



RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE RE-APPROPRIATION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE: A CRITICAL ENQUIRY OF TRADITIONAL RESONANCE INTO THE ARTWORKS OF EMERGING CHINESE ART PRACTITIONERS

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Abstract

China has a long history, rich art, culture, festivals, and rituals. Distinct regional expressions further diversify this cultural wealth, manifest in local dialects and various art forms. Within this broad creative context, fine arts have historically been the most prominent and influential medium of cultural expression and articulation. The magnificent visual depiction, whether in the form of calligraphy, painting, or sculpture, has throughout Chinese history served as a primary and enduring medium for engaging with and representing core cultural values, philosophical concepts, and social ideals.

This research paper offers a critical analysis of an important trend in contemporary Chinese art: the vital, creative dialogue with their cultural heritage by the young generation of artists, including *Wang Yiya*, *Cai Yiming*, and *Jiang Yifan*. The research paper is structured around the question of how these emerging Chinese artists recombined philosophical concepts, historical artistic form, and cultural traditional symbols in a contemporary way through diverse media.

The research paper presents a detailed textual analysis of the artworks of these emerging Chinese artists, as well as research demonstrating that, through artistic practices, tradition becomes an active component, creating a dynamic conversation between past and present and underscoring a new model of cultural continuity and change.

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Introduction: -

Culturally, China is a rich and diverse country. Chinese art, crafts, and literature have long and deep roots and are deeply connected to ancient times. Chinese art history encompasses all the visual arts originating in China and produced by Chinese creators and artists. Paintings, calligraphy, and printmaking were three of the most important and highest forms of Chinese artworks.

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The modern art movement in China started in the early nineteenth century with artistic and creative explorations and the discovery of new art forms and techniques. The term modern art often refers to Western styles such as realism, expressionism, and later modernism. Chinese modern art is associated with an evaluation of artistic and creative expressions from the nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century. During that time, Chinese artists began to experiment with various media and techniques inspired by Western styles, while also rediscovering Chinese traditional and classical arts and their aesthetics.

Chinese modern art is a manifestation of the country's history and the fast transformation of the modern age. During the mid-twentieth century, art became the medium for exploring new concepts and ideas. Chinese modern art is the combination of traditional Chinese elements with new creative techniques and artistic approaches, and it lays the foundation for the later development of contemporary art in China.

"Numerous unofficial art groups appeared spontaneously from 1984 to 1986, lending the name '85 Art New Wave' to this exuberant period in the history of modern Chinese art. According to one statistic, more than eight such groups, all of which emerged during this period, were scattered across twenty-three provinces and major cities."^I Wu Hung^{II} (Contemporary Chinese Art; Primary Documents, Page 51).

According to Dr. Lian Duan, "Contemporary Chinese art is largely a movement of modernization and post-modernization." (Dr. Lian Duan).^{III} Chinese contemporary art is defined as the diverse, innovative, experimental, creative, and artistic practices that have arisen in the nation from the late twentieth century to the present day. Contemporary Chinese artists often explore various concepts and themes, such as identity and globalization. A group of artists who were active in China in 1980 migrated in 1990 to many Western and other countries. Their first solo exhibition abroad launched international careers that span to the present day, such as those of the veteran artists *Xu Bing* (1955), *Gu Wenda* (1955), *Cai Guoqiang* (1957), *Liu Dan* (1953), *Wang Tiande* (1960), *Wang Dongling* (1945), *Wang Jiecheng* (1957), *Li Huayi* (1948), *Qiu Zhijie* (1969), *Qin Feng* (1961), *Feng Mengbo* (1966), *Liu Fenghua* (1956), and *Chen Zhen* (1955-2000).

The art produced outside of China by Chinese artists results from a reflection on Chinese cultural, artistic, and traditional practices, such as calligraphy, ink painting, landscape painting, and sculpture. Chinese artists achieve important recognition on the international art stage with their artworks.

"In the year 1993, as part of the 45th Venice Biennale,^{IV} 'Passaggio an Oriente' (Passage to the Orient)^V marked one of the first appearances of Chinese contemporary art on the international art stage, presenting fourteen Chinese artists."^{VI} (Jiang Jiehong).^{VI}

At the beginning of the twenty-first century in China, rapid changes occurred in the art scene, particularly in cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, and other major cities, which began investing in the construction of world-class government and private museums to support government and private organizations. At the same time, several private galleries, art districts, art centers, art institutes, and art fairs started to function. Additionally, international art biennales, including the *Shanghai Biennale* (1996), *Chengdu Biennale* (2001), the *Beijing International Art Biennale* (2002), and later the *Yinchuan Biennale* (2016), and others, have taken place since then. On the other hand, the beginning of international art fairs in major cities in China, such as *Art 021* in Shanghai (2013), *Jing Art* in Beijing (2018), and others. All the developments in the art sector changed the art scene in China and put China on the world map. Chinese contemporary art creations have become a vibrant and dynamic field that captures the rapidly ongoing transformation of Chinese culture and its place in the international context.

