

Art and Society: Chu Teh-Chun and the Encounter in the Art Field

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Abstract: Through the process of "being" discovered in the modern art field by Chinese-American academician Chu Teh-chun, this paper finds that the development of modern Chinese art presents a different orientation from the Western "aesthetic autonomy": at the level of reception, the art field is influenced by the political and economic fields; in terms of artistic creation, Chu Teh-chun insists on the "fusion of East and West" and resolves the contradiction between the "aesthetic autonomy" and the social contextualization of Western art sociology in a transcendent way. In his artistic creation, Chu Teh-chun insists on the idea of "integration of East and West", resolving the contradiction between "aesthetic self-discipline" and social contextualization in Western art sociology in a transcendent way. The complete and independent personality of Chinese artists makes the art field different from the traditional art field: Chinese artists still influence the development of the art field in a two-way interaction through the use of unique mediators.

Keywords: Art sociology, Chu Teh-chun, Field.

1. Introduction

Art sociology is an important branch of art and aesthetics, and is an intersection of art, aesthetics and sociology. The purpose of introducing sociological theory into the field of art research is to "study the form, characteristics, stylistic changes, functional values and meanings of artworks in relation to the socio-historical context in which they were produced.[1]

Traditional aesthetic standards have failed to define the boundary between artworks and household objects in the advent of the postmodern art era. The French structuralist scholar Bourdieu elaborated in his theory of the artistic field: "The field of art belongs to the field of cultural production, and there is a structural relationship between the field of art and the external social environment. Art has to be freed from external pressures on the one hand, but on the other hand it cannot be separated from these external circumstances, so it can only oscillate between self-regulation and other-regulation." The German Frankfurt School scholar Habermas has also elaborated, "Art takes place in the social public sphere, between the state and the private, where the individual is able to create freely and rationally." The existence of each self-regulating field is both bound by its own rules and subject to the checks and balances of other factors, such as economic and political. Thus the self-regulation of a field is relative. Artistic fields are gradually institutionalized in the process of artistic autonomy. From the city-state system of ancient Greece, to the patronage system of the Renaissance Church, to the emergence of the slogan "art for art's sake," the world is an art field that constantly creates, produces, and reproduces the value of artworks.

The artist is a product of social historicization, not only with the list of signs of the artist's autonomy, exhibitions, contracts, artist's signature and social mechanisms that accompany the emergence of a process of refinement of the artistic language, which first involves establishing a way of naming painters, in which the discussion of them and the nature of their work and the payment of their work, also establishes a specific artistic value.

In 1957, Chu Teh-chun was invited to participate in the Salon de la comparison with his non-figurative oil paintings. He won the silver medal for "Portrait of Jingzhao", which was well received by French artists and was called "Mona Lisa of the East" by critics. This was the first time that Chu Teh-chun came to the forefront of Western artists after his studies in France, and it laid the foundation for his subsequent development in France.

In 1960, Chu Teh-chun held a solo exhibition at Galerie Henriette Legendre in Paris, and was always admired by the art critics. Maurice Panier, the gallery's artistic director, appreciated Chu Teh-chun's work and often discussed modern art with him, becoming a close friend and signing a contract with him in 1958 until 1963. The patronage of Maurice Panier provided financial security for Chu Teh-chun during his stay in France, and also laid the groundwork for the subsequent circulation of his works in the art market.

In July 2020, Sotheby's Hong Kong's spring auction "Modern Art Evening Sale" went under the hammer. On the occasion of the 100th anniversary of Chu Teh-chun's birth, Sotheby's offered Chu Teh-chun's only five-panel Ode to Nature, which started at HK\$65 million and was sold for HK\$113.7 million (approximately RMB 103.7 million) after fierce bidding, setting a new auction record for Chu Teh-chun and bringing him into the pantheon of billion dollar painters for the first time.[2]

The above three paragraphs present three representative moments of Chu Teh-chun's artistic career in different social contexts. The first representative moment occurred at the beginning of Chu Teh-chun's stay in France, when he was still in the stage of figurative painting, and his solid painting foundation and unique oriental approach made Chu Teh-chun's first appearance in the French art world. The second representative period occurred during the exploration of Chu Teh-chun's painting style. During this period, Chu Teh-chun opened several solo exhibitions and sold his works under the patronage of the director of the Paris gallery, and his popularity continued to grow, laying the foundation for his later development in France. The third representative period took place in Hong Kong, China in 2020, when Chu Teh-chun

surpassed the billion dollar mark in art auctions and became one of the "billion dollar painters".

