

A Brief Analysis of Chen Danqing's "Tibet Group Paintings"

Shuang Liu

Sichuan Minzu College, Kangding, 626001, China

Abstract: *"Tibet Group Paintings" is an oil painting completed by Chen Danqing in Lhasa from 1979 to 1980, depicting the daily life of Tibetans. Chen Danqing not only depicts the life of the Tibetan people with realistic oil painting skills and pure oil painting language, but also shows his humanistic care for the Tibetan people and reflects a real attitude. By analyzing Chen Danqing's trip to Tibet and "Group Paintings in Tibet", this paper explores the influence of Chen Danqing's "Group Paintings in Tibet" on Chinese modern oil painting.*

Keywords: *Chen Danqing; creation; Tibetan group paintings*

1. Chen Danqing's trip to Tibet

Chen Danqing is the most influential contemporary artist, and his artistic path has been difficult. When he graduated from junior high school at the age of 16, he was exiled to the countryside to cut the queue and became a screw for the great cause of the socialist revolution. In his spare time, he still insisted on painting, and some of his works were selected for art exhibitions. He became an "educated youth painter".

At the age of 23, Chen Danqing was seconded to Tibet as a talent to engage in creation, and entered Tibet for the first time. In 1978, when the college entrance examination resumed, Chen Danqing was admitted to the postgraduate class of the Oil Painting Department of the Central Academy of Fine Arts. He studied hard and conceived and created in the studio every day. In 1980, he went to Tibet-related areas to sketch again, and completed his graduation project "Tibet Group Paintings". Entering Tibet had a decisive influence on Chen Danqing's art, and also laid the foundation for his creation of "Tibet Group Paintings".

Chen Danqing went to Tibet to show the tough and rough life he saw on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau to the world through his brush, so that people could feel the shepherds of Kham, experience life on the plateau, and appreciate their coquettish charm. As for the shepherds on the plateau, he was attracted by their valiant and steady steps and piercing eyes, and envied them as real men.

Chen Danqing wrote in "The Mud of Conversation": I don't always recall the situation of painting more than 30 years ago. I remember painting those paintings in a small room of seven square meters. The light was poor. At dusk, I moved to the door and continued to paint in the light of the aisle. Then, I was also in the aisle by the door, cooking vegetables, frying fish and cooking. The fish in the Tibetan rivers have no scales and are very cheap. One dollar weighs several kilograms. [1] The awards for beautiful Tibetan men and women aroused Chen Danqing's creative passion and energy. Even though the conditions were very difficult, he still painted "Tibet Group Paintings".

2. The creative background of "Tibet Group Paintings"

The creation of Chen Danqing's "Tibet Group Paintings" was influenced by the social thought and artistic style at that time, and his works also reflected his personal character and artistic proposition.

From the 1920s to before the founding of New China, Chinese art shifted from its own reform and exploration to realist art, stemming from the realistic needs of the social status quo of China's anti-Japanese national salvation. In China at that time, the overall social pattern had changed, and the development of art gradually changed from self-exploration to reflecting and exposing the social status quo and saving the nation. "From 'art revolution' to 'revolutionary art' is actually the theme of revolution instead of the theme of the development of art itself" [2]. In 1942, Comrade Mao Zedong

pointed out that literature and art should serve the workers, peasants and soldiers and how to serve them in the "Speech at the Yan'an Symposium on Literature and Art", and advocated "politics first, art second". [3] The art of the Liberated Areas represented by "Yan'an Art" laid the foundation for the rise and development of the socialist trend of thought after the founding of New China.

After the founding of New China, the task of literature and art has changed, focusing on promoting the new atmosphere of New China, and the new blueprint of socialism requires literature and art to face reality. At the beginning of the founding of New China, the Soviet Union, as the big brother, gave a lot of help. The state sent a group of Chinese students to study in the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries, and invited Soviet artists to give lectures and hold art exhibitions in China. This had an important impact on the development of Chinese art, and the Soviet-style "realism" art was formed in the literary and art circles. The good times did not last long, and Sino-Soviet relations deteriorated until they severed diplomatic ties. The Chinese literary and art circles launched a movement to remove Soviet-style "realism" art. The subsequent "Cultural Revolution" caused painting to show two states: one is to emphasize a clear political theme in art; , away from the real life of society, the art of painting has lost its vitality. Art creation is in a state of dullness, tension and brewing resistance under the control of frequent political movements and the state's violent machinery.

