Collusion or Resistance: Printmaking Art and Technology in Age of Simulacra

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Abstract: *In the context of the overall victory of the technology in the era of simulacra, printmaking, as a visual expression medium with both art and technology, faces contemporary difficulties and value problems. This study analyzes the profound influence of the age of simulacra on artistic expression and viewing mode. In view of printmaking art, this study puts forward a dual proposition of "collusion" and "resistance", emphasizing that in the process of technological evolution, artists should not only collude with the favorable conditions of digital technology, but also resist the siege of technology, so as to return to the reality of life.*

Keywords: *Simulacrum; Digitization; Printmaking art; Technology; Viewing mode; Visual expression*

1. Introduction

The essence of art is to imitate nature, express and reproduce nature through technical media. From Imitation Theory to the formation of representational painting, the visual expression of the subject promotes the development of traditional painting. Placing sight before other senses, the Greeks regarded visual experience as the artist's key experience of nature, and visual expression as the key to unlocking the truth of the obscured object. In the age of simulacra, however, technology has won out, and the relationship between visual expression and nature has fundamentally changed. Therefore, reconstructing the value concept of art has become a topic that must be discussed at present.

2. Art and Technology in Age of Simulacrum

Modern technologies such as virtual simulation, artificial intelligence and interactive transmission have been widely used. Digital technologies are participating in the production of images and gradually constructing artificial reality. This "simulacra" pushes the results of technical development to the extreme, creating an "electronic illusion" that gradually invades social life and acts as a more important, real, and concrete role than reality. In the creation of the visual machine, the image constructed by the code intentionally turns to pure representation, which makes the boundary between reality and representation, essence and phenomenon blurred. The world has entered a "simulacrum age" in which image reproduction is rampant and mass media manipulates [1]. Humans are immersed in the world of images and mistakenly regard appearances as reality, even believing that simulation is more real than reality. Images are no longer just a "reflection" and "communication" of the real world, but at the same time constructing the world. Heidegger pointed out in the Age of the World Image that the world image is not meant to be an image about the world, but to grasp the world as an image, and the image symbol becomes the way to understand the world [2]. Therefore, the subject of "viewing" enters into the illusion composed of images and gradually separates from reality. The experience of viewing images has by this time been homogenized by technology. This means that in the process of "watching", the subject idea is passively accepted, cooperated or discussed concurrently, and the way of artistic creation is simultaneously constructed and distorted. At the same time, it is fed back into the subject's spiritual world and consciousness.

"One must reckon that a great innovation will change the whole technique of art, which will inevitably affect the very creation of art, and may eventually lead to a change, in the most fascinating way, of the very idea of art." The evolution of technology opens up new modes of existence for the world of simulacrum, namely, virtualization, dematerialization, diversification, while the real world is shelved or obscured. As a result, the problem facing art becomes how to deal with the relationship with simulacrum, and the relationship between reality and truth is often ignored. Whether the "spiritual halo" of art works

has completely disappeared is still unknown, but the impact and influence of the process of technology on art is huge, and simulacra is changing the existence of traditional art.

The environment of contemporary art creation has undergone obvious changes, from the traditional mode to the multi-symbiosis and multi-coexistence of holographic civilization. Duchamp's Spring raises the question of the concept of art work, overturns the artistic standard of traditional western aesthetics and the artistic concept established therefrom. In the 1960s, Pop art further broke the boundary between art and reality (life) : any object could be a work of art, any "act" or "process" could constitute art in itself, and anyone could directly participate in the creation of art. Contemporary art uses a wide range of media, such as painting, sculpture, installation, ready-made products and multimedia, trying to break the boundaries of media and become a "total art". Art works are no longer just imitating nature, and the related subject "viewing" is no longer a one-way aesthetic experience, and the essence of "art" has entered the stage of the vaguest concept. Arthur Danto, Hans Bertin and others theorized the boundary problem, and threw out the core issues of modern art research such as "the boundary of art" and "the end of art". The theoretical value of art has obviously changed, requiring a new analysis of phenomena and a new examination of the essential concept of art.

