

Study on the Reproduction and Crisis of Image Art in the Digital Era

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This paper discusses the impact of the development of reproduction technology on culture and art, analyzes the main ways of modern “Aura” disintegration, and discusses the artistic crisis brought about by “Aura”’s disappearance. Finally, it explores the possibilities and ways for people to find a new “Aura” in the digital era flooded with images. Because understanding the change in the art “Aura” helps people see the changes in the art mechanism in the new era, it helps to recognize the role of technology in art, and it helps us think about how we view art, image, and ourselves. In this digital era, people no longer have to meditate on oil paintings and sculptures, and their eyes are more on LCD screens. At present, the ancient “Aura” is gradually dissipating, and digital image has gradually replaced the mainstream status of traditional art. In a contemporary society filled with a variety of digital images, people need to find a new “Aura” to satisfy the pursuit of beauty or the “Redemption” of beauty.

Keywords: art, digital image, reproduction, crisis, Aura

The Advent of Digital Reproduction

After the first industrial revolution was launched from Britain in the 18th century, people began to replace manual labor with machine labor on a large scale. Later, the second and third industrial revolutions and the fourth industrial revolution represented by the Internet and artificial intelligence have occurred successively. Network digital televisions have become standard in living rooms. People receive digital images through mobile phones at any time, and the online social networks carried by images are becoming more prosperous.... The new way of working has changed people’s way of life and social structure. Similarly, people’s pursuit of art and aesthetics are also changing.

Innovation in Reproduction Technology

Reproduction is a universal “Theme”. Genes are constantly replicating in control cells, and various organisms are busy multiplying, thus replicating a new generation of self. The same is true of art and thought. Only continuous reproduction can continue and expand the value of existence. “Everything is replicating itself: capital, commodities, technology, art without exception” (Gloucester, 2012, p. 176). However, some people

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once thought that art should not be copied, and reproducing is the “enemy” of art. However, in the digital era, in the face of so many touching photos, movies, and games, the result is that such remarks are self-defeating. All in all, if it is impossible to reproduce, then these artworks cannot be shared with the public, and it is impossible for the public to pool funds into the creative team of these artworks.

Reproducing technology is directly related to the inheritance and development of human experience, culture and art. Humans invent various technologies, and at the same time, humans are shaped by these technologies. “*Humans are the consequence of the evolution of technology to this day*” (Huang, 2012, p. 176). Human evolution is not just based on the external environment. It is also closely related to technology. French ancient anthropologist Leroy Gourhan believes that humans not only evolve their own flesh on the road of evolution, but also constantly look for external ways of evolution. This is the skill of using tools. In ancient times, humans began to use simple tools to record symbols and images, and people recorded important events on stones, rock walls, and animal skins, thereby getting rid of the limitation of only word of mouth experience. In the era of manual reproducing, people still can only reproduce and draw scriptures by hand. A large amount of work to reproduce images and texts still requires a lot of manpower to complete. Therefore, people are eager to get faster and more convenient reproducing technology.

It wasn't until the invention of printing in the 15th century that people's ability to reproduce images and texts improved significantly, thus beginning the transition from manual to mechanical reproduction. The well-known Canadian scholar Mike Luhan took technology as an extension of human organs, and in his book “Gutenberg Bright Stars”, he comprehensively analyzed the foundational effect of printing on the formation of modern civilization. The development of reproduction technology has greatly promoted the spread of knowledge and promoted the progress of civilization in the new era. In 1837, the French Daguerre completed the research on silver photography, and then his patent was acquired by the French government, and the French government announced that it would be shared free of charge. Since then, the reproduction of the image has entered a new field; In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, photography has been a hot topic throughout society and the art world. People were fascinated by photography and film, when the center of social culture shifted from literature to image works.

On October 17, 1969, after Ball and Smith invented the digital camera at the Bell Institute in the United States, people then could get rid of their dependence on real materials and make reproductions. Digital cameras brought people into virtual illusions. With the popularization of computers and digital cameras, when the public stores image data, there is an option of virtual space, namely the famous French contemporary theorist Bernard Stigler said that in addition to short-term memory, long-term memory, it is so called “Bestand” of that the third. People can rely on digital reproduce technology to store images in hard disks, optical discs and other equipment, and can easily reproduce the data content in these third “Bestands”, reproducing and disseminating at almost without cost. Basically, this is the foundation of the dissemination and development of contemporary digital image works.

