



A Study of Young Art Creators' Perceptions of Chinese Sex Symbolic Art

Xi Xu^(✉) and Shuguang Xu

Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, Khon Kaen University, Khon Kaen, Thailand
xuxiart@163.com

Abstract. Thousands of years of Chinese civilization have left a large number of written records and other works in the form of paintings and sculptures in the history of sexual culture. “Sexuality” is an expression of the primitive ancestors’ pursuit of happiness and hope for a prosperous career. It is a praise and aspiration for the reproductive capacity of the biological world, a custom commonly prevalent in primitive societies, which is also the origin of sex symbol art. These sex-related works have been controversial in the development of society, so their historical and artistic characteristics have been marginalized and not well organized and protected, but it is undeniable that they are an integral part of the historical development. Therefore, this paper will analyze and discuss Chinese artworks related to sex symbols, and study the perceptions and opinions of young art creators about sex-related artworks, so as to understand whether such works have any influence on young art creators and their creative ideas. It can be concluded that most of the young art creators understand and know Chinese art works related to sex, and they are able to accept such works and are willing to experiment with sex-related symbols in their creations, and many young creators already have sex-related symbols in their works. They believe that art should not be influenced by the outside world and that art needs to be a true expression of their inner thoughts.

Keywords: Sexual art · Sexual symbols · Young art creators · Artworks · Symbolic perception

1 Introduction

The fact that eating and sex are basic human desires reflects the fact that ancient Chinese inhabitants placed sexual activities on the same footing as compared to daily eating activities [1]. Sexual artworks, such as literature, film and video, painting and other forms of expression, are a means of expressing human consciousness in extremes that do not exist in mainstream form [2]. In the process of changing national ideology, these works are also playing different functions and roles for social development, guiding people how to participate in social practices [3].

In sexual art works, we can often capture features such as buttocks, breasts, lips, thighs, etc. that can show the process of sex in progress, and these things not only represent their own properties, but also are given the meaning of “sex”, thus constituting

a sex symbol with cultural connotation. Every artistic image can be said to be a symbol or system of symbols with a specific meaning. In order to understand a work of art, the artistic image must be understood, and in order to understand the artistic image, the structure must be understood. As the denotative form of an object, the symbol has a unifying function that generates humanity and shapes human culture. Sexual symbolic art is created by the creator of art based on the analysis and interpretation of elements such as human feelings and sexual activity [4]. The purpose of sex symbol art is also to delight the viewer's eyes, tantalize the viewer's heart, and awaken the viewer's lust [5]. In the development of society, whether in the most popular or powerful sex symbol artworks, or in the sex symbol artworks in museums to the merchandise found everywhere in sex stores, all contain the function of arousing eroticism. Every social group has to be exposed to things related to sexual symbols [6]. In addition, sex symbolic art also reflects the social acceptance of sexual values and culture in the society [7].

Sexual symbolic art has many forms of expression. In the gears of history, the expressions of sex symbol art have continued to progress with social development, from intuitive figurative expressions to metaphorical abstract expressions [8], constantly enriching and reflecting people's daily lives, providing cultural and social values. This paper introduces and interprets the expression of artworks related to sex symbols, while conducting a social survey of young people such as scholars, students, and artists who create art in China based on the characteristics of sex symbol art, in order to gain a deeper understanding and explore the impact that sex symbol art brings to society and its future potential.

2 Peripheral Design in Chinese Symbolic Art

Art about sexual symbols is common in people's daily life, such as porcelain cups, snuff bottles, pillows, porcelain sculptures, Chun Gong Tu and other products [9]. These various forms of peripheral products, which appear in different forms of craft products, not only reflect the metal smelting technology and craft technology of the time, but also have great significance for further research on the historical development of Chinese sex symbol peripheral products. According to the different functions of these products, this paper divides them into three categories.

