

## New Sign Of Artist Case

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### *Abstract*

Li Xiongcai (1910-2001) was one of the important representatives in the modern art history of Guangdong, China. There are many works left by him, and his large-scale creations are shocking. Li Xiongcai Art Research Project (The Case) was sponsored by Lingnan Painting School Memorial Hall of Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts. The significance of this study lied in the statistics and analysis of the case data from the perspective of the participants, researchers, planners or managers of the case study with grounded theory and semiotic analysis. The case study is how to reinterpret Li Xiongcai's art and create new signs. It could be possible to generalize this model to other artists of the same type.

Keywords: Li Xiongcai, Pierce Semiotic Trisection, 4As Semiotic Analysis Method.

### **1. Introduction**

Among many art museums in Colleges and universities, Lingnan Painting School Memorial Hall, as one of the museums group of Guangzhou Academy of fine arts, was established in 1991. Different from other professional museums, Lingnan School of painting Memorial Hall chose a different road and made contributions to the local art history. For many years, the hall has been exploring the collection, research and teaching resources of Lingnan Painting School. The most representative case is the "Li Xiongcai art research project" started in 2007 (hereinafter referred to as The Case).

Li Xiongcai (1910-2001) was one of the important representatives in the modern art history of Guangdong, China. There are many works left by him, and his large-scale creations are shocking. When he was a professor of Chinese painting in Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts, he attached great importance to realism. His landscape

painting is still a model that beginners of Chinese painting must copy. Li Xiongcai was also one of the organizers of Lingnan Painting School Memorial Hall, donating a large number of teaching related works.

The Li Xiongcai's Art Research Project was sponsored by Lingnan Painting School Memorial Hall of Guangzhou Academy of fine arts. Since 2007, it had collected more than 5500 works and 1200 life photos of Li Xiongcai. In 2009, the research group of "Centennial Talent" was established. In 2012, books were published and originals were exhibited in Guangzhou and Beijing. These project results are highly praised by the Chinese art circles. The memorial hall subsequent development of collections, researches and exhibitions still based on the project experience.

The main members of the project team were Li Xiongcai family, Professor Li Jingkun and the Executive Deputy Curator Lin shuran, the staff of Lingnan Painting School Memorial Hall and the researchers engaged in the project. I participated in the whole process of the case as a data manager of Lingnan Painting School memorial Hall at that time. The main work was to manage the data according to the opinions of the project leader, and provided some personal creativity ideas: from collection to classification, to selection, and then to editing and publishing. After the publication and exhibition, I have been also responsible for the inquiry of Li Xiongcai data for visitors for a long time. I have observed that the influence of the case experience on the Lingnan Painting School Memorial Hall continued for ten years since the publication of some results of the case in 2012. However, the success experience of cases has been in the empirical imitation and continuous improvement, but it has not been risen to the systematic pattern method.

In American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914) model, semiosis functions through three positions. There are the sign (that which stands for something else) and the interpretant (also called meaning or meaning-effect, and basically means interpretation or the mental image the individual forms of the sign) and the object (or referent, the thing for which the sign stands). Peirce often uses the word "sign" instead of "Representation". (Pierce, 1958)

Minges and Brooksay (1997) proposed a set of very common research steps, which can include a wide range of specific research methods (The 4As): Appreciate the current research situation; Analyze the structure that produces and maintains this kind of research; Assess alternatives to the current situation; Act to make a difference. Semiotics is regarded as a part of the well-designed mixed method research, combined with other qualitative and quantitative methods to form a 12 Step Integrated Semiotics Method.

This thesis uses semiotics to analyze how the case reunderstood Li Xiongcai art and created a new sign from the

perspective of a case participant. This thesis intends to extract the research mode for any artist case from the Li Xiongcai Art Research Project.

## 2. Data Collection

In this thesis, the data collection technology mainly adopts the qualitative method of case observation, follows the grounded theory, and makes quantitative statistics on the data generated in the process of "Li Xiongcai Art Research Project" from the perspective of project participants.