The contemporary Chinese art scenario is a site of dynamic and complex dialogue, where the tension between a rapidly globalizing world and deeply rooted cultural heritage becomes a source of creativity. The young generation of artists, in particular, who came of age during China's economic rise and technological revolution, have emerged as key drivers of this conversation. This research paper begins by arguing that for emerging Chinese artists, 'tradition' is not a static, fixed truth stored in a museum, but rather a dynamic and open repository for experimentation. It is this cultural resonance that resonates in their (emerging artist) works, sometimes explicit, sometimes subtle, and sometimes contradictory. This resonance manifests itself in diverse forms: the reinvention of the aesthetic and philosophical underpinnings of classical Chinese paintings in various media, the reinterpretation of ancient folklore and symbols in modern contexts, and the revival of abstract concepts from poetry and calligraphy through contemporary media.

This research paper explores the selected emerging Chinese artists, including *Wang Yiya*, *Cai Yiming*, and *Jiang Yifan*, and how their artworks became significant in the contemporary Chinese art scenario in terms of their traditional and cultural visual language and narration. The research paper shows that the re-appropriation of cultural heritage and traditional resonance by emerging Chinese artists is not merely an aesthetic exercise. It is a cultural conversation between China's collective memory and its vision of the future, where history continues to resonate in the present as a living, debatable, and creative force. The artwork of *Wang Yiya*, *Cai Yiming*, and *Jiang Yifan* is proof that the most powerful way to preserve tradition is to question it and redefine it in a new context.

Artist and Analysis of Key Artworks: -

This research paper examines and investigates the artwork of three emerging Chinese artists, including *Wang Yiya*, *Cai Yiming*, and *Jiang Yifan*, and explores their creative practices and artistic approaches. These artists were born in 1985-95, are influenced by Chinese social changes, and their work connects with personal experiences and social fabric. Their work uses both traditional and new media, presenting a unique art style of individuality, and these artists are establishing contemporary Chinese art in the global conversation.

WANG YIYA (王依雅)

Wang Yiya is an emerging Chinese artist who showcased her artworks at *Art Basel Hong Kong*^{VII} in 2024. In 2025, she held her solo exhibition at the prestigious art museum in China, the *National Art Museum of China* in Beijing. Her creations primarily feature meticulous *gong bi* (工笔)^{VIII} painting on *silk*. *Wang Yiya* possesses a strong awareness of women and life. Her work series 'Bloom to Demis' explores women's social roles and responsibilities, displaying a unique style. In her paintings, she depicts elaborately adorned *Song-style*^{IX} (960-1279) crowns amid flourishing flowers, contrasting sharply with the blank silhouettes of figures, creating intensely striking visual sentiments. The floral shapes surge upwards and gracefully unfurl, deeply conveying the splendor of life, as well as the helplessness of its eventual withering and fading.

Wang Yiya was born in 1989 in Zhejiang Province, China. She completed her Bachelor's and Master's degrees from the Department of 'Traditional Chinese Painting' of the *Central Academy of Fine Arts (CAFA)*, Beijing, China, in 2009 and 2013, respectively. She received her PhD (Doctoral Degree) from the Department of 'Chinese Painting', *China Academy of Art (CAA)*, Hangzhou, China, in 2016. Currently, she is a faculty member of the *China Academy of Art*, Hangzhou. Her solo painting project was held at the *Convention and Exhibition Centre, Art Basel, Hong Kong* in 2024, and her solo exhibition titled *Prosperity and Illusion, The Crown of the Empress of Song Dynasty* at *Daqian Art Gallery* in Beijing, China in 2021, and *In Blooming Splendor* in the *National Art Museum of China (NAMOC)*, Beijing, 2025.

She has actively exhibited and participated in numerous art exhibitions in different cities in China, such as Shanghai, Beijing, Hangzhou, Nanjing, Shenzhen, Suzhou, Shaoxing, Tainan, and Dalian. Along with these exhibitions, her work was exhibited in foreign countries, including the USA, Italy, Japan, and Singapore. She has received several scholarships and awards, such as the *Zhejiang Provincial Academic Scholarship* in 2015, and the *Scholarship of the Central Academy of Fine Arts* in 2004 and 2008. Her works have been in the collections of various museums and galleries, including the Museum of the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing, Yuan Dian Art Museum, Hong Art Museum, and Haisi Art Center, Xiamen. *Wang Yiya* lives and works in Hangzhou, Zhejiang, China.

Analysis of Key Artworks: -

Starting from the objects and texts in Chinese art history, artist *Wang Yiya* focuses on expressing the individual reflecting on life and cultural spirit. She reconstructs visual elements such as crowns, court ladies, flowers, a celestial pavilion, and others, presenting a Chinese female space with transcendent sensory characteristics. *Wang Yiya's* paintings are filled with a sense of lush, clustered flowers, with pavilions and towers partially hidden among them, where fairies float around and reside. It can truly be called a paradise of heavenly sceneries, which are wonderful and enchanting, a dream-like, magical, and extraordinary world beyond ordinary life.

