

Yunnan Feminist Artists' Living Environment and Interpretation of Artistic Language—A Case Study of Sun Guojuan and Fu Liya

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Abstract

This study explores the living environment and artistic language of Yunnan female artists, Sun Guojuan and Fu Liya. Through an in-depth analysis of the works of these two artists, the article revealed how they integrated their own female experiences and cultural backgrounds into their artistic creations. Sun Guojuan's work reflected her exploration of multicultural identities and the unique expression of the female body and mind. Fu Liya's works were deeply influenced by her multiple roles as mother, wife, and artist, showing the different faces of women in family and society.

This article aims to deepen the understanding of Yunnan female artists' artistic expression and social roles through case studies of Sun Guojuan and Fu Liya while exploring how their creative works influence and promote the development of female art. Additionally, the paper explores their experiences attending Judy Chicago's feminist art event in Lugu Lake, Lijiang, and provides a new perspective for understanding female artists in Yunnan and contributes to a global study of female art.

Keywords: Feminist Art, Yunnan Characteristics, Female Artists, Yunnan Culture, Social Context, Interpretation of Artistic Language

云南女性艺术家的生存环境与艺术语言解读—— 以孙国娟、付丽娅为例

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摘要

本研究探讨云南女艺术家孙国娟和付丽娅的生活环境和艺术语言。文章通过对两位艺术家的作品进行深入分析,揭示了她们如何将自身的女性经历和文化背景融入到艺术创作中。孙国娟的作品体现了她对多元文化身份的探索以及女性身心的独特表达。付丽娅的作品深受母亲、妻子、艺术家多重角色的影响,展现了女性在家庭和社会中的不同面貌。

本文旨在通过孙国娟和付丽娅的个案研究,加深对云南女性艺术家的艺术表达和社会角色的理解,同时探讨她们的创作如何影响和推动女性艺术的发展。此外,本文探讨了她们参加朱迪·芝加哥在丽江泸沽湖举办的女权主义艺术活动的经历,为理解云南女性艺术家提供了新的视角,为全球女性艺术的研究做出了贡献。

关键词: 女权主义艺术, 云南特色, 女艺术家, 云南文化, 社会背景, 艺术语言解读

Introduction

In Yunnan Province, a land where diversity and mystery coexist, female artists, Sun Guojuan and Fu Liya demonstrate the power and depth of Chinese feminist art with their rich creative practices. This article focuses on how they express their female identities and experiences through their artistic works while criticizing traditional social structures and gender roles.

Sun Guojuan and Fu Liya, as representatives of Yunnan female art, provide a unique perspective to examine the living conditions of women where tradition and modernity intertwine. Their works are reflections of personal experiences and resonate with the everyday experiences of the female community, their artistic creation builds a platform for women's self-expression and promotes extensive thinking and social dialogue on women's rights.



Figure 1: Sun Guojuan and Fu Liya, 2024

(Source: Arttda.cn, 2010; Longlati Foundation, 2022)

Of particular note is their participation in the "Long March Project" initiated by Judy Chicago in Lugu Lake - this historic art project brought the perspective of international feminist art to Yunnan and, through the interaction of local culture, further enriches the understanding of female art.

The researcher's research deepens our understanding of Yunnan female artists' artistic expression and social role and promotes social and cultural discussions on gender equality and cultural diversity. Through case studies of Sun Guojuan and Fu Liya, this paper demonstrates the status and influence of female artists in the contemporary art world and how their artistic creations occupy an essential position in global research on female art.

Objectives

1. To study the artistic works of Sun Guojuan and Fu Liya.
2. To analyze and explore how they express their feminist views through artistic language.
3. To analyse artistic works which reflect the context of culture and society of Yunnan environment.

Methods

1. Qualitative research method:

This study uses qualitative research methods to interpret the visual and textual content of the artworks carefully, understand the meaning contained in the works, explore the relationship between art and feminism.

