Painting Strategies under Image Watching

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Abstract: The significance of photography to human beings is not only in science and technology, but also in its influence on human vision and watching mode, thus forms the present image era. In such a era, image takes the place of reality and seems more real than reality, because the description of reality has been defined by image. The target of people's viewing is the image, and the image does not need to correspond to reality. Painting has been forced to change its development track because of the appearance of photography. On one hand, it avoided the visual control and documental of photography, explored the language of painting itself inward, emphasized the possibility and purity of art, moved toward self-completion and self-definition, and returned to painting itself. On the other hand, it explored outward, combined with photography. Under the thinking image watching, there are roughly four strategies for the combination of modern and contemporary painting and photography: 1, using photographic language, 2, using photography directly, 3, beyond photography, 4, painting is photography.

1. Introduction

First and foremost, art is the matter of watching. We always really watch an object when we want to see it, "we only see what we're looking at, gaze is a kind of selection behavior.[1]" The vision seems to have an invisible guide, wandering around in the surrounding world, once finding anything, it will seize the object, scan the surface of it, and explore its inner world. "The shape of an object is never determined by the image of the object falling on eyes[2]", but the eyes watching it.

During the Renaissance, people invented perspective, the ability of art to express the world was greatly improved, and its viewing approach was single-point focused. Until the photography was invented, viewing approach was still single-point focused. But photography has more influence on art than perspective.

2. Image watching

With the popularization of photography, the need of information dissemination in modern society and the rapid development of media, large-scales of images entry into the daily life and dominate people's visual experience, world stepped into the image era.

All images we can see are coming from camera--a magic machine, camera lens becomes our visual angle when we look at the image, so that our visual angle is defined by the camera lens, and such rule does not need to be explained. "Eyes can be compared to a camera, eyelid is lens cover, iris is shutter, crystalline lens is lens, photosensitive plate is retina.[3]" In the era of characters before the image era, image is a attachment of text and thus stipulated by text, which embody rational meaning and thought. In the image era, image is stipulated by camera lens, it no longer needs words to interpret and has its own meaning, its dominance comes from science and technology. When faced with images, we can only treat it as reality, which is presented after careful selection by others, we even do not have the autonomy right to choose visual angle. Thus, image takes the place of nature. These images are then reassembled through other tools to generate secondary images. Social space is filled with such images and becomes "landscape [4]", the legitimacy of image itself even beyond the reality it depicts. This is the worldview of image rather than text, "the text world has been replaced by the image world [5]". "It is not similar to the fact, but it is the fact itself."[6] All we can choose is to see or not, and as to how to watch is not in our

thinking, but rather a presupposed procedure. In this way, our relationship with image has changed substantially, and it no longer points to the truth, the object or the reality, but just lets us stay in it. We produce images, while in turn we are controlled by images, because "the photograph is indisputable, it represents unmistakable facts. It has no intention of refuting, so it is irrefutable."[7] In the "landscape" composed of image, it is impossible to distinguish between realities and virtual, only remains experience and memory brought by image and image itself, because the recognition of reality also depends on the description of language and image. "Sometimes, what is untrue contains more truth than what is real"[8]. So image has become the visual obstacle and even the thought obstacle for us to observe and understand the real world, rather than an extension of our vision. Human's viewing points to image, while image does not need to correspond to reality, it becomes "the world image that abandoned the prototype [9]". Lens becomes our third eye, we no longer understand the world directly, but by way of the image perception that image technology brings to us.

The media is even more bizarre. Widespread image makes the real world become "landscape", "reality is replaced by surreal, which is a bunch of messy and indeterminate images."[10] Image takes the place of reality, and reality measures and finds itself in images, and the media becomes content, "we become what we observe [11]". This kind of image is then reacting on the real world, allowing the image "landscape" produced by media to be recreated in the real world (for example, New Zealand redesigns and designates the entire country's geographical landscape according to Avatar), repeating the above process and that will make the whole real world become a virtual and surreal world (such as Disney theme park). In "landscape", "all things exist to end in photos"[12].

3. Painting reform under image watching

In the western art history, apart from the social and human factors, every art reform must breathes strength from science. In the renaissance, perspective and anatomy were invented, and now the photography is invented. Historically, photography replaced painting that has the function of reproducing nature, which make it no longer meaningful to explore the authenticity of nature. However, photography no longer obscured its noumenon for painting for a long time and provided an opportunity for the liberation of painting. Painting carried out a creative activity to excavate its own value.

The record value of painting in real society is no longer exists, but it is forced to face new problem and task: asking what is the noumenon of painting--what painting should be and what it can be. In this way, we can only explore the energy of painting, avoid the visual control of photography, emphasize the purity of art and their own possibilities, so painting goes towards self-definition and self-completion. Impressionism is an early example of painting reform: impressionism no longer pays strict attention to the shape of objects but emphasizes color, in their view, the picture is nothing more than a pigment. Cézanne's work is no longer the reappearance of reality, but the creation of real things. They pay attention to pictures, and their pursuit of painting has returned from 3-D space to 2-D plane. From the cubism produced by Cézanne for his decomposition, to the minimalist put forward by Mondrian, this is a rational and Abstract development track; by playing the stroke to the extreme, Van Gogh inspired the later expressionism, then Matisse and Jackson Pollock appear, this is the perceptual, expressive development track.