'QUEEN'S CROWN, ORNATE LETTER':

In the work titled *Queen's Crown, Ornate Letter*, *Wang Yiya* painted a lavish and dazzling queen's crown. It presents personal feelings, emotions, and extends to the nostalgia for the passing of times, and sustenance of distant dreams of the wife in ancient China. The term *Inscribed Brocade* can be understood as a brocade (embroidered)

letter, words woven on the silk fabric, generally referring to the luxurious letter on behalf of love that represents lovesickness. In ancient times in China, it mostly referred to a wife's thoughts for her husband.

In this work, the striking vermilion, cyan, and gold colours create an auspicious and gorgeous wedding ceremony, and ladies are drinking, playing, and strolling among the flowers, creating several visuals of daily life. At that time, it was ordinary, and the passing years contained the sincerest feelings and the most enthusiastic expectations of life. (Figures 1-I, II).



Figure 1-I, Artist: Wang Yiya, Title: Queen's Crown, Ornate Letter, Medium: Ink and Colour on Silk, Size: 204x158 cm, Year: 2024, Source: Artist.



Figure 1-II, Artist: Wang Yiya, Title: Queen's Crown, Ornate Letter (Details), Medium: Ink and Colour on Silk, Size: 204x158 cm, Year: 2024, Source: Artist.

‘SPRING COMES TO THE COURTYARD’:

In the work titled *Spring Comes to the Courtyard*, the artist used ancient silk as the surface medium, quietly integrating subtle and strange surreal imagination within a calm and restrained classic tone. Artist Wang Yiya skilfully combined motifs of ladies, courtyard, and luxuriant flowers, narrating their stories through delicate and fine brushstrokes. According to Wang Yiya, the work titled *Spring Comes to the Courtyard*, she explains, “The calm atmosphere of the Song Dynasty, and silk is infused with bizarre and subtle surreal imagination. The clever combination of ladies, courtyards, and flowers reveals the praise of the poetic life of ancient ladies in the detailed telling. At that time, it was just ordinary, and everyday trivialities became timeless here. The beauty of life itself returns.” The classical aesthetics and surreal sensibility harmoniously converge, collectively evoking a return to the essence of everyday beauty. (Figure 2).



Figure 2, Artist: Wang Yiya, Title: Spring Comes to the Courtyard, Medium: Ink and Colour on Silk, Size: 47x67 cm, Year: 2020, Source: Artist.

‘LIVING IN PEACE ON THE WATER’:

In the work titled *Living in Peace on the Water*, all the contents of the human chapter descend and fall on the water, which means the simplicity of the human spirit. However, the joy is undiminished and bustling, and the lanterns at night add to the atmosphere of fireworks in the mundane, full of interesting details of life, and a nostalgic nostalgia. (Figure 3).



Figure 3, Artist: Wang Yiya, Title: Living in Peace on The Water, Medium: Ink and Colour on Silk, Size: 69x138 cm, Year: 2019, Source: Artist.

‘LIVING SAFELY ON THE WATER-QINGXU MANSION’:

The work titled *Living Safely on The Water-Qingxu Mansion*, ‘Qingxu Mansion’ is a mixed transition of people and gods, and the huge ships float slowly, carrying people's yearnings, and there seems to be no experience on the other side. Heaven and water have their vitality, vigor, and inclusion. The symbolic architecture embodied in vast, slow, and flowing ships functions not merely as a physical shelter but serves as a vital instrument of collective human will, a dynamic inspiration for which there is no definite empirical other shore. The narrative replaces traditional dualism, keeping the mansion in an essential continuity, where both heaven and water are filled with unique vitality. (Figure 4).



Figure 4, Artist: Wang Yiya, Title: Living Safely on the Water-Qingxu Mansion, Medium: Ink and Colour on Silk, Size: 69x138 cm, Year: 2019, Source: Artist.

‘SHANGLIN GARDEN’:

The work interpreting the subject of the grandeur of *Shanglin Garden* strategically employs indirect symbols to express the classical ideals of leisurely and contemplative wandering. The dignified presence of the depicted female image and the display of her ornate attire symbolize the garden’s cultivated beauty and refined ambiance, rather than its physical dimensions. From an aesthetic perspective, composition makes extensive use of negative space, invites viewers to imagine and project the invisible garden environment, and engages them in the participatory act of reconstruction. The colour composition is intentionally in an ancient style, evoking a sense of historical layers and temporal distance. The geometrical design encapsulates sacred and worldly qualities, blending the insightful serenity of ‘Bodhisattva’ iconography with natural human grace. (Figure 5).