## 3. Research Methods

The instruments of this thesis are case study, grounded theory and semiotics. The analysis technology of this thesis is mainly semiotic analysis method of qualitative method, which analyzes the quantitative statistical results. According to Peirce semiotic ternary theory (Peirce, 1958) , the corresponding elements are found : Take "what is Li Xiongcai art" as the sign. Take "Li Xiongcai art" as the object of the sign. Take the publications and exhibitions of "Li Xiongcai art" in form of media carriers are the perceptible parts, as representations of the sign, also equivalent to Saussure "signifiers". Take the informations received and transferred by readers and visitors are the thoughts caused by the sign as the interpretant of the sign.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 The Old signs of Li Xiongcai Art

At the beginning of the case, the project team conducted a comprehensive search of Li Xiongcai personal publications. The 1st was to understand the previous publications. The 2nd was to extract the sources of the artist excellent works. The 3rd was to provide basic information for the writing researchers. And the 4th with the dialectical thinking under the college education system, the publications have doubts were excluded. Credible publications were summarized as follows. I kept them in the library and very understood their characteristics.

**Table 4.1 Statistics of Li Xiongcai Previous Publications**

	Publication Name	Characteristic	Edition
1	Transport the Timber to the Construction Site	Poster	1954
2	Looking for More Mineral Resources for Motherland	Poster	1955
3	Sanwei Study House	Poster	1956
4	A Corner of Yu Mausoleum in Shaoxing	Poster	1956

5	Hengyun Stone Wall	Poster	1957
6	The West Lake	Poster	1957
7	Fuyan Temple Front Door Stone Path	Poster	1958
8	Mirror Grinding Table	Poster	1958
9	Mountain Village	Poster	1958
10	Wind Through Pine Trees, Moon In Water	Poster	1959
11	Huangshan Sea of Clouds	Poster	1959
12	Water From The Yellow River	Poster	1959
13	Huangshan Sketching Collection	Posters Set	1959
14	Spring In Yangshuo	Poster	1961
15	Li Xiongcai Travel Sketch	Posters Set	1963
16	Xiufeng Mountain in Xingping (Yangshuo)	Poster	1964
17	Lijiang River Crossing (Yangshuo)	Poster	1964
18	Selected Paintings by Li Xiongcai	Posters Set	1982
19	Li Xiongcai Landscape Paintings-Trees	Teaching Album	1981
20	Li Xiongcai Landscape Paintings Manual-Mountains	Teaching Album	1981
21	Li Xiongcai Landscape Paintings Manual-Waters	Teaching Album	1981
22	Li Xiongcai Landscape Paintings Manual (Hardcover)	Teaching Album	1984
23	Li Xiongcai Landscape Paintings	Teaching Album	1984
24	Li Xiongcai Paintings	Early works	1985
25	Selected Paintings by Zhao Shaoang, Li Xiongcai, Guan Shanyue and Yang Shanshen		1987
26	Li Xiongcai: Flowers, Birds, Grass and Insects	Flowers and Birds	1988
27	Exhibition of 6 Artists of Lingnan School of Chinese Painting: Li Xiongcai, Guan Shanyue, Chen Jinzhang, Liang Shixiong, Chen Zhangji, Zhou Yansheng		1991
28	Paintings of Li Xiongcai and Liang Shixiong Visiting Japan		1993
29	Works of 3 Friends of Chunshui Painting Academy - Situ Qi, Li Xiongcai and Guan Shanyue		1994
30	Li Xiongcai 80th Anniversary Art Album	Green Landscape	1994
31	Total Works of Contemporary Famous Chinese Painting - Li Xiongcai	Green Landscape	1997
32	Li Xiongcai Landscape Paintings	Green Landscape	1998
33	Li Xiongcai Landscape Flowers and Birds Paintings		1999
34	Appreciation of Li Xiongcai Works	Green Landscape	2000
35	Collection of Li Xiongcai Art Museum		2000
36	Li Xiongcai, Cui Deqi and Lin Jin		2001
37	Wuhan Flood Control Atlas	A 32 Meters Long Scroll	2001
38	Selected Works of Li Xiongcai	Green Landscape	2002
39	Li Xiongcai Commemorative Paintings	Large Scale Works	2002
40	Li Xiongcai Sketches		2002

41	Appreciation of Li Xiongcai Masterpieces	Green Landscape	2004
42	Li Xiongcai Art Exhibition		2005
43	Li Xiongcai Landscape Boutique	Green Landscape	2006
44	Appreciation of Li Xiongcai Masterpieces	Green Landscape	2010
45	Lingnan Painting Series: Li Xiongcai	Collection of Essays	1996
46	Li Xiongcai Memorial Collection	Collection of Essays	2002
47	A Great Master Li Xiongcai	Collection of Essays	2004
48	Li's Landscapes Paintings & The Master	Collection of Essays	2007

