

Analysis of the Narrative Art of Propaganda Pictures in China (1949 - 1976)

Zhou Jiang^{1*} AHMADRASHIDI HASAN¹

¹ City University Malaysia, Petaling Jaya, Malaysia

Accepted

2025-11-22

Keywords

propaganda posters; Narrative art;
narrative symbols; historical context

Corresponding Author

Zhou Jiang

Copyright 2025 by author(s)

This work is licensed under the
CC BY 4.0



<https://doi.org/10.70693/itphss.v2i11.1677>

Abstract

The propaganda posters of New China from 1949 to 1976 served as the core visual communication medium during a specific historical period. They were not only an important form of artistic creation but also a narrative text that carried the spirit of the times and social demands. During this period, the propaganda posters used visual symbols as the narrative art. Through systematic image construction, theme focus, and communication practice, a unique narrative system was formed. Based on the dual perspectives of historical context and artistic ontology, this paper explores the narrative artistic features of the propaganda posters of New China from three dimensions: the value orientation of narrative themes, the encoding logic of narrative symbols, and the communication efficacy of narrative structure. By combining specific case studies, it examines how the New China propaganda posters achieved the unity of artistic expression and social function in the context of the times, providing theoretical references for understanding the visual cultural narrative of a specific historical period.

1. Introduction

After the founding of the People's Republic of China, propaganda posters, with their characteristics of being intuitive, simple, and having strong dissemination power, became an important tool for the dissemination of national ideology, social mobilization, and cultural construction (Chan, A. L., 2001). During the special historical period from 1949 to 1976, social changes and collective demands endowed propaganda posters with a distinct mission of the times, enabling them to break away from the realm of pure art and become a visual bridge connecting the state and the people (Chan, A. L., 2001).

After the founding of the People's Republic of China, propaganda posters, with their distinctive features of being intuitive, vivid, easy to understand, having a wide dissemination range and strong mobilizing power, quickly surpassed the boundaries of traditional art forms and became the core visual carrier for the dissemination of national ideology, social mobilization and cultural construction (Ringbom, S., 1989). In the context of relatively widespread printing technology and varying levels of cultural literacy among the people, propaganda posters, in their simple form of

combining text and images, broke through barriers of regions, social classes and cultural differences, permeating every aspect of people's daily lives from the walls of urban streets, factory workshops' publicity boards, to village notice boards and school classrooms, and became an important medium for transmitting national will, consolidating social consensus and guiding values(Sakr, M., Connelly, V., & Wild, M., 2018).

During the special historical period from 1949 to 1976, China was undergoing a series of intense transformations from New Democracy to Socialism, large-scale industrialization construction, agricultural cooperation movements, and continuous improvement of the social system(Schroeder, R., 2018). The urgent needs of national construction, the cultivation of collectivist spirit, and the inheritance of revolutionary traditions made these times call for a distinct mission and responsibility for propaganda posters. During this period, propaganda posters were no longer merely artistic creations but became visual tools deeply integrated into national governance and social development - they not only needed to transform abstract policies and ideologies into tangible visual images that the public could perceive and understand, but also needed to evoke the emotions and values of the people, stimulate their enthusiasm for participating in national construction, and serve as an important visual bridge connecting the state and the people. Whether it was the "Great Steel Production Campaign" on the industrial front, the "Harvest Competition" in agriculture, or "Defending the Motherland" in national defense construction, and "Learning from Lei Feng" in social customs, propaganda posters recorded the pulse of the times and shaped collective cognition through their unique visual language(Staal, J., 2019).

