



Research on Artistic Works of Marcel Duchamp and Art Development Track in the 20th Century

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Abstract. Marcel Duchamp is one of the most influential western artists in the 20th century, and also the only artist in the history of western art who holds the banner of anti-art but is recorded in the history of art. Duchamp's art career can be divided into three stages: learning period, cubism period and anti-art period. His art works embody his artistic ideas of advocating freedom, damaging criterion and opposing meanings. Under the guidance of Duchamp's artistic concept, postmodernism has risen and flourished, evolving many artistic varieties. Duchamp changed the trend of art in the 20th century and is known as the pioneer of postmodern art.

Keywords: Marcel Duchamp, Artistic works, Art development track

1 Introduction

Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968) was born in France and naturalized in the United States in 1954 [1]. His appearance changed the process of modern art in the 20th century. It can be said that modern art in the 20th century, especially after the Second World War, mainly followed Duchamp's ideological path. Therefore, understanding Duchamp is the key to understanding modern art. Duchamp lived in a turbulent age, and he also experienced World War I and World War II personally. The trauma of war, the possibility and new problems brought to mankind by the development of industry and science and technology, the new discoveries of natural science, the leaping development of social science, the interruption of tradition, and the leap of philosophical and aesthetic thinking are all unprecedentedly active, but at the same time they cause people's extremely confused thinking and the loss of standards and principles. Modernist art has completely broken away from traditional classical art, and artists are trapped in hesitation, confusion and emptiness. The industrial innovation in the new era really makes people at a loss. It not only facilitates life, but also destroys the traditional value system, shakes people's fundamental belief, and deepens people's spiritual crisis. The most important thing Duchamp did was to make painting a self-complete structure, and painting was constructed according to its own needs. Duchamp's artistic concept is unique and free, with obvious artistic characteristics, but does not belong to any style or school. He spent his whole life

pursuing self-expression and spiritual freedom in the field of art. This paper will focus on Duchamp's works of art and their impact on the development of art in the 20th century, and on this basis, discuss the evolution of artistic style [2].

2 Duchamp's Artistic Career

To understand Duchamp's works of art, we must first understand Duchamp's artistic career. Duchamp's art career can be roughly divided into three periods: learning period, cubism period and anti-art period.

2.1 Learning Period

Duchamp began his painting career in 1902, and *The View of Bolanville* is the earliest representative work of this period that he has preserved [3]. In the period before 1906, although Duchamp painted some oil painting landscapes to amuse himself, he also spent nearly a year with his brother to study at Julien College in Paris, but this did not make him interested in painting too much. Duchamp did not really care about art until he retired from the army in 1906 and followed his two brothers to Paris. Paris, France, at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century was at the peak of art. Duchamp adopted the two-dimensional color composition of Cezanne's painting, and used a rational method to express a mechanical reconstruction of the human body and the landscape. This study of mechanical reconstruction also led to Duchamp's later move towards cubism. In 1910, Duchamp began to paint with the free and bold expression style of the Fauvism. Like most young artists, Duchamp tried various new schools such as Impressionism, Fauvism and Cubism from 1907 to 1910, and successfully became a member of the avant-garde artist salon [4].

2.2 Cubism Period

In 1911, Duchamp began to paint in a cubist style. During this period, Duchamp's painting style has undergone amazing changes. Compared with many artists, Duchamp did not have many works in his life, but his works led and opened a new era of western modern art. Duchamp's intention in the painting "Nude Women Going downstairs" is to show the objects in motion. When the painting was first exhibited, the audience complained that they only saw a series of wooden pieces, and they could not see women or naked bodies at all. *The Coffee Mill* is a mechanical drawing. In Duchamp's initial cubism painting, his direction is not very clear. In his first paintings of *Chess Player* and *Sonata*, Duchamp just felt that cubism had enabled him to find a way to express himself, and he was just trying cubism. This made him quickly recognized and welcomed in the cubism salon. Then Duchamp began to try to show the theme of movement in the picture. *Sad Young Man on the Train*, *Teared Yvonne* and *Magdalene*, *Portrait* and so on are all cubist paintings that Duchamp tried to show movement in the pictures [5].

