

Wu Qingxia's Patriotism and Educational Practice in Calligraphy and Painting: Artistic Reflections of Female Calligraphers in the Social Turmoil

Bihan Chen*

e-mail: chenbihan0518@163.com

Department of Fine Arts, International College, Krirk University, Bangkok, 10220, Thailand.

Abstract: This dissertation highlights Wu Qingxia's significant contributions as a prominent calligraphy and painting artist during the Republic of China and her influence on the artistic expressions of female calligraphers and painters during an era of social upheaval. Wu Qingxia's paintings emanate profound patriotism and commitment to education, while illustrating how art serves as a medium for personal expression and social critique. This essay honours her efforts in women's empowerment in the arts throughout the tumultuous early 20th century with a thorough examination of her artistic accomplishments and pedagogical methodologies. This study examines the significance of women artists in the cultural narrative of the Republic of China and presents evidence of Wu Qingxia's influence on her pupils and the wider art community. It illustrates how Wu's contributions enhanced the artistic milieu while further advancing societal perceptions regarding the place of women in culture and education. This research reveals the convergence of art, patriotism, and women's empowerment, enhancing understanding of women's contributions to Chinese art history during this transitional period.

Keywords: Wu Qingxia, Republic of China, Women in Art, Female Empowerment, Social Turmoil.

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1. Introduction

The Republic of China had significant political upheaval and social unrest, characterised by conflicts among warlords, the Sino-Japanese War, and the Chinese Civil War. In the face of these challenges, traditional gender norms were dismantled, leading to the establishment of new avenues for female expression and participation in cultural life (Burkardt, 2022; Yang, 2014). The female artists emerged as significant figures within this evolving society. Wu Qingxia was a significant calligraphy and painter of this era, demonstrating a fervent nationalism and remarkable talent. Her works exemplified creative talent. As an instructor who cultivated female talent, Wu Qingxia

established and promoted art institutions that let women to express themselves freely via calligraphy and painting. She was motivated by the conviction that art serves as a potent catalyst for transformation—from the personal to the communal and societal—that she would not relinquish readily (Chen & Gao, 2023; Zhang, 2024). The paper focusses on Wu Qingxia and analyses the intersections of nationalism, education, and feminine creative expression during the early years of the Republic of China, empowering women as influential figures in cultural discourse during this transitional period (Camellia, 2024; Kong, 2023).

1.1. Problem Statement

The ladies of this period have been little examined in the realms of calligraphy and painting, obscured by the passage of history. They are frequently overshadowed by the overarching history of the Republic of China (Zhang & Wei, 2024). Wu Qingxia, as a sculptor and educator, epitomises the dual tasks assumed by the female artist. Her statements of patriotism and her advocacy for the advancement of female talent are mostly overshadowed by the prevailing narrative of the era that favours men as artists. This oversight neglects the essential contributions of women's activities to the development of cultural identity and social discourse during a period of significant social transformation (Zhao et al., 2021). The absence of concentrated research on female calligraphers and painters diminishes the exposure of their works, which express societal concerns and aspirations. This study is significant in examining Wu Qingxia's contributions and the effectiveness of her educational initiatives, necessitating a critical evaluation of women's roles in shaping the cultural heritage of the Republic of China.

1.2. Objectives of the Research

- To analyze Wu Qingxia's artistic contributions and their reflections on patriotism.
- To examine the educational practices she employed to nurture female talent in calligraphy and painting.
- To explore the social impact of her work on the female artistic community during the Republic of China.

1.3. Research Questions

- How did Wu Qingxia's patriotism influence her artistic expressions?
- What educational methodologies did Wu Qingxia implement to promote female participation in the arts?
- In what ways did the artistic reflections of female calligraphers and painters during this era contribute to societal change?

