

Aesthetic Utopia, Revolution in Daily Life and Identity Construction of Peasant Paintings

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Peasant painting is a kind of painting created by farmers as creative subject, bearing rich significance. According to the historical development of peasant painting in reality, the types of meaning it carried could be divided into three types in chronological order: political ideological significance, folk life significance, and creative fashion significance. These three types of meaning gave rise to three types of aesthetic utopia, namely political aesthetic utopia, folk aesthetic utopia and fashion aesthetic utopia. The three types of aesthetic utopia reflected three forms of negation and revolution of daily life. What the political aesthetic utopia resisted was the alienation force of material desire. What folk aesthetic utopia resisted was the desire for material and the binding of political ideology. The fashion aesthetic utopia opposed the relatively narrow localism. Through these three forms of resistance, the public also constructed three identities: the interpreter of their own aesthetic interpretation of political ideology, the interpreter of their own aesthetic interpretation of real life from perspective of local feelings, and the interpreter of their own aesthetic interpretation of real life from perspective of the relationship between themselves and the world.

Keywords: peasant paintings, aesthetic utopia, daily life revolution, symbol, identity

Introduction

Peasant painting is a kind of painting created by farmers as creative subject. It inherits the traditional folk-art techniques, mainly depicting the rural landscape, agricultural production, farmers' daily life, and rural customs. Through this description, the peasant paintings show the rural social style in various historical periods, people's good imagination, and memory of rural life (Xu Ganli, 2021).

Peasant paintings originated from ancient folk art, such as hunting rock paintings of primitive ancestors, bone carvings as ornaments, and patterns drawn on pottery. Later, the New Year pictures of folk artists and the pictures expressing good luck and blessings on the edge of a brick bed, stove, gable and eaves could also be included in peasant paintings. These pictures, in the form of folk art, reflected the understanding of people in traditional agricultural society to the world, or expressed reproductive worship, or expressed the joy of real life, or expressed the imagination of future life. Peasant paintings techniques were rough, with less official colors and literary interests. The peasant paintings in academic sense appeared in 1950s, rose in 1960s, flourished in the end of 1970s and early 1980s, became sluggish in 1990s, and began to face new opportunities and challenges in the 21st century.

From Politics to Folklore to Fashion: The Evolutionary Map of Peasant Painting as an Ideographic Symbol

From origin of peasant paintings, we could see that peasant paintings was, to some extent, a symbol bearing rich meanings. According to the historical development of peasant paintings in reality, the meaning types carried by peasant paintings could be divided into three types in chronological order: the meaning of political ideology, the meaning of folk life, and the meaning of creativity and fashion. Among them, each type of meaning corresponded to a historical stage of development of peasant paintings.

Peasant paintings bearing significance of political ideology appeared in late 1950s, rose and became popular in 1960s. In the summer of 1957, Zhang Yourong, a farmer in Chenlou Town, Pi County, Jiangsu Province, drew a mural on the wall with pot ash water, called “Old Cow Complaint”, which showed a scene that an old cow went to the mayor to complain because of lack of food, and criticized the keeper for withholding food. At that time, this painting was regarded as a representative work of rural socialist education and political and ideological work and was vigorously promoted, which set off a vigorous painting movement among the farmers in the county. Cai Ruohong, Hua Junwu and Wang Chaowen, who worked in China Artists Association, wrote a special article on Art to introduce this. Therefore, Jiangsu Cultural Department and the Artists Association also held Pi County Peasants’ Paintings Exhibition in Pi County, Xuzhou and Jiangsu Art Museum. Inspired by this, in August 1958, the whole Pi County started to draw peasant paintings, established about 1800 art groups, nearly 15,000 people, completed 10,5000 farmer murals, and became a banner of “Great Leap Forward” propaganda. Since then, peasant painting had become a national trend. In Shulu, Hebei Province, Fuyang, Anhui Province, Hu County, Shanxi Province, Mianyang, Sichuan Province, Liuyang, Hunan Province and other places, the painting movement of peasant paintings had been carried out in succession (Kang Ningmei, 2009). At that time, the peasant paintings were exaggerated and bold, with a certain degree of cartoon color. They were numerous and could be seen almost on the courtyard walls of rural households. In terms of content, the paintings mostly show the scenes of agricultural harvest and farmers’ joy in harvest, which reflected farmers’ yearning and enthusiasm for rich material life and is full of romantic feelings. However, under the influence of the “Great Leap Forward” ideology at that time, there was no lack of vanity and exaggeration. For example, many scenes of harvest and joy were virtual and imaginative, such as Li Zhichang’s “Couple Comparison”.

