

A Characterization of Future Chinese Art Concepts

中國藝術觀念的未來特徵

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This article won an Excellence Prize in Art Criticism from The Trend of Art Thought, the creator of China's first national Art Criticism award, in 1985. In such a conservative and narrow-minded time, the article was like a bomb thrown into an oppressive and traditional art circle and played a key role in the early '85 Art Movement. As years passed, time has proven many of this article's predictions about the development of Chinese art true.

In this timely and accurate exposé of the characterization of Chinese art tendencies, Tan explains what we can expect for the phenomena of the near future through his application of the concept "Future Leads Today."

There are five forecasted classifications: futurity, diversity, agility, originality, and competitiveness. Tan predicts that Chinese artists will soon move from agricultural, conservative thinking to futuristic, candid thinking. Chinese art will be altered from standardization to diversity; from a unitary system to complex system; and from high centralization to a scattered decentralization. Competition will bring interaction between artistic talents and enable them to emerge in groups alternately.

Current society demands that Chinese artists update their aesthetic standards at an increasing rate, from yearly, to weekly, to daily, as if following the trend of "Moore's Law." "The doctrine of the mean" from Confucianism makes people weak and less original creatively, suppressing their individualistic spirit. Originality should be the final destination for artists. China's art market will rise shortly if political influences do not interfere. The art market runs itself through its competitive self-regulation, having given free rein to art business people and art enterprises.

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LIQin Tan 譚力勤

If we deem that, since the last half of the century, the art history of the whole world has been a bulky record of human's self-destruction, and then modern art concepts are the guiding ideology of said self-destructive human race. These concepts swept off with the force of a whirlwind those old, golden rules, the order of truth, goodness and beauty, and the old sense of intellect and justice. This whirling force first arose in Europe and North America and rapidly spread to the Asian Continent. Upon the conceptual horizon, it gradually swells up like a skulking behemoth, formed by the countless staggered lines and shapes of futurity, variety, promptness, originality and competitiveness; a creature that we can stand over as either master or destroyer.

Futurity

Future leads today. To take a hold of every opportunity in the future and to be brave enough to change all outmoded criteria are a prominent features of modern art. If we say that people's way of thinking in agricultural society is past-oriented, and that in an industrial society, it is to face the reality and to look forward to the future in the information society, and then I can confidently say that contemporary art looks into the future eternally.

At present, the conservative thinking of agricultural society occupied the "holy land" of China's contemporary art scene; everything should be based on various logical manners such as observation, induction, deduction, etc. Those classical works and art masterpieces are the most convincing evidences and arguments, from which all the new viewpoints must get confirmation. It is therefore main reason why the Chinese art haven't changed much for past hundreds of years.

An American anthropologist and futurist Margaret Mead has pointed out, at her book *Culture and Commitment* (1970), that one of the significant changes nowadays in human society is the conversion from "postfigurative

如果說，半個世紀以來，世界藝術史仿佛是一部龐大的自毀罪行錄，那麼，現代藝術觀念本身也就是自毀罪行的指導思想。它以無窮的旋轉力，卷去人們昔日宣布的金科玉律、真善美次序、理智、天理和一切藝術的主體。這種旋轉力首先從歐洲升起，并迅速波及亞洲大陸，逐漸在我國藝術觀念的地平線上凸起一個巨大的無數參差的綫條和未來性、多樣性、敏捷性、獨創性、競爭性等幾何形狀組成的多面立方體，人們既可掌握它，也可推倒它！

未來性

未來引導現在。把握未來，衝破一切規範，已成為現代藝術觀念的突出特點。如果說，農業社會人們的思維方式是面向過去，工業社會人們的思維方式是面向現實，信息社會人們的思維方式是面向未來，那我可肯定地說：現代藝術的思維方式就一直是面向未來！

目前，農業社會收斂式的思維方式占着我國當代藝壇的聖地。一切都得建立在觀察、歸納、推導等各種邏輯方法上，經典著作、藝術杰作，都成為最有力的論據，一切新觀點都須在此得到確證，從而成為數百年來藝術風貌變化不大的重要原因。