2. Research population and sample:

The artistic works of Sun Guojuan and Fu Liya were selected as research samples because of the uniqueness of their works and their influence in the field of female art in Yunnan. Including but not limited to paintings, installations, and performance art, mainly works related to Judy Chicago's activities.

3. Research Tools:

Literature review tools: Use database search, keyword screening, and quality assessment tools.

Art analysis tools: Collect and observe the works of two artists, including multi-dimensional analysis indicators of form, theme, technology, and content.

4. Data collection:

Visual analysis: Systematically collect images of artworks and conduct detailed visual content analysis.

Review of relevant literature: Relevant academic and critical literature covering art history, women's studies, and Yunnan culture and social structure.

5. Data analysis:

Thematic analysis: Extract themes and patterns related to feminist perspectives and Yunnan cultural elements.

Integration of cultural and social context: Interpret the analysis results in Yunnan's specific social and cultural context and explore how artistic works reflect and respond to gender and cultural issues in the region.

Results

4.1 Analysis of the artistic works of Sun Guojuan and Fu Liya

4.1.1 Artworks of Sun Guojuan



Figure 2: "Sweet Series" of Sun Guojuan, 2024

(Source: Artda.cn, 2024)

"Sweet Series" is Sun Guojuan's masterpiece that profoundly explores the relationship between the female body and the passage of time. She created a visual metaphor for the female aging process by coating her body with sugar. White sugar here symbolizes love and sweetness but also implies the beauty and youth that gradually fade with time. This series of works expresses women's fear and uneasiness about aging and reflects society's standards and expectations for female beauty. Through this series, Sun Guojuan challenges traditional concepts and aesthetics of the female body, revealing the multiple meanings of the female body in social and cultural contexts.

"As you go", Sun Guojuan's artistic work in the Lugu Lake collaboration with Judy Chicago demonstrates her deep reflection on matrilineal society and contemporary cultural changes. In this performance installation, she presented text and images about Lugu Lake and matriarchal society through long scrolls spliced by computer. The ground was covered with chewed gum and newspaper scraps. The chewing gum here represents the traces left by tourists, while the newspaper crumbs symbolize a lost civilization. In this way, Sun Guojuan expressed her concern about the gradual disintegration of matriarchal society under the influence of modern tourism. Her work highlights the challenges traditional culture faces in contemporary society and the role of tourism in dissolving local culture. Through this work, Sun Guojuan explores the tension between cultural preservation and globalization, as well as the role and status of women in this process.



Figure 3: “As you go” of Sun Guojuan, 2024

Source: Longlati Foundation (2022)

Overall, these two works by Sun Guojuan demonstrate her profound insights into themes such as the female body, female roles, and cultural changes. Her works are artistic expressions of personal identity and experiences and critical reflections on social and cultural issues.

4.1.2 Fu Liya's artwork



Figure 4: “Blackbird” of Fu Liya, 2024

(Source: Longlati Foundation, 2022)

In "Blackbird," Fu Liya continues to use symbolic images to express their state of mind and deep thoughts on family roles. The "blackbird" in this work may represent the painter's feelings, especially pressure and restraint in family and social roles. The blackbird in the painting is trapped in an enclosed space, possibly symbolizing the restrictions and lack of freedom the painter felt in his family life. Fu Liya explores women's status and psychological state in modern society through this potent symbol and metaphor.

"Water Questions" is the work of Fu Liya and Judy Chicago in the Lugu Lake collaboration project. This work explores feminist issues and the role of women in society through performance art. In this project, Fu Liya invited an old Mosuo woman to participate in Chicago, which reflected the examination of women's status in different cultures. This work symbolizes the exploration of the theme of women

dominating the world and the metaphorical expression of female power by sealing questions and ideas into a glass bottle and throwing them into a lake.



Figure 5: “Water Questions” of Fu Liya, 2024

(Source: longmarchproject.com, 2024)

Overall, Fu Liya's artwork profoundly reflects her experience as a female artist on both a personal and social level. Her works reveal the complexity and sensitivity of women's emotional world and explore women's status and role in modern society. Through symbolic elements and performance art, her works resonate strongly with viewers visually and emotionally, demonstrating a female artist's unique perspective.

