

‘Sandro Botticelli and Women’

Youyou Wang’s Virtual Exhibition Project

Courtauld Institute of Art, UoL

March, 2021

## **‘Botticelli and Women’**

### **Exhibition Proposal**

#### **Introduction**

In response to the feminist and transfeminist movement ‘Non Una Di Meno’, the exhibition *Botticelli and Women* will play a significant role in reclaiming female subjectivity and the space taken away from women every day. In Italy, many serious female issues still exist. Among them, the worst one is that the rapes and femicides happening every day are now considered ordinary and even, irremediably, as a responsibility of women. Second, there is the violence of institutional patriarchy that in court punishes women who break the blackmail of domestic violence by revoking custody; that criminalises women who report harassment, abuse or violence; that in hospitals systematically prevents women from deciding freely on their bodies and lives; that sometimes is replicated in schools and universities when knowledge serves to legitimise gender roles and hierarchies, despite higher education has been equally accessible to everyone since the second World War. Moreover, women’s bodies are treated as the breeding ground for profit and exploitation. The movement ‘Non Una Di Meno’ has been and is still rebelling against these issues by strikes every year on 8th and 9th March.

The exhibition *Botticelli and Women* will give exposure and voice to those whose living conditions were at risk of being invisible in history, which echoes the claim of the feminist movement. By comparing Botticelli’s profiled portraits and paintings, including female figures who perform actively, together with the social-historical context provided by the domestic setting, the exhibition intends to ask a broad question: can we detect any female agency in Botticelli’s art; and encourages the spectators to reflect more on life circumstances of women.

The exhibition will be placed in the Palazzo Medici Riccardi, Florence, that men fully controlled in the fifteenth century and that could have been a rusticated stone prison for women, given that women were enclosed in the private realm for most of their lives. However, the exhibition does not aim to restore faithfully the circumstance surrounding Renaissance women, but to challenge the patriarchy by taking place on the ground floor where the male members of the Medici Family did banking and won social prestige in the fifteenth century. The site staging the exhibition used

to be dominated by men, but now it is filled with female paintings and highlights the possibility of female agency in Renaissance Italy. When female spectators gather at the site, the exhibition empowers women so that everyone can feel they have the strength to escape the blackmail of domestic, institutional, judicial and economic violence. They can all experience a potentiality of liberation from which they do not want to go back. In this case, the exhibition can be seen as part of the political act of reclaiming women's history and supporting women's rights.

Thanks to the international city, Florence, the exhibition welcomes everyone, regardless of their ethnic, cultural and educational backgrounds, in the hope of breaking the isolation and the existing power relations. To celebrate the achievements of women, there will be a special treat on 8th March, International Women's Day: women are free to entry, and each can bring one guest.

The exhibition will function practically as well as academically in terms of the discussion on Renaissance women's portraits and female agency. The historian Joan Kelly-Gadol's essay *Did Women Have a Renaissance* is an original and provocative reconsidering of the powers of Renaissance women and the quality of historical experience from various aspects: the regulation of female sexuality, women's economic and political roles and cultural roles, and the sex-role system displayed or advocated in the symbolic products of the society, its art, literature, and philosophy. The scholar challenged Jacob Burckhardt's opinion that 'women stood on a footing of perfect equality with men' by emphasising Renaissance women's greater dependency upon men. The art historian Patricia Simons deployed Kelly-Gadol's insights to shape an argument about female profiled portraits, the specific form that visually constructed the sexual difference and reveals how men and women could operate as viewers. In her monography on the inception of the Italian Renaissance nude, Jill Burke unveiled that beauty, as established criteria, was fundamentally a Renaissance female attribute and also a woman's task. At the same time, men were taught how to judge the beauty of women and art. Burke's idea inspires the first section's display strategy that the male sitters in frontal portraits are gazing at the women in profile on the opposite wall.

