

**CHINA'S REALISTIC PAINTINGS WITH
HUMANISTIC THEMES FROM 1976 TO 1989**

GUO XIAOHUI

UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA

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**CHINA'S REALISTIC PAINTINGS WITH
HUMANISTIC THEMES FROM 1976 TO 1989**

by

GUO XIAOHUI

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

PRC	People's Republic of China
CPC	Communist Party of China

CATAN REALISTIK DENGAN TEMA KEMANUSIAAN DI CHINA DARI TAHUN 1976 SEHINGGA 1989

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini meneliti evolusi catan realistik dengan tema-tema kemanusiaan di China dari tahun 1976 hingga 1989, iaitu tempoh transformasi artistik yang signifikan selepas Revolusi Kebudayaan. Menjauhi idealisme sosialis, seniman-seniman di China merangkul gaya realisme untuk menggambarkan kehidupan seharian, emosi manusia, dan realiti sosial. Penyelidikan ini menyiasat faktor-faktor yang mendorong perubahan ini, termasuk perubahan keadaan sosial, dasar kerajaan, dan peningkatan kebebasan artistik. Menggunakan kerangka teori Marxis, kajian ini menganalisis empat gerakan seni utama pada era tersebut: *Scar Art*, yang mencerminkan trauma Revolusi Kebudayaan; *Native Soil Art*, yang menggambarkan kehidupan luar bandar; Seni Realistik Neoklasik, yang menggabungkan tema-tema tradisional Cina dengan teknik-teknik artistik Barat; dan Seni Sejarah Revolusi, yang menawarkan interpretasi semula dengan bernuansakan peristiwa-peristiwa bersejarah. Dapatan menunjukkan peranan penting catan realistik ini dalam membentuk seni sezaman China, membolehkan seniman meluahkan pengalaman peribadi dan kritikan sosial melampaui batasan gaya propaganda sebelumnya. Kajian ini menyorot interaksi antara dasar kerajaan, pengaruh Barat, dan wacana budaya dalam membentuk ekspresi artistik. Dengan mendokumentasikan transformasi artistik ini dan menerapkan teori Marxis pada seni China, penyelidikan ini menawarkan wawasan baharu mengenai fungsi realisme sebagai kaedah artistik dan juga sebagai wadah refleksi sosial dalam era semasa di China. Ia menyimpulkan bahawa perkembangan artistik pada tempoh ini terus

bergema dengan seniman-seniman sezaman China, menggunakan kekuatan realisme yang berterusan untuk mencerminkan dan mencabar norma-norma masyarakat.

CHINA'S REALISTIC PAINTINGS WITH HUMANISTIC THEMES FROM 1976 TO 1989

ABSTRACT

This study examines the evolution of realistic painting with humanistic themes in China from 1976 to 1989, a period of significant artistic transformation following the Cultural Revolution. Moving away from socialist idealism, Chinese artists embraced realism to depict everyday life, human emotions, and social realities. This research investigates the factors driving this shift, including changing social conditions, government policies, and increased artistic freedom. Employing a Marxist theoretical framework, the study analyzes four key artistic movements of the era: Scar Art, reflecting the trauma of the Cultural Revolution; Native Soil Art, portraying rural life; Neoclassical Realistic Art, blending traditional Chinese themes with Western techniques; and Revolutionary Historical Art, offering nuanced reinterpretations of historical events. The findings demonstrate the crucial role of these realistic paintings in shaping contemporary Chinese art, enabling artists to express personal experiences and social critiques beyond the constraints of previous propaganda styles. The study highlights the interplay between government policy, Western influences, and cultural discourse in shaping artistic expression. By documenting this artistic transformation and applying Marxist theory to Chinese art, this research offers new insights into the function of realism as both an artistic method and a vehicle for social reflection in contemporary China. It concludes that the artistic developments of this period continue to resonate with contemporary Chinese artists, underscoring the enduring power of realism to reflect and challenge societal norms.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The growth and development of realism in China reflect the characteristics of the times and society as well as the public's demand for authenticity.¹ In the 20th century, the aesthetic concept of realism was introduced to China. It emerged from the needs of Chinese society and culture, but as society and culture in the 20th century changed, so did the emphasis and meaning of realism.² Since then, realism has significantly influenced Chinese literary and artistic thought and creation. Although postmodernism and Western modernism have proliferated in China since the mid-1980s, leading to diverse artistic tendencies, realism remains an important genre of creative expression.³

Notable differences exist between the realism of Mao's era and post-Mao neo-realism. The former is characterized by three main themes: glorifying history, praising the wise leadership of leaders, and depicting the pleasant lives of the masses. It reproduces the core elements of a state ideology. In contrast, after Mao, although the methods and perspectives of realism changed with the work of many artists, the new realist art consistently reflected the artist's independent and socially critical stance.⁴

This research examines realistic art between 1976 and 1989. This realistic art of this period differs greatly from the cultural revolution's overtly humanistic aesthetic

¹ Chuan Liu Tian, "Lun Xian Shi Zhu Yi Zai Dang Dai Zhongguo Yi Shu Fa Zhan Zhong De Liu Bian Yu Shen Hua (On the evolution and deepening of realism in the development of contemporary Chinese art)," *Fujian Tribune(The Humanities & Social Sciences Monthly)*, no. 10 (2018): 114.

² Hui Shang, "20 Shi Ji Zhongguo Mei Shu Xian Shi Zhu Yi Nei Han De Bian Hua Yu Fa Zhan (The Changing Connotations and Development of Realism in 20th Century Chinese Art)," *Literature & Art Studies* 6 (2007): 92.

³ *Ibid.*, 61.

⁴ Ming Lu Gao, *Qiang: Zhong Guo Dang Dai Yi Shu De Li Shi Yu Bian Jie (The Wall: Reshaping Contemporary Chinese Art)* (China Renmin University Press, 2006), 63.
<https://books.google.com.my/books?id=cheWAwAACAAJ>.

expression of the Cultural Revolution.⁵ The focus of artistic creation shifted from utopian fantasies of the Cultural Revolution to the everyday lives of the masses, marking a significant departure from the previous socialist realism.⁶ Therefore, this research aims to clarify the generation of China's realistic art with humanistic themes from 1976 to 1989, providing a more comprehensive understanding of Chinese art.

In this chapter the researcher provides the background of the study and introduces the problem statement, research questions, and objectives. This chapter also outlines the scope of the research, the significance of the study, the theoretical framework, and the conceptual framework. Finally, the definitions of key terms and the research methodology are discussed. This research is based on the structure described above.

