

Huang Yongping's Artistic Journey: The Harmonious Path of Cultural Fusion and Social Reflection

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Abstract: Huang Yongping is a French-Chinese artist who lived in France for thirty years and died of illness in 2019. His artistic creations span borders and cultures. His artistic works profoundly reflect on human beings' acceptance of cruelty and injustice. Through the comparison of competition between animals and human social behavior, they guide the audience to think deeply about moral and ethical choices. Huang Yongping's artistic works transcend aesthetic expression and become unique insights into the relationship between contemporary society, culture and human nature. By combining ancient cultural heritage with modern concepts, he calls on people to transcend traditional binary oppositions and embrace a more open and diverse way of thinking.

Keywords: Huang Yongping;Installation art;Cultural integration;Social reflection;World Citizen

Introduction to Huang Yongping

Huang Yongping is a French-Chinese artist. After living in France for 30 years, he died of illness in Paris, France, in 2019 and was buried in Père Lachaise Cemetery. This cemetery also contains Chopin, Wilde and Balzac. This foreigner is Chinese and a key figure in French culture and art. A bright star in the sky.

Huang Yongping is a French-Chinese artist. After participating in the "Magicians de la Terre" exhibition in France in 1989, he moved to France and lived in France for thirty years. In 2019, he died of illness in Paris, France, and was buried in Père Lachaise Cemetery. This cemetery also contains Chopin, Wilde and Balzac. , this foreigner is Chinese and a shining star in the sky of French culture and art. Huang Yongping once tried to integrate Chinese Zen Buddhism and Taoism with Western contemporary art ideas. When Huang Yongping graduated from Zhejiang Academy of Fine Arts in 1987, he formed a creative method of "non-expressive painting" to express an anti-art thought.

After moving to France, Huang Yongping's artistic works began to expand his horizons, focusing on the global scope, paying attention to global politics, history, culture, and human nature. Huang Yongping places himself under the identity of a "citizen of the world" and keenly captures the conflicts and collisions between different cultures, different positions, and different forces from a God's perspective, and engages in multi-dimensional thinking, mostly in a critical way. attitude for artistic expression.

In 2016, when Huang Yongping won the "Wolfgang Hahn Prize", the judges commented like this: "In his now more than three-decade-long career, which began in China in the 1980s and has continued and expanded in Europe and globally since the 1990s, he has traversed not only many countries and cultures, but also a fantastic range of topics and chronologies in his work. His oeuvre is a singular achievement noted for its often awe-inspiring physical grandeur, incredible iconography, and rigorous intellectualism, which alter our view of the world and sense of how we exist in history and in the world. He is both a masterful sculptor and a contemporary bard for our time^[1]."

The cultural integration of the dual identities of China and France

The first time I learned about Huang Yongping was in the book "History of Contemporary Chinese Art^[2]" written by Lu Peng. In this book, I got to see "History of Chinese Painting" and "A Brief History of Modern Painting". I stirred them two times in the washing machine. minute". This is an ordinary yellow wooden box with information such as the name of the work and the author written on it. The lid is opened, and a broken glass plate is placed at the mouth of the box, with mixed pulp on it.

In 1987, Huang Yongping created “The Big Turntable with Four Wheels”. There is a big disk on a wooden cart with four small wheels. The big turntable is designed according to the Book of Changes (sixty-four hexagrams, three hundred and eighty-four lines). The circle has 64 entries and the outer circle has 384 entries. Huang Yongping spins the roulette wheel and uses ancient Chinese divination to derive the instruction “moist means”, and then links it to what Ludwig Wittgenstein wrote: “Sometimes words must be removed from the language and sent for cleaning-before it can be Put it back into circulation”. Thus the work^[3]. “The History of Chinese Painting and the Brief History of Modern Painting Stirred in the Washing Machine for Two Minutes” was finally born. An “outdated” ancient cultural heritage determines an avant-garde work of contemporary art. Huang Yongping uses divination as a kind of randomness and accident, which draws our attention from the final result to a process of artistic production. Huang Yongping handed over his creative motivation to the so-called “fate” and almost abandoned his initiative. However, the content of the carousel was compiled by himself, and these entries ultimately came from the ancient Yi Jing. Result and process, chance and necessity, creation and discovery are full of philosophical dialectical thinking. Huang Yongping’s works from the late 1990s to the present also linger in such speculation and paradox.

In 1999, Huang Yongping’s work “One Person and Nine Beasts” represented France at the Venice Biennale. This work shows a bronze figure standing on a Chinese compass, pointing towards a classical building. When the audience stands in the same position as the bronze figure, they can see the word “ANCIA” on the building, which means ancient. Then, walking around the car, the word changed to “RANCIA,” meaning old, aged wine. Finally, when the audience reaches the end of the building, they will see the complete word “FRANCIA”, which means France. This work cleverly expresses the concept of “France” through the change of words. In addition, there is a group of wooden pillars standing on the top of the building, with a group of monster statues on them. These monsters come from the Chinese mythology “The Classic of Mountains and Seas”. Most people in the Chinese cultural circle will think about the connotation of the monster when they see this work, while most viewers in the Western cultural circle will feel the horror and weirdness. In this way, Huang Yongping not only explores the differences between cultures, but also reveals the collision of imaginations about exotic beasts between different cultures. This kind of work echoes his common approach in artistic creation: through his works of art, he provokes the audience to think deeply about culture, history and society.