Among the previous exhibitions that include Botticelli's female portraits, *Virtue and Beauty* in the National Gallery of Art, Washington treated the female portraits, no matter in profile or in front, as virtuous objects for the male gaze and rejected any female agency. The exhibition *At Home in Renaissance Italy* in the V&A museum reinforced the domesticity of *Portrait of a Lady known as Smeralda Bandinelli* by placing it in a space that it originally occupied as the curator presumed. This idea is adopted by the exhibition *Botticelli and Women*. However, instead of exclusively restoring a unity of the painting and the space, *Botticelli and Women* slightly adjusts the format into two separate rooms: one reconstitutes the character of a *camera* to provide a social-historical context of Renaissance women's life and their marriage; the other displays the female frontal portrait for being reexamined in a new visual narrative. Recent accounts of Renaissance female identity tend to conceive women as conscious agents. In 2011, Simons argued that women's sexual agency can be perceived in terms of active reception of the male seed. Following the scholar's idea, the exhibition aims at reconsidering the possibility of female agency through Botticelli's art. Rather than merely providing a certain answer, the exhibition means to start a dialogue between Botticelli's female portraits and the public, and leave some space for the spectator to ponder.

### **Three Sections: Women in Profile; A Women in her Prime; Female Agency?**

After passing through the garden, the spectator will enter the exhibition space. The first section 'Women in Profile' presents two groups of portraits: women wearing finely embroidered garments and luxurious accessories were portrayed in profile, being subject to the spectator's gaze, while all the frontal male portraits are looking out at the spectator actively. These two groups are hung on two opposite walls. When the spectator gazes at the female profiled portraits, the male figures on the opposite wall are staring at those virtuous female figures as well. However, as static objects looking elsewhere, those female sitters decorously avert their eyes and present a face available to scrutiny. This strong visual narrative is inclined to evoke the spectator's curiosity of the polarity enacted by Botticelli between male and female portraits. And it may stir his/her/their emotions, possibly uncomfortableness and sympathy especially when the spectator realises that the women and the spectator himself/herself/themselves are constantly being gazed at by the men. In the profiled portraits, the women's body languages that have been

of performative value, are likely to reflect, define and maintain their identities with which the spectator is possibly concerned. The female identity of Italian Renaissance women will be further explored and clarified in the next section.

As Judith Butler puts it, gender is ‘an originating activity incessantly taking place’, a construct, a process and a project occurring in a culture. Fifteenth-century Florentine women lived in a culture that placed a significant premium on children, motherhood and chastity as the ultimate mark of womanhood. The second room presents the spectator with the social-historical aspect of how a Renaissance woman’s identity was constructed. The construction mostly happened in a domestic context, because the common Florentine opinion of women remaining in the private realm was essential to ensure the honour and virtue of the women and their families. Besides that, women did not have complicated professional identities like men, and thus their activities were mainly limited to their role in the home, especially in the *camera* (bed chamber). That also explains why the second section will be placed in this specific room which used to be an actual *camera* but is not anymore. Therefore, the second room will reconstruct the character of a Renaissance *camera* that featured in fifteenth-century women’s life by displaying images and surviving furniture.

‘A Woman in Her Prime’ is the theme of the second room where the spectator’s attention will be drawn to the expectations of a woman in her prime years. At the entrance of the room, the print *The Steps of A Woman* will be positioned in a glass or acrylic display case. Even without recognising the inscriptions on it, the spectator can read from the image that only after a woman gave birth to a child did she reach the top of her life. This point will be emphasised by the surviving fifteenth-century bed dominating the central space. When a woman was unmarried, she was expected to be not only decorous, but accessible to men. This fact will be conveyed by the cycle of *Nastagio degli Onesti*, which were originally set into the *spalliere* behind the *cassoni*. In fifteenth-century Italy, the furniture and images on them, though commissioned by men, were imparting moral messages targeted at women at home. The series of *Nastagio degli Onesti* functioned in the same way. While the first three scenes are hung together as a group in the exhibition to indicate that women should be kind and tractable to men as Boccaccio’s story admonished, the last scene, placed above a *cassone*, informs the very nature of the fifteenth-

century Florentine marriage, which was the union of families, rather than that of individuals as today's marriage. By interpreting Botticelli's capacity of visualising violence to evoke women's fear, the spectator will possibly understand why fifteenth-century Florentine women behaved well in accordance with men's preference. The surviving girdle and the image depicting that people are selling girdles, may inspire the spectator to ask what the girdle was used for, especially when it is associated with the other exhibits. Is the girdle simply such a popular decoration that it would be sold in the free market, or a symbol of Renaissance marriage, namely women's chastity and husband's control over his wife? In short, the second room intends to express multiple social expectations of Renaissance women to be accessible, obedient and fertile, and provide some clues to the question presumably raised in the first section why women were portrayed in profile, and invite the spectator to ponder how women were identified within the male discourse and how art played its role in it.

