

The Historical Evolution of Image Appropriation in Western Paintings

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Keywords: Appropriation, Image, Evolution, Imageization

Abstract: The appropriation of images as a form of art and a method of creation has existed since ancient times. Today, with the development of science and technology, a large number of images are overwhelming us. To study the historical evolution of image appropriation in Western painting has implications for visual-related painting and The field of design has far-reaching significance in terms of artistic aesthetic forms and viewing methods. By summarizing and sorting out the typical cases of image appropriation in ancient and modern times, this paper draws the historical context of image appropriation and the common methods and techniques of image appropriation. It provides a reference for artists to carry out in-depth and multiple reflections on all aspects of current life through appropriation of real images in the image era when image reproduction technology is developed.

1. The Development of Image "Misappropriation" in Classical Painting

It can be said that the history of western classical art is an art history of image misappropriation and reproduction, which is determined by the main source of the subject matter of western classical art. Since art at that time mainly served the pope and royal dignitaries of the Holy See, art not only had aesthetic value, but also the patrons paid more attention to its functionality and use value. Therefore, the themes of works of art at that time mainly came from the following aspects. 1. Character stories in religious classics represented by Christianity, such as The Creation of Adam, The Last Supper, The Baptism of Christ, etc. 2. Myths and legends represented by Greek myths, such as The Birth of Venus, The Three Goddesses of Beauty, Apollo and Daphne, etc. 3. The deeds and historical events of heroes in the history of ancient Greece and Rome. For example, Judith Kills Horofennie, Athens School, etc. 4. A genre painting showing secular scenes. In Pictures 1 and 2, Calava Bridge painted two altarpieces of St. Matthew simultaneously in 1602. Although these two works belong to the same theme, compared with the vivid and interesting picture of the second work, the first one presents a completely different sincere and faithful emotion.[7] As shown in Figure 1,2.



Figure 1: Caravaggio, St. Matthew, 1602, altarpiece, oil on canvas, 223x183cm destroyed, originally in kaiser-friedrich museum,berlin (Photo credit: [UK] Gombrich, The Story of Art, [M], Guangxi: Guangxi Fine Arts Publishing House, 2008.2)



Figure 2: Caravaggio, Saint Matthew, 1602, altarpiece, oil on canvas, 296.5x195cm, church of s. luigidei francesi, rome (Photo credit: [UK] Gombrich, The Story of Art, [M], Guangxi: Guangxi Fine Arts Publishing House, 2008. 2)

In the classical period, artists, after receiving the entrustment of the employer, would find creative objects in the corresponding classics according to the requirements of the employer. In the face of the same classics, artists have very little room to play. What's more, as a commodity with practical use, the art of that time would be regarded as a deviant behavior at will, which also suppressed their creativity and desire to express their thoughts. In this context, it is not difficult to understand that in the long years, with the development and evolution of different times and different art schools, there has been little change in character modeling, body movements, layout

and composition. It can be said that in the classical period, the spread of each image was also a process of continuous imitation, learning and continuation. [6]

In a word, the history of western classical art is a process of carrying many images, constantly changing in style, and constantly pursuing perfection in performance skills and schematic language. The handed down classical images are abstracted and reorganized by the artists according to their creative needs, forming a new image with the artist's own will and the spirit of the times. This creative technique is called "misappropriation". As shown in Figure 3.



Figure 3: Venus of Urbino Titian (Photo credit: Titian, Western Painting Master [M] Zhang Jie, Zhou Ying, Chongqing: Chongqing Publishing Group, Chongqing Publishing House, January 2009)

In the origin and evolution of Venus' images, it can be clearly seen that once the image becomes a classic, it will be "appropriated" by later artists to give it a new meaning on their own pictures. Compare Giorgione's Venus on the Grass with Titian's Venus in Urbino. The two works are very similar in terms of composition and character movements. Through a few changes, the painter made the former's holiness and quietness disappear, but added secular eroticism.

