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## On the Study of Textual Classics and Artistic Creation - Taking Buddhist Art Dunhuang Grottoes as an Example

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### Abstract

Stone cave paintings are continuous interactions as independent mediums in places such as text, images and stone cave architecture. Unlike Buddha statues, the narrative of the text always fascinates and guides the viewer to the timeliness of the image, that is, the narrative. In particular, in Buddhist art, Buddha statues are never simple images, and murals are never simple paintings. Before the Tang Dynasty, most unknown artists were artisans, and many artists still worked on murals in temples and palaces, and independent paintings such as scrolls and sides became an important form of painting after the Tang Dynasty, changing the mechanism of painting creation. In this paper, the graphic creation process prioritizes dedication and service, but we can still feel the creativity of the painters strongly. The historical resources of how to paint these paintings, the clues to the copies, and the precursor to the foreground, encourage the painters to constantly try to resemble each other and discover problems...Therefore, in this paper, it was confirmed that reinvention and creativity are very important, and that Dunhuang Buddhist art is the basis for artists' creation and the source of vitality.

**Keywords:** Donhwangseokgul, Seokgul Mural, Text, Image, Creativity

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Buddhist art was introduced into China with the introduction of Indian Buddhism at the end of Han Dynasty. As a kind of past art, it attracted more and more attention from art practitioners. But the more we try to glorify him, the more romantic, religiously religiously, the further away we are from him because of our own conceptual structure. Because this romantic religious sentiment has faded in most of us, "there is no more living Buddhist art" [1]. Then, reflecting on this romantic imagination, we look back to find the Buddhist art form of his time. Ultimately, the distance between us and Buddhist art is not only sociological, historical, or religious, but also aesthetic, which leads to our familiar aesthetic structure.

In our familiar knowledge and structure of creation, we are accustomed to connecting works of art to causes, consequences, or to political (social) or religious (religious) meaning; and as authors of art, we are too accustomed to finding a gesture in a work. And throughout art, very subtle reflections on the nature of art are often overlooked, leading to the dry conclusion of looking at the work [2].

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## **2. Works and authors**

In contemporary works of art, it is often easy to connect the work with the author's self-centeredness and produce associations with the author's life. In particular, the visualization and narration of personal preferences are often classified as self-character and emotional factors, which are often interpreted as the subconscious reaction of his personal life experience. People always try to correct the artist's private psychology from the surface of art; and the more private, the more public attention. Of course, the author's introspective activities and interest in his own cognition and concern are not the only background of a work, but also the author's inspiration and expression are greatly changed through his imagination as well as his life. In fact, it is the commonness of human emotions rather than the privateness of an individual's autobiography that makes it possible.

In China, the earliest dates back to the Wei, Jin and Northern and Southern Dynasties, when independent painters emerged, the emergence of famous artists in Wei and Jin Dynasties. At the end of the Tang Dynasty, scroll painting became a major artistic creation, and the establishment of painting school and individual style became a major event in Chinese art history. No one would think that Buddha statues and the rise of grottoes were related to this, and no Buddhist temple statues were built as works of art. Because of its ideological and educational function, the Buddha statue is considered to be a robed statue of God, known only to those who understand or believe in the religion [3]. When we discuss Buddhist art, we never think of Chang Sang-hsi (the Southern Dynasty painter), Cao Zhongda (the Northern Qi painter), Lu Tan-wei (the Southern Dynasty painter) or Wu Fang (the Tang Dynasty painter). The author's lack of individuality makes the study of Buddhist art focus more on the functionalist categories such as sociology, archaeology and religious teaching. However, as an ancient art with a unique aesthetic concept, Buddhist art should not only from the religious aspect, but also from the angle of aesthetics to win its own complete connotation. Only by connecting Buddhist art with artistic background (his exploration of art form, aesthetic paradigm, his theory of material technique, etc.) can his aesthetics be understood and protected in the historical background of art as original [4].

And although we know that there are many outstanding painters in Chinese art history, the preservation ability of paper works is limited in ancient times. Today, it is difficult to find the original paintings of Wei, Jin, Northern, Southern and Southern Dynasties to Tang Dynasties, and many descendants of the copy also mixed their contemporary style and interest.

