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СЮЙ БЭЙХУН: ЗАМАНБАП КЫТАЙ ИСКУССТВОСУНУН НЕГИЗДӨӨЧҮСҮ ЖАНА КӨРКӨМ БИЛИМ БЕРҮҮНҮН РЕФОРМАТОРУ

Аннотация. Бул макала XX-кылымдын биринчи жарымында заманбап кытай искусствосунун өнүгүшүндө негизги ролду ойногон көрүнүктүү кытай сүрөтчүсү, агартуучусу жана реформатору Сюй Бэйхундун чыгармачылык мурасына арналган. Автор анын көркөм стилинин эволюциясын, батыш живописинин жана социалисттик реализмдин таасирин, Кытайдагы көркөм билим берүүнү реформалоого кошкон салымын изилдейт. Кытай Эл Республикасы түзүлгөндөн кийинки мезгилдеги Кытай менен Советтер Союзунун ортосундагы маданий өз ара мамилелерге, ошондой эле Сюй Бэйхун салттуу кытайлык жана европалык көркөм мамилелерди бириктирүү жолуна өзгөчө көңүл бурулат. Макалада Сюй Бэйхун улуттук өзгөчөлүктү универсалдуу көркөм баалуулуктар менен айкалыштырган жаңы көркөм парадигманын негиздөөчүсү катары мааниси баса белгиленет.

Негизги сөздөр: Сюй Бэйхун, кытай искусствосу, көркөм билим берүү, социалисттик реализм, Кытай жана СССР, живопистин модернизациясы, маданий алмашуу, XX-кылымдагы кытай живописи, реализм, искусство реформасы.

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СЮЙ БЭЙХУН: ОСНОВАТЕЛЬ СОВРЕМЕННОГО КИТАЙСКОГО ИСКУССТВА И РЕФОРМАТОР ХУДОЖЕСТВЕННОГО ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ

Аннотация. Статья посвящена творческому наследию Сюй Бэйхуна – выдающегося китайского художника, педагога и реформатора, сыгравшего ключевую роль в становлении современного китайского искусства в первой половине XX века. Автор рассматривает

эволюцию его художественного стиля, влияние западной живописи и социалистического реализма, а также его вклад в реформирование художественного образования в Китае. Особое внимание уделяется культурному взаимодействию между Китаем и Советским Союзом в период после основания Китайской народной республики, а также тому, как Сюй Бэйхун интегрировал традиционные китайские и европейские художественные подходы. Статья подчёркивает значение Сюй Бэйхуна как основателя новой художественной парадигмы, сочетающей национальную идентичность с универсальными художественными ценностями.

Ключевые слова: Сюй Бэйхун, китайское искусство, художественное образование, социалистический реализм, Китай и СССР, модернизация живописи, культурный обмен, китайская живопись XX века, реализм, художественная реформа.

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XU BEIHONG: FOUNDER OF MODERN CHINESE ART AND REFORMER OF ART EDUCATION

Annotation. This article explores the artistic legacy of Xu Beihong – a prominent Chinese painter, educator, and reformer who played a key role in the formation of modern Chinese art in the first half of the 20th century. The author examines the evolution of his artistic style, the influence of Western painting and socialist realism, as well as his contributions to the reform of art education in China. Special attention is given to the cultural exchange between China and the Soviet Union after the founding of the People's Republic of China and how Xu Beihong integrated traditional Chinese and European artistic approaches. The article emphasizes Xu Beihong's significance as the founder of a new artistic paradigm that combined national identity with universal artistic values.

Keywords: Xu Beihong, Chinese art, art education, socialist realism, China and the USSR, modernization of painting, cultural exchange, 20th-century Chinese painting, realism, art reform.

After the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, significant changes occurred not only in the political, economic, and social spheres but also in the realm of art. The new era was marked by active cultural exchange between the Soviet Union and China, which had a profound impact on the development of traditional Chinese painting. Under the influence of Soviet art, particularly socialist realism, Chinese artists began to rethink traditional forms and imagery, incorporating new stylistic techniques, thematic directions, and methods of artistic expression. One of the key figures during this transitional period was the artist Xu Beihong – the founder of modern Chinese art and a reformer of art education in China. This article explores the main aspects of his creative journey and his role in shaping a new artistic paradigm within the context of cultural

interaction between China and the Soviet Union, as well as his contribution to the development of art education, which includes the use of new techniques in teaching the art of drawing and painting.

After the establishment of the communist regime in China in 1949, cultural cooperation with the Soviet Union became one of the key directions of state policy, aimed at strengthening ideological ties between the two countries. This cooperation was part of a broader strategy that included the exchange of experience in science, education, and culture, as well as the active adoption of Soviet models in various aspects of life. In the field of art, this was expressed in the promotion of socialist realism, which was seen as the most appropriate artistic method for reflecting the values of the new society [7, p. 70].

We all understand how important it was during that time to adhere to the directions of state policy – not only in China but also in the Soviet Union – and to follow the socialist regime, including within the education system and in the field of fine arts.