In 1960s, some farmer painters began to move peasant paintings from walls to paper, trying to create peasant paintings on paper. The content also moved from virtual and imaginary harvest scene to specific life details in real countryside, such as building reservoirs, picking cotton, raising cattle and sheep. At the same time, the artistic expression technique had also changed from the rough and plain unconscious expression to conscious and stylized artistic language expression. In this period, peasant paintings began to approach the realistic techniques of the Academy to a certain extent, with heavy lines and strong perspective, and even there were training classes for peasant paintings. This made the peasant paintings bear a heavy technical burden, and lost the roughness and simplicity of the original. Yang Zhixian’s *Ganyu Reservoir Completion Ceremony*, Ge Zhengmin’s *Dora Run*, Gao Zhixing’s *Model Carpenter Zhang Jingting*, Li Fenglan’s *Heroes Lock the Dragon*, and other representative works at that time reflected the characteristics of the time. The 1960s was rising period of peasant painting, and the peasant painting was officially named “peasant painting” at that time. At this stage, although the peasant

painting, like the original ancestors and folk artists, tried to express the farmers' desires and demands in their daily life, it mainly carried political ideology of the time. In a sense, it was the mouthpiece of the political ideology at that time, and belonged to the "model play" in form of painting.

The peasant paintings bearing significance of political ideology mainly continued the spirit of Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art, and were influenced by various policies in 1950s and 1960s. They were regarded as propaganda tools of political ideology at that time. The Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art emphasized the unity of politics and art, the unity of content and form, and the unity of revolutionary political content and art form as perfect as possible. That was to say, "Literature and art cannot be divorced from the times and social realities. They should start from life and truly reflect the struggle life of the masses" (Liu Zhong, 2009, p. 123). The central thrust of various policies in 1950s and 1960s were also "literature and art serve politics". Therefore, in 1950s and 1960s, although there was no lack of rural daily life, peasant paintings were generally shrouded in political dogmatism. The Great Leap Forward in late 1950s and the Cultural Revolution in 1960s were both embodied in peasant paintings.

In September 1957, the Third Plenary Session of the Eighth Central Committee of Communist Party of China adopted the National Agricultural Development Program (Revised Draft) from 1956 to 1967, calling on agriculture and rural work to "achieve a huge leap forward". At the end of the year, the movement of farmland and water conservancy construction and composting to ensure the agricultural leap forward was launched. The Great Leap Forward in agriculture was thus kicked off. Some western scholars pointed out that the Great Leap Forward was based on an extremely optimistic view of human nature. They believed that as long as people were given appropriate opportunities, they could use political thought to stimulate their enthusiasm, make them work actively for the public interest of society, and then promote the realization of social ideals in reality (MacFarquhar & Fairbank, 1992, p. 673). As a result, the number of peasant paintings grew ten times and dozens of times in the country at one time. Most of the creative content showed grandiose, virtual scenes of agricultural harvest and farmers' joy of harvest. Although it also contained farmers' own desire to enrich material life, it was basically covered by grandiose, virtual scenes and emotions that interpreted political slogans.

The Cultural Revolution in 1960s began with an essay published by Mao Zedong in *People's Daily* on August 5, 1966.

On August 18, Mao Zedong met with the Red Guards in series to encourage them to carry out revolution and rebellion, and also used political slogans to encourage them to destroy the original political power and authority at all levels. This move opened an outlet for the various kinds of depression that adolescents were subjected to at that time, but it caused China to come into paralysis and retreat for a decade. Many typical political events and slogans in Cultural Revolution were reflected in peasant paintings. For example, peasant paintings in Cultural Revolution depicted intellectuals' labor transformation, "criticizing forests and Confucius", "learning from villages in agriculture", etc. These political events and political slogans had a strong color of struggle, which made peasant paintings show a fighting atmosphere in the aspects of characterization, composition, color and other factors. At this time, peasant paintings basically became the mouthpiece of political slogans, with less farmers' own real desires and appeals.

From the description and reflection of the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution in 1950s and 1960s, it could be seen that peasant paintings at this stage are typical symbols of political ideology.

After the end of Cultural Revolution in late 1970s, the meaning of peasant paintings began to change, returning to the original meaning of folk life from the meaning of political ideology. In 1978, the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee of the Communist Party of China put forward the reform and opening up plan, and the household contract responsibility system was widely carried out in rural areas throughout the country. The household contract responsibility system was a form of agricultural production responsibility system in which farmers, taking families as units, contract land and other means of production and production tasks to collective economic organizations. In this kind of production, peasant families, as relatively independent economic entities, contracted and managed collective land and other large-scale means of production, and carried out production and management independently in accordance with the provisions of the contract. Except that a small part of the operating income was turned over to the state and the collective according to the provisions of the contract, the rest belonged to individuals. In addition to necessary coordination and management, the collective mainly provided production services for farmers' families. This new economic management system for rural areas made the rural economy develop rapidly. In the context of booming economic conditions, rural life became rich. At the same time, with the normalization of social and political order, the daily life in rural areas returned to normal and stable. Therefore, the attention of the creators of peasant paintings shifted from political ideology to daily life of farmers. At this time, some professional researchers, in combination with the new changes in the development of peasant paintings, losing no time in proposing that peasant paintings throughout the country need to be treated as modern folk paintings. Its painting themes and techniques should be derived from the real life of farmers, reflecting strong local characteristics. We should pay attention to learning from the local ancient folk art and bring forth new ones. In a word, peasant paintings should be contemporary folk paintings, which is based on farmers' real life and inherited local traditional folk art to express farmers' real psychological demands in reality, rather than a grand political narrative. Under the influence of this concept, many artists would spontaneously guide farmer painters to learn modeling and color matching from such folk arts as calico, embroidery, paper-cut, murals, etc., on the basis of being familiar with and understanding the traditional folk art resources in rural areas, so as to improve the artistic taste of peasant paintings and help peasant paintings form their own artistic style. With the joint efforts of researchers of peasant paintings, relevant artists and farmer painters, peasant paintings in the late 1970s and early 1980s began to use the unique artistic skills of peasant paintings to actively express the farmers' sense of life, emotions and values in reality, especially the peasant paintings in Jinshan, Shanghai and Huxian, Shaanxi. Zhejiang Yudong peasant paintings also emerged in this period. This constituted a turning point in history of development of peasant paintings.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, driven by Jinshan peasant paintings, Huxian peasant paintings and Yudong peasant paintings, a strong upsurge of folk art was formed across the country, and nearly 100 peasant painting groups suddenly emerged. On the basis of drawing on the painting techniques and color matching of local traditional folk art resources, these peasant paintings depict the real life details of local farmers, each with its own characteristics. In 1984, the Ministry of Culture and the Chinese Artists Association held the first "National Peasant 'Paintings Exhibition'" in Beijing. The county town, which made good achievements in the creation of peasant paintings, was named as "Modern Folk Painting Town of China" by Social Culture Bureau of the Ministry of Culture. By 1988, there had been 51 such painting villages, and then more than 110 (Kang Ningmei, 2009). From the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s, the creation of peasant paintings continued to pay attention to the

