

Yeong Gill Kim essay:

The prevailing belief is that traditional Asian ideas are very similar to contemporary western ways of thinking. It is difficult to explain, however, if someone asks why that is so. The other side of the coin would be if someone would say that the concept of western contemporary art includes elements of Asian aesthetics. There is a clear line of separation between tradition and contemporary art in western art as in Asian art. The general belief is that contemporary western art began with impressionist art, since impressionists visualized their work from a subjective point of view, whereas artists in the tradition of realism believed that things are permanently set in our world, and thus worked from an objective point of view. Paul Cezanne divided the forms and colors of his landscapes and recognized the three basic geometrical shapes in nature: are cone, cube, and sphere. Vincent Van Gogh visualized air and clouds only with lines when in reality clouds do not have lines. Yet why do Van Gogh's clouds attract and impress us more than real clouds? Perhaps he touches the place where such clouds exist is in our mind. We feel and decipher this invisible essence within them.

We might notice that our spirit embodies irrational elements of sub-conscious as found in Freud's work and Dadaist concept. When Marcel Duchamp exhibited a porcelain urinal in 1917, he meant it to be anti-art. In other words, he was reacting against traditional western art. Broadly speaking, we can also mention that Dadaism, Objecthood and Minimalism, which still influence contemporary art, are departures from the reasoned interpretation of reality. In this context, I'm arguing that minimal elements of minimalist art can be regarded as fundamental elements of hidden reality. I believe that western contemporary art has only been able to keep revolutionizing its creative direction because most of the western contemporary artists have relied on subliminal elements such as subconscious abstraction and inconsistency.

If expressing an inner state of mind is indispensable in creating contemporary western art, how can it be specifically related to the traditional aesthetics of Asian art? Interestingly enough, it is the core idea of Asian aesthetics to express a constantly changing state of our mind and its mysteries. The same idea has also been considered the accepted barometer of contemporary arts. The principle of Spirit Resonance and Bone Method focuses on invisible and inner essence of reality rather than visible reality. This is because Asians interpret things in reality as constantly mutating entities.

According to key concept of the Bone Method, artists are expected to express forms not as completely manifested but as originating from a living force which is continuously transforming. Someone might ask why Bone Method anticipates space as an originating entity rather than completed one. While traditional western paintings reveal the permanently fixed space, Asian brush

paintings done by the Bone Method let their spaces change themselves. If it is impossible for artists to express enough about space, isn't it better to simply trigger viewers' imagination and let them appreciate as much as they can by themselves?

Although people often understand Bone Method as a method for foundation or frame, it is more about vital energy or dynamic and regenerating life force which make us realize change is the only permanence. In this context, tendency and implication are important concepts for Bone Method since tendency means characteristics that seek to undergo continuous change by themselves and implication signifies composition that space takes to induce tendency.

Although people say the empty space in Asian brush paintings is imaginary space, it is rather the invisible space generated by special implication in the painting. Let's say we take a space which is 100 percent. If we articulate 50 percent of the space, the remaining 50 percent will be empty space. This implication makes the empty space much more expressive than delineated one. When someone says the significance of emptiness is very powerful, he means its implication is very successful and its way of revealing Spirit Resonance is well achieved. This is not about visible reality but about invisible and fundamental reality which is based on emotional and mental experience.

People have been witnessing the original and creative energy that have been provided to contemporary artists by conceptual ideas beyond tangible and visible reality. Minimalist Art that reveals interpreting of things in minimal form is one of those examples. Postmodern works of art express unexpected vitality that is similar to Spirit Resonance and Bone Method in Asian Brush Painting. They also illustrate the concepts of Deconstructivism, Improvisation and Inconsistency which are not connected to western traditional art. I'd like to argue that the deconstructive approach is very similar to Zen philosophy and Taoism in the way they deconstruct things to see them differently than they are constructed. This is connected to their beliefs that presence exists in absence and form exists with non-form. Postmodern Art demonstrates a similar space structure to Bone Method's and Spirit Resonance's in that all of them maximize the impact of a shocking experience by letting different elements unexpectedly meet and clash to create conflict. Basically both are the same in the sense that they trigger vitality and power.

In sum, since the Impressionists, Western contemporary art has moved closer and closer to the traditional Asian concept of art. Based on that, I believe I also can propose that Asian traditional concept of art is contemporary in its essence. Unaware of this fact, Asians believe their contemporary art has been always influenced by Western art. They understand modernization to go in opposite direction to their tradition

and underestimate their traditional art. I insist we need to remind people in Asia that there exists traditional Asian concept in Western contemporary art.

Although we have regarded Asian concept simply as traditional matter, it's time for us to approach Asian ideas with a more respectful and productive point of view.