4.2 How Sun Guojuan and Fu Liya express their feminist views through artistic language

4.2.1 Sun Guojuan's Feminist Artistic Expression

Sun Guojuan's artistic works profoundly embody feminist perspectives, especially in exploring the female body, female roles, and cultural changes.

The dialogue between the female body and time: In her "Sweet Series," Sun Guojuan created a visual metaphor for the female aging process by applying sugar to her body. This series reflects the changes in women's bodies, society's standards of female beauty, and women's perceptions and fears of their bodies.

Cultural identity and personal identity: In works such as "As you go," Sun Guojuan explores cultural identity and personal identity in depth. She explores women's identity issues between tradition and modern pressures by combining texts and images from matriarchal societies.

Cross-Cultural Feminine Perspective: Her work demonstrates a cross-cultural feminine perspective, particularly in exploring identity, race, and cultural diversity. Her artistic language crosses the boundaries between tradition and modernity, East and West, and explores the complexity of female identity in the context of globalization from a female perspective.

4.2.2 Fu Liya's Feminist Artistic Expression

Fu Liya's artistic creations also profoundly reflect feminist perspectives, especially in exploring women's roles in family and society and expressing personal emotions.

The female experience of family life: In works such as "Blackbird," Fulia explores the impact of roles as mother and wife on female identity. She demonstrates conflicting emotions about family life: attachment to family versus the desire for personal freedom. She uses symbolic elements such as the blackbird to express her feelings and place in it.

Exploration of emotion and identity: In works such as "Blackbird," Fu Liya uses symbolic elements to construct thoughts on the relationship between the sexes. The visual language in her work, such as roses and mermaids, is used to express emotions and explore female identity and social status.

Exploring female power: In the "Water Questions" project with Judy Chicago, Fulia explored the theme of "what if women ruled the world" through performance art. This work explores issues of female power and social structures through direct artistic acts and symbolic gestures.

Through their artistic language, the two artists reveal women's inner world and emotional experience and challenge traditional gender roles and social expectations, promoting in-depth thinking on women's status in contemporary society. While their works explore female identity and personal emotions.

4.3 How do the artistic works of Sun Guojuan and Fu Liya reflect Yunnan culture and social environment?

4.3.1 Yunnan culture and social environment in Sun Guojuan's works

Exploration of cross-cultural identity: Sun Guojuan's works, such as "As you go," demonstrate her exploration of her cross-cultural identity. As someone who grew up in China but holds Korean nationality, her work reflects a deep consideration of different cultural identities and roots. Yunnan's multicultural environment gives her a rich perspective to explore these themes.

Depiction of Matriarchal Society: Sun Guojuan's works also concern Yunnan's unique matriarchal society. In her work, she explores the values and lifestyles of matriarchal societies and how these factors have gradually evolved in modern societies. Her works reflect a deep understanding of the adaptation and changes of traditional culture in the process of modernization.

4.3.2 Yunnan culture and social environment in Fu Liya's works

The influence of Yunnan contemporary art: As part of the Yunnan modern art movement, Fu Liya's works reflect the characteristics of Yunnan contemporary art. Common elements in her works, such as roses and mermaids, express her personal emotional experience and contain references to Yunnan's cultural characteristics. The Yunnan region is known for its biodiversity and rich ethnic culture; these cultural elements are reflected and transformed in her works.

Personal emotions and cultural environment: In works such as "Water Questions," Fu Liya showed her thoughts on social changes and the role of women. In particular, in a project with Judy Chicago, she explored possible societal leadership roles for women. This discussion is particularly prominent in Yunnan, a context with rapid social changes and cultural diversity. Yunnan, at the forefront of China's reform, opening up, and cultural diversity has provided her with rich materials and sources of inspiration, allowing her to examine and express the power and possibilities of women from a unique perspective.