美國人類學家、未來學者米德曾指出：當今社會顯著變化之一是人類社會已從一種青年人向老年人學習的“後喻文化”轉變為“同喻文化”（向同時代人學習），迫在眉睫下的時期將會是“前喻文化”的產生，年長的人將從年輕人那裏學習，青年人將向兒童學習。“前喻文化”中未來主宰現在，如同“後

culture” (a kind of culture that the young learns from the old) to “cofigurative culture” (learn from the contemporary), the imminent period will witness the emergence of “prefigurative culture”, i.e. the old will learn from the young. In “prefigurative culture”, tomorrow will dominate today, just as the past (tradition) commands the present in “postfigurative culture”. The newly happened events are different from the past ones, thus the concepts of the elders on the future become less informative, and people will easily tend to depend on the instruction of their contemporaries. With the acceleration of cultural change, the possibility of wondering how the future will be falls on the youngsters, who will be the dominators of the future art.

Idols for young people are no longer those traditionalistic “skills masters”, instead they penetrate into serious reality, seek for entities and thoughts of spirit freedom, and step their way on the future beyond that of the elders. The educational modes in the future will be: the elders will not teach the junior what they should learn any more, but educate them how to learn; not require them what they should believe in, but tell them the meaning of belief. The teaching system should also change from inputting training skills and knowledge to cultivating their intelligence through self-discovery method. Since the future can not be clearly perceived, it is very urgent for our society to set up a future art institute to research, explore and anticipate the permanently ambiguous and extraordinarily charming future of art.

Diversity

The prospect of China's art will certainly be like numerous great system projects, in which each profession and each project will form into an individual system itself while constituting systems with each other, just like a stunned three-dimensional network structure with multiple dimensions, directions, factors and levels, thus it takes a very complex cross-effects. Art itself is magnificent rich and it determines the diversity of artists' thinking manners, while such diversity determines the variety of art concepts. We have to accept multi-perspective views to study diverse esthetic focuses and art objectives. In a sphere with neither dominant art school nor either-or art forms, only when Multi-thinking manners are adopted we can obtain success, otherwise we will fail.

Our art society is in the crack of a conversion currently from centralization to decentralization; the future tendency of art will inevitably be from the bottom unknown place to the top, it will be diversified, miniaturized, commercialized and no-governmentalized. “Centralization”, “standardization” and “largeness” have already been reflected as the aesthetic awareness in the second civilization wave. The Sixth Nationwide Art Exhibition in

喻文化”中過去（傳統）主宰現在一樣。新發生的事件和過去并不一樣，使得老年人關於未來的觀念用處較少，人們更趨於依靠他們同代人作指導，隨着文化改變的加速，希望搞清楚將來是什麼樣子的可能性已轉到年輕人。藝術未來的主宰者是當今的年輕人和兒童！

青年學生們心中崇拜的偶像不再是因循守舊的技法大師，他們深入嚴肅的富有哲理的現實生活，尋找心靈自由的實體和思想，越過年長的先生，走在未來的路上。未來的教育方式：年長的不是教導他們學習什麼，而是教他們如何學習；不是教他們信奉什麼，而是教他們信奉的涵義。教學體系也必須由現在的培訓技巧、灌輸知識為主轉變為培養學生的智能為主！

未來并不是清晰可見的，我國亟待建立藝術未來學會，研究、探索、預測這永久模糊、非常迷人的藝術未來。

多樣性

我國藝術的未來必象無數巨大的系統工程，其中每一個行業，每一個項目，都自成系統又互相成系統，是多維、多向、多因素、多層次、縱橫交錯的立體網絡結構，有着十分復雜的交叉效應，藝術本身的宏大壯觀和豐富多彩，決定我們藝術思維方式的多樣性，思維方式的多樣性決定我們藝術觀念的多樣性。我們必須用不同的思維方式去研究不同的審美對象。在沒有占統治地位的藝術流派，沒有非此即彼的藝術天體上，多種多樣的思維方式的選擇，才能取得勝利。非此即彼的單調方式一定要失敗。

