

The Mutual Relationship Between Art and History

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Abstract: The topic of lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgenders is becoming an issue of intensive debate and it is also represented through a large amount of artwork. The mutual relationship could also be seen through this group between art and history and it is reasonable for us to explore it through different approaches. We analyze the actual content of art forms, such as film or oil painting, then get their artistic expression purpose and final presentation effect according to our own understanding and public reaction. Meanwhile, we also focused on the detailed characteristics of artworks, such as the color application of oil painting, and combined with real-life, analyzing the purpose of artists and their effect on history. We used specific and typical examples to give a general conclusion. For instance, we picked certain oil paintings to give a general conclusion towards most of the oil paintings. Art may cause people to deviate from their understanding of some social problems and social groups, thus causing their support and attraction to become less powerful. Art, however, will continue to serve as propaganda and attraction, making it easier for people to understand and accept certain social minorities. At the same time, artists often use contrasting colors in artistic works, especially paintings, to represent a rebellious historical event. At the same time, history can restore truth to some extent, but the truth is relative in any case.

1. Introduction

It is wildly believed that Stonewall riots regarded as a watershed of homosexual's safeguarding rights and the birth of the modern lesbian, gays, bisexuals and transgender movement [1]. This event sparked LGBT groups over the world, and they stand up to fight for their human rights. In 2019, the exhibition "The 50th anniversary series of stonewall movement," was held in Grey Art Gallery and New York University, celebrating the progressive social change and further popularizing the LGBT culture. More than 200 works of art were presented covering issues from gender and the body to sexual mobility, identity, AIDS, and activism. The event attracted a large number of people around the world and also those who are not a member of LGBT or familiar with the LGBT group [2].

There is a variety of art and entertainment events that can reflect the improvement of LGBT liberation, such as drama works, painting works, music works and film works. The movie, as a critical form of the LGBT artwork, serves a catalyst for creating, connecting, and celebrating liberal concepts. It has been accepted and hailed by people for the past decades. Some of the movies, such as *Brokeback Mountain*, even were nominated for the Oscar, meaning the increasingly widespread recognition [3]. We could see abundant positive comments on these movies. For example, a comment says, "the relationship between the same gender could also be romantic," and expresses the acceptance towards the LGBT group of this audience.

Homosexuality represented as a great format and a more acceptable version in these movies; the stories were romantic and dramatic. However, there is still some doubt in the distorted description of LGBT images [4]. For the same reason, the artworks which showed in the exhibition were

colorful and ornamental as well. In other words, their display of the LGBT group was incomplete and inaccurate. We have to think about if the people who show their support to the LGBT group know about them. We can regard their support as valuable and meaningful or not. This can support it without enough comprehension, positive or negative, or not. We compare the advantages and disadvantages of the influence of art on history and analyze whether, analyze the effects on the audiences' attitudes towards LGBTQ through the contrasting color and image and art describe the special groups correctly. These are the primary purpose we did this research and the main content we would tell about in the paper [5].

2. Method

We analyze the actual content of art forms, such as film or oil painting, then get their artistic expression purpose and final presentation effect according to our own understanding and public reaction. Meanwhile, we also focused on the detailed characteristics of artworks, such as the color application of oil painting, and combined with real-life, analyzing the purpose of artists and their effect on history. In this step, the topic of LGBT is vital and therefore, we also read a lot of essays about this and absorb the valuable thoughts to enforce our essay. We also used specific and typical examples to give a general conclusion. For instance, we picked certain oil paintings to give a general conclusion towards most of the oil paintings.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Advantages and disadvantages of art's influence on the history

The representation of art towards social phenomena would be biased and beautified art, such as movies and paintings. They might cause people to deviate from their understanding of some social issues and social groups. They thus cause their support and appeal to become less powerful. However, the artwork would still play the role of propaganda and appeal, making it easier for people to understand and accept certain social minorities. In general, the advantages outweigh the disadvantages.

The movie called *Brokeback Mountain* is a proper illustration of this point. It won the 78 Oscar best film nomination, which proved that the film and the LGBT groups which were presented in the movie were beginning to be familiar and accepted by the public. There are numerous viewers who expressed their support for the LGBT group and their affirmation because of the romance of the film. This represented the benefits of the arts for social minorities. However, when we look at the film review, most people said that the "romantic" film plot moves them. They were only driven by the romantic suspense itself but did not understand the actual situation of the LGBT group. If they blindly express their support or even praise for the LGBT group, it would even cause side effects [6].