The case data shows that Li Xiongcai, who was diligent to create a large number of green landscape works in his middle age. It can be said that he was very familiar with the accumulation of early sketching and the ink used to depict these objects. He extracted various elements that he used to combine into his green landscapes works: using brush, ink, composition and color to depict trees, stones, mountains and waters. These objects are perfect, and even tended to be stylized. These works form his typical green landscape art sign - Li's landscape. Businesses created momentum for his green landscape works, which type of originals were easy to be occupied by collectors, and this kind of printed matter was popular in the market. It made it easier for people outside the academy to receive the signs of his green landscape art, even equivalent to the explanation of the sign of "Li Xiongcai art".

#### 4.2 Recognition of Li Xiongcai Art

The data of Li Xiongcai pieces of works were collected from the direction of domestic investigation and classified.

The collecting jobs began in 2007 summer, when taking photos of collections from Li's family members. On the basis of mastering the collections data of family members and Lingnan Painting School Memorial Hall, the case had been extended to other reliable art museums and private collections. I summarize them as follows:

**Table 4.2.1 Statistics of Li Xiongcai Works Physical Locations by 2011**

Physical Locations	Originals (Piece Set)	/	Digital Pictures
Gao Yao Li Xiongcai Art Museum	106		106
China Art Museum	7		29
Lingnan Painting School Memorial Hall	271		438

Guangzhou Art Museum	72	72
Department of Chinese Painting, Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts	46	46
China Import and Export Fair	7	7
Family and Other Private Collectors	3796	4223
<b>Total</b>	<b>4305</b>	<b>4921</b>

In the summary of the sources of the originals, this case almost searched the physical locations where large numbers of works or in large-scale form works were left behind by Li Xiongcai. There were also some large-scale works locations were relatively scattered, and the case had listed in the publications, which are not reflected in this table.

The case divided all the collected works and life photos into the following categories. I make the statistics as follows:

**Table 4.2.2 Statistics of Li Xiongcai Data Classification**

Major Categories	Subclass	Original Materials	Original Works	Digital Pictures
Works	Landscapes		1496	1496
	Long Scrolls		25	108
	Black and White Sketchings		1922	1922
	Color Sketchings		433	433
	Tree Stone Lesson Drafts		286	286
	Flowers and Birds		598	598
	Figures		338	338
	Calligraphies		453	453
Manuscripts and Photos	Life Photos in Color	415		415
	Life Photos in Black and White	864		864
	Gao Yao Museum Reference Materials	38		38
	Notes on Calligraphy	1 Diary		54
	Letters from Li Xiongcai	3		8
<b>Total</b>		<b>1321</b>	<b>5551</b>	<b>7014</b>