我國的藝術正處在由集中走向分散的夾縫時期，美術的未來趨勢必然是自下而上，多樣化、小型化、民間化。“集中”、“標準化”、“大”，這已是第二次浪潮文明的審美意識。第六屆全國美展如此高度集中，規模之宏大，具有絕對的權威性，已給美術界投下了不少陰影，完全落後於形勢的需要。

新的通訊工具的出現，信息傳達之迅速，使得世界藝術不再以巴黎、紐約為中心，其他任何國家、地區都可產生一種新觀念新思潮影響世界。未來中國也不再以北京為藝術中心，新藝術革命

1984 so highly centralized and with such grand scale as well as absolute authority, has cast much shadow on the art sphere and completely lagged behind the demand of current circumstances.

The emergence of new communication tools enables information to transmit rapidly, making Paris and New York are no longer taken as the center of the world art, and any country and district can produce an innovative concept and ideological drift to influence the whole world. In the future, China will no longer take Beijing as the art center either, the wave of new art revolution may firstly sweep the zigzag Pacific coast thousands of miles long in China, then penetrate into the inland, and profoundly develop to forceful torrents driving the development of art revolution in our mainland.

On one hand, the future vision of art will change so fast along with the exponential growth of science; on the other hand, it will develop in accompany with the change and development of human beings' emotion and ideology. With the help of scientific and technological means, the forms of the artworks are more expanded and differentiated. In addition, new technological revolution also creates and provides new art objectives and subjects to form new art categories. Yet artists also long to think free from the "demon" of technical exploration as well as the pressure of reason and mechanization.

Macro-structure of modern art are diverse, and even more are the microscopic activities of artists. What the contemporary artists emphasize are the specific characters of their own, rather than the common grounds with others. For instance, the roles of oil painter, traditional Chinese painter, comic illustrator, sculptor and critic, are played integrally through one person by young artists who have been called as "the third generation." West, Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth adopted on both realistic and abstract techniques simultaneously as well as several other techniques in their painting.

There shall appear no masters in future times as expected by art public. The era of "one mountain crest dwarfing all peaks under its feet" has gone forever. Today, one hundred individuals have ninety-nine different artistic pursuits. Followers of art, not to create their own leaders!

Agility

The spatial scale of modern society is more and more broad. Like positive powers of ten which can be infinitely greater, the macrocosm has already gone beyond over tens of billions of light years; in the same way, like negative powers of ten which can be infinitely smaller, the microcosm will amount to one part per trillion. The aesthetic interaction between the subject and object carries out a persistent movement to and from and thus form a kind of successive activity—this is named by the

的浪潮首先可能拍打中國幾十裏漫長而曲折的太平洋海岸，然後逐步向內地滲透，朝縱深發展，匯成推動我國藝術革命發展的滔滔洪流！

我國未來的藝術一方面隨着科學發展而發展，另一方面則是根據人的感情理念的變化發展而發展。各種科技手段進入文藝作品，形式更加多樣化。新的科技革命也為文藝理論和文藝科研提供新的研究對象、課題，形成新的研究門類。而藝術家們又希望從科研的“巨魔”中逃避開來，避開理性和機械化的壓力去思考。

現代藝術宏觀結構呈多樣化，藝術家本身的微觀活動更加多樣化。當代藝術家強調的是自己的特點，而不是別人的共同點。例如，我國第三代畫家往往是油畫家、國畫家、連環畫家、雕塑家、理論家融於一人。西方亨利·摩爾，巴巴拉·赫普沃思就同時採用寫實和抽象等幾種不同的手法。未來的時代并不象人們預料的那樣出現大師。“一峰崛起，凌駕群丘”的時代一去不返。而今，一百個人就有九十九個不同的藝術追求目標。藝術的追蹤者，不再創造自己的領袖！

敏捷性

現代社會空間範圍越來越寬闊。十的正次方可無限大下去，宏觀世界已到幾百億光年以外；十的負次方可無限小下去，微觀到億萬分之一。審美主體與審美客體之間的相互作用，往返無窮，連續性活動——現代心理家所謂的“循環弧”。隨着通訊設備的現代化及電腦的發展和普及，信息傳遞、存儲、加工等一系列環節的速度的加快而呈現千變萬化的姿態。無限循環的過程時間短暫，富有緊迫感。繪畫的空間美感已擴大為四維空間，提高思維的敏捷