In this picture created in the 16th century, great changes have taken place in the "appropriation" method of classical images and the creation method before the Renaissance. No matter how the artists organized the composition and studied the image before, their understanding of the characters in the classic images would not be too biased. Artists have basically the same meaning for the pictures expressed by similar works, namely, the interpretation of the stories in the Bible. However, Venus of Urbino completely subverts the previous understanding of Venus. It uses the image schema of Venus to express a female image that has nothing to do with Venus. The former magnanimity and innocence of Venus' image are replaced here by the beauty of physical senses, which can be said to be a subversion of Venus' image.

Three centuries later, the image of the reclining Venus was once again appropriated by Manet, who created the controversial Olympia at that time. The painter described the image of an unbearable woman in the dust, without any aesthetic feeling to speak of, and its expression method was also very rough. The method of nearly flat painting weakened the shaping of the volume of the object, making it tend to be flat. Finally, the painter named such a "vulgar and crude" work with the holy mountain Olympia.

Edward Another famous work of Manet, Lunch on the Grass, also uses the method of "misappropriation" in the picture pattern. The dynamic combination of naked women and two gentlemen in the picture may borrow the picture pattern of the Renaissance painter Lemont in the print work Paris Trial. She was combined with the well-dressed men beside her. Such a picture idea was considered vulgar and inferior at that time. Such treatment has been used in Venus of Urbino and Olympia, but the visual and psychological experience formed in Lunch on the Grass is more

intense because of the change of scenes and surrounding characters. As shown in Figure 4-7.



Figure 4 Lunch on the Grass, Manet, oil on canvas 208cmx265.5cm, AD 1862-1863, Musee d 'Orsay, Paris (Photo credit: Jiang Xun, A history of Western art for you, [M], changsha: Hunan Fine Arts Publishing House, 2015.7)



Figure 5 Part of The Trial of Paris, Lemont, print (Photo credit: [UK] Fritz. Saxell:Legacy of image, [M], nanjing: Yilin Publishing House, 2017. 10)

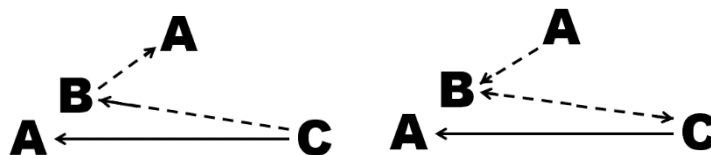


Figure 6 "Lunch on the Grass" character diagram, A= naked woman on the left, B= man in suit on the left, C= the man in the hat on the right, D= the maiden in the far lake

Similar in position → A、B、C、D

Similar action → A、B、C

Similar line of sight → A、B

Figure 7 "The Trial of Paris" character diagram, A= Naked youth with a flower crown on the left ,B= naked old man on the left, C= Naked old man on the right, D= God in the sky (Photo credit: Author Made)

2. The Development of Image "Misappropriation" in Modern Painting

As . Today is an era of image reproduction, and a large number of images are pouring to us. With the development of the Internet, the way we obtain images has changed. A large number of images previously collected by museums and private collections can now be easily obtained. At the same time, the way we view images has also changed. Because we view images on the screen, the sense of scene is no longer so important, and the technical problems about image imitation and reproducibility are no longer the main research objects of images. The aesthetic style that has been precipitated since the classical period is no longer important for modern pictures, and images have become a tool to carry information. The "misappropriation" of images is not only applied to painting art, but also reused in a large number of industries related to vision. When people "misappropriate" images, they not only value schema language as their predecessors did, but also value the information and meaning brought by images. [8]

Francis Bacon "appropriated" Velazquez's image in the Portrait of Pope Innocent X, and drew a series of portraits on the subject of the Pope. His expression is ferocious, his mouth is wide open and he screams desperately. Bacon's method of misappropriation and reconstruction questioned the authority and sacredness of the pope in the context of classical painting, destroyed and dispelled the original image's meaning, and made the picture have a new meaning. It exposes the loneliness, ugliness and painful struggle of modern urban people.

