

Sketching praise—the simplicity of Sun Lixin's oil landscape paintings

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Abstract: This article reviews the oil painting sketching art of military painter Sun Lixin. The author begins with the fundamental significance of sketching for the growth of a painter's artistic life and discusses the artistic value of Sun Lixin's long-term dedication to sketching practice. The article points out that, with the tenacity of a soldier, Sun Lixin has traveled great distances and traversed the vast lands of China, capturing the inner beauty of ordinary scenes from the wonders of nature. His works exhibit an aesthetic quality of simplicity and genuineness, reflecting a high degree of unity among mind, eye, and hand—a testament to artistic wisdom. The author believes that Sun Lixin's sketch-based creations are not only a deep study of natural laws but also an opening and sublimation of spiritual realms. In the current context of chasing Western trends and popular art, such steadfastness is particularly valuable.

Keywords: Sun Lixin, oil painting sketching, military painter, wonders of nature, artistic wisdom, beauty of simplicity, harmony between mind and object

1. Introduction

Sun Lixin was born in 1955 in Dandong, Liaoning Province. He graduated from the PLA Academy of Arts in 1989 and completed the doctoral course at the Central Academy of Fine Arts in 2004. He currently serves as the Director of the Fine Arts Creation Studio at the Military Museum and holds the title of National First-Class Artist. He is also a member of the Oil Painting Art Committee of the China Artists Association and a council member of the China Oil Painting Society. His major oil painting works have been selected for the 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, and 11th National Art Exhibitions, as well as exhibitions such as "Hand in Hand with the New Century — The Third Chinese Oil Painting Fine Art Exhibition," "National Major Historical Themes Art Creation Project Exhibition," and "Oil Painting Art and Contemporary Society Exhibition." His awards include the Bronze Award at the 9th National Art Exhibition, First Prize at the All-Army Flood Relief Art Exhibition, the Beijing Outstanding Literary and Artistic Works Award commemorating the 60th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China, and the All-Army Outstanding Literary and Artistic Works Award for earthquake relief themes. His works are housed in collections such as the National Art Museum of China, the Central Academy of Fine Arts Art Museum, and the Museum of the Chinese People's Revolution Military Museum. In 1997, the Central Academy of Fine Arts invited him to host the "Sun Lixin Oil Painting Sketch Exhibition." In 1999, he held the "Sun Lixin Oil Painting Exhibition" at the National Art Museum of China. In March 2014, he presented the "Military Journey · Travels: Sun Lixin Oil Painting Exhibition" at the Guangdong Museum of Art, followed by the "Military Journey · Travels: Sun Lixin Oil Painting Fine Art Exhibition" in August 2014 at the Chinese Children's Art Museum in Xiamen. His published works include Sun Lixin Oil Painting Collection (Beijing Fine Arts Photography Publishing House), Contemporary Artist Masterpieces: Sun Lixin Volume (National Thread-bound Books Publishing House), and Sun Lixin Painting Collection (Tianjin People's Fine Arts Publishing House).

2. Adherence to sketching: an artistic choice in the contemporary context

Sketching is no longer particularly popular nowadays, especially among those whose eyes are fixed only on Western trends and popular art; they long ago dismissed it as unworthy of attention. Nevertheless, in this

vast land where we live, there are still many devoted enthusiasts who persistently engage in sketching—both old and young, they delight in it tirelessly, finding contentment and satisfaction in the practice. Lixin is one of them. Recently, he shared with me the fruits of his accumulated labor before they went to print. Upon repeated perusal, these numerous works, created over the years, bear the imprints of his life journey, artistic philosophy, and professional footprints. I was moved by his sincerity, diligence, and dedication to his craft, and felt compelled to express my thoughts.

3. The essence of sketching: the simple needs of artistic life

For the growth and development of a painter's artistic life, sketching is a most fundamental and essential need. It is like the air, water, and sustenance that people require daily, rather than the exotic delicacies of a lavish banquet; it is akin to the cloth garments that provide warmth and cover, not the fashionable attire of models on a runway. It can be said that this is undoubtedly driven by instinct. In the eyes of a sincere artist, the myriad phenomena in the natural world are all filled with charm, captivating and stirring the mind and spirit endlessly, compelling them to capture and reproduce these sights with all their might, and then to immerse themselves in dedicated study. The primary focus of such study lies in the inner and outer laws of nature. Through the repeated process of this inquiry, the painter's own will and spirit gradually merge into the work, and in dialogue with nature, they refine and temper themselves. At the same time, they progressively delve deeper into the laws and elements of plastic arts. Thus, the painter's inner world alternates between movement and stillness, genuine emotions are stirred, and a high degree of unity and harmony is achieved among the mind, eye, and hand, leading to a state where the self and the object merge and are forgotten, ultimately finding concentrated expression through the brush. This can be described as the wisdom of artistic vision. Surveying masterpieces from both East and West, past and present, none fail to radiate the brilliance of this wisdom, shining with irresistible charm. From Lixin's many works, we can similarly perceive the glow of this wisdom.