On moving into the final section titled 'Female Agency?', the spectator will be met with four Botticelli's paintings on the same wall that all include a female figure gazing out the pictorial plane. Among them, *Portrait of a Lady known as Smeralda Bandinelli* is placed at the centre. The handkerchief in her hand and tightly bound hair under white cap mark her as a married matron, like the female sitters in the first section, but the spectator may notice that she is turning towards him/her/them and the lady's plain and transparent overgarment, probably appropriate for indoors, forms a striking contrast to the ostentatious attire dressed by women in profile displayed in the first section. Moreover, she is confidently staring out of her window, making eye contact with the spectator. This unexpectedly bold image significantly contrasts to the female profiled portraits in which all the women's gaze are pointed outside the frame. Perhaps section one has left an initial impression on the spectator that the averted eyes could have been a sign of feminine modesty. When the spectator steps into the third space, a question might occur in his/her/their mind what Smeralda Bandinelli's gaze meant and why Botticelli depicted her in a disparate manner?

On the opposite wall is Botticelli's *Venus and Mars*. This display strategy creates a new visual narrative: Smeralda Bandinelli is constantly gazing at the naked body of Mars who is utterly lost in sleep. In other words, Mars' appealing body of muscularity and porcelaneous quality is

appreciated and objectified not only by the spectator, but also by Smeralda Bandinelli. When provided with a specific object to gaze at, Smeralda seems to perform actively. The newly-created context encourages the spectator to muse on the title question of whether we can detect any female agency in Botticelli's art.

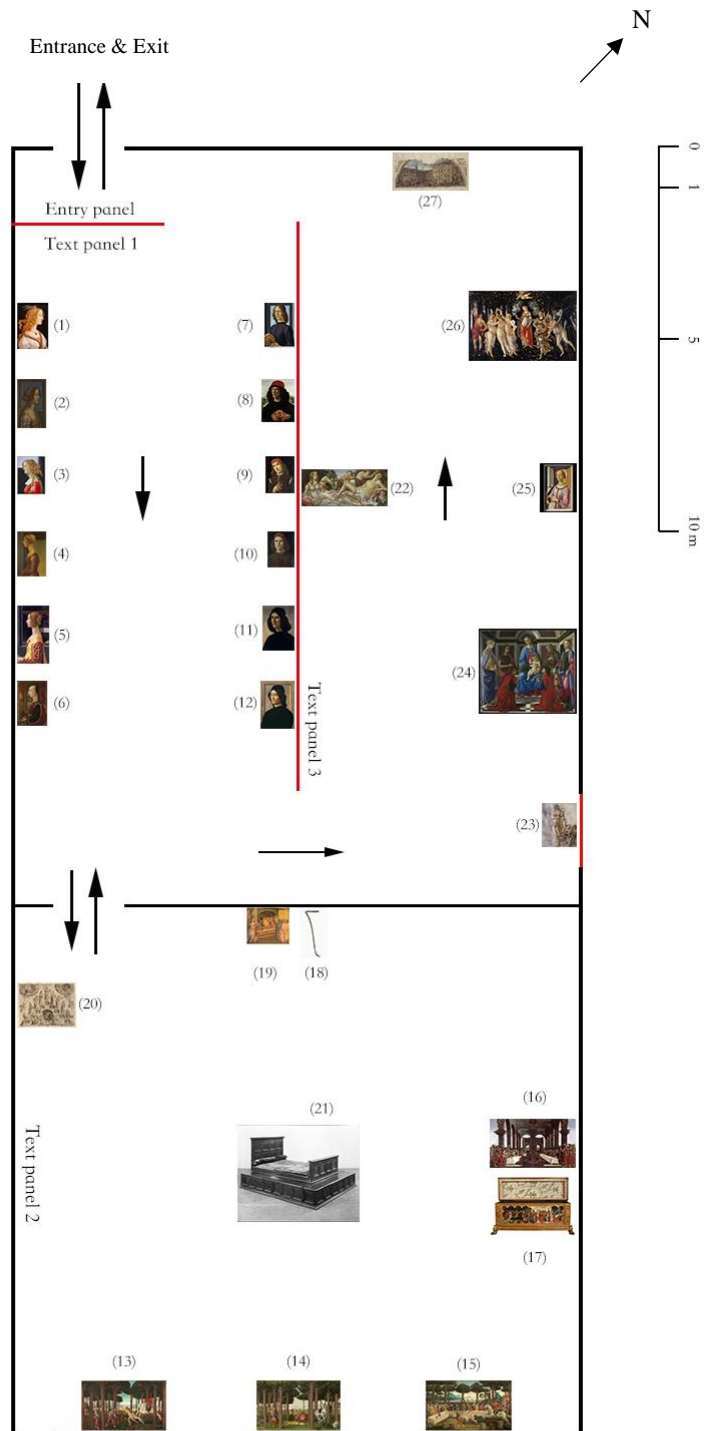
Probably the spectator will notice that most female sitters displayed in first and third sections are placed in the domestic setting, which echoes the *camera* reconstruction in the second room. At the end of the exhibition *Botticelli and Women* is a Renaissance urbanscape painting. It brings a new perspective to reconsider the women enclosed in the domestic realm, and a question might linger in his/her/their mind: if women in most cases could only look at the streets through windows, weren't they, as human beings who had self-consciousness, eager for extending their horizons?

