

# Exploring the Concept Innovation of Greenberg, Fried and De Duve's Sculpture Theory\*

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**Abstract**—Greenberg, Fried and Duve have made great concept innovation to promoting the development of modern sculpture theory. Greenberg's interpretation of media realism, Fried's critique of physical theatre theory and Duve's interesting archaeological narrative provide a new perspective to examine the spiritual connotation of modern and post-modern sculpture. Clarifying their respective connotations of value implication and vision differences will help to further clarify the spiritual connotation of the quality of sculpture modernity, break through the rigid thinking, and thus enhance the appreciation level of modern value of sculpture.

**Keywords**—Clement Greenberg; Michael Fried; Thierrv de Duve; sculpture theory; divergence of vision

## I. INTRODUCTION

Greenberg repeatedly talked about the most prominent feature of modern sculpture is the prominence of the media in many articles such as "Towards a Renewal of Laocoon" and "New Sculpture". He said: "Traditional sculpture in the hands of less gifted artists - that is, storytelling - has become literary proxy and puppet. All the emphasis has shifted away from the media to literary or religious themes." [1] The medieval artists tended to submit to the external demands of public interest, official power, literature and religion, and often had to suppress their intuitive sensitivity to materials and their desire for individualized expression. "They don't have to be a philosopher or dreaming, they just need to be a craftsman." [2]<sup>16</sup> Representing the dominant spiritual style of the art of the door, to imitate or express the human world outside the physical space (material). The master of modern sculpture "Rodin's mature period works are only tentative and immature. (as shown in "Fig .1") He also bears the burden of romanticism and moral 'function', and Impressionism abandoned it at the beginning." [3]

However, most modern "avant-garde sculptors tend to give up stones, bronze or clay, while using industrial materials such as iron, steel, aluminum, glass, plastic,

celluloid, etc." [2]<sup>180</sup> "In contrast to Rodin, Medardo Rosso's sculptures, who refused to use bronze as a material, and it is this that reflects the radical modernity of his work. Russo's creation process of sculpture stops at the stage of the wax and plaster model, and these materials obviously do not bring any heroism or lofty associations." [2]<sup>179</sup>

In other words, the "media" in modern sculpture has undergone fundamental changes. The media attributes of materials have begun to highlight in modern new sculptures. Moral symbols and symbolic meanings attached to objects are gradually eliminated, replaced by various components, components and "devices" which are freely assembled and placed by ready-made objects. For example, modern "corner couches, corner beds, low tables, partition shelves, component furniture replaced the old furniture projects." [6] All goods can be freely combined according to their functional needs, without considering the superfluous factors other than moral symbols and power symbols. In other words, the emphasis of modern new sculpture on media materiality and the innovative use of language have dismembered the traditional symbolic meaning framework attached to objects. That is to say, the media has gradually replaced the priority of symbolic meaning and become the most basic principle of sculpture creation and language development.

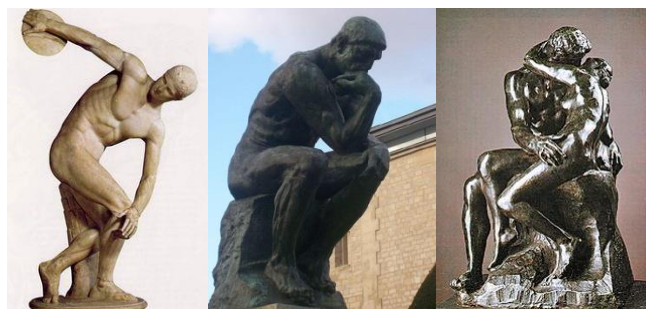


Fig. 1. Myron's "The Discus Thrower" and Rodin's Sculptures.

## II. DISCOVERY MEDIA: GREENBERG'S ACADEMIC CONTRIBUTION TO AVANT-GARDE SCULPTURE THEORY

Greenberg pointed out that "modern avant-garde art has such a common effort, that is, to expand the performance potential of the media, this effort is not to express ideas and ideas, but to express the irreducible elements of experience with a stronger direct feeling." [1] Greenberg emphasized that

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modern sculpture should first base itself on and inward seek the essential basis of self-preservation. Based on the exploration of intrinsic stipulation, they should be "restored"

to the concrete or abstract spatial form, through which "restored" can express the space freely and autonomously in many forms.

