

Analysis and Practice of the Creation Materials of Chinese Contemporary “Junk Art” from the Perspective of Ecology

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Abstract: Garbage is an important channel to understand the contemporary society. The "junk art" works created by the artists had a strong visual impact, and could cause people to concern and think about the ecological problems. Therefore, artists should connect with renewable resource enterprises to artistically regenerate the important practical value of waste. Treat waste materials with an artistic vision, shape recycled products from an aesthetic perspective, and open another door of the world's resource cycle with a beautiful heart. The paper first analyzed the creation materials of contemporary Chinese "junk art" works from the ecological perspective, and then shared the process of creation practice and purpose of the installation art works "Unearthed in 2521 - Plastic White Jade", so as to promote the creation development of "junk art".

Keywords: Junk art, Ecological perspective, Creative materials, Contemporary art

1. Introduction

Accompanied by the emergence of human civilization, nature is constantly being interfered with and modified by human beings, especially the arrival of the industrial era since the end of the 19th century. Ten environmental problems include the global climate warming, the ozone layer damaged, biodiversity destruction, the spread of acid rain, forest collapse, land desertification, air pollution, water pollution, marine pollution, and transboundary movement of hazardous waste in the 21st century. In the face of new century ecological crisis and extreme deterioration of the human survival environment, ecological artists firstly focused on the waste that people created every day, they used waste materials to try to create a work of art. The discarded waste was reassembled according to the concept of art, and became a work of art after breaking away from the original attributes of the object. In addition, the reconstructed "garbage art" works not only had aesthetic value, but also had positive effects such as arousing the public's sense of anxiety about the future state of the planet, alerting human beings to environmental protection, and calling on the government to take effective ecological protection measures.

2. An Analysis of the Creation Materials of Chinese Contemporary “Junk Art” Works from an Ecological Perspective

After the New Trend of the Eighth Five-year Plan, Chinese contemporary artists also began to pay attention to "junk art". The reasons are as follows: on the one hand, the creative language and materials of artists in this period were constantly expanded; on the other hand, artistic works have gradually become a way for artists to intervene in Chinese social issues [1]. In the field of Chinese contemporary art, the development of "garbage art" has its own unique development trajectory and expression theme. Artists responded to the ecological and environmental issues of globalization from different perspectives. In the face of the global ecological crisis, such as "water pollution", "plastic pollution", "air pollution", "industrial solid waste", "electronic material pollution", in this artistic wave of environmental protection, "waste" has become the most powerful expression material for Chinese contemporary artists. They showed their environmental theme through visual language and images from different angles. "Waste" as an artistic material told the history of the past and showed the glory of the past. At the same time, it also warned us of our future life style through artistic expression, reminding people not to ignore the existence of waste. Human being should start from the source of garbage and re-examine the relationship between

our lifestyle and garbage and ecological environment.

2.1. "Sewage" Used as Raw Material for Creation

Chengdu is the only cultural city in China with a long history of more than 2,000 years, and also the only one with a traditional history of "water control". It had the reputation of "Land of Abundance". However, the Fu Nan River, which used to be abundant and clean in the 1990s, gradually became a "rotten river" containing dirt and harmful substances. At this time, the behavior of the domestic art and installation art experienced bud development, Dai Guangyu et al. co-sponsored the art project of "Protectors of Water". Using the "sewage" of Fu Nan River as the raw material, they displayed their installation works in open public places, which not only aimed to make everyone pay attention and think about the living natural environment of Fu Nan River, but also appealed to the government to treat the sewage of Fu Nan River. This activity had produced a strong social and public influence.

2.2. "Industrial Waste" Used as Raw Material for Creation

In June 2017, Ren Hongwei's large-scale solo exhibition opened at the Museum of Contemporary Art, in Beijing city. Various elements, such as pop, misplacement, political metaphor and literati feelings, were implied in his works. Ren Hongwei's installation work "City of Fantasy" used scrap iron, scrap copper and abandoned oil drums to form human habitation. The work showed the conflict and harm between industrial civilization and natural environment, as well as the paradox and dilemma of the expansion of globalization urbanization, thereby reflecting on energy development and environmental issues.

2.3. "Plastic" Used as Raw Material for Creation

Lei Yan used tens of thousands of plastic bags to create her work "Sea War", and Yao Yun used waste water bottles as the main raw material to create a large-scale outdoor interactive installation art work "A Touch of Color", which was combined with several neon lights, iron nets and steel frames. They described the unbalanced relationship between plastic waste and the natural environment in a very visual way, trying to stimulate the audience to think about the relationship between human beings and nature. In 2019, in the face of biology and the serious ecological problems of environment, the design team of Wang Meifen created the installation art work "City of Hesitation" with the theme of environmental protection and ecology. The project showed that 100,000 individual straws were connected in a triangular structure through internal nylon filaments, which were replicated and extended to form a 40-meter long dragon running through the space of the building. It was an infinitely extended and dense irregular structure when closing up, while it is supported by a soaring dragon's body shape far from a distance. They created a contradiction through the shaping of color, shape and environment to reflect the concentrated contradiction between commercial development and ecological surroundings of environmental protection. The installation works alerted people that the environmental pollution situation is also a mistake of urban development under the state of rapid development of China.