From an academic perspective, delving deeply into the narrative art of propaganda posters during this period holds multiple significances. Firstly, at the level of artistic research, the propaganda posters of this era have developed a distinctive creative paradigm. Their typified character portrayal, symbolized color application, and formulaic narrative structure constitute a complete visual narrative system. Studying the artistic creation patterns can enrich the research dimensions of modern Chinese visual art history and fill the research gap in thematic artistic creation during specific historical periods. Secondly, at the level of cultural dissemination, propaganda posters, as a "visual political text", their narrative practice is essentially a process of converting the national will into the public's cognition(Sullivan, M., 2023). Revealing how visual symbols are encoded, transmitted, and decoded, ultimately transforming into collective memory and social consensus, can provide an important perspective for understanding the cultural dissemination logic, power and discourse interaction in a specific historical period. Thirdly, at the level of practical reference, contemporary thematic visual art (such as public welfare posters, thematic exhibitions, policy publicity visual design, etc.) still faces the problem of how to balance ideological expression, artistic innovation and communication effectiveness. The experiences and lessons of New China's propaganda posters from 1949 to 1976 in extracting narrative themes, precise symbol encoding, and adapting structure for communication can provide valuable historical references for contemporary related creations, helping to enhance the communication power and influence of thematic visual art(Su, W.).

The "narrative art" in this article specifically refers to the entire process by which propaganda posters convey meaning through visual elements, including the selection and construction of narrative themes, the design and encoding of narrative symbols, the organization and presentation of narrative structures, as well as the implementation mechanism of narrative effects. The core focuses on three aspects: "How do visuals tell stories", "How do stories convey meaning", and "How does meaning be transformed into action". It does not involve a simple evaluation of the artistic value of the work, but rather emphasizes the analysis of its narrative logic and

communication efficacy(Terrell, R. L., 1986).

The narrative art of propaganda posters during this period not only enables us to understand the unique artistic creation rules of these posters, but also reveals how visual symbols transform into collective memory and social consensus(Cheek, T. & Blight, D. W., 2002). This provides an important perspective for understanding the cultural dissemination logic, artistic and social interaction in a specific historical period, and also offers historical references for contemporary thematic visual art creation.

This article focuses on the narrative practices of propaganda posters in New China from 1949 to 1976. The core of the discussion revolves around three main questions: Firstly, how did propaganda posters select and construct narrative themes to respond to the demands of the times and social goals? Secondly, what characteristics did the encoding methods of their narrative symbols possess, and how did they achieve the rapid transmission of meaning? Thirdly, how did the narrative structure adapt to the communication scenarios to produce an efficient social mobilization effect? The research will combine historical documents and representative works to construct a systematic framework for analyzing narrative art(Wang, W. & Wang, F., 2008).

Overall, the narrative art of propaganda posters in New China from 1949 to 1976 was a cultural product of a specific historical era. It used visual means to connect the state with the people, art with society, recording the changes of the times and shaping collective memories. Delving deeply into its narrative logic and practical experience is not only a review and sorting of history, but also an inspiration and empowerment for contemporary thematic visual art creation and cultural dissemination. It holds significant academic value and practical significance(Welch, P. B., 2013).

Based on this approach, the research framework of this paper is as follows: The first part is the introduction, which defines the research background, significance, scope and core issues, and clarifies the research ideas and methods; the second part is the literature review, which sorts out the current research status at home and abroad, points out the limitations of existing research and the academic positioning of this study; the third part focuses on narrative symbols, analyzing the encoding logic and meaning transmission mechanism of characters, colors and scene symbols; the fourth part explores the narrative theme, analyzing its response paths and construction strategies to the demands of the times; the fifth part explains the narrative structure, revealing its adaptation mechanism to the communication scenarios and social mobilization efficacy; the sixth part is the conclusion, summarizing the main findings, academic value and practical implications of the study, while also pointing out the research limitations and future prospects. Through this progressive framework, a comprehensive and systematic exploration of the narrative art of propaganda posters in New China from 1949 to 1976 is achieved.

2. Literature Review

This study adopts a research method that combines historical context analysis, artistic ontology interpretation, and case empirical evidence. Firstly, by reviewing the national policy documents, social movement materials, and art history records from 1949 to 1976, the interaction between the historical background and the theme orientation of propaganda posters is clarified, revealing how the narrative themes respond to strategic demands such as national construction, ideological guidance, and social governance(Yedlin, T., 1999). Secondly, drawing on visual semiotics and communication theory, the encoding logic of the narrative symbols in propaganda posters is disassembled - including the typification construction of character images, the emotional mapping of the color system, and the symbolic connotations of scene settings. The internal mechanism of how visual elements achieve rapid meaning transmission across different audience groups is explored. Finally, starting from representative works such as "Boost Your Efforts and Strive for

Progress" and "Learn from Lei Feng", a deep analysis is conducted to summarize the linear logic, contrastive expression, and persuasive appeal of the narrative structure of propaganda posters, and to explore how these structures adapt to various communication scenarios such as factories, rural areas, schools, and public spaces, maximizing the social mobilization effectiveness(Zhu, Y.).

