

陈丹青等谈“荷兰黄金时代名作”展：反倒是古典艺术不易过时

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“伦勃朗、维米尔、哈尔斯：莱顿收藏荷兰黄金时代名作展”在上海开幕当天，大型巡回系列讲座第一场在上海龙美术馆西岸馆开讲。讲座嘉宾陈丹青和尹朝阳以《我与古典大师》为题，呼应了世界艺术史上的荷兰17世纪“黄金时代”。



讲座现场



《纺织女工》，维米尔

艺术大师可以从后人的态度判定，但“古典”却不是一个容易下定论的词。

艺术家陈丹青在讲座中表示：当我们笼统说古典艺术的时候，其实我们几乎没有说出什么。我们得分清楚，古典艺术是指文艺复兴、巴洛克还是指19世纪？因为这些都可以笼统地称为古典艺术。另外我们不能随便说现实主义，现实主义是从库尔贝开始的，此前没有这个概念；我们说巴洛克也要分几个地方，不能一概而论。但古典从字面上说，时间是先于现在的，他们的眼界远没有现在开阔，知识非常有限，但能做出非常重要的画。当时的中国，董其昌在松江这一带，离我们现在的地方很近，地方非常小，到南京都很远。那个时候的艺术圈非常小，一小群人在一个小地方待一辈子，有一些来往，现在天南海北地交流，是不可想象的事情。其实科技情况、交通情况、学习情况在不同时代的艺术是起很大作用的，它会葬送前一个阶段的情况。而学生时代逃掉美术史课的尹朝阳也渐渐意识到了古典艺术的重要性，它最大的作用，“其实是在学艺术的过程当中，提供了一种坐标”。

艾略特在《传统与个人才能》中写道，“有人说：‘死去的作家离我们很远，因为我们比他们知道得多得多。’确是这样，他们正是我们所知道的。”艺术也是如此。有时候我们会断然说学识丰富会消磨艺术的敏感度，但艺术家还是应该知道得愈多愈好，了解艺术的源起与流变，清楚自己的位置，只要不妨害他必需的感受性和必需的懒散性。



《空山梵宇》，董其昌



《萨拉引夏甲见亚伯拉罕》（Sarah Leading Hagar to Abraham），
卡斯帕·奈切（Casper Netscher），莱顿收藏

在讲座伊始，陈丹青就此次展览内容也表达了相似的看法。“这次展览三分之二是其他艺术家的作品，是比较完整的17世纪荷兰绘画的集成。”“完整”与“系统”是陈丹青在提到美术馆和博物馆时多次强调的两个词。据他介绍，国外有一种博物馆脉络非常清楚，地理上按几大洲分区，时间上从古代到近古到现代，系统性强，比如大都会博物馆、大英博物馆和冬宫博物馆。脉络清楚很重要，从曾祖父到祖父到爸爸、儿子、孙子，清清楚楚地交代体系，能让观众形成清楚连续的印象。但这样的展览太少，此次展览以伦勃朗、维米尔、哈尔斯为线，区域特色和时间已经很清楚了。



《写作被打断的学者》（Scholar Interrupted at His Writing），
格利特·德奥（Gerrit Dou），莱顿收藏

回到上世纪五六十年代，少年时期的陈丹青，没有画册，只有一本黑白印刷的傅雷著《艺术哲学》。他从中了解到伦勃朗、维米尔、米开朗琪罗等西方艺术家，发烧发狂般地迷恋，“做梦都会叫伦勃朗的名字”。对比当年，现在文化交流越来越频繁，欧洲的原作有些都拿到中国来展览，甚至达·芬奇的原作（熊头素描）也首次进入中国。但是那种“热”却冷了。人们不是不知道这些大师，但知道的艺术师太多了，很难有封闭时代那种疯狂。上海博物馆《清明上河图》展出的时候人们会排五六个小时的队来看，如果《蒙娜丽莎》可以来中国，相信也会出现同样的盛况。然而这只是到此一游，最多拿出手机来拍照。这叫博物馆时代、旅游时代，在这个时代艺术与看的人是否还有过去那种真挚的关系？现在伦勃朗来了，大好的事情，却出现时间、文化上的错位，但伦勃朗还是要来，而且来的还不够、还不多，来的顺序性还不够强，他在时间里的脉络、在文化里的因果我们总是没有机会想清楚。