specific events in the life of farmers, representing the real life of farmers. Government departments at all levels also often organized exhibitions and competitions of peasant paintings, and carried out seminars on peasant paintings, providing good conditions and atmosphere for the creation of peasant paintings. During this period, the famous peasant painting villages emerged, including Rizhao in Shandong, Jinshan in Shanghai, Huxian County in Shaanxi, Yudong in Zhejiang, Yijun in Shaanxi, Liuhe in Nanjing, Xiaoxian County in Anhui, Xuanyi in Xi'an, Yongfeng in Jiangxi, Ansai in Yan'an, Pixian County in Jiangsu, etc. These farmer painters in the painting villages derived various painting techniques from the local traditional folk art resources, depicted the details of social life with local regional color, and formed various peasant paintings with local regional characteristics.

From late 1970s to mid 1990s, with the loose political atmosphere and the improvement of economic life, the expression of peasant paintings gradually got rid of the grand narrative mode during the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, and began to realistically portray farmers' real daily life, such as farming, pig feeding, cattle raising, sheep herding, weeding, flower growing, vegetable growing, fishing, festivals, etc. In this description, farmers' joy of harvest, their love of raising poultry, and various rural festival traditions were all vividly on paper, expressing farmers' true consciousness, feelings and values in daily life. So far, peasant paintings had returned to the original meaning of folk life. In this sense, peasant paintings from the late 1970s to the mid 1990s are typical symbols bearing the meaning of folk life.

From the mid-1990s to the present, the meaning of peasant paintings changed from carrying folk life to carrying creativity and fashion. In mid-1990s, with large-scale reform of state-owned enterprises in China, a large number of enterprise employees were laid off, the domestic economy turned into a downturn, and the rural economic development also turned into a sharp decline. A large number of rural youth began to leave the land on which their ancestors had been living to work in cities. Many peasant paintings activities, which were originally supported by the government and guided by cultural centers, were halted due to the transformation of social management organization mechanism from state-owned to market. The creation of peasant paintings lost the rich and fresh sources of daily life, the number began to decrease, and the creation content was also lack of innovation, and it began to decline.

However, downturn in peasant paintings in mid-1990s was only temporary. From middle of 1990s to beginning of the 21st century, there was a transition period of social management organization mechanism from state-owned to market. After entering the 21st century, the market-oriented organization mechanism was gradually established. The whole economic development of Chinese society broke previous planned economy model and pushed the whole process of production, marketing and consumption to the market. Many literary and artistic projects also broke the "iron rice bowl" and became self-supporting in the market. Although peasant paintings did not really enter into the system and there was no problem of system reform, the market economy also brought challenges to the development of peasant paintings. At the beginning of the 21st century, the development status quo of domestic history was that if peasant paintings wanted to survive, they could not stick to the rules of organization, creation methods, creation skills, and creation content. Instead, they needed to constantly innovate, enhance competitiveness, enter into cultural industrial track, and develop in the market. The rise of cultural industries in the world brought challenges and opportunities to the development of peasant paintings. First, the mechanism of cultural industries drove culture into the track of industrialization and commercialization. On the one hand, it could help culture get rid of its dependence on political institutions and

strengthen its ability to intervene in social life independently. On the other hand, it could make culture easy to be over industrialized and lose its cultural connotation and become a pseudo culture. Peasant paintings could only actively face challenges and seize development opportunities. On the one hand, they could effectively enter the track of cultural industries and adapt to the mechanism of cultural industries in production, marketing and other links; On the other hand, we also needed to take measures to resist the alienation of original cultural connotation by industrialization mechanism. Therefore, when creating peasant paintings, we should first take into account the art itself, so that the creative content is more rich, the form is more multiple, and we should also maintain a high aesthetic taste through design, techniques and colors. Secondly, peasant paintings must take market factors into consideration. Many farmer painters made a living by creating peasant paintings. They would pay great attention to create attraction to consumers' consumption psychology, highlight their own unique aesthetic styles, such as classical aesthetic style, local characteristic aesthetic style, fashion avant-garde aesthetic style, etc., and would not simply display rural daily life without packaging. These unique aesthetic styles, on the one hand, maintained the artistic characteristics of peasant paintings, on the other hand, created a unique attraction to consumers' consumption psychology in cultural market, showing the competitive advantages of works, so that peasant paintings could survive.