The first is the actual use of the function of sex tools. Such products are mainly direct imitation of the shape of the sexual organs, and have part of the sexual function of the product. The earliest of these was found in the tomb of King Jing of Zhongshan, known as the Bronze Ancestor, a sexual instrument. The shape of the bronze ancestor shows that it is mainly a symmetrical combination of the upper and lower male genitalia, and each group contains two cases of sexual organs. From the morphological point of view of the organ, its shape is mainly the simulation of the male genitalia of the penis, which has been able to reflect the basic morphological characteristics of the phallus more realistically. The inclusion of testicles makes the image of such sexual instruments more concrete, according to the shape of Han Dynasty sexual instruments from another period

excavated. Based on the technical limitations of the Cold War era, the sexual instruments that emerged from the Han Dynasty were mostly represented by copper products, and occasionally other materials such as Chinese white jade, and in the Republican period, with the development of the industrial revolution in China, rubber products began to appear. In addition, the craftsmanship of the early sexual instruments was relatively low, only a rough imitation of the genitalia, but from the copper gilt sexual instruments and the rubber products of the Republican period presented below, the craftsmanship further increased and the aesthetic sense was no longer limited to figurative. Finally, given that most of these tools were produced during the feudal period, when patriarchal society was the system, most of the sexual tools are mainly based on the simulation of male genitalia (Fig. 1).

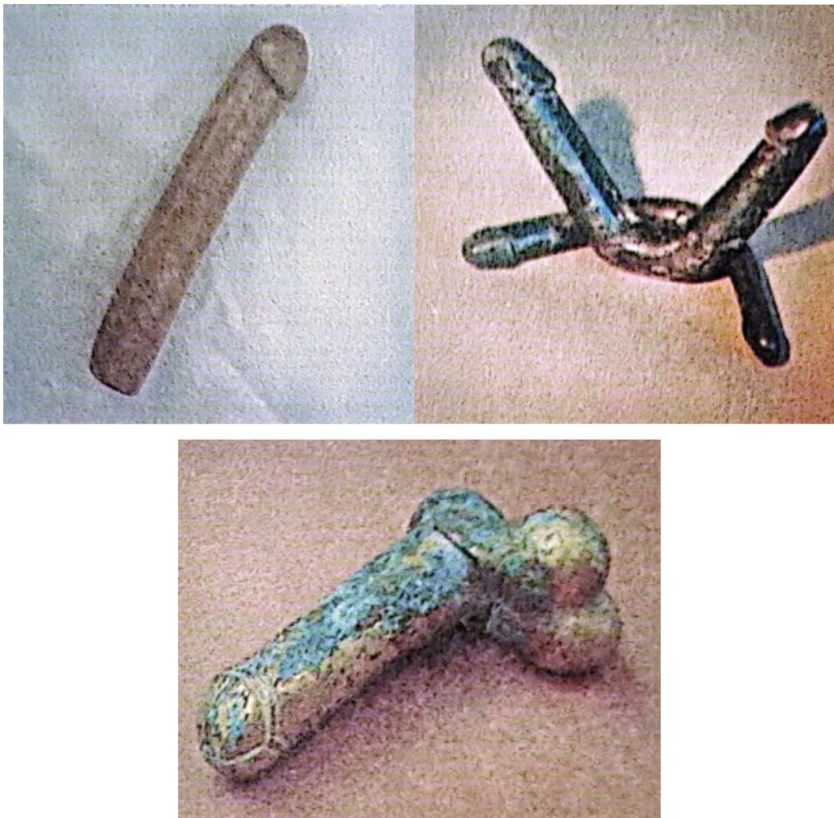


Fig. 1. Sexual instruments

The second is the imitation sexual instrument that symbolizes the sexual organ. These tools are actually imitations of a certain form of the sexual organ, which are less intuitive than the aforementioned sexual tools, and only invoke certain functions of the sexual organ or change the form of the sexual organ to emphasize its decorative role. As shown in the figure below, the porcelain cup on the left simulates the testicular form of the

