



The Influence of Eastern Aesthetics on Western Contemporary Art

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the profound impact of Eastern aesthetics and artistic philosophies on Western contemporary art. Through a historical analysis, it examines how Eastern artistic traditions, particularly those rooted in Zen Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, and Japanese tea ceremonies, have shaped and enriched Western artistic practices. The study delves into key concepts like Wabi-Sabi and Zen, highlighting their influence on Western avant-garde movements from the 19th century onwards. It also considers the channels through which Eastern aesthetics were transmitted to the West, including missionary activities and world expositions. By investigating examples of artists who have successfully integrated Eastern aesthetics into their work, this paper demonstrates the ongoing dialogue between Eastern and Western art forms, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of global artistic exchanges.

Keywords: Eastern aesthetics, Western contemporary art, Zen Buddhism, Wabi-Sabi, Taoism.

INTRODUCTION

The objective of this paper is to convey an analysis of the influence of Eastern aesthetics and artistic philosophic principles over Western contemporary art. Earlier search for and appreciation of Oriental civilization by individual artists and intellectuals, knowledge of classical Oriental art and literature were not aimed at mutual fusing of the creative achievements of different cultures, but insufficiently limited understanding of the life and nature of the Western civilizations. With the advance of globalization, contemporary East has become an influential and significant economic and cultural entity. Its artistic achievements have become an inherent part of the modern universal culture. Numerous artists are seeking inspiration not in the West, exasperated with our time, but in the East, both in its distant past and in its turbulent present [1]. The West is seeking its own ideal and is looking for answers to numerous existential questions in beliefs that do not derive from the Christian religious tradition, in the Taoist concept originated from the ancient Chinese religion-philosophic doctrine, in Buddhism, rooted by the Hindu ideas of life, as well as in a variety of contemporary political teachings. As regards Japan, one of the most significant aesthetic phenomena of the past era was the phenomenon of the 'Empire of Signs' (1983) when, due to the combination of the conceptions and the creativity in literature, fashion, standards for the decoration of the environment, photography, architecture, and urbanism, Japan became an exceptional aesthetic phenomenon [2].

HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF EASTERN AESTHETICS IN ART

Under the influence of globalization and the rise of Asia, Eastern aesthetics have become a highly appealing subject for contemporary Western scholars and artists. Asian artists, especially those from China, South Korea, and Japan, draw pictorial knowledge and techniques from traditional ink painting, calligraphy, seal cutting, and other classical art forms, which are then used to enrich contemporary visual language in their works. Western scholars and artists actively studying Chinese painting and calligraphy regard them as a visual analogy of the mental aspects of Eastern culture, including the aesthetic experience and the wisdom of life. In the context of increasing globalization and multicultural integration, appreciation and re-creation of traditional Eastern aesthetics will be a trend in the exploration of the

practice of contemporary visual culture. In the East and West, artists exchange the most truthful thoughts and sincere communication [3]. The concept of "Eastern" aesthetics is rooted in the works of Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and other East Asian artists, which is entirely different from that originating from the cultural context of Western aesthetics. Here, "Eastern" aesthetics refers to the visual creation and aesthetic theory created under the influence of the cultural context of Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism in East Asia. It has gone beyond the general aesthetic form of traditional Western aesthetics. Due to the difference in cultural backgrounds, the representations of "beauty" and "the way of looking" in Eastern and Western artworks are significantly different and are accepted and familiar to the respective cultural community. Eastern art has too often been ignored or misinterpreted because, until recently, Asian art has been alternatively exoticized or ignored by Western collectors and scholars. The study of Eastern art can foster mutual understanding between the East and the West and have a positive influence on interpersonal communication, the learning process, the content of website design, and even the concept of creativity, culture, and life in the field of design [4].

KEY CONCEPTS IN EASTERN AESTHETICS

To understand the influence of Eastern aesthetics on Western contemporary art, we must first understand the key concepts that underpin the aesthetic beliefs and practices of Eastern culture. It is generally agreed that the leading traditions of Eastern aesthetics, both implicit and explicit, are the art within the practices of Zen Buddhism in the Far East, the Daoist and Confucian traditions in China and Japan, Yoga in Indian aesthetics, and the Japanese tea ceremony. While different in content, these practices reflect the key concerns with art in the Far East. By looking at the conjectural and extant role of art within the practice of these traditions, we can gain a more holistic understanding of possible Eastern influences on Western contemporary art practice [5, 6]. It is important to bear in mind that each of these traditions is historically embedded in process. Far Eastern traditions provide a cultural context, a historical continuity, within which art takes place and thereby has meaning. The art is not identified by its portrayal of physical characteristics but by its arrangement of ideas, which appears non-representational. Although it is not representative in the sense of a photographic image, this practical knowledge reflects the worldview of Zen. When applied to the practice of any craft, it becomes an aesthetic, transcending the sensual - the relational pragmatics of man to the world - grounded in a more profound human ethos. Art then, in any craft, becomes the representative space of enlightened cognition. Zen Buddhism is particularly relevant because it explicitly shapes and gives aesthetic meaning to a wide range of objects and craft forms. It is not restricted to a specific output in the form of painting or sculpture. Rather, the 'art' is in everyday things. The ongoing practice of the Way through the routine will sustain the sense Bigwen, the refined and cultured person [7].