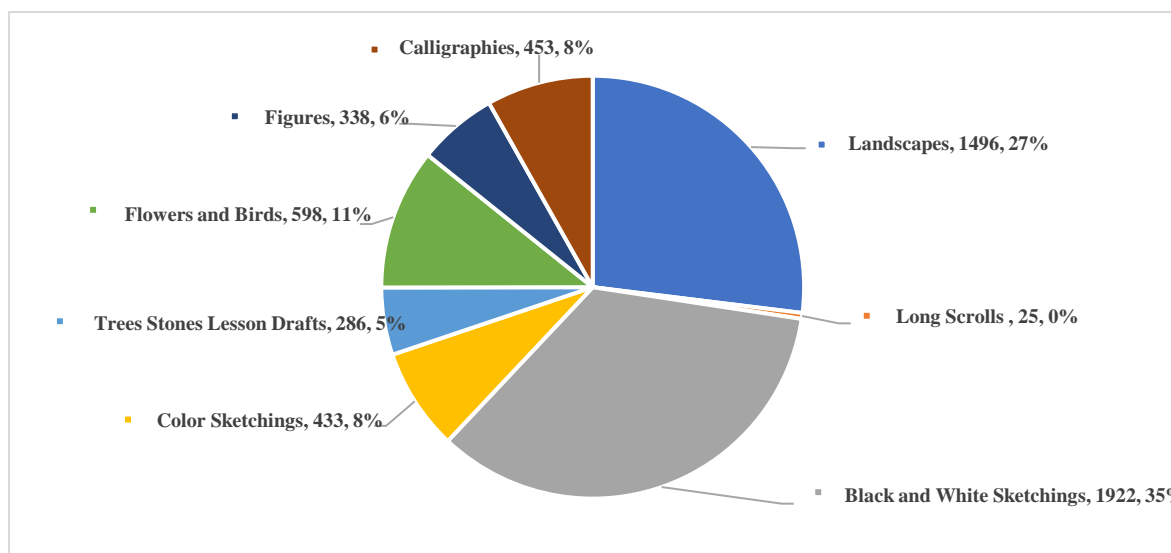


Figure 4.2.1 Scale of Categories of Li Xiongcai Works  
(Note: Category, Number of Works, Percentage)

According to the pie chart of Li Xiongcai works, Li Xiongcai formal landscape paintings just account for 27% of his total works. If adding the pictures of calligraphy works that have not been taken photos, the proportion must be even less. Green landscape works are only a part of landscape paintings, so it can not fully represent the artistic sign of Li Xiongcai. Through Li Xiongcai hard-working life, there are still many other categories of works for people to study. Sufficient data provides a variety of directions for case differentiation.

#### 4.3 Created A New Sign of Li Xiongcai Art

Because the composition of the project members were mainly academic, with professors and students of Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts as the main body, there were Chinese painting art majors, calligraphy majors, and art history majors. After mastering Li Xiongcai various materials, the intention of the project team to produce new signs had a natural pre-text(Zhao Yiheng, 2016): We wanted to study the successful experience of this successful artist, but not focused on whether the originals were priced at 15 cities! Every pieces of his famous works were not an overnight success, there should be a lot of works and hard sweats behind them. Taking the road of differentiation, the project team decided to reinterpret the sign of Li Xiongcai art in a new way of editing.

Mr. Li Jingkun, the project leader, specially pointed out: don't choose works that might hurt Mr. Li Xiongcai personal appearance. The case organization experts carefully selected and combined the data of the above 8 types of theme works for almost 13 times as I recorded. And interspersed with literature and photos, organized historical experts to carry out theme research, wrote articles, and then published

and exhibited. It took 5 years from data collection, editing to publication. In October 2012, the series of "Centennial Talent" sponsored by the Publicity Department of the CPC Guangdong Provincial Committee, edited by Lingnan Painting School Memorial Hall was published by Rongbaozhai Publishing House.



Figure 4.3 Centennial Talent Series

The size of the series were octave printed, with a total of six volumes. Each volume is nearly 400 pages thick. I combine the Publication Content Table (Centennial talent, 2012) with the number of digital pictures statistics as follows:

**Table 4.3.1 Statistics of "Centennial Talent" Series Publication Data**

Volumes	Characteristic	Pics
Centennial Talent (1) Landscape	With large-scale representative works, this volume presents the positive works of Li Xiongcai artistic sign as a historical commanding point of Lingnan art.	441
Centennial Talent (2) Long Scrolls	It mainly presents Li Xiongcai in the form of long scroll and has the ability of epic recording.	145
Centennial Talent (3) Ink Sketches, Figure Sketches	These volumes are not as stylized as the works seen in the previous publications. Li Xiongcai art was rooted in the diversity of life, especially in the observation and expression of characters. Teaching Albums are also reflected in.	481
Centennial Talent (4) Color Sketches		370
Centennial Talent (5) Plants & Animals	The works of flowers and birds show Li Xiongcai learning experience of natural history in Japan, and his meticulous observation of plants and animals. Li Xiongcai artistic signs are not limited to landscape painting.	500
Centennial Talent (6) Calligraphy	As an artist of freehand brushwork, Li Xiongcai establishment of nis artistic signs was inseparable from	360



	calligraphy. It also negates Southerners paintingsnortherners the impression of no brush or ink on Southerners paintings.
<b>Total</b>	<b>2297</b>

2011, parallel exhibitions were also held when the editing of this set of books draft came into being. The exhibitions were arranged according to the style of the albums.

**Table 4.3.2 Statistics of "Centennial Talent" Exhibition Data**

<b>Classification of Works and Documents</b>	<b>Originals</b>
Landscapes	53
Long Scrolls	18
Sketches	129
Trees, Stones Lesson Draft	27
Flowers and Birds Paintings	80
Figures Paintings	38
Calligraphies	60
Literatures and Life Photos	560
<b>Total</b>	<b>965</b>

The value of the case publications and exhibitions lied in the fact that they showed Li Xiongcai art from multiple angles and interpretations, not just the green landscape. In this way, between breaking and establishing, the case expanded and innovated the sign of "Li Xiongcai art".

