The Value of the Information Carrier- As An Artwork

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Abstract

In this essay, it will start from the motivation of "book as an artist" and my own experience - the field of mural painting in ancient Chinese traditional painting, discussing its forms and value generally. In addition, under the impact of contemporary electronic media, the state of different information containers- the symbiosis, multiplication, and the process of thinking, had been transformed from images to physic, material work. Moreover, as a result, it will be emphasized especially during the whole process of elaboration that the works which are created as sculptures, are all made by the same manufacturing technique and material to create a series of works that are interconnected while, at the same time, independent individuals in TOPOLOGICAL in the network. The group of cubes are a kind of personal reflection which is caused by the information container of different times, namely the ancient time of China and the modern one. Morphologically, this work is not a book in the traditional sense but rather explores the spirit of the book, so as to create a set of miniature abstract physical sculptures or pages. Conceptually, this group of sculptures questions what form a published book might take, and also explores its materiality and structure, showing the reflection on the artistic value in the publishing area and representing the spirit of books.

Keywords

Book; Information carrier; Chinese art practice; Rhizome.

1. Introduction: Motivation form Art as a book (Dither Roth, Yongping Huang and Dunhuang frescoes)

The initial inspiration for the idea of an information container began with one of the course sessions- a book as an artwork. It motivated me that a book is not only a tool for recording, but also could be a piece of art that demonstrates the concept of an artist's personal emotion, a reflection of the essential events happening in artist ages. This freedom of text pushes the threshold of "physical books". It becomes a neutral container that can exist in any form and structure (Gilbert, 2016). Given the process of art, artists always combine their own aesthetics and knowledges of materiality to create published artworks.

According to Diether's artwork- literary sausage, can be viewed as an appropriate example. Since 1950s, "books" has always been forcing Roth to make more art productions. Then the question about "what is book?" makes him explore boundaries between art and daily life, even the medium itself, revolting the nature of art (Suzuki et al., 2013). For the reason of that, it is obviously that he broke the previous stereotype of books, communication tool, altered the nature of the book as a series of flat pages that hold information, and instead cut up, mashed and formed them into a mass or body- the information still there but inaccessible as a mean of communication that had been transformed flat documents into a body with a stronger visual impact. In a sense, it pioneered the limitation of finished media system (Suzuki et al., 2013).

Although Roth denied that his book was influenced by the Fluxus style which has the "anti-art" attitude with humor and irony as the main body encouraging artist to use the random items in

their art experiment (Tate, 2020), let alone other styles such as Op art , pop and so on. It is undeniable that Roth's artwork implements the randomness that is a character forming Fluxus style: breaking the rules of the concept of the book as only a form of information container - only the plane has no three-dimensionality and materiality (Tate, 2020).

Dieter Roth. Literature Sausage (Literaturwurst). 1986. Published 1961-70 (30.5 x 17 x 9 cm)

Moreover, as a work of art, books can also convey the author's contemplation, a point of expression with strong emotions. It is no longer a cold transmission machine- purely delivering formal communicating information, such as a guidebook, but a transmission route with Humanity– the idea that creators wantto irrational narrate.

At the same time, such transmission is exactly in line with the meaning of the book itself-an information container and transforms the ordinary text transmission form into a more abstract visual form. The installation "Chinese Painting History and Brief History of Western Modern Art Washed in a Washing Machine for Two Minutes" was put forwarded by Huang Yongping: A Chinese artist, who mashed two books together that are art history book of China and Western art history, puts them through a washing machine to become a pulped mass, which was then exhibited in a display of Chinese tea box and glass. This work shows the endless and meaningless bickering of different viewpoints in the Chinese and Western art theory toward the end of the twentieth century: the process of making paper pulp made the collision of two grand culture traditions and the illegible remains captured the complexity and fuzziness in the intercultural dialogue (Cahan et al., 2012).

Huang Yongping. Chinese Painting History and Brief History of Western Modern Art Washed in a Washing Machine for Two Minutes. 1987

As an art practitioner, I may think from the artwork itself, just like the two artists mentioned above, and explore the meaning of the information contained and published through a form of artwork. I am particularly drawn to mural painting.