Figure 5, Artist: Wang Yiya, Title: Shanglin Garden, Medium: Ink and Colour on Silk, Size: 33x66 cm, Year: 2018, Source: Artist.

‘SPLENDID GARDEN’:

Wang Yiya explains the work titled *Splendid Garden*, and she says, “the dream residence is surrounded by flowers, the gentle and quiet hometown, the women shuttle through the corridor, meditate on the pavilion, and read poetry and books in the warm pavilion. A delicate scene at dusk, with a detached state of mind on top of the slightest fireworks, is fascinating.” (Figure 6).



Figure 6, Artist: Wang Yiya, Title: Splendid Garden, Medium: Ink and Colour on Silk, Size: 44x66.5 cm, Year: 2018, Source: Artist.

In the year 2024, artist Wang Yiya participated in the prestigious international art fair, Art Basel, Hong Kong, where she showcased her large-scale work titled *Queen’s Crown, Ornate Letter*.

The art studio of Wang Yiya is located in the capital city of Hangzhou in Zhejiang province, China. Her studio is the place for creativity and tranquility. She presents a unique blend of traditional Chinese aesthetic and classical visual language.

CAI YIMING (蔡逸鸣)

Cai Yiming is a professional printmaking artist who was born in 1987 in Shanghai, China. He has done his Bachelor’s, Master’s, and PhD degrees from the *School of Printmaking, China Academy of Art*^X, Hangzhou, Zhejiang, China, in 2009, 2012, and 2022, respectively. He is a member of The Shanghai Artist Association, The Zhejiang Printmakers Association, and The Zhejiang Watercolor Painters Association. He has more than 10 years of teaching experience. He is currently a lecturer at the *China Academy of Art*, Hangzhou, China.

Cai Yiming's works have been exhibited at several provincial and national levels in prestigious museums and art galleries, and his works have been collected by multiple art galleries, museums, and art institutions such as the Suzhou Museum, Liu Haisu Art Museum^{XI}, Migyuan Cultural Art Centre, Xuyuan Art Museum, Himalayan Art Museum^{XII}, Guanshan Yue Art Museum^{XIII}, Shanghai Putuo District Art Museum, and The Art Museum of China Academy of Art.^{XIV}

He visited different countries, including the Netherlands, Italy, and Pakistan, for his artistic research and studies. He has served as an organizational committee member and assistant director of the party branch of the Basic Department of the Shanghai Design College and China Academy of Arts (2015-2018).

Cai Yiming is also actively involved in writing research papers, and several of his research papers have been published in various reputable publications. His publication includes one author, one deputy editor-in-chief of a textbook, and four textbook editors. His theoretical achievements were published in four national-level core journals and eight provincial-level core journals. He worked as an editor-in-chief and editorial member for many textbooks in China. Cai Yiming has led one provincial-level creative project and one department-level social science project, and participated in two provincial-level social science projects and two department-level educational reform projects as well.

Cai Yiming engaged in the theory and practice of visual culture, and his works involved printmaking, easel painting, and video.

“(No) one color is ever superimposed on another, but at most appears in the medium of another color. And even that is often difficult to determine, so that in principle it is often impossible to say in many paintings whether a color is on top or underneath.” (Walter Benjamin).^{XV}

“Every person, whether they are great or ordinary, successful or disappointed, will have their own identity, and each identity has its interpersonal circle, that is, what we call things like people in groups. In the pursuit of their desires for the interests of different circles, the concepts of circles, and their different identities, there is only a veil between confusion and awakening. What is the essence of life may only be understood by us in the repetition of these pursuits.” (Cai Yiming).

Analysis of Key Artworks: -

Emerging artist *Cai Yiming* explores the theme of identity, cultural change, memory, and geopolitical influences through the medium of printmaking, including *lithography* and *etching*. His print blends historical and modern images, cultural traditional symbols, and urban modern elements into a subtle and thoughtful visual vocabulary. His prints display a blend of technical proficiency and deep conceptual concept. Cai Yiming's printmaking works represent a significant voice in contemporary Chinese art.

‘INNER WORLD VIEW’:

Cai Yiming describes the series of works titled *Inner World View* (Figures 7-I, II, III), which “revolves around overall appearance and is the graphical interpretation of the artist's personal worldview based on the intangible images of *Xumi Mountain*. Conceptually presenting the vastness of the world and the subtleties of personal life in terms of temporal and spatial relationships, as well as the worldliness of life. Formally, it combines various maps in the form of playable square stones, and presents the illusion of ‘mustard sumi’ with ultra-realistic painting techniques, and is based on the construction logic of ‘time’ and ‘space’ in Buddhism. I attempt to recombine the world under public cognition with the reality within reach, forming an image interpretation of Mustard Seed Xumi.” (Cai Yiming).