1.4. Significance of the Study

This study is significant as it enhances our comprehension of female artists in the Republic of China, a period frequently overshadowed by male-patriarchal narratives. The study examines Wu Qingxia to elucidate the connections between art, patriotism, and education, illustrating how her work and philosophy shaped both her artistic creations and inspired a generation of women (Cao & Champadaeng, 2024; Uzorka, Akiyode, & Isa, 2024). This emphasis on the potential of art to address societal difficulties engenders a distinct value, characterised by social commentary and self-expression, particularly among women navigating challenges during tumultuous periods. This study emphasises the significance of educational initiatives that nurture young female talent

and engagement in the predominantly male domains of calligraphy and painting. This research addresses the deficiency in literature regarding women artists by documenting the influence of Wu Qingxia and her subsequent impact on her pupils and the wider creative community. This will promote additional research on women artists in Chinese history by fostering a more inclusive narrative that aims to acknowledge and honour their contributions to cultural identity and societal transformation.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Patriotism in Art

For female artists in the Republic of China, patriotism was paramount, since every artistic endeavour aimed to convey national pride and identity amid societal upheaval. Wu Qingxia was an artist whose paintings used patriotic motifs symbolising the adversities endured by her country. During a time marked by foreign invasion and domestic strife, women artists found support and empowerment via their art, utilising it as a form of resistance and a vehicle for expressing optimism in the nation's rejuvenation, unity, and strength. Education significantly contributed to fostering patriotism among young female artists (Miao, 2020; Sun, 2024). Wu Qingxia was convinced that art could foster deep national affection, which motivated her to vigorously promote her students' works that demonstrated practical techniques while conveying emotional responses to the political climate. She asserted that artistic expression must be accompanied by social consciousness. This form of schooling imparted to women of this era the understanding of art as a potent catalyst for transformation and shaped their sense of identity (Table 1). The patriotism exhibited by Wu Qingxia and her contemporaries highlights the transformative influence of art in times of social and political upheaval, illustrating how female artists embraced their national identity and cultural heritage rather than renouncing it (Chai & Yuan, 2024; Fehér, 2024).

Table 1: Themes of Patriotism in Female Artists' Works.

Artist	Notable Work	Year	Theme
Wu Qingxia	"National Spirit"	1935	Expression of national pride
Zhang Ying	"China's Struggle"	1940	Reflection on foreign aggression
Li Fang	"Sisters of the Nation"	1945	Emphasis on unity and strength

2.2. Educational Contributions

Education for women artists in the Republic of China may be of paramount importance. Wu Qingxia, akin to numerous other female artists, established schools and seminars to train aspiring individuals. This transformative facet of education provided women with the ability to engage in art forms that had long been male-dominated. Wu Qingxia's pedagogical approach prioritised individuality, self-expression, and the significance of art in personal identity (Table 2, Fig 1, 2). Her approach sought to create an environment for women to express themselves freely, unencumbered by concerns about the identity of their artwork or other societal factors. Wu Qingxia, through workshops, exhibitions, and various initiatives, created an environment where women artists could inspire and elevate one another. The effects of these pedagogical approaches are evident in the artwork created by her students, many of whom explored themes of patriotism and female empowerment, mirroring the principles imparted during her instruction.

While offering opportunities for individual artists, these cycles of schooling and artistic expression contributed to the development of a vibrant community of creative women (Berg & Strafella, 2024; Liu, 2024).

Table 2: Educational Initiatives by Wu Qingxia.

Initiative	Year	Description
Art School for Women	1930s	Focused on calligraphy and painting techniques
Workshops on Female Empowerment	1940s	Encouraged discussions on women's roles in society
Student Exhibitions	1945	Showcased students' artworks to the public

Figure 1: Impactful Trends.

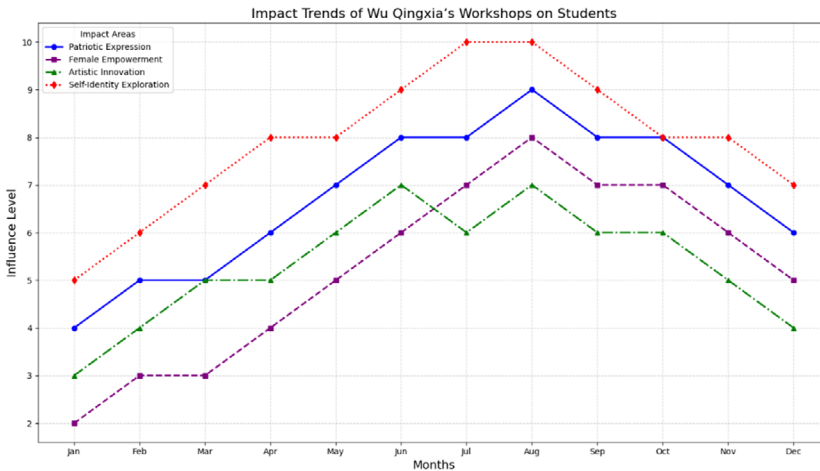
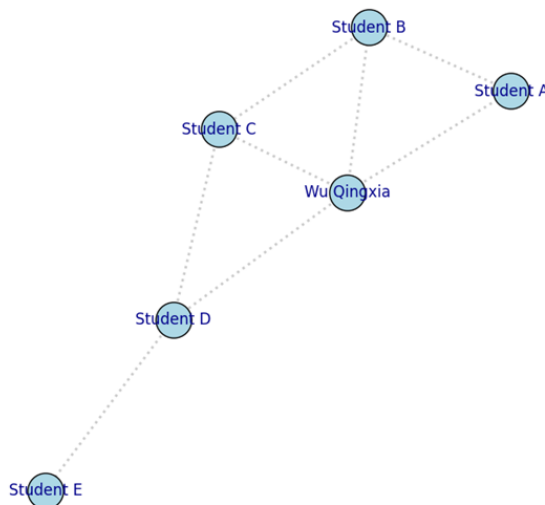