1.2 Background of the Study

The evolution of Chinese art has reflected the nation's political, social, and cultural transformations,⁷ especially during the period from 1976 to 1989. Marked by the end of the Cultural Revolution⁸ and the beginning of the Reform and Opening-up⁹

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid., 66.

⁷ Wei Sheng, "Dang Dai Yi Shu De She Hui Li Shi: Lun 'Ti Zhi' Yu 'Dang Dai Yi Shu' Zhi Guan Xi (The Social History of Contemporary Art: On the relationship between 'System' and 'contemporary art')," *Art Research*, no. 02 (2014): 18.

⁸ Cultural Revolution, full named The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, was a nationwide political movement in the history of the People's Republic of China. It occurred between May 16, 1966, and October 6, 1976, across mainland China. The Cultural Revolution, initiated and led by Mao Ze Dong and the leftist faction of the Chinese Communist Party, is widely regarded as one of a series of political campaigns spearheaded by Mao. Its official commencement is generally considered to be the issuance of the "May 16 Notification" on May 16, 1966. The Cultural Revolution, lasting for a decade, had profound and far-reaching impacts on the society of the newly established China. It was subsequently repudiated in its entirety by Deng Xiao Ping and later central leadership. In retrospective evaluations, it has been negatively characterized as a Decade of Turmoil, a Decade of Chaos.

⁹ The Reform and Opening-up policy was proposed and initiated by the second-generation central leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, with Deng Xiao Ping at its core. Official implementation began following the Third Plenary Session of the 11th Central Committee of the CCP on December 18, 1978. This series of reform measures, primarily focused on economic development, can be summarized as "domestic reform and external opening". The Reform and Opening-Up policy represents a significant decision and turning point in the history of the People's Republic of China. Emerging during the "Rectification of Errors" period following the Cultural Revolution, it marked a departure from the relatively closed economic state that had characterized the preceding three decades since 1949. This policy ushered in an era of rapid economic development for mainland China.

era, this period represents a significant shift in artistic expression.¹⁰

Simultaneously, realistic art reflected the cultural liberation that followed the Cultural Revolution, embracing global influences while grappling with questions of identity and “Chineseness”.¹¹ This duality—adapting to Western aesthetic values while preserving local cultural roots—created a tension that became a driving force in contemporary Chinese art.

Realism, as a creative method, served as a bridge during these periods. Between 1976 and 1989, realism evolved from a propagandistic tool to a vehicle for authentic expression, capturing the complexities of individual and collective human experiences. This shift was driven by ideological changes, the influence of Western art, and artists’ desire to reflect real-life struggles and transformations.

This research will focus on realistic paintings with humanistic themes from 1976 to 1989, as the continuous growth and expansion of realism has become one of the most prominent features of Chinese modern art, particularly in painting and other media.¹²

In China, the concept of realism is a Western import.¹³ The development of realistic oil painting in China has largely paralleled the country’s social development over the past century. Consequently, every change in painting language reflects the evolution of social structure.¹⁴

China has been a semi-colonial and semi-feudal society since the Opium War, when the feudal system was completely dismantled. This enormous social

¹⁰ Yue Jin Zou, *Xin Zhongguo Mei Shu Shi: 1949-2000 (A History of Chinese Fine Art: 1949-2000)* (Changsha: Hunan Fine Arts Publishing House, 2002), 153.

¹¹ Chi Yu Chen, "Xian Shi Zhu Yi Zai Zhong Guo De Ming Yun (The Fate of Realism in China)," *Journal of Nanjing Arts Institute (Fine Arts & Design)*, no. 06 (2012): 66.

¹² Gao, Qiang: *Zhong Guo Dang Dai Yi Shu De Li Shi Yu Bian Jie (The Wall: Reshaping Contemporary Chinese Art)*, 63.

¹³ Geriletu, "Lun Zhong Guo Xin Shi Qi De Xian Shi Zhu Yi Yi Shu (Discussion of The “Realism” Arts in The New Era of China)," *Chinese Art*, no. 04 (2011): 122.

¹⁴ Xiao Dong Xu, "20 Shi Ji 80 Nian Dai Zhongguo Xie Shi You Hua Yu Yan Yan Jiu (Study of Realism Oil Painting in Language 1980’s China)" (PhD, Chinese National Academy of Arts, 2010), 6, Cnki.

transformation profoundly affected on China's traditional value system, which had existed for thousands of years. To save the country, Chinese intellectuals began to learn from the West for various reasons. However, this process was repeatedly interrupted by numerous internal and external conflicts in China over the past century, resulting in a perpetually one-sided adoption of Western education. As a foreign art form, realistic oil painting underwent a lengthy period of development in China in order to discover the true Western tradition.

Since realism is a concept borrowed from the West, it was translated as *xie shi zhu yi* (synonymous with naturalism) in the early days of introduction to China, due to differences in understanding.¹⁵ In correspondence between Chen Du Xiu and Lyu Zheng in 1918, Chen proposed his own solutions to the issues in the Chinese art circle:

*"If you want to improve Chinese painting, you must first change the life of Wang Painting¹⁶, because the improvement of Chinese painting must adopt the spirit of realism in oil painting."*¹⁷

The concept of *realism* was not further explored or advocated until the May 4th New Culture Movement. In his article *Xian Dai Ou Zhou Wen Yi Shi Tan (The History of Modern European Literature and Art)*, Chen Du Xiu examined the evolution of European realist literature.¹⁸ He described the development of Classicalism, Romanticism, and Realism, and identified the deficiencies of "glitz and decadence" in Chinese literature and art. Compared to European literature and art, he stated, Chinese

¹⁵ Before the PRC (1949), "realism" was all translated into "naturalism". In order to show this research more clearly, researcher uses the concept of realism uniformly.

¹⁶ Wang Painting refers to the painting styles of four Wang surnamed landscape painters in the early Qing Dynasty. These four painters are: Wang Shimin, Wang Jian, Wang Hui and Wang Yuanqi. They were the representative figures of the landscape painting circle at that time, mainly imitating ancient styles and emphasizing the charm of brush and ink. They were respected as the "Orthodox School" and had a profound influence on later generations.

¹⁷ Shuang Xi Yin, ed., *20 Shi Ji Zhongguo Mei Shu Pi Ping Wen Xuan (Selected Critical Works of Chinese Art in The 20th Century)* (Hebei Fine Arts Publishing House, 2017), 75.