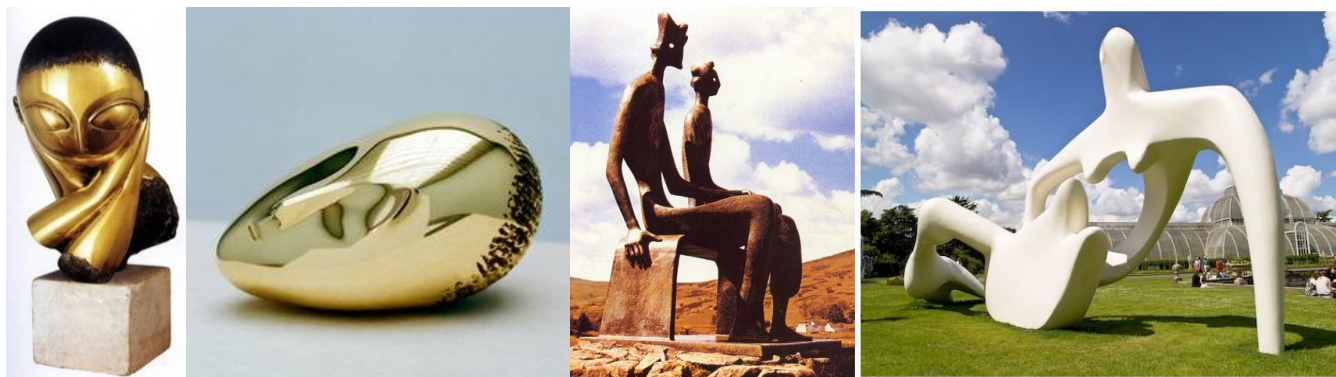


Fig. 2. Brancusi and Henry Spencer Moore's Sculptures.

In other words, modern avant-garde sculptors have given sculpture media a new flexibility by means of arbitrary "building, forging, assembling and arranging" space. Brancusi pushed the giant solitary sculpture to the extreme of space and reduced the human image to a simple geometric simplified oval, (as shown in "Fig .2") tubular or cubic mass. Subsequently, Alp and other artists led his giant solitary sculpture to abstraction... But Brancusi did not really cross the traditional sculpture into this new sculpture, and it was not him who really pioneered this road, but cubism collage.

In Greenberg's opinion, modern sculpture is to return to the prescriptive logic of three-dimensional modeling, spatial form, line color blocks and other media. It is the free organization of media elements rather than the superposition

of external symbolic meanings that makes the new sculpture full of modernity. Greenberg pointed out: "In this self-sufficiency, every imaginable and perceptible element completely belongs to the positivist side of the work of Art - modernism's aesthetic appreciation, only to find that it has achieved its fullest realization." [2]<sup>182</sup> "In fact, every work of art, as the only possible world, needs to be explained urgently." [5]

The atmosphere and charm of language writing based on media modeling, color, texture and texture are calling us to stop and have fun. (as shown in "Fig .3") A strange and novel feeling was aroused. They are totally different from the traditional sculptures as a religious and political tool of expression.

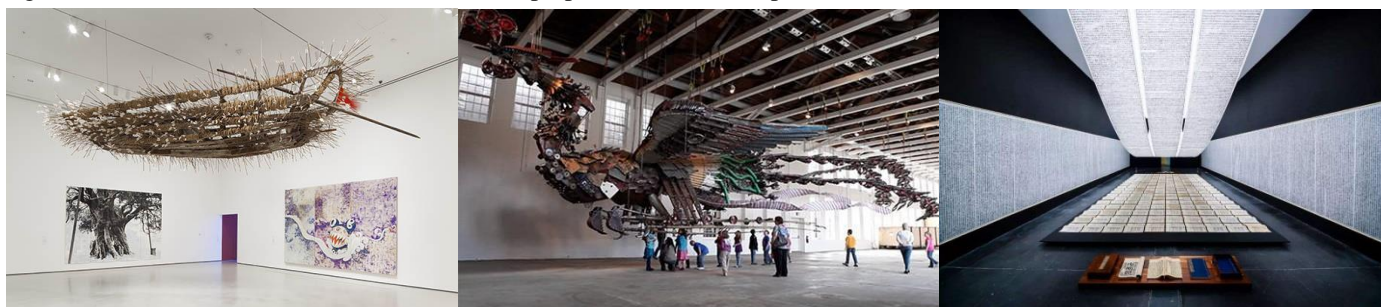


Fig. 3. Cai Guoqiang's Sculpture and Xu Bing's Works.

