

Evaluation of Sculpture

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Keywords: Character sculpture, Art acceptance, Sculpture evaluation

Abstract: Based on the experience of Markus Lupertz's sculpture works, the author began to re-examine the evaluation of sculpture value. This paper reviews the environment and track of the growth and development of Chinese sculpture, aiming to explore the key factors that affect the evaluation of sculpture: the formation process of sculpture, the particularity of sculpture communication, the separation and interaction between sculptor and recipient, etc.

1. Introduction

To understand and judge the value of an artist's work, we must first systematically understand his creative process. To achieve profound experience and clear understanding, and thus make rational judgments, we can only “face” his work. After more than three years, from March 28th, 2017 to April 28th, 2017, Tsinghua University Art Museum held an exhibition entitled “From Bacchus to Arcadia: Exhibition of Markus Lupertz's Works”. There are 104 pieces of exhibition works-88 easel paintings and 16 sculptures. The author is Markus Lupertz (1941-), one of the representative figures of German neo-expressionism. The exhibition covers his representative works from 1968 to the present.

2. Confessions of Lupertz

After the exhibition, there are many doubts to be solved urgently, especially the colored bronze sculpture by Lupertz, which is full of “visual stimulation”, which impacts our “conscious” judgment on the artistic standard of concrete sculpture. If the author is a Chinese sculptor, it is hard to imagine whether his works will enter the official exhibition (the latest national art exhibition in 2019, the 13th National Exhibition of Fine Arts, did not find any works of the same type selected), even in Beijing 798 Art Zone, where “contemporary art” and commercial art gather, it is not easy to be accepted, let alone “people who eat melons”. We usually give ugly names, bad names, common names, or “ethical judgments” such as grandstanding and formalism to sculpture works with “no skill in modeling”, bright colors and obscure expressions. Whether it is difficult to “tolerate” because it is different from others. What exactly is the problem? Why do we “can't understand” the works of such contemporary western art masters? Do we have the judgment about the value of sculpture?

I think all the above problems are caused by the chaos of sculpture art criticism. A single or chaotic “opinion leader” will inevitably lead to the group consciousness of autism or loss. In the exhibition video, there is a confession of Lupertz, which deserves our recollection. When facing the public's questioning, criticism and incomprehension of his commemorative public sculpture Mozart, he said: “I don't want to insult Mozart, I'm not interested in his true appearance at all, I just want to express that music is negative, and through the passage of time, people can think of it. The big face of sculpture is what I want to express, the respect for a great and intelligent musician, that's all. When people mention Mozart in that period, they will mention Mozart, which is the reverence for Mozart. The word “Mozart” has its own meaning. The expression of these two meanings by my own artistic form and artistic development process is my artistic expression form. This is art, contemporary art. Whoever wants to understand this work must understand this first. If anyone can't

understand this, I can't help it. [1] Faced with the public's confusion, artists clarify the “judgment chaos” with the formation of “their own artistic form” and the will expressed in their works. At least people can see how artists think and express their works, thus enriching the content of “rational judgment”, because only by understanding the author's creative intention can we truly establish the basis and standard of judgment, which is also the standard of success or failure of works.

For example, if we want to create a magnificent picture of “river of no return”, which is also beautiful after completion, but gives people the feeling of “a small bridge running water”, then we can judge that this work is unsuccessful [2]. However, when we didn't establish the basis and standard of judgment, the understanding of beauty formed by “consciously” or “consciously” only by experience is not enough to judge the beauty, ugliness and merits of artistic works, but from the very beginning, we fell into the arbitrariness of metaphysics or formalism, and could not approach the essence of art-inner spirit. The aesthetic ability of the public as a whole directly restricts the development of artistic creation. This is especially true of sculpture art, which relies heavily on social resources.