ZEN BUDDHISM

A precursor to the match between Eastern philosophy and Western art lies within Zen Buddhism. The interest in Zen began in the 19th century and it was reflected, as has been noted, in philosophy, psychology, painting, and literature. This eastern religion renounces all learned and perceived norms and standards, rejecting the veil of shadows, allowing the time to remain in the ephemeral and celebrates the simplicity, passive perception, and living in the moment. A fundamental property of Zen is the need for harmony between soul and world, the ultimate expression of which is the instantaneous capture of truth, empathy, the closest moment of connection with the time. The fusion of Zen and the modern western world is expressed through the belief that meaning, spirit, consciousness, body and cosmos are revealed in moments of intensity, beauty, and excellence when we entrust countless individual logos to simple silence, hearing unstained to the voice of eternity [8].

WABI-SABI

Sabi adds a negative dimension of decay and depersonalizes objects made of materials which continuously change their character like textile, wooden or paper walls. However, it is more closely related to the beauty of aging. Elegant aging reflects the natural course of life; it has its past and memories and reminds us about their passing. The beauty of such inanimate and natural environment can be felt now - not in the past or in the future [9, 10]. The concept of sabi opposes the optimism of euphemistic speeches that derive additionally. Monuments or memorials in Western culture have always been closely related to the memory of the dead people. Sabi refers to the visual memories of whatever died, disintegrated or gradually disappeared as a result. Even j-culture in cyber and hi-tech technology of the 21st century sometimes prefers simple decaying systems to gorgeous and functional newest models [11].

The beautiful and lovable old has a right to exist parallel to new fashion trends and hi-tech models. In the 21st century, a cooperation of the old and the new for the benefit of both has not only nostalgic value, not only profit of the market economy. The things that lost their sales value, long abandoned and virtually

forgotten, surviving survived can and sometimes should live on within contemporary popular culture. Their radical transformation, preserving the charm of the past, can absorb and combine the advantage of disposable kitsch, of work of art, of the consumer culture [12].

TRANSMISSION OF EASTERN AESTHETICS TO THE WEST

Broadly speaking, there have been two possible channels through which Eastern aesthetics reaches the West: either through the professional art field such as galleries, exhibitions or art publications and theory, or through other non-professional channels such as missionary activities, academic research or world expositions. Before the 20th century, there was almost no professional contacts between the East and the West in fine art, so that the transmission of Eastern aesthetics to the West was almost completely accomplished by non-professional channels [13]. Eastern aesthetics began to infiltrate the West through missionaries who exported the aesthetics of their own country, and East theories were absorbed by western intellectuals. The missionaries' enthusiasm and the religious character of their transportation activities as well as the knowledge and varied teaching abilities of the literati in the East undoubtedly contributed more to their economic and political power. The activities of Western missionary societies were not limited to religious indoctrination, but also included educational, charitable, scientific and medical work among their tasks. The export of the civilization and language of their own country, as well as calls for cross-cultural dialogues, the universal adaptability of religious amalgamation or relationship, and humanism among different cultural spheres were all conducive to the further transmission of Eastern aesthetics to the West [14].