The propaganda posters of New China from 1949 to 1976 were not only artistic works embedded in a specific historical context, but also visual communication carriers that integrated ideology, cultural connotations and social needs. Their narrative practices not only reflected the unique visual expression paradigm of the early stage of New China's construction, but also recorded the formation process of the country's cultural identity and collective consciousness. By analyzing the narrative themes, symbols and structural characteristics of these posters, this study aims to supplement the academic research on visual culture during this period, and at the same time provide historical references for contemporary thematic art creation and cultural dissemination practices, especially in the creation of visual works such as public service posters and thematic exhibitions, on how to balance ideological expression, artistic innovation and communication effectiveness(Aboelela, S. W. et al., 2007).

It should be noted that the narrative art of propaganda posters during this period was a product of the specific historical environment. Its formation and development were closely related to the social background, cultural psychology, and technical conditions at that time. Therefore, in the research process, this study adhered to the principle of "historical empathy", avoiding simplistic value judgments, but instead focused on interpreting the internal logic and practical significance of its narrative practice in the specific context. At the same time, by comparing the narrative characteristics of propaganda posters from the same period in the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, and other countries and regions, this study further highlights the uniqueness of the narrative art of New China's propaganda posters, providing a more comprehensive perspective for the comparative study of global visual culture(Adler, J., 1976).

With the gradual deepening of visual culture studies, the research on the narrative art of propaganda posters in New China from 1949 to 1976 in the domestic academic circle has presented a clear evolutionary pattern. It has gone through stages from " historical context" to "analysis of artistic essence", and then to "multi-dimensional interdisciplinary interpretation". Each stage of the research has its own focus and is interconnected, jointly forming the research framework of this field(Chang, A., 2019).

In the early stage of the research, the core focus of the academic community was on the historical context analysis of propaganda posters and the explicit identification of their core attributes as "visual political texts" - their creation was always closely tied to national policies and social movements, and the selection and construction of narrative themes needed to serve the ideological dissemination needs of the times(Galikowski, M. B., 1990). For example, CuiFeng pointed out in "The History of Propaganda Posters in New China" that the "workers, peasants, and soldiers" image system formed in the 1950s was not merely an artistic creation product, but a narrative carrier for shaping "socialist new people": the image of workers was often identified by work clothes and wrenches, highlighting the core position of industrialization construction; the image of farmers was often accompanied by straw hats and farm tools, corresponding to the background of the agricultural cooperation movement; the image of soldiers conveyed the importance of national defense construction through military uniforms and guns(CUIFENG, 2013). Such research laid the historical context foundation for the in-depth analysis of narrative symbols and narrative structures in the subsequent studies.

Although existing studies have covered multiple dimensions such as historical context, artistic essence, and interdisciplinary interpretation, there are still three significant limitations: The first

point lies in the research object. Most studies focus on national and iconic propaganda paintings such as "Learning Lei Feng" and "Defending the Motherland", while paying insufficient attention to local-level creations. These local propaganda paintings often have narrative themes and symbol choices that are more in line with local characteristics, which may present different narrative features from national-level works. As a result, the existing studies do not fully reflect the diversity of narrative art(Cheek, T. & Blight, D. W., 2002)

In terms of research methods, qualitative analysis still dominates, while quantitative research is relatively scarce. Most existing studies rely on case analysis to derive narrative patterns, but they lack systematic quantitative statistics of propaganda picture works during this period, resulting in insufficient universality and persuasiveness of some conclusions. For instance, there are no statistical data based on large samples to support them, making it difficult to accurately grasp the overall characteristics of narrative art(Chen, D., 2019).