Although the negative impact is notable, quite a few people begin to develop a deeper understanding of LGBT groups and then express their support. As for these people, the arts played the role of the guide. The exhibition of the Stonewall movement was similar. While the Stonewall movement was a landmark event in the history of LGBT development, it only spread and had effect inside the LGBT group, and did not play the role of propagating this minority to the society [7]. But a follow-up exhibition to commemorate the Stonewall movement, which opened at New York University, allowing more people who are not one of the members of LGBT groups and even do not know about this group, began to have an impression of the LGBT group. Although many paintings were too decorative and aesthetically pleasing, they still stimulate the interest of people to understand this minority group and thus serve as outreach agents.

3.2 Contrasting colors and images in artwork related to LGBT

Artists often use contrasting colors in works of art, especially paintings, to represent rebellious historical events. Contrasting colors refer to the color with different hues. There are many ways to achieve a contradictory impact with colors [8]. A mixture of warm or cold tones is a good example.

When the color with warm tones like red and yellow is used with the color with cold tones like blue and green, then those two tones of color are mixed together. The distinct contrast of color could be seen obviously and is used as a strategy of art representing. Thus the audience will receive a stronger visual impact and experience the equivalent emotion as the oppression of sexual minorities. At the same time, when stronger compassion is aroused, the audiences are more sympathetic to the minority who eager for support and recognition from society [9].

An intuitive example is Marsden Hartley's work called *The Stupid Eight Bells: Remembrance of Hart Crane*, a tribute to the poet Hart Crane, both gay men and outsiders [10]. As shown in Figure 1, the sea, the ship and the sun are combined in a twisted way. The warm-tone sun represents that Hart Crane was dead at noon, while the rest of the scenes (e.g., the sea) are dark blue or light blue, forming an ornamental experience that emphasizes the sun [11]. The background conveys the irony that a great gay poet does not realize his death. In Hartley's painting, Crane represents a group of gays and lesbians who establish their own networks in a straight society, identify themselves, and create a space for self-protection. With the demonstration and contribution of the previous generation, the gay subculture community began to develop its own history, as it is shown in the suicide of Hart Crane. It can also be seen as a silent resistance to the neglect of gay identity. A stronger sense of shock, especially in the visual sense, can reflect not only an explicit scene of conflict like war but also the inner resistance of the creator. Therefore, as you can see, the contrast of color, especially in reflecting human nature, could play an important role: the inner resistance and conflict might not be shown directly through images or certain words in the paintings. However, through the contrast of color, artists can express higher aesthetic value.

Strong visual impact brings the sexual minority living under the mask of sorrow to the surface. Sexual minorities are used to conceal their true intention because that is an easy way to protect themselves from injustice accusations [12]. However, advanced artists are unyielding to the disguise and, through the artwork, try to unveil the camouflage of the people who are suffering from prejudice and bias. Andy Warhol's self-portrait of disguise is a good example. In the aggressive celebrity culture of the 1960s, Warhol treated himself as a blank sheet of paper. As shown in Figure 2, His pale, expressionless, eccentric expression and famous wig created an "individual." In his "self-portrait of disguise" series, each has a different color of camouflage covering the artist's face. Warhol argues that the portrait is just a mask. Warhol hid in full view — no disguise, immediately discernible, his face is his disguise. There is an extremely high overlap between the content and the nature of the sexual minority. For them, hiding their identity, the so-called mask of survival is their normal life. So here, if the audience can understand the meaning of the mask in this painting, then the sexual minority can be seen through the strong color of the seemingly gorgeous, but actually, an empty surface mask, so as to improve their understanding of them further, and support their existence's meaning [13].

Artworks can expose the physical and mental persecution to the public, which gives people better conditions to arouse empathy. In this way, artists can achieve their ideas and purposes [14]. When a child is beaten in front of you, your instinct is to feel compassion and hope to help him. The same can be said for sexual minorities. It is not enough to show compassion for others simply by confiding in their grievances. Conversely, if sexual minorities expose their scars to others, support for sexual minorities can be accomplished indirectly through easy empathy. The background to Keith Harling's unfinished paintings is the spread of AIDS and HIV viruses in one of the worst health crises in American history—accompanied by political swings in the 1960s [15]. The initial response was sporadic, fragmented, and politicized, with many demonizing AIDS as a "gay plague", implying that they were "self-inflicted" "because of moral degradation. In the face of crisis, the gay community has to rely on its own efforts. In 1990, 18,447 Americans died of AIDS, one of them by artist Keith Harlem, who died on 16 February 1990 at the age of 31. Harlem is known as a graffiti artist, and his paintings often appear in New York subway stations, winning him a reputation in the art world. The painting also has traces of casual graffiti, but the structure of the unfinished work gives it the weight of formal work. The paint is not only a hint of unfinished, but also a relief. The struggle can be seen in this context, with only about a quarter of the painting and

the paint flowing down as if to see the creator in the pain of the intermittent painting, until finally can not insist on dropping his brush, fell on the cold side of the road [15]. When viewers learn about the conflict and the suffering of sexual minorities in the context of the painting, they are bound to be shaken by the mutilated patterns and flowing colors that create empathy.

