

# Research on Post-modern Artistic Language Originality

## Analysis of the Works of Marcel Duchamp as an Example

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**Abstract**—In the 1990s of 20th century, post-modern art is very popular in China art circles. Since modern art landing China the dispute is nonstop, however, after the hustle and bustle, there is no certain conclusion. Writer try to analyze the typical case which is the beginning of modern art artists Marcel Duchamp's work, in order to explore the meaning of post-modern artistic language originality , and derive inspiration for artistic creation.

**Keywords**—*post-modern art; Duchamp; artistic language; originality*

### I. INTRODUCTION

Where does the artistic significance or value been reflected? This has always been a non-stop and constantly explore topic. Contemporary art drawings express the fact that our artistic creation either follow our-self, or follow the West. In today's post-modern or post-post-modern art, contemporary art has been over developed from the context and the form resort to every conceivable means, but with no doubt, the originality of artistic works is always the rules for the art to survive. Objectively speaking, there are many original elements in post-modern art worth learning.

Although today's post-modern art is not new, but in the nineties of last century the Chinese art world is indeed consider post-modern art quite fashion. Since post-modern art landing China until it became the darling in art world especially the fine art world, the whole process has been controversial. The main reason is that polysemy and ambiguity of post-modern art has brought the self-consistent possibility both on artists' creation and theorist's criticism. Post-modern art was seen as a hotchpotch which includes everything, and everyone can find what they want in it. The roles of post-modern art in the Chinese art stage mostly were ruffian, rogue, clown or doll. These full, numb or even insane images have created pessimistic and cynical artistic attitude which prevailed in the whole post-modern art, so that the value has been inverted and the spirit has been dispelled. Post-modern became very popular and it became the fashion. In general, the heyday of post-modern art development in China's has possessed by the devil, to the extremes which ordinary people difficult to understand and withstand.

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The development of post-modern art as described above, was really worrying at that time. Although the twenty-first century's information has allowed people to easily obtain as much information as needed, but just see from the motives and results of our understanding and explanation to post-modern art, we have not got enough information about the post-modern artistic connotation. Throughout the establishment and features of Western post-modern art, post-modern art paintings indeed flashing an alternative trait, and its generality was reflected in increasing in time, fashion, random and ambiguous image language world. This is a new way of expression. It questions the authority of modernism artistic core discourse, it deconstructs the perfect, dispels the holiness, subverts the so called mainstream discourse logic, emphasizes the significance of marginality, focus on the uncertainty's redefinition for the established value. Despite the post-modern art in China has passed its wind, and mostly draw the blame sound. But we must clarify that the post-modern art we considered is focused on external performances and cater to the audience, but we ignore the artistic connotation and original intention. This is at least one of the causes for the contradictory between post-modern art understanding and interpretation. In this, I avoid these troubles, wish from the perspective of artistic language to analyze Marcel Duchamp's work as an example to illustrate the connotation and value of Western post-modern art language originality. Compare with modern art, post-modern art after all is a latecomer, its pioneer significance can not be ignored. In particular, the advantages of its artistic language originality during creative process are worth to be learned.

So, what is artistic language? The so-called artistic language, is the unique expression and means of art. In fine art, artistic language is dot, line, surface, space, light and color, materials and mechanisms. As long as fine art-oriented art, the main aspects of its ways and means are nothing but the above several language forms. But the mundane artistic language was able to make works that no one has ever done before or the process for this creation and intent concepts, it is the artistic originality. As already said, post-modern art appears as the role to subvert modern art, so it must have its own uniqueness. Here also necessary to point out why choose Marcel Duchamp and his works not other artists? This is because Duchamp and his work as the beginning of post-modern art, the concept of his art is a typical post-

modern art feature. Conceptual artist Joseph Kosuth (Joseph Kosuth) said: "Since Duchamp, art exists in the level of concept." This is the true confirmation of Duchamp's effect in art history. Duchamp was a French ready-made artist and performance artist, the originality of his works behaved in the following areas.

## II. DUCHAMP'S WORK EXTENDED THE CREATION DIMENSION OF THE TWO-DIMENSIONAL PLANE, IT COMPLETED A NON-NARRATIVE ATTEMPTS OF ARTISTIC LANGUAGE

The art forms before post-modern art such as modernism art, impressionist art, or classicalism art, romanticism art, even the earlier religious art and primitive art forms were all based on the narrative method to reproduce certain event or plot, played the story with specific image. Artwork picture is only a story or a fixed lens of the event. But the originality of Duchamp's "Nude Descending a Staircase, No.1" (1911) is from the conception connotation to performance process, no one has done that before. In beginning he planned to draw a nude painting, he planned to draw a moving gesture which different from the traditional actionless gesture. He thought this is a kind of provocative attempt to traditional painting. Movement is abstract and also will weaken the narrative painting with specific images, but it exists in the views' eyes. This painting did not have fresh human body, only simple anatomy from top to bottom, from head to the four limbs. More serious is that in this painting audience can not see "Nude Descending a Staircase", they saw a physical structure rotate like mechanical. The painter simplified and deformed all the image details, identity, environment, and the whole process before and after it happens, emphasized the continuity of the picture. This Duchamp's work was considered to be an explanation for a 'Cubism' person on the "futuristic" form, and it was an alternative explanation. In 1914 United States Armory Show, this piece of work had successfully sold with a high price, I believe first should give credit to the topic of this work, this topic is never been thought by others before.

The painter introduced the elements of the theme- action, emotion and personality-into the painting process, extended the combination of time, movement and speed in two-dimensional plane. Since he did not use narrative description method to express the targets, so all natural images have disappeared in this work, but it created a completely different stuff with original concept which makes the art survived in conception.