¹⁸ "Xian Dai Ou Zhou Wen Yi Shi Tan (The History of Modern European Literature and Art)," wikisource, updated June 12, 2021, 1915, accessed April 7th, 2023, <https://zh.wikisource.org/w/index.php?title=%E6%96%B0%E9%9D%92%E5%B9%B4/%E7%AC%AC01%E5%8D%B7&oldid=2036666>.

literature and art were still in the period of Classicalism and Romanticism. In the future, there would be a tendency toward Realist paintings and sketching.¹⁹ In other words, compared with Western painting, the development of Chinese painting was still in the classical and romantic stages of Western painting, and there was no tradition of using realistic art to educate the public. At that time, Chinese literature and art were still obsessed with the pursuit of ancient traditions, such as the imitation of ancient classical Chinese in literature and the prevalence of the “Si Wang²⁰” model in Qing Dynasty painting. Even the imitation of ancient literary and art forms had developed to an extreme, which Chen Du Xiu called “glitz and decadence.”. He called on Chinese literature and art to engage with reality in order to educate the public.

From this period, the idea of transforming Chinese painting from the pursuit of ancient forms to realism began to influence the Chinese art world. In other words, Chinese painting shifted from focusing on the forms of the “Si Wang” to engaging with society and reality, and began to represent social reality in its content.

During the National Exhibition of Fine Arts in 1929, Xu Bei Hong published articles discussing Western realism and modernism in painting.²¹ From then on, Xu Bei Hong set out to transform Chinese painting through realism. This discussion attracted attention within the art community at the time and led to a division in Chinese fine arts, especially oil painting, into two camps: realism and modernism. However, with the

¹⁹ Ru Shui, ed., *Chen Du Xiu Shu Xin Ji (The Collected Letters of Chen Du Xiu)* (Beijing: Xin Hua Publishing House, 1987), 20.

²⁰ “Si Wang” refers to the four Wang landscape painters of the Qing Dynasty, namely Wang Shi Min, Wang Jian, Wang Hui and Wang Yuan Qi. The common feature of their artistic thoughts is to imitate the ancients and regard the brushwork of famous writers in Song and Yuan Dynasties as the highest standard.

²¹ Yin, *20 Shi Ji Zhongguo Mei Shu Pi Ping Wen Xuan (Selected Critical Works of Chinese Art in The 20th Century)*, 76-78.

outbreak of the War of Resistance against Japan, realistic painting developed further due to its use in wartime propaganda.²²

Realistic art, as a tool of the mainstream system to educate the masses, became especially significant after the founding of the PRC. From the establishment of the PRC through the end of the Cultural Revolution, Chinese art developed new forms and styles in accordance with Mao Ze Dong's literary, artistic, and social objectives. Cultural Revolution art brought Mao's thought art to its zenith, completing the construction of all concepts and languages, creating styles and creative processes that fully aligned with Mao's ideas and social values, and became the visual emblem of Mao's era.²³

From 1949 to 1976, the characteristics of artworks over nearly 30 years can be summarized as “Hong, Guang, Liang (Red, Bright, and Shining)” and “Gao, Da, Quan (Sublime, Outstanding, and Perfect).”²⁴ The features of “Hong, Guang, Liang” reflected the Maoist aim to entertain and inspire the masses. These characteristics combined the bright and colorful elements of Chinese folk art, especially those found in Chinese New Year paintings, which were popular with ordinary people. The figures were depicted as strong and healthy, with ruddy faces, and the works displayed a distinct inclination and elevated style. The so-called “Gao, Da, Quan” meant that the person depicted in the painting should appear noble or heroic, the painting should convey a positive socialist atmosphere, and express the proletariat's perfect abilities. Therefore, the artworks of the first 30 years of the PRC reflected these thematic characteristics in both form and content under political control.

²² Jian Wu Huang, "Xin Wen Hua Yun Dong Zhong De Mei Shu Si Xiang Lun Zheng Dui Kang Zhan Shi Qi Mei Shu De Ying Xiang—Cong Xi Fang Xie Shi Zhu Yi Jing Shen Xiang Zhong Guo Xian Shi Zhu Yi Mei Shu De Chan Bian (The Impact of The Art Thought Debate within The New Culture Movement on Art during The Anti-Japanese War — The Transition from Western Realistic Spirit to Chinese Realistic Art)," *Art Panorama*, no. 08 (2020): 81.

²³ Yue Jin Zou, *Xin Zhong Guo Mei Shu Shi : 1949-2000 (A History of Chinese Fine Art: 1949-2000)* (Changsha: Hunan Fine Arts Publishing House, 2002), 127.

²⁴ Tsong-Zung Chang, Valerie C Doran, and Li Xian Ting, *China's New Art, Post-1989/With a Retrospective from 1979-1989* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994), XII.

With the death of Mao Ze Dong and the fall of the Gang of Four²⁵ in 1976, China ended its decade-long Cultural Revolution and entered a New Era.²⁶ At that time, the governmental system was undergoing significant changes, which directly affected all sectors of Chinese society, including the fine arts. After the harsh winter of the Cultural Revolution, Chinese intellectuals became more engaged and eager for knowledge.²⁷ In other words, there was a growing desire among the Chinese population during the post-Cultural Revolution era (from 1976 onward) for intellectual, artistic, and cultural content that reflected reality and human experience, rather than ideological propaganda. The Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, held in 1978, marked China's entry into a new age of Reform and Opening Up, which made the divide and differences between China and the rest of the world more apparent. According to Yan Wei Si, the decade of the 1980s was dominated by the pursuit of new concepts, new lifestyles, and new creative forms.²⁸ A tidal wave of Western concepts and philosophies swept into China. The Western way of life captivated the inquisitive and youthful eyes of the Chinese like a magnet, and Chinese society was full of momentum for significant change.

All of these changes, including the reinstatement of the college entrance examination (Gao Kao), the resumption or creation of professional fine arts journals,

²⁵ "The Gang of Four" refers to four of the most influential political figures during the late stage of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) in China. They were Jiang Qing, Zhang Chun Qiao, Yao Wen Yuan, and Wang Hong Wen. During the later years of the Cultural Revolution, the Gang of Four controlled China's propaganda, ideology, and partial political power. They were considered key driving forces behind the Cultural Revolution. Through manipulating the media, launching political persecution campaigns, and suppressing political opponents both inside and outside the Communist Party, they actively promoted an extreme revolutionary agenda.

²⁶ Hans Van Dijk, "Painting in China After the Cultural Revolution: Style Developments and Theoretical Debates Part I: 1979-1985," *China Information* 6, no. 3 (1991): 25, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0920203x9100600302>, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0920203X9100600302>.

²⁷ Michael Sullivan, *Art and Artists of Twentieth-Century China (ii)* (Shanghai China: Shanghai People's Publishing House, 2013), 402.

