

The Spiritual World of New Era Farmers: A Discussion on the Creation of the New Life Series of Oil Paintings

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Abstract: This paper is grounded in the strategic framework of rural revitalization and takes the image of farmers in the new era as its central theme, presenting a series of oil paintings entitled New Life. By immersing itself in the fertile terrain of rural existence, the study explores the spiritual world of contemporary farmers and portrays the vibrant scenes of rural life, their optimistic and dynamic outlook, and the distinctive cultural charm of the revitalized countryside. The New Life oil painting series celebrates the noble values embodied in farmers' diligent labor and selfless dedication to the prosperity and strength of the nation. Through artistic representation, the series reveals the ideological aspirations, humanistic concerns, and contemporary significance embedded within the creative process, ultimately constructing a historical visual archive of farmer portraits characterized by the regional features and distinctive spirit of a particular era.

Keywords: New Life; Oil Painting Creation; Farmer Image; Spiritual Connotation

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1. Introduction

As the largest social group, farmers have historically served as a fundamental pillar of society and continue to constitute the backbone of a modern agricultural nation. The continuity and development of the profound Chinese agrarian civilization over thousands of years are inseparable from farmers' wisdom, diligence, and persistent labor. In the new era and on the new journey of development, the implementation of the rural revitalization strategy has highlighted the active role of farmers' spirit and value orientations, injecting new vitality into the modernization of agriculture and rural areas. Meanwhile, profound transformations have taken place in rural environments and the quality of farmers' lives. Today, rural areas have evolved into living spaces where farmers' material well-being and spiritual pursuits coexist, while also becoming significant fields of artistic creation, emotional expression, and creative inspiration for artists^[1].

2. The Genesis of Oil Painting Creation on Farmers in the New Era

Only through an in-depth understanding of rural culture and sustained attention to farmers' everyday lives can more profound and meaningful works on farmer themes be created^[2]. Such artistic practice is not merely a simple reproduction of reality; rather, it transforms artistic representation into a medium for reflecting the renewed vitality of rural communities and the evolving spiritual temperament of farmers. At the same time, it conveys the lingering sentiments of rural nostalgia embedded within my personal memories. Recalling my childhood experiences in the countryside, rural life was once characterized by hardship and simplicity, yet it was imbued with a poetic and refreshing quality. Although farmers often displayed expressions

of hardship caused by the pressures of livelihood, their faces were frequently illuminated by sincere and modest smiles. Their character was deeply rooted in diligence, perseverance, and resilience, while the warmth of rural culture continued to resonate within my memories.

With the advancement of modernization, the former conditions of rural poverty and underdevelopment have gradually become a thing of the past. Intelligent agricultural technologies, convenient transportation networks, improved ecological environments, and abundant material resources have not only transformed rural production and living conditions but have also enabled farmers to pursue richer spiritual experiences and higher levels of cultural fulfillment.

It is precisely my deep attachment to rural life that has motivated me to frequently return to my family's rural residence or engage in field sketching within rural communities. Through these experiences, I seek to discover authentic personal perceptions through direct observation, documenting farmers' contemporary living conditions as well as the values of truth, goodness, and beauty embodied in their lives^[3]. Immersing myself in the simplicity and purity of rural villages brings a profound sense of familiarity and inner tranquility, deeply awakening my emotional connection with the countryside. Therefore, the New Life series selects scenes depicting farmers enjoying leisurely moments during agricultural off-seasons and elderly villagers benefiting from convenient transportation during their travels. Although the figures portrayed in these works wear simple clothing and maintain modest lifestyles, they embody warmth and authenticity. Their sincere smiles and determined gazes reveal an enduring enthusiasm for life and hopeful aspirations for the future.

Through its evolution within a multicultural context, rural oil painting has gradually developed a distinctive artistic approach that integrates realistic representational techniques with expressive forms of visual language^[4]. This transformation reflects the pursuit of localized and national characteristics amid the interaction between traditional artistic heritage and contemporary historical contexts. Within this framework, I establish realism as the fundamental approach of my artistic creation, portraying the generous and sincere external characteristics of farmers in the new era^[5]. Through the unique language of oil painting, I attempt to capture their simple yet profound inner spiritual world and construct a poetic representation of rural life through artistic expression. This creative process not only embodies the artistic exploration of depicting the beauty of life, the beauty of human spirit, and the natural and cultural vitality of contemporary rural landscapes, but also represents a deeper reflection on achieving harmony between aesthetic expression and rural realities through artistic methods^[6].