熊头素描，列昂纳多·达芬奇，莱顿收藏

错位空间里，古典艺术似乎已经失去了生存的土壤，“过时论”不可避免。陈丹青说印象派过时了，二战以后的抽象艺术过时了，甚至最近90年代以来像达明安·赫斯特也过时了，他们正在过时，因为有一个时的概念笼罩着他们。有位一度非常权威的批评家宣布至少具象绘画已死，将来是抽象派的天下，但是80年代我刚到美国的时候发现这已经过时了。这一百多年的艺术因为有一个时的概念，所以艺术呈现阶段性，长则30年短则10年，过时的速度越来越快。反倒是古典艺术不太容易过时，最早的艺术最难过时，比如埃及艺术、古希腊艺术、罗马艺术，还有中国的先秦艺术、汉代艺术，大概我们离他们足够遥远，有些艺术到今天还能给你提供新的感受新的视觉冲击，甚至还能给你带来灵感，例如马蒂斯就到非洲艺术寻找灵感。赶潮流、赶时髦，越可能过时得快，经典的、永恒的东西反而不会过时。

艾略特认为，一位艺术家，“必须明了欧洲的心灵，本国的心灵——他到时候自会知道这比他自己私人的心灵更重要几倍的——是一种会变化的心灵，而这种变化是一种发展，这种发展决不会在路上抛弃什么东西，也不会把莎士比亚、荷马，或马格达钵时期的作画人的石画，都变成老朽。” 每一位新的艺术家，都是以前艺术家的总和，古典艺术事实上已经融入后代艺术家的基因，无论正视与否，都会在不同的时期开花结果。



《餐前祷告》（The Prayer Before the Meal），
扬·斯丁（Jan Steen），莱顿收藏

The Paper

23 September 2017

Li Yadi

“Chen Danqing and Others on Masterpieces from the Dutch Golden Age: *Classical Art is Hard to Define*”

The first session of the Touring Lecture Series at the Shanghai Long Museum, West Bund took place on the same day as the opening of the exhibition “Rembrandt, Vermeer and Hals in the Dutch Golden Age: Masterpieces from The Leiden Collection.” Guests Chen Danqing and Yin Zhaoyang gave a talk entitled “The Classical Masters and I,” in an effort to contextualize the 17th century Dutch Golden Age in the history of art.

Art masters can be judged by later generations, but the term “classical” is hard to define

“We talk about classical art in general, but we can hardly define it,” artist Chen Danqing declared. “Let us try to be precise. Does classical art mean Renaissance, Baroque, or 19th century? Any of these can arguably be referred to as classical periods. We cannot simply say realism either. Realism was started by Courbet, and we know that no such concept existed previously. We also claim that Baroque art should be divided into several regions, and thus cannot be generalized. The only certainty is that, in terms of timeline, classical art happened before us. With limited knowledge and understanding of the world, these artists produced important works. At that time in China, for instance, Dong Qichang lived in the Songjiang region, which is close to where we are right now. The place was very small, and far away from Nanjing. Back then, art circles were rare and limited in size. People would stay in small places all their lives. They might enjoy some kind of communication with each other, but certainly nothing like what we are able to do nowadays. In fact, the impact of science, technology, transportation, and learning has greatly varied depending on the period in history. These forces can literally make or break achievements of the past. Yin Zhaoyang, who happened to disregard art history classes as a student, gradually realized the importance of classical art. Its most important role is indeed to provide a reference point in the very process of learning about art.”