²⁸ Yan Wei Si, "Er Shi Shi Ji Ba Shi Nian Dai De Zhongguo Dang Dai Wen Xue Pi Ping De Chao Liu Hua Wen Ti (The "Trendiness" of Chinese Contemporary Literary Criticism in The 1980s)," *Literature & Art Studies*, no. 10 (2021): 81.

and the rehabilitation of artists persecuted since the founding of the PRC, created favourable conditions for the flourishing of the fine arts.

Even forty years later, the 1980s are regarded as a golden age for creativity, intellectual freedom, westernization, and rebellion against convention.²⁹ This period not only continued the realist creative heritage established since the founding of the PRC, but was also distinct from Soviet or socialist realism. While socialist realism promotes the idealized portrayal of socialist values and collective progress, humanistic themes focus on individual experiences, emotional resonance, and moral reflection, even when these are situated within a socialist framework. As the political restrictions on art production were loosened, artists grew weary of clichéd displays of fanaticism for leaders and idealized hymns to the perfect socialist existence. Instead, they became more inclined to focus on the everyday lives of ordinary people. This shift was closely related to the discussion of “humanism” in society at that time.³⁰

The discussion of humanism emerged as a result of the Reform and Opening-up, which encouraged people to open their minds.³¹ The main reason why humanistic issues became a concern is that, since the founding of the PRC, several political campaigns resulted in significant miscarriages of justice, often associated with class struggle and the handling of disputes and conflicts in thought, academia, literature, and art.³² After the implementation of the Reform and Opening-up policy, people had the opportunity to reflect on the nature of humanity itself.

The transition and shift of Chinese fine arts from Mao’s era to the new age of Reform and Opening-up, from 1976 to 1979, was unique to this period of realistic art.³³

²⁹ "Yu Zhu Wei Chong Du Ba Shi Nian Dai (Rereading 80's with Zhu Wei)," Sanlian Lifeweek, 2018, accessed April 8, 2022, <https://www.chinawriter.com.cn/n1/2018/0915/c405057-30295035.html>.

³⁰ Shang, "20 Shi Ji Zhongguo Mei Shu Xian Shi Zhu Yi Nei Han De Bian Hua Yu Fa Zhan (The Changing Connotations and Development of Realism in 20th Century Chinese Art)," 98.

³¹ Zou, *Xin Zhong Guo Mei Shu Shi : 1949-2000 (A History of Chinese Fine Art: 1949-2000)*, 166.

³² Zou, *Xin Zhongguo Mei Shu Shi: 1949-2000 (A History of Chinese Fine Art: 1949-2000)*, 166.

³³ Ibid.

According to Gao Ming Lu, the art of this time was the origin of contemporary Chinese art.³⁴ In other words, after the Cultural Revolution, Chinese art entered the stage of contemporary art. The concept of Chinese contemporary art is different from that of Western contemporary art. It is the general term for new artistic phenomena after the Cultural Revolution. Realism, in contrast to the socialist realism of the Maoist period, rejects creative representations that celebrate history, eulogize the sage guidance of leaders, and portray the joyful life of the proletariat as mere replications of state doctrine. Instead, it consistently demonstrates the artist's independence and societal critique.³⁵

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate the developmental logic of Chinese realistic art with a humanistic focus from 1976 to 1989, in order to provide a clearer understanding of Chinese art.

1.3 Problem Statement

The evolution of realism in China reflects the characteristics of the era and culture, along with the public's yearning for authenticity.³⁶ In this study, the term realism refers to an approach to artistic creation that seeks to depict actual life by representing characteristic eras, social events, and individuals in a manner that preserves the authentic style and appearance of real life.³⁷ The concept of realism was introduced to China in the 20th century. It arose from the intrinsic needs of Chinese society and culture; however, as societal and cultural dynamics evolved throughout the 20th century, so too did its significance and implications.³⁸ Since the 20th century, realism has

³⁴ Gao, *Qiang: Zhong Guo Dang Dai Yi Shu De Li Shi Yu Bian Jie (The Wall: Reshaping Contemporary Chinese Art)*, 17.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Tian, "Lun Xian Shi Zhu Yi Zai Dang Dai Zhongguo Yi Shu Fa Zhan Zhong De Liu Bian Yu Shen Hua (On the evolution and deepening of realism in the development of contemporary Chinese art)," 114.

³⁷ Xian Ting Li, "Xian Shi Zhu Yi Bu Shi Wei Yi Zheng Que De Tu Jing (Realism Is Not the Only Correct Approach)," *Art Magazine*, no. 02 (1981): 46.

³⁸ Shang, "20 Shi Ji Zhongguo Mei Shu Xian Shi Zhu Yi Nei Han De Bian Hua Yu Fa Zhan (The Changing Connotations and Development of Realism in 20th Century Chinese Art)," 92.

significantly impacted Chinese literary and artistic concepts and production.³⁹ Despite the proliferation of postmodernism and Western modernism in China since the mid-1980s, realism remains a significant genre of artistic expression.⁴⁰

In the art history of the PRC, there was a long period when propagandistic realistic art was dominant.⁴¹ It is worth noting that after the end of the Cultural Revolution, this trend changed dramatically, and realistic painting began to abandon the socialist realist creation model as a state apparatus, instead focusing on history, society, and personal values. This kind of realistic art demonstrates the artist's independence and critical social attitude.⁴² To provide a clear and focused research scope, this study examines Chinese realist paintings with humanistic themes created between 1976 and 1989, a period shaped by decisive political and cultural moments such as the ideological debates following the Reform and Opening-up policy, the 1978 Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee, and the Anti-Spiritual Pollution campaign. These historical anchors allow the research problem to remain specific while capturing the complexity of the period.

The past advancements in the field of Chinese realistic art from 1976 to 1989 have shown a clear need and inadequacy in the exploration and study of realistic art, particularly in terms of comprehensive research on realistic art during this period. Most research in the field of art history has primarily focused on descriptive and summarizing studies, with limited work conducted within a clear theoretical framework.

³⁹ Ibid., 61.

⁴⁰ Hui Shang, "Xian Shi Zhu Yi De Zhongguo Hua Tan Suo: Xin Zhongguo You Hua 70 Nian De Shen Mei Zai Zao (Sinicizing Explorations of the Realism in China: The Aesthetic Renaissance of Chinese Oil Painting in the Past 70 Years)," *Art Magazine*, no. 11 (2019): 61; Shang, "20 Shi Ji Zhongguo Mei Shu Xian Shi Zhu Yi Nei Han De Bian Hua Yu Fa Zhan (The Changing Connotations and Development of Realism in 20th Century Chinese Art)."

⁴¹ Guey-Meei Yang and Tom Suchan, "The Cultural Revolution and Contemporary Chinese Art," *Art Education* 62, no. 6 (2009): 25.