During the creation of the New Life series, I have consistently maintained a humble attitude and an open-minded artistic perspective. Guided primarily by subjective experience, I employ compositional structures, forms, brushwork, and color relationships as essential visual elements to reveal the authenticity of human figures. Rather than pursuing exaggerated or artificial expressions, I avoid excessive emphasis on heavy tones or decorative colors. Instead, through balanced compositional arrangements, hierarchical relationships, harmonious tonal transitions, and subtle contrasts, I strive to create a fresh visual impact while presenting the simple yet genuine aesthetic qualities of rural humanity. This approach enriches the expressive capacity of the paintings while simultaneously providing spiritual purification, allowing me to transcend inner fatigue and anxiety and return to a state of sincerity, freedom, and artistic openness.

3. The Construction of Image and Artistic Language in New Life I

Prior to the commencement of artistic creation, I engage in face-to-face communication with farmers, sharing their personal experiences, listening to their conversations, observing subtle changes in their expressions, capturing their momentary gestures, and interpreting their inner emotional worlds. These direct encounters provide essential experiential foundations that enable the artwork to achieve greater vitality and authenticity. For example, New Life I was created through both rural field sketching and artistic practice within farmers' homes. Field sketching allows me to experience rural life firsthand and to comprehend the realistic approaches employed in the representation of farmer images^[7], while the process of painting enables me to integrate these observations and emotional experiences with the expressive language of oil painting, thereby exploring the inner narratives and spiritual dimensions of farmers.

The painting depicts a scene in which three farmers converse, drink tea, and share a meal in a peaceful and authentic atmosphere. Their spiritual appearance has already transcended the hardship and bitterness associated with earlier periods of poverty, instead revealing confidence, ease, and dignity. The farmers are portrayed with bronze-like skin tones, broad

physiques, and weathered faces, creating a profound sense of visual weight and historical depth within the construction of the farmer image. Accompanied by simple clothing, modest accessories, and natural, relaxed bodily expressions, their solid physical forms embody the virtues of honesty, kindness, resilience, and diligence. These qualities are inscribed upon their rugged yet joyful appearances, revealing both their materially enriched daily lives and their fulfilled spiritual worlds.

In the exploration of oil painting language, the work carefully focuses on the individuality of each figure, emphasizing distinctive personal characteristics. Through steady and refined brushwork, the painting meticulously depicts vivid facial expressions, breaking away from repetitive and standardized modes of representation. Slightly exaggerated forms, delicate variations in brushstrokes, and intensive attention to minute details enhance the dimensionality of the farmer images, vividly conveying their passionate emotions and profound spiritual vitality.

As presented in the composition, the central farmer sits upright on a sofa with his hands naturally resting on his knees. Wearing a blue cap and full-rimmed glasses, he smiles warmly while speaking in a lively manner, sharing stories of everyday experiences and moments of happiness. On the right side, another farmer holds his raised left leg with his large, weathered hands while a cigarette rests between the fingers of his right hand. His yellow-toned face bears the healthy reddish marks formed through years of labor. His neatly arranged hair and gentle smile reveal a relaxed psychological state, suggesting the richness and fulfillment of his inner spiritual life. On the left side, the farmer wears a traditional Chinese tunic suit and a blue cap. His expression appears natural yet slightly restrained, as he attentively observes and listens from the side profile. The darkened white collar and slightly unkempt hair present an authentic portrayal of the simple and sincere rural character.

The dishes placed on the tea table, including butter flatbread, stir-fried pork with green peppers, and frozen black pears, convey the happiness and satisfaction brought by a prosperous life. The green mountains, clear waters, and vibrant ecological environment visible outside the window reflect the harmonious coexistence between ecological protection and rural economic development. The traditional Chinese painting displayed on the wall symbolizes the improvement of farmers' aesthetic awareness resulting from economic growth and social progress. Together, these visual elements embody the beauty of nature, the beauty of everyday life, and the beauty of the human spirit.

Through the integration of visual representation and artistic language, *New Life I* articulates the spiritual significance embedded within the new rural landscape and presents the enriched inner world of contemporary farmers. The work transforms ordinary rural experiences into an artistic expression of dignity, happiness, and spiritual fulfillment, revealing the cultural identity and humanistic values of new farmers in the context of rural revitalization.