From mid-1990s to the present, although there was a period of downturn, that period of downturn was a period in which farmers drew a picture of saving strength for development and transformation. In the 21st century, the rise of cultural industries brought both challenges and opportunities for peasant paintings. In order to meet challenges and seize opportunities, great changes took place in the creation of peasant paintings, such as focusing on aesthetic packaging of peasant paintings instead of simply showing daily life in rural areas. Although the style of this aesthetic packaging was diversified, it maintained a high aesthetic taste, in order to maintain the artistry of peasant paintings on the one hand, and create consumer selling points of peasant paintings on the other hand, and strengthen the competitiveness of peasant paintings in the market. As a result, the creation of peasant paintings was no longer a simple creation in traditional sense, but an increase in packaging and marketing sense of creativity. The meaning of peasant paintings was therefore more creative and fashionable. In this regard, peasant paintings from the mid-1990s to the present were typical symbols bearing the meaning of creativity and fashion.

In a word, as a symbol bearing rich meanings, peasant paintings developed from the late 1950s to the present could be summarized as a whole from political ideology to folk life to creative fashion according to their different meanings at each historical stage.

The Formation and Connotation of Aesthetic Utopia in Peasant Paintings

In 1615, Thomas Moore used the term "Utopia" for the first time in his novel *Utopia*. Utopia was composed of "no" and "place" in Greek, which meant "nonexistent place" and "nihilistic land". Researchers usually thought that the term Moore had two meanings: first, it had a beautiful meaning; Second, it meant fantasy. This made Utopia finally become pronoun of all kinds of imaginary ideal society. The concept of aesthetic utopia came into being in context of serious alienation of human life in capitalist society. Philosophers and aestheticians who were dissatisfied with the existing capitalist system, on the premise of fruitless intervention in social politics, trying to use aesthetic and artistic methods to save the alienated human life, so that people who lost their nature of freedom and harmony due to alienation can regain their nature of freedom and harmony under the inspiration of aesthetic

and art. In this way, an ideal social system and social life could be constructed through aesthetic rather than social revolution. The thoughts of these philosophers and aestheticians were called “aesthetic utopia”. Different from utopia, aesthetic utopia was less subversive. Aesthetic utopia did not advocate breaking the existing social system through violence to create a new life. It sought to restore people from “one-way people” to sound and perfect people, and improve the existing life. Its purpose is to save the existing life rather than subvert it. The explorers of aesthetic utopia were mainly western Marxist theorists. Lukacs believed that art could build an aesthetic utopia by reflecting overall social reality, shaping typical images in art works, and constructing harmonious unity of content and form of art works. Bloch strongly advocated spirit of utopia, advocated giving full play to imaginative creativity to build future, and integrated thinking of aesthetic utopia into study of historical dimension of utopia. The theoreticians of the Frankfurt School, such as Marcuse, advocated revolution of sensibility and aesthetic sense in society, tried to eliminate the “one-way” alienation of the capitalist system to people, and jointly built an ideal and beautiful society by cultivating people’s artistic thinking mode of transcending alienation, that is, aesthetic utopia thinking mode. Jameson analyzed the existence of aesthetic utopia in cultural industries from a realistic perspective. He pointed out that the cultural industries were not only the control and entertainment of capitalist ideology, but also the transformation of anxiety and illusion of social life and political activities. It could express yearning for ideal life in popular manner, and then provide an aesthetic utopia to conceive ideal life on the basis of denying the existing social order.

In short, aesthetic utopia was an ideal social life form constructed by grasping overall social reality through art and aesthetic thinking mode. The aesthetic utopia of peasant paintings were to grasp the overall social reality through unique artistic techniques and aesthetic thinking mode of peasant paintings, and then built an ideal social life form. However, due to the evolution of real history, the aesthetic utopia of peasant paintings was not unified. In each historical stage, the aesthetic utopia of peasant paintings presented different states. This different state had a great relationship with the internal organization mechanism of peasant paintings. In other words, internal organization mechanism made aesthetic utopia of peasant paintings. It could also be said that the internal organization mechanism of peasant paintings created peasant paintings. The internal organization mechanism of peasant paintings was endowed by social history, specifically, it was a feeling structure of farmers in social and historical life. Raymond Williams once explained that feeling structure is “social experience in dissolution and mobility” (Raymond Williams, 1961, p. 65). The feeling structure “is deeply rooted in our life as I mentioned before; it cannot be simply abstract and summarized; it may only exist in art - this is the importance of art - and it can be realized and communicated as a whole experience” (Raymond Williams, 1961, p. 65). This feeling structure is hidden in relationship between signifier and the signified of peasant paintings as a symbol, which controlled symbolic expression of peasant paintings’ aesthetic utopia. According to Roland Barthes, “symbol is a connected whole of signifier and signified”, but this “connection” cannot be simply understood. Barthes regarded symbols as a secondary signifier system. The first level meant that the system consisted of signifier and signified. The whole first level system is the signifier of the second level system, and the signified of the second level system constituted symbolic meaning of the second level signifier system. Feeling structure is the reference of the second level signifier system, which determined the meaning of the whole symbol system. The first level of peasant paintings referred to the systematic signifier, which referred to the peasant paintings images composed of lines, colors, etc., and referred to the harvest, scenery or characters of peasant paintings; The second level