Reflective expression of society as a “global citizen”

In 1993, Huang Yongping exhibited his work “Yellow Peril” at the Oxford Museum. He put a large number of locusts and five scorpions together, and the scorpions naturally enjoyed a “big meal”. The word “locust” in “locust” is homophonic with the word “yellow” in “yellow peril”, which is a metaphor for the large-scale immigration of yellow people. The yellow immigrants, who have always been regarded by Westerners as disastrous invaders, are actually victims of the expansion of the Western world and the exploitation of other regions and races. Starting from “Yellow Peril”, Huang Yongping placed himself in the context of a “world citizen” to create art, and animals began to participate in his works. In his works, animals become symbols, mostly representing marginalized individuals in the era of globalization. By associating locusts with the “Yellow Peril”, Huang Yongping projects Western stereotypes of Eastern immigrants onto animals, triggering the audience’s deep reflection on race, cultural prejudice and cultural collisions. This kind of artistic creation is not only an annotation of history, but also a powerful accusation against various problems in contemporary society.

In the same year, Huang Yongping created “Theater Of The World”, in which hundreds of geckos, cockroaches, centipedes, locusts and other animals were placed in a closed, transparent space shaped like a turtle, and kept in drawers to keep them In a state of hunger, once the drawer is opened, the animals will start a fierce fight for survival. What we observe from the outside to the inside of the top glass is an animal society under the law of the jungle where the weak can eat the strong. After some battles and games, a new order is formed. Judging from the morphological characteristics of the “Theater of the World”, its design came from the philosophers of the 18th century. As early as the 1960s, Michel Foucault had commented that he believed that this model was a metaphor for A mechanism that controlled modernism, which led to colonialism, imperialism and all hegemonic systems.

Huang Yongping has refined the complex state of the current world into a simple work such as “World Theater”. The clue of “game” always runs through Huang Yongping’s creation, and “World Theater” provides us with a perspective: human beings in the glass dome Looking down at the game of animals from outside, is there a “God” or a more advanced alien civilization outside the human world looking down at us? And from the perspective of “gods”, are our games between individuals, races, and countries also so cruel? In ancient times, different cultures were isolated and protected due to geographical, communication and transportation restrictions. Disputes broke out immediately after the isolation was removed. The so-called order was established when the strong and violent ones won, and this process repeated itself. Throughout human history, there may never be a true winner.

The controversy surrounding Theater of the World makes us think about society's acceptance of cruelty and injustice. Through this work, Huang Yongping seems to be questioning why people are uncomfortable with competition and killing among animals, but are accustomed to similar behaviors in human society. This contrast allows the audience to reflect on human nature's moral and ethical choices when facing the cruel reality.

In 2000, Huang Yongping created the work "Bank of Sand or Bank of Sand" for that year's Shanghai Biennale. This piece is a small replica of No. 12 on the Bund built of sand. Historically, No. 12 on the Bund was the headquarters of HSBC, the seat of the Shanghai Municipal People's Government, and is now the headquarters of Pudong Development Bank. This spectacular building made of sand slowly disintegrated and collapsed during the three-month exhibition period, symbolizing the fate and impermanence of colonialism.

The work reflects on colonial history through the disappearance of sand and the collapse of buildings. No. 12 on the Bund is a representative example of colonial Shanghai architecture, and Huang Yongping chose to use perishable sand to construct this building, implying the fragility and unsustainability of colonial history. In this way, he appeals to the audience's sensitivity to history and emphasizes that history cannot be ignored.

In 2001, Huang Yongping participated in the Shenzhen Sculpture Biennale, which kicked off his "Bat Project" series of works. In April 2001, the US Navy EP-3 spy reconnaissance aircraft was conducting reconnaissance over the waters near China's Hainan Island. China sent two fighter jets to monitor and intercept. One of the aircraft collided with a US military aircraft over China's exclusive economic zone. China The fighter jet crashed, the pilot died, and the US military plane made an emergency landing at Lingshui Airport in Hainan. China accused a U.S. reconnaissance plane of deliberately ramming a Chinese fighter jet. The U.S. countered that it was hit by an out-of-control Chinese fighter jet. The stalemate between the two sides turned into a diplomatic crisis.

Similar to the fate of "World Theater", "Bat Project" continued to evolve after that, causing a series of events. The replicated fighter plane itself and the series of events it caused are superimposed to form the "Bat Project" series of works, which continues to evolve. In fact, Huang Yongping's work is to a large extent a surprising interpretation and expression based on the environment and context in which we live, causing people to think about society and human nature.

Conclusions

Huang Yongping's artistic works demonstrate unique insights into human society and the era of globalization through profound reflection. However, his work is not just an aesthetic expression of art, but a response to the profound and challenging questions raised by his audience. In his creation, art is not only a presentation of formal aesthetics, but also a medium that guides people to think about society, culture and individual existence. The core of his works not only remains in reflection on contemporary society, but also provides a new thinking framework for the audience through the collision and integration of traditional culture and modern civilization. He combines ancient cultural heritage with modern concepts in a unique way, calling on people to transcend traditional binary oppositions and embrace a more open and diverse way of thinking.

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