## **3. Grottoes, Humility and Compassion**

In Buddhist art, there is a method of self-discipline. There is a fixed and clear basis for Buddha's creation. At first, most of the techniques were taught by word of mouth by monks and craftsmen, and later the rules of sculpture were fixed in writing [5]. So in general terms, Buddha is not a representation of Buddha, but a portrait of Buddha, and he can be made by a non-religious craftsman. As an art, Buddhist art is an art that refuses to let the author's emotions into the artistic expression, and the Buddha's portrait is no longer an aesthetic expression of human emotions. He has a "careful work", a craftsmanship, a decorative quality, which is not to make the author speak, but to glorify his humility in preaching religious rituals. Therefore, when it comes to the artistry of Buddha's statue, most scholars think that "because the essence of religious sculpture is highly collective and normative, its aesthetic requirement is absolutely obedient to religious needs [6]." and therefore considers Buddhist sculptures to be limited in giving play to the space of individual free imagination. "The subject matter of Buddhist statues limits the development of freehand sculptures. In creating the main image of Buddhism, the craftsmen's devout attitude only creates the solemn image of the Dharma. Dharma weakens the spirituality of art [7].

In a good work, the problems they touch on are not only the proposition of the times, but also the fundamental ontology of art. It is these problems that touch on the spirit of Chinese art and the ideals of life that make the works of art pass through time to become classics. The grotto art can also be seen in the possibilities of Chinese aesthetics, which may be a work of classicism, a work of simple folk temperament, or a tool for spreading

Buddhism by crude manufacturing.

Taking the simple and plain style of the Wei-Jin grottoes, which many people loved in the early days, we can feel that the craftsmen poured out a great deal of emotion in making the statue. This Buddhist meditation Buddha of the Northern Wei Dynasty gives people a very quiet and peaceful image, giving them a visual image of "being in the self, being in place forever and firmly", so the viewer can't grasp any image of the self. It is as if there are two different possibilities hidden behind him in the art world, one that engrosses us in ourselves and touches us strongly; the other, while meditating on beauty beyond the phenomenal world, wants us to forget our excitement, our sorrow, even ourselves, and all that is outside us.

This meditation Buddha is 0.92 meters high and has a distinct Jindra style as an early grotto statue. The distinctive difference is that the robes of the Buddha cover the whole body, and the lines of the robe are only shallow and liney. The right hand of the Buddha statue covers the left hand, the thumb covers the back of the left hand, and the other four fingers are slightly closed and tilted downward. And the edge of the garment from the wrist droop, showing a kind of smooth sliding, such as lotus petals will cover up the pedestal. In this period, the Buddha's face was generally less muscular, but his nose and lips were close to each other, and his eyes were wide apart. In facial proportions, the temporal bone is centered on the eyebrow, making the whole face turn forward than we normally see (usually behind the cheekbones). The features are delicate, curved eyebrows with long knives, eyes slightly open, eyes slightly down, nose slightly raised, lips bent like a half-moon, lips slightly raised, deep into two small nest, joyous and restrained. The body tilts slightly toward the viewer, showing compassion, while the hands are folded together to give the viewer an image of dignity, creating a mysterious image of intimacy and

In Chinese history, the Wei and Jin Dynasties are probably the most metaphysical arguments and expressions of emotions, which are the core of Wei and Jin Dynasties aesthetics. Feng Youlan put forward four points about Wei-Jin style, namely, "there must be a mysterious heart", "there must be an insight", "there must be a wonderful appreciation", "there must be a deep feeling", and the philosophy of sentiment and wisdom. In philosophy, Zhuangzi, Laozi and Yi Jing were called the "Three Xuan" at that time, and because of the same culture of Chu and Han, famous scholars of Wei and Jin read LiSao. The combination of Buddhism and Buddhism can also be seen here the profound influence of Wei and Jin aesthetics. It is no longer just a tool to promote Buddhism, but a noble and mysterious image with both divine and human.