Fried said: "I agree with Greenberg's explanation of what he calls the 'restoration' of modernism in sculpture, which includes the trend toward visualization and a way described as no longer sculptured, but constructed, constructed, assembled and arranged." [6]<sup>38</sup> Greenberg first discovered and elaborated the essence of media. Let the media stand out or not, become the watershed and value yardstick of ancient and modern sculpture.

### III. FRIED'S THEATRE CRITICISM INHERITED GREENBERG'S THEORIES AND EXPANDED VISION

Fried inherited Greenberg's value judgment on the prominence of media attributes in modern sculpture. At the same time, he further led the perspective of normative construction to the physical analysis of sculpture and the

cognitive criticism of realism. He has being defended the publicity of the material nature of modern sculpture media and opposed the theatrical concealment of the "physical nature" of sculpture by the outside world. This is because the theater-style exhibition method will inevitably provide the audience with an aesthetic perception experience, and entice the audience and wrap them in the theater. The sculptures that should have been in the center have become "terrible or transparent, hollowed out, and become zombie in the "theatrical effect"... The realist's emphasis on materiality and materialization has become a kind of fresh theatre.

Any exhibit can be in a "theatre" package and become a sculpture or installation art. As a result, it is not the intrinsic prescriptive basis for the existence of the sculptural device.



Isn't there any difference between sculpture, installation art and ordinary objects in the atmosphere of the theater? This is one of the main reasons why Fried criticized the sculpture "theatre" packaging.

Any exhibition can be transformed into sculpture or installation art as long as it is in theatrical packaging. In this way, it means that the intrinsic prescriptive basis for the existence of sculpture devices has been cancelled. There is no difference between sculpture, installation art and ordinary objects in theatrical atmosphere. This is one of the main reasons for Fried's criticism of the "theatrical" packaging of sculpture.

Secondly, theatrical packaging can also cause audiovisual interference to viewers' cognitive judgment. He said, "The sensibility that has been theatricalized and, at worst,

corroded or subverted by theatre." How can the authenticity of sculpture be distinguished? And it is the same general, omnipresent and infectious, which first corrodes the realist perceptual presentation." [7]<sup>57</sup>The audience can't judge the nature of the sculpture at all.

He denounced realists typically represented by minimalist and abstract sculptors such as Donald Judd, Robert Morris and Tony Smith. They are accused of using theatrical methods (lighting, discourse flattery, background beautification, scene formalization, etc.) to cover up the authenticity of their works. Real works were originally designed to highlight and materialize physical properties," he said, but the "unique effect" of materialization was achieved through scene scheduling or dramatization. Therefore, such "art" is difficult to accept.

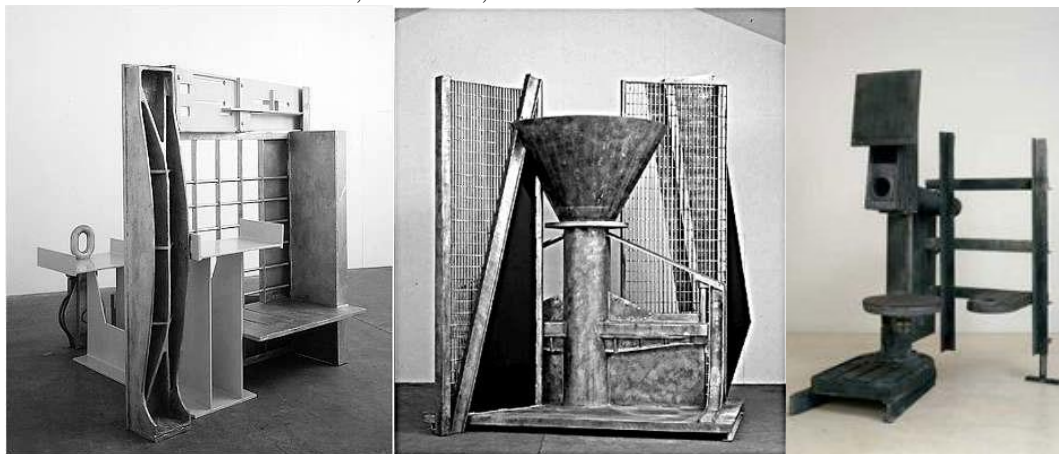


Fig. 4. Anthony Caro's Sculptures.

Thirdly, it needs to be admitted that Fried's worries are justified. But his judgment of modern sculpture has some deviations. Because he only saw the physical "exhibition space", but neglected the spiritual "theatricality" to the rational value connotation of sculpture art. Obviously, by opposing the theatrical space exhibition, he insisted on the customary mechanism of traditional exhibition (museums, squares, collections, etc.) and re-defended the unfinished Greenberg format of abstract sculpture.