One of the most significant masters of this period was Xu Beihong, who became a prominent artist and patriot of modern China. He achieved remarkable artistic results and had a major influence on contemporary Chinese art, playing a vital role in its modernization. His creative activity spanned the first half of the 20th century, and he made outstanding contributions to painting, art education, and theoretical practice.

From an early age, Xu was influenced by traditional Chinese culture and studied poetry, literature, calligraphy, and painting under the guidance of his father, Xu Dazhang. Although largely self-taught, he developed a solid foundation in traditional Chinese painting. In his youth, his father's mentorship significantly shaped his style. Xu Dazhang required him to observe people and landscapes, and to hone his drawing technique by copying portraits. This training method, close to realism, enabled Xu Beihong to develop high-level technical skills and accumulate rich visual material for his future works. At the age of thirteen, due to the need to earn a living, he began selling his paintings. This difficult experience toughened his character. Life's hardships also allowed him to engage with different layers of society, broaden his horizons, and gain a deeper understanding of the lives of ordinary people – a valuable cultural and artistic resource for his future creations.

In 1914, Xu Beihong moved to Shanghai – at the time, the Chinese city most open to the outside world and a center of cultural exchange between China and the West. There, he became acquainted with works from the European Renaissance, Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, and various other schools of art. These new artistic ideas had a strong impact on him and motivated him to rethink the direction of traditional Chinese painting.

In Shanghai, he was actively engaged in artistic work. It was here that he first attempted to combine traditional Chinese painting with Western techniques. One notable work from this period is the painting *Horse*. In this piece, the image of the animal is no longer depicted in the abstract, generalized manner typical of traditional Chinese painting, but instead takes on anatomical accuracy thanks to Western techniques – the musculature and bone structure are rendered in a way that makes the horse appear alive and energetic. Nevertheless, the painting retains the traditional spirit – the animal's emotion and character are conveyed through its pose and movement. In this way, the work reflects Xu's desire to combine the best of Chinese and Western painting traditions. What increases the value of his works is not only their historical significance, but also their usefulness in teaching students new drawing techniques.

It is worth noting that the image of the horse holds one of the most important places in Chinese art. The figure of the horse was especially vividly portrayed in classical Chinese painting. Since ancient times, this animal has been associated in the Celestial Empire with the scholarly official. For instance, in the catalogue of the imperial painting collection from the Song dynasty – *Xuanhe Huapu*, compiled under Emperor Huizong, a great connoisseur of painting – it was recorded that: “...scholars often favor images of horses because they serve as analogies for all kinds of their deeds. For horses, when compared, can be low-bred nags or purebred stallions, slow or swift, obscure or outstanding, unfortunate or fortunate” [4, p.210].

In 1919, Xu Beihong traveled to France and began studying Western classical and realistic painting. He hoped to use Western realism to revitalize and improve Chinese painting [1]. There, he gained a deep understanding of composition, color, and form in Western art. While studying at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, he chose François Flameng – a master of realistic painting specializing in portraits and historical scenes – as his mentor. Flameng’s mastery and teaching methods deeply influenced Xu. He received professional and systematic training in painting.

It should be noted that, starting from the late 19th century, Chinese painting came under strong influence from the artistic ideas and forms of expression of Western visual art. At the same time, the traditions of national painting were passed down from generation to generation, and throughout the history of landscape painting, numerous schools and movements emerged. In every generation, renowned artists appeared who sought to introduce innovative ideas into visual art and to develop their own unique painting styles [6, p. 162].

In 1927, after completing his studies abroad, Xu Beihong returned to China with a clear vision for the development of Chinese painting. He actively engaged in art education and sought to merge Western painting concepts with the spirit of traditional Chinese art, creating an improved form of Chinese painting. He taught at the Art Department of National Central University, Peking University, and the Beiping Art Academy, training a new generation of artists. At the same time, he produced many outstanding works, such as *The 500 Soldiers of Tianheng*, *Ba People Fetching Water*, and *Yu Gong Moves the Mountains*. These works are noted for their high technical mastery, expressive aesthetic lines, and original style. They became classics of modern Chinese painting and significantly influenced its further development.

The main difference between Chinese painting and European painting lies in the fact that the pictorial tradition combines painting, graphics, and calligraphy. Chinese painting and calligraphy are closely connected because both art forms use lines. Sometimes firm, sometimes fluid, sometimes strict, sometimes flowing, the lines accurately capture the image, whereas in European painting, images are expressed through volume and form, color, and light and shadow. The Chinese, however, transformed simple lines into highly developed art forms [3, p. 327].

During the period of cultural cooperation between China and the USSR, Chinese painters, sculptors, and art critics went en masse to study in the Soviet Union, where they learned the principles of socialist realism, studied the works of Soviet masters, and adopted their approaches to creating art [2].

Soviet experts were also active in China, teaching in local art academies and institutes. They not only shared their knowledge but also helped develop curricula aligned with the ideological objectives of the new regime. Soviet teachers introduced Chinese students and artists to working methods that emphasized labor, collectivism, and the achievements of socialist construction [9].