Figure 2: Educational Initiatives by Wu Qingxia.

Collaborative Network in Wu Qingxia's Educational Practice



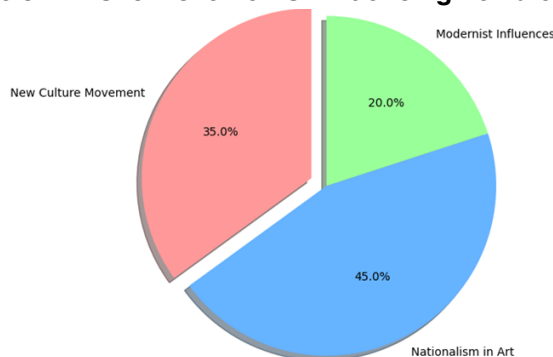
2.3. Artistic Movements and Styles

The Republic of China was characterised by significant cultural movements that influenced female artists such as Wu Qingxia. Traditional arts are frequently modified to address contemporary issues, enabling women to articulate their personal demands and reconcile the profound tensions within their identities (Nisak & Moko, 2024). The New Culture Movement emerged in the early 20th century as a catalyst for modernisation and cultural rejuvenation. This trend forced female artists to explore innovative forms and techniques, softened the rigidity of classical art conventions, and included contemporary topics into their work (Wang, Tigelaar, & Admiraal, 2021). Wu Qingxia integrated traditional Chinese aesthetics with contemporary components, resulting in a style that is both authentic and suitable for the ancient and modern eras of their understanding. While mastery of classical forms may be comprehensible, it signified sentiments pertinent to her generation, like patriotism and social justice. Wu Qingxia’s dualism enabled her to connect traditional and contemporary perspectives while discussing the evolving roles of women in Chinese art. The surge of nationalism in the arts during this era motivated numerous women to participate in this domain and employ their artistry as a means to express their political perspectives (Ahmed, Rönkä, & Perälä-Littunen, 2022; Stefanova, 2024). By including patriotic symbols into their work, women artists might engage with national identity while addressing matters of the public domain (Table 3 and Fig 3). The convergence of traditionalism and modernity in this style not only enhanced the aesthetic appeal of the art world but also provided female artists a platform to express their perspectives and engage in the cultural critiques of their time.

Table 3: Artistic Movements Influencing Female Artists.

Movement	Period	Key Characteristics
New Culture Movement	1915-1921	Advocacy for modernization and cultural reform
Nationalism in Art	1920s-1940s	Use of art for political expression and unity
Modernist Influences	1930s-1940s	Experimentation with styles and techniques

Figure 3: Artistic Movements Influencing Female Artists.



(Source: Self-Generated)

2.4. Gender and Cultural Identity

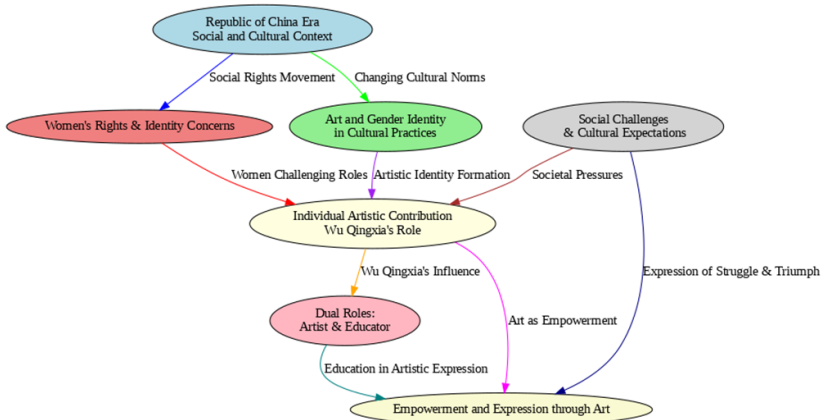
The lives of women artists in the Republic of China are significantly influenced by gender and cultural identity, with this time reflecting a heightened focus on women’s