人們已拋棄安于現狀和對新觀念反映遲鈍的心理狀態，看不起國內當代畫壇上一輩子就捧着一種風格的人。大家力求不斷變新，從而崇拜畢加索。

社會結構更新周期性越來越短，知識更新越來越快。大學四年中所學知識50%已經陳舊，八年後100%要更換。而人們的審美意識更新周期更短、更敏捷。我國詩、書、畫、印這種文

modern psychology the so-called “circular arc.” Which takes on an ever changing state with the modernization of communication equipments, the development and popularization of computer, as well as the double acceleration of information transmission, storage and processing approximately every two years (physics called “Moore’s Law”), etc. The time for this endless circulation and exponential growth are shorter and shorter with full of a sense of urgency. Therefore, the spatial creative sensitivity has been broadened to a four-dimensional space, and another future characteristic of art concept is to improve the agility of mind and brain. People have already been casting off the mental state of being content with the present and unresponsive to new concepts. Those who invariably hold single approach and constant similar style in contemporary art have been despised. And many are detecting their best innovation, taking Picasso as the favored hero. The replacement cycle of the social structure is becoming shorter and shorter, and the knowledge is renewing itself more and more rapidly. Half of what we have learned in the college has already been outdated today, and this knowledge needs to be replaced completely after a few years. Moreover, people will change their artistic consciousness more quickly and promptly. Around the May 4th Movement, the scholarly aesthetic impression of freehand brushwork in traditional Chinese painting, incorporating painting, calligraphy, poetry, verse, and seal, was gradually replaced by the realistic artistic sensation which combined Chinese and Western classical art. Today it will have an ever closer connection with future Eastern mysticism and realism, the brand-new, fantastic and diversified art experience will raise a powerful current. If the former impression has an over one thousand year history in succession, the middle one several decades, then the latter one may only last several years or even several months. Therefore, an artist must ensure that his artistic consciousness keep abreast of the times, and his optimum condition should go beyond it; he also should absorb various types of information of the times and create new imaged by applying, selecting and integrating the information as soon as possible. Information is not only a concept and artwork, but also a new skill. This newly included means has already affected the people who engaged in art thoroughly.

Originality

Originality has been regarded as a highest goal of artistic creation, or even the ultimate aesthetic value. The originality of western modern art is often embodied in extremity or diversity—always running contrary to the tradition and challenging authority. This spirit of rebelliousness is especially precious in artistic creation.

人的大寫意美感在“五四”運動前後被中西古典藝術結合的現實主義美感所逐漸代替，目前與未來東方的神秘主義與現實主義結合將更緊密，嶄新的、奇異的多樣化美感將波浪翻滾。如果說前一種美感相繼有一千多年，中者祇能幾十年，那麼後者可能祇有幾年、幾個月。因此，一個藝術家至少必須時時保持自己的審美意識與時代同步，最佳狀態應走在時代的前面，吸收時代各種不同的信息，盡快運用和篩選信息，綜合信息，創造新形象。信息既是審美觀念、藝術品，又是新的技能的雙重意義已影響着整個從事藝術生活的人。

獨創性

獨創性已被看作藝術創作的一種最高的追求目標，甚至是最終極的審美價值。

西方現代藝術的獨創性經常表現為極端化、多樣化——永遠與傳統觀念唱反調，這種反叛精神在藝術創造中尤為可貴。

統治東方幾千年的中庸思想使中國人思考問題時隨大流、怕冒尖，取法於中，不允許情思過分激烈而明朝的外露，養成中和、保守的民族性格，反映在社會生活中是“人怕出名豬怕壯”，“槍打出頭鳥”；反映在藝術上就是所謂美的最高法則——“似與不似之間”。藝術創造中的這一鐵籠必須砸碎，藝術家既可追求藝術作品的似、酷似、完全似、似與不似之間，也可追求藝術作品的似、一點也不似、根本不似！

