

The Selection of Subjects in Military-themed Ink Wash Figure Paintings Since the Founding of New China

Ziyang Lin

The Second Experimental School Of Jilin Province, Changchun, Jilin, 130012, China

ABSTRACT

As a unique form of artistic expression, military-themed art creation has distinctive characteristics and rules in subject selection. From the exhibitions held by the Chinese Artists Association in recent years, military-themed art creation has made a leap forward in the selection of themes. This article will analyze the selection of three themes: military daily life themes, military technology and aerospace themes, and military scene themes.

KEYWORDS

Artistic creation; Military themes; Ink figure painting

1 Themes of Soldiers' Daily Lives

Artistic creation that departs from the times and practices will ultimately become like a rootless duckweed or a castle in the air. For a long time, the reason why military-themed ink wash figure painting has become an "important stronghold" of Chinese realistic art is precisely due to the numerous military painters who have rooted themselves in the army, delving into the frontline to record the demeanor of soldiers with their brushes. The birth of these outstanding military-themed ink wash figure paintings is fundamentally rooted in the vivid practice of China's strong military dream process. Since the strong military thought was proposed in the new era, the career of military-themed ink wash figure painting in China has undergone leapfrog development, and the topics of military-themed ink wash figure painting have entered a new historical stage. endowing our military with a new spiritual temperament of confidence, self-improvement, courage to fight, and perseverance. Since then, the core focus of a large number of military-themed ink wash figure paintings has gradually shifted from merely depicting grand scenes and individual heroic deeds to portraying the daily struggles, teamwork, and life scenes of soldiers. In creation, if military-themed ink wash figure painting departs from the times and practices, it will ultimately become like a rootless duckweed or a castle in the air. The reason why military-themed ink wash figure painting has become an "important stronghold" of Chinese realistic art is indeed due to the numerous military painters who have rooted themselves in the army, immersing themselves in the frontline to record the demeanor of soldiers. Since the founding of New China, military-themed ink wash figure painters have gone deep into the troops to feel the changes in the army, actively reflecting the vigorous development and appearance of soldiers in different eras, fully showcasing the spiritual height and humanistic value of soldiers, while incorporating more humanistic care and philosophical reflection. For example, Zhao Xiaojian's "Unity and Cooperation" (Figure 1) depicts a group of soldiers in a mountain climbing training scene, showcasing their strong physique, reflecting the noble artistic sentiment of contemporary literary and artistic workers. Fang Yudong and Fang Yuzhu's "Joint Effort" (Figure 2) selects a group of soldiers engaged in a tug-of-war competition, embodying the noble character and indomitable spirit of soldiers. Additionally, a series of excellent works such as Zhao Xuebao and Shi Chunhong's "Marching Forward," Chen Siyu and Yu Miao's "Steel Tempered by Flame," and Zhang Hao's "Time in Training" all use the daily training of soldiers as their theme, portraying soldiers as vivid and relatable figures. The emergence of these outstanding military-themed ink wash figure paintings is rooted in the vivid practice of China's strong military dream process while also showcasing the humanistic feelings under military themes since the founding of New China.



Figure 1 Zhao Xiaojian "Unity and Cooperation" Paper Color
160cmx216cm ,2024



Figure 2 Fang Yudong, Fang Yuzhu "Synergy" Paper Color
200cmx150cm, 2021

2 Military Technology and Aerospace Theme

The precise depiction of these technological elements serves not only as vivid cultivation of the audience's scientific awareness, but also as concrete manifestation of the concept that technology constitutes primary combat capability in strengthening the military. When science and technology art resonates innovatively with military-themed artworks, it ignites not merely cultural influence, but more profoundly, a nation's strategic thinking and innovative confidence oriented toward the future. Chen Lin's "Victory in Battle" (Figure 3) features multiple soldiers as the central focus, with naval and air forces forming the backdrop, depicting the seamless coordination among China's land, naval, and air forces. The composition employs dense ink tones and rigorous modeling, capturing the essence of contemporary military figures while demonstrating China's enhanced military capabilities in recent years, thereby embodying national strength.