When it comes to the misappropriation of "images" in western painting, we can think of Leonardo da Vinci's Mona Lisa, which should be the image that has been printed and disseminated most frequently by the public in the world. Duchamp's Mona Lisa with a Beard is Duchamp's most famous spoof work. On the postcard printed with Mona Lisa, he drew a few Türkiye style mustaches with a pencil and marked "L.H.O.O.Q" below. After this change, the mysterious and noble image of the Mona Lisa has disappeared and become absurd. He used humor to express "Don't take art too seriously" by vilifying the supreme Mona Lisa portrait. The pursuit of formal beauty by art is precisely what Duchamp intended to overthrow. The Mona Lisa with a Beard is a rebellion against tradition. It gives new enlightenment to the subsequent art movement, and makes the art once belonging to a few people enter daily life, bringing art to the public. Since then, the derivative works of Mona Lisa have emerged in endlessly, such as the surrealist master Salvador Dali's Mona Lisa Self portrait; The Visible Gene of the Mona Lisa by Frank Fox; Fernando Portro's Mona Lisa at the age of 12, etc.

From the 20th century to today, more and more artists "misappropriate" existing images into their own images, using new forms of expression to express their opinions. Painting has been separated from the classical aesthetic taste and the monopoly of the elite class. The more well-known painting images are more imitated by artists, and painting has become more popular, vulgar, and more grounded. The "misappropriated" images are also re created in the form of criticism, irony and other forms, striving to shock the world and attract the public's attention. For example, in the works of Chinese artist Yue Minjun, he used a lot of "misappropriation" techniques. He created a kind of naughty image with his own prototype, and combined it with various world-famous art works to create a utopian world. [9]

3. Methods of Image Appropriation

3.1 Copy of Image

There are many ways to "misappropriate" images in painting, and the most common way is to copy. Reproduction is to copy and copy the original image, basically or completely retain the overall appearance of the original image. This reproduction of the original is an important way for

image “misappropriation”.

Since ancient times, art has been copied frequently. However, with the change of the times, people began to copy art by mechanical means. Since then, the history of art development has continued to leap forward, more and more fiercely. Walter Benjamin mentioned this in his book *The Age of Mechanical Reproduction*. [1]

Since the 19th century, people have entered a new era in the method of copying the original image. The invention of lithography and photography is quietly encroaching on the space of traditional art. People can more easily and quickly get a copy of the image, which is probably a copy of a classic masterpiece, or a portrait photo.

In the 20th century, with the further development of image reproduction technology, new media forms have emerged. People not only have mastered the technology of copying all traditional works of art, but also have produced the dynamic influence technology of film. The influence mode of art has been completely changed, and art has lost its luster in the past under the mode of mechanical reproduction. Even the most perfect copy can not bring the authenticity of the original to the viewer in real time. [2]

We can divide the social functions of art into two categories: first, art is worshipped; Second, artworks are displayed to people. With the gradual loss of the worship value of works of art, the advantages of its display value have brought a new interpretation method to the works. This is just like the difference between watching drama under the stage and watching movies in the cinema. The former's artistic achievement is embodied by its own image, while the latter is embodied by machines. In the former case, the audience can watch, taste and interpret the works from their own perspective, and it is a process of continuous thinking and meditation for people to face the works. On the other hand, the audience looks from the perspective of the camera, or from the perspective of the artist. Whether looking at the whole from a distance or looking at the details from a close perspective, it is not out of the subjective consciousness of the audience. I think this may be the biggest difference between traditional and modern art reproduction.

The mechanical reproduction of images as a creative method is widely used in the field of painting Duchamp's art experiment began. Duchamp has changed the tradition, subverted the content of his works, and even changed the means and concepts of artistic creation. He likes to paint with the image and description of machines. His works *The Nude Who Goes Down*, *Fountain*, *L.H.O.O.Q.*, *Big Glass*, *Giving: 1. Waterfall*, *2. Burning Gas*, etc. all have their own unique styles. Many of these works are realized by mechanical reproduction of images. He redefined the boundary and essence of art, which prompted people to look at the whole art history and the basic issues of art from a new perspective. From then on, the concept highlighted by the works has become the primary issue in artistic creation.

The artist who really makes painting art and commercial images have no boundary is Andy Warhol, the leader of pop art. In the past, although painters could also describe life, they would look for picturesque themes. By placing commercial objects such as cans, Coca Cola, celebrity avatars and dollars in the middle of the canvas, this creative method completely breaks the boundary between elegance and popularity. The reproduction of ready-made images has since become the main form of artistic creation.