⁴² Ming Lu Gao, *Qiang: Zhongguo Dang Dai Yi Shu De Li Shi Yu Bian Jie (The Wall: Reshaping Contemporary Chinese Art)* (China Renmin University Press, 2006), 63.
<https://books.google.com.my/books?id=cheWAwAACAAJ>.

Simultaneously, the research on Chinese realistic paintings with humanistic themes can be divided into three categories:

The first category includes Scar Art and Native Soil Realistic Art as examples of realistic paintings with humanistic themes. The main argument is that artists in the New Era return to traditional experiences to explore the modern aesthetic value of universal human nature.⁴³ These paintings focus on the ordinary and everyday aspects of rural life, reflecting humanistic care and praise for working people.⁴⁴

The second category consists of theorists such as Chen Chi Yu and Shang Hui, who classify Scar Art, Native Soil Realistic Art, Neoclassical Art, and Revolutionary History Paintings of this period as realistic art with humanistic themes. They acknowledge that Scar Art and Native Soil Realistic Art seek the truth of human nature through memories of the Cultural Revolution and rural life.⁴⁵ Additionally, Shang Hui points out that neoclassical painting reflects contemporary Chinese visual experience and spiritual psychology.⁴⁶ Revolutionary History Painting, meanwhile, transforms the deified leader into a human leader, offering different perspectives on the interpretation of humanistic theme painting.⁴⁷ However, these articles provide only a brief overview of the development of realism in the PRC and a simple list of representative works, without in-depth analysis.

⁴³ Ibid., 69; Zou, *Xin Zhongguo Mei Shu Shi: 1949-2000 (A History of Chinese Fine Art: 1949-2000)*, 165.

⁴⁴ Gui Yan He, "20 Shi Ji 80 Nian Dai Sichuan Xiang Tu You Hua De Xing Qi Yu Shan Bian (The rise and evolution of Sichuan local oil painting in the 1980s)," *Art Observation*, no. 12 (2019): 68, http://106.53.219.187:8085/kcms2/article/abstract?v=Vof-4b7nxdCD2RX3WqGK4a2MyjiV7ImRQ_4XqwqGOlsKIVdnd5gFFH5ZbyUQ2L-gzIEgAKiYOsBMITbPNZqYoWPMY6TDvOmRx4gmUtXaSB9qDHim3EdeN0vbQw4OH5eugBR168Z8uTBvYSuStYQqww==&uniplatform=NZKPT&language=CHS.

⁴⁵ Chen, "Xian Shi Zhu Yi Zai Zhong Guo De Ming Yun (The Fate of Realism in China)," 66-67; Shang, "Xian Shi Zhu Yi De Zhongguo Hua Tan Suo: Xin Zhongguo You Hua 70 Nian De Shen Mei Zai Zao (Sinicizing Explorations of the Realism in China: The Aesthetic Renaissance of Chinese Oil Painting in the Past 70 Years)," 010-11.

⁴⁶ Shang, "Xian Shi Zhu Yi De Zhongguo Hua Tan Suo: Xin Zhongguo You Hua 70 Nian De Shen Mei Zai Zao (Sinicizing Explorations of the Realism in China: The Aesthetic Renaissance of Chinese Oil Painting in the Past 70 Years)," 011.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

The third category comprises case studies and thematic studies of realism art in the New Era⁴⁸. This research focuses on specific artists, art forms, styles, and works to explore the narrative characteristics of 1980s realist art.⁴⁹ While these studies provide detailed visual analysis of artworks, they often lack theoretical support.

Despite the proliferation of postmodernism and Western modernism in China since the mid-1980s, realism remains a significant genre of artistic expression.⁵⁰ The continued presence of realistic painting underscores the ongoing need to examine the connection between art and social change.⁵¹ However, previous studies on Chinese realistic paintings, particularly those with humanistic themes from 1976 to 1989, often lack a suitable theoretical framework to adequately contextualize their evolution. This theoretical gap limits the depth of analysis regarding how socio-economic transformations underpin artistic expression during this period.

By adopting Marxist art theory as the guiding analytical framework, this study directly links the research problem to the base–superstructure relationship, allowing for an examination of how economic, political, and ideological changes collectively shaped the emergence of humanistic realism in China. While “realism” broadly denotes the faithful representation of life as it is, “humanistic realism” integrates this representational approach with an emphasis on empathy, moral reflection, and the portrayal of human dignity and emotional depth. From a Marxist perspective, art is a

⁴⁸ In the context of contemporary Chinese history, New Era, also mentioned by New Period refers to the historical period following the Third Plenary Session of the 11th Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party. This era is characterized by a shift in political focus toward economic development and the implementation of socialism with Chinese characteristics, with reform and opening-up serving as its central political themes.

⁴⁹ Jing Qi Wu, "Xin Shi Qi Yi Lai Xian Shi Zhu Yi Mei Shu Liu Bian Ji Mei Xue Biao Zheng — Ji Zhong Yu You Hua De Pou Xi (The evolution and aesthetic representation of realistic art since the new era - focusing on the analysis of oil painting)" (PhD, Liaoning University, 2017), Cnki; Xu, "20 Shi Ji 80 Nian Dai Zhongguo Xie Shi You Hua Yu Yan Yan Jiu (Study of Realism Oil Painting in Language 1980's China)".

⁵⁰ Shang, "20 Shi Ji Zhongguo Mei Shu Xian Shi Zhu Yi Nei Han De Bian Hua Yu Fa Zhan (The Changing Connotations and Development of Realism in 20th Century Chinese Art)", 92.

⁵¹ Shang, "Xian Shi Zhu Yi De Zhongguo Hua Tan Suo: Xin Zhongguo You Hua 70 Nian De Shen Mei Zai Zao (Sinicizing Explorations of the Realism in China: The Aesthetic Renaissance of Chinese Oil Painting in the Past 70 Years)", 6.

product of its socio-economic conditions, with the superstructure—including cultural and ideological forms like art—both reflecting and shaping the material base.⁵² The emergence of humanistic realism in China during this transformative era corresponds to the ideological shifts prompted by the end of the Cultural Revolution and the subsequent policy of Reform and Opening-up. It should be pointed out that, in this study, humanistic realism is an approach to artistic creation that combines the representational accuracy of realism with a deep concern for the fundamental conditions, values, and dignity of human life. It seeks to portray characteristic eras, social events, and individual experiences with authenticity, while emphasising empathy, moral reflection, and the complexity of the human condition.

