

“ANIMATION” STYLE IN MODERN PAINTING OF CHINA

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The “animation” style in contemporary Chinese painting is gaining popularity, largely due to the rapid development of the economy, Internet resources, and animation. Artists draw inspiration from animated films and comics, integrating bright colors, dynamic compositions, and distinctive stylized “animated” images into their works. This style is characterized by expressiveness and boldness, which allows artists to convey complex emotions and stories with expressive visuals that are understandable to viewers of all ages. Chinese easel paintings often contain elements of fantasy, national culture, and contemporary realities, which create a unique combination of old and new, real and imaginary. The influence of animation allows artists to experiment with form and content, expanding the boundaries of traditional painting and opening up new horizons for creative expression.

Chinese artists Jie Xu, Liu Ye, Li Zikai, Chen Ke and others are actively adopting the aesthetics and narrative elements of animation, integrating them into their work, resulting in a unique cultural phenomenon based on the synthesis of visual and plastic arts. Most of these artists achieved worldwide recognition in the wake of the “opening of China” period in the early 1990s. In their work, artists often refer to the theme of childhood, using it to express their memories, emotions, and reflections.

The theme of childhood in the “animated” style of contemporary Chinese painters is becoming one of the most common, reflected in many works of art. Artists refer to images of childhood, using bright, stylized elements of animation to convey deep emotions and complex feelings of children. These paintings often combine fairy-tale and realistic motifs, allowing viewers to plunge into the world of children's dreams and fantasies. The artists strive to convey the versatility of childhood, depicting both joyful and sad moments. In their works, you can see carefree play, delight in discoveries and new experiences, as well as feelings of loneliness, fear, and uncertainty. The use of the “animation” style adds dynamism and expressiveness to easel paintings, allowing artists to experiment with painting techniques, form, color, and composition.



Figure 1. Xu Jie. Children 1. 2010. Oil on canvas.| 50x40. Private collection collection
Figure 2. Liu Ye. Girl (Ruan Lingyu). 2002. Oil on canvas.| 60x45. Private collection.

The influence of animation on the paintings of Chinese artists is also manifested in their desire to reproduce movement and energy on canvas. Thanks to this, viewers can feel like they are part of a child's world full of magic and unpredictability. This style of painting also reflects the changes in Chinese society, where there is a growing interest in preserving childhood memories and understanding the importance of childhood in shaping the personality.

Children have always been an endless source of inspiration for artists, which is reflected in numerous masterpieces of world fine art. Images of children often depict unbearable hardships, hard fates, and suffering, which emphasizes their vulnerability to the world. However, at the same time, these works also embody children's dreams and desires, conveying the world through the eyes of children, full of dreams and hopes. On children's faces, you can see a variety of emotions: from carefree joy and cunning to secret sadness and intense concentration (Fig. 1-2). The artists skillfully convey all these feelings, creating “live” and realistic images that reflect the versatility of the child's essence. Therefore, the theme of childhood in the “animation” style of contemporary Chinese painting becomes not only a means of artistic expression, but also an important social commentary that helps to rethink the importance of childhood in the life of every person.



Figure 3. Li Jikai. Fire. 2007. Acrylic on canvas. 99,8 x145. Private collection

Figure 4. Chen Ke. Another me in the world. 2007. Modeling paste and oil color on silk. 67x47,25. Private collection

The “collective discourse of childhood” is also seen by some Chinese art critics as an attempt by artists to “escape from reality.” The children's world cannot be described from the perspective of adult logic. The “children's discourse” in Chinese painting includes “apocalyptic” and “surreal” subjects, including quotes from literature and animated films. Along with the “cute and naive” child archetype, Chinese art has another narrative in which the childlike borders on the cruel and creepy. In such works, artists show childhood as a complex and often dark period of life, full of fear, tension, and anticipation. These works evoke neither smiles nor irony, but rather leave the viewer with a sense of anxiety and unease (Fig. 3-4).

The artists use this “ideologeme” as a contrast between the outward innocence of children and the inner emotional chaos of the characters. The artists present children in situations where they face the cruelty of the world, trials and losses, which emphasizes their vulnerability and incredible resistance. Paintings created in this vein are often full of symbolism and allegories, in which children's images become the embodiment of deep social and psychological problems. They can reflect fears and anxieties related to the modern world, environmental disasters, war, or personal tragedies. These paintings evoke not only an emotional reaction but also make the viewer think about the complexity and ambiguity of childhood.

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