male genitalia, but its form is difficult to relate to the meaning of the sexual organ if not inferred from the decorative writing attached to its surface, while the second ceramic pot figure simulates the penis form of the male genitalia, whose body excludes the possibility of other representations of the sexual organ, retaining only the straight form and diminishing the utilitarian nature of the genitalia, and using sculptural techniques to achieve a decorative effect. Compared to the two drawings on the left, the two illustrations of Qing Dynasty products on the right show a more lifelike use of such imitation class tools. In the two boys form of the teapot, the top two-thirds of the pot is the upper body sculpture of two boys, but in the lower half of the pot extends out of the spout is located in a position that is generally the location of the male sex organs, which implies the morphological characteristics of the male genitalia, and the excretory function of the genitalia is linked to the pouring function of the teapot. In general, such tools are more lifelike, generally in the form of tea sets appear more (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2. Ceramic products

The third is the decorative tool that implies sexual culture. The distribution of such tools is more diverse, and because of the ease of manipulation of decorative elements, they appear in a larger range of products, generally appearing as ceramic vessels, sculptures, wood craft products, etc. According to the artistic shaping techniques of such

tools, the article broadly classifies these products into two categories, one with pictorial-based products and the other with sculptural forms. In general, these products are mostly ceramic products, supplemented by simulated animal mating or male and female intercourse as decoration to show the form, its craft reached its peak in the Qing Dynasty. The two works of art shown below are Song dynasty clay pots, their surfaces engraved in relief with a scene of two fish mating, but in terms of form, the pots themselves are of a more rustic texture, and the coitus scene is depicted in a simpler manner (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3. Animal ceramic products

In addition, from the viewpoint of the excavated Qing dynasty products, the description of the sexual intercourse scene is not only more vivid and richer, but also more diverse in product form. In the porcelain product shown in the figure below, the painting form with the spring palace picture is used to describe the daily coitus scene of a man and a woman, with richer color expression and more erotic posture, while the subject

matter is also decorated with decorative folding fans or daily objects next to the auxiliary decoration, showing a more decorative overall, showing a rich aesthetic sense of sexual intercourse. The porcelain pen container painted with sexual intercourse motifs on the right are integrated in a combined form, in which not only are there multiple groups of male and female intercourse scenes, but they are also decorated by the addition of rockery and bamboo, which appear more often in literati paintings. It is thus evident that these craft products of the Qing Dynasty, decorated with sexual culture, not only embody the basic art of sexual intercourse, but also reveal the unique scholarly sentiments of the Chinese literati (Fig. 4).



Fig. 4. Sex symbol painting daily necessities

3 Data Analysis

The survey for young art creators in this study was divided into two stages for data collection, in order to more accurately and scientifically understand the views and opinions of this group on artworks related to sex symbols. First, in the pre-survey stage, the

main purpose was to test the applicability of the questionnaire, in order to make the content of the questionnaire clear to the public, without creating ambiguity, ambiguity and unintelligibility, in order to provide a reference basis for the subsequent revision and optimization of the questionnaire, and to lay the foundation for the development of a formal research program. Students and young art workers from several art colleges in China were used as the target population for this study. The pre-survey phase was conducted from December 23, 2021 to January 7, 2022, using offline questionnaire distribution to collect a random sample of students and young workers who had received art education. After conducting 20 surveys, this paper revised the questioning and presentation of some questions, which was able to make the presentation of the questionnaire easier to read for these groups. The official survey phase was conducted from April 5, 2022 to 2022, and 189 questionnaires were collected, of which 150 were valid and 39 were rejected. The 39 questionnaires included both homogeneous questionnaires with the same options and those in which the art students had not been exposed to sexual art education during their studies, so we excluded those who had not received such education in the questionnaire.