In addition, this study's approach emphasises not only the socio-historical background but also the visual and cultural dimensions of the paintings, analysing composition, colour, subject matter, and symbolic meaning alongside contextual interpretation.⁵³ This ensures that the focus remains firmly on the works of art themselves and their cultural resonance, rather than reducing the discussion to political history.

This study aims to address these theoretical and empirical deficiencies by using Marxist art theory to analyze the principles of Chinese humanistic realism from 1976 to 1989. It examines the relationship between the socio-economic foundation and the ideological superstructure to demonstrate how Chinese realistic paintings with humanistic themes serve as tools for expressing societal critiques and humanistic principles in response to significant cultural and political changes.⁵⁴

⁵² Gordon Graham, "The Marxist theory of art," *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 37, no. 2 (1997), <https://doi.org/10.1093/BJAESTHETICS/37.2.109>.

⁵³ Art Johnson Museum of, *Visual Analysis 101*, Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University (Ithaca, NY, 2024), <https://museum.cornell.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Johnson-Museum-Visual-Analysis-101.pdf>.

⁵⁴ Raymond Williams, "Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory," *New Left Review* 82 (1973), <https://newleftreview.org/issues/i82/articles/raymond-williams-base-and-superstructure-in-marxist-cultural-theory>.

In doing so, the research problem engages directly with multiple academic audiences: for art historians, it traces the evolution of a pivotal genre in contemporary Chinese art; for cultural studies scholars, it reveals how visual culture interacts with political transformation; and for social theorists, it demonstrates the applicability of Marxist theory to visual analysis in a non-Western modern context.⁵⁵

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate the generation of Chinese realistic art with humanistic subjects from 1976 to 1989 by using Marxist art theory, thereby providing a clearer understanding of Chinese contemporary art.

1.4 Research Objectives and Research Questions

The main purpose of this research is to understand the overall logic of the development of Chinese realistic art with humanistic theme from 1976 to 1989, which can provide a clearer understanding of the origins of Chinese contemporary art. To achieve this aim, the following specific objectives have been identified:

- (i) To identify the historical development process of Chinese realistic paintings with humanistic theme from 1976 to 1989.
- (ii) To explore the causes behind the aesthetic evolution process of Chinese realistic paintings with humanistic theme from 1976 to 1989.
- (iii) To synthesize the value of Chinese realistic painting with humanistic theme from 1976 to 1989 within the context of Chinese contemporary art.

In this research, Objective 1 is addressed in Chapter 4, Objective 2 is examined in Chapter 5, and Objective 3 is discussed in Chapter 6.

⁵⁵ Journal Selva, "A Marxist Alternative," *Selva: A Journal of the History of Art 2* (2020), <https://selvajournal.org/article/a-marxist-alternative/>.

This research seeks to answer the following research questions:

- (i) What are the development process and progression of Chinese realistic paintings with humanistic theme from 1976 to 1989?
- (ii) What are the causes of aesthetic evolution process of Chinese realistic paintings with humanistic theme in this period?
- (iii) What is the value of Chinese realistic painting with humanistic themes from 1976 to 1989 for Chinese contemporary art?

1.5 Scope of the Research

The scope of this study is limited to humanistic-themed Chinese realistic paintings created by Chinese artists between 1976 and 1989. This period was chosen because it marks a significant turning point in China's art history.⁵⁶ With the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1976 and the introduction of Reform and Opening-up policies in 1978, Chinese art transitioned away from strict Maoist ideologies. During this time, realistic paintings underwent major developments, integrating humanistic themes that reflected societal, political, and cultural shifts.⁵⁷ This era represents the emergence of artistic freedom and the exploration of new forms of realism, making it essential for understanding the evolution of modern Chinese art.⁵⁸

This research does not consider other disciplines of Chinese realist visual arts, such as sculpture, ink painting, and printmaking, in order to allow for a more focused

⁵⁶ Hans Van Dijk, "Painting in China After the Cultural Revolution: Style Developments and Theoretical Debates Part I: 1979-1985," *China Information* 6, no. 3 (1991): 25.

⁵⁷ Tian, "Lun Xian Shi Zhu Yi Zai Dang Dai Zhongguo Yi Shu Fa Zhan Zhong De Liu Bian Yu Shen Hua (On the evolution and deepening of realism in the development of contemporary Chinese art)," 114.

⁵⁸ Wu, "Xin Shi Qi Yi Lai Xian Shi Zhu Yi Mei Shu Liu Bian Ji Mei Xue Biao Zheng — Ji Zhong Yu You Hua De Pou Xi (The evolution and aesthetic representation of realistic art since the new era - focusing on the analysis of oil painting)," 46.

exploration of the unique characteristics and creative strategies within the medium of oil painting. This narrower scope ensures the research remains manageable and targeted, providing detailed insights into this specific art form without being overwhelmed by the diversity of Chinese realist traditions.

The realistic artworks analyzed in this research are characterized by their use of realist painting techniques, which create art that resembles real people and objects, to depict the objective world. These works are also noted for their thorough and unembellished depictions of nature or modern life.⁵⁹

According to Bao Dong, humanistic paintings are those that demonstrate a concern for the most fundamental aspects of human existence, such as basic living conditions and the importance of human values.⁶⁰ This study identifies key criteria for humanistic painting, focusing on subject matter that depicts ordinary life, societal struggles, and individual emotions. It emphasizes a purpose centered on human dignity and the critique of oppressive ideologies. The aesthetic approach prioritizes realism to convey authenticity and depth, highlighting the human condition, individual freedom, and socio-political reflection.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The subject of this research is China's realistic painting with humanistic themes, focusing on the period between 1976 and 1989, during which Chinese society and the art context underwent major transformations.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Xi Jing Zhi, "Xian Shi Zhu Yi, Xie Shi Zhu Yi Yu Qi Ta (Realism and Others)," *Fine Art Studies*, no. 2 (1979): 34, <https://doi.org/CNKI:SUN:MUSE.0.1979-02-008>.

⁶⁰ Dong Bao, "Xiang Tu Hui Hua Yu 80 Nian Dai "Ren Dao Zhu Yi" Hua Yu De Jian Gou (A Relatively Artistic Vision: Building a Discourse on Regional Art and Humanism)," *Dongfang Art* no. 3 (2012): 62.

⁶¹ Lei Dong, "Mian Yan Yu Tui Bian-1978-2008 Xian Shi Zhu Yi Mei Shu De Li Shi Xu Shi (Stretching And Transmutation 1978-2008 Art in The Historical Narrative Realism)" (PhD dis, Chinese National Academy of Arts,

During this period, the end of the Cultural Revolution and the beginning of Reform and Opening-up in China led to significant changes in Chinese art, altering the mode of realistic literary and artistic creation that had prevailed for the previous 30 years. This shift directed critical attention toward real life.⁶² The mainstream art production group completely overthrew conventional realistic art, specifically the stylized creation mode, and initiated a preliminary exploration of new content and forms of realistic art in the New Era.