2.4. "Haze" used as Raw Material for Creation

The idea for the Dust Project, proposed by a so-called "nut brother" of the post-80s generation, began with reports of worsening smog in Beijing in 2013, with PM2.5 exceeding the standard. From July 24th, 2015 to November 29th, 2015, "nut brother" took a vacuum cleaner and sucked the smog in the streets of Beijing for 100 days. Finally, they made a brick of smog and stuffed it into a wall under construction. The "nut brother" used "smog" as raw material for their creation, breaking the material form of artistic creation. Their purpose was to remind more people to pay attention to the air environment problems under economic development.

2.5. Use "e-waste" as Raw Material for Creation

Electronic waste has become the fastest growing waste in the world today. As the terminal product of modern society, it is not properly treated, and the harm is even greater than the general waste. For example, in the process of dismantling electronic waste, heavy metals infiltrate into the soil and enter rivers or groundwater, which will do harm to the soil and groundwater, causing direct or indirect damage to the environment and people's health. Incineration releases a large number of toxic gases, such as highly toxic dioxins, polychlorinated biphenyls and other carcinogens, which can cause a variety of

diseases. Therefore, in order to remind people that electronic products bring convenience to human beings, but improper disposal of e-waste may also bring ecological consequences[2]. On February 27th, 2010, an e-waste art installation exhibition was held in Hong Kong. Environmental group "Friends of the Earth Hong Kong" exhibited eight art installations created by students of the Hong Kong Design Institute using about 800 kilograms of used electrical appliances in Hong Kong.

With the development of science and technology, mobile phones are constantly updated in a short period of time and abandoned by people, which is the doomed fate of this consumption era. From March 26th to 31st, 2019, Greenpeace collaborated with artist Shen Bolun to display the art installation "Tong Tian", which consisted of 500 old mobile phones, at the exhibition "Sleeping Treasure: Resource Cycle of Mobile Phones" at Yitai Port in Beijing. They used nearly 500 old cell phones as the main materials to build Tong Tian tower, making power, patch panel, cable, battery and mobile phone series one-to-one correspondence. After making sure the old equipment is working properly and receiving current, then designers debugged, 82 cell phone screened flashing familiar and unfamiliar boot screen, and the whole space sounded the nostalgic phone ringing in the 2000's, so that the "sleeping treasure" started to "wake up". The work "Tong Tian" made us reflect that although modern electronic technology has entered a stage of rapid development, with the power of "Babel", the excessive desire for consumption is destroying the life of contemporary people.

3. Practice of the Installation Art Work "Unearthed in 2521 - Plastic White Jade" from an Ecological Perspective

Plastic bags, plastic straws, plastic tableware, etc., are common plastic products in our life, which facilitate people's life. However, after plastic products being discarded by people, their degradation time may be as long as 500 years. With their flow into the sea, they not only pollute the marine environment, but also do harm to marine organisms. If directly burned, the gas produced will endanger the ecological environment and human health. Therefore, plastic waste has become a deadly killer of the marine ecological environment. In recent years, in order to reduce the use of plastic products and strengthen the control of plastic pollution, Chinese government also issued a new version of the "plastic limit" in 2020, setting a timetable for the withdrawal of non-degradable plastic products from the market. Based on this background, I made use of the characteristics of plastic material deformation when being heated to create the installation art work "Unearthed in 2521 - Plastic White Jade". Since the plastic mineral water bottle has a transparent and easy kneading texture after melting, it is easy to shape. Therefore, in the process of creation, I selected 18 small mineral water bottles, 12 medium ones and 1 large one, and then shaped the mineral water bottle at high temperature. The installation art work was irradiated with warm light lamp, at this time the shaping works liked milky jade, such as just unearthed cultural relics. Therefore, in the final form of expression, a highly transparent acrylic custom box was selected to place the art works, and the exhibition label was placed next to it, which was marked: "Plastic White Jade, 2021, unearthed in 2521"(Figure.1), in order to create a form that seems to be exhibited in the museum. This art work had paid more attention by experts in the "Other vision - Variable Laboratory II Macao University of Science and Technology Fine Arts culture Special exhibition". The installation art work "Unearthed in 2521 - Plastic White Jade" made people aware of the degree of difficult to degrade plastic, and the plastic products should be reduced. I hope that the installation art work "Unearthed in 2521 - Plastic White Jade" can improve people's awareness of environmental protection and make government strengthen the control of plastic pollution.



Figure 1: Installation Art Work "Unearthed in 2521 - Plastic White Jade" by Xu Jia

4. Conclusions

Making art from waste material in China is still at a very early stage[2]. Artists don't know much about waste, and enterprises, engaging in recycling industry resource, rarely meet with artists. However, the reality is that enterprises are worried, anxious and confused about the construction of corporate culture and establish a landmark corporate culture benchmark. Therefore, artists should connect with renewable resource enterprises to artistically regenerate the important practical value of waste. Treat waste materials with an artistic vision, shape recycled products from an aesthetic perspective, and open another door of the world's resource cycle with a beautiful heart. The beauty is loved by all. Let's bring new beauty and vitality to the renewable resources traditionally defined as "garbage".

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