Figure 1. Xuanmin Yue, New Life I, Oil on canvas, 160cm×130cm



The work adopts a horizontal composition centered on human figures, emphasizing the thematic significance of the farmer image while carefully organizing the narrative structure and spatial order of the scene. It integrates rural everyday experiences, including farmers' clothing, food, agricultural landscapes, and other vernacular elements, with their leisurely and relaxed spiritual states, creating a harmonious visual relationship between material life and inner emotions. Particular attention is given to the depiction of farmers' facial expressions and gazes, through which their emotions, thoughts, and psychological states are conveyed. Through a calm and tranquil visual aesthetic, the painting constructs a peaceful and warm atmosphere that reflects the harmonious rhythm of contemporary rural life.

The compositional arrangement emphasizes subtle balance and follows the natural proportions of the figures. By selecting appropriate areas of the background and positioning the farmer figures within the optimal central visual space and scale, the work provides greater possibilities for the exploration of form, color, light, shadow, and brushwork. The foreground elements, represented by the tea table and food, are connected with the distant landscapes of rural mountains and fields, establishing a spatial hierarchy between near and far, primary and secondary. Meanwhile, humorous and vivid vernacular details are interwoven throughout the composition, further highlighting the farmer image and expressing a humanistic sentiment in which farmers, despite experiencing the passage of time and the hardships of life, maintain vitality, optimism, and spiritual resilience.

In terms of color selection, the painting primarily employs a cool gray tonal framework to better convey the spiritual characteristics of farmers, while incorporating warm tones to create a strong contrastive effect. Color relationships such as yellow and purple, red and green, and blue and orange are applied throughout the composition. The cool tones of the figures' clothing and hats symbolize the simplicity and sincerity associated with rural identity, whereas the warm tones of their faces emphasize their vitality, confidence, and inner strength. This chromatic strategy not only enhances the visual contrast among different elements but also conveys my sincere emotional connection with farmers. At the same time, it strengthens the depth and spatial dimension of the image, creating a sense of visual openness and layered structure. Through concise and vivid color relationships, the painting presents the comfortable living environment of rural households and the abundant material conditions of contemporary farmers. More importantly, it reveals the vitality, hope, and spiritual aspirations embodied in the new era and the revitalized countryside.

4. The Perspective and Spiritual Representation in New Life II

The oil painting *New Life II* is derived from a familiar rural bus station waiting hall, where people of different genders and generations gather within the same spatial environment, forming a social microcosm that reflects the diversity and complexity of everyday life. Their expectations for the next destination and their aspirations toward distant places became the original motivation for the creation of this work.

The painting takes two elderly farmers as its primary visual subjects. In the waiting hall, an elderly couple in their late seventies sits on the chairs directly opposite me, with the traces of time visibly inscribed upon their bodies. Their slightly stooped figures, gray hair, and deeply wrinkled faces and hands construct the image of rural elderly farmers who have endured the hardships of life. In contrast, the fashionable young woman behind them creates a striking visual opposition, highlighting the coexistence of different generations and social experiences within the contemporary rural landscape.

Although their gazes appear somewhat melancholic yet determined, revealing traces of physical exhaustion accumulated through years of labor, they convey a stronger sense of anticipation and hope for their journey. The fully packed travel bags placed beside their feet suggest various possibilities: perhaps they are traveling to the city to visit their children, going to a market, embarking on a journey, or preparing to return to their warm rural home after an outing. The specific destination is no longer the essential concern; what truly matters is their positive and optimistic attitude toward life.

It is precisely this sincere emotional state and resilient spirit that touches the most sensitive part of my artistic perception, motivating me to narrate, through visual representation, the warm and ordinary daily experiences of rural elderly people in the new era. Through the portrayal of these figures, *New Life II* seeks to reveal not only the physical appearance of aging farmers but also their inner dignity, emotional richness, and enduring vitality within the context of contemporary rural transformation.

Figure 2. Xuanmin Yue, *New Life II*, Oil on canvas, 160cm×120cm



The work employs a figurative and realistic oil painting language to articulate my artistic concepts while introducing new possibilities for viewers experiencing visual fatigue from conventional representations. In designing the composition, I focus on an in-depth interpretation of the elderly figures' life experiences and spiritual worlds. The proportions of the elderly couple are deliberately enlarged, occupying more than half of the pictorial space and creating a strong visual contrast with the figures in the background. This compositional strategy enables the elderly images to be presented with maximum clarity. Furthermore, the use of a low-angle perspective further emphasizes the imposing presence of the elderly figures, conveying my respect and admiration for them, while establishing the emotional foundation of the image and enhancing its visual strength and dramatic effect.