This research is significant as it compiles various academic documents and viewpoints related to China's realistic paintings with humanistic themes from 1976 to 1989, providing a valuable reference for future researchers.

In addition, this research facilitates a comprehensive understanding of the characteristics and underlying logic in the development of realistic art with humanistic themes during the new period. It offers insights into the relationship between artistic expression and broader socio-political transformations, emphasizing how art functions as both a reflection and a critique of its era.

Furthermore, this study expands the scope of empirical research on the application of Marxist theory in Chinese realistic painting during this era. By contextualizing these works within their social history, the study offers a methodological contribution to academic discourse on art history, emphasizing the role of realism in shaping contemporary Chinese artistic identity.

2010), 5, CNKI.

⁶² Chen, "Xian Shi Zhu Yi Zai Zhong Guo De Ming Yun (The Fate of Realism in China)."

1.7 Theoretical Framework

This research is primarily based on the Marxist theoretical method. Marxist art theory emphasizes the connection between artistic expression and the broader social, economic, and political conditions of its time.⁶³ Since this study examines Chinese realistic paintings with humanistic themes during a period of significant societal transformation (1976 – 1989), Marxist theory provides a framework for understanding how these paintings reflect and respond to such changes. The theoretical framework is shown in Figure 1.1.

According to the Marxist theoretical framework, human society is divided into two components: the base and the superstructure.⁶⁴ The term “base” refers to the social system’s mode of production, specifically the forces of production and their relationships. Examples include the contractual arrangements between employers and workers, the technical division of labor, and the connections between the parties’ respective possessions. The word “superstructure” refers to social relations and ideas that exist outside the production process, such as culture, institutions, political power structures, social roles, rituals, religion, the media, and the government. The superstructure is not only influenced by the base; the base may also be affected by the superstructure.⁶⁵

⁶³ Anne D’Alleva, *Methods & Theories of Art History*, trans. Xu Jia (Beijing: People's Fine Arts Publishing House, 2017), 63.

⁶⁴ "Preface to the Critique of Political Economy," 1859, accessed April 12, 2023, <https://www.marxists.org/chinese/marx/06.htm>.

⁶⁵ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Complete Works of Marx and Engels*, vol. 37 (Beijing: People's Publishing House, 2006), 460-62.

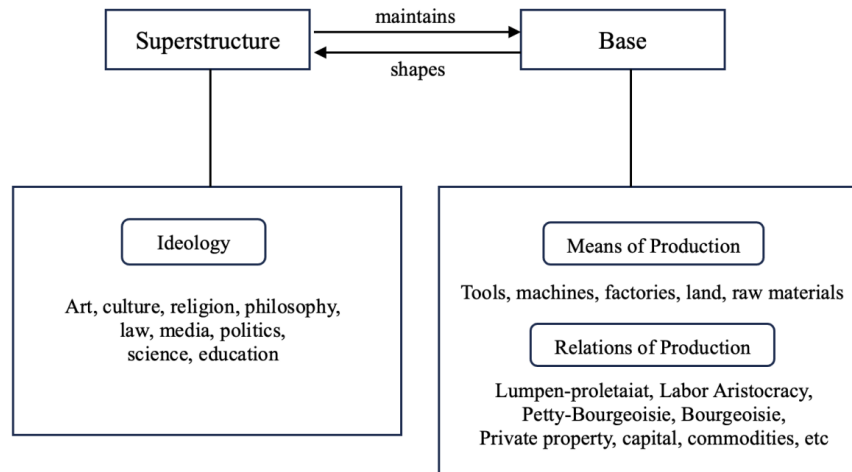


Figure 1.1

Theoretical Framework

Marxist theory serves as a critical tool for understanding the evolution of artistic practices, especially within the context of Chinese realistic paintings from 1976 to 1989. According to Marxist theory, art and culture are deeply influenced by the socio-economic base, which constitutes the mode of production and its associated relations.⁶⁶ The superstructure, encompassing political, ideological, and cultural domains, reflects and interacts with this economic base. Within this framework, art is both a product of societal conditions and a medium through which social critique and transformation can occur.

This study specifically draws on Marxist aesthetics and its focus on the dialectical relationship between socio-economic structures and artistic production, analyzing how artworks function as both reflections and critiques of their socio-political conditions. In this research context, Marxist theory provides the foundation for examining how Chinese realistic paintings emerged and evolved in response to the

⁶⁶Thomas Munro, "The Marxist Theory of Art History: Socio-Economic Determinism and the Dialectical Process," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 18, no. 4 (1960): 436, <https://doi.org/10.2307/428109>, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/428109>.

socio-political and economic transformations of the era. These changes allowed for greater artistic freedom and exploration of individual and societal realities, which had previously been suppressed under strict ideological controls.

Realistic paintings during this period, influenced by Marxist principles, often depicted the struggles, aspirations, and lived experiences of ordinary people, thereby aligning with the Marxist emphasis on human dignity. This approach also critiqued earlier propagandist art styles by focusing on authentic representations of human conditions rather than glorified and idealized portrayals of socialism.

In this study, for Research Question 2, which explores the reasons for the aesthetic evolution of these paintings, this framework helps to show how changes in Chinese policies, social conditions, and artists' personal experiences have affected the way they paint. The Marxist idea of base and superstructure explains the impact of economic and political changes on artistic styles.

Research Question 3 examines the value of these paintings in contemporary Chinese art, using a framework that helps to understand how these artworks reflect human struggles and emotions. These paintings demonstrate human concern, realistic challenges, and aesthetic reflection. Marxist theory supports this, emphasizing that art should represent real life and serve society.

By employing Marxist theory, this research elaborates on the interplay between the socio-economic changes of the time and the aesthetic evolution of realistic art with humanistic themes, demonstrating how the art both reflected and influenced societal shifts. This perspective not only highlights the artistic responses to historical

transformations but also underscores the role of art as a medium of ideological and cultural discourse.