signifier system of peasant paintings referred to its entire first level signifier system, while the second level signifier system of peasant paintings referred to the feeling structure of the era of peasant paintings. This feeling structure constituted the symbolic meaning of secondary meaning system of the whole peasant paintings.

In general, the aesthetic utopia of peasant paintings could be divided into three types: political aesthetic utopia, folk aesthetic utopia, and fashion aesthetic utopia according to the three historical stages of development of peasant paintings as symbols. In the first stage of development of peasant paintings as a symbol, that is, the political symbol stage from the late 1950s to the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1970s. The aesthetic utopia of peasant paintings in this stage can be summarized as political aesthetic utopia. The understanding of the overall social reality of the peasant paintings in this period completely copied political ideology propaganda and slogans of that time, and concentrated on reflecting awareness of policy propaganda in the “Great Leap Forward” movement and the “Cultural Revolution” movement. The awareness of policy propaganda in the “Great Leap Forward” and “Cultural Revolution” movements mainly focused on two points: first, the exaggerated imagination of material accumulation and rich material life in real society; Second, the consciousness of class struggle. At that time, peasant paintings did not form its own unique painting techniques. The peasant paintings in the 1950s used very casual and simple unconscious expressions, while the peasant paintings in 1960s incorporated the realistic techniques of the Academy, showing strong lines and strong perspective painting effects. During the shaping process of peasant paintings symbols from late 1950s to the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1970s, the signifier in its first layer of signifier signified system is the image representing labor, harvest, landscape, people, livestock, poultry and other painting contents. These images are usually formed under rough or strong lines and perspective color painting. It refers to labor, harvest, scenery, characters, livestock, poultry and other painting content entities. The signifier in the second layer signified system is the whole first layer signified system. It refers to the feeling structure of painters and their times, that was, the imagination and joy of the rich material accumulation and material life in real society, as well as the consciousness of class struggle. The farmer painters at that time lacked the awareness of grasping the overall social reality from the perspective of self and reality. The understanding of the overall social reality was basically a mechanical interpretation of the political ideology and policies at that time. The aesthetic utopia embodied in this way and the ideal social life depicted were all aesthetic utopia dominated by the political ideology at that time, which was also the aestheticization of the political ideology at that time. This aesthetic utopia showed a world of great material wealth, beyond the needs of the people, free from exploitation, oppression and class. All people held firm communist beliefs and regarded labor as the first need of life. However, this aesthetic utopia did not separate itself from reality in expression, but presented a spiritual tendency to replace reality with fantasy.

In the second stage of the development of peasant paintings as a symbol, that is, the folk symbol stage from the end of the Cultural Revolution in late 1970s to the middle of the 1990s. The aesthetic utopia of peasant paintings in this stage can be summarized as folk aesthetic utopia. The understanding of the overall social reality of the peasant paintings in this period began to reflect their true feelings of daily life, that is, as a specific individual, the feeling and understanding of the natural scenery, interpersonal relationships, local customs and slang around them. After the end of the Cultural Revolution in the late 1970s, under the adjustment of national policies, the political atmosphere began to become relaxed, and the economic life in rural areas also improved greatly, while the tide of commodity economy did not yet arrive. Under the background of this era, the