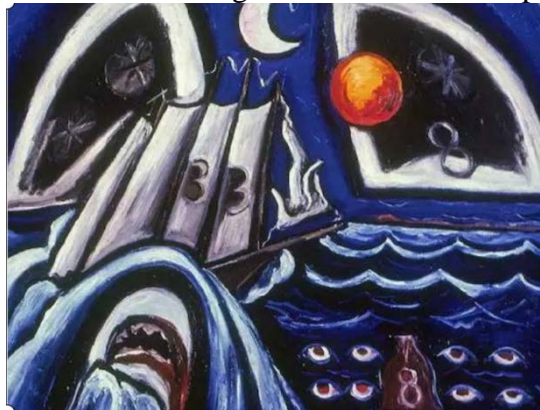


Figure 1. Marsden Hartley, The Stupid Eight-Flight Clock: In Commemoration of Hart Crane,1933 [16]



Figure 2. Andy Warhol, camouflage self-portrait [17].

3.3 The authenticity of the depiction of LGBT in works of art

The question of how art affects our understanding of historical facts has always been an important topic in the field of history and art. As far as we can see at present, it is generally believed that artworks can restore the historical truth to some extent, which is undoubtedly the most powerful support for the view that Schliemann, who explored the ancient city of Troy with Homer's epic. However, although there are such examples, it is still necessary to explore the special relationship between works of art and historical events with a rigorous theoretical attitude. From the perspective of historical philosophy, what works of art as text and language pursue or can only show is relatively real history, which often has a deviation from the actual mistakes. Even the most objective and rational artists will surely have their subjective artistic thoughts and tastes, but the deviation caused by this situation will not affect the authenticity of the history they reflect. All people, whether observing the historical phenomenon or the history they have experienced, should adopt indirect ways, which will bring about considerable ambiguity and error. Just like in a war, even if you are the supreme commander, you can't observe the whole situation of the battlefield. You can only judge by all the information on hand. Obviously, in this case, the observation is imperfect but true [18]. Although this kind of incomprehensive fuzziness may bring us some difficulties in restoring real history, it opens another door for us. Because of this unique and sharp

subjectivity, we will not lose our understanding of the minority and the nuances of time in the whirlpool of time [19]. When artworks reflect the times they live in, they often look for the most typical and conflicting phenomenon, and the artistry here will bring considerable trouble to understand the historical phenomenon. Because sometimes, this kind of artistic appeal makes people feel too optimistic or too negative emotions, although historians may eliminate interference by collecting a large number of contemporary works of art or other ways. Historians can eliminate interference by collecting a large number of contemporary works of art or other ways, but it has to be pointed out that the interpretation of historians is often difficult to offset the appeal of these works. According to French historian Bloch, the worst part of common sense is to elevate the momentary observation to the eternal truth. Therefore, there are similar problems in artworks [20]. It is easy to show the extremely special situation of a certain historical period as a universal phenomenon in this period. To some extent, this special phenomenon can be understood as a lack of voice or minority groups in this period [21]. Besides, it should be noted that works of art rely on people in the process of restoring the real history, which also means that the history behind works of art needs to be rational and matched with other reliable historical materials. For example, listening to Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture today, we must have a basic understanding of European social history at the beginning of the 19th century in our mind [22]. Without these foundations, works of art will become the tool of people's pure emotion. Even if they cause resonance beyond the times, this resonance is vague. To sum up, there is a strong interaction between artworks and historical events. As a part of history, works of art must be able to reflect the historical truth and are often an excellent way to observe the minority groups in history, but this historical truth and reflection should be based on rational observation and this truth can only be said to be relative, after all, the real history itself does not exist.

4. Conclusion

All in all, we could say that art, such as film and painting, may cause people to deviate from their understanding of some social problems and social groups, thus causing their support and attraction to become less powerful. Art, however, will continue to serve as propaganda and attraction, making it easier for people to understand and accept certain social minorities. At the same time, artists often use contrasting colors and images in artistic works, especially paintings, to represent a rebellious historical event. At the same time, history can restore truth to some extent, but the truth is relative in any case.

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