1.8 Conceptual Framework

Based on Marxist theoretical method, the conceptual framework of this research is shown below:

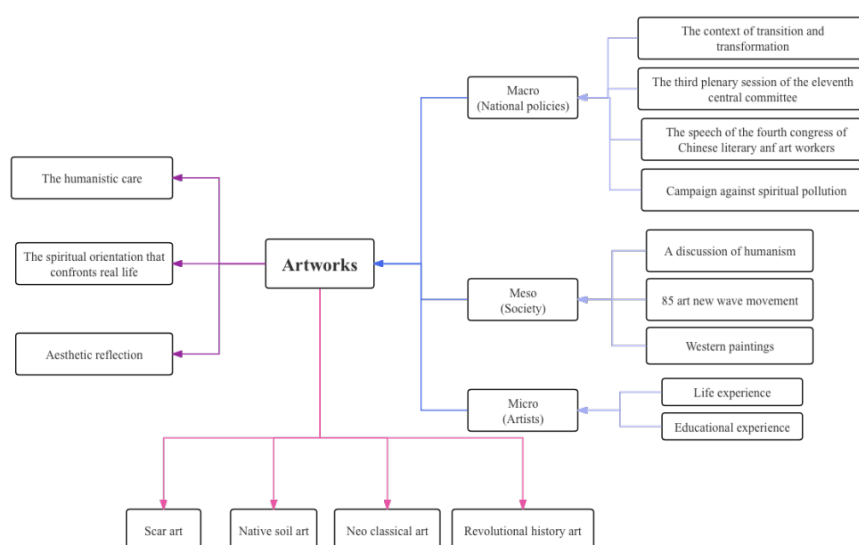


Figure 1.2

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework (Figure 1.2) of this study, grounded in Marxist art theory, serves as the primary lens for analyzing the development of Chinese realist paintings with humanistic themes from 1976 to 1989. The framework demonstrates the interrelationship between three central aspects of the research: the evolution of Chinese realist paintings with humanistic themes from 1976 to 1989, the causes behind their aesthetic transformation, and the significance of these artistic developments within the context of Chinese contemporary art. These aspects form an interconnected process that reflects the dynamic interaction between society, culture, and artistic practice.

The conceptual framework situates four representative artistic forms—Scar Art, Native Soil Art, Neoclassical Realistic Art, and Revolutionary Historical Art—as the central outcomes of this period. These movements collectively reflect the transformation of realism from propagandistic functions to more independent and human-centered expressions. It emphasizes that the development of these art forms constitutes the historical trajectory of Chinese humanistic realism in the post-Cultural Revolution and Reform era.

The framework further shows how different factors in various levels—such as Macro level, Meso level, and Micro level—together shaped the emergence of distinct artistic forms. At the Macro level, state policies and ideological campaigns provided the institutional environment that either restricted or encouraged particular forms of artistic expression. At the Meso level, social and cultural conditions—including debates on humanism, the influence of the 85 New Wave movement and the influx of Western art—created an intellectual atmosphere conducive to innovation and critical reflection. At the Micro level, artists' personal experiences, such as the trauma of the Cultural Revolution, rural life encounters, and academic training, directly shaped their artistic strategies. By linking these levels together, the conceptual framework clarifies how structural, cultural, and individual factors jointly contributed to the aesthetic transformation of realist painting during this period.

Finally, the framework underscores the significance of these artistic developments in three dimensions: humanistic care, spiritual orientation that confronts real life, and aesthetic reflection. These values demonstrate how the paintings not only represented social change but also articulated critical perspectives on human dignity, existential struggles, and the complexities of lived experience. By emphasizing authenticity, empathy, and reflection, these works departed from the idealized formulas

of socialist realism and contributed to broader cultural discourse. The conceptual framework thus visually synthesizes the research logic of this study: Macro–Meso–Micro causes lead to distinct artistic evolutions, which in turn generate enduring significance. In doing so, the framework links directly to the three research questions, clarifying the processes of artistic evolution (RQ1), the underlying causes of this transformation (RQ2), and the continuing value of these works for the development of Chinese contemporary art (RQ3).

1.9 Definition of Keywords

1.9.1 Realism

In the context of this research, the term “realism” refers to an approach to artistic creation. To be more specific, it means to represent actual life by typifying particular eras and social life events and personalities with the original style of real life. This may be done in a number of different ways⁶⁷. In other words, let go of the idealized imagination and represent the real world with descriptions that are factual, precise, and easy to understand modern life.

1.9.2 Realistic Art

In the context of the research, realistic art is an artistic approach that aims to represent actual life by typifying particular eras, social life events, and personalities.⁶⁸ It rejects idealized imagination, focusing instead on factual, precise, and comprehensible depictions of real world.⁶⁹ Realistic art serves as a reflection of societal and cultural contexts, influenced by socio-political and economic transformations.

⁶⁷ Li, "Xian Shi Zhu Yi Bu Shi Wei Yi Zheng Que De Tu Jing (Realism Is Not the Only Correct Approach)," 46.

⁶⁸ Cheng Feng Gu, "Xian Shi Zhu Yi Mei Shu Zai Ren Shi (Reunderstanding of Realistic Art)," *Literature and Art Studies*, no. 06 (2007): 103.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

1.9.3 Realistic Painting

Realistic painting refers specifically to visual artworks characterized by figurative modeling methods to depict the objective world. It emphasizes thorough and unembellished representations of nature and modern life, often reflecting themes such as humanistic care, societal critiques, and aesthetic reflections.⁷⁰ In the context of Chinese art from 1976 to 1989, realistic painting represents a departure from idealized socialist realism and focuses on the individual experiences, struggles, and values of everyday life.⁷¹

1.9.4 Humanism

According to Bao Dong, humanism is defined as the paintings' reflection of a concern for the most fundamental aspects of human existence, such as basic living circumstances and the importance of thinking about human values.⁷² Because it is based on the ideas of human nature and subject, it considers humans to be the most important thing in the world and places an emphasis on the free characteristic that they possess regardless of their class or social history. This critique of the Cultural Revolution experience and a critique and reflection of the dominant ideology of the first 30 years of socialism, official Marxism, of which Mao Ze Dong Thought was a part, drove the humanism that formed the main resource of the ideological liberation movement in the late 1970s and early 1980s. It is a response to the cult of the individual during the Cultural Revolution.⁷³

⁷⁰ Shang, "20 Shi Ji Zhongguo Mei Shu Xian Shi Zhu Yi Nei Han De Bian Hua Yu Fa Zhan (The Changing Connotations and Development of Realism in 20th Century Chinese Art)," 98.

⁷¹ Gao, Qiang: *Zhongguo Dang Dai Yi Shu De Li Shi Yu Bian Jie (The Wall: Reshaping Contemporary Chinese Art)*, 63.

⁷² Dong Bao, "A Relatively Artistic Vision: Building A discourse on Regional Art And Humanism," *Oriental Art*, no. 3 (2012): 62.

⁷³ Zou, *Xin Zhong Guo Mei Shu Shi : 1949-2000 (A History of Chinese Fine Art: 1949-2000)*.