understanding of peasant paintings on the overall social reality returned to the tradition of local folk art, gradually dispelled the political ideology during the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, and began to express farmers' true and simple feelings about their daily life "here and now". The reflection and guidance of professional artists on the painting techniques of peasant paintings also made the expression skills of peasant paintings more artistic in this period. The reference of peasant paintings to local traditional folk art resources, such as cloth, embroidery, porcelain, Kang Wei paintings, stove paintings, etc., made peasant paintings in this period quickly form their own unique painting style, and got rid of the restrictions of unconscious simple graffiti and pure academic techniques in the previous period. In the process of symbol shaping of peasant paintings from late 1970s to the mid 1990s, the signifier in its first layer of signifier signified system was still the image representing labor, harvest, landscape, characters, livestock, poultry and other painting contents, but the selection of these images was much more lively than that in the first period, full of strong interest in life, and the lines and colors used are mainly borrowed from local traditional folk art. It referred to the entity of the contents of the paintings, such as labor, harvest, landscape, people, livestock, poultry, etc. The signifier in the second layer of signifier signified system referred to the whole first layer of signified system, which referred to the painter and the whole feeling structure of the times from late 1970s to the mid 1990s. Such a feeling structure was free from political ideology, and was not eroded by the negative impact of the commercialization wave. It showed the joy from the heart in the face of the gradual prosperity of daily life, as well as the expectation and imagination of a better new life in the future. At that time, peasant painters began to establish a sense of grasping the overall social reality from the perspective of self and reality. Their understanding of the overall social reality is based on the real inner feelings of individual farmer painters on the daily life in rural areas. The ideal life depicted by such an aesthetic utopia was based on farmers' own real thoughts and feelings about reality. It removed the grandeur and loftiness of the political aesthetic utopia from daily life, and showed a happy world with rich daily life, harmonious and happy neighborhood, and full of daily life interests and earthly atmosphere. This aesthetic utopia integrated itself with reality in expression, and tried to truly convey the farmers' realistic feelings, consciousness and values in current life. However, it was worth noting that the aesthetic utopia's feelings of real life "here and now" in this period, though simple and true, were limited by and did not yet broke through the feelings of local feelings, consciousness and values.

In the third stage of the development of peasant paintings as a symbol, that is, the fashion symbol stage since the middle of 1990s. The aesthetic utopia of peasant paintings in this stage could be summarized as the aesthetic utopia of fashion. The understanding of overall social reality of the peasant paintings in this period reflected the "here and now" world imagination of daily life that transcended reality, that is, from the perspective of specific individual existence, attached the cognition and understanding of the international world to the natural scenery, human relations, local customs and slang around them, and endowed these contents with a world vision and significance that transcended the "here and now". In mid-1990s, with the large-scale reform of state-owned enterprises in China, the domestic economy turned into a downturn again, and many rural people began to leave the countryside to make a living in the cities. Peasant paintings also lost the support of the government. However, this was only a transitional period. In the 21st century, the domestic economic management model began to gradually transform to the market mechanism, and the cultural industries began to sprout and develop in China. This helped the creation of peasant paintings get rid of the dependence on the government, but it is also easy for

peasant paintings to be over industrialized. However, under the unique social system management mode of China, the government would conduct macro-control on cultural industries in general. However, this kind of macro-control was mainly to prevent culture from being over industrialized in the development of cultural industries, rather than over interfering with the free creation of peasant paintings. In fact, the creation of peasant paintings during this period was relatively free. However, we should also pay attention to aesthetic taste and market sales. In the process of shaping symbols of peasant paintings from the beginning of the 21st century to the present, the first layer of the signifier in the signified system was still the image representing labor, harvest, landscape, people, livestock, poultry and other painting contents. The choice of image content was more focused on life interest. In addition to inheriting the local traditional folk art resources, the painting techniques of these images were also used for reference to the contemporary professional painting techniques at home and abroad. It referred to the entity of the content of the paintings, such as labor, harvest, landscape, people, livestock, poultry, etc. The signifier in the second layer of the signifier system of this peasant paintings was the whole first layer of the signifier system, which referred to the painter and the feeling structure of the times from mid 1990s, especially since the 21st century. This feeling structure reflected the aesthetic taste and vision of the international world and the reflection on the cultural identity of local region inside world pattern. At this time, the farmer painters established the consciousness of grasping the overall social reality from the perspective of the relationship between themselves and the world. Utopia displayed through this way, the ideal social life depicted was the ideal social life imagined by farmers on the basis of their reflection on the relationship between themselves and the world, and was the aesthetic expression of this ideal social life. This aesthetic utopia broke the traditional vision of relatively closed “small country and few people” rural life, and showed a growing world full of vitality and unlimited development possibilities in cultural integration with the outside world and even the international world. This aesthetic utopia transcended the reality again in expression, trying to convey the farmers’ feelings, consciousness and values with a world perspective based on current life.

In a word, according to the three historical stages of the development of peasant paintings as a political symbol, folk custom symbol and fashion symbol, the aesthetic utopia of peasant paintings also mainly presented three states: political aesthetic utopia, folk custom aesthetic utopia and fashion aesthetic utopia. In an aesthetic way, it depicted the images of three aesthetic utopias: political ideology vision, folk custom life vision and world consciousness vision. The creative role of the symbol organization mechanism of each type of peasant paintings in generation of aesthetic utopia was worthy of attention.

The Negation and Revolution of the Aesthetic Utopia of Peasant Painting to Daily Life

Aesthetic utopia itself is a generalization of the state of criticizing and transcending the real world. Marcuse believed that in a unidirectional society, only “the aesthetic dimension still retains a freedom of expression” (Herbert Marcuse, 1989, p. 207) can maintain the two-way dimension of people. Art and the aesthetics it brought could provide people with imagination, freedom and individuality, which were the solid foundation that could arouse transcendence of the subject and enable it to establish criticism and negation of the real world to move towards a more ideal future. Therefore, the aesthetic utopia of peasant paintings in various periods actually provided different types of imagination, freedom and individuality to varying degrees, thus arousing the passion of the people at that time to criticize and deny the real world, and at the same time promoting them to transcend

and move towards the ideal world they thought. However, because the aesthetic utopia of peasant paintings in different periods was different, their negation and revolution of daily life were also different.