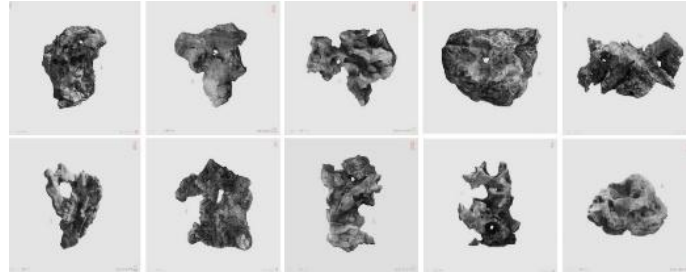


Figure 7-I, Artist: Cai Yiming, Title: 'Inner World View' Series, Medium: Lithograph, Size: 10 Panels (Each: 55x55 cm), Year: 2021-24, Source: Artist.

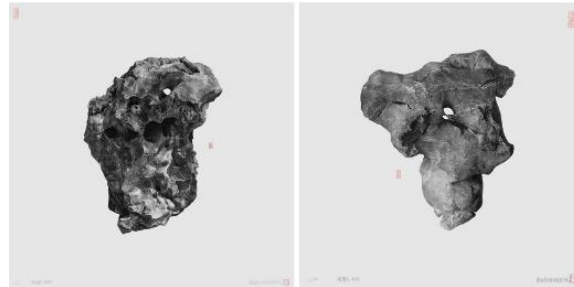


Figure 7-II, Artist: Cai Yiming, Title: 'Inner World View' Series, Medium: Lithograph, Size: 2 Panels (Each: 55x55 cm), Year: 2021-24, Source: Artist.



Figure 7-III, Artist: Cai Yiming, Title: Inner World View: Germany, Medium: Lithograph, Size: 55x55 cm, Year: 2021-24, Source: Artist.

The series of works *Inner World View* visually interprets the artist's personal cosmic vision through the Buddhist metaphor of Mount Xumi. By combining vast geopolitical maps with miniature, playable stone forms, it explores the profound connection between infinite space, fleeting time, and the intimate scale of individual life through a realistic approach. (Figures 7-I, II, III).

‘REINCARNATIONS-ALL FLESH’:

In the work titled *Reincarnations-All Flesh*, Cai Yiming describes and says, “I try to arrange the religions and streams in the form of wooden movable type, that is, the various occupations and various identities of the Buddha and the equality of all beings. While it is true that the names of the various identities have changed over time, the names themselves and those who were at the time and in their ways are eternal.” (Figure 8).

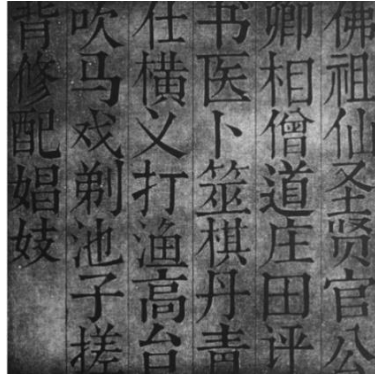


Figure 8, Artist: Cai Yiming, Title: Reincarnations-All Flesh, Medium: Etching, Size: 45x45 cm, Year: 2011, Source: Artist.

Chinese printmaker Cai Yiming's work titled *Reincarnations-All Flesh*, which was created in 2011, measures 45x45 cm. The work employs the intricate medium of engraving to carefully depict various identities of the Buddha and the equality of all beings through the Chinese characters. This piece of work functions as a meditative visual essay on permanence within changes, examining how spiritual continuity is maintained through evolving cultural and historical media. (Figure 8).

'REINCARNATIONS-RELATIVE TIME':

In the work titled *Reincarnations-Relative Time*, Cai Yiming says that "the eternity of the Buddha is not incompatible with the infinite inheritance of humans, although life is short. The Buddhist plant *dipterocarp*^{XVI} also alludes to the image of life in the world, just like the cycle of life that you sing and I appear. The disordered cycle of getting or getting is the same thing, to reveal the insignificance of our actions in the face of the cycle of life." (Figure 9).



Figure 9, Artist: Cai Yiming, Title: Reincarnations-Relative Time, Medium: Etching, Size: 45x45 cm, Year: 2011, Source: Artist.

Cai Yiming is a practicing artist as well as a teacher in the printmaking department at the China Academy of Art, Hangzhou, one of the finest art institutes in China. After teaching, he uses his time to create work in his studio. He tries various kinds of art media and materials for his creative practices. (Figure 10).



Figure 10, Cai Yiming in his studio in Hangzhou, Zhejiang, China, Source: Artist.

JIANG YIFAN (姜怡帆)

Jiang Yifan is an emerging Chinese artist who was born in a city called Korla in Xinjiang (the northwest part of China) in the year 1992. She was raised by her mother, and she started drawing when she was a child. Jiang Yifan completed her Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Chinese painting from the *School of Art, Renmin University*^{xvii}, in Beijing, China, from 2013 to 2020, and later she went to London for advanced study in painting (MA in Painting) at the *Royal College of Art*^{xviii}, UK (2023-2024).