From being the son of a Han family to being the first Chinese member of the French Academy of Fine Arts to being a billion dollar painter, Chu Teh-chun's identity has been constantly renewed. Born in the Republic of China, Chu Teh-chun was influenced by the idea of "fusion of East and West" during the art revolution. The fusion of East and West drove Chu Teh-chun to Paris to fulfill his dream. At this time, French society, as the world's art capital, already had a relatively well-developed art market and critical system. Along with the in-depth study of art field theory, the analysis and study of Chu Teh-chun's artistic style and value should not only be based on the works themselves, but also placed in a macroscopic sociological system, taking the relationship between art and society as the entry point, his life experiences, social interactions and cultural background as the foothold. This long process presents a sociological richness and is characterized by a "case study of the trend of integration between East and West". The status of Chu Teh-chun in art history has been rewritten thanks to his status as the first Chinese member of the French Academy of Fine Arts. As a result, attention to Chu Teh-chun is now gradually focused on the art scene. In recent years, with the deepening of the art scene, Chu Teh-chun's artistic value and status have been constantly refreshed. Due to the complex nature of the modern art scene, exploring how Chu Teh-chun balanced the relationship between art and various elements of society, including related communicators, critics, and patrons, becomes necessary to study the value of Chu Teh-chun and related artists.

2. Culture and Chu Teh-Chun's First Encounter

Zhu Dequn was born in Xiaoxian County, an ancient city in northern Anhui Province, into a family of scholars, and his family's good culture was the inspiration for his artistic career. In his early years, he studied with Lin Fengmian and Wu Dayu at the Hangzhou Art Institute with Wu Guanzhong, and then moved around Nanjing, Kunming and Sichuan to escape the war. During the war years, Chu Teh-chun's works were destroyed before the age of 25. After the end of the war, his friends Wu Guanzhong and Zao Wou-ki all stayed in France, which further provoked Chu Teh-chun's desire to go to France to fulfill his dream. Due to practical constraints, Chu Teh-chun went to Taipei to secure a position as a teacher in the art department of the National Taiwan Normal University. While teaching at the National Taiwan Normal University, Chu Teh-chun was able to secure financial security for his studies in France. At this time, the art market had not yet developed in Taiwan, but Chu Teh-chun's works sold exceptionally well and were even ordered by appointment, which makes it easy to explain why Chu Teh-chun's works have become commonplace at auction in Taiwan in recent years.

Before Chu Teh-chun settled in Paris, his external living space kept changing in response to the war, which did not cause Chu Teh-chun's art style to break through, but remained traditional and figurative. His contemporaries, such as Changyu, Xu Beihong, and Pan Yuliang, were constantly updating their artistic style in response to the changes in their external living space, but after settling in a certain place, they were self-copying; Chu Teh-chun, on the contrary, began to gradually "change" his style after settling in Paris.

When he first arrived in France, Chu Teh-chun still showed his figurative style. Artistic innovation and rebellion flooded Western society at the time. As a son of a Han family, Chu Teh-chun had never experienced the charm of modernist art. Chu Teh-chun's re-start from the title of professor at the National Taiwan Normal University to Paris was also jokingly referred to as a "poetic fall". In the early days of his life in Paris, the hardships of aphasia and the lack of money in his life brought worries to Chu Teh-chun's passion. Later, Chu Teh-chun visited the famous "Grand Cottage" in Paris, where all his predecessors in France had sketched, and where Chu Teh-chun persisted until the doors of the Grand Cottage were empty. It was here that Chu Teh-chun acquired the ability to capture the dynamics of the moment, and accumulated material for his later works. Chu Teh-chun's portraits based on his wife Dong Jingzhao, which won awards at the Salon de France two years in a row, began to attract the attention of the Parisian painting world. Chu Teh-chun's unique classical portrait style with an oriental spirit laid the groundwork for his later abstract transformation.

