

Thoughts on the Boundary and Dialectical Relationship Between Refined and Popular Art in the “After the End of Art” Era

Qinrou Chen¹, Yuezhong Chang^{1*}

¹ JMU College ARTS & Design, Xiamen, China

Email Address

511716442@qq.com (Qinrou Chen), 340138288@qq.com (Yuezhong Chang)

*Correspondence: 340138288@qq.com

Received: 20 March 2021; Accepted: 25 May 2021; Published: 6 July 2021

Abstract:

ArthurC Danto’s analysis on the theory of After the End of Art triggers a discussion on the boundary and dialectical relationship between refined art and popular art. The concept of refined and popular art is defined to: a. explain why popular art appears after the end of art, or why popular art is included in art in the “after the end of art” era; b. investigate and think about why both refined and popular art are art; why there are distinctions between refined and popular art; what are the boundaries and relationships that exist between them; c. put forward and solve the philosophical problem of “what is art” from the thinking of refined and popular art.

Keywords:

Refined and Popular Art, “End” of Art, Boundary, Refined Art, Popular Arts

1. Introduction

ArthurC Danto published his response as a philosopher and critic to the great changes that have not taken place in the global art pattern since the 1960s in his three works on the development of art philosophy. One of the arguments is: “in the early 1960s, artists were all overcoming the boundary between refined art and popular images, so the boundary between them became pretty urgent”. Although there was no distinction between refined art and popular art before this stage because the so-called “popular” has not been included in the category of “art”, art has developed to such a stage, so it is pretty urgent to understand the definition of such a boundary, the reason of which lies in that there is still a definition of art behind the distinction between refined art and popular art. In 1964, Warhol exhibited “box art”, which timely raised the philosophical question of art, that is, the essence of the definition of art--why art.

2. Debate and Definition on the Boundary of Refined and Popular Art

In exploring the history of “why art is art”, a series of art movements such as Pop Art, Dada Movement, Minimalism, Conceptual Art, etc. all describe the past when there was only “refined art” in the past. In addition to refined art, there are other “non-

refined” art, that is, popular art. At the moment of the birth of popular art, there was a complicated boundary between refined art and popular art, which has not been successfully overcome as originally thought since the 1960s. However, the refined and popular arts were all under the category of “art” during this period, so the question raised: why are they classified as refined and popular arts? can this classification boundary be eliminated? and the most important question was--why is “popular art” art? Therefore, when we are unable to confirm or determine the boundary and dialectical relationship between refined and popular art, the question of “why art” cannot be truly clarified, which is the urgent and necessary point of thinking about the boundary and relationship between refined and popular art.

In ArthurC Danto’s view, art is defined as the one with specific attributes to which it belongs. After a series of artistic transformations, attributes are expanded and filled. When art is no longer defined by a single definition, the “After the End of Art” Era is formed therefrom. “End” becomes a reality, and the single art of great, high-level, and grand narrative in “History” also ends, followed by the emergency of “artists can really do anything and anyone can become an artist”. In the pluralistic new era in which art belongs to anyone and anyone can be an artist, “popular art” becomes the newborn of this era, or “the end of history” brings the original popular art into this new era.

In *Baihutong-Liyue*: “refined in ancient times means the music of zheng”, so “refined” is the standard that conforms to the norm. In contrast, *Shuowen* says: “custom means habit”, so “popular” means folk behavior, customs, and habits. Under the analysis of the original meaning of “refined” and “popular”, there is a corresponding explanation for refined art and popular art. “Refined art” is a kind of art with certain standard and normal form and certain subsidiary requirements, which is difficult to understand, while “popular art” is a kind of art which is originated from and subordinate to the people, and is more popular and easy to understand.

However, in modern everyday semantic narration, “refined and popular art” are quite different from the ancient meaning. “Popular art” is no longer a neutral term, but a description that is not appreciated and accepted by the public, or at least not appreciated and accepted by the public in terms of superficial behavior, and has derogatory meanings in morality, aesthetics and ideology, while “refined art” is basically the same as the ancient meaning, that is, refined art is a high-level commendatory category with certain conditions, layered characteristics, specific rules and paradigms.

The thinking and discussion on the boundary and relationship between the two shall be divided into two, but not mixed up.

3. Boundaries of Refined and Popular in Ancient Meaning-Form and Content

The so-called boundary proposed by ArthurC Danto points to ancient meaning, which makes the daily visible things become art after certain processing, refining and endowing. Regardless of the actual field of art, music, dance and literature, there is such a transformation. In addition to the art officially recognized, more people become “artists” and create a variety of art that cannot be officially defined and recognized. The conclusion that “popular art” has become the new birth of this era, or “the end of history” has brought the original popular art into this new era” came into being: popular art is the existing product before the end of the era of art, but before

that, people's understanding of the nature of art is still relatively narrow, that is, people only give recognition to the systematic art with a certain class attribute. In this sense, the boundary between refined art and popular art lies in form and content.

