

The Dissolution and Revolutionary Reconstruction of “Aura” in the Film

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Abstract: Focusing on the concept of "Aura" proposed in Benjamin's "Works of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", this paper explores the Aura in the art of film, the Aura in traditional art inevitably faces dissolution and deconstruction in the art of film in the age of mechanical reproduction. This paper discusses how the Aura is dissolved in film from three aspects: the disappearance of "authenticity", the display value of film, and the contrast between film actors and theatrical actors. Benjamin, as a technologist, had a positive attitude towards the art of film, arguing that although the aesthetic dimension of the Aura was lost, surrealist films redefined the Aura at the social and political level. He believes that real films and documentaries are the hypocritical experiences created by the bourgeoisie, while surrealist films break the false experiences through "tremors" and keep the masses awake about reality, thus achieving a reconstruction of the unique and revolutionary "Aura".

1. Introduction

Benjamin, one of the important theorists of the Frankfurt School, mentioned in "Works of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" that "even the most perfect art reproduction is lacking in the Aura", and the term "Aura" is repeatedly mentioned as a professional term in this article, which can be said to be a core concept for understanding Benjamin's art theory. At the same time, Benjamin regarded technological progress as an important factor in promoting the development of art. He believed that every technological advancement in history had brought about a new look to human art, and film was a typical example of art in the era of mechanical reproduction. Unlike Ardono, Hawkheimer and others who regarded film as a low-quality art that suppressed the imagination of the masses and numbs them, Benjamin held a positive attitude towards film art. He believed that film was a weapon against totalitarianism and that it broke the aristocratic monopoly of art and was a new form of art that promoted democracy. As an art form of mechanical reproduction, film inevitably loses the "Aura" of art, but Benjamin also says that as a combination of art and science, film reconstructs the "Aura" in its unique way and has revolutionary significance in political practice.

2. The definition of the concept of "Aura"

"Aura" is a key word for understanding Benjamin's theory of art, which he explicitly states in "Works of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" that the description of "Aura" from a temporal and spatial perspective is "the unique manifestation of something that is at a certain distance but feels so close." ^[1]In layman's terms, the Aura is the unique life and soul that the viewer perceives when they look at the artwork from a certain distance in a specific time and space. It is a unique artistic conception and flavor condensed in the artwork. The Aura is the source of the unique characteristics of the artwork and the embodiment of its authority. Aura is a subjective feeling that the subject has towards the object when viewing. It is shaped at the moment it is perceived, seemingly at a certain distance from the viewer, yet as if right in front of them. This elusive uncertainty gives Aura art an indescribable air of mystery.

The definition of the concept of "Aura" can be further explored by starting from its three characteristics. The first is the characteristic of its "authenticity". ^[2]The "authenticity" of an art piece is its immediate and local nature, that is, the unique nature it possesses when it comes into being. A work of art with a Aura is created by the artist through his own artistic conception and inspiration in a specific time and space, and it has absolute originality, which is the difference between traditional art and mechanical reproduction art, which does not have the artist's creative wisdom but is merely a reproduction of the "original". Because once a work of art is born, its existence is subject to history, and the changes in its physical structure caused by the passage of time and the different possessory relationships in which it is located have certain effects on the work of art.

The second is the ritualistic nature of the art of Aurality. The way the art works exist in traditional connections was first manifested in worship, art originated from witchcraft, and the art works also served some kind of human ritual activity at the very beginning. The ritualistic nature of the art works has never been completely separated from their ritualistic functions, that is to say, the unique nature of the art works is rooted in theology. The more united and loyal a group is, the more irrational elements they have in the ritual worship, and the irrational elements are the key to giving artistic works the Aura. ^[3]Finally, the distance characteristic of the art of the Aura, on the basis of the ritual, gives rise to the way the art is preserved. The art used for the ritual has the natural attribute of keeping a distance from the public. At this point, the worship value of the art is much higher than its display value. The distance here, on the one hand, refers to the physical distance required to maintain a sense of mystery from the public. Only a few clergy members have access to the artwork. On the other hand, it refers to the psychological distance. Even those clergy members who can get close to the artwork hold a sense of awe in their hearts, thus achieving the physical and psychological distance of the artwork. The "authenticity", "ritual" and "distance" of the artwork together constitute the definition of the "Aura".

3. The dissolution of Aurality charm in a film

Benjamin believes that the technology of reproduction liberates what is replicated from the traditional realm, and the desire to replace the unique existence and give the replicated object real vitality will cause a great upheaval in tradition, and this upheaval will cause the dissolution of the Aura. ^[4] Benjamin proposed to understand the changes in modern perceptual media as the decay of rhyme, which would reveal the social conditions for the disappearance of rhyme, and the dissolution of rhyme in contemporary society is closely related to the increasing development and intensity of mass activities, so film, as a mass art, has some value for the study of the dissolution of rhyme. Benjamin turned his attention to film because, in his view, the mystery, authenticity and aesthetic distance of Aurality art were all deconstructed one by one by mechanical reproduction technology, and the mechanical reproduction of film completely overturned the authority carried by Aurality art

and fundamentally destroyed Aurual art.