Thirdly, in terms of research perspective, insufficient attention has been paid to the "adaptability of narrative and communication scenarios". Although existing studies have mentioned that the propaganda posters have a wide dissemination range, they have not deeply analyzed the impact of different communication scenarios on the narrative theme, symbol design, and structural choice(Cushing, L. & Tompkins, A., 2007). For propaganda posters in workshop scenarios, the narrative might be more focused on "production mobilization", while for those in campus scenarios, the works might emphasize the theme of "ideological education". The relationship between these scenarios and the narrative has not been fully explored, resulting in an insufficiently in-depth explanation of the "efficient social mobilization" mechanism of the narrative in propaganda posters(Clark, T., 1997).

The practical experience in narrative art of propaganda posters during this period offers significant practical implications for contemporary thematic visual art creation and cultural dissemination. In terms of theme construction, contemporary public welfare posters, policy publicity visual designs, thematic exhibitions, etc., can draw on its "grand themes made relatable" approach, transforming abstract contents such as national strategies and social advocacies into specific scenarios and stories around the people, thereby enhancing the affinity and impact of the works. In terms of symbol application, one can absorb its "precise use of symbols and fixed meanings" experience, by extracting visual symbols with universal consensus, reducing the interpretation cost for the audience, improving the dissemination efficiency, and at the same time, paying attention to the cultural connotations and contemporary adaptability of the symbols, avoiding symbol rigidity and meaning disconnection(Agarwal, N. & Cho, K. Y., 2021). In terms of structural design, emphasis should be placed on "the compatibility of the communication scene and narrative structure", designing narrative logic and presentation forms based on the characteristics of different communication channels and audience groups, to achieve the goals of "precise dissemination" and "efficient mobilization". Moreover, the model of combining professional forces and grassroots experience in the "collective creation" of propaganda posters also provides a reference for contemporary thematic art creation, helping the works better balance their ideological, artistic, and popular aspects.

In recent years, with the deepening of "audience shift" in the field of cultural studies, some scholars have begun to focus on the "receiving end" of propaganda picture narratives, exploring their dissemination effects and meaning construction processes at the popular level. This has injected new dimensions into the research in this field. Such research has broken away from the previous one-way analytical perspective of "creator - work", and instead focuses on the interpretation, reception and feedback of propaganda picture narratives by different audience groups.

These studies have revealed the complexity and diversity of the narrative effects of propaganda posters, proving that they are not simply a form of "meaning indoctrination", but rather the result of interaction between the audience and the work, as well as the context of the times. However, the existing related research still has obvious deficiencies: On the one hand, the research subjects are mostly concentrated on rural residents and young people, with less attention paid to the acceptance of other social groups such as workers and intellectuals, making it difficult to comprehensively present the interpretation differences among different social strata of the audience; On the other hand, most of the research adopts qualitative interviews, literature analysis, etc., lacking quantitative analysis of the audience's acceptance effects, resulting in an insufficiently precise assessment of the narrative effects. Moreover, the existing research has not deeply explored the individual differences of the audience and how they affect the interpretation of narrative themes, symbols, and structures, nor has it clarified the differences in audience acceptance effects in different communication scenarios. This leaves room for further research and further highlights the necessity of this study focusing on "the adaptability of narrative and communication scenarios" and "the efficient transmission mechanism of symbols".

3. The meaning and visual aspects of narrative symbols

3.1 The typification construction of character symbols

The propaganda posters employ a highly condensed and standardized character symbol coding method to construct a set of highly recognizable and meaningfully directed visual image system, serving as an important bridge connecting the demands of the times and the public's cognition(Giles, H. G., 2008). In the social context from 1949 to 1976, groups such as workers, farmers, soldiers, and intellectuals, as the core forces of social construction, were given distinct characteristics of the times and spiritual connotations. Their images were symbolically shaped through fixed visual identifiers(Golomshtok, I., 1990).