Absence of Faith

German scholar Walter Benjamin believes handmade arts are endowed with Aura (Aura), “Aura” in German, was originally understood as the aura surrounding the divine heads of Jesus in iconography; also

translated as Aura, breath, glow, etc., is the concept that Benjamin has adopted to generalize the characteristics of aesthetics of traditional art, so it as to be positioned for the opposition regarding to the characteristics of modern mechanical reproduction art. Because of course, modern machinery brings people more than just new culture, new products, and of course, terrible wars. In World War I, people witnessed their passionate high technology ruthlessly devouring countless lives, and people's faith did not save their dead or disabled relatives and friends. People mentally Suspicion and emptiness contributed to the prevalence of Dadaism. Since the 20th century, technology has continued to develop, and many people have become less enthusiastic and devout about religion than before. According to Benjamin: "*In modern times, human beings-in short, have entered a non-religious era in history*" (Benjamin, 1992, p. 255). In this era, the religious influence in many areas is not as strong as before, and whether it is the Buddha, God, or the gods have faded out of the core of social life. Politics, culture, and consumption are the new centers of people's lives. However, in a society where the gods are absent, can humans build a complete cultural and artistic value system? Does it make the system run safely and stably? These as the problems we are facing currently.

In ancient times, people were attached to the gods, the relationship between people, people and nature had laws to follow, and people's desires were controlled. In the modern era in which the gods are absent, people are expanding wildly, using science and technology to change the appearance of nature and society at a rapid rate. Under the great material prosperity, the rift between culture and art is covered. While turning materialism into fetishism, besides, excessive emphasis on the status of technology and material in life has become a common problem. With the development of commerce, more and more goods appear in the store, which are radiantly arranged in the gorgeous window. In a modern society where consumption is predominant, beauty is not only a spiritual pursuit, but also a desire and satisfaction for desire. "*Just as the wolf child became a wolf because of living with the wolf, we ourselves have gradually become functional people*" (Baudrillard, 2014, p. 2). People live in the age of material prosperity, the rhythm of the follower's goods and lives, and people's aesthetics also change.

II. The Disintegration of "Aura"

In medieval Europe and before, the subject matter of mainstream works of art often came from religious beliefs, chanting gods, praising monarchs and important historical deeds. But in the context of industrial civilization, people pay more attention to philosophy than theology, and in addition, the subject matter of art works has begun to shift. In the 20th century, reproduction production reached a new height. Not only can artistic works be made into signals and transmitted to the public, but even the artist's processing of works can be transmitted with signals also. Art reproduction and film art have already had a profound impact on us. In 21st century, The power of digital technology has penetrated into the core of art creation and art display, and has changed both in subject matter and form. In addition to the picture photography and movies discussed by Benjamin, interactive TV series, webcasts, virtual reality, enhanced virtual reality, and holographic images have already entered people's lives. In short, reproduction is the development trend of art, and it is also an objective fact. The development of the method of artistic reproduction has changed the mainstream form of artistic works and the methods of artistic dissemination and display, thus directly impacting the foundation of "Aura" existence.