畢加索說過：“藝術不是進化，而是不斷變化。”藝術並不是從低級走向高級、幼稚向成熟、殘缺至完美的發展。美術歷史為連續不斷滾動的創新浪潮所組成，藝術變化越多越能接近真諦。我們的注意力應更多地放在藝術史的轉折點上，而不要總是放在歷史的延續上。在新的藝術出現時，就要判斷它的主要趨勢，以便掌握和影響它。我們的思維中心不在研究是誰在支撐行將退伍的舊藝術，而是去發現是誰在塑造當今與未來的新藝術。正當我們為了暫時的、不可收拾的過去的理論問題論戰而耗盡我們的精力和注意力的時候，一場隱蔽的意義重大的新藝術運動早已開始

The "doctrine of the mean" which had ruled the East for thousands of years has formed the Chinese way of thinking as following general phenomena: dare not stand out, and always choose the middle state without letting out affections too passionately or distinctly. In this way the national characteristics of neutralism and conservatism was formed, whose reflections in social life are the sayings like "a man dreads fame as a pig dreads being fat" and "the bird taking the lead gets shot first", and in art it is reflected in the so-called highest principle of aesthetics—"between likeness and unlikeness". This iron cage in artistic creation must be broken so that artists can choose either to pursue after the realism, perfect realism, super realism, between likeness and unlikeness, or pursue the unrealism, surrealism and abstract of artworks.

Picasso said that art is continuous change instead of evolution. Art does not evolve from lower to higher stages or from infancy to maturity or from deflection to perfection. Art history is formed by continuously rolling wave of invention and the more varieties there are of art, the closer it gets to true meaning. Our focus should be more on the turning point in art history rather than the continuity state of history. When a new art comes into being, its major tendency and characteristic should be determined so that we can understand and affect it. The focus of our concern should not be laid on the research of those who are backing the art going out of date, but to discover those who are forming new genre today and tomorrow. An implicit and significant new art movement has long been launched while we are exhausting our spirits and attention in some temporary and irresolvable theoretical debates of the past. The rushes of future art movement will be reflected in our work and life. The artists living in contemporary society will either be the apologists of the dying traditional aesthetic ideas or the founders of the new concepts of future art! Future art will not create any fixed system, nor seek for eternity or permanency. It ceaselessly denies others as well as itself, as a forever unfinished "revolution". Artists should be the "pioneers and experimenters" of beauty, the "scouts" conveying new social information. Artists are precursors representing the future. Absurdity lies not with them but with those unable to appreciate them.

Competitiveness

Competition brings vitality; competition brings progress. Future art develops through bottom-up in competition. No executive means is necessary for interfering or advocating it. Winners and losers in natural contest will be future masters of art or nobodies. For competition, artworks should be revalued and commercialized, so that they can join in the great national economic campaign which initiated a few

了。未來藝術運動的急流，將反應到我們的工作和生活之中，生活在當今社會的藝術家不是充當頹于垂死的傳統的審美意識的捍衛者，就是新的未來藝術觀念的締造者！

未來藝術不會創造什麼固定的體系，也不追求永恆和不朽。它不斷否定別人，也不斷否定自己，永遠是一場未完成的“革命”。藝術家應是美的“開路先鋒和實驗家”，是傳遞新的社會信息的“偵察兵”，藝術家是代表未來的先驅者。可笑的不是他們，而是不能鑒賞他們的人！

競爭性

競爭帶來活力，競爭帶來進步。

未來藝術是在競爭中自下而上地發展的，無須通過行政方式進行過多幹擾和提倡。競爭中的勝利者和淘汰者將是未來的大畫家和無名之輩！

要競爭，必須重新認識藝術品的價值，提倡藝術品的商業化，讓藝術作品參入國內經濟大競爭之中。為此，必須徹底改變中國士農工商的觀點，藝術作品的生產也必須追求經濟效益。

繪畫是藝術，經商同樣也是一門藝術，當代藝術家有必要同時掌握這兩門藝術。

畫商是我們未來社會主義經濟中藝術活動的樞紐。從某種角度來說，他比理論家更重要。他能縱橫向溝通，把藝術家創作的出路和欣賞者的消費有機的聯系起來，從而使藝術作品與社會經濟得以良性循環起來，所以，畫家不僅直接參入了藝術財富的創造，而且可以使財富在加速循環中成倍增加。目前我們學校培養的大部分藝術人才都是文人書生型，而我們須運用經濟的杠杆去鞭策一些藝術家向企業家型的藝術人才發展。未來的美院有必要增加藝術經濟管理系。