## **5. Conclusion**

Through sorting out the previous publications, the case grasped the predecessors interpretation of Li Xiongcai artistic signs, knew the shortcomings of the predecessors, and studied Li Xiongcai art with the differentiated development route. The case collected all kinds of data of Li Xiongcai works from the directions of domestic investigations, and classified them to get the overall cognition of Li Xiongcai art. The case re interpreted the visual sign system of Li Xiongcai art through screening, combining, publishing and exhibition of the above thematic data.

As Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts Art Museums Group Chief curator Wang Huangsheng said: Art Museum is a place to produce knowledge.(Wang Huangsheng, 2012 ) Knowledge is a familiarity, awareness, or understanding of someone or something, such as facts

(descriptive knowledge), skills (procedural knowledge), or objects (acquaintance knowledge). By most accounts, knowledge can be acquired in many different ways and from many sources, including but not limited to perception, reason, memory, testimony, scientific inquiry, education, and practice.( Wikipedia, 2021) For art museums, production knowledge is planning exhibitions, publishing books and conducting public education. The exhibition function of Art Museum makes exhibition a field that can be perceived and knowledge can be learned. However, it needs the creative thinking of producers to make exhibitions and books new knowledge that audiences never meet. It might be considered that an art museum is a place where signs are produced and then received.

Therefore, editing books and planning exhibitions can be treated as the production of signs. Then the intention of the producers of publications and exhibitions, that is, the pre text, also appears (Zhao Yiheng, 2016) . Reproduction of signs according to the same object can be called innovation. This coincides with the thought of Li Jingkun, the case curator: take a road of differentiation. How to make cases become new knowledge is different from the previous publications and exhibitions. It is impossible for the receiver of signs to touch all of Li Xiongcai pictures or works as the case participants, but he can receive more complete Li Xiongcai artistic signs from the new publications and exhibits than the old knowledge.

Finally, based on the 4As step by step semiotic approach of Mings and Brooksay (2017) , I extract the case experience and construct the following model to facilitate the research and innovation of artist case signs for data collection, thesis writing, exhibition planning and book publishing. I call this model the "Three-Dimensional(3D) " Artist Case Sign Presentation Method .

Table 5.1 "3D "Artist Case Sign Presentation Method

Steps	Contents	Procedures and Details
Step 1	Collect & Manage Data	(1) Collect artist mature Works - representative works and habitual works. Collect immature Works - unusual theme works, soft pen sketches, hard pen sketches. Collect literature materials - videos, recordings, photos, articles, letters, notes, creative tools and even daily life necessities. Collect old publications and old exhibition materials. (2) Collect materials of horizontal comparison of the historical background, relatives and friends, and other artists in the same period. (3) Data classification and reorganization.

Step 2	Analyze Old Signs	<p>(4) Investigate social world and semiotics. Get the historical background. Compare horizontally with relatives and friends, and other artists in the same period.</p> <p>(5) Investigate material world and semiotics. Analyze the characteristics of artist old publications and exhibitions.</p> <p>(6) Investigate personal world and semiotics. Get the intention of the signals sensors of the old signs. Get the signals received by the signs receivers.</p>
Step 3	Acquire New Interpretant	<p>(7) Recognition the object of artist art. Compare the new data with the old signs and find new discoveries. Old signs usually occupy high frequency categories. New discoveries are often hidden behind low-frequency types. Pay respect to the old signs, because the old signs should become an important chapter of the new signs.</p>
Step 4	Creat New sign	<p>(8) Choose an interpretation of the object from perspective of producer demand. Represent the new sign by multimedia. In addition to literature and painting books, exhibitions, there are also videos, stage performances (songs, plays, dances), internet websites and apps and so on. Based on the maximization of artist data, the new sign extracted may be biased to categories for the sake of volume, but it could be presented as comprehensively as possible.</p>
Step 5	Promote & Public Educate	<p>(9) Spread the new sign to more people. Let the sign receivers verify the success and failure of new sign production, and gain new experience. Prepare for the next innovation.</p>

This model is also fit for a research on a group of artists.

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