3. Contemporary Dilemma and Value of Printmaking

Printmaking, as a revolutionary weapon in the democratic liberation movement of the last century, is still continuing the expression of traditional art, but it is gradually declining in the tide of contemporary art. Since the 1980s, the study of Chinese printmaking art has been focusing on the intensive study of the subject art language. The group of print-makers is mainly composed of teachers from art colleges and universities, who tacitly abide by the local rules and form a relatively closed state on the whole. In contemporary art, the perfection of artistic language is not a decisive factor in the standard of value. Therefore, the research system of printmaking language makes it difficult to find new perspectives and ways of intervention, resulting in its gradual marginalization in the market and academic fields. Some avant-garde printmaking artists began to try cross-border experiments, hoping to solve the contemporary problems of printmaking through media transformation [3]. Therefore, we discuss the dual characteristics of art and technology of printmaking, explore whether the media transformation of traditional printmaking art can adapt to the complex artistic environment of the era of simulacra, and how printmaking may react in the contemporary artistic environment.

The art of printmaking develops due to the renewal of reproduction printing technology, and its particularity lies in that this art form must be realized through indirect media, that is to say, the renewal of media has been boosting the development of printmaking art in history [4]. From the era of mechanical reproduction to the era of simulacra (that is, digital reproduction), a new media that is different from the traditional media - virtual media has emerged, and printmaking has entered the post-printing era that can be paperless and plateless. In the era of simulacra, printmaking may take the initiative to incorporate digital media elements, and then face the freedom and possibility brought by digital technology, including the virtual encircling of the real world under the simulacra mentioned above, which is the problem that artists and printmakers as intellectuals must face. We change our thinking and discuss from what Angle the printmaking art should incorporate the new technology in today's increasingly blurred reality and whether the new technology can cope with the erosion of virtual images to the world through art, so that human beings can return to the vivid reality.

4. Collusion and Resistance of Printmaking in the Era of Simulacra

4.1. Collusion

"Complicity" implies a conscious inclusion of the advantages offered by digital technologies. The application of digital and new media technology in artistic creation is very rich, which makes the cross-border and cooperation between various disciplines possible.The art of printmaking is produced by the technique of reproduction and has an inherent advantage in the use of media, that is, plates. Starting from the plurality and indirectness of printmaking itself, the development and extension of emerging media or technology with an open mind can constitute a new artistic way.

First of all, collusion involves the expansion of the medium of printmaking itself. Digital technology has long been incorporated into the production process of printmaking, such as PS manuscript, color separation, plate making, etc. The basic features of traditional printmaking are applied to computer image

processing technology, high-definition scanning, digital micro-spray and other methods to form a comprehensive digital printmaking. Chinese printmaking artists have focused on the definition of digital printmaking in terms of identity. One side believes that digital media gives artists more space to play with the advantages of fine picture and convenient production. The other side questioned its lack of manual meaning and spiritual temperature, and the mechanical nature led to the absence of spiritual halo of the work. Based on the creation purpose of original Printmaking, digital printmaking can be included in regular exhibitions [5]. After experiencing rejection at the initial stage of recognition, new technologies have now been accepted and widely used, such as the Chinese printmaking artists organization "International Academy Printmaking Alliance" established the legal identity of digital printmaking in 2018, and hosted the first international digital printmaking art exhibition in 2021. From the technical point of view alone, a series of experimental digital printmaking will become an opportunity for new art to be released. However, we also need to pay attention to the fact that if this mutation only changes its external form, but lacks the breakthrough of internal spirit, it is difficult to realize the essence of the sublimation of printmaking art.

Secondly, collusion also points to experiments in cross-border languages. With its good application and prospect, digital new media provides abundant possibilities for cross-media artistic creation, which is undoubtedly more conducive to the expression of new concepts at present. In the active part of experimental exploration of contemporary Chinese printmaking, artists' thinking and creation present different perspectives, such as Xu Bing, Su Xinping, Wang Huaxiang, Li Fan, Song Guangzhi and Wei Jia, from the contemporary transformation of artistic expression themes to the experiment of cross-media language. Li Quanmin, Yang Feng, Wenzhong Yan's use of comprehensive media with more free tension. Kang Jianfei, CAI Yuanhe, Sun Xun, Liu Yichun, Liu Qingyuan and others go beyond the thinking of printmaking to intervene in social issues [6]. To promote the art of printmaking to cross borders, enhance inclusiveness and openness, which requires artists to break through the old concept of "printmaking", reduce the blind worship of printmaking history and production procedures, and eliminate the binary opposition between traditional handwork and digital technology. Printmaking is no longer an independent form of figurative language, but a "way of thinking" that is widely applied, expanded and extended, which can be seen in the concrete creation of contemporary artists such as Xu Bing.

