

The Non-interpretability of Painting

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Abstract

Goethe once said that everyone could see materials, but connotation was only found by those who dealt with it, and form was a secret to the majority of people. This article is aim to discuss the currently situation of contemporary easel painting and its de-interpretation, from the development of easel painting, i present the irreplaceable visual sense, and therefore, to offer a referent direction about the easel painting's future.

Keywords

de-interpretation; contradictoriness; visual sense.

1. The modern art market and the fact that easel painting is two dimensional make us have an illusion

The modern art market and the fact that easel painting is two dimensional make us have an illusion: painting itself is no longer important, what matters is the “packaging” of the critics, so gradually, painting is drawn into the market. And painting, which is limited in dimension, is taken as “dead”. Whether painting can be free from the limit of interpretation and return to its original form will be the focus of this piece of writing.

First, interpretation is everywhere: from textbooks in primary schools to international behavior of politicians. We dislike interpretation because it is neither the intention of the creator nor reflects the aesthetics of the audience. Just as when I see the giant stone pillars in South America and am about to marvel at them, you tell me that this is the reproductive worship of a certain primitive tribe.

The contradiction of interpretation is that it is unavoidably subjective. When such subjectivity deviates from the author's intention, then interpretation becomes distortion and sophistry. Chinese born in the 1980s must have become bored with Lu Xun, because they don't know that each word in “I will feel the supreme tragedy of this society” can be analyzed. Lu Xun's works are still good, but educators force their own understanding and interpretation of his work on students. This is the biggest mistake of interpreters and interpretation.

Nevertheless, our society has been accustomed to interpretation. For example, when we watch news programs, we unavoidably will think of something, and such thoughts are heavily influenced by our own ways of thinking. When we watch Topics in Focus, or Phoenix Evening Express, we will receive information, but the information we received is no longer the information of the program, and the program does not necessarily reflect the reality. We don't feel anything strange about this, because interpretation is part of thinking. We hate interpretation but we cannot get rid of interpretation. Therefore, Susan, the author of Against Interpretation, failed to take a firm stand in her book, and replaced “reasonable interpretation” with “interpretation”. In this way, the difference is made clear. Susan thinks like us - she is against unreasonable interpretation, she is against randomly assumed interpretation, and she is against interpretation that is forced with one's own understanding.

The reason I am against interpretation of painting is because, due to interpretation, the meaning of art takes the place of the works of art, and audience neglect the true intention of the artist. And, another important factor must be considered: interpreters are important figures, or persons in authority, so their interpretation has significant influence on the public; their interpretation is not a true reflection of the artwork, but a “second creation”, which is unfair to both art and the artist. Meanwhile, interpreters force their own understanding on the audience, this is not reasonable interpretation, but a reflection of the power of authority.

Interpretation is a process. The interpretation of ordinary audience is just an individual thinking process, so it won't be forced on any other individuals. But the interpretation by authority forced on ordinary audience is a vivid example of “force others to do as you wish”.

Today, when appreciating a work of art, people often ask themselves: "what's it about?" Audience are accustomed to applying their own experiential concept to the logic system of artworks. They endeavor to find the truth behind the artwork, as if the artwork presented in front them is not enough, as if it must be further interpreted, if its being is to be proven reasonable. In the book *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* by Susan Sontag, the indirectness and separability of interpretation are explained in detail. Interpretation will not make the audience closer to art, on the contrary, to move the content of art will only make art become concealed by experiential concept. The essence it digs is not the answer to art, but the disdain of art. But to go against interpretation does not mean that art can not be described, rather, to go against interpretation aims at looking for the most suitable interpretation, namely, the question - "what form of criticism do we need to serve works of art rather than take their place?" As regards this question, Susan Sontag gave us an answer: "transparency", to experience the clarity of the object. That is to say, interpretation should show that "the function of criticism is to show how it becomes like this, or even to show that this is what it is, rather than to show what it means", critics must master the minor differences between reasonable interpretation and over interpretation.

The same goes for painting. Although, because of the identifiability of painting works, it tends to make people interpret them, painting in the field of cognition has become a mark of the past. It no longer meets the expectation of the modern culture, because freedom and equality are the common objectives of today, therefore, in art appreciation, the audience and the authors are absolutely equal, so, interpretation - a type of activity conducted from one party to the other, a type of activity with strong intentionality, becomes a factor of violence. It not only influences the relationship between the author and the audience, but also influences the conflict between the audience as an individual and audience as a group, because of the involvement in the right to speech that contains political elements. Of course, we are unable to give a negative definition to interpretation, but in aesthetic activity, interpretation must be handled with meticulousness.

To change the current trend - interpret artworks- is still a slogan rather than a habit of thinking. Each of us interpret, there is nothing wrong with it. But such interpretation must be fair and open. We don't need interpretation from the authority, because the value of artworks belongs neither to the artist nor the interpreter. The value of artworks lies in the fact that it is multi-dimensional, any single dimensional interpretation may bring an end to its multi-dimensional value, which, is of course against the true intention of the artist.

From the perspective of visuality, Craig Clunas once said that all material culture contained visual elements, and any type of visual culture was reliant on materiality. He thought that materials and visual culture were interdependent. The research on visual culture, which is just unfolding, takes every object related to “observation” as the subject of research, including the object being observed, the subject that is observing, and the discourse related to vision.

The theme of vision becomes “speech to oneself”. But in fact, vision also includes talks with the history, talks with fields, and talks with the audience.

As cultural history comes to a new age, social art history (or the left wing school) and visual art research has come into being. Vision (that deals with art/visual objects) abandons its awkward past - to work behind closed doors. While combining the results and theories of interdisciplinary research, vision is no longer confined to form analysis (lines, colors and composition) while processing the objects of art; attention is paid to the special perspectives (that are influenced by single facet or multi-facet social forces) presented by these “texts”, and how to create facts that are universally accepted by the society, the shaping of ideology and effect of human heart assimilation behind such discourse are focused on. On this basis, research on visual art becomes popular in the UK. However, while talking about “visuality”, we become trapped in a contradiction: on one hand, we are madly exploring the visual interestingness of a painting, on the other hand, we are easily influenced by relevant standard forms.

Whether for painting or art, interpretation means a distrust toward the form of the artwork. This is a kind of universal doubt. This is not only true for the audience, but also true for the artists. Excessive interpretation makes them but a tool for replicating empirical concept.

“The greatest artist obtained a high level of neutrality.” (Susan Sontag). In an era when the Internet is highly developed, people are living in a sea of information and interpretability becomes a habit. On the basis of empirical concept, interpretability becomes a shortcut. People no longer need to honestly and bravely confront their objects. The transfer platform Internet makes the shadow of everything replace themselves and become a common and cheap data. It makes form empty talks, while the contents left is barren and boring. As a fictitious media, the Internet is destroying the "truth". Where is truth? It does not lie in our brain in the form of experience, it is not the vague concept in our cognition. It is what we see, hear, eat, and feel. The reason why "truth" is true is because it is not invented, but something real that can be felt!

“The pearl rolls in the plate in a flexible way, and the spirit still remains within the plate”. In the world of the "plate", to make criticism and interpretation play its "spirits" role will be the best answer.

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