Building upon this compositional framework, the elderly figures are constructed through delicate and expressive brushwork. Fine brushes are employed to meticulously depict the textured details of the wrinkles on their faces and the roughness of their hands, revealing the hardships and resilience accumulated throughout their lives. In contrast, the depiction of their clothing, shoes, hats, and luggage adopts a more vigorous approach, characterized by broader brush movements and dynamic variations in rhythm. Through the interplay of lines and blocks of color, the painting constructs a substantial, layered, and authentic visual texture. The background is rendered through thinly applied, large-scale planar treatments, presenting a clean and simplified environment composed of chairs, floor, and walls. This restrained spatial representation serves to more effectively highlight the full and weathered figures of the elderly, strengthening the expressive tension of the composition.

In the construction of the figures, the work does not rely on external labor scenes to emphasize their identities. Instead, the traces of a lifetime of labor are embodied through their aged appearances, deeply carved wrinkles, and dry, weathered hands. However, their expressions remain gentle, calm, and dignified. Their crossed legs, folded hands, and casually resting arms on the chair back convey a relaxed and joyful psychological state, revealing their inner satisfaction and optimism toward life. The bulging luggage represents not only their improved material conditions but also carries their emotional attachments and spiritual aspirations. Integrated into the harmonious composition and passionate brushwork, these elements contribute to the painting's sense of volume, rhythm, and vitality.

Furthermore, particular attention is given to the role of color in shaping the overall atmosphere of the painting. Soft and warm tonal relationships are employed to unify the figures within a stable background environment. By reducing color saturation,

the work conveys the simplicity of the elderly figures and enhances the poetic atmosphere of the image, thereby deepening its spiritual significance. The clothing and luggage of the elderly are primarily rendered in cool tones of blue and gray, which form a striking contrast in brightness and hue with the large areas of orange-yellow represented by the seats and the vivid orange-red cotton shoes worn by the elderly woman. Meanwhile, the warm yellow tones of the figures' faces echo the color of the wall in the background, while the deep blue of the trousers establishes a subjective chromatic transition with the lighter blue tones of the floor. Through the clarity and harmony of the overall color structure, the painting highlights the centrality of the figures within an orderly visual arrangement. Combined with the subtle integration of light and shadow, brightness and darkness, as well as solidity and ambiguity, the work achieves a convergence between visual form and spiritual expression through artistic language. It ultimately reveals the emotional experiences of rural elderly people—their longing for distant children, their appreciation of family bonds, and their enjoyment of a better life in the contemporary era.

Conclusion

The process of artistic creation has enabled me to pay closer attention to the realities of rural life and to further reflect on the contemporary spirit embodied in rural painting practices^[8]. Guided by a sense of rural nostalgia, the New Life oil painting series is created through keen observation, subtle perception, and an authentic and powerful oil painting language. The works seek to extract the sincere emotions of farmers that embody truth, goodness, and beauty, focusing on their diligence, simplicity, sincerity, and integrity. Through artistic representation, the paintings reveal the spiritual connection between farmers and the land on which they depend, highlighting their shared destiny with the rural environment.

The series aims to construct vivid and confident images of farmers in the new era while portraying their joyful and fulfilling spiritual worlds^[9]. By presenting contemporary rural living environments and the spiritual outlook of new farmers, the works reflect the profound transformations occurring within rural society. The creative objective of this series lies in the continuous refinement of artistic decisions concerning thematic contexts, compositional structures, color relationships, and painterly techniques, as well as the repeated exploration of figure representation and spiritual expression. Through the realistic approach of rural oil painting, the works attempt to explore localized and culturally rooted forms of artistic expression, integrating regional experience with national cultural identity^[10], thereby achieving aesthetic resonance and emotional connection between the artwork and its viewers.

Looking toward future artistic practice, an important direction of my continued exploration is how to further nourish rural farmer-themed oil painting through the resources of traditional Chinese culture, develop an oil painting language and artistic symbols characterized by a renewed rural aesthetic, and create works that continue to represent the images of farmers in the new era while interpreting their evolving spiritual values. This pursuit will remain the enduring source of inspiration and motivation for my artistic creation.

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