Loss of Uniqueness

Ancient art categories, such as sculptures and paintings, have the uniqueness of the original work. There is only one original work, which gives the original work an authority based on uniqueness. According to Benjamin: “Even the most perfect reproduce must lack a basic element: time and space, which is unique in the place where it came out” (Baudrillard, 2014, p. 2). Artwork has its own history, which includes the change of art over time and the spread of art among different occupants. These histories cannot be copied. In the era of hand made art, every piece of art has its own special trace; but in the era of mechanical reproduction, the gap between works becomes minimal. In digital image works, whether it is a picture or a video, there is no difference between the original and the reproduction. The number of reproductions can be numerous or even unlimited. Digital imaging works will not change physically or chemically over time like antiques. In addition, the circulation of digital image works also has its characteristics. They will not be auctioned by the auction house, but they will be sold at a clear price or shared on the Internet. For the general public, people are more focused on appreciating or experiencing digital image works, rather than buying them and keeping them in the hard disk for a long time. Many reproductions of an image work are equal. Through the high-speed Internet, each reproduce can be displayed an unlimited number of times without being limited by space. Nevertheless, these are all unattainable by traditional works of art, and also the constraints that uniqueness brings to art. Just as the film will be released in countries around the world, producing countless reproductions, but this still does not prevent it from being a good work. Whether it is a photo or a video, for its display value, the more the image is copied, the wider the circulation, the greater the influence. In short, digital image works cast aside the shackles of uniqueness. Although the worship value has decreased, the display value of the work has been greatly enhanced.

With the advent of the era of digital image reproduction, the sense of distance between the public and art has also disintegrated. Be more specific, Nowadays, with the help of technology, people can enjoy the image art anytime, anywhere with only their hands. In addition, in social media, online albums, and online video sites, there are a large number of images that we can't watch in a lifetime. At present, the sense of distance between digital image works and the public has almost disappeared. People are completely immersed in the image. The image is me and I am the image. Due to the development of technology, images have been pushed to the public by various media. However, the public often cannot control the distance from the images. According to postmodern scholar Jameson, “*In the new space of postmodernism, ‘distance’ is the object to be abandoned. We are immersed in the big dye tank of postmodern society, and our postmodern body also loses the coordinates of space, and even actually loses the ability to maintain distance*” (Zhang, 1993, p. 206). Benjamin pointed out in “Art Works in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”: “‘*Aura*’—*the unique phenomenon of a distance, but close it may be*” (Gloucester, 2012, p. 176). This shows that in addition to the distance on the spatial level, Benjamin’s sense of distance has more meaning on the psychological level. In the era of digital digital reproduction, anyone can take images using cameras, mobile phones, image recorders, driving recorders, etc., and producing images is not anyone’s patent, but something that everyone can accomplish. So on the psychological level, the sense of distance has also disappeared. The disintegration of the sense of distance allows the masses to treat art equally and integrates art into the lives of the masses, rather than treating art as a high-level idol.

Extinction of Worship

The disappearance of contemporary and contemporary people's worship of the sacredness of works of art is manifested in art, but its roots must be traced to the entire modern social and cultural level. That is because, in modern society, philosophy has generally replaced the position of theology. Without the protection of sacredness, people's worship of the artistic tradition also disappeared. Art originated in witchcraft and shared its glory and worship as a follower of witchcraft. From etched murals to church buildings, we can find artworks expressing beliefs around the world. Restricted by the doctrine of non-worshipable idols, Christian paintings have long been suppressed. Until 1025, the Arras Religious Conference announced: "Those in the church who cannot understand the crucifixion of Christ through the Bible can think about this story by staring at the specific image in the painting" (Olson, 2003). As a result, Christian art began to develop rapidly. Michelangelo's *Our Lady of Sistine*, Da Vinci's *Last Supper*, and Albrecht Dürer's *Apocalypse* are examples of religious painting. In thousands of years of cultural tradition, art is closely related to God. Many people even think that some works of art are the manifestation or sacred things of God on earth. In the Middle Ages, worship of holy relics was a prevailing ethos. It is believed that worshipping holy relics can save the soul, get good luck, or get rid of disease.

If the art in the classical era is to let people worship, the art in the era of mechanical reproduction is to let art be shared with the public, then the characteristics of the image in the era of digital reproduction are to show themselves and entertain themselves. The right to create and publish digital images is popular and free. Every day, hundreds of millions of mobile phones take photos and videos and transmit them to Internet platforms. Instead of focusing on church or government-recommended CCTV channels, the public is more willing to focus on events and people they are interested in. The continuous emergence of Internet celebrities, Internet heat maps and popular online videos has allowed grassroots to participate in mainstream culture and gain a right to speak. They found ways to show their self and publicize their personality on various online social platforms and other online platforms. Therefore, in the field of imaging, the worship and authority of culture and art have been dissipated to a certain extent.