Paradoxically, however, his egoless addiction to Caro's minimalist sculpture (as shown in "Fig .4") and his appeal for the so-called "sustained and thorough presence" are the source of the effect of the "theatrical" spiritual experience. The traveling state of self-forgetfulness and meditation is precisely the "theatricality" he wants to oppose. Self-contradiction makes the reasonable basis of his self-related theoretical discourse doubtful.

Yeemun Park said: "It is unsatisfactory to find out the attributive elements of real representation, expression and form from the object of works of art to grasp the essence and definition of art only from the visual level. They can only become inadequate theories emphasizing one aspect of art. They can only be understood in the organic connection with other things." [6]<sup>47</sup>



Fig. 5. Xu Liaoyuan's sculptures.

In other words, it is obviously difficult to cover the rich feelings of modern sculpture from different perspectives when the real space of sculpture is only discussed from the cognitive level. When people look at sculpture and appreciate any art, they can have different perspectives. Certainly it will not be confined to the cognitive speculation of sculpture. (as shown in "Fig .5")A quick glance at the minimalist sculptures such as Judd and Smith gives people a pure beauty of "things". The beauty of simplicity and simplicity can also be impressive. They are in the public environment, as art installations, will also bring people a

unique aesthetic experience.(as shown in "Fig .6")The positive value of theatre and the intrinsic connotation of sculpture can interact and form harmony. This is not a broader social value effect.

Thus, the complexity and extensibility of the sensory world cannot be classified as the physical object of conceptual cognition by cognitive rationality, nor could it be compressed or equated with the conventional mechanism in the sense of formal logic. Fried himself did not realize that. Therefore, while refuting the limitations of Greenberg's media realism, he will also fall into the self-related logic which is hard to perceive.



Fig. 6. Zhu Cheng's Sculptures.

Yeemun Park pointed out: "In addition to the realists, Greenberg has no real believers... As I insist on his opposition, if the 'cognitive' dimension of modernist dynamics is a kind of routine that wants to find that Trying, that is, at a given moment, can force or arouse people's beliefs, there is no reason to imagine that the dynamic

mechanism will have a 'reduced' shape. Or this dynamic mechanism will follow the second dynamic mechanism of determining the general basis of artistic value or quality." [7]<sup>47</sup>

The original analysis of the feelings of "physicality" and "object itself" is an important value of Fried's modern sculpture theory. However, due to the deep cognition and criticism logic of realism, I missed the in-depth exploration of the ontological horizon of this dimension. This is somewhat regrettable. As a result of this, Fried slid into the form of the illusion of the sculpture, and fell into the cognitive deduction of the concept. His disagreement with Defoe's sculpture is very disappointing. Finally, his minimalist sculpture is regarded as a kind of temporal art, giving a sloppy judgment.

So, Buchlo lamented, taking this meditation position will change the basic category of people's intuitive attitude towards the world: simplifying time and space into things with common characteristics, and degrading time to the dimension of space... time of space the characteristics of the characters are also vividly expressed in the works of Carlo and Duchamp, because the stagnation of time and passive meditation are the ways in which the melancholy observes the world and is constantly alienated from it.

#### IV. THE ACADEMIC CONTRIBUTION AND VISION OF DUVE'S INTERESTING ARCHAEOLOGY

As everyone knows, what Duve is doing is to use the archaeological method of Foucault's sense to make a kind of intellectual interpretation of modern sculpture. "To pay attention to the recognition of Duchamp's acceptance of 'theoretical contribution' in the 1960s, (as shown in "Fig .7") also paying attention to putting 'everyone is an artist utopian' in a broader vision"[8]<sup>232</sup> — "Reviewing the achievements and disillusionment of avant-garde sculpture art in the political heritage of the French Revolution and the philosophical heritage of the Enlightenment problem." [8]<sup>242</sup> In the retrospective field of knowledge archaeology, Duchamp's ready-made products ("SPRING") signed "Richard Mutter" constitute a historical event with inflection point significance.



Fig. 7. Duchamp's works.



Because after re-reading Kant from Duchamp, the question "This is beautiful" has been transformed into a fun judgment of "this is art." The conceptual shift of problem consciousness and the switching of the horizon of vision have occurred quietly after the "Richard Mutter" incident.