Her works have been exhibited in different places in China and also abroad. She has held several solo exhibitions in Beijing and Shanghai.

Jiang Yifan's works are personal and contemporary translations of the traditional Chinese painting language, in which she tries to paint her personal experiences and emotional understanding through the medium of colours and ink on silk, and presents contemporary dramatic narratives based on the traditional aesthetic. During her creative practice, she tries to reshape the lines, forms, and proportions of the figures to create a new visual effect that makes the images particularly mysterious. Her brushes and lines become simple, curved, and soft, which seems so decent.

By using the natural elements that are indispensable in traditional Chinese painting, such as mountains, rivers, and seas. She expresses her desire to evolve within a framework based on the past and local culture. Her paintings dwell in reconstructing narratives related to cultural memories and the abstraction of visual images.

Through the reappearance of traditional Chinese painting elements, myths, and literary metaphors, Jiang Yifan draws from the collective unconscious and creates an immersive spectacle on the edge of dreams. She has been fascinated by the possibilities of symbols; extractions of daily objects and memory figures, and theatrical stage perspective, which constitutes a blurred borderline between illusion and reality. Jiang Yifan lives and works between Beijing, China, and London, UK.

Analysis of Key Artworks: -

The artistic practice of *Jiang Yifan* engages in critical dialogue with traditional Chinese painting. The argument establishes that the artist Jiang Yifan's works function as a personal and contemporary translation of classical and aesthetic visual language. Her creative process involves the deliberate reconstruction of formal traditions; she reshapes forms, lines, and proportion to create a distinctive, enigmatic visuality characterized by simple, gentle, and curvilinear brushwork. This artistic and stylistic intervention serves a dual purpose. Technically, it is achieved through the use of conventional art media such as ink and colour on silk, and maintaining a tangible connection to the heritage. Conceptually, however, this adopted vocabulary is employed to articulate contemporary dramatic visual narrative and to express personal experiences and emotional states.

Jiang Yifan's artistic practice is not an imitation; it is a transformative reshaping, using the aesthetic framework of the past to construct a distinctive, contemporary visual space for introspection and narrativity.

‘MOMENT OF FANTANCY: THE PEONY PAVILION’:

Jiang Yifan explains and talks about the concept behind the work titled *Moment of Fantasy; The Peony Pavilion*, and she describes, “this painting is inspired by a Chinese play called *The Peony Pavilion*^{xix} from the *Ming Dynasty* (1368-1644).^{xx} In this play, an official's daughter falls in love with the man of his dreams and dies of a broken heart. Aiming to find her real-life lover, she returns to the earthly world and eventually comes back to life. The water background indicates that this story unfolds due to an imaginary dream, and the objects in each mirror are a hint of the identity of the characters in the story. The Chinese text also appears as a symbol whose content is an old Chinese saying that one is not in control of one's life, whether it is birth or death. I wanted this phrase to appear in this painting to express the same sentiment about the young girl in this story, whose fate is not under her control.” (Figure 11).



Figure 11, Artist: Jiang Yifan, Title: Moment of Fantancy; The Peony Pavilion, Medium: Ink and Acrylic Colour on Silk, Size: 55x47 cm, Year: 2022, Source: Artist.

‘DRIFTING FLOWERS’:

Jiang Yifan describes her creative practice and says, “I like to use the drapery a lot. First of all, it creates a sense of unreality, which is contradictory to the subject’s natural landscape scenes, but when combined with them, it can hint at the unreality in the setting of the landscape scenes. You can see that in the paintings; I deliberately designed the placement of trees and stones into geometric shapes. The early paintings of mankind were relatively general, did not pursue realism, and even had some symbolism. I like this state of painting. Secondly, the curtain is soft when it separates the space, it creates a touch of ambiguity and a peeping atmosphere while obscuring. Chinese people like to separate private spaces. The cascading drapery is also similar to the mountains and rivers in landscape paintings.” (Jiang Yifan).

The work titled *Drifting Flowers*, created with Chinese ink and acrylic colour on silk, presents a modern reinterpretation of classical Chinese traditions. An image of a female who is sitting on a horse, trees, and waves of a river, is created in the classical Chinese painting style. The delicate and dynamic lines, forms, and proportions create a mysterious, dream-like atmosphere. The use of a red curtain (drapery) in the background gives the painting a dramatic, supernatural appearance, which seems like a traditional folk scene. This effect is enhanced by the use of vibrant acrylic colours. This piece of work is successfully coordinated between cultural memory and contemporary vision. (Figure 12).



Figure 12, Artist: Jiang Yifan, Title: Drifting Flowers, Medium: Ink and Acrylic Colour on Silk, Size: 45x35 cm, Year: 2021, Source: Artist.