3. Constraints of Sculpture Growth Environment on Its Evaluation

The main external factors affecting the development of sculpture art lie in the funding environment and social and cultural environment (art recipients-including gold owners). Because sculpture is a kind of art with strong materiality, such as large-scale sculpture projects, and even use the financial resources of the whole country, such as Yungang Buddha in the Northern Wei Dynasty, the emperor became the golden master of sculpture. If there is no huge financial resources as the backing, how can the stone colossus of more than ten meters be completed? Moreover, the aesthetic image and composition of sculpture can not be completed without the will and approval (strong intervention) of the gold master. In ancient China, the royal sculpture works are usually excellent works, such as Terracotta Warriors and Horses of Qin Shihuang, stone carvings of Huo Qubing Tomb in Han Dynasty, Yungang Grottoes, Longmen Grottoes and so on. Because from the aesthetic point of view, the intellectual elites in ancient China are concentrated in the political power and have good aesthetic cultivation; From the perspective of technology realization, the best craftsmen are recruited to participate in the project. Moreover, they will make every effort to adopt or invent new molding techniques to realize the aesthetic ideal of the gold master, and they don't have to pay too much attention to the problem of “material cost” and focus on “ingenuity” and “heavenly quality”. Therefore, both artistic and technological standards can represent the highest level of their contemporaries. We can assert that the ancient intellectual elites often directly participated in the creation of sculpture art, and when it comes to intellectual property rights, they also have a part, rather than those nameless craftsmen. To put it bluntly, it is very difficult for sculptors to produce fine sculptures of the times. Even for college sculptors (industry intellectual elites) who are fighting bravely with Party A's gold master, they must “respect” the gold master's wishes if they want to realize their ideals. At this time, if the gold master knows nothing about art, the works can only become regrets.

4. Confessions of Li Jinfa

In China, the cultivation of knowledge-based and professional sculptors started in the early 20th century. The earliest sculptors were “returnees”, taking Li Jinfa as an example: in 1922, Li Jinfa, the pioneer of Chinese modern sculpture, made his debut at the international art exhibition (Salon Exhibition in Paris, France), which was also the first appearance of Chinese sculptors at the international salon exhibition. After returning to China, in 1928, he taught at the National Art Institute (Hangzhou National Art College) and served as the head of the sculpture department (the sculpture department of the National Art Institute is the first modern sculpture education entity in China). Later, few students were admitted to the sculpture department, with less than ten students. In the same year, the magazine Aesthetic Education, published by the Commercial Press, was founded in Shanghai to publicize French sculptors and works, such as the works of figurative

sculpture masters such as Rude, Carpeaux, Rodin and Bourdelle. At this time, Chinese people have almost no concept of sculpture, let alone sculpture criticism. Sculpture business only stays in architectural decoration and the creation of leaders. The “ignorance” of the gold master to sculpture art has become the main restriction factor for sculptors to engage in artistic creation. On February 15, 1935, Du Geling talked about Li Jinfa's thoughts on the relationship between sculpture work and poetry writing in the article “Poetry Q&A” (published in Literature and Art Pictorial): Du asked: “Do you use the same attitude and technology for both sculptors and poets?” Li replied, “It doesn't matter at all. When you write poetry, you forget that you are a warrior who stirs mud and chisels stones, but a sentimental poet. The art of poetry and sculpture is too different. I can say that the sculpture I have made up to now has not produced a satisfactory creation: everything is a commodity for people to order. In order to satisfy customers, I used to color the mud to make people look lifelike. It is really convenient to do so. I didn't create, so I didn't have a personal exhibition “[3]. In the more than ten years from Li Jinfa's return to China in 1924 to 1935, there was a lament of “I didn't create”, which was enough to imagine the harsh environment of artistic creation at that time, which was extremely out of proportion to Mr. Cai Yuanpei's active propaganda on sculpture art in the “Teachers' Class of French Chinese University of Technology” in Paris in May 1916-”Music architecture is enough to express the outlook on life, and the most direct expression is sculpture”. As for “goods for people to order”, it is not the key point, but it is “forced” to choose the way of catering in order to satisfy the owner's vulgar taste. However, this seems to be the only way for the development of new things, and the material properties of sculpture bring them innate shackles. Moreover, the artistic acceptance environment of sculpture is also an important factor affecting its development. The important basis for judging sculpture value lies in the cognitive level of the recipient.