The opportunity for Chu Teh-Chun to begin to subvert himself was after seeing the Staël retrospective, and from then on, he began to make the "great spiritual leap" to the inner universe. After settling in Paris, the external leap stopped, but the internal leap began in Paris. At this time, there were numerous exhibitions in Paris, and Chu Teh-chun, after observing the art masters of various genres from different countries, developed a sense of "aesthetic dullness" that "the Five Mountains do not look at the mountains, but the Yellow Mountains do not look at the mountains". "The first time I saw Staël's works gave me a great shock, which played a decisive role in my artistic journey. Later on, in the process of painting abstract paintings, I experienced the 'freedom' of Zhuangzi's unattached and unhindered 'free' and Confucius' 'travel in art.'" [3] This is what Chu Teh-chun mentioned in an interview with international student Liao Qiongfang, who studied his painting art as a subject. The invisibility of Staël and the open artistic atmosphere of Paris transformed Chu Teh-chun's artistic concept, but what really made Chu Teh-chun make a fundamental breakthrough in his artistic style was the deep-rooted traditional cultural thought. At this time, abstract paintings were mostly based on the breakthrough of external forms, which had visual impact but lacked connotation in internal structure. As a group of Chinese artists, Chu Teh-chun, unlike the mainstream abstractionists in the Parisian painting world, learned Chinese traditional culture and art since childhood to provide support for his abstract painting creation; integrating Tang poetry and Song lyrics with calligraphy and ink techniques, so the works of Chu Teh-chun can be viewed independently of the whole to appreciate the interest of his brush and ink. The more sensitive Western abstract painters have also sought inspiration in traditional calligraphy, but have only scratched the surface of the art, making it difficult to appreciate the essence of Chinese culture. The process of Chu Teh-chun's return to ink and wash did not go smoothly either, as the lack of media materials became the biggest obstacle. It was only after experimenting with meat wrapping paper and ink-absorbing paper of different thicknesses that Chu found a material that could replace Xuan paper for painting. The revival of ink and wash relieved Chu Teh-chun's homesickness and made him feel the charm of ink and wash even more. Compared to oil painting, ink is irreproducible and cannot be changed once the brush is put down, and the ink stains on paper are ductile and unique. Chu

Teh-chun transplants the spirit of traditional Chinese culture, which he has learned through his ink and wash, into oil paint. The implantation of calligraphic lines and color blocks of varying sizes gives the structure of Chu Teh-chun's paintings a musical rhythm.

In October 2003, Zhu Dequn and sculptor Fei Hou, also a member of the French Academy of Fine Arts, held a month-long joint exhibition at the Chinese Cultural Center on the Seine in Paris, France, to celebrate the "Year of Chinese Culture". The exhibition was organized by Chu Teh-chun and Fei Hou, a sculptor who is also a member of the French Academy of Fine Arts, to celebrate the "Year of Chinese Culture. Dana, Director General of the Department of Asia of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a number of French art professionals and Academicians of the Académie française visited the exhibition and commented on the characteristics of Chinese and Western cultures. While congratulating the launch of the Year of Chinese Culture, they also affirmed Chu Teh-Chun's abstract art.

In the summer of 2001, Chu Teh-Chun was invited to Shanghai by the Shanghai Grand Theatre, accompanied by his old friend Wu Guanzhong, and made a site visit. The Grand Theatre, by the hand of French designers, is a large modern style building integrating new technology, new techniques and new materials. In the main hall of the Grand Theatre, the giant mural "Goddess of Art" by the American painter Ding Zhaoguang was hung as the symbol of the Grand Theatre at that time, which had cracks and peeling due to long-term light and room temperature, so the institution wanted to ask Chu Teh-chun to create a replacement. Chu Teh-chun also worked for several months on this invitation, customizing the painting with fade-resistant paints, a seamless canvas and an electric crane. When the work was about to be completed, an official from the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs visited Chu Teh-chun and immediately proposed, "We cannot let such a masterpiece leave France without a word, we must let the French see it first." [4] After the official and the Paris Opera and other parties contact, named "Festival Symphony" in the Paris Opera public exhibition for one month, the exhibition inauguration ceremony is the French Minister of Culture, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and our Ambassador to France, the Shanghai Grand Theatre also made a special trip to celebrate; and through this exhibition, the Shanghai Opera and the Paris Opera concluded a sister theater partnership.

