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The Uniqueness Study of Contemporary Silk Painting

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Abstract

Silk painting is a way to express the painter's personality and creativity, and the "DIY" process always brings huge self-fulfillments, enriching people's life. This valued and meaningful art form should be shared by the public, not just the professionals. Just like any long journey starts with the first step, spreading the beauty and value of silk painting is necessary for people to know about this art form. "Bricolage" theory, "hybridity" and case study methods are used in this article. The uniqueness of contemporary silk painting is represented in three ways: unrivalled painting ground, unduplicated and expressive painting effects, and multiple painting styles.

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Keywords: uniqueness; silk painting

1. Introduction

Originated in China, silk has a profound influence in the civilization history throughout times and across continents; painting is the original and ancient way to decorate fabrics (Yuan & Qiu, 2006; Cheng, 2011), as well as a direct, fast and effective approach to express ideas in pattern creation (Miao & Zhang, 2008; Wang & Yuan, 2012). Without the limitations of colors and patterns, silk painting can express numerous styles (Lin, 2002; Zhao, 2006; Cheng, 2011; Wu, 2012). Silk painting is a relaxing and absorbing process (Southan, 2011), a way to fully express the painter's personality and creativity, and the "DIY" process always brings huge self-fulfillments, enriching people's life.

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2. Problem Statement

Through literature review, I found the focus point of silk painting study was different in the West and in China. It was more practical in the West and more theoretical in China.

There are at least 30 “know-how” silk painting books in the West market, teaching the public how to undertake silk painting, ranging from all-included practical guide books for novice beginners to more advanced professional books for experienced enthusiasts; besides, on-line tutorial videos and websites are easy to find. Relevant materials, tools and equipments are available in art supply stores. With a good channel and access to silk painting, anyone can enjoy the process even without any drawing experience, as long as he or she wants to have a try. The finished silk paintings are mainly used for garments, accessories, home furnishings and decorative art works.

Chinese scholars devoted more energy into the theoretical study about silk painting. These articles and papers are for professionals published in academic journals; silk painting classes are mainly for students in some art schools; the practical books and tutorial videos are hard to find in the market. Chinese people like silk, but they do not have much knowledge about silk painting. Without basic painting experience and skills, people do not have much courage or passion to try, because they normally think only professionals and experts are competent for painting.

Silk painting is rooted in China, but it is better practiced by foreign public. I think Chinese people haven't fully realized the beauty and uniqueness of this art form. This valued and meaningful art form should be shared by the public, not just the professionals.

3. Research Questions

As an art school student who has some silk painting education background, what can I do to help more people enjoy silk painting? Just like any long journey starts with the first step, spreading the beauty and value of silk painting is a necessary way for people to gain interests towards this art form. What is the proper starting point? To begin with, people should know the uniqueness of silk painting.

4. Purpose of the Study

Find out the uniqueness of silk painting.

5. Research Methods

5.1. *Bricolage*

This theory comes from ‘Bricoleur’, a French word, which was coined by Claude Levi-Strauss. As Strauss (1966) puts, a bricoleur is a man who undertakes odd jobs and is a Jack of all trades or a kind of professional do-it-yourself man. In this article, I will play the role of “bricoleur”, collect and assemble fragment materials and information available at hand through a hodgepodge of sources, such as practical books, academic papers, tutorial videos, craft websites, formal face-to-face interviews, expertise and my personal silk painting experience.

5.2. *Hybridity*

According to Brah and Coombes's study (2000), “hybridity” is a term for a wide range of social and cultural phenomena involving “mixing”. To an extent, the history of silk painting is a mix of different cultures. Chinese culture first came into silk painting's history; with trade and commerce, silk painting spread into foreign

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