19TH AND 20TH CENTURY ART MOVEMENTS

The connection between the two cultures of the East and the West, however, is a subject that has been discussed in numerous fields of studies including art, literature, and philosophy. This research is focused on the effect of Eastern aesthetics on Western contemporary art. The term "Eastern" mentioned in the paper refers to the areas such as China, India, Japan, and the African countries where the ancient civilizations have been flourishing and where different cultures, religions, values, and points of view were born and then have developed in a diverse and profound manner. The term "Western," in contrast to the Eastern, is usually used for the European countries, America, and the countries in the similar civilization system whose representative culture and art forms have gone throughout the world and been deeply imprinted in various fields of art around the world [15]. In the artistic context, the process of exchanging values and ideas involves travelers and artists who are deeply inspired by the beauty around them, which provokes their creativity and as a result artists express their emotions on the canvas or on the stone by means of color, words, or musical notes. In the 19th century, with the involvement of both the impact of the European Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution, the fact that the modern Western Art traditions have been closely linked to each other had its beginning. The often used terms are Impressionism, Expressionism, and Cubism. Then Abstract Expressionism, the movement characteristic of the 20th-century United States period, has gradually emerged. Shortly after the mid-20th century, John Cage and the Fluxus Movement play a prominent role with their performance art [16]. Despite their difference in themes and concepts, these Western Art Movements in the two centuries have interacted and developed through the works. At this time people from the East, who have had a long-standing unique cultural heritage, have begun to receive attention from the West. Sun Tzu's book, *The Art of War* has laid a substantial foundation for the concept of "strategy" in the field of management that the West has been pursuing continuously. During the above period, the gradual contact of the two cultures has activated the art movements from both sides, resulting in a wide range of expressions in structure, form, space, texture, music, and material-making between and within the East and the West with its own unique style used to create works of art which gives people a broad sense of aesthetics. The artists use local spiritual symbols and the artistic forms of the East and try to deal with the integration of the East and the West in the movements they create. Providing peace and stability and revealing the prosperous state of life afterwards, the peaceful and stable environment in turn becomes the nourishment of the land, which is also the common aspiration of the East and the West. Although not every attempt is successful, a dialogue between art and society or between cultures arises. In a truly meaningful art world, the exchange of mutual inspiration results in endless creativity and innovation [17].

IMPACT ON CONTEMPORARY WESTERN ART

EAK and contemporary Western avant-garde art from the late 19th century to the early 20th century.

Later, with the development of Western society, conflicts between modern scientific rationalism and traditional religious metaphysics cast a shadow on the human inner world. The elemental feelings and the exquisite aesthetics were weakened and worn away, and this inner pain directed artists to the external

appearance of nature and strengthened aesthetic consciousness to express the yearning for superhuman perfection and initial beauty. The Romantic Movement offered essential strengths and internal demands for the progress of Western avant-garde art. Its subjects no longer came from the life represented by traditions, but from the intrinsic world of art. The morals and constraints of classical art forms were discarded, which revolutionized the practical exploration and creation of new art forms. The avant-garde Western art bravely announced to human beings the thoughts from the avant-garde artists themselves by breaking the scratched appearance and the symbols universally economically utilized [18]. After most ancient and medieval civilizations in the East came to an end of their cycle of civilization, they were lost in a gloomy class intrigue and the priests deeply buried in the absolute emptiness of Tibet and Kathmandu. The holiness of India underwent immense internal conflicts and was finally violated to be trampled by the British boots. The painted works of Wolf scooped out the inner world of Australia with a knife, and the camping towns blossomed on the land of the God in the long river of escapement flowing through three gorges. The civilization did not vanish, so the saint exiled himself to Guanyin City, and the Body-Nature-Heart Association announced the manifesto of the last artistic carnival. Thus, art cannot help revealing the shadow of misery, pain, fracturing, and tragedy of human beings on the purser world of life, and converting the dreams of the Yunshen Kingdom in the unreachable heaven to the blood drives and dancing in art [19].

EXAMPLES OF ARTISTS INCORPORATING EASTERN AESTHETICS

The question that undoubtedly arises is how and to what extent can we "learn" from the visual appeal of non-representational Eastern aesthetics and to what extent those stylistic traits can be incorporated into "foreign" Western contemporary art. In contemporary art practice, there exist significant examples of a synthesis of painting languages that combine the roots of the specificity of Western painting with elements of Far Eastern architecture. These works are deciphered not only from an internal point of view, deciphered by their very method of appearing at the border of the two cultures. Nevertheless, these are not particularly known cases, which we aim to present and elucidate here, to help design a purpose for contemporary painting and artistic craftsmanship, which we narrowly link to another type of architecture – of its rhythmic plastic [20, 21]. Below we will present some works and already published projects. Other projects and works are being prepared. It should be noted that these works are not in any way based on the desire to imitate ancient visual models, they are not depersonalized. They come from academic conceptual views of the author, who in art is responsible for the works, proceeding with a conscious de-personalization of the role of the artist [1].

CONCLUSION

The influence of Eastern aesthetics on Western contemporary art is a testament to the dynamic and evolving nature of artistic expression. Through historical contexts and key concepts like Zen Buddhism and Wabi-Sabi, Western artists have found new ways to approach and conceptualize their work, leading to innovative and diverse artistic practices. The transmission of Eastern aesthetics, facilitated by globalization and cultural exchanges, has allowed for a richer and more inclusive art world. As contemporary artists continue to draw inspiration from Eastern philosophies, the integration of these diverse aesthetic principles fosters a greater understanding and appreciation of the universal language of art. The ongoing synthesis of Eastern and Western artistic traditions not only enriches the cultural tapestry but also paves the way for future creative endeavors that transcend cultural boundaries.

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