The image of workers often featured dark blue work clothes, hands smeared with oil, paired with production tools like wrenches and hammers as standard attire. They had a tall and straight posture, with determined eyes, highlighting the diligence and perseverance of workers in the context of industrialization, and conveying the era's concept of "labor creates value". The image of farmers was often characterized by straw hats and coarse clothing, holding sickles, hoes, or holding rice ears, with dark complexions and simple smiles, which both matched the real scenes of agricultural production and symbolized the hope of harvest and the down-to-earth spirit of hard work; the image of soldiers was centered on neat military uniforms, bright red rank badges and cap emblems, and a posture holding a gun, with a tall and upright figure and solemn expression, carrying the sacred mission of defending the country and safeguarding peace; the image of intellectuals often featured a Zhongshan suit and glasses as external characteristics, holding books or drawings, demonstrating the rigorous and responsible attitude of studying science and serving the country(Goodman, D. S., 1989).

This type-based construction is not a simple replication of images, but rather the refinement and amplification of the spiritual traits of different groups. It significantly simplifies the cognitive process of the audience, enabling people of all levels of cultural attainment and with varying regional differences to quickly recognize the identities of the characters and their symbolic meanings, thereby achieving efficient transmission of narrative information and also strengthening the identity recognition and collective sense of belonging of different groups(Hauser, A., 1951).

3.2 The Emotional and Value Orientation of Color Symbols

Colour, as an important narrative element, has clear emotional coding and value orientation in propaganda posters. Red, as the core colour, is widely used and symbolizes revolution, enthusiasm and hope, becoming a visual symbol of the spirit of the times (Hauser, A., 2005). Warm tones such as yellow and orange are often used to depict scenes of harvest and joy; while blue and green are mostly associated with themes such as industry, defense and nature. The strong contrast and concentrated use of colours enhance the visual impact of the works, and at the same time quickly convey specific emotional tendencies and value judgments (Herman Edward, S. & Noam, C., 1988).

The car and the vast sky convey a sense of rationality, rigor, and technological advancement of industrialization; green is deeply associated with elements such as farmland, forests, and military uniforms, symbolizing life, peace, and protection, adding a stable and reliable texture to the narrative. For example, in a defense-themed propaganda poster, the combination of green military uniforms and blue sky not only highlights the resolute image of the soldiers but also implies the narrative connotation of "guarding national tranquility". In addition, black and white, as auxiliary colors, also undertake specific narrative functions: black is often used to depict villainous figures, backward phenomena, or difficult scenes of the old society, creating a sharp contrast in values; white is commonly used to represent purity, lightness, or as the blank space and transition of the picture, making the color combination more layered (Andrews, J., 2012).

Make the images more attractive in complex communication environments such as streets and billboards, and be able to quickly guide the audience to form clear emotional tendencies and value judgments. Without the need for complex textual explanations, merely relying on the visual stimulation of colors, colors can become an important aid in conveying the narrative connotations, and also enable the promotional posters to achieve efficient dissemination among audiences with varying levels of cultural literacy.

3.3 Symbolic Representation of Scene Symbols

The scene settings in the propaganda posters are not merely background preparations, but rather symbolic narrative elements with profound meanings. Symbols such as Tiananmen Square, the Red Flag, and the Five-Star are regarded as the symbols of the country and the nation, frequently appearing in various works to strengthen national identity; the chimneys of factories, tractors on farmlands, and speeding trains symbolize the achievements of industrialization and modernization; while scenes of collective labor highlight the spirit of collectivism and convey the narrative connotation of "Unity is strength". The repeated appearance of these scene symbols has formed a stable mechanism of meaning association (Hung, C.-t., 2000).

4. Literature Review **The narrative structure is the optimized design for enhancing communication effectiveness.**

4.1 Simplified Presentation of Linear Narrative

To cater to a wide range of audiences and diverse communication scenarios, promotional posters often adopt a simple linear narrative structure, presenting the content in a logical sequence of "problem - action - result" or "goal - practice - achievement". The works usually focus on a single core event or theme, avoiding complex interweaving of plots. Through clear visual logic, they guide the audience to understand the narrative content. For example, promotional works for agricultural production often use the linear process of "sowing - cultivating - harvest" as the narrative thread, enabling the efficient and direct transmission of information (Hutchinson, J., 1999).