## III. DUCHAMP'S WORK BROADENED THE CREATIVE SPACE OF ARTISTIC MATERIAL LANGUAGE AND ACHIEVED THE POSSIBILITY FROM READY-MADE TRANSFORMED INTO WORKS OF ART

In art history, after sculpture work finished, the work image would be far different from the original image of the material. The moving sculpture "Old Bicycle Wheel" as the first ready-made art work of Duchamp "Fig. 1", what we see is an ordinary object, that is a rotating bicycle wheel with steel frame backward inserted into a kitchen high stool. This

piece of work actually is a "supplementary ready-made art", although it was believed that the production of this work questioned a series of propositions related with artistic creation and definition, but as long as the art history admit it is a work of art, then the purpose of banter art has been reached. Make ready-made things into sculpture, the shaping and material arrangement requires aesthetic judgment. Duchamp was not the first person to use daily necessities for artistic creation, Cubism already did it in the collage. Ready-made became art work contains a certain meaning which is the production of art only need to select a preexistent item, simply select it. For the consequences such artists creation procedure would bring to us, although people held opposite conclusions, but this idea already had a huge impact with later artists, especially from the 1950s to the 1960s of 20th century when Duchamp art had widely dissemination. Because components of "bicycle wheels" are the mass-produced products, they do not have personality and they are identical or similar to other numerous things. Even in fact, the fact that it is not original itself seems does not matter, at least in visual experience is so (after the original work lost for nearly 40 years, Duchamp simply redoes it). Until today, the "bicycle wheels" is still a visual miracle of absurdism. However, its greatest power is reflected in the shock as a conceptual proposition. As for sculpture art, Duchamp's work "Old Bicycle Wheel" (1913) assembled a ready-made object into an art work for exhibition, it broke the traditional mediums production paradigm, shaken past aesthetic experience. The material language application provided a new perspective for the artistic creation.



Fig. 1. "Old Bicycle Wheel", Duchamp

## IV. DUCHAMP'S WORK RETURNED THE INTERPRETATION OF THE ARTISTIC LANGUAGE INTO THE ART ITSELF

In the history of art, works of art were often been appreciated and judged, but Duchamp's work "Spring" (urinal, 1917) changed the artistic process fundamentally, it changed the judgment method of the art work value. With Duchamp's words, "spring" used ready-made product in the creation was trying to insult traditional aesthetics "Fig. 2". But the neo-Dadaists accepted the ready-made product and found their value. In fact, "spring" changed the artistic process fundamentally, it changed the judgment method of

the art work value. The displayed works of art either can be paintings or ready-made products. Critics said, the fact that "spring" was exhibited explain for the first time that art may become a non-appreciation object, but only be the media which caused thinking. It has broken the traditional aesthetic, conventional aesthetic experience (art is empathy effect that the subject obtained from fantasy) here has no effect. Instead, people could found the possibility of the existence of art in the particular combination of ready-made products.



Fig. 2. "Spring", Duchamp

Duchamp's attitude to art was always mockery and indifference. He believed that true art behavior was dependent on when the audience experience the artists use inanimate objects to change into art works through qualitative phenomena, select from a different angle and the audience random guidelines should be the basis for aesthetic value judgment. He also believed that after the artist create an art works, then there is no relation between the artwork and the artist, only the viewers have the final rhetoric. More importantly, he changed the original artistic proposition "what is art" into Dadaism art proposition "what is not art". These theories then became necessity for the development of post-modern art, naturally Duchamp and his theory became the forerunner of post-modern art.

#### V. DUCHAMP'S WORK PROVIDED A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON HOW TO WATCH CLASSIC ART AND HOW TO TREAT TRADITIONAL AESTHETIC

Duchamp's attitude to treat classical art always wasn't respect and admiration, not mention worship. Duchamp did not trust the authorities, in his mind there was simply no authority. He treated the classic art with banter and ridicule attitude. He used a ready-made urinal to make artwork "Spring" in order to mocking the classic artwork "spring" made by the neoclassical master Ingres, he used Mona Lisa with a beard work "L. H. O. O. Q." in order to banter Renaissance master Leonardo da Vinci's classic "Mona Lisa". He was presented with the attitudes towards the arts and ideals which is very different with traditional aesthetic.

Traditional aesthetic sense is the activities for people to discover, understand, experience, appreciate and even create beauty. It requires the artwork should have aesthetic

significance and able to offer aesthetic feeling. Traditional aesthetic sense believes the beauty of artwork is the beauty of objective things act on human mind and then to produce certain consciousness and emotional activities, also it is the mental communication between the beauty of objective things and human understands for beauty. In the work of Marcel Duchamp's "Spring", people can not see the beauty, only left a male urinal which is worth thinking but not worth appreciation; from Duchamp's "Nude Descending a Staircase" series of works, there is no emotional beauty and no formal beauty, single and boring color, numerous mixed lines without elegant and moving modeling. Only after the tip from its title, the audience could guess what it is. To a certain extent Duchamp's work broke the aestheticism of art, get rid of the first step of traditional aesthetic. Duchamp questioned the traditional art: "What is art?" which did the groundwork for the later radical point out "what is not art". Here we are not encourage everyone to deny classics, but his work reminds us, we can change the perspective to admire the works of "masters", from the classic holiness into the ordinary, do not always trapped inside the classic works and dare not deviate them. He questioned the boundaries and nature of art, prompted us to look at the entire history of artworks with a new vision and perspective.

#### VI. CONCLUSION

Everything appeared, at first, there will likely be some flaws, post-modern art is no exception, but during the development process it continues to introduce pioneering ideas which is beneficial. Be perfect during development is an objective law, this law may also suitable for the arts.

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