4. Military journeys and travels: contemplation of nature with a resilient spirit

As a soldier, Lixin has long been tempered by his military career, cultivating an indomitable spirit. He spares no effort, undeterred by hardship or weather, traveling thousands of miles and traversing the vast lands of China. Thus, whether it is the ever-changing clouds and sunsets in the sky, the clear reflections in a pond, the gracefully stretching branches, the tree lines connecting to the horizon on distant slopes, the gleaming white trunks of birch trees, the rugged paths of village cottages, the sturdy autumn grasses, or the snow-covered fields—though seemingly ordinary, none are overlooked or easily dismissed in his eyes. This is because the inner beauty of nature's creation resides here, and once discovered by a perceptive observer, it transforms into the language of beauty. Those who can draw inexhaustible nourishment of true beauty from nature are bound to experience an expansion or sublimation of their spiritual realm. I believe this is the profound meaning and value of sketching.

5. The beauty of simplicity: the artistic quality of an unadorned language

At first glance, Lixin's sketch works may seem to lack vibrant colors, but upon closer inspection, one can savor the beauty of simplicity within them. Drawing an analogy to music, he clearly does not compose grand symphonies with a variety of instruments but rather creates poetic melodies played by a single instrument. I believe he fully recognizes this characteristic and need not look elsewhere but instead refine and advance further along this path.

6. Conclusion

Through decades of dedicated practice, Sun Lixin has quietly toiled on the unadorned artistic path of sketching, using his brush to record the tempering of his military career and his deep, affectionate gaze upon the wonders of nature. His works are neither ostentatious nor driven by superficial glamour. Instead, they reveal genuine purity in their simplicity and inner beauty in their ordinariness, much like poetic melodies played by a single instrument, possessing their own deeply moving power. Within the diverse and complex landscape of contemporary art, Sun Lixin's steadfast commitment to the tradition of sketching is not only a

refinement and tempering of his personal will but also a profound retrospective and dedicated inheritance of the local spirit of Chinese oil painting. May Lixin continue to uphold this spirit, without distraction, and amidst the interweaving of military journeys and travels, paint even more refined and advanced chapters of his art.



Figure 1: Winter Sunshine, 50cm x 60cm, Sun Lixin, 1997



Figure 2: Morning Frost, 50cm x 60cm, Sun Lixin, 2011

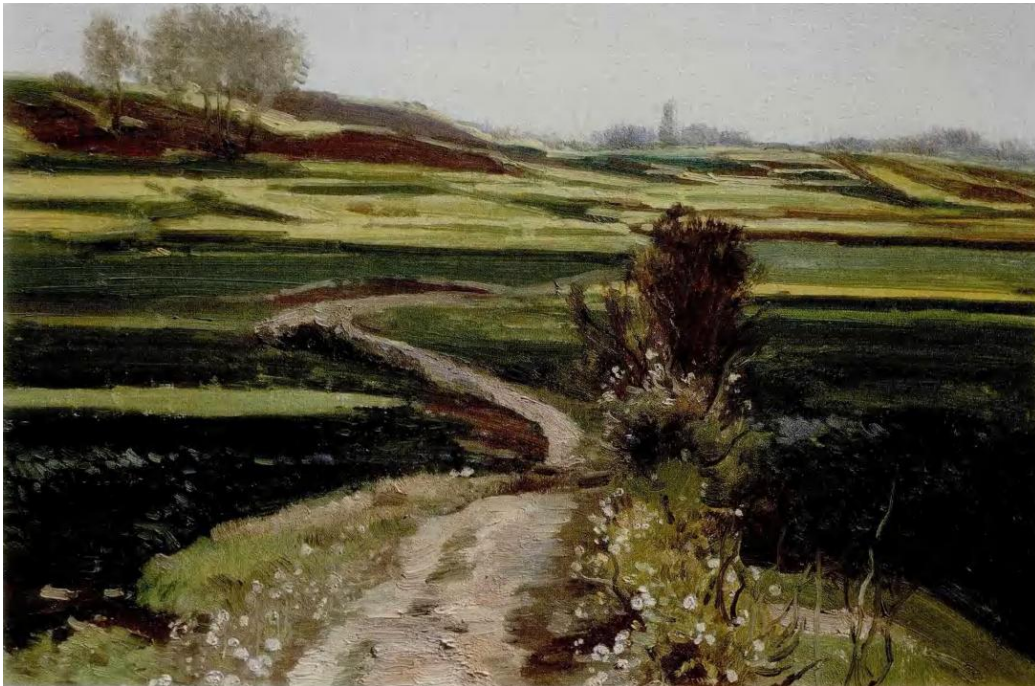


Figure 3: Yellow Flowers in Full Fragrance, 50cm x 60cm, Sun Lixin, 2011



Figure 4: Yaodong (Cave Dwellings) in Babao, 50cm x 60cm, Sun Lixin, 2004