3.1. The dissolution of "authenticity"

Benjamin contrasts painting with modern film, analyzing the authenticity and authority of painting from the perspective of art production, while modern film is characterized by mechanical reproduction, and the emergence of film has led to the disappearance of the Aura of classical art. At the same time, artworks can be replicated. With the advancement of technology, they have evolved from traditional manual replication to modern mechanical replication, and the content of replication has also changed from replicating the entity to replicating the image of the entity. In the era of handicraft replication, due to the limitations of technology, artworks that could not be replicated had their authenticity and authority^[5]. But in the era of technical replication, Technical reproduction is more independent of the "original work" than manual reproduction, such as photographs, which can capture details of the original work that cannot be seen by the naked eye but can be discovered by the lens, and the photographer can also adjust the shooting Angle and focal length, which also reflects the photographer's artistic conception, which is somewhat different from the original work; And technical reproduction can take a copy of the original to a level that the original itself cannot reach, whether it is a photograph or a record, it can be viewed at any time without being limited by location, which gradually dissolves the Aura. When it came to the film, which became the first art form determined by replicability, it didn't even have an "original", and the entire production process of the film was made possible by replicability, so there was no essential difference between the negatives of the film at the beginning of its production, the films shown in cinemas, and the films copied on CDS. There is no point in distinguishing between the "original" and the "copy", let alone analyzing the unique and authoritative nature of the film, which fundamentally dissolves the authenticity of the Aurual art.

3.2. Display value replaces worship value

The worship value of an artwork is based on rituals, and whether it is ancient human witchcraft rituals or traditional religious rituals, they are maintained by "mystery". The scientific value of the mechanical reproduction technology of films, with its high clarity and accuracy, undermines the air of mystery in traditional rituals. Moreover, as a popular art, the audience does not have a sense of awe when watching films, but rather a mentality of entertainment, which fundamentally undermines the basis of the "mystery" on which the rituals rely. Then the worship value attached to "mystery" in traditional art would cease to exist, and the mechanical reproduction technology would completely liberate the art of film from rituals and etiquette, making it a commodity that could be mass-produced, distributed and disseminated. The audience no longer cared about the distinction between the "original" and the "reproduction", and the goal of film production became to be seen by more people, so films would be replicated and disseminated through various media, and the display value of films officially replaced the worship value.

The film has become a commodity that is mass-reproduced to achieve display value, and it has broken the monopoly of art by a few people under rituals and given art mass. The film breaks through the limitations of time and space, and is accepted in a diverse way. Film makes art accessible to the general public, which shortens the physical distance between the audience and the artwork, and at the same time, because it is free from ritual functions, it shortens the psychological distance between the audience and film. The film is liberated from ritual, replacing worship with display value, and shortening the double distance between the audience and the art, thus completely dissolving the "Aura" of traditional art in the film.

4. The reconfiguration of the Aura in the film

Benjamin mentioned the emerging art of film many times in "Works of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", which shows his positive attitude towards this technology of film. Moreover, he fully affirmed its practical and political value from the perspective of mechanical reproduction technology. This also reflects the practical ethical and political value obtained while the aesthetic value of "Aural charm" in film is dissolved. This is the revolutionary reconstruction of the Aura in modern cinema, that is, the shift from the contemplative aesthetic dimension of the Aura to the action-political dimension of the Aura. ^[6] Benjamin specifically mentioned the concepts of "montage" and "tremble", and from these two perspectives, he fully analyzed how film restructures the revolutionary "Aura" and expounded on the important value of film reconstructing the "Aura".

4.1. Montage technology

Montage is one of the important technical means of the art of film, which creates a new continuum of time and space through the editing of fragmented footage shot. The original film was documentary, with cameras replacing the traditional viewer's perspective, capturing a series of actions of the actors in front of the camera in a fixed position, and the introduction of montage as a technical means into film has driven the artistic development of film. When comparing film to painting, traditional painting has integrity, while the uniqueness of film lies in the revisability given by the montage technique, which creates a new narrative through the editing and collage of shots. Montage has had a profound influence on the time and space of film. It can extend and compress time. The classic "Odessa Steps" scene uses montage to extend and compress time as well. At the same time, montage can cross, overlap and juxtapose the space of the film, thus creating a new time and space for the film. Movies allow us to rediscover the world through technological means. "The film goes deep into this shackled world and blows up this cage-like version of the world with 1/10 of a second of glycerol."^[1] The film awakens the public's sense of self-awareness by ingeniously using close-ups to present everyday life that we take for no reason, allowing us to see a completely unexpected space and movement within it.