Mural painting, as an ancient and traditional painting, plays an important role as information carrier, no matter in ancient or modern time. The reason of that it is an art that promotes Buddhist thought in early time, the content is mainly Buddhist scriptures. The definition category of the Buddhist scripture is to pay attention to the combination of philosophy and theology, which is good at expressing content with abstract concepts. Then the murals provide a visual platform to transform and spread these abstract contents. Moreover, artistic creation as a medium realizes the possibility of this transformation (Duan, 1980).

In China, there's a saying that art comes from life. It means that all visible matter must be completed based on profound real-life experience. Therefore, in addition to the Buddha on the mural, there will also be many supporters who donated their fortune for temple, showing their faith. These people were named people in the local real life at that time. They not only painted their appearance characteristics, but also had more detailed titles.

These details directly reflect the real people and their activities, and they are realistic. These details also can be influenced by different dynasties, recording to the value of painting styles of different dynasties (Duan, 1980). Moreover, the customs of life at that time-such as the costumes, shape and layout positions of the supporter. Those strong evidences can be used to verify the historian or artist's speculation on Dunhuang culture, or even the speculation of ancient Chinese civilization. Hence, it plays a role as a container of information in contemporary society as well. The information carrier in different ages differs from the one originally in ancient times, for mural painting was born as a function which must serve religion-Buddhism and power bureaucracy, instead of history and art like the modern one.

Dunhuang fresoces.Anonymous

Dunhuang fresoces.Anonymous

2. Theory of the Rhizome- Gilles Louis Rene Deleuze

Nowadays, with the communication technology, murals painting is gradually being less important as a form of teaching tool, because the development of science and technology makes digital technology possible. Digital technology has a large capacity and fast propagation speed which become
advantages as an information container. Like paper, murals belong to the old media, but the new media of digital technology represented by the Internet has changed from revolutionary things to everyday phenomena, taking away the position of old media. It seems that there is only existed the competitive relationship between the new media and the old media. However, Deleuze's rhizome theory gave me new inspiration for the relationship between them. Maybe they are not purely competitive, and there are also complex and pluralistic relationships including inheritance, symbiosis, or reproduction. It is more profound and long-a pluralistic or rootless relationship, such as symbiosis or proliferation (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988).
In Deleuze's theory, general things have both linear space and flow space in a changing state. Those mix of the two states creates space. Such a space can be measured according to the speed of the two states, and the two states constantly touch, interfere and even combine inside, forming a multi-dimensional relationship within the space. The free flowing but relatively regular nature of the pluralistic relationship has formed a nomadic aesthetic, which is of great significance for digital media communication.
Apart from them, there is a third kind of book, such as the nomadic aesthetic thinking, which cannot be analyzed by the dialectical logic of the bifurcation in the rhizome theory, and it also transcends the characteristics of multiple relations (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988). This makes me wonder: They may belong to evolutionary relationships in the early days, that is, the emergence of paper promoted the flow of information and laid the foundation for the later development of digital media. After the development of digital technology in the later period, this information fluidity was accelerated again, making information explosive growth (Anderson, 1999). From another perspective, it means that the capacity of the information container has increased, and old information containers that cannot adapt to this change, such as paper and murals, will be gradually eliminated. In this way, the relationship between the old and new information containers is transformed into a competitive relationship.
However, because the amount of information used is not the only factor that determines the value of containers, there are factors such as art and history that make them valuable. Therefore, in the later and even future development, the new and old information containers may present a parallel development, or there may be opportunities for mutual integration. Through the development, the relationship between the old and new information containers keeps changing. This is also the main point of my creation.

3. Sculpture of the cubes: Virtual, Moldability, Physical

After associating these elements, I decided to recombine two substances into different patterns which were diverse from their usual states, therefore, I embodied the thoughts on information record of different times, murals, paper printing, and even Internet communications. After a series of experiments and improvements, I completed a set of sculptures with small cubes as the main body to link to the theme of this paper.

The practice was made of plaster and Xuan paper. Xuan paper is an indispensable material in Chinese painting. In the study of modern murals, Xuan paper was chosen as an alternative to wall materials and to create murals because of its good ductility and toughness. Moreover, in the modern way of publishing, murals and paper have similar fate: the gradually decline. For those reason, I chose it as a material representative of the old information carrier. Besides, the operation of plaster comes from my experience in the plaster workshop. It can be shaped or even filled into different images because of its extreme softness. Including square or soft shapes, it also can be contrasted with the texture of paper. In history, plaster was as old as paper, and the time it was used can be traced back to the previous civilization (Scott, 2003). In this way, the shaping of the two textures fits well with the theme of "symbiosis" which suggests the development of two different information containers.