The degree and support of form and content constitute the boundary between the two. Popular art needs the dual support of a relatively large direct expression content and a relatively small symbolic form to face a wider audience with less requirements, while popular art does not need that, but more focuses on that with the support of strong formal conditions, expression of meaning has certain requirements for art appreciators. In short, popular art is the field of content, which directly caters to the general cognitive and entertainment needs of a large audience, while refined art is the field of form, which satisfies the professional pursuit of a specific aspect and the specific pursuit of a specific class or group.

The emphasis of form and content and the transfer of consciousness are unstable in the course of the times, making it possible to transform and transfer. Popular art needs to express the content as much as possible with the form to cater to the public, so it also contains the refined element, which unconsciously makes the audience accept the influence of form. In this case, it affects and standardizes a certain audience's "refined" consciousness and norms, and forms a certain accumulation of forms, thus promoting popular art into the refined art in a certain era of history and the development of audience awareness. On the contrary, refined art also contains popular factors to a certain extent. In *Debate on "Refined and Popular"*, it is believed that "the separation of refined and popular and the convergence of refined and popular are the inevitable historical necessity. The history and reality have proved that the appreciation of refined and popular can be achieved, and the works of both refined and popular appreciation are valued." Similarly, Xu Yuan indicates in *Opposition and Deconstruction of "Refined" and "Popular"* that in some tones, the boundary between "refined" and "popular" is really broken through and tends to converge in the core. For the emphasis and transformation of art form and content in the era of historical instability and the development of audience awareness, the relationship between refined and popular art is of interdependence, mutual transformation, common progress and rise, and under certain conditions, the boundary between refined and popular art will be broken through because of the convergence trend of the core.

On the other hand, the refined and popular art in modern everyday semantics, which is different from the ancient meaning, has completely different boundaries and relationships.

4. Changes in the Boundaries Between Refined and Popular in the Development of Modern Art

When "popular art" does not point to folk customs, public habits and easy-to-understand and fluent concept, but to derogatory description of art which is contrary to morality, aesthetics and ideology, the boundary between it and refined art turns to the advantage and disadvantage of intention motive. Whether art will be moral and whether it conforms to the consciousness of the times is not something that needs to be observed during artistic creation, nor is it a standard of measurement. However, the advantages and disadvantages of the intention motive in the face of morality and consciousness are key difference between "using 'popular' to achieve art and borrowing 'art' to cover 'popular'". The boundary of intention motive lies in "whether

your performance is to purely exaggerate human's animal desire, or whether such performance helps to explain certain meaning". This seemingly slight difference can be said to be quite different in terms of definition and expression of spiritual meaning, forming a complete opposition between "refined art" and "popular art". If "popular art" and "refined art" are different types of city walls to the north of the Weihe River, "popular" art is something to south of the Weihe River, and the boundary between them is pretty different and cannot be eliminated.

5. Conclusions

After clarifying the boundary and dialectical relationship between refined art and popular art, the question conclusion of why popular art is art is self-evident, that is, popular art is the "new" birth brought to the new era by the end of art and the art breaking away from the aura of "standing the test of time as a treasure" and breaking through the inertia of "what is the right way to create art" to show "what is being done right now", "people's wisdom and feelings" and the art of "time". The formation and brilliance of popular art is complementary to refined art in the era when everyone is an artist, and the sum is a community of inclusive connotations, replacing the role that only philosophers could play in the past, and guiding us to think about what art works express. However, this kind of art combination is as said in *After the End of Art*, "in fact, it is about who we are and how we live..."

Under the guidance of refined art, people begin to be anxious, and anxious people yearn for art, so they are seeking their own art, in which not only the invisible spiritual world exists, but also those at their fingertips. The reason why refined and popular art can coexist in mutual transformation and interdependence is precisely because "art is regarded as a source of knowledge, rather than a mere object of knowledge." Apart from the complicated attributes, conditions, political economy and other reasons, when the boundary and relationship between refined and popular art are explored, so do the purest essence of art.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

Funding

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

References

- [1] ArthurC, D *After the End of Art*. Jiangsu: Jiangsu People's Publishing House.
- [2] ArthurC, D. *The Transformation of Common Place*.
- [3] ArthurC, D. *The Abuse of Beautify*. Jiangsu: Jiangsu People's Publishing House
- [4] Zhou, X.F. *Game between Elegance and Popularity*. East China Normal University, 2008.
- [5] Zhang, M.H. *A Study of the Theory of Aesthetic Criteria about Elegance and Popularity in the Contemporary Art -A consultation with the writer Mr Wang*

- Jinzhong on “artistic discussion of the elegance and popularity in the appreciating vision”. *Journal of Guizhou University (Social Science)*, 2007, 06), 72-77.
- [6] He, Y.C. On the “Elegance” and “Popularity” in Culture and Art. Yunnan Normal University, 2017.
- [7] Chen, Z.B. Demand, Freedom, Ar: On Three Thoughts Challenging the Anti-Lavatorial Culture Movement in Contemporary China. *MARXISM & REALITY*, 2010, 02, 35-39.
- [8] Xu, Y. Opposition and Elimination of “Elegance” and “Vulgarity” --Reflection on Popular Literature Review in “Thirty Years of Chinese Modern Literature”. *Journal of Harbin University*, 2005, 4.



© 2021 by the author(s); licensee International Technology and Science Publications (ITS), this work for open access publication is under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0). (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)