

The Truth After Removing Impetuosity

—Chen Yugui's impressionistic pottery

At first glance of Chen Yugui's pottery works, the most impressive thing is the ancient fair lady's facial outline after its stylized treatment. Viewers can explicitly feel the interests and delights of traditional Chinese art, and also see the shadow of an ancient Chinese beautiful woman's painting. Chen Yugui's work does not have the kind of delicate figures or thick makeup of traditional fair lady's paintings charming manner, yet give the impression of naivety and childishness. If we carefully gaze at these women mages in detail, we would find out that they are not "beautiful" in the traditional sense, but rather interesting. Such as a long and thin nose, slightly closed eyes, two lips as small as green beans.

The artist generalizes the nearly symbolized facial features of these "beautiful" women, thus avoids the danger of being patterned simultaneously, and shows a kind of natural and naive tastes. Since the dynasty of Wei Jin, nature forms without carving has been highly prized by Chinese literati as the highest aesthetic taste, which may have some connection with the revival of "Zhuang Xue" at that time. But fundamentally, this interest represents the ideal of a "kindness", honesty not falseness, naivety not disguise. Above all, I am sure Chen's works reflect this innocent natural aesthetic ideal.

Perhaps it is the reason for him being born in Dehua Fujian province, the artist has a relatively sensitivity over local porcelains clay. From seeing his works, he has grasped the "mud nature" of porcelain clay and the characteristics of clay strips and clay pieces quite considerably.

Of course, this is by no means a day's work. The people of pottery circle know that the grasp of mud is the most difficult thing and need lots of work to do.

On this basis, he has put the pieces of clay together boldly and aggressively, which quite similar to the huge strokes in traditional Chinese ink paintings. In his works, the collage of clay pieces doesn't seem to take too much work, but the character's movements and clothes are quite expressive.

Particularly his handles with women's clothes is commendable. In terms of techniques, the artist draws inspiration from the "white sketch" in traditional paintings and with special emphasis on the visual effect of a "line".

Although inherited the "white sketch" from the traditional style of clothing patterns, he did not limit his own imagination and creativity and make the trend of clothing folds reflecting a certain kind of elegance and give people a wise fresh and natural feeling.

It's so easy to associate European baroque sculptures with the handling of the character's clothing folds. At that time, artists would usually deal with the folds wrapped around the body of the characters to get rich and dramatic effects and accompany with the characters in an extreme dynamic effect. Meanwhile, richness in detail would give people a delightful feeling. With the contrast the former is more flexible and free, the latter treatment is more realistic, more detailed and more sculpted.

In addition to the clay pieces, we can not ignore the glaze in these works reflecting the expressive force. The artist used the "shadow green glaze" produced in Jingdezhen as a coat, this glaze is a specialty glaze of Jingdezhen, it appeared in the dynasty of the Northern Song. Because it is burned into glass form, its colour is white in blue and looks very elegant.

Therefore it has always been loved by people. In the treatment of glazed color, the artist himself sprayed thick glaze in the sunken area of clothing folds and facial outline of the characters, it burned into a cyan color and thus resulting in a visualized effect of lights and shadows.

Furthermore, the glaze flows freely during the burning process, so finally the resulted occasional effect is almost inevitable, at the same time it also avoids the appearance of overly rigid glazes. After burning process, due to the mixture of white and cyan, in the surface of the work it presents a "ink in ink" effect. This can be so called the true sense of the natural form.

It was said that the artist had previously been keen on traditional Chinese painting, so it seems that he has converted his feeling about traditional paintings into his pottery works.

If only from the logic of artistic creation itself, Chen's works has explored a new expressive way, i.e. the combination of the visual features of traditional paintings and ceramic materials.

Of course, this combination is not just drawing on the ceramic material, but the visual features of the painting are completely transformed into the visual features of one kind of ceramic art, that is to convert the two-dimensional forms of painting into three-dimensional forms of ceramic materials.

On the other hand, his works are virtually a dissipation of the male perspective. Generally It is believed that traditional Chinese women's painting belongs to the product of the patriarchal society, because it is to express female images as a projection of male desire. This is actually similar to endless and extensive advertising images of beauty of today's commercial consumption society, the role of the image of ancient women and today's advertisement beauties is nothing but to let male viewers producing an imagination of desire.

But Chen Yugui's work is neither a copy of the image of traditional women's painting, nor a simple kind of projection of desire. He exaggerates or refines the traditional images of women with a simple and unbridled technique to show

Among these works, he excludes the affectation of the image of fair ladies in our mind, but shows kind of naivety and simplicity. The so-called "The Truth After Removing Impetuosity" is exactly the most practical interpretation to these works.

Yan Dan

School of Fine Arts, Tsinghua University