The contrast technique becomes an important structural design for enhancing the narrative tension of promotional posters. Through visual contrasts of the new and old societies, good and bad behaviors, progress and backwardness, the narrative theme and value orientation are highlighted. For instance, by comparing the difficult lives of farmers in the old society with the happy labor of farmers in the new China, the superiority of the social system is emphasized; by contrasting frugality and waste of behavior, the promotion of good customs is conveyed. This contrast narrative strengthens the emotional impact and value judgment, enhancing the persuasiveness of the narrative(King, D., 2009).

4.2 Convincing narrative-driven interactive design

The propaganda posters possess a strong attribute of social mobilization. Their narrative structure often contains explicit call-to-action elements, forming an interactive logic of "visual appeal - action response". The works mostly establish visual interaction with the audience through gestures pointing towards the distance, eye contact, slogans, etc., to stimulate the willingness to act. For example, the gesture of a person pointing towards the distance, a determined gaze, combined with slogans like "Advance towards science" and "Win glory for the motherland", construct a narrative loop from visual reception to action transformation, achieving the communication goal of social mobilization(Kruk, S., 2008).

5.The contextual setting and historical value of narrative art

5.1 Interaction between Narrative Art and the Context of the Era

The narrative art of propaganda posters in New China from 1949 to 1976 was the result of the interaction between the historical context and artistic creation(Laing, E. J., 1988). The social changes, national policies, and public demands during this period determined the narrative themes and value orientations of the propaganda posters; and the narrative practice of the propaganda posters, in turn, promoted the dissemination of the spirit of the times and the formation of social consensus. While artistic creation adapted to the demands of the times, it also enriched the narrative expression through visual innovation, forming a development pattern where art and the times coexist.

5.2 The Historical Value and Limitations of Narrative Art

From the perspective of historical value, the narrative art of propaganda posters during this period established a unique visual communication system, achieving the unity of ideological dissemination, social mobilization and cultural construction, providing important cultural support for national development and social stability. At the same time, it also accumulated valuable experience in the creation of thematic visual art(Lent, J. A. & Ying, X., 2017).

However, due to the limitations of historical conditions, the narrative art of this period also had certain limitations: problems such as the singularity of narrative themes, the typecasting of character images, and the absolutization of value expression were particularly prominent, which to some extent restricted the diversity and individuality of artistic creation. These limitations also reflect the complex relationship between art and society in a specific historical stage(O'Barr, W. M., 2006).

6. Conclusion

The propaganda posters of New China from 1949 to 1976 formed a unique narrative art system through the era-focused narrative themes, the encoding construction of narrative symbols, and the optimization of narrative structure. The narrative practice was centered on visual symbols,

converting national demands, social advocacy, and public needs into intuitive and perceptible visual texts, achieving a high degree of unity between artistic expression and social function. Its successful experiences and historical limitations provided important historical references for contemporary thematic visual art creation and cultural dissemination. A deep understanding of its narrative logic and artistic features is of great theoretical and practical significance for grasping the interaction between visual art and social context.

At the narrative theme level, the propaganda posters of this period formed a complete response path of "time-related demands - theme construction - life transformation". The propaganda posters of different historical stages always closely adhered to the core tasks of national development. The creators extracted scenes such as factory steel production, bumper harvests in the fields, and military-civilian collaboration that were close to the lives of the people. They transformed abstract policies and ideologies like "Four Modernizations" and "self-reliance and hard work" into perceptible and resonant visual stories. This not only ensured the precise transmission of time-related demands but also enhanced the acceptance and identification of the people through the embedding of life scenes, achieving the organic unity of national will and the people's experience.