Today's image reproduction technology is not like that of painters who used to rely solely on exquisite painting skills, because it is difficult to find a new way out with the development of oil painting today. More artists put their eyes on the level of stating the cultural state and expressing the concept of works. Whether using classical painting techniques or mechanical reproduction and other methods, they are regarded as a means and form, and the ultimate purpose is to convey the author's unique ideas. In other words, the biggest difference between the image reproduction and the original image is that the unique meaning of the reproduction gives its unique originality. As

shown in Figure 8.

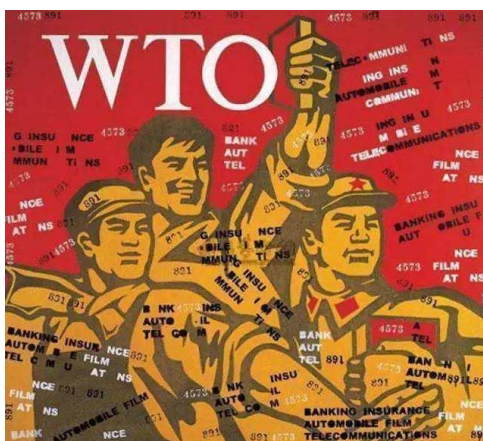


Figure 8 Wang Guangyi, Great Criticism -WTO, 2001, Oil Painting (Photo credit: Tang Xiaobing: A Reinterpretation of contemporary Chinese Visual Culture,[M], shanghai: Fudan University Press,2018.7)

The reproduction language of images from the West, combined with the unique cultural context of China, burst into extraordinary brilliance. Some artists create works by copying public images. From 1990 to 1992, Wang Guangyi created the representative work of Chinese political pop in Wuhan, Great Criticism. It recorded the most exciting moment of China's reform and opening up with art. Wang Guangyi believes that Grand Criticism actually expresses two ways of brainwashing. One is that western fetishism brainwashes the public. They create endless illusion through the design and accumulation of goods, which is realized by copying "Coca Cola", "Marlboro" and other commercial images. The other is the communist utopian brainwashing method, which makes up a scene through posters. When people watch these posters, they will be brainwashed. The posters used the form of advertising flat painting to copy the image of the prevailing uniforms posters at that time. This image of the Cultural Revolution is a cultural symbol of a specific historical period, with special significance and connotation. The author just stores these two ways of brainwashing in a space, where the artist has no attitude and gives the meaning of the artwork to the audience to interpret. [3] As shown in Figure 9.



Figure 9 "Violation of Regulations" Liu Xiaodong (Ast. Liu Xiaodong is omnidirectional [M] Wu Hong, Guo Xiaoyan, Liaoning: Liaoning Fine Arts Publishing House, January 2009)

Some artists create pictures by copying images in photos. The image prototype in Zhang Xiaogang's "Big Family" series works comes from the old photos of people with stiff expressions

taken in the photo studio from the 1940s to the 1970s in China and charcoal sketch portraits that can be seen everywhere in China's streets. He borrowed from Gerhard Richter based on the realism of photos, gave a new connotation to the photos that were mechanically copied. The slightly melancholy and inflexible characters show a variety of blood relationships. This Chinese style emotion has the collective characteristics and spiritual outlook of an era, which is the common memory of a generation. This kind of emotion and memory is achieved through the reproduction of the mental state of images, which makes us look back on history again and reflect on the lost cultural image. [5]

There are also some artists who use traditional oil painting language skills to copy the original image. What supports their works is not only their ideas, but also the artistic enjoyment brought by the rich and ingenious language expression skills in their works. Inspired by Freud's works, Liu Xiaodong insists on using his own realism to directly copy life photos into paintings. His representative works include *White Fat Man*, *Violation*, *Heroes from Ancient Times*, *Good People in Three Gorges*, etc. He focuses on daily life and familiar people and objects. His works are far away from the trend and noise, focusing on showing the isolation and alienation of ordinary people in life, presenting the wounds of a country and the wordless position of an artist. There are many artists who create in this form, such as Xin Dongwang, Ai Xuan, Chen Danqing, Shi Chong, etc. Wei Guangqing's "Red Wall" series is inspired by the reproduction of traditional woodcut images.