The artistic works of Sun Guojuan and Fu Liya are profound reflections of Yunnan culture and social environment. Their works demonstrate the complexity and richness of Yunnan's diverse culture while revealing their personal life and emotional experiences in this specific social and cultural context. Through their artistic works, researcher can see Yunnan's unique social structure and cultural traditions and how these factors evolve in the context of modernization and globalization.

Discussion

Researcher explore the artistic works of Sun Guojuan and Fu Liya, focusing on analyzing how these works reflect the cultural characteristics of Yunnan and how the artists express feminist perspectives in their works.

1. Unique cultural background

The artistic works of Sun Guojuan and Fu Liya are deeply rooted in the rich cultural soil of Yunnan. The cultural diversity of the Yunnan region provides these two artists with a unique perspective and source of inspiration. Through her works, such as "Sweet Series" and "As you go," Sun Guojuan shows the conflict and harmony of women in traditional and modern life and the complexity of female identity in a cross-cultural environment. Fu Liya's works, such as "Blackbird," deeply explore women's roles and emotions in the family, as well as how to seek personal expression and self-realization in the specific social environment of Yunnan. These works not only

express the artist's personal life experience but also reflect the changes in Yunnan society and the evolution of women's status.

2. Comprehensive understanding

Through a mixed methods study of the artworks of Sun Guojuan and Fu Liya, researcher gain a multifaceted understanding of the two artists' perspectives. Although there may be limitations to subjective interpretation, through in-depth analysis and critical thinking, researcher can uncover the deeper meanings within the work and understand how the artists employed layers of symbolism and metaphor to express their feminist perspectives.

In this discussion, researcher should also consider the reception of the artwork within the socio-cultural context and how audiences interpret the artist's intentions. These works emphasize the active role of women in society, challenge traditional gender roles, and promote in-depth thinking about the place of feminist art in China and its regional culture.

Originality and body of Knowledge

The works of Sun Guojuan and Fu Liya provide us with a unique perspective to understand feminist art in Yunnan.

1. Combination of experience and culture

Through their artistic works, Sun Guojuan and Fu Liya demonstrate how personal experience blends with Yunnan's rich and colorful local culture. Their creations are the catharsis of personal emotions and an expression of regional culture. These works provide a new perspective to understanding the status and role of regional female art in contemporary art.

2. Art as a tool of expression

At the same time, the artistic works of Sun Guojuan and Fu Liya have also become tools for feminist expression and social criticism. Through the depiction and criticism of gender roles in society, their works challenge traditional gender concepts and reveal the power and status of women in modern society. These works not only enrich our knowledge of gender issues but also expand our understanding of the possibilities of art as a tool for social change.

This study effectively fills the gap in previous research on Sun Guojuan and Fu Liya, two Yunnan female artists, especially in exploring in depth how they integrate their personal experiences and Yunnan's unique cultural background into their artistic creation, and through this process, promotes understanding of Sociocultural discursive aspects of gender equality. Previous research has often failed to comprehensively

link the artists' expressions with the broad social and cultural context, especially the lack of exploration of the significance of their works in the study of global women's art. Through a detailed analysis of their artistic works and creative motivations, this paper provides a new perspective and depth for understanding their position and contribution in Yunnan and even the global art world, thereby significantly enriching academic discussions in related fields—a combination of experience and culture.

Suggestion

After exploring the artistic works of Sun Guojuan and Fu Liya and their reflections on Yunnan's cultural and social environment, the following recommendations can be made to support and enhance the status of female artists in the region and the influence of their works further.

Support Female Artists

It is recommended that the art world and cultural institutions pay more attention to female artists in Yunnan. Specific measures could include providing financial support for artistic creation, providing a platform for exhibitions and exchanges, and promoting collaborative opportunities for creative projects.

Raise Public Awareness

By organizing events such as exhibitions, workshops, and educational programs, public awareness and appreciation of the work of female artists can be effectively increased. Workshops and educational projects can serve as platforms for communication and education, inviting artists to have direct conversations with the public, explaining their creative inspirations and artistic processes, and how they explore and reflect social issues through art.

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