5. Growth Trajectory

In feudal society, writing became the privilege of elite, which was a very small number of the total population of society. The knowledge source of the general public mainly lies in word of mouth, understanding diagrams and reasoning, and upward and downward effect. Therefore, the values of the whole society are controlled by the political power. Isn't the aesthetics of “little-footed women” the best example? Similarly, the judgment of art is no exception: China's rich art theory (this paper focuses on art theory) mainly focuses on calligraphy and painting, and the works are abundant, all of which are in the hands of scholars. The theory of “vivid expression”, which is a Chinese painting theory, is almost a household name. Although ordinary people don't write paintings, it is also justified to judge them, such as “it's hard to paint people's hands” and “vivid expression in the eyes”, which even affects the creation and appreciation of sculptures. To this day, traditional folk craftsmen still use painting theory to guide their creation. For example, the “face-opening” master and the “hand-making” master have the highest status, and of course their income will be much higher than that of the “clothing-making” master. This is obviously incompatible with the evaluation standard of modern and contemporary figurative sculpture. In a word, the knowledge of art receiver's value judgment (beauty and ugliness, good and bad) mostly comes from word-of-mouth publicity and popularization, and the source of knowledge lies in the accumulation of writing theory (evaluation). However, China's sculpture can be said to be a major without theoretical propaganda. Sculpture was a matter of being a craftsman in ancient times. Because of its low social status, almost no one cares about it, and there are few words.

At the beginning of 20th century, since the introduction of modern sculpture, it can be described as faltering, with few sculptures, no national support and weak voice. After the founding of the People's Republic of China, influenced by the Soviet Union (Lenin's “Monument Propaganda Plan”), because sculpture has a grand and far-reaching political propaganda function, the state strongly organized and intervened the sculptor's creative activities, and large-scale monument sculpture came into being. For example, ten white marble reliefs on the base of the Monument to the People's Heroes, Long live the People's Commune carved by Beijing Agricultural Exhibition Hall, the clay sculpture Rent Collection House created by Sichuan Academy of Fine Arts, Long live

the victory of Mao Zedong Thought in Zhongshan Square, Shenyang, and other well-made sculptures have made the sculpture cause unprecedentedly prosperous. At the same time, it also trained a large number of high-quality sculpture creative talents, and later became the backbone of the education of sculpture colleges of the eight major academies of fine arts in the 1980s. However, despite this, the evaluation and publicity of sculpture basically stays at the political level. Sculpture has become a political image symbol in the eyes of the public, and the artistic quality of sculpture is basically grasped by sculptors (at this time, the main organization of sculptors' creation is "collective creation"). The sculptor's creative method is to "consciously" adopt a single socialist realism, which is also the evaluation standard of beauty and ugliness. Meanwhile, Western contemporary art was criticized as "ugly capitalist art". The understanding of sculpture is still in the aesthetic stage of classical sculpture, but it is gratifying that with the acceptance of this art form by the state, the public has gradually noticed the value of sculpture art, but it has been "consciously" accepted.

After the reform and opening up, along with the prosperity and development of economy and society and the rise of urban construction, commercial sculpture and urban sculpture projects occupy the energy of sculptors, who are basically busy undertaking various engineering tasks or public projects (specifically, government image projects), and are also responsible for training "technical talents" (young sculpture workers) needed for engineering tasks, which can be described as "project-based teaching". However, the popularization of sculpture knowledge has been neglected, so that although there are many "sculptures" in our life-at least we know that they are sculptures, the art recipients know almost nothing about how to appreciate and evaluate sculptures. Especially when people can't judge the content of sculpture at a glance, they are even more confused. The separation between sculpture art creation and art recipient's value judgment is obviously reflected in the fact that sculptors have introduced, imitated and "improved" a lot of Western contemporary sculpture "various doctrines" after the reform and opening up, and their creative consciousness far exceeds the cognitive level of ordinary people. Of course, this has a great relationship with the backwardness of national art education at this time. Sculpture education in colleges can hardly keep up with the development of various doctrines. The critics of sculpture can hardly catch up with all kinds of works with "frequent patterns" and are at a loss.

6. Addendum: on the Image Dissemination of Sculpture

There are three basic elements in judging sculpture: the viewer's existing visual experience, knowledge background and immediate situation. The first two factors are the key to realize independent judgment, while the immediate situation is the catalyst, and the formation and growth of these three factors all depend on the spread of sculpture art. Illustrated pictures and texts are the main way to spread sculpture art so far. This section only discusses the spread of sculpture images.