Sun Chunlong and Zhang Yuanyuan's "Chasing Dreams in Space" (Figure 4) adopts an innovative approach, using the boneless technique to portray an astronaut standing imposingly at the center of the composition. The layered accumulation of ink creates an ethereal and vast aesthetic, imbuing the work with futuristic technological resonance. This piece exemplifies how ink artistry evolves with the times, marking a new milestone for military-themed ink figure painting. Furthermore, works such as Lian Yawei's "Guardians of the Blue Sky," Sui Rongyu's "Dreaming of Exploring the Wilderness," Han Xuezhong's "China's First Female Astronaut Liu Yang Flying into Space," and Fan Chen's "A Moment in Space" are imbued with a futuristic sense infused with modern technological elements, showcasing the advanced weaponry and equipment of military personnel as well as China's strength.



Figure 3 Zhao Xiaojian "Solidarity and Cooperation" Ink and color on paper 160x216cm ,2024

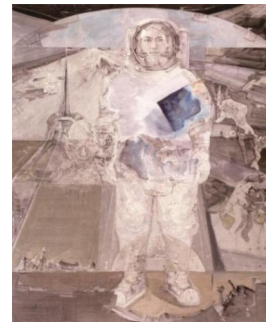


Figure 4 Fang Yudong, Fang Yuzhu "Joint Efforts" Ink and color on paper 200cmx150cm ,2021

3 Depicting Military Scene Themes

Nowadays, peaceful development has become the theme of the Chinese era, and the people stay away from the military, but the Chinese people have never forgotten history. Since the founding of New China, military-themed ink and wash figure paintings have engraved national memory in the form of artistic expression, which is not only the memory of the ancestors, but also the desire for peace. The depiction of military scenes by military-themed ink figure painters is by no means a simple presentation of violence and destruction, but reveals the cruel nature of military affairs through artistic language, conveys profound thoughts on human nature, and makes viewers feel the cruelty of military affairs and the preciousness of peace. Today's military paintings are no longer limited to directly reproducing grand military scenes, but pay more attention to expressing the impact of military on individual destiny through detailed depiction, atmosphere creation and psychological description. Whether it is the smoke-filled front line or the silent and solemn post-war scenes, military-themed paintings are always based on the spirit of realism, and complete the profound writing of military memories in the balance of artistry and ideology. For example, Wu Jiang's "Congratulations on Victory", Liu Jian; Huang Jun; Hua Jun's "Twenty-Seventh Storm", Li Xiangpeng's "Dawn - Bloody Battle in Siping", Wang Dongfang, Wei Deheng, Niu Lisheng's "Meeting", He Guolin's "The Scene of the People's Liberation Army Entering the City during the Peaceful Liberation of Peiping", Yu Zhenping's "Crossing the Snowy Mountain" and other works all use military scenes as depiction objects to present to the viewer.

Wu Jiang's "Congratulations on Victory" (Figure 5) depicts the Red Army soldiers successfully achieving victory in the battle. The Red Army soldiers at the front of the army were cheerful and walking confidently in the team, while the soldiers at the rear of the army were walking with heavy artillery and other weapons with determination on their faces. Senior Wu Jiang is good at painting grand scenes of battle and life, showing people the specific events of that era and allowing viewers to remember that specific era. The whole work is magnificent and has a great impact on people's soul. The February 7th strike was the first climax of the labor movement. Tens of thousands of workers went on strike collectively, but were suppressed with iron blood. 52 comrades died, more than 300 people were seriously injured, and more than 1,000 people were fired... In just a few days, the blood of workers stained Jingshan Road red. The three authors used the monumental composition of their work "Twenty-Seventh Storm" (Figure 6), which gave the picture an

overwhelming momentum and demonstrated the determination and courage of the workers. The authors also used this work to commemorate the soldiers who sacrificed this time and call on everyone to remember this period of history.



Figure 5 Wu Jiang, Celebrating Victory, ink and color on paper, 200 cm X 200 cm, 2016



Figure 6 Liu Jian; Huang Jun; Hua Jun, The February 7th Storm, ink on paper, 370 cm X 871 cm, 2019

About the Author

Ziyang Lin, Male, Master's Degree, Research Field: Chinese Painting, Professional Title: Junior.

References

- [1] Xu Xiangqun. Persistence and creation of new changes and explorations - the current situation and reflections on military-themed art creation in the new era [J]. Fine Arts, 2022, (08): 28-30.
- [2] Guo Xinghua. The value of military painters in thematic art creation [J]. Art Observation, 2017, (01): 16-18.
- [3] Lu Xuedong. On the integrity and innovation of military-themed art creation in the new era [J]. Military Culture Research, 2024, 3(03): 106-121.