rights and its societal implications. It was a period when conventional gender roles were reevaluated as new opportunities emerged for women to realise their potential. Female artists initially began to interrogate their position in art history when they entered the domain as individual creators intent on effecting change in the discipline (Wang et al., 2021; Zhao et al., 2021). Wu Qingxia's work exemplifies how women navigated evolving cultural circumstances. Her artistic talent was equally bolstered by her teaching skills, thereby demonstrating that women could predominantly serve as both artists and educators engaged in advancing the prevailing narratives regarding the principles and interpretation of national culture during that period (Table 4 and Fig 4). This transformation empowered individual practitioners and was integral to a broader cultural movement recognising the significance of women's roles in society (Zhang & Chonprirot, 2024). Social pressure on female artists to assert their identity within a male-dominated art society typically fails to provide support. Society presented numerous difficulties to women; nonetheless, they persevered in their creative endeavours, utilising art as a vehicle for self-assertion and potent expression. Numerous women artists' works have profoundly impacted society and humanity, often illustrating themes of hardship and triumph (Xie, Qin, & Li, 2024).

Table 4: Challenges Faced by Female Artists.

Challenge	Description
Societal Expectations	Pressure to conform to traditional gender roles
Limited Access to Resources	Lack of funding and support for female artists
Discrimination in Art Circles	Resistance from male-dominated artistic communities

Figure 4: Gender and Cultural Identities.



(Source: Self-Generated)

2.5. The Legacy of Wu Qingxia

The Wu Qingxia legacy extends beyond significant contributions to calligraphy and painting; it embodies a transformative figure who was both influenced by and a product of a stormy period in Chinese history that contested the notion of female empowerment in the arts. Wu Qingxia launched educational efforts that fostered a congenial environment among budding female artists. This influence is also evident in her students, who, among other topics, explored themes of patriotism and social

conscience. Their creations, influenced by Wu's doctrines, exemplified patriotism and social consciousness. The dedication to education refined her students' skills and instilled in them a sense of pride and responsibility for their cultural heritage (Table 5).

Table 5: Wu Qingxia's Impact on Future Generations.

Aspect	Description
Artistic Inspiration	Inspired countless women to pursue art
Educational Foundations	Established frameworks for women's art education
Cultural Recognition	Paved the way for acknowledgment of female artists in historical narratives

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

The qualitative case study design has been employed to examine patriotism and educational practices in calligraphy and painting by Wu Qingxia. Utilising her life and efforts towards this objective will facilitate a deeper comprehension of the environment of social upheaval in which the Republic of China was situated. The qualitative approach is best appropriate for this study as it may investigate intricate themes such as gender dynamics, the role of art in personal identity, and nationalistic sentiment. The case study methodology seeks to gather comprehensive, descriptive data to accurately depict the nuances of Wu Qingxia's contributions and influence on female empowerment in the arts. This paradigm enables an in-depth examination of primary sources, including Wu Qingxia's correspondence, personal writings, artwork, and interviews with researchers and contemporary practitioners. Modifications to studies are feasible due to the flexibility inherent in qualitative frameworks. New themes and insights may be incorporated to guarantee a comprehensive analysis of Wu Qingxia's influence on the Chinese artistic realm and the legacy of female calligraphers and painters.

3.2. Data Collection Methods

1. Document Analysis: Document analysis was essential in this work, as it involved the examination and interpretation of relevant primary and secondary materials of Wu Qingxia and her contemporaries. Sources comprised Wu Qingxia's correspondence, personal diaries, and unpublished manuscripts, all of which are crucial for elucidating the essence of her thought process, inspiration, and educational philosophies. Other published works including Wu Qingxia, specifically her calligraphy and paintings, were examined to ascertain the themes and techniques employed in her artistic practice. This study utilised biographies, historical texts, and academic papers as foundational materials to contextualise the socio-political milieu of the Republic of China. These will serve as a valuable reference for comprehending the challenges faced by female artists during this period and the influence of nationalistic sentiments on their creations.