3.2 Collage of Various Images

The important means for contemporary art to realize image "misappropriation" is also collage from all kinds of images. In the pictures of traditional painting, there is a sense of order left over from the classical period. The whole picture is immersed in a unified scene by means of composition and arrangement of light sources. Any image description should serve the overall picture atmosphere. The collage and misappropriation in contemporary art is a rigid way to piece together various image materials, and juxtapose images that have no connection with each other, forming a new visual conflict and contradiction direction, so that the picture has a new meaning. This creative method has been used in pop art as early as Richard What makes today's families so different and charming It is created by means of image collage. The muscular man and sexy woman in the picture are cut and pasted by the artist on the medicine magazine. The background of the picture is full of various images from commodity signs, posters, commercial advertisements, popular pictorials and so on. In the form of banter and absurdity, the work directly borrows the cultural symbols of the commercial society as images for copying and pasting, suggesting that the mass culture tends to be rapid, batch, assimilation and standardization from form to content, and that art gradually loses its aesthetic taste and independence and other cultural spirits.

Many Chinese artists' works also take the pasting of images as their main form of expression. The representative figures are Wang Guangyi, Zhou Weihua, Zhang Wei, Zhong Biao, etc. The image elements they used for collage came from photography, magazines, advertisements, Chinese paintings, traditional art and many other fields. Put all kinds of image fragments of history and contemporary, retro and fashion, East and West, reality and illusion into the same space. Images from different contexts and scenes are pulled out, losing the depth and conceptual connotation of the original image background. While reducing the ideological depth of the original image, the vision tends to be flat.

3.3 The Parody of Images

Parody is divided into two parts: imitation and banter. It refers to the use of a part of the classic image or the original image to reinterpret the well-known classical authority in a "banter" way.

Jokes include mockery, games, ridicule and even homage. With this attitude, artists face the classic images of Chinese and foreign masters and imitate them. In the process of the classical images being teased and exaggerated, the audience faced the once high art with a relaxed attitude, which not only brought the art closer to the general public, but also reflected the artist's deep understanding and thinking of things. Marcel Duchamp's *Mona Lisa with a Beard* and Fernando Botero's *Mona Lisa* are very famous image parodies.

Many Chinese artists also use image parody to create works. Zhang Wei's work "Banquet. Who can be happy and free in the world" playfully replaced the characters in the famous painting "Han Xizai's Banquet Picture" with modern beauty. Wang Xingwei's work *The Road to the East* is also a parody of the well-known painting *Chairman Mao Goes to Anyuan during the Cultural Revolution*. In the painting, Chairman Mao is replaced with the image of a contemporary youth, showing a new context with a relaxed and teasing attitude. [4]

3.4 Virtual Conversion Of Images

"Virtual" is one of the basic functions and natures of artistic creation, which refers to the visualization of things that can not be seen or imagined or created in the real world. Virtual art comes into being with the progress of modern scientific and technological means. The artist juxtaposes images from different times, scenes and cultures by using computers, images and other processing means to form a surreal virtual scene, which brings great possibilities in visual space to the screen.

Zhang Wei's works use the method of computer image processing to put masterpieces of characters from different times and cultures on one screen.

Some artists first use computer technology to put together irrelevant pictures from different times and cultures, first realize the virtual state and generate pictures, and then transform them into their own unique expression language. For example, some works of Shi Chong, Yu Youhan and Qin Qi were created in this way. [10]

4. Conclusion

As an ancient art form and creation method, "misappropriation" continues and evolves the classic images, forming a rich art image in the art history. The classical images are abstracted and reorganized allegorically by the artist according to the creation needs, which reflects the artist's own will and the spirit of the times. In this process, as the carrier of cultural concepts, images are endowed with new meanings. Today, with the rapid development of various information technologies, a large number of images overwhelmingly hit us. The original artistic aesthetic forms and viewing methods have changed, resulting in more embezzling forms of expression and techniques. The misappropriation of images is not only concerned with the formal language and expression methods of pictures, but also the expression of the author's ideas.

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