‘SWAN’:

Jiang Yifan’s brushes and lines become simple, curved, and soft. The figures in her painting are rounded and delicate. In traditional Chinese painting, by using essential natural elements such as rivers, mountains, and seas, artists express their desire for continuous personal development within a framework rooted in the past and local culture. The work titled *Swan* presents a fascinating, surreal dialogue between the Eastern tradition and

contemporary displacement. The work was created with *Chinese ink* and *acrylic colour* on *silk*. A central motif, a swan seated on a large sofa, is depicted with the expressive, minimal brushwork of Chinese bird and flower painting. This work interprets classical elements not through their repetition, but through an extraordinary parallel substitution, challenging their symbolic permanence and creating a contemporary mood of elegant solitude in an unstable world. (Figure 13).



Figure 13, Artist: Jiang Yifan, Title: Swan, Medium: Ink and Acrylic Colour on Silk, Size: 16x21 cm, Year: 2020, Source: Artist.

‘THEATER; THE GODDESS OF THE RIVER LUO’:

Jiang Yifan explains that the series of *Theater* works is the “inspiration for this series of paintings, which came from the painting *The Goddess of the River Luo* from the *Wei and Jin dynasties*^{XXI} (220-420). In which the mountains and rivers are placed in front of the figures and close to the edges of the painting, in such a way that the composition is like a stage set, and I feel that the past and the present magically appear together in this ancient painting. Inspired by it, I began this series titled *Theater*. I have tried to create a dreamy, transcendental surrealism based on the iconography of traditional painting that I felt when I viewed this painting.” (Figure 14).



Figure 14, Artist: Jiang Yifan, Title: Theater; The Goddess of the River Luo, Medium: Ink and Acrylic Colour on Silk, Size: 30x40 cm, Year: 2019, Source: Artist.

‘ROOM’:

In the work series titled *Room*, Jiang Yifan explains that “this series is concerned with the private feelings of the enclosed public space. Because of my recent working experience in an art gallery, I have been in an enclosed white box space for a long time. The state of people in this space is the coexistence of coldness and warmth, with the light source indicating the passage of time. In this series of paintings, I have experimented with other materials on silk, such as acrylic colour and pencil, and also created and kept some traces of painting that should not be present in traditional techniques, trying to broaden the possibilities of expression.” (Figure 15).



Figure 15, Artist: Jiang Yifan, Title: 'Room' Series, Medium: Ink and Acrylic Colour on Silk, Size: 46x57 cm, Year: 2019, Source: Artist.

Jiang Yifan explains the use of *silk* in her creative practice, “In my undergraduate and previous educational experiences, I have been exposed to a variety of painting materials and techniques. However, the ‘sense of stability’ that ‘silk’ materials can provide me when I am creating the paintings, as well as the method and process of the painting, and the final presentation effect, can give me a strong sense of attachment, and I feel that using silk is a natural choice. During the creation, the part of the line drawing can only be added, but not deleted, so it is necessary to have a relatively certain line drawing first. The colour part is dyed layer by layer, so there is more space for adjustment, and some adjustments and deliberations can be made at the stage of dyeing the ink and colour. This is my favorite state of painting, which I prefer. There will be a very definite moment when the painting is complete. But there is always a time when you can’t find a satisfying moment, which is why there are a lot of unfinished or half-completed sketches. Silk is suitable for subtle variations, rich details, and antiques, and silk with colour will make the colour difference value less, the saturation will be lower, and you will need to spend more time to see the colour change. At the same time, because the visual experience caused by the overall tone is more subtle and restrained, it is closer to the overall personality tendency of the painting. It may also be a material language that can represent a national and cultural background. This subconsciously gives me a strong sense of identity, and I may feel confident enough when working with this material.” (Jiang Yifan).

Critical Analysis: -

The research paper site is in China, and based on the principal cultural contexts, three emerging Chinese artists are chosen as the research subjects. This research paper indicates the selected artists' artworks' impact on the present state of visual art in China and analyzes the execution of Chinese cultural uniqueness with respect to creative ideas. The research paper examines the artwork of emerging Chinese artists, including *Wang Yiya*, *Cai Yiming*, and *Jiang Yifan*, and highlights the cultural traditional resonance in their artworks, as well as presents an argument for the role of the selected visual artists who are contributing to the development of professional art practitioners in modern China, with cultural and conceptual essence. The work of art created by these emerging artists generates a new perspective through cultural identity, technical ability, and experimentation.

Conclusion: -

This research paper examines the contribution of emerging Chinese visual artists to the present state of art and how effectively they contribute to taking cultural visions and aesthetics into account in their art practice. The research paper also emphasizes the importance of aesthetics in contemporary art practices in China, as well as its impact on visual narratives.

The research paper concludes that elements of cultural heritage and tradition, whether classical aesthetics, philosophical underpinnings, and traditional and folk symbols, serve as the visual cultural vocabulary for these artists, *Wang Yiya*, *Cai Yiming*, and *Jiang Yifan*. The significance of these artists' endeavors lies not merely in aesthetic accomplishments but in the way these artists redefine the very nature and cultural continuity. These artists demonstrate that in a living culture, the truest preservation of heritage is found in its continuous reinterpretation and the meaningful questions it provokes.