In 1978, the Eleventh Central Committee of the Communist Party of China Plenary Session was held, and the guidelines of "emancipating the mind" and "seeking truth from facts" were put forward. The "Double Hundred Policy" was reiterated at the Fourth National Conference of Literary and Artistic Workers held in the following year, pointing out that "the free development of different forms and styles is advocated in artistic creation, and the freedom of different viewpoints and schools of art is advocated in art theory. Discussion." [4] This gave literary and artistic creators the freedom to create, and they began to reflect on the "Cultural Revolution" and social issues, and gradually worked towards a new era of artistic development. Chen Danqing experienced the "Cultural Revolution" and other political movements, and deeply realized the difficulties of art. Chen Danqing said: At that time, I felt that I could get rid of the Soviet style of painting, and I had to paint like Miller, Corot, and Courbet, in a smaller and simpler way. The French Countryside Art Exhibition had a great influence on me. At this time, my Shanghai "genes" also played a role: the open breasts of my boyhood were actually old-school European paintings left over from Shanghai in the Republic of China. I also remember Courbet's "paint what your eyes see". [5]

Chen Danqing's secondment in Tibet gave him a platform for further self-realization. He went deep into Tibet and experienced the life of herdsmen firsthand, which provided him with materials and inspiration for the creation of "Tibet Group Paintings". The real life and the pursuit of authentic European oil paintings became his the biggest motivation for creating "Tibet Group Paintings".

3. Brief Analysis of "Tibet Group Paintings"

3.1 Theme

In "Tibetan Group Paintings", Chen Danqing used the mode of "small size, multiple pictures, non-narrative, and no theme" [6] to create, showing the real daily life scenes of the Tibetan people. Chen Danqing got rid of political themes and focused on the subtle and moving moments in the lives of people on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau. It pays attention to the performance of each Tibetan's different mental state and personality charm, and reflects the humanistic care and humanitarian spirit.

There are many ethnic groups in my country, and the Tibetans are one of the ancient ethnic groups in China. So far, the native Tibetans have maintained their original culture. They also maintain the traditional customs of eating, living, clothing, marriage, etc., with a strong grassland flavor, showing the world the harmonious development of man and nature, which is precisely an important factor attracting many artists. Chen Danqing went to Tibet twice, and lived with the people there. The work "Tibet Group Paintings" expresses the details of Tibetan people's life and the strong human charm, making the viewers gain a strong aesthetic feeling. In "Tibet Group Paintings", Chen Danqing does not have much description of the storyline, and the theme of "fuzziness" is prominent. The pictures show the wilderness, desolation, and standing shepherd boys, etc., which lead the viewers into deeper thinking, highlighting the beauty of the picture that the nature of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau is integrated with the rural life.

3.2 Content

"Tibet Group Paintings" consists of seven works including "Mother and Son", "Entering the City One", "Kangba Man", "Pilgrimage", "Entering the City No. 2", "The Shepherd" and "The Shampoo Girl". Chen Danqing shows the daily life of Tibetans in the gesture of sketching. Among them, "The Shepherd" is the most widely known, and it is also the work with the most publications, citations, exhibitions and the greatest influence.

In *The Shepherd*, Chen Danqing painted a Tibetan man and woman kissing by the wall. He depicts kissing couples in a straightforward way. The man turns his back to the audience. The back shows his strong figure. He bows his head and kisses the woman man's love. The innocent and eager scene of two people in the painting is very cute.

Painter Chen Danqing faced love, a subject that many artists have shown, without concealing it, but directly attacking love itself. This work embodies Chen Danqing's concern for human nature, and it is also a manifestation of emotional release and the pursuit of free spirit.

"Pilgrimage" shows the beliefs of Tibetans, who have the habit of bowing their heads to worship Buddha, and the picture is solemn and pious. In the picture, except for the girl and the sheep who are kneeling in red shirts, who can see clearly, the rest of the people can't see their faces clearly. One person takes off his hat and bows his head and stands silently, while the other three people are prostrate on the pre-paved floor mat, showing their five heads on the ground. Out of the incomparable devotion. Soon after the various political campaigns ended, Chen Danqing made a direct depiction of religious scenes, showing his great courage and courage.

Chen Danqing painted five strong and powerful Tibetan men in "Kangba Men". They were tall and dressed in heavy Tibetan clothes, with long Buddhist beads hanging around their necks several times around their necks, and their hair was made of red cloth strips and other objects. A simple comb, open and wild. The Tibetan man in the middle is a positive image. He is slender and slightly short. His eyes are staring out of the painting, the corners of his mouth are slightly raised, revealing a slight smile. Lean and confident. Two of the other four men are profiled, one is with his back to the audience, and the other is with his face turned to the side, showing admirable real men in different images.