At the same time, painting is also exploring outward, it is one of the strategies combining with photography.

4. Painting strategies under image watching

Strategies combined with photography can be divided into the following four types:

4.1 Using photographic language

In early days of photography, photography imitated painting completely, works of Rembrandt, David and Vermeer all had been translated into photographic works. Pictorialism appeared in this

period as a school with far-reaching historical influence. Body photography in early days was used by painters and sculptors as artist materials. Painters ordered these photos, some even taken such photos on their own as artist materials. From Delacroix and Angle, painters of all schools used photos as source of material and inspiration in their creations. Photography existed as a tool for painting. Inspired by the photo composition, Edgar Degas used the composition and elements of photography for reference in his series of dancers and bathers, he put incomplete foreground characters into the composition of the works in the form of photographic framing. The composition like snapshot and quarter view of work had never been seen before. From him, the panoramic composition of classical painting terminated. Giacomo Balla, influenced and inspired by photography, created the Dynamics of Tied Dog with multiple tails and legs.

4.2 Using photography directly

Artists are well aware of the influence of images and mass media on people's daily life, visual experiences and even the way they watch. They convey creative intentions through direct borrowing of various types of images, or through a series of collages, combinations or additions. Marcel Duchamp drew two beards on a replica of Leonardo da Vinci's Mona Lisa, and signed "L.H.O.O.Q" on it, so the replica became his composition. In art history, Marcel Duchamp's works was considered as finished products. This art creating process uses images directly, the boundary between painting and image has been eliminated for the participation of hand drawing, and a certain new meaning is established between two.

One of Gerhard Richter's most famous series of works is painting with photos which last for 20 years: he colored these photos with oil directly and subjectively. In his opinion, once the shutter was pressed, there was nothing that can be done to create a picture, so he had to paint it and negate the achievement of mechanical civilization.

4.3 Beyond photography

Photo realism attempts to transcend photography with unparalleled fine technique, which proves that painting is no worse than photography in the ability of reproducing objects. They advocate abandoning subjectivity and drawing nature, while magnify and paint photos or prints on canvas meticulously, absolutely and mechanically. Precisionism in the same time is the same as photo realism, they use modern means to achieve the purpose of realism when being short of basic modeling, in fact, they fundamentally negate tradition and painting nature.

Chuck Clos, an experimentalist who is keen on creating lifelike portraits, is also a serious photographer who focuses on all relationships between photography and painting. His works of that kind like self-portrait in 1968 depict photos accurately, the details of which are more elaborate than those of the photos of same size, due to the huge size of the works.

Leng Jun's works based on photos are also showing extraordinary lifelike ability of reproduction and amazing skills, but they are different from negative subjectivity and drawing nature in photo realism, every detail reveals the drawing nature. His works such as Century Scenery show lifelike expressive force beyond photos, it also has drawing nature when taking a close look at details.

4.4 Painting is photography

This strategy--depicting the image directly, is the reproduction of photos. Photo or print reproduced by rote is the original, painting is the replica, so that the image is no longer an auxiliary means for art creation, but transforms painting into image.

Gerhard Richter's typical works are based on photography. Works are directly based on photos which originate from different sources, then they are drawn after being selecting. The blurry image in his works perfectly captures one of the features of the image era: "Blurring and slithering of images"[13]. Richter believes that photography is objective, photo takes precedence of the reality. His works prove photography by painting, rather than prove painting by photography. With the help of photo, he reaches the thing itself directly and removes the subjective style in a mechanical and objective way, thus maintains an anonymous and neutral attitude or position.

In this strategy, the image effects in paintings have their own system on the terms of the

composition like snapshot, the casual feeling of taking bad photos, the poor particles or pixels of images, even the coding, the suppositional focus of lens, the unique plane sense of photos and so on. Photography intermingles and interacts with painting, the recording of photographs becomes subjective because of manual painting, and the language of painting obscured the boundary between photography and painting. Thus the profound meaning and definite theme in traditional painting are ignored. At present, they become fragile and floating.

5. Conclusion

The appearance of photography does not mean the end of painting art, but the beginning of art reform.

Artists ' experience on image watching causes the image effect of work. At first, artists just wanted to take photos as source material, photos play a supporting role, while the photo interests infiltrated painting, photo eventually left its own mark on the painting. The boundary between painting and photography began to blur and mix since then. The combination of painting strategies and images varies widely and can be divided into the above four types. Photography language which makes a painting more like a photo without losing its drawing nature is used for reference and performance of image in the way of painting. Using photography directly whether the work appears in forms of painting, photography or finished products, it will more or less retain the traces of hand painting in the work. Is this fascination or tease of painting? The drawing mode that beyond photography wants to prove people's manual value in the face of the powerful mechanical record ability of photography. Interestingly, the manual value and people's ability here are referenced and regulated by photography. In the way that painting is photography, painting is realized directly to become the image itself.

In early days after photography appearing, painting was forced to change, from fearing photography at the beginning, to exploring the meaning and value of its own existence, now to combining with images, fully absorbing image elements, and obtaining the freedom of expression. Painting did not die out, but gained a new life and prosperity.

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