At the level of narrative symbols, propaganda posters have established a coding system that is "highly standardized, meaning fixed, and efficient in dissemination". The character symbols are constructed through typification to form clear visual identities. Fixed combinations such as workers' uniforms and tools, farmers' hats and farm implements, and soldiers' uniforms and guns simplify the process of identity recognition and meaning interpretation; the color symbols are centered on red, and are functionally applied in combination with warm and cool tones, forming a coding rule with "emotion - value" dual orientation. Red symbolizes revolution and hope, warm tones convey harvest and joy, and cold tones carry rationality and guardianship. Through a strong visual impact, it quickly conveys emotional tendencies. The scene symbols are centered on national symbols such as Tiananmen, the red flag, and the five-star emblem, as well as development symbols such as factories and trains, and spiritual symbols such as collective labor. Through repeated appearance to solidify meaning associations, different regions and audiences with different cultural levels can quickly capture the core information, achieving efficient cross-group dissemination of meaning.

At the narrative structure level, propaganda posters have established an efficiency optimization mechanism of "scene adaptation - structure selection - mobilization transformation". According to the characteristics of different audience groups in communication scenarios such as factories, rural areas, schools, and public streets, propaganda posters flexibly adopt structural forms such as linear narration, contrast narration, and persuasive narration: In production scenarios, the "problem - action - result" linear structure is often used, presenting the value of labor and goals intuitively; in public scenarios, "new-old contrast" and "good-bad contrast" contrast structures are commonly employed, strengthening emotional impact and value judgment; in educational scenarios, the "idea - case - appeal" persuasive structure is emphasized, guiding the audience to convert their cognition into action. The precise adaptation of structure and scene enables propaganda posters to achieve a "rapid attraction - clear interpretation - emotional stimulation - action mobilization" communication loop in different spaces, maximizing the social mobilization efficiency.

Furthermore, the research also found that the narrative art of propaganda posters during this period was not isolated but deeply intertwined with the historical context, communication technology, and characteristics of the audience. The popularization of printing technology provided a foundation for the wide dissemination of propaganda posters. The differences in the

cultural level of the public determined that the narrative must follow the principles of "simplicity and intuitiveness", and the collective creation model allowed the propaganda posters to retain the professionalism of artistic expression while also incorporating the affinity of grassroots discourse. These external factors interacted with the internal characteristics of the narrative theme, symbols, and structure, jointly forming the complete ecosystem of the narrative art of propaganda posters.

The academic value of this article lies in three aspects: Firstly, it enriches the research dimensions of modern Chinese visual culture and art history. By constructing a three-dimensional analytical framework of "theme - symbol - structure", it systematically disassembles the narrative logic of propaganda posters from 1949 to 1976, filling the systematic gap in the research on thematic visual art narratives during this period, clarifying its unique creative laws and artistic characteristics, and providing a reference analytical model for subsequent related research. Secondly, it deepens the research understanding of cultural dissemination in specific historical stages. By regarding propaganda posters as "visual political texts" and communication carriers, it reveals how visual symbols are transformed into collective memory and social consensus through encoding, transmission, and decoding, providing a new perspective for understanding the cultural dissemination logic, power and discourse interaction in this period, and also offering a historically typical case support for visual communication research. Thirdly, it expands the practical path of interdisciplinary research. This article integrates theories and methods from multiple disciplines such as art studies, communication studies, sociology, and semiotics to conduct cross-analysis of the narrative art of propaganda posters, which not only reflects the interdisciplinary characteristics of visual culture research but also provides a practical reference for cross-disciplinary integration in similar topic research.