Like many Chinese artists, Xu Beihong's first acquaintance with the Soviet Union occurred in 1934, when he was invited by the USSR's Society for Cultural Relations to organize an exhibition of Chinese painting in Moscow. This invitation was no coincidence: on one hand, the Soviet Union sought a better understanding of Chinese culture and closer cooperation, as Chinese painting, being an external expression of culture, was of special interest. On the other hand, Xu Beihong, though educated in Europe, knew little about Soviet socialist realism. However, the idea of socialist realism – to reflect reality and inspire the people – closely aligned with his own artistic aspirations. Thus, he wanted to better understand Soviet art and discover new directions for developing Chinese painting.

The exhibition featured more than 300 items, including works from the Eastern Palace collection. This event became a milestone in cultural ties between China and the USSR. Xu Beihong actively engaged with Soviet artists, discussing methods and ideas of socialist realism. At the same time, he introduced Soviet masters to the unique features of Chinese art. In 1950, after the founding of the PRC, he visited the Soviet Union again and took part in an exhibition of PRC art, further strengthening cultural relations.

In his article *The Background of Soviet Art*, Xu Beihong highly praised the spirit reflected in Soviet art. He wrote that firmness of belief, sharpness of perception, the courage to seek truth, and emotional subtlety distinguished Soviet art. In the visual arts, he especially admired artists such as Perov, Repin, Surikov, Serov, and the landscape painter Levitan. Repin's works, particularly *Barge Haulers on the Volga*, deeply moved him with their truthful depiction of the suffering of ordinary people and social injustice. Surikov's historical paintings impressed him with their scale and attention to detail. In *The Morning of the Streltsy Execution*, he especially appreciated the precise conveyance of emotion and atmosphere. Serov's portraits were distinguished by their subtle expression of the subject's inner world, and Levitan by the lyrical depth of his landscapes. All these works reflected a realist approach to art that deeply resonated with Xu Beihong [1].

Xu believed that post-revolutionary Soviet art had established a strong foundation and was rapidly developing. This recognition of the Soviet art model prompted him to reflect on the modernization of Chinese art so that it could better reflect reality and serve the people. It was also important to convey to the people – both the Chinese intelligentsia and the common folk – new approaches to the modernization of Chinese painting, with an emphasis on a realistic approach and a transformation in the perception of painting.

Xu Beihong was also deeply involved in teaching, nurturing a new generation of artists who continued to develop the ideas of socialist realism [5, p. 71]. While teaching students in China, he became increasingly aware of the gap between Chinese painting and real life – all under the influence of Soviet art. Equally important for him was to shift the younger generation's perception of the new artistic direction shaped by the influence of the Soviet Union and Soviet art. Accordingly, this transformation was intended to extend to the training and education of art students.

Xu Beihong believed that artists should pay greater attention to social reality and the lives of ordinary people. This reinforced his commitment to realism. His portraits increasingly featured realistic features, while his landscapes reflected a focus on space, light, and nature. He adopted Soviet artists' techniques for working with light and shadow, anatomy, and composition, giving his paintings depth and emotional power.

Xu Beihong's reform revitalized Chinese painting, bringing it new life. His efforts focused on two main directions: changes in teaching methods and changes in artistic approach [5, p. 238].

His appreciation of Soviet realism and the work of the Peredvizhniki provided Xu Beihong with new ideas and inspiration. He sought to combine the strengths of Soviet and Chinese art, exploring a realist path suited to China's national characteristics. His contribution played a crucial role in the development of modern Chinese art, including paintings about nature.

In his research, Huang Duanyi notes: "In Chinese philosophy, nature is perceived as a living, animated organism with which a person must be in harmony in order to achieve a full and meaningful life" [8, p. 183]

One of Xu Beihong's most notable achievements is the post-1949 establishment in China of the concept of "art in service," aimed at supporting the new social system and portraying the constructive atmosphere of a new life. The younger generation of students trained by Xu Beihong were taught to analyze and consider historical contexts and to realistically depict social realities [5, p. 237].

Xu Beihong was born in 1895 and passed away in 1953, leaving behind not only an artistic legacy but also a whole school of students who continued his work. After his death, his contribution to Chinese culture was officially recognized by the state, and his works were included in the collections of the country's most prominent museums. In Beijing, the Xu Beihong Memorial Museum was established, showcasing both his artworks and materials related to his teaching and scholarly activities.

The art education system, reformed on Xu Beihong's initiative, included systematic training in anatomy, perspective, working from life, and oil painting techniques. He emphasized the necessity of combining academic knowledge with ideological education – a principle that aligned with the cultural policy of the PRC, although it was also criticized for potentially diminishing national artistic identity.

Nevertheless, Xu Beihong's influence on the development of Chinese art cannot be overstated. He became a bridge connecting East and West, tradition and modernism, the national and the universal. His ideas are still widely discussed in academic circles, and his style continues to inspire artists both in China and beyond.

Thus, Xu Beihong not only became a symbol of the modernization of Chinese painting but also played a key role in shaping the artistic identity of the new China. His work demonstrates how art can be national in form and international in essence.

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