2.3 Anti-Art Period

In order to completely get rid of the bondage of cubism and traditional painting, Duchamp began to make some works that introduced machines into painting. These works are similar to machine drawing, without brush strokes, light and shadow [6]. They use varnish, glass, dust, lead foil and other materials, bid farewell to traditional painting completely, and are freer in creative ideas and methods. Duchamp's Big Glass is an abstract painting that he brought mechanical drawing to the extreme. The production of this masterpiece makes him more like a scientist. He used glass as canvas to test various painting methods. At first, he tried to use kerosene and fluoric acid as a carving method, but gave up because the smell of fluoric acid was too strong. Then he tried to use thin lead wire as the side line, then fill the side line box with color, and finally plating the lead film. This method was ideal. Duchamp created more than ten ready-made products in his life. The appearance of ready-made products is Duchamp's complete negation of traditional art. In some aspects, the ready-made art also reflects Duchamp's idea of returning to art. The art is not noble, art can be anything, and art is created by people. No man, no art. All artificial ones are worthless. Art has no biological source, and it is just a kind of interest [7].

3 Duchamp's Artistic Career

In the previous chapter "Duchamp's Artistic Career", some of Duchamp's works of art have been mentioned. This chapter interprets the three most famous works of Duchamp.

3.1 Nude Descending a Staircase

Duchamp once said: "When I painted the portrait of a woman, five images of the woman appeared in my mind at the same time, three of them were dressed and two were naked. This is actually the concept of sports, a woman in sports and her dog. Maybe it is out of my subconscious mind. [8]" This is an attempt by Duchamp before painting *The Nude Descending a Staircase*. He has initially formed this painting idea. Duchamp painted *No. 1 Nude Descending a Staircase*. Duchamp's *Nude* not only walked down the stairs, but also walked down gracefully and solemnly like a performance girl. In this work, we saw a silent hint of the human body. When Duchamp painted the second picture a month later, that is, when he finalized it, he completely removed the details of naturalism. The naked woman in *Nude Descending a Staircase* is a body, a robot-like thing, composed of more than twenty consecutive movements of going down the stairs. This makes people think of a machine rather than a human body, a machine going downstairs. This work is composed of solemn yellow grey and green tones, and has many cubist overlapping structures. Obviously, Duchamp's elements of action and emotion are beyond the cubist principle [9]. This shows that Duchamp had a lot of things in his mind when he was learning cubism. Duchamp mentioned when explaining this work: "It is not appropriate to say it as a painting - it is a component of kinetic energy factors and a manifestation of time and

space reflected through abstract movement. When we consider the movement of shape passing through space in a certain time, we enter the field of geometry and mathematics, just as we did when we built a machine for that purpose. If I show the plane rising, I will try to show the actual situation of rising.



Figure 1. Nude Descending a Staircase [10]

3.2 Fountain

In 1917, Duchamp came to the exhibition room of the Intel Iron Shop located at 118 Street, Fifth Avenue, bought a flat porcelain urinal, and signed “R. Mott in 1917” in black at the bottom left. Before the opening of the exhibition, it was sent to the Grand Central Palace and placed upside down there. In addition, I also brought an envelope containing a six-dollar exhibition fee and the title of the work *Fountain*. The fate of this work caused a strong dispute between Walter Arsenberg and George Bellos. Bellos said: “We can't show it. It's too indecent. Someone must have sent it as a joke. It's signed Mott on it. I think it sounds suspicious.” As far as the function of urinal itself is concerned, it is a tool used by men to excrete excess water from their bodies. From the use process, men excrete debris, flush it with water, and the rest is the urinal. From the perspective of mobility, the author's original intention was that the paintings painted by artists at that time were not innovative, just like the sundries removed by human bodies. The sound of flowing water symbolized the artists' comments on the paintings at that time, both the erosion of art and the inverted urinal, which symbolized the inversion of the original and the end of the comments on art by these artists. The shape of the urinal shows that art at that time was confined in a small range. Until 1962, he wrote in his letter to Hans Richter: “I used ready-made products to make people indifferent to aesthetics, but he took my ready-made

products and found beauty in them. I threw bottle racks and urinals in front of people as challenges, while they praised its aesthetic beauty.” When Duchamp's original intention was misunderstood again, Duchamp began to learn to keep silent.