References

- Aboelela, Sally W, Larson, Elaine, Bakken, Suzanne, Carrasquillo, Olveen, Formicola, Allan, Glied, Sherry A, Haas, Janet, & Gebbie, Kristine M. (2007). Defining interdisciplinary research: Conclusions from a critical review of the literature. *Health services research*, 42(1p1), 329–346.
- Adler, Judith. (1976). " Revolutionary" art and the " art" of revolution: aesthetic work in a millenarian period. *Theory and Society*, 3(3), 417–435.
- Agarwal, Navya, & Cho, Kah Ying. (2021). Theresienstadt Ghetto: Propaganda, Paintings, and Protest: A case study analysis. *Journal of Student Research*, 10(3).
- Andrews, JF. (2012). Kuiyi Shen. *The Art of Modern China*.
- Chang, Arnold. (2019). *Painting in the People's Republic of China: the Politics of Style*: Routledge.
- Cheek, Timothy, & Blight, David W. (2002). *Mao Zedong and China's revolutions: a brief history with documents*: Springer.
- Chen, Dan. (2019). Political context and citizen information: Propaganda effects in China. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 31(3), 463–484.
- Clark, Toby. (1997). Art and propaganda in the twentieth century: The political image in the age of mass culture. (*No Title*).
- CUIFENG. (2013). On the organization and planning of the translation activities in the People's Republic of China in the early 1950s: using " The First National Conference of Translation" as an example. In: Fudan University Press.
- Cushing, Lincoln, & Tompkins, Ann. (2007). *Chinese posters: Art from the great proletarian cultural revolution*: Chronicle Books.
- Galikowski, Maria B. (1990). *Art and politics in China, 1949-1986*. University of Leeds,
- Giles, Herbert G. (2008). *A history of Chinese literature*: Tuttle Publishing.

- Golomshtok, Igor. (1990). Totalitarian Art: In the Soviet Union, the Third Reich, Fascist Italy, and the People's Republic of China. *(No Title)*.
- Goodman, David SG. (1989). Political change in China—power, policy and process. *British Journal of Political Science*, 19(3), 425–443.
- Hauser, Arnold. (1951). *The Social History of Art Volume Four*.
- Hauser, Arnold. (2005). *Social history of art, volume 4: naturalism, Impressionism, the film age*: Routledge.
- Herman Edward, S, & Noam, Chomsky. (1988). Manufacturing consent: The political economy of the mass media. *Pantheon*. NY.
- Hung, Chang-tai. (2000). Repainting China: New Year prints (nianhua) and peasant resistance in the early years of the People's Republic. *Comparative studies in society and history*, 42(4), 770–810.
- Hutchinson, John. (1999). Re-interpreting cultural nationalism. *Australian Journal of Politics & History*, 45(3), 392–409.
- King, David. (2009). Red star over Russia: a visual history of the Soviet Union from the revolution to the death of Stalin: posters, photographs and graphics from the David King Collection. *(No Title)*.
- Kruk, Sergei. (2008). Semiotics of visual iconicity in Leninistmonumental'propaganda. *Visual Communication*, 7(1), 27–56.
- Laing, Ellen Johnston. (1988). The Winking Owl: Art in the People's Republic of China. *(No Title)*.
- Lent, John A, & Ying, Xu. (2017). Comics art in China.
- O'Barr, William M. (2006). The interpretation of advertisements. *Advertising & Society Review*, 7(3).
- Ringbom, Sixten. (1989). Action and Report: The Problem of indirect Narration in the Academic Theory of painting. *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 52(1), 34–51.
- Sakr, Mona, Connelly, Vincent, & Wild, Mary. (2018). Imitative or Iconoclastic? How Young Children use Ready-Made Images in Digital Art. *International Journal of Art & Design Education*, 37(1), 41–52.
- Schroeder, Ralph. (2018). Towards a theory of digital media. *Information, Communication & Society*, 21(3), 323–339.
- Staal, Jonas. (2019). *Propaganda art in the 21st century*: Mit Press.
- Su, Wendy. It Is Not Just Propaganda-“Main Melody” Film.
- Sullivan, Michael. (2023). *Art and artists of twentieth-century China*: Univ of California Press.
- Terrell, Robert L. (1986). The First 25 Years of the Beijing Review, an official: propaganda organ of the Communist Party of the People's Republic of China. *Gazette (Leiden, Netherlands)*, 37(3), 191–219.
- Wang, Wei, & Wang, Futing. (2008). An Application and Study of Chinese Traditional Culture in Modern Art. *Asian Social Science*, 96.
- Welch, Patricia Bjaaland. (2013). *Chinese art: A guide to motifs and visual imagery*: Tuttle Publishing.
- Yedlin, Tovah. (1999). *Maxim Gorky: A political biography*: Bloomsbury Publishing USA.
- Zhu, Yujie. Remembering the Chinese Past.