Lefebvre described the revolution in daily life as that people found a specific time in daily life to release their passion, returning to true humanity, and then eliminating the manipulation of alienation forces on daily life to achieve human freedom and liberation. People would break the established hierarchical order and conventional dogma, providing each other with equal attitude and pure emotion, and then moved towards freedom collectively. "In order to reach the reality, we must really tear off the veil" (Henri Lefebvre, 1991, p. 57). This revolution in daily life was concentrated on a kind of overall revolution, that is, people achieved "overall people" by improving themselves, and then "liberate themselves from alienation" (Michel Trebitsch, 1991, p. XX). The aesthetic utopia of peasant paintings negated and revolutionized daily life through audience's cultivation of their own totality when viewing paintings. Of course, this way of cultivation would be different due to the different aesthetic utopia.

In the stage of political aesthetic utopia from 1950s to late 1970s, the alienation force that people faced in their daily life was mainly the desire for material and the binding of political ideology caused by material poverty. However, bound by the powerful political ideology at that time, the power of alienation was artificially locked in the desire for material, and political ideology was instead interpreted as the key to solving the desire for material. Therefore, the aesthetic utopia of the peasant paintings at that time was embodied in the mechanical interpretation of the political ideology and policies at that time, which demonstrated the communist world, which was extremely rich in materials, free from exploitation, oppression and class, and took labor as the first need of life, and forced the people to replace reality with this aesthetic utopia ideal, so as to solve the material desire caused by material poverty in reality. In this historical stage, the negation and revolution of the aesthetic utopia of peasant paintings to daily life was shown as: through the aesthetic interpretation of the political ideology and policies at that time, it resisted the alienation force of the desire for material caused by material poverty, thereby liberating people from the alienation force, shaping "overall people", and moving towards an ideal society.

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Since late 1990s, it was the stage of fashion aesthetic utopia. In this period, with the gradual improvement of economic life and the gradual liberation of political ideology, the creation of peasant paintings in this period entered a relatively free stage. The main alienation forced that people face in daily life was no longer the

excessive binding of material desire and political ideology, but the narrow concept of localism. The 21st century is a century of globalization. After entering the 21st century through the economic transformation in the late 1990s, China also entered the track of globalization. Globalization required people to have a global perspective and understand local culture from a global perspective. However, the traditional deep-rooted localism made it difficult for Chinese people to adapt to the world rules in the era of globalization. The emergence of cultural industries in the 21st century would help Chinese people break through localism and understand globalization. It would rapidly spread culture around the world with the help of digital technology and business system. Under this background, peasant painters gradually established the consciousness of grasping the overall social reality from the perspective of the relationship between themselves and the world. The aesthetic utopia of peasant paintings in this period depicted the ideal social life imagined by farmers on basis of their reflection on the relationship between themselves and the world. This kind of aesthetic utopia broke through the traditional relatively narrow localism and showed the infinite possibility of cultural integration with the outside world and even the international world. The expression of this aesthetic utopia began to reflect the tendency of transcending reality, but it was not the transcendence of political ideology, but the transcendence of consciousness and concept. It tried to convey farmers' feelings, consciousness and values with a world perspective based on the current life. Therefore, the negation and revolution of the aesthetic utopia of peasant paintings in this historical stage to daily life was manifested in that farmers resisting relatively narrow localism caused by traditional feeling structure based on the feelings, consciousness and values of the world born from the current life, and then shaped the "overall person" in the context of globalization, and moved towards an ideal society with global feelings, consciousness and values.

The Aesthetic Revolution and Identity Construction of Peasant Paintings in Daily Life

The revolution in daily life triggered by aesthetic utopia of peasant paintings was not only to build an ideal social blueprint, but also to establish farmers' own cultural identity through conception of this ideal social blueprint. This made the daily life revolution of the aesthetic utopia of peasant paintings not only a revolution against the daily life itself, but also a revolution against the established rules and order of the organization of daily life. The cultural identity of peasant painting, which was constructed through aesthetic utopia and its daily life revolution, presented different characteristics due to different historical development stages.

In the stage of political aesthetic utopia from 1950s to late 1970s, although the alienation force faced by the people at that time was mainly the desire for material and the bondage of political ideology caused by material poverty, the alienation force was mainly interpreted as the desire for material because of the strong penetration of political ideology into social life at that time. However, because political ideology was interpreted as the key to solving the people's desire for material things, the aesthetic utopia of peasant paintings at that time was mainly reflected in the mechanical interpretation of political ideology and policies at that time. The aesthetic utopia that mechanically interpreted political ideology and policies outlined a communist world that was extremely rich in materials, free from exploitation, oppression and class, and regards labor as the first need of life. Through such Utopian ideal, the public revolted against the alienation of the real world and at the same time constructed their own cultural identity, that was, the annotator who revolted against the alienation force of material desire to interpret the political ideology aesthetically. Such interpreters were not only the experimenters of cultural

intervention in politics, but also the bearers of contemporary cultural creation. However, they were not very mature either in cultural intervention in politics or in contemporary cultural creation. They only interpreted politics in a cultural way to achieve cultural intervention in politics and contemporary cultural creation, and completely equated cultural intervention in politics with contemporary cultural creation.