Figure 2. Fountain [10]

3.3 LHOQQ Mona Lisa with Moustache

One day in December 1919, Duchamp bought a postcard with the Mona Lisa printed on it in Rivery Street, drew two moustaches on the elegant lady's face with a pencil, and painted several capital letters L.H.O.O.Q. on the bottom. These letters themselves have no meaning. What Duchamp wants to deny in this work is not the work itself, but the reality of endless abuse of this masterpiece. Duchamp believes that the immortal famous painting Mona Lisa is being trampled by a secular aesthetic blind obedience under the impact of secularization and commercialization. Because of the pursuit of economic interests, people have no leisure to savour the subtle and profound beauty of this work. Therefore, a secular blind obedience makes it inevitable that the Mona Lisa will be copied in large numbers. Postcards, stamps Even the Mona Lisa's smile is printed everywhere on the package. Faced with this situation, Duchamp coldly wrote L.H.O.O.Q. on this accidental copy [11]. In Duchamp's view, these inferior copies covered by the name of popular art are meaningless except for bringing profits to those art merchants. Duchamp saw that noble art was being trampled and low and kitsch was becoming increasingly popular, so he took up his pen and drew a picture. Unexpectedly, this carelessness led to an artistic debate. He also jumped to the peak of art because of this easy painting and became the object of criticism and attack. This work is regarded as an anti-traditional portrayal of a generation of artists. It also foreshadows the next step of Duchamp's development, that is, mixed sex games. This gave him a comprehensive personality that strengthened the identification of women, and also showed Duchamp's character of defying tradition and ignoring constraints.



Figure 3. LHOOQ Mona Lisa with Moustache [10]

4 Duchamp's Artistic Ideas

4.1 Advocate Freedom

In order to maintain spiritual independence and freedom, Duchamp was unwilling to participate in any art group in his life [12]. In Duchamp's time, painters were in groups, even forming a party, and they exchanged their research and discoveries. Duchamp always maintained a retired style. For Duchamp, a spirit or an attitude does not need to be taken as a doctrine or a movement. True freedom should be formless, and it does not have to be attached to any name. Therefore, Duchamp does not belong to any school. He keeps a subtle distance from everything. In 1915, for freedom, Duchamp chose the United States, and finally chose the United States as the terminus of his art. The city of New York made Duchamp feel unprecedented freedom, and he even described his feeling for Paris with crabs tied in baskets. Maybe Duchamp was destined to be an American by nature. He felt that the city and its residents had a natural blending force with him. He liked New York. Duchamp's artistic view of advocating freedom not only prevented him from being eager for quick success and instant benefit, from being involved in any doctrine, but also from the temptation of material things and unnecessary arguments. It can be said that the freedom advocated by Duchamp is a kind of capital freedom. As an independent observer, Duchamp suppressed all instincts and impulses, despised trivial daily life, and only concentrated on developing his noble and cold personality. When dealing with art, Duchamp never regarded it as a means of self-expression or a tool of social protest and other arts that are often seen, but regarded it as a free activity full of vitality and adventure. Duchamp firmly believes that only by escaping from the cage of greed and slander can freedom be maximized [13].

4.2 Damage Criterion

The destruction of Duchamp was not for the sake of destruction as Dada did. In the 1920s, Duchamp was once classified under the name of Dada because of the coincidence in some aspects between Duchamp and Dada. However, the destruction of Dada was just a temporary rise and an expression of emotion. Whatever they do against art, they should put everything they do in the tray of art for others to see. They are just showing their uniqueness in the name of destroying art, or exchanging artistic value in the name of non-art. After all the venting has been used up, Dada artists will take their places again, drawing and sculpting. Basically, they just smashed the old temple and built a new one on the ruins. However, Duchamp is fundamentally different from Dada. He never broke the original standard in order to establish a new one. He once said that for art and against art are actually two aspects of the same thing. Duchamp did not want to live under the so-called standard model. He believes that anything that is unchanging is changeable, that any standard is artificial, and that those standards in art are just dogmas made by human beings. He broke the artistic standard and rewritten the definition of art. Duchamp's artistic concept of going against the grain not only supports his completion of a series of landmark works, but also gives unprecedented inspiration to heavy art and those artists who paint in prison. Duchamp's destruction of art is not for destruction. He wants to bring art out of the limitation of art for art's sake. His destruction of art standards is actually a shot of stimulant for the silent art world [14].