Word count: 2098





# Proposed Layout of Exhibition



## Simulated Images of Room 1 and Room 3







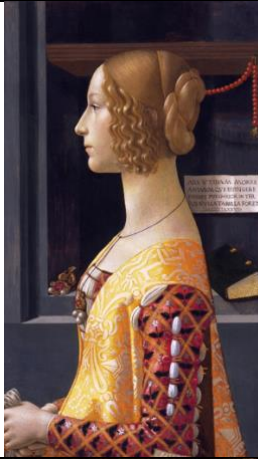



Room 1 (detail, looking from northwest to southeast)








Room 3 (detail, looking from southeast to northwest)





## List of Exhibits






No.	Caption	Exhibit
1	<p>Sandro Botticelli's Workshop  <i>Portrait of a Woman (Simonetta Vespucci?)</i>  c.1480-1485  tempera on panel  81.5 cm x 54.2 cm  Städelsches Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt am Main</p>	
2	<p>Sandra Botticelli's Workshop  <i>A Lady in Profile</i>  mid-1480s  tempera on wood  59.1 cm x 40 cm  National Gallery, London</p>	
3	<p>Sandro Botticelli's Workshop  <i>Portrait of a Woman (Simonetta Vespucci?)</i>  mid-1480s  tempera on wood  47.5 cm x 35 cm</p>	
4	<p>Sandro Botticelli  <i>Portrait of a Plainly Dressed Lady</i>  c. 1485  tempera on wood  61 cm x 40.5 cm  Palazzo Pitti, Florence</p>	





5	<p>Domenico Ghirlandaio  <i>Giovanna degli Albizzi Tornabuoni</i>  c. 1488-1490  tempera on panel  77 cm x 49 cm  Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid</p>		
6	<p>Filippo Lippi  <i>Woman with a Man at a Window</i>  c. 1438-1444  tempera on panel  64.1 cm x 41.9 cm  The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York</p>		
7	<p>Sandro Botticelli  <i>Portrait of a Young Man holding a Medallion</i>  c. 1485  tempera on panel  58.4 cm x 39.4 cm  Private Collection</p>		
8	<p>Sandro Botticelli  <i>Portrait of a Man with a Medal of Cosimo de' Medici</i>  c. 1474  tempera on panel  57,5 cm x 44 cm  Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence</p>		