First of all, the collection of images should fully reflect the language features of sculpture art. Take the language of "shape" as an example: shape is one of the main languages of figurative sculpture, and the famous British sculptor Henry Spencer Moore's statement that "shape blindness" is more than "color blindness" still has universal significance. Understanding form is also one of the main problems to be overcome in learning figurative sculpture. If we want to judge sculpture objectively, we should be aware of all aspects of the form. For example, if we want to understand the extremely distorted and struggling physical and spatial relationship in Michelangelo's "The Bounded Slave", we must collect images from various angles, otherwise, it will be difficult for us to reasonably and pertinently evaluate the inner spirit conveyed by the sculpture through the written description. Because we lost the "foothold" of judgment, we only saw a certain "fragment" of sculpture instead of the whole. According to the ornamental habit of sculpture surrounding, when collecting the complete angles of works, there are mainly eight perspectives, including front, back, two sides and four 3/4 sides. If a specific angle is mentioned in the creator's self-reported literature or influential critical literature, it should also be reflected in the image collection. After the above collection process is completed, at least three infectious images (at least three) are selected for editing and dissemination, so as to ensure the academic nature of dissemination, and finally serve

and promote the recipient to make a relatively objective judgment on the work.

Secondly, the image content should reflect the environmental characteristics of sculpture. The so-called environmental characteristics of sculpture are simply the “site”—the physical space where the sculpture is located. Sculptures all “grow” in specific places, and sculptures appearing in “growing places” have the identity of spiritual space and physical environment. When I visited the sculpture of the Bhagavad Sutra Hall in Huayan Temple, I got an unexpected discovery: Looking from the center of the main hall, 31 Buddha statues (except for the two Amitabha Buddhas added later) have no shade on their heads, and they have cleverly escaped the interference of indoor columns, so the layout can be described as exquisite. This kind of “discovery” may not be available in person. However, this so-called “late discovery” can be avoided if we pay attention to the overall composition of the environment in image communication. For another example, the general composition of large sculpture groups often hides the idea of sculpture, which is the soul of group images. In the sculpture catalogues such as *Sculpture Compilation of Complete Works of Chinese Fine Arts*, *Atlas of Chinese Sculpture History and Complete Works of Chinese Sculpture*, there are no images of overall composition in the images of Baoding Mountain in Dazu, but most of them are collected locally, and many necessary illustrations are lost. However, the overall space composition of sculpture is one of the key elements of sculpture design. In the 2014 International Symposium on Dazu Studies, Professor Li Jingjie's report on “Combination Analysis of Southern Song Dynasty Stone Carvings in Dazu Mountain” is an interpretation of the overall appearance of Baoding Mountain Statue—the theme of Baoding Mountain Stone Carvings is to develop Bodhicitta, practice Bodhisattva and achieve Dharma. The value of creative guiding ideology is just like seeing the day through the clouds. Therefore, it is undoubtedly the mission of art historians to sort out the images of the guiding ideology, which is directly related to people's deep understanding of the connotation of sculpture works.

In a word, the feeling of “visiting the original” is the core goal of sculpture image communication. Nowadays, with the development of 3D scanning technology and VR technology, it provides a good guarantee for the communication quality of three-dimensional art, and we are approaching the ideal way of sculpture image communication step by step.

7. Conclusion

Markus Lupertz's interpretation of Mozart makes us feel the great thrust of western values of “liberal humanism” on the development of artistic creation personality [4], but at the same time, we should be soberly aware that it is equally important to take care of art recipients. What Chinese sculptors lack is the elucidation of the anatomy of their own works, and the ethical judgment of the final works should be based on the close interaction with art recipients. In 2012, Sohu.com launched the “Top Ten Ugly Sculptures in China” campaign, which lasted for three months and received 4,983,916 votes. With the help of the Internet, the scale was unprecedented, and the works of famous sculptors also appeared in the results. What does this mean? And this work happens to be an art work selected for a certain national art exhibition (representing academic level). How should we see it? Perhaps accommodating the audience's vulgar taste and adapting to the audience's aesthetic needs are always a pair of irreconcilable contradictions.

On March 23, 2017, the First Studio of the Central Academy of Fine Arts made a good attempt to move the “mysterious” professional study site to the art museum, and Sun Jiabo, a senior sculptor, gave a live demonstration and explanation, so that the audience could get in touch with the sculpture in the most intimate way and broadcast it through multiple channels such as the network platform. Furthermore, since September 13, 2017, the National Art Museum of China has held many live statues for people of the times, showing the value of sculptures in the same way, which may be the most direct contact between Chinese sculpture art and the public at present. However, whether these interactive ways can really promote the rational judgment of sculpture value by the public is still worth pondering and further exploring.

References

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