4.3 Oppose Significance

Duchamp's artistic view of game meaning is based on negative meaning. However, as mentioned above, Duchamp's opposition to meaning is not in a cold way, but in a word game. His game attitude between meaning and nonsense has become an excellent interpretation of his artistic view of game meaning. In addition to denying the existence of a certain meaning in his own works, Duchamp also fundamentally denied the meaning of all his own works. Even in the face of his ready-made products, the most important innovation in modern art, Duchamp was reluctant to publicize himself and show the importance of himself or his own thoughts. On the contrary, he often downplays his actions and ideas as much as possible. Duchamp's artistic view of game meaning is based on negative meaning, and this artistic view of game meaning not only makes meaning melt consciously between jokes, but also makes his opposition to meaning more meaningful. Duchamp's negation of meaning is not an indiscriminate total negation. He just doesn't want the so-called meaning to prevail, that is, what he wants to deny is the meaning that looks like meaning. To a certain extent, painting did not achieve the true meaning of ideological emancipation for painters. Painters all want to set a new standard to overthrow the previous school, so they have a foothold. However, Duchamp did not think so. He was against meaning. He believed that art did not need to be endowed with great significance [15].

5 Duchamp And Art Development Track in The 20th Century

5.1 Transformation Of Avant-Garde Art

Duchamp is the representative of avant-garde art. In the 1950s, the value and significance of Duchamp's creation were highlighted, and avant-garde art had become the mainstream art form. From the perspective of the development of avant-garde art, the practice of "avant-garde" in the field of art has unleashed extremely destructive energy, pushing the traditional art concept and its system into an awkward situation. However, what we need to pay attention to is that, as the representative of the early avant-garde art, Duchamp's works, especially his Dadaism works, more reflect the rebellion against the traditional art system and concepts. After the 1960s, the avant-garde art went to the opposite of its original purpose. The avant-garde artists have lost the avant-garde nature of the avant-garde in history. Their works have been recognized by the system and become the guarantee of the system. The purpose of the artists is no longer the same as that of the avant-garde in history, which is opposed to the art system and the museum representing this system. Instead, they try to squeeze into the museum, obtain the status of art and the title of artist, and form a collusive relationship with the system. In this case, the originally set concept of avant-garde art against the system has no basis for existence. However, if the new avant-garde still takes artistic actions similar to those of the historical avant-garde, then they will be different from the latter in nature and become a pseudo confrontation. At present, avant-garde art no longer confronts traditional art concepts, but establishes its position through a conspiracy [16].

5.2 Weaken The Authoritative Art Worship

The trend of anti-modernist art took shape in the 1960s. Artists have broken the idea that modernism pursues beauty and loftiness, and they have also begun to break the new taboo formed in anti-modernism. Pop art is a real mass art. It has different forms of expression, and collective art is one of them. It heaps and gathers wastes and images that represent consumption civilization and mechanical civilization, and creates them as works of art to express various characters, characteristics and connotations of modern urban civilization. France's new figurative art is also a kind of art, which keeps closer contact with the tradition of Dadaism and surrealism. Duchamp, the originator of postmodern art, pioneered the anti-tradition and anti-art of postmodern art. Since then, art has undergone a qualitative change, and the traditional western art concept has completely collapsed. Duchamp's anti-art makes art no longer express any social significance beyond the concept. The pluralism of post-modern art has dispelled the authority of traditional art and modern art that have existed as a single school for a long time. Stimulated by the modernist art starting from Duchamp's ready-made products, postmodern art has made great progress and evolved many artistic varieties, such as installation art, performance art, earth art, occasional art, etc. Among them, there are many talents and outstanding people, and

they have become a splendid art landscape in the art history. This pluralism fundamentally dispelled the single authority mechanism formed by traditional art and modern art for a long time, thus forming a prosperous situation in which a hundred flowers bloom and many kinds of arts coexist, which is the pride of Duchamp's era.

6 Conclusions

Marcel Duchamp is a controversial figure in the history of western art. He is not only a representative of avant-garde art, but also a mocker of elegant art. Duchamp does not belong to any school, because he has been pursuing freedom all his life, the freedom of the real soul. His works of art shocked the world at that time and had a profound impact on later generations. The emergence of Duchamp and his ready-made art has enriched the form and connotation of artistic creation, opened the door of post-modernism dominated by conceptual creation, and facilitated the turn of art history.

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