

Chinese Contemporary Art Series



Eva Kit Wah Man

Issues of Contemporary Art and Aesthetics in Chinese Context

Chinese Contemporary Art Series

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This series focuses on what is happening to Chinese art in the course of recent decades. Since China has changed greatly, it is now a curiosity and a research task: What is that? Why is that? How can it be that? Culturally, why does Chinese art have its own special image narrative? How to evaluate and criticize Chinese art made today? Is it a continuation of its history and heritage? Is anything new that could be reconsidered further? Is Chinese art an artistic issue or a political one? This series of books will concentrate on such questions and issues and will invite international writers and scholars to contribute their thoughts on the explanation and elaboration of Chinese art today.

More information about this series at <http://www.springer.com/series/13527>

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China, with its long-standing civilization and spectacular growth over the past few decades, has generated intense global interest in its art. Reports of Chinese artworks breaking sales records have become common, and this booming interest has sparked discussions on how China's transformations in the last century have shaped both its arts and its philosophical aesthetics. For instance, how have political, economic, and cultural changes shaped China's aesthetic developments? How have the country's long-standing beliefs and traditions informed modern desires and forces, and how have these changes materialized in the artistic manifestations? To learn more, comparative studies between the Western aesthetic tradition and that of China are needed. This book seeks to address this significant comparative perspective, and more importantly, it aims to enrich the dialog between Chinese philosophical ideas on aesthetics and those of the West.

This book deals with some significantly understudied themes, including comparative aesthetics between the West and China, contemporary aesthetics development in China and Hong Kong, how art is intertwined with the politics of identity, art and gender issues and the challenges in traditional and creative practices. Chapters 2 through 5 present comparative studies in art and philosophical aesthetics between China and the West. The discussions of these issues in contemporary art and aesthetics show how Chinese philosophical models can offer meaningful comparative revelations.

In Chapter 2, for example, two prominent authors—Søren Kierkegaard from nineteenth century Denmark and Liu Xie from fifth century China—are examined to determine how they represent their literary traditions and how their cultures perceive the author's function. Kierkegaard's theory of authorship is analyzed from a comparative perspective, using Liu Xie's 劉協 中國文學批評 from *Wenxin Diaolong* 《文心雕龍》 as a comparative model. The author's views on literary function, the spiritual and aesthetic dimensions and creative force of compositional literary writing and the goal of writing are examined, as

elaborated by these two authors. According to Kierkegaard, the quality of an author's writing is mainly tied up in his or her religious mind, whereas Liu relates it to moral quality. The analysis demonstrates how Kierkegaard and Liu complement and enrich each other in their understanding of authorship and writing, despite inhabiting distant centuries.

Chapters 3 and 4 offer philosophical comparative studies of contemporary Western discussions and debates on art, aesthetics and values in China. In Chapter 3, American aesthetician Richard Shusterman examines the contemporary fate of aesthetic experience in his article, "The End of Aesthetic Experience" (1997). The discussion of aesthetic experience has long been regarded as one of the core concepts of Western aesthetics until the last half century, during which it has expanded into an umbrella concept for aesthetics notions such as the sublime and the picturesque. This chapter agrees with Shusterman's reading that aesthetic experience has become the island of freedom, beauty and idealistic meaning in an otherwise coldly materialistic and law-determined world. Chapter 3 begins with the main dimensions of aesthetic experience in the history of Western aesthetics, as concluded by Shusterman. In the fragmentation of modern life and the disjointed sensationalism of the media, Shusterman notes that people are losing the capacity for deep experience and feeling especially as we undergo various extensive informational revolutions. This chapter is also a response to Shusterman's claim that the concept of aesthetic experience is worth recalling, not for formal definition but for art's reorientation toward values and populations that could restore its vitality and sense of purpose. It mentions the recent call for values and life concerns in art within the Anglo-American aesthetics circle which has also turned to the possible strength of aesthetic experience, claiming that "aesthetics is the mother of ethics." Amid the discourse is a review of John Dewey's notion of "aesthetic experience" which claims to support a transcultural view and common patterns, as the relationship is structured around human needs. The chapter addresses whether the Deweyan notion, which still represents some of the most influential