The following are the descriptive statistics of the sample for the general information collected from the study subjects. From these descriptions, we find that: among the group of respondents, there are 65 male groups, accounting for 43.3%, which is less in number than the female group, which accounts for 56.67%. In terms of age level, students aged 18–22 years old accounted for the largest number, 43.33%, while students aged 30 years old and above accounted for the smallest number, only 14.67%; in terms of education, the total number of young art creators with bachelor's degrees surveyed was 81, the In terms of education, the number of young art creators with a bachelor's degree was 81, accounting for 54% of the total, while the number of masters was 50, accounting for 33.33%, and the number of doctors was the lowest, at 19, accounting for 12.7%; when asked whether they had creative experience, only 57 art creators said they had such experience, while a total of 93 artists had no such experience. This indicates that the development of works related to sex symbolic art is still not in the mainstream in China, and although they have received education on sex art, they still lack relevant practices; when asked "do you actively pay attention to these works related to sex symbolic art", 103 art Finally, among the surveyed groups, we also categorized the professional fields of these young art creators, with painting accounting for the largest group, followed by design, and less by film and television.

The second part of the questionnaire, which is the focus of this paper, was divided into 10 questions. When asked if they had ever seen artworks related to sex symbols, 91 people said they had, while 59 people said they had never seen such artworks or art forms. When asked whether these works of art related to sex symbols could serve the purpose of sex education [10], 72 people thought that they could serve this function and could be used to teach adults or minors about sex, while 78 people thought that they would not use these works of art to teach themselves or their children about sex, but would use other methods When asked whether these works of art related to sexual symbols affect their perceptions of sexuality, 102 people thought that these works have made

them think about sexuality, whether more openly or more conservatively. When asked whether these works of art related to sexual symbols are free to express themselves, 86 people thought that it is allowed, and that art related to sexual symbols can be expressed differently depending on individual differences, whether it is symbolic or not, while 64 people thought that its expression is bound by other factors, such as the shape of the male genitalia is fixed, and therefore its expression can only be limited by the shape of the male genitalia. And therefore its expression can only be expressed in the same or similar way as it, and if it is not, it cannot represent this symbol; when asked whether the symbols in these artworks related to sexual symbols are obvious, a total of 78 people think he can delicately capture the wonderful symbols, beautiful lines, usage of bold colors, etc. in these artworks, which together form a complete When asked whether these works of art related to sexual symbols could be appreciated by you, 112 people said they would be willing to buy them if they were accessible to them in their lives, while 38 people said that although these works were distinctive, they were not. When asked what kind of theme they could see in these artworks related to sex symbols, 15 people thought they were meant to be conservative and subtle, 24 people thought they were meant to be tense, and 68 people thought they were meant to be purely sexy. When asked what the main characteristics of these artworks related to sex symbols were, a total of 40 people thought that the form of creation was A total of 45 people thought it could convey a lot of content and let me learn more about it. 30 people thought these works had a strong traditional Chinese culture behind them, and were the product of a cultural society with depth and connotation. A total of 15 people chose this other option, and they thought the expression of these artworks should have more characteristics; when asked in what aspects these artworks related to sex symbols could do better, a total of 55 people hoped that the presentation of these artworks could be more diversified, and a total of 35 people hoped that the Chinese culture it represents could be better inherited and developed A total of 40 people hoped that the artworks would not show sexual desires too visually, but should be expressed in a more abstract way so that they would not be used in an awkward way, and 20 people hoped that the artworks would be presented in a more vivid way so that the public could easily understand their meaning and essence.

From the above results, we can learn that today's artworks related to sexual symbols have been carried out in the vision of many young art creators, who hope that sexual art with Chinese characteristics can be greatly developed, and they have also carried out many art creations related to sexual symbols and produced various art products. Among these groups, most of the young art creators understand and know Chinese sex-related art works, and are willing to accept such works and experiment with sex-related symbols in their creations, and many of them already have "sexuality"-related symbols in their works (Table 1).

