


COMMENT ON “CONTEMPORARY ART: CULTIVATING FENG ZIKAI’S TEACHINGS”

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Feng Zikai, as a modern Chinese artist, focuses on the relation between art, education, life, and particularly children’s development. He integrates traditional and modern elements to create an imaginative form of art. Feng Zikai emphasizes children’s creativity in expressing themselves through art. He believes that art is not going to be taught to children through techniques, but rather it encourages children to appreciate aesthetics and think imaginatively. Therefore, children’s innate and innovative ability is stimulated. Feng refers to art as a reflection of real life. His aim is to encourage people to appreciate their artistic beauty and to help to create a harmonious and compassionate society. He helps modern education and social development through offering art education and creativity in life. He brings art into daily life and education for promoting social harmony (Geremie, 2002). Feng’s view of art as a “unity of technique and beauty” could benefit from a comparative analysis with similar concepts in Western art theory, such as the Aristotelian notion of *techne* (craftsmanship) being essential to achieving beauty in art. This cross-cultural comparison would highlight the universal aspects of Feng’s philosophy and its unique integration with Chinese cultural traditions. Feng Zikai’s works are not just artistic expressions but also they have impact on Chinese cultural identity and social values.

In the article, it is addressed to various scholars (e.g., Zeng, Zhan, Zhao, Zhu, Zhang, Pan, and Wang Chaowen) who have explored Feng Zikai’s thoughts on art education. These scholars are aligned with Feng’s universal artistic approach which integrates traditional and modern styles. Like Feng, they agree with the integration of art, beauty, and technique.

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Comparing Zeng's view on Feng's ideological communication with Zhao and Zhu's emphasis on aesthetic education could provide a richer academic context and highlight areas of agreement. Wang Chaowen also agrees with Feng Zikai's view on art as a reflection of real life, but Feng has more individualistic approach in contrast to Wang who emphasizes art's social function and ideological attributes. A modern Chinese artist, Xu Beihong, has much more political approach to art and criticizes social injustices, while Feng has more humanistic view to art. However, Feng's view on moral and spiritual dimension of Aesthetic and art education is beyond mere beauty and is aligned with the Confusion philosophy for refining one's personality and self-cultivation. Feng's views on aesthetic education relate to his broader ethical and philosophical outlook and they resonate with contemporary debates on the role of art in education. Feng's insistence on both technical skill and moral content reflects a synthesis of traditional Chinese aesthetic values with modern artistic concerns.

Agnes Po-Yee Ko in her thesis, *The Beauty of Harmony* (2006), addresses aesthetic principles in Chinese art and emphasizes Chike, Guo, and Lu Xun's view on aesthetic education, as Feng defines aesthetic and art education. Ko in her thesis refers to Chike's essay, *Aesthetic Education: Pillar of Ethics* (1994), in which Chike emphasizes "aesthetic education as vital in life and calls it the pillar of ethical education" (Ko, 2006, p. 24). Ko refers to Guo who stresses human beings' life within the logic of beauty, as Feng Zikai defines. Thus, in Guo's view, the only way to revive China is to "enhance aesthetic education" (Ko, 2006, p. 24). Guo agrees with Lu Xun who introduces art to manifest culture, and to preserve ethics. He also defines aesthetic education to cultivate beauty in art, music, ethical discipline, poetry, and visual art. In comparisons between Feng Zikai and Lu Xun, both use their art to critique society by utilizing humour (Ko, 2006, p. 24).

The article could provide more background on the artistic and cultural climate during Feng Zikai's time. Understanding the socio-political influences of the late Qing and early Republic of China would help readers grasp the significance of Feng Zikai's work in context. Providing a detailed analysis of the socio-political environment that shapes Feng's artistic philosophy – such as the influence of the May Fourth Movement or the introduction of Western art education in China – would offer a deeper understanding of his artistic evolution.

The analysis could benefit from specific philosophical doctrines, contemporary political contexts, or interactions with other artists and intellectuals. For example, the impact of Confucian and Daoist philosophies on Feng's outlook on art and life could be explored in more depth. Feng Zikai's idea of the "insulated artistic vision," emphasizing viewing things in isolation to appreciate their true essence, is reminiscent of the Daoist concept of seeing beyond worldly distractions to grasp the underlying nature of reality. Feng's concept of 'unity of technique and beauty' is rooted in both Confucian and Daoist philosophies, where beauty

is not just an aesthetic category but a moral one. It provides a deeper philosophical context for Feng’s artistic principles, enriching the discussion on his aesthetic views and the interplay between morality and technique in his work. This is our comment about Xie and Chen (2024)

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