Commodification of Art

Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno (1903-1969) believed that the works produced in the era of mechanical reproduce violated the self-discipline principle of classical art. In the era of high industrialization, art became a product of industrial reproduction. This fully shows Adorno's concerns about the art of mechanical invasion. In contrast, Benjamin is much more optimistic about the impact of mechanical reproduction on art. He believes that although photography and film, which are typical representatives of mechanical reproduction, have a tendency to become commodities, the commercialization process can Promote the development of art and industry. Although he expressed regret for the decline of traditional art, he looked forward to new art more. This article believes that whether art is a totem or a commodity, it is a phenomenon of natural social development. Whether art should be provided on the altar or stepped down from the altar should be chosen by the public. In other words, mechanical reproducing at least releases the public's right to choose. From this point, mechanical reproducing benefits the public. In daily life, the commercialization of works of art can have a positive impact on the value of works. For example, Monet's paintings were printed and sold on scarves, clothing, and decorations in large quantities. This

did not devalue the original work, but increased the display value of the work. Both pure art and commercial applications of art share a common sign language. They both can generate value, and they should be equal. For art as a commodity, Benjamin is tolerant and accepting. He believes that the manifestation of mechanically copied art is a great artistic change, which dissolves the mystery of art, allows art to gather the masses, eliminates the monopoly of artistic discourse power, and makes art more democratic. However, Adorno fears that the fusion of art and goods will bring harm to the public and cannot be ignored.

III. The Crisis of Art in the Era of Digital Image

“Aura” disintegrated and art became freer. Digital images continue to spread in social and virtual spaces, but they also bring “toxicity” to humans. It’s like opening Pandora’s box. People must find ways to find a new “Aura” to overcome these toxicities before they can be harmless.

Distortion

The image produced by reproducing is distorted on multiple levels, so the public will have misunderstandings or misjudgments. People often think that image works can be completely and non-destructively copied. but it is not the truth. No matter how perfect the lens is used for imaging, the image will be different from the real thing, which is determined by the characteristics of the lens. Whether it is photo paper printing, laser processing, printing, presentation on LED screens, or projection, the output of photographic works will be distorted.

However, the distortion of images in digital image transmission is not mainly due to process reasons, but from changes in context, misleading or deliberate deception. “*Photography, which freezes and cuts visible objects into individual units, was once a competent person who paints reality. As witchcraft critics have said, it also potentially distorts the way we look at reality*” (Friedrich, 2015, p. 3). In his book “The Conspiracy of Art”, Baudrillard took the Gulf War as an example to show that people’s understanding of the world through the images in the mass media is tantamount to understanding the world with phantoms in Plato’s cave. Audience When you see some artificially selected and processed image fragments in the media, you think you know the truth. From mechanical reproducing to digital reproducing, not only is the speed of reproducing faster, but the principles are also more complex. We are living in a world surrounded by symbols, some of which come from reproducing and some from modulation. Image advertising is also a typical example. We have never bought the same burger in the fast food restaurant as in the advertisement. The endorsers in the advertisement often have not used the product themselves. Even if we use the health products in the advertisement, our body may not be real Gains. Advertisers have used the distortion of images to make the public mistakenly believe that the pictures in advertisements are reality, and advertisers have not lied. Baudrillard believes that today’s imitations are no longer reproducing the real, but fictional non-existent things Reality has been obscured by “surreal”, the world is controlled by symbolic economics, and the world will be like a huge theme park.

Obfuscation and Substitution

Images and reality are far from essential. People often think that the images seen on the Internet, social media, and cinema represent the thing itself, ignoring the essential differences. In “On Photography”, Susan Sontag used the movie “Carbin’s Hot” as an example to expose the deviation of photos from reality. In the

movie, two lazy stupid farmers are tempted to join the war, promised to be able to rob, kill, and rape the enemy, and make a fortune. But a few years later, the two peasants returned home triumphantly with an image full of treasures, rare animals and wonders. Although from a subjective point of view, shooting an object has the meaning of trying to possess it, but after all, the image of the possessed object is different from the possessed object itself. The two stupid farmers couldn't see the difference, so they gave up their treasures and went home with image materials. In the daily life of the digital reproduce era, many people, like these two "stupid farmers", cannot realize the difference between images and objects: they think that chatting in video communication is chatting with the other person; posting the pictures of idols all over the room is able to get the view of idols.