"Into the City One" tells the scene of three girls walking slowly forward, holding each other's sleeves hand in hand. The three girls wore thick robes, the latter pulling the sleeves of the former, and the collars and cuffs were decorated with fur. They dressed neatly and walked slowly past the Tibetan houses. The walls of Tibetan dwellings are made of stone, the windows are wooden, and the tops of the windows are covered with sunshades. The picture is mainly made of gray and white. The white and gray residential buildings contrast with the girl's dark clothes, showing the girl's charm.

"Entering the City" No. 2 depicts a family of three on their way to the city. The Tibetan woman is holding her young child in one hand and tugging at her husband's sleeve with the other, showing timid eyes. Although it is an era of openness, Tibetan women do not have a high status in the family, they are still dominated by men, and they are very careful in their work. The Tibetan man walking in front looked like a big man, strode forward, showing courage and determination. In the painting, two adults are dressed in plain clothes, and the woman has a thousand-strand braid on her head, which hangs down her back. A red top, and a long embroidered waistband on the bottom, with white furry edges leaking out. Men's clothes are mainly robes made of fur, and the gray color looks very heavy. The main color of the picture is black, white and gray, and the large color block is used to describe the touching relationship of a family of three. The picture shows a kind of solemn beauty. An everyday scene becomes rich and mysterious in the work of art, which triggers too many feelings and connections in the audience.

"Mother and Son" is one of the "Tibet Group Paintings", which depicts the scene of three Tibetan women sitting scattered on the grassland to breastfeed. They put the child in their arms and wrapped them in the front of their clothes. One of the women was facing the audience. She looked simple, and the child was sucking milk in the woman's arms. She was in a trance when the baby sucked and looked very honest. The woman on the left side of the picture has half of her upper shoulders bare, and her right hand is feeding milk to the child standing in front of her. The child is drinking milk earnestly with her head lowered. The woman on the right is helping the child in her arms with her left hand, and she is drinking a bowl of milk with her right hand. There are utensils for cooking milk on the grass in front of them, with unique shapes. This painting uses a simple expression to show a warm and peaceful

moment in the ordinary life of Tibetans on the plateau. The brush strokes are thick throughout, and each object is shaped with color blocks, which is intriguing.

In "Shampoo Girl", Chen Danqing painted a scene of a couple washing their hair. The wife is half-naked with her upper body facing away from the audience, and her husband also bends over and scoops water for the woman to rinse her hair with her back to the audience. The wife's figure is very good and the body is very beautiful. Chen Danqing also painted her figure standing on the side brushing her hair after washing her hair. This painting is full of joy of life, and the real depiction makes people unforgettable.

Seven separate paintings constitute the "Tibet Group Paintings". In this group of paintings, Chen Danqing depicts the daily life of Tibetans with the directness and decisiveness of sketching, allowing people to see the real life itself through the works. This group of paintings made Chen Danqing a great success, and also attracted the attention of the art world to Tibetan themes.

4. Conclusion

The significance of "Tibet Group Paintings" to Chinese art is not only the realistic oil painting skills and pure oil painting language, but also the humanistic care and humanitarianism for the Tibetan people, which reflects a real attitude. The intuitive and easy depiction of "Tibet Group Paintings" became one of the first influential literary and artistic works at that time.

The work of "Tibet Group Paintings" quickly had a huge influence in the society at the beginning of its completion, which prompted the artist Chen Danqing to be widely recognized by the art circle. Later, Chen Danqing became a social celebrity again due to the "resignation incident" and the establishment of his "public knowledge" status. His artist status and his paintings including "Tibet Group Paintings" further attracted people's attention.

References

- [1] Chen Danqing. *An uncooperative painter*. https://www.sohu.com/a/217080250_555194
- [2] Zhu Sha. *Soviet Art and New China Oil Painting [M]*. Nanjing: Southeast University Press, 2013.
- [3] Mao Zedong. *"Selected Works of Mao Zedong" Volume 3 [M]*. Beijing: People's Publishing House, 1991.06.
- [4] Edited by China Federation of Literary and Art Circles. *Collected Works of the Fourth Congress of Chinese Literary and Artistic Workers [C]*. Chengdu: Sichuan People's Publishing House, 1980.
- [5] Chen Danqing. *Still Life • People [J]*. Reporter Observation, 2018.
- [6] Li Pingping. *The Reappearance of Traditional Realist Painting in the Wave of Reflection in the Early 1980s: Taking Chen Danqing's "Tibet Group Paintings" as an Example [J]*. Beauty and Times (Part II), 2015.