我國一些藝術作品受外國人經濟左右的可悲局面的結束已為期不遠，人們生活的富裕，審美興趣的廣泛和提高，將導致人們積極去理解藝術家的審美趣味，藝術家又返回來以多樣化的生產去滿足人們多樣化的審美需要。一體化的

years ago. Therefore, the Chinese hierarchical-view of scholars, peasants, workman and merchants should be thoroughly converted while art makers should also be in pursuit of economic benefit.

Creation is an art, so is business. They are two types of art contemporary artists need to grasp certainly.

Art business is the hinge of the art activities in our future socialist economy. In a sense, we can say that an art commercialist is the same important as a critic. They can communicate in length and breadth, organically linking the outlet of artworks with the consumption of collectors, and thus enabling artworks and social economy to circulate soundly. Hence, art commercials not only participate in the creation of art wealth, but also enable such wealth to multiply in accelerated cycling. Most artistic talents nurtured by our schools today are of the literator and scholar type, yet we need to urge some artists to develop into entrepreneur type by dint of economic lever. Art administration major should be superimposed in colleges of fine arts soon after.

The tragic ending of Chinese artworks dominated by foreign collectors is not far away. The enrichment of life and the expansion and elevation of art interests will lead people towards the active understanding of the tastes of artists; on the other hand artists will also satisfy the varied art demands of people by diversified art production. National zeal for integrated literature will soon become a relic when literature is no longer endowed with its brilliant appeal which has attracted the eyes of millions people. The developing trend of it will surely be on one hand turning to visual art, keeping balance of aesthetic emotion with speedy social changes, while on the other switching to the deeper concepts in pursuit of its charm. The coming era of art is the one in which original artworks replace press-works, in this way, the consumption of artworks in China will be able to self-circulate. Like the Japanese, we would be able to foster our own Higashiyama, Takayama, Kayama and Hirayama.

Competition will bring interactive between artistic talents and enable them to emerge in groups alternately. Born in the impacts between rays of ideas, the artistic genius today is not something the so-called "transcendent" scholars aloof in reclusion able to be endowed with. To rival other competitors, we have to rely on group power, and emphasize the distinction between this group and other groups so as to find a foothold in the garden of art. In groups, each one should stress his or her individuality rather than the common grounds. Only in this wise will the expected situation of all thoughts and ideas blossoming together come into being.

In every corner of the future garden of art, the mother-like sunshine is always crouching by our side with a warm heart. Whether to respect her, support her, or to neglect her, discard her, is up to yourself.

Wrote in Changsha, Hunan, 1984

文學熱忱很快就會成為陳迹，文學不再有往昔萬家矚目的輝煌感召力，其發展趨勢必然是一方面轉向視覺藝術，高速度地保持某種情感的平衡；一方面轉向更深層的富有哲理的海洋中尋找其魅力。即將來臨的藝術時代是原作取代印刷品的時代，從而我國藝術作品的消費便可自我循環，象日本一樣，人們將扶植自己的東山、平山、加山、高山！

競爭會帶來藝術人才的互相交流，成集群式交替的出現。現在的藝術天才是在思想光芒相互撞擊中產生的，不是那種獨來獨往，隱居山林，所謂超脫世俗的士大夫可能具有的。要同其他對手抗衡必須依靠集群力量，並強調集群與其他群體區別的重要特點，以立足于藝術之園。在集群之中，每人必須強調自己的個性而不是共同點，這樣，我們期待的千花齊放，萬家爭鳴的局面才能出現。

在未來藝術園地的每一個角落裏，慈母般陽光總是帶着溫暖的心蹲在我們的周圍，是尊重她、擁護她，還是輕視她、拋棄她，選擇在於自己！

1984年寫于長沙瀟嶺