Table 1. Sample description statistics

Category	Item	Quantity	Proportion
Gender	Male	65	43.3%
	Female	85	56.67%
Age	Age 18–22	65	43.33%
	Age 22–26	30	20.00%
	Age 26–29	33	22.00%
	Over 30 years old	22	14.67%
Qualifications	Undergraduates	81	54.00%
	Postgraduate	50	33.00%
	Doctor	19	12.70%
Experience in creating sexual artworks	Yes	57	38.00%
	No	93	62.00%

4 Conclusion

Sexuality, as one of the essential elements in people's daily lives, is an important topic explored by people all over the world, both in life practice and in academic research. Based on the understanding of Chinese sex symbolic art, this article describes the current peripheral products related to sex art that have social and cultural value, and introduces and interprets them in order to allow more people to gain insight into the unique Chinese sex art and culture. In addition, the article initiates a social survey of young art workers through a structured questionnaire, leading to general conclusions. This group is the backbone of China's art discipline or art industry development and has an important role to play in the future development of Chinese sexual art, so it is feasible to select this group for the study. We found that young art creators believe that art in this area is valuable or has the potential to be valuable in the future, and that it can be used as an educational tool to transmit sexual knowledge and serve as an initiation tool. In addition, more young art creators believe that the expression of sexual art should be free and unrestricted, so that the essential characteristics of sexual art can be revealed as much as possible in the process of creation. Through these surveys, we can provide the general art workers and scholars with directions for creation and research, and make relevant suggestions based on them.

Chinese government departments, art associations, and higher education institutions should increase investment in sex-related art education and create a general education curriculum on sex art education for all students to guide them to a scientific understanding of sex. Sexual art education is still a weak link in school education, and there are many difficulties and problems. The situation of insufficient opening rate of art courses, small participation in related activities, and shortage of teachers has not been fundamentally improved, schools in remote areas lack basic art education, and the evaluation system of sexual art education has not been established, which restrict the full play of the nurturing

function of sexual art education. In the face of the new situation and new requirements, schools must accelerate the development of sex art education from a new historical starting point. Secondly, we should screen the general vulgar pornographic works and noble sexual art works, to make students realize what the real sexual art is, so that students will not be confused in their youth, from the psychological real recognition of Chinese sexual symbolic art, generate a strong interest, and happy with to understand and research about sexual art topics or to create related art works out, only in this way, China Only in this way can Chinese sex art education flourish and gradually be recognized by the whole country or even the whole world.

References

1. Liu, D.L.: *The History of Sexuality in the World*. Zhengzhou University Press, Zhengzhou (2005)
2. Chen, X.M., Yang, L.: "Sex" and the preference of consumerism. *Soc. Sci. Front* **3**, 163–167 (2012)
3. Guo, F.M.: *Research on sexuality theme painting*. China Academy of Art (2009)
4. Chen, W.G.: Anti-theorist, "art pornography." *J. Jiangnan Univ. (Human. Edn.)* **29**(2), 42–46 (2010)
5. Zheng, H.Y.: Analysis of the modernization and popularization trend of film and television art communication. *Tomorrow's Style* **19**, 62–65 (2022)
6. Lindberg, L.D., Kantor, L.M.: Adolescents' receipt of sex education in a nationally representative sample, 2011–2019. *J. Adolesc. Health* **70**(2), 290–297 (2022)
7. Rentschler, R., Fillis, I., Lee, B.: National identity and the future of branding the arts. *Futures* **145**(2–3), 1–45 (2023)
8. Peng, Y.X.: On Liu Haisu's practice on the road of "art for the people": The example of his art dissemination activities during the European tour. *Chin. Art Res.* **2**, 128–134 (2022)
9. Dai, Z., Bao, Y.H.: Sexual culture and sexual art: a study of Spring palace paintings. *Chin. Sex Sci.* **22**(8), 105–109 (2013)
10. Goldfarb, E.S., Lieberman, L.D.: Three decades of research: the case for comprehensive sex education. *J. Adolesc. Health* **68**(1), 13–27 (2021)