Those cubes size is regular, with neat shape as a cube which implies the accuracy of electronic technique. Then in the making process, it will be filled with Xuan paper inside, and the plaster and Xuan paper become an entirety. Therefore, the surface of cube possesses a combination pattern of two different materials, showing a different representation of information carriers from ancient times and modern times. In the last exhibition moment, these small-sized sculptures will be place as a point type layout imitating network distribution.

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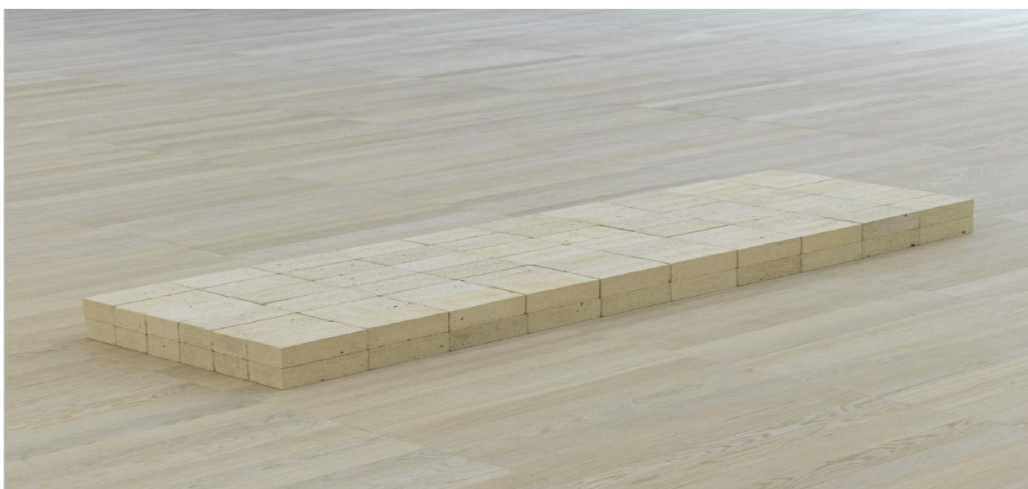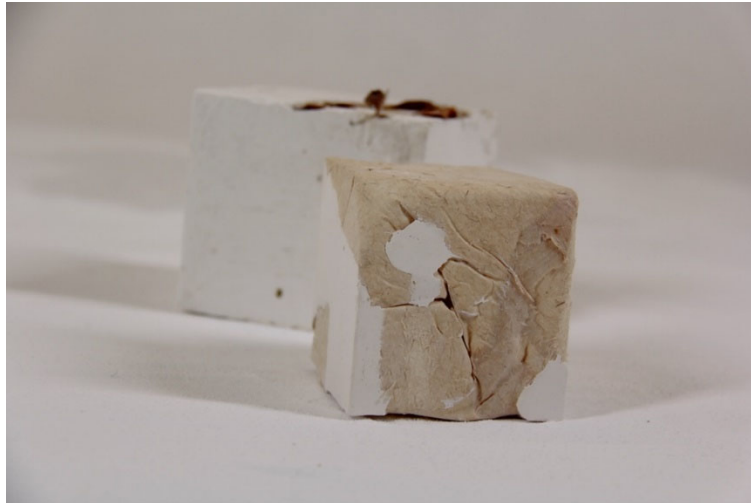

Figure 1. Carl Andre. Equivalent VIII. 1996.

Suixin Zhang. Trace-2-1. 2019.

Suixin Zhang. Trace-2-2. 2019.

4. Conclusion

This work possesses an artwork identity showing from the combination of small blocks. I am intended to arouse people's thought on the replacement of the old and the new with arguments combining the above-mentioned artist and rhizome theory: Will old ones significantly be replaced by new ones? Perhaps, dull information container will be replaced in practical terms. Substitute is a phenomenon of natural selection, which is normal and unaffected. However, the old objects should be diverse, even anything is granted with new possibilities in different fields. For example, books can play both the role of record tool and of artwork and those pluralistic nature will rejuvenate both.

Acknowledgments

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