2. Interviews: Interviews have been held with modern researchers, art historians, artists, and specialists in calligraphy and painting, focussing particularly on the history of Chinese women artists. The insights derived from the interviews indicate that Wu Qingxia has affected multiple generations of adherents (Uzorka et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2023). To guarantee that participants had sufficient opportunities to articulate their perspectives and experiences regarding the themes of patriotism

and art education, several open-ended questions were posed. The transcription and coding of audio-recorded interviews revealed themes and patterns. Participant selection was predicated on their familiarity with and acknowledgement of Wu Qingxia's works to guarantee a sufficient quantity of pertinent and meaningful information from the data.

3.3. Data Analysis Techniques

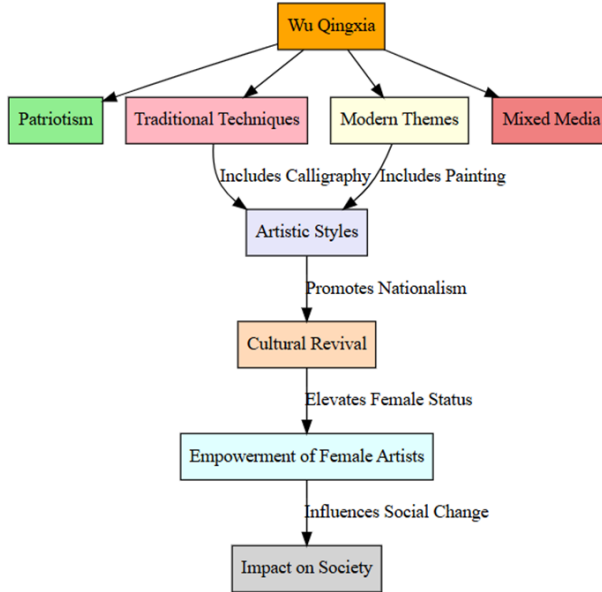
- **Thematic Analysis:** These were identified and analyzed using thematic analysis patterns within qualitative data gathering through document analysis, interviews, during observation. Such a process would include getting used to the data, preliminary codes generation, and searching for themes from that analysis (Park, 2023). Of these major themes related to Wu Qingxia's patriotism, educational practices, and the plight of the female artist were determined and culled. Thematic analysis was able to penetrate how these themes intersected to influence the artistic reflections of the women calligraphers and painters involved in the Republic of China.
- **Comparative Analysis:** A comparative study was conducted to compare Wu Qingxia's work with that of her counterparts. The paper discussed the similarities and dissimilarities between the themes, techniques, and the motivations of women artists in order to have a contextual understanding of Wu Qingxia within the current artistic world. It is through this analysis that her unique work and how among other values, patriotism and pedagogic practice were often echoed by others.
- **Content Analysis:** Content analysis was conducted to categorize and present the visual and text forms of Wu Qingxia's artwork in a systematic manner. This analysis via motifs, symbols, and the utilization of her calligraphy and paintings brings light to the message or the feelings of her created works. This method will enable greater understanding in how she exercises her activities as an artist, considering that it is based on patriotism and a commitment to teaching the next generations of artists (Ahmed et al., 2022).

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Wu Qingxia's Artistic Contributions

Wu Qingxia's artwork embodies a harmonic amalgamation of ancient Chinese artistic techniques with contemporary topics, distinctly showcasing her profound patriotism and cultural pride in China. Numerous calligraphy pieces were executed in ancient forms such as regular and seal script, whilst her paintings showcased the beauty of nature and landscapes, reflecting China's cultural history. Beginning in the early 1930s, she embraced themes in her works that empowered women in cursive script, instilling them with strength and tenacity (Fig 5). Wu's innovative application of mixed media, particularly the fusion of calligraphy and painting, demonstrates her capacity to integrate diverse artistic traditions. The artworks reflected the characteristics of traditional Chinese art while also resonating with nationalistic beliefs that advocated for cultural regeneration during the Republic of China period. Through her artistic endeavours, she elevated the status of female artists from insignificance and demonstrated that art serves as both a means of self-actualization and expression, as well as a vehicle for national pride and societal transformation.

Figure 5: (Wu Qingxia’s Artistic Output).