In “Tradition and the Individual Talent” T.S. Eliot wrote: “Someone said: ‘The dead writers are remote from us because we *know* so much more than they did.’ Precisely, and they are that which we know.” Art is the same. Sometimes we claim with certainty that knowledge will kill artistic sensitivity, yet also believe that artists should be educated, understand the origins and evolution of art, and be aware of their own position, as long as these capacities do not hinder the necessary receptiveness or encourage laziness.

At the beginning of the lecture, Chen Danqing expressed similar views on the content of the exhibition: “Works by different artists represent about two-thirds of this show, which is a comprehensive collection of Dutch paintings in the 17th century.” “Comprehensive” and “systematic” are two words that Chen Danqing uses frequently when talking about galleries and art institutions. According to him, foreign museums such as the Metropolitan Museum, the British Museum, and the Hermitage Museum organize their exhibits with great precision and rigor; for example, geographically organized by continents, or chronologically from ancient to modern. The sequencing is clear and important. From great-grandfather to grandfather, father, son, and grandson, the system is explicitly explained, allowing the audience to form a coherent

and continuous impression. Such exhibitions, however, are quite rare. The present one uses Rembrandt, Vermeer, and Hals as the main anchors, while the regional characteristics and historical timelines are very clear.

Back in the 50s and 60s of the previous century, Chen Danqing, a teenager, did not own any picture book. All that he had was a black and white print of “Art Philosophy” by Fu Lei. He learned about Rembrandt, Vermeer, Michelangelo, and other Western artists from that publication, and fell madly in love. “I would call Rembrandt’s name in my dreams,” he said. In comparison, we enjoy much more cultural exchanges in this day and age. Some of the European masters’ original works have been on display here in China, and even an authentic sketch by Da Vinci (*Study of a Bear’s Head*) has come for the first time. That being said, the “frenzy” seems to be gone. People are certainly aware of these masters, but there are so many artists to know about that it has become difficult to replicate the kind of excitement that prevailed when information was harder to access. When *Along the River During the Qingming Festival* was exhibited at the Shanghai Museum, people would queue for five or six hours to buy a ticket. If the *Mona Lisa* were to visit China, something similar would undoubtedly take place. However, some people would go simply to take a picture. Should we be referring to this as “the era of museums” or “the era of tourism”? Do people still seek a genuine connection with art as they used to? Now, Rembrandt is here and that’s great. Whether or not this is happening at the best time remains unclear, but he should still come and come more often – especially given that we are still trying to establish the classical timeframe and figure out the master’s impact on culture.

In today’s misplaced narrative, classical art seems to have lost its standing. The “theory of outdatedness” becomes inevitable. Chen Danqing recounted that Impressionism was once deemed *passé*, that abstract art was described as obsolete after WWII, and that even as recently as the 90s Damien Hirst became “out of fashion.” These trends and artists are considered “outdated” because time is a concept that works against them. A prominent art critic once declared that “figurative expressionism” was dead and that the future belonged to abstract art. Yet when I landed in America in the 80s, I realized that it too was dead. Art has always been governed by time and as such defined periodically – sometimes 30 years for period, sometimes 10. And it is becoming antiquated at an even more rapid pace now. In contrast, classical art is unlikely to suffer from premature outdatedness; especially its earliest forms – Egyptian art, ancient Greek and Roman art, pre-Qin and Han Dynasty art. We are so far removed from them. It can still elicit new experiences, new visual impact, and even inspiration. For example, Matisse drew inspiration from African art. Fashionable things are much more likely to become outdated fast. But classical and eternal things will never be obsolete.

According to T.S. Eliot, an artist “must be aware that the mind of Europe—the mind of his own country—a mind which he learns in time to be much more important than his own private mind—is a mind which changes, and that this change is a development which abandons nothing *en route*, which does not superannuate either Shakespeare, or Homer, or the rock drawing of the Magdalenian draughtsmen.” Every new artist represents the sum of all his predecessors, and the fact that classical art has actually integrated into the DNA of future generations of artists – whether they admit it or not – is what ensures that different periods can flourish on their own.