Benjamin, as a Marxist philosopher, advocated the art of film not merely out of the pursuit of technology. He proposed that the montage technique of film had a certain revolutionary potential, which could produce the "alienation effect" of Brecht's drama when the audience watched the film, that is, to keep the audience awake at all times, detached from the false reality, and keep the audience at a distance between art and reality. Interrupt the hallucinations that the film creates in the audience. Montage, by deconstructing the integrity of traditional art, breaks the holism of the viewer's stereotypical perception, and by reconstructing reality, creates a alienated aesthetic effect, alerting the audience from the false holistic reality and turning them into reviewers and critics of real life, thereby promoting the political awakening of the masses. ^[7]

4.2. "Shudder" criticizes false experiences

The art of film evolved from photography, and when photography replaced traditional painting, the main content of photographs was portraits of people, which became the last line of defense for the existence of worship values, and the momentary expressions of people's faces in early photographic works became the last refuge of "Aural charm". In 1900, Atteguet first captured the deserted Parisian districts, which marked the beginning of the potential political significance of photography. For the first time, portrait photography produced a "shudder" feeling, and people dared not look directly at the person in the photograph because of its precise clarity and strong sense of reality, which made the viewer feel as if they were being looked directly at by the person in the photograph. The

clarity of photography and the infinite magnification of details allow viewers to understand the visual unconscious for the first time, just as Freud's "psychoanalysis" introduced the instinctive unconscious to the public, the visual unconscious increases insight into the inevitable developments that govern our lives, and also increases the public's exploration of the defamiliarity of familiar daily life, the strong visual impact people are exposed to, It is reasonable to describe it as "shudder".

Benjamin first discovered this unique psychology among the "loiters" on the Arcade. The Arcade was the commercial center of the developed capitalism in Paris in the 19th century. At this location, there were many people with different purposes from shoppers. They wandered aimlessly on the Arcade, attracted by the dazzling array of goods. They enjoyed the visual impact from the bustling consumption spectacle of capitalism around them, and the sensory stimulation produced by these loiters was "shiver". And film is the art that brings the "shiver" experience, and it is through "shiver" that film achieves its revolutionary nature in two ways. First, it changed the way people focused on a single object. The film's editing and collage, along with a large number of dazzling special effects, kept the viewer's attention in a distracted state. The glasses were fully activated as organs of desire, and the colorful content of the shots disrupted the viewer's complete way of thinking, which precisely adapted to the way people perceived in the era of mechanical reproduction. In the era of reproduction, fragmented and explosive information has become the norm, which requires viewers to change the traditional way of continuity and slow acceptance. The "tremors" of the film give the public the ability to digest the tremors, allowing viewers to adapt to the modern society and thus gain further room for reflection.

Secondly, Benjamin believed that films could be used by the bourgeoisie and fascists to create a false reality, using the educational and propaganda functions of films to hide fascist ideas, thereby achieving the purpose of distorting experience and controlling the minds of the masses. *Triumph of the Will* was such a film, which promoted Hitler's authority in the form of a documentary.^[8] But film can also be used by revolutionaries to make it revolutionary and break fascism's control over the masses. Benjamin advocated for surrealist films, the theory of surrealism proposed by the French avant-garde in the 1920s, which sought to explore the subconscious realm of human beings, and this surreal expression often produced a "shudder" effect, awakening the audience through the deification of daily life and the wonders of the Aurau world. Breaking the false experience created by the "film" under the control of capitalism, it successfully liberated the audience from the false reality created by imitating reality and pseudo-documentaries. Benjamin stressed that art can only call the masses the revolutionary subject of resisting fascist rule if it infiltrates the daily lives and perceived world of the masses. Furthermore, "tremble" has a cautionary effect on the perception of the masses.^[9] Under the sensory stimulation of the film's aesthetic of wonder, the inner subconscious of the viewers is activated, enabling them to better discover and understand themselves, and thus to clear the political fog of fascism with a conscious attitude, recognize the anti-human nature of the fascist centralized rule, and ultimately complete the transformation from the masses to the revolutionary subjects This is a transformation.

5. Conclusion

"Aura" as a distinction between traditional works of art and reproductions is dissolved in the art of film, which relies on reproduction techniques to lose the "authenticity" of the works of art; At the same time, as a mass art, it lowers the threshold for viewing art, replaces the value of worship with the value of display, and brings the audience closer to the art. But as a new art form, film reimagines the revolutionary "Aura" from the action-political dimension of art, ADAPTS film to the development of modern society, and inspires the revolutionary potential of viewers through "montage" and "tremble", making film a powerful tool against the false reality of fascism and anti-capitalism.

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