Since Plato, the anxiety that people would have been replaced by reproductions has continued to manifest. With the improvement of technology, drones have replaced photographers to a certain extent in image shooting, and it can even automatically and stably follow the target shooting. The problems caused by reproduction are not only reflected at the artistic level, but also at the production and ethical levels. For example, the most controversial issue in recent years is the biological cloning business. A large number of crops have been replaced with genetically modified plants due to industrial interests, thus triggering a crisis of natural plant genes. In addition, human cloning is still in the experimental stage, and a large number of scholars severely oppose the experiment and research of human cloning. Thirdly, Go is one of the four major arts of "qin, chess, book, and painting" in ancient China. The artificial intelligence ALPHA GO defeated various masters in 2016 and 2017 and became the hegemon of Go. ALPHA GO as a reproduce of human intelligence defeated the original human with its superb memory and computing power. At present, all in all, these issues have aroused widespread attention and in-depth thinking of scholars.

Kitsch

Although kitsch is not caused by digital reproducing, kitsch can spread because digital reproducing can give works excellent transmission ability and eliminate technical barriers to production. Kitsch works meet the aesthetics and needs of some people, but if kitsch forms a culture in the entire culture, it will endanger the health of mainstream culture. In the 17th century, pretense and baroque prevailed in Europe. Although they are not representative of kitsch, they reflect people's desire to distinguish symbols. After the advent of the movie medium, a superficial cult came into being. People highly admired movie stars, and stars became a cultural symbol. Correspondingly, the film industry has created a lot of kitsch content, highly affected movies, which fascinates the public. More and more commercial films do not follow the self-discipline principle of art, but actively cater to people's needs for entertainment and entertainment, which leads to the expansion of kitsch.

With the popularization of art, we have the ability and power to produce and publish image works ourselves, but the proliferation of kitsch image works is also eroding people's hearts. In the Middle Ages, if a painter painted kitsch works, he might be severely criticized and condemned, and even punished by the guild and the Holy See. But nowadays, due to the trend of interest, many people are creating and publishing kitsch image works to gain traffic and attention. Obviously, in the face of interest, moral restraint appears weak. Fortunately, these works can not stand the test of time and will eventually be buried in the boundless online world. Real artists should still have a lofty spiritual pursuit, rely on their own ability to make their works stand out, and give people a purification and shock.

Conclusion

Advances in technology are not enough to create new art. In addition, art in the new era needs new ideas. In 1917, Duchamp named the urinal bought from the store “Spring” and sent it to the American Independent Artists Exhibition for display. This incident of designating ready-made products as works of art surprised many artists and critics. Later, Duchamp also made a reproduce of Da Vinci’s “Mona Lisa” with a two-handed mustache as his own work. Although Duchamp’s works were attacked by traditional art defenders, he used industrial reproductions to break the monopoly of handmade products in the art world, expand the boundaries of art, and seek new “Aura” points the way. After him, many modern and contemporary artists and art theorists have made their own contributions to finding a new “Aura”.

The ancient “Aura” supported by worship and uniqueness has disintegrated, and people need a new “Aura”. Without the new “Aura”, people will not be able to heal the trauma of civilization caused by the “toxicity” of digital reproduction, which may lead to cultural degradation and even social disaster. The power given to the artwork “Aura” is no longer in the hands of God, its spokesperson or noble class, but it is released to the mass audience. We can’t see the dazzling, sublime “Aura” of art as before, the new “Aura” is hidden in the works and the public. To find the hidden “Aura”, you need to approach “Aura” and decode the “Aura”. For viewers, it is to confirm their desire to appreciate art and improve their artistic literacy in order to gain a deeper understanding. For the creators of digital image works, they need to be independent of ancient materials and artistic language, and integrate their creativity, emotions, and personal characteristics into the works to distinguish them from other image works in the era of digital reproduction.

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