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Notes: -

^I The most detailed account of this art movement is provided in Gao Minglu, 'Zhongguo Dangdai Meishushi (Contemporary Chinese Art) 1985-1986', (Shanghai People's Publishing House, Shanghai, 1991).

^{II} *Wu Hung* (1955) is a director of the centre for the Art of East Asia at the University of Chicago. He has published widely on both traditional and contemporary Chinese art (<https://arthistory.uchicago.edu/faculty/profiles/wu-hung>).

^{III} *Dr. Lian Duan* is a senior lecturer at Concordia University, Montreal, Canada. (<https://www.concordia.ca/faculty/lian-duan.html>).

^{IV} *Venice Biennale* is a prestigious international exhibition, showcasing visual arts, architecture, cinema, dance, music, and theatre which happens every two years. It started in the year 1895 in Venice. (<https://www.labiennale.org/en>).

^V *Passaggio an Oriente* (Passage to the Orient), The 45th Venice Biennale (14 June-10 October 1993) was curated by *Achille Bonito Oliva* with *Helena Kontova*. As an earlier example, *Gu Dexin*, *Huang Yongping*, and *Yang Jiechang* participated in this international exhibition.

^{VI} *Jiang Jiehong* is a head of research at the School of Art, and director of the centre for Chinese Visual Art at Birmingham City University, UK.

^{VII} *Art Basel Hong Kong* is one of the most significant and prestigious international art fairs that is held every year in Hong Kong. (<https://www.artbasel.com>).

^{VIII} *Gong bi* (工笔) A traditional Chinese painting technique featuring fine brushwork and close attention to the details.

^{IX} *Song Dynasty* (960-1279 AD) was one of the brilliant art and cultural epochs during that time.

^X *China Academy of Art* (CAA) was founded in the year 1928 (*National Academy of Art*) as the first art academy with complete academic programs in China. CAA is jointly established by the Zhejiang Provincial Government, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. CAA is situated in Hangzhou (the capital city of Zhejiang province) and is known as a first-class art academic institution in China. (<https://en.caa.edu.cn/index.htm>).

^{XI} *Liu Haisu Art Museum* (1995) is a Shanghai-based multi-functional institution integrating collections, exhibitions, academic research, and cross-cultural exchange. The Museum opened to the public in the year 1995.

^{XII} *Himalayan Art Museum*, the former name 'Zendai Museum of Modern Art', was established by the Shanghai Zendai group in Shanghai, China.

^{XIII} *Guanshan Yue Art Museum* (1997) is located in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, China. The museum was officially opened in the year 1997.

^{XIV} The *Art Museum of China Academy of Arts* is located near to the world heritage *Westlake* in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, China. The museum is an important benchmark in China's art and cultural circles.

^{xv} *Walter Benjamin* (1892-1940) was one of the 20th century's most important intellectuals, a philosopher and literary critic from Germany.

^{xvi} The *Dipterocarp* tree is considered sacred. It is revered in East Asian Buddhism as a sacred symbol that is related to the birth of Buddha.

^{xvii} *School of Art, Renmin University of China* (RUC), Art Education at Renmin University of China started as 'Shangbei Public School' in the year 1937, and it underwent many stages of development with the name changed, in 1999, it was rebuilt as *Xu Beihong School of Arts, Renmin University of China*, and in 2008, it was renamed to *School of Art, Renmin University of China*. (http://art.ruc.edu.cn/English/Home/About_Us.htm).

^{xviii} *Royal College of Art (RCA)* is a world-famous and influential institute of art and design which is located in London, United Kingdom. The Royal College of Art was founded in 1837 as the *Government School of Design* and became the *Royal College of Art* in 1896. (<https://www.rca.ac.uk>).

^{xix} The *Peony Pavilion* is one of the Chinese classics written in 1598 by *Tang Xianzu* (1550-1617) in the *Ming Dynasty* (1368-1644). It is a romantic masterpiece in Chinese opera history.

^{xx} The *Ming Dynasty*, a Chinese dynasty that lasted from 1368 to 1644, and provided an interval of native Chinese rule between eras of Mongol and Manchu dominance, respectively. During the Ming period, China exerted immense cultural and political influence on East Asia and Turks to the west, as well as on Vietnam and Myanmar to the south. (<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Ming-dynasty-Chinese-history>).

^{xxi} *Wei and Jin Dynasties*; The *Wei Dynasty* (386-534/535) is the longest-lived and most powerful northern Chinese dynasty that existed before the reunification of China under the Sui and Tang dynasties. The *Jin dynasty* or *Chin dynasty* (265-420) comprises two distinct phases; the Xi (Western) from 265-316/317 and Dong (Eastern) 317-420. (www.britannica.com).

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