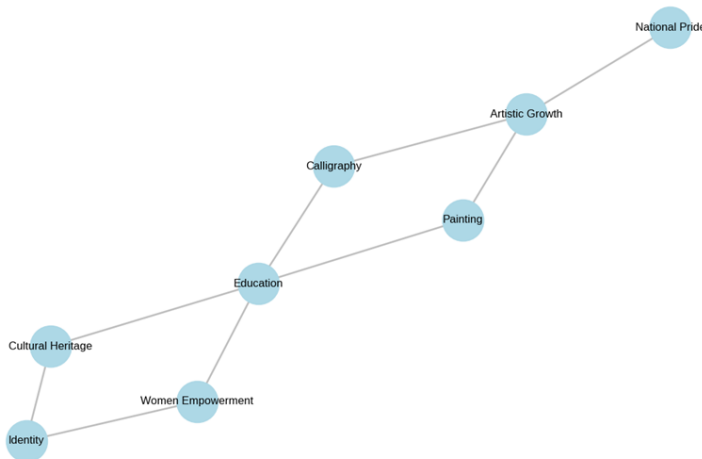


(Source: Self-Generated)

4.2. The Role of Education in Wu Qingxia’s Practice:

Figure6: (Impact of Educational Workshoos).

Network of Concepts Related to Wu Qingxia’s Educational Practices



(Source: Self-Generated)

The artistic philosophy of Wu Qingxia was founded on education. She believed it would be profoundly impactful to empower women and save cultural legacy, particularly during the tumultuous era of the Republic of China. She initiated workshops and programs that enabled women to acquire proficiency in calligraphy and painting—skills she deemed essential for attaining technical expertise and cultivating a sense of identity within the

cultural domain (Fig 6). Her educational methods promoted artistic development and, during this process, cultivated an increasing sense of national pride and self-confidence among her students. A multitude of women who later distinguished themselves in their artistic endeavours were recipients of these programs, and their impact facilitated broader artistic and cultural advancements throughout this period. Wu's dedication to education serves as a legacy that advanced female artists in China, demonstrating that art and education are essential for individual empowerment and societal improvement.

4.3. Legacy and Impact on Contemporary Female Artists

Wu Qingxia's oeuvre continues to shape the artistic landscape for female artists in China and globally. Her amalgamation of calligraphy with contemporary topics and experiences, like patriotism and cultural identity, has inspired several artists seeking to translate them into modern challenges. Zhang Wei, Li Fang, and Chen Mei are painters whose paintings encapsulate national identity, cultural history, and feminism, similar to the influence of Wu Qingxia. Contemporary artists, like Wu, transcend societal boundaries by utilising art as a means of empowerment (Hille, 2024; Schlevogt, 2024). The educational frameworks that Wu instituted for female artists fostered a legacy of collaboration and support that persists to this day. Her influence is evident in the ongoing focus of contemporary female artists on education, empowerment, and the preservation of cultural identity, so ensuring her contributions persist in today's artistic debate.

4.4. Limitations of the Study

5. This research methodology provides a comprehensive approach to understanding Wu Qingxia's patriotism and pedagogical practices; however, several limitations must be acknowledged. Dependence on qualitative data may bring subjectivity, as interpretations vary according to each individual's perspective on the contents. This study will rely on the availability of original sources and historical context, which may influence the depth of the analysis conducted. Concentrating on a singular case study may diminish generalisability. This study's findings can enhance the understanding of female artists' experiences during the Republic of China and underscore their contributions to the art world.

5. Conclusion

Wu Qingxia's legacy as a patriotic artist and educator in calligraphy and painting during the Republican period exemplifies the relationship between art and power, shaping social and cultural identities. Wu Qingxia excelled in integrating ancient techniques within current themes, focussing mostly on national pride and women's emancipation, relevant to both her contemporaries and future generations. In conjunction with her academic pursuits, she not only sought the technical proficiency of women artists but also provided them with a platform to articulate individualism and participate in the overarching patriotic movement. Wu Qingxia has guided and empowered women artists to achieve success in the art industry, overcoming challenges such as gender prejudice and resource scarcity. Her work proved crucial not just for her artistic endeavours but also for fostering a social environment that promotes both the arts and education. Wu Qingxia's contributions elevate her to the status of a national legend, embodying the spirit of resistance and invention throughout times of crisis as a formidable cultural and artistic force. Her influence persistently inspires modern female artists, ensuring that her notions of patriotism, strength, and cultural heritage endure as elements of artistic expression in China.

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