In the stage of folk aesthetic utopia from the end of 1970s to the middle of 1990s, the alienation force that people faced at that time was still the desire for material due to material poverty, but at this time, the abuse of political ideology over binding people's daily life was also widely recognized. Therefore, in this period, the power of alienation was positioned in the desire for material and the bondage of political ideology. Therefore, the aesthetic utopia of peasant paintings gradually returned to the traditional life orienting folk ideal. Folk aesthetic utopia dispelled the grandeur and loftiness of political aesthetic utopia, and depicted a world full of rich life, harmonious neighborhood, and interesting life. When people resisted the alienation caused by economic and political constraints through the ideal of folk aesthetic utopia, they built their own cultural identity, that was, they resisted the alienation force formed by the desire for material and the alienation force formed by political ideological constraints, and they interpreted the real life aesthetically, basing on local culture. Such an interpreter needed to resist both the alienation force of materialization and the alienation force of political ideology, and through the aesthetic approach. This is actually the aesthetic resistance advocated by the Frankfurt School. The progress of this interpreter's interpretation compared with the previous stage was that he intervened in the creation of politics and contemporary culture with a relatively independent artistic and cultural attitude. However, this intervention and creation also followed the principles of traditional local culture and excluded the understanding of others and international understanding of culture.

In the stage of fashion aesthetic utopia from the mid-1990s to the present, the combination of material barrenness and ideology eased in reality, and the alienation force faced by the people was mainly the traditional narrow concept of regionalism. This narrow concept of localism made it difficult for people to adapt to the social rules in the era of globalization. Therefore, breaking through the narrow localism and grasping the overall social reality from the perspective of the relationship between self and the world constitute the main cultural task of the people in this period. The aesthetic utopia in this stage showed the ideal social life imagined by farmers on the basis of their reflection on the relationship between themselves and the world. This aesthetic utopia would break through the traditional relatively narrow localism, showing the infinite possibility of cultural integration with the outside world and even the international world, and trying to convey the farmers' feelings, consciousness and values with a world perspective based on the current life. This aesthetic utopia was mainly expressed through the creativity and design of cultural products, so it could be called a fashion aesthetic utopia. When people resisted the alienation caused by narrow localism through fashion aesthetic utopia, they built their own cultural identity, that was, they resisted the alienation force caused by localism, and they were the interpreters of aesthetic interpretation of real life from the perspective of the relationship between themselves and the world. Such an interpreter not only paid attention to maintaining the relatively independent attitude of art and culture involved in politics and contemporary culture, but also set up the perspective of understanding the other and international culture, organically integrated local culture into creation of common culture of mankind, and moved towards an ideal society that could reflect the global emotion, consciousness and values in the context of globalization by shaping the "overall person" in the context of globalization.

Conclusion

Peasant painting, rooted in the fertile soil of traditional Chinese folk art, was a symbol bearing rich historical and cultural significance. This symbol bearing rich historical and cultural significance was of great value and significance in establishing China's modern culture with national characteristics in the context of globalization. Unlike most western countries, China was a large agricultural country, with farmers accounting for the largest proportion of China's population. Therefore, the main body of the construction of Chinese modernity culture should be the farmers. Peasant painting was an important creation type in peasant culture and art. According to the historical development of peasant paintings in reality, the meaning types carried by peasant paintings could be divided into three types in chronological order: the meaning of political ideology, the meaning of folk life, and the meaning of creativity and fashion. These three types of meaning gave rise to three types of aesthetic utopia, namely political aesthetic utopia, folk aesthetic utopia, and fashion aesthetic utopia. The three types of aesthetic utopia reflected three forms of negation and revolution of daily life. The political aesthetic utopia was to resist the alienation force of material desire caused by material poverty through the aesthetic interpretation of the political ideology and policy machinery at that time. Folk aesthetic utopia was to resist the material desire and political ideology bondage caused by material barrenness through farmers' real feelings, consciousness and values in daily life. Fashion aesthetic Utopia was a relatively narrow regionalism caused by the traditional feeling structure, which was resisted by farmers based on the feelings, consciousness and values with a world perspective generated by the current life. Through the negation and revolution of daily life in these three forms, the people also constructed their own interpreter of the aesthetic interpretation of political ideology against the dissimulatory force eager for material, the dissimulatory force formed by the desire for material, the dissimulatory force formed by the bondage of political ideology, the interpreter of the aesthetic interpretation of real life basing on local culture, and the dissimulatory force caused by the resistance to the concept of localism. The third identity of annotators was who interpreted real life aesthetically from the perspective of the relationship between self and the world. Among them, the fashionable aesthetic utopia of peasant paintings, their resistance to daily life and the construction of the identity of farmer painters were of great significance for the coupling of cultural nationalism and modernity construction in the context of globalization. It could help us establish a modern culture with Chinese national characteristics in the context of globalization and highlight the value and significance of this modern culture in social life.

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