevant art research materials, the "May Painting Society" has many members who advocate modern artistic concepts and pursue abstract expressionism in their painting style.[6] For example, Liu Guosong's works are known for his unique "space age" painting style, using techniques such as stretching ink, peeling and texturing to create a large number of abstract paintings rich in Eastern philosophical imagery. His works have received widespread attention internationally and have been exhibited multiple times in Europe, America, and other places, earning Taiwan region art a reputation on the international art stage.

With the social development in Taiwan region, thematic art creation in Taiwan pays more attention to local culture, social reality, and historical memory. Like painter Chen Chengbo, his works often depict rural landscapes and everyday life in Taiwan, showcasing the local cultural customs with delicate brushstrokes and rich colors. A large number of works by Chen Chengbo have been collected in some art museums and galleries in Taiwan, which have become important materials for studying the development of local art in Taiwan. In recent years, Taiwan's art creation has been actively exploring and innovating in the field of contemporary art, while inheriting local culture and constantly aligning with international art trends.

5. THE CULTURAL FOUNDATION OF THEMATIC ART CREATION IN HONG KONG, MACAO, AND TAIWAN REGIONS

5.1 *The Foundation of Chinese Culture*

Art creation in Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan regions is deeply rooted in the fertile soil of Chinese culture. In the field of traditional painting, the influence of traditional Chinese painting is

ubiquitous. Taking Hong Kong as an example, according to a survey conducted by the Hong Kong Arts Development Council on local art education institutions, over 80% of art training institutions have incorporated traditional Chinese painting courses into their teaching system, with teaching hours on brush and ink techniques accounting for an average of over 60% of the total duration of traditional Chinese painting courses.[7] This indicates that in the inheritance of art in Hong Kong, the use of brush and ink in traditional Chinese painting is highly valued. Many Hong Kong painters follow the freehand spirit of traditional Chinese painting in their creations, emphasizing the use of form to express spirit. Like the painter Zhou Luyun, his works draw inspiration from the traditional Chinese painting technique of leaving white space in their layout, using concise brushstrokes to outline the charm of mountains and waters. The artistic conception contained in his works is closely related to classical Chinese poetry and philosophical thought, reflecting a deep understanding and inheritance of the connotation of Chinese culture.

Macao plays a unique role in reflecting the foundation of Chinese culture through traditional art and craftsmanship. According to the data of Macao Cultural Heritage Department, there are about ten existing traditional wood carving, paper cuttings and other handicraft workshops in Macao, and these workshops create thousands of art works with Chinese traditional style every year. In the decoration of some temple buildings and folk activities in Macau, exquisite traditional wood carvings can be seen. These wood carvings strictly follow the norms of traditional Chinese art, whether in the selection of themes, such as common patterns of dragons and phoenixes, the Eight Immortals crossing the sea, or in the application of carving techniques, such as hollowing out and relief carving. They are a vivid display of Chinese culture in Macau's art creation.

The adherence to the foundation of Chinese culture in Taiwan's art creation is equally significant. Research on the curriculum design of art schools in Taiwan has found that the teaching of traditional Chinese painting theory and techniques accounts for about 70% of the basic courses in painting majors.[8] Painters in Taiwan region often use Chinese historical stories, myths, and legends as themes when creating figure paintings, use traditional Chinese painting lines to outline character images, and then use delicate color rendering to express the temperament and emotions

of the characters. For example, the painter Jiang Zhaoshen's landscape paintings follow the example of ancient people in the use of brush and ink, using a center to outline the contours of mountains and rocks, and using light ink to create a profound artistic conception. The works are complete with elements such as poetry inscriptions and seals, fully demonstrating the integrity and systematicity of traditional Chinese calligraphy and painting art.

5.2 The Integration of Diverse Cultures

Due to its unique geographical location and complex historical experiences, Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan regions have become an active stage for multicultural integration, which is vividly demonstrated in art creation.

Hong Kong, as an international financial and trade center, experiences frequent exchanges and collisions between Eastern and Western cultures. According to statistics from the Hong Kong Customs, a large number of various types of artworks are imported and exported through Hong Kong every year. Among them, the import volume of Western art works such as oil paintings and sculptures accounts for about 40% of the total import volume of artworks.[9] The exhibition, sales, and collection of these Western art works in Hong Kong provide local artists with opportunities to have close contact with and learn Western art. In Hong Kong's urban landscape paintings, it is often seen that painters combine Western perspective and color theory with traditional Chinese painting elements. For example, some painters use Western realistic painting techniques to accurately depict the appearance and light and shadow effects of high-rise buildings in Hong Kong, while also incorporating the beauty of lines from traditional Chinese painting to express the contours and structure of the buildings. This combination of Chinese and Western creative techniques gives the works a modern urban fashion sense while retaining the charm of Eastern culture.

The unique historical background of Portugal and Macao has created a distinct feature of multicultural integration in its art creation. According to the data of Macao Tourism Administration, the number of tourists visiting historical buildings in Macao every year exceeds 10 million. Among them, buildings such as the memorial archway of Dasanba, which combines Portuguese architectural style with Chinese decorative elements, have become popular punch card points. The diverse cultural elements contained

in these buildings have had a profound impact on Macao's artistic creation. In painting works, painters often combine the color matching and modeling characteristics of Portuguese architecture with the composition and artistic expression of Chinese painting. From the art exhibitions held locally in Macao, about 30% of the works present the characteristics of multicultural integration. For example, some painters use Macao's street scenes as the theme, and the colorful exterior walls of Portuguese style buildings and Chinese style shop signs complement each other in their paintings. The character costumes have both traditional Chinese style and Portuguese elements, and the use of colors combines the richness of Western oil painting with the elegance of Chinese traditional painting, forming a unique visual effect.

Taiwan also has a unique history and performance in the integration of diverse cultures. After being strongly influenced by Japanese culture during the Japanese occupation period, there were extensive exchanges with European and American cultures after the war. According to statistics from Taiwan's cultural department, since the 1960s, Taiwan has introduced over 500 European and American modern art exhibitions, which have brought various modern art trends such as Abstract Expressionism and Pop Art to the Taiwan region art world. Taiwan region painters actively absorb these foreign cultural elements and integrate them with local culture in their creations. For example, in contemporary art creation, some Taiwan region artists use local natural landscapes such as Alishan as creative materials, and use installation art forms of Western modern art to express them. They combine natural elements such as trees and stones in Alishan with modern materials such as metal and glass, and integrate the concept of harmony between heaven and man in Eastern philosophical thought into the conceptual expression of their works, creating art works that have both international perspectives and local cultural connotations. This integration of diverse cultures in art creation has made Taiwan region art present a rich and diverse appearance, standing out on the international art stage.

6. CONCLUSION

The thematic art creation of Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan regions has a rich and complex historical context and profound cultural foundation. In the process of historical development, each region has experienced different stages of colonial rule, cultural exchange, and awakening of local

consciousness, which are deeply reflected in their artistic creations. Its cultural foundation is rooted in the profound soil of Chinese culture, while constantly innovating and developing through the integration of diverse cultures. Through the study of themed art creations in Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan regions, people can better understand the cultural connotations, historical changes, and unique status and contributions of these regions in the Chinese art and culture family. It also provides useful references and inspirations for further promoting cultural exchanges between Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan regions, and the mainland, and promoting the inheritance and innovation of Chinese art and culture. In future research and creation, more attention should be paid to the exploration and integration of art and cultural resources in Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan regions, strengthening art exchanges and cooperation between regions, and jointly promoting Chinese art and culture to a higher level on the world stage.

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