The problems that "collusion" needs to face include the following aspects. The first is that whether the contemporary printmaking art needs the deterministic concept. Moreover, the integration between printmaking and new media, that is, art and technology. At last, does the crossover of printmaking mean that art has no boundaries? If we want to ensure the independence of the concept of "printmaking", how to grasp the scale of boundary?

4.2. Resistance

In today's virtualized world, faced with the ambiguity of reality and simulation, essence and phenomenon brought by simulacra, we must be alert to the separation between the siege of technology and the connection of the real world, so as not to lose the authenticity. Contemporary art should be the creative activity of the intellectual artist who is concerned about the real world, and needs the revolutionary revelation of art to face the thing itself, so that the hidden truth can be revealed [7].

One possibility is a return to the manual labor and physical intervention of traditional printmaking. In The Origin of Art and the Stipulation of Thought, Heidegger pointed out that modern art comes from the world civilization that is planned and manipulated by science and technology, and can only deceive itself, emphasizing the return to "craft", which is the way of communication between the body and nature. Through the traditional printmaking art form to express new themes, play its revolutionary vanguard role in the criticism of popular culture, so as to return to the artistic roots of Athena.

Another possibility emphasizes the printmaking way of thinking. The tendency of the artist is to see what he wants to paint, not to paint what he sees [8]. Artists can use the "vision" of prints, not to inherit and modernize every aspect, but to find a meaning clue from it and transform this clue in the current context. The physical and "paper" carrier of traditional printmaking can be abandoned, whether through digital technology or new media, the presentation mode can be installation or image, as long as the thinking mode of printmaking is preserved. This way of thinking is related to the realistic criticism of printmaking and the poetic nature of art, focusing on thinking about the real life world. In short, the way of thinking that printmaking has to return to reality is reflected through digital images, and technology "resists" technology to reawaken our true feeling of the living world.

Printmaking can use the advantages of media to connect with the current reality, can intervene in the

social reality as a former social image disseminator and producer, and can also be a special way of thinking, combining with other media to express the current concept. What really needs to be "resisted" is the alienation of our relationship with reality in the age of simulacra. Today, we live in a technologically virtualized world, facing the ambiguity of reality and performance, essence and phenomenon in the era of pseudo-reality. We may even be virtual themselves, completely losing contact with the real world. A printmaker should be an artist first, and a printmaker should be an art first. The printmaking that insists on ontology research and lacks publicity will eventually be reduced to the artist's personal ravings, which is the real resolution of the fundamental attributes of printmaking. The problems faced by print are also the problems faced by art. In other words, art must take measures for the current process of physical and mental variation, and play a role in returning to reality in the historical context.(

5. Conclusion

People's "thinking" in reality is the beginning of modern printmaking in China - the spiritual origin of the new woodcut movement. Art is the place of truth, the struggle between the world and the earth, and art makes the truth hidden by things appear. What we really experience and gain in a work of art is how real the work is, that is, how better we know and reknow things and ourselves in it [9].

Technological change has brought freedom and possibility to contemporary art, but it has also brought unprecedented challenges. In the discussions about art, printmaking has been concerned about its current situation and future fate because of its dual characteristics of art and technology, such as "the crisis of the era of Simulacra" and "the crisis of art". The key words "collusion" and "resistance" discussed in this paper are not a set of opposing concepts. Artists need not only to accept the development of technology, but also to resist the homogenization of technology through manual work and the change of thinking mode. In this way, printmaking art can break through the "concern" of modern science and technology and return to the life world. This study calls for a deeper and more detailed discussion of the relationship between art and technology, art and reality, so as to provide a possible path for art that is always future-oriented.

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