3. Market, Capital and Chu Teh-Chun's Second Encounter

As a regular visitor to the auction market in recent years, Chu Teh-chun's auction figures have averaged 84.92% over the past 20 years, with three times reaching 100%. Among the three, Zao Wou-ki's art market operation and auction prices are the highest, followed by Wu Guanzhong's. Because Chu Teh-chun's collection market is concentrated in China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and overseas markets, he is slightly inferior in the domestic art market. Chu Teh-chun's 1989 masterpiece "Ode to Nature" was sold at the 2020 Sotheby's spring auction for HK\$113.7 million plus commission, officially marking his entry into the era of "billion dollar painters". In this spring auction, Chu Teh-chun's calligraphy works, "Red Cliff and the Song of Water" were both sold for 15.8 and 9 times their estimates, which not only makes people think - is the market for Chu Teh-chun about to reach a climax again? The online media's focus on "billion dollars" suggests that in the modern

art world, the logic of capital is the driving force, and that Chu Teh-chun was either "rediscovered" by capital, or that the discussion of Chu Teh-chun's market value in the relevant reports seems to be a supplement to the billion dollar auction price of his works. The discussion of Chu Teh-chun's market value seems to be a complement to the billion dollar auction price of his works.

Looking at the price trend of Chu Teh-chun's works in the Chinese art auction market since 2000, it is easy to see that the trend is not a linear increase, but rather a wave-like ups and downs, compared to the same period Wu Guanzhong and Zao Wou-ki's auction market continued to rise, it seems unsatisfactory. It was not until around 2020 that the prices of Chu Teh-chun's works were characterized by high prices. Over the years, Chu Teh-chun's works were priced at over 120 million, but it was not until 2020 that he broke the 100 million mark with Ode to Nature, which fetched 113.7 million Hong Kong dollars. Zhu Dequn, Wu Guanzhong, Zao Wou-ki, Changyu and other early artists who stayed in France have become the leaders of the oil painting auction market in recent years, with considerable circulation and high prices for their works, and are historically hot stars in the market; they also represent the painstaking exploration of Chinese oil painting styles by early 20th century artists, especially after Zhu Dequn settled in Paris, whose paintings first circulated in the European and American art markets and began to enter the Chinese market in the 21st century. He has become the tip of the pyramid in the oil painting segment. As an art master representing the spirit of an era, Chu Teh-chun's artistic achievements and values need the support of academic research and the precipitation of time, and the trading quotations established on this basis more often than not reflect the market supply and demand for his paintings, with specific factors such as precision or not, more or less, governing their prices.

4. Artistic Crossing and Chu Teh-Chun's Third Encounter

In recent years, art has crossed over into many fields, and the content and ideas it contains and conveys have flooded daily life. When it comes to cross-border art on the shelves, most of them are co-branded with fashion brands to launch a series of peripheral products, which not only sublimates the brand image and connotation, but also serves as a means of circulation to make art works everyday. The concept of "crossover co-branding" is now deeply rooted in people's hearts, and there are hundreds of forms of crossover co-branding, among which "art crossover" is actually a rather long-standing concept. What is common is the cross-border cooperation between brands and art, through the integration of art works, the spiritual needs will be infused into a variety of products that can be marketed, indirectly enhance the image of the brand, while empowering the emerging value of the brand, which is also the reason why more and more brands choose cross-border art. As the consumption level and appreciation ability of the country's people continue to upgrade, homogenized products have been difficult to meet the needs of part of the national high quality of life. In the generation of seeking newness and change, brands are cooperating across borders, colliding with different fields and stirring up new sparks, so that they can successfully attract the attention of consumers, and cross-border co-branding is one of the ways to expand consumer groups, so many brands tend

to rush to them. The effect.

The designer brand "SHANGXIA", which originates from the contemporary elegant life of Chinese culture, was founded in 2010; it is dedicated to inheriting Chinese life aesthetics and exquisite craftsmanship, and through innovation, bringing it back to contemporary life. The brand concept is in line with Chu Teh-Chun's artistic philosophy of adhering to traditional Chinese culture. Chu Teh-Chun's works are characterized by moving colors and spontaneous brushwork to build a rhythm of space and light, giving a new perspective to the aesthetic exploration of design that connects classic and modern, practical and artistic, "up and down". The elegant ink painting is fused with the simple silhouette of the classic "Up and Down" moon bag with its full form and smooth lines, resulting in three limited edition "Moon" bags with poetic and contemporary qualities. The "Up and Down" collection is a perfect reproduction of the delicate receding effect of ink painting, the transparent quality of Chu Teh-chun's works and the far-reaching spatial context, using layers of overlapping silk threads combined with exquisite hand-made Su embroidery techniques. Through the simple and pure contemporary design aesthetics to interpret the majestic artistic creation, the thousands of changes in ink color, rich in

layers and details of dynamic interpretation, the artist's rich and strong personal emotions into everyday objects, naturally revealing the unrestrained freedom of temperament.

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