At the same time, in our past experience, we are looking for the language trend of the subject, the mastery of the overall modeling language, not the details of the modification. However, in the observation of the Buddha statue, the craftsmen's handling and grasping of the details made the details of the parts meaningful, so that the original parts of the structure not only physical structure. A little careful processing can provide a rich feeling. From observation, we can see that the center of the Buddha statue is centered. To avoid rigidity, the craftsmen shifted the center of the upper garment to the right. At the same time, when dealing with the similar volume and area, the difference is found on the basis of symmetry. Taking the left arm as an example, the left arm has similar shape. Even in the lower half, which emphasizes stability and symmetry, although the three parts are similar in area, there are differences in depth due to slight differences in the thickness of the legs and knee orientation. Symmetry makes the sculptures unified, allowing the viewer to have a feeling of awe and faith in the Buddha statue, while subtle changes add to the lively charm of the statue. In artistic creation, a change of color, a choice of form and so on, if in the "moment of decision", it is enough to change the overall appearance of the work. The thin-bodied Dharma has a flat body, no extra ornate decoration, and the Buddha's hair and clothes are used to reduce the difference, increase the mental image of the Buddha.

Buddha's statue will "the meditation state of Buddha, with stone and soil into spiritual and artistic realization." Qi Baishi's view on art can also be applied to the standard of "too much likeness is vulgar, not

alike is deceitful. " In this case, the element of "imagination" makes Buddha's image close to ideal. In The Theory of Ideological Conception of Chinese Art, Chinese art is already a whole structure of ideological conception. Artistic conception is not the same as a particular large artistic image and typical image, which is the mother of artistic conception. Artistic conception often has the characteristic of being "out of the picture". Therefore, artistic conception has the characteristics of overlapping because of the trigger of specific images. Subjective experience needs to be objectified into images, which must bring a certain degree of idealism, and objective jurisprudence and individual creation reveal different possibilities to create an image of Buddha that never gets tired of. Whether it is an idealistic portrait in Wei and Jin Dynasties or a portrait in Sui and Tang Dynasties, it is taboo to subjective emotions and imagination, but it still follows the aesthetic will of contemporaries. There seems to always be a smile here, lurking between the original commandments and his subtle transformation.

#### **4. Narrative of Mural Space and Time**

Dunhuang Grottoes 254 (North Wei Dynasty), is a typical central tower-column grottoes, inheriting the Indian Tapa style. At that time, believers who visited the cave worshiped and walked around the pillars while looking at the Buddha's statues. When they went around the pillars, they watched the stories painted on the walls and learned about the teachings of Buddha. The mythical world behind the square pillars stems from the Buddhist myth of ancient Indian folklore, the nativity story. Among the many good deeds that Sakyamuni has accumulated in his previous life, he is regarded as the most respectable act of sacrificing his life to save others. Among the many murals on the same subject in Dunhuang, this painting of the Northern Wei Dynasty is the most beautifully conceived and expressive, and it is very representative in space-time narration. The frescoes are of a similar structure. The Northern Dynasties use lines to describe the speed and proficiency of the artists, but the technique of the frescoes is not completely linear. It is easy for the viewer to get emotional, but it also makes it difficult for the viewer who is not familiar with the story to find a clue. Looking at the frescoes carefully, we can sort out its clear visual logic method, will view the painting thoughts to rearrange. The mural, which has no definite boundaries to define events in time and space, combines a complex story of eight different sizes on a wall of less than 2 square meters, depicting 20 people, eight tigers and many animals, mountains and a white tower. The whole mural image is numerous, can see ancient painters rich imagination and high artistic generalization ability. Painters use hand-marking, color, line and composition to constantly execute to create a picture, moving the scene to the next plot, and combining multiple plots into one structure. In the first place, the eyes will be drawn to the climax of the story of jumping off a cliff, feeding a tiger with one's body, and stabbing a bamboo neck. In the picture, Prince Saab's right arm is connected to the feet of Prince Saab's jumping feet, and the straight line of his body shows his inner peace and perseverance. Finally, with the left arm extended by Sarang, all the movements of the picture are introduced into the next scene. The three plots, three continuous dynamic loops, form a relatively closed painting, firmly grasp the viewer's psychological feelings. And the eyes of Prince Sa who threw himself at the cliff and Prince Sa 埤 who was stabbing his neck made eye contact at different times, as if he were talking to each other in different time and space [8].

For example, cave murals in 254 represent the sequence of events in the story by linear space mode, but the sequence is not exactly according to the time line of the story, but according to Buddhist principles or story logic. Cave 257 (North Wei) is also a central pagoda-column cave. The famous mural "Bensheng Deer King" is located on the wall behind the pagoda-column. In this mural, like the artists of Cave 254, the climax of the story, "The Deer King and the King," and the ending of the story, are arranged in the middle of the mural. Start at both ends and draw in a particular order that shows the important plot in the middle. In the process of

transmitting the story text into visual language, the artist is not simply accustomed to the story text, but the key to visual narration is to choose and create vision [9].