Duve believes that all these symptoms point to one and the same contradiction. This contradiction belongs to the acceptance history of ready-made products in the 1960s. It appears in various forms: either action (ACT) or art (ART). Unless this contradiction or the contradiction is resolved, people will always fall into this double bondage... people must break this double bond and solve this contradiction. There is no other way to do this - there is no other way to interpret the existence of ready-made products as (sculpture) art, to maintain continuity with both the art's past and the future of art — unless the assumption is 'this It is the art of such a sentence that promotes the birth of ready-made products, thereby expressing an aesthetic judgment in the sense of Kant.(as shown in "Fig .8")



Fig. 8. Zheng Xiaodong's Sculpture.

Here, the taste constitutes the basis for judging the aesthetic value. As a judgment intermediary and connective word, the concept proposition combines the subjective "this



Fig. 9. Bruno Catalano's and Zhu Cheng's Sculptures.

Here, the good and bad of the sculpture seem to have nothing to do with the external factors such as metaphysics, traditional beauty standards, and convention mechanisms. Everything depends only on the taste orientation and personality preferences.(as shown in "Fig .9") However, the complexity of the question is, is the taste inherited or acquired? Isn't it constantly forged in the mutual shaping, mutual intimacy, and mutual induction of things? It can't come out of nowhere, even if it's an alternative, quirky inter,

one" sculpture with the predicate object. In this way, the interesting words of the sculpture are "spoken". Fun judgments are presented in conceptual form. Conceptual propositions are also related to the taste of value. The conversion between conceptual propositions and sculptural language into true and false judgments - is this, or is it not art? Can new objects such as sculptures, installations, and ready-made products be called art? Duve's approach to the internal relationship between things and things, the method of knowledge archaeology and value questioning, is indeed refreshing.

The uniqueness of Duve's insight is that he transforms his visual gaze into a sensible structure of sensory taste (high and low vulgarity, regular disorder, ancient and modern, etc.). This perspective jumped away from the discipline of sculpture history and jumped out of the framework of consciousness of Greenberg and Fried. The aesthetic appreciation of sculpture has become a diversified taste contest.

"Intangible charm, natural elegance, is not necessarily a constant, or a good thing accepted by the public (now, the beautiful things that magazines are passionate about), but an element we didn't expect... , diversity, surprise, rules overturned in exceptions (Michelangelo), all of which are the result of constant self-creation through self." [9] A well-educated person will make taste creations based on current needs all the time. He knows and can sense the exact connection between him and things.

Here at Duve, the value of sculpture is transformed into a fun judgment. In Duve's own words: "We are trying to make a rereading of Kant, and we need to rely on the assumption that 'this is art' as a value judgment intermediary." [8]<sup>245</sup>

it's also inseparable from the historical environment. Therefore, taste is not an isolated product.

However, it still needs to be acknowledged: Duve has turned from the creative perspective to the diversity review of the audience, from visual to taste, from a single object to the relationship between things and things, between objects and people, it has opened a new world for us.

## V. CONCLUSION

According to Duve's opinion, although Greenberg and Fried have different taste preferences, they are limited to the side of the two-revolutionary cognitive logic, failing to jump to the taste to rethink the sculpture problem. This coincides

with their opponents: the opponents are not willing to think that the value judgment given to the "art status" of the ready-made sculpture is a true proposition. Some judgments are likely to have exceeded the subjective taste. (as shown in "Fig .10")



Fig. 10. Xu Liaoyuan's sculptures.

In short, "fun judgments circulate the conceptual discourse by circling the concept discourse, thus neglecting the positive proposition of Kant's two laws. Therefore, formalism and conceptualism are unsatisfactory." [5]24 Fried proposition that "minimal sculpture is a kind of temporal art is also just one of the positive propositions that Defoe reveals "two laws against the opposite". How can it be used as a validity scale for diagnosing the value of sculpture? Fried's deviation and loss appear to be a bit tragic, sighing "I became the last Art theorists from Lessing, through Wolfflin after Greenberg, they are looking for special art in the moments of time and space. Essential achievements, (all based on) aesthetic falsification and 'cultural' subversive considerations, "not a 'theatrical' problem."

In short, Fried, Greenberg and Duve have significant academic contributions to the theoretical opening of modern sculpture, and there are also some limitations of vision. Sticking to one's position makes them ignore the diverse richness of the recipient's and other's visions. They can't see the richness of the sculpture in the main body and the multi-dimensional development in the surrounding environment. This is not simply a concept of position, "theatrical space", "fun judgment", but how the infinitely rich sense of sculpture can be transformed into a universally effective aesthetic experience through the media, how to extend the spiritual meaning? How to get out of their respective horizons? This requires further in-depth seminars.

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