9	<p>Sandra Botticelli  <i>Portrait of a Young Man</i>  1482-83  tempera on panel  41 x 31 cm  National Gallery of Art, Washington</p>		
10	<p>Sandro Botticelli  <i>Portrait of a Young Man</i>  c. 1483  tempera on panel  37.5 x 28.2 cm  National Gallery, London</p>		
11	<p>Sandro Botticelli  <i>Portrait of a Man</i>  c. 1490  tempera on canvas transferred from wood 49 cm x 35 cm  Private collection</p>		
12	<p>Sandro Botticelli  <i>Portrait of a Young Man</i>  1490s  tempera on Wood  57 cm x 39 cm  Musée du Louvre, Paris</p>		
13	<p>Sandro Botticelli  <i>Scenes from The Story of Nastagio degli Onesti: Nastagio in the Pine Forest of Ravenna</i>  c. 1483  mixed method on panel  83.5 cm x 142.5 cm  Museo del Prado, Madrid</p>		




14	<p>Sandro Botticelli</p> <p><i>Scenes from The Story of Nastagio degli Onesti: Nastagio Witnesses the Punishment of Guido degli Anastagi and his Beloved</i></p> <p>c. 1483</p> <p>mixed method on panel</p> <p>82.3 cm x 139 cm</p> <p>Museo del Prado, Madrid</p>	
15	<p>Sandro Botticelli</p> <p><i>Scenes from The Story of Nastagio degli Onesti: Banquet in the Pine Forest</i></p> <p>c. 1483</p> <p>mixed method on panel</p> <p>83.5 cm x 142.5 cm</p> <p>Museo del Prado, Madrid</p>	
16	<p>Sandro Botticelli</p> <p><i>Scenes from The Story of Nastagio degli Onesti: Wedding Feast</i></p> <p>c. 1483</p> <p>mixed method on panel</p> <p>83 cm x 142 cm</p> <p>Private Collection</p>	
17	<p>Studio of Giovanni Toscani,</p> <p>Cassone with scenes from 'The Decameron': The Tale of Ginevra, Bernabo and Ambrogiuolo</p> <p>c. 1420-25</p> <p>Private Collection</p>	

18	<p>Girdle for a Lady's Dress, c. 1375-1400. Italy, Siena?, 14th century.  Basse-taille enamel and gilding on silver, silver thread, gilt-silver buckle, cast and chased; overall: 236.5 x 2.9 x 0.6 cm, The Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland</p>	
19	<p>Master of the Madonna della Misericordia  <i>Saint Eligius in his Shop</i>  c. 1370  gilded, tempera on panel  35cm x 39cm  Musel del Prado, Madrid</p>	
20	<p>Nicolò Nelli  Copy after Cristofano Bertelli's The Steps of A Woman  c. 1560-1580  etching and engraving  37.8 cm x 50.1 cm  British Museum, London</p>	
21	<p>Bed from the Davanzati Palace, Florence  Second half of the 15th century  Walnut  H. (dais) 40.3 cm;  Gr. H. (bed at headboard) 103.8 cm;  Gr. W. (bed at headboard) 148.6 cm;  L. (bed) 224.8 cm  The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York</p>	
22	<p>Sandro Botticelli  <i>Venus and Mars</i>  c. 1485  tempera and oil on poplar  69.2 x 173.4 cm  National Gallery, London</p>	

23	<p>Sandro Botticelli  <i>Allegory of Abundance</i>  c. 1480-1485  paper  31.7cm × 25.2 cm  British Museum, London</p>		
24	<p>Sandro Botticelli  <i>Madonna and Child with Saints</i>  (Sant'Ambrogio Altarpiece)  c. 1470  tempera on panel  170 x 194 cm  Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence</p>		
25	<p>Sandro Botticelli  <i>Portrait of a Lady known as Smeralda Bandinelli</i>  c. 1470-1480  tempera on panel  65.7 cm × 41 cm  Victoria &amp; Albert Museum, London</p>		
26	<p>Sandro Botticelli  <i>Primavera</i>  