Later, Cave 428 (North Zhou Dynasty) depicts Prince Sa sacrificing his life to feed a tiger, presenting a more detailed narrative. The graph is divided into three sections, from top to bottom in a "Z" shape. Compared with the 254 caves, the linear spatial pattern of different events is easier to see and understand. The story is divided into 10 different time and space, which are presented in turn: entering a mountain to see a tiger, jumping over a cliff, feeding a tiger with a sharp neck, feeding a tiger again, feeding a tiger on a sarang, finding bones, crying, and supporting the tower. There are many images of plants, simple geometric shapes of rivers and mountains, extremely abbreviated features, very light and expressive, while animals wave their hands and ink to see a lean, incomplete texture, so rough texture, so that painters of the Northern Zhou Dynasty remained light and confident. Throughout the whole picture, the artist cuts the narrative line of the original story according to the time. The continuous appearance of rocks and plants in the murals is not just the background of the scenery. The most attractive part of the mural is the treatment of these rocks, which are arranged in rhythm, some overlapping, arc and wave patterns, which bring a dynamic pattern to the viewer's eyes. In this mural, however, the direction of the branches and leaves is the same as the direction of the horse's galloping. Some scholars have analyzed that this irrational treatment is the artist's intention.

These two narration techniques are a kind of three-dimensional feeling which tries to match the mural image and the text story under the time line to enhance the text narration.

With the development of time, in addition to traditional Buddhist stories on murals, variations of paintings are becoming more prevalent, and we can see that painters explore the forms of text and images. "Bensheng" is the founder of Buddhism in the past life of many stories, "Jingchang" is the form of images to illustrate the Buddhist scriptures' ideological content. "Variance" is "Variance" or "realization", that is, visual meaning. In many variations, variational painting combines binary composition with temporal linear narration, and even in some variations the mural structure contradicts the variational order [10]. However, almost all the wall paintings in Dunhuang were painted in this non-linear logical way without narrative law. Dunhuang Grotto 196 (late Tang) fresco "Loudu Fork Fight Holy Transformation" depicts the Buddhist Shriver and outer road Loudu Fork Battle six rounds of Buddhist scripture story. If the mural is viewed from the first plot to the last in the narrative order, the viewer must move in front of the 9.5-meter-long mural, which has dozens of scenes and characters. So when we look at these murals, we need to re-view them from the perspective of the creator, that is, from the perspective of image logic and visual space. We can see that the composition is a dichotomy between Buddha disciple Shriver and Loudu fork. The left Shriver sits on the central axis of the painting and Loudu fork sits on the square platform. At the same time, the artist selects the corresponding characters and plots to form a confrontation. There are four high monks next to Shriver, and there are four outstanding female monks next to Loudu fork. The scenes in murals can be described separately. Even if the images are from text, their function is no longer to connect the scenes in murals as a whole, but to reshape the textual relationship in murals. Although these murals are not used in the performance of the century, they tell the story of exorcism no longer by writers or ordinary people, but by spatial narratives of painters [11]."

## 5. Conclusion

Grotto murals are a kind of continuous interaction as an independent medium with texts, statues and grottoes in the same field. Unlike Buddha statues, the narrative nature of the text always makes the viewer attracted and guided by the temporal nature of the images. But we can imagine that the ancient painters in the creation of these murals, in the management position, always considered the spatial factors of the image, and then according to the image logic, to conceive, choose and create details.

In Buddhist art, Buddhist statues are by no means simple, nor are murals simple paintings. Even in the Tang Dynasty, when scroll painting was very developed, many artists still painted a lot of temples and palaces. Only after scrolling and side pages became an important form of painting, did the mechanism of painting change significantly. In the past, painting was indivisible from religious politics and everyday life, such as painting on architecture or objects, so their work was not entirely individual, but a collective result. The artists of the Dunhuang dynasties seem to have a desire for innovation, which may have originated from other regions and times, or from self-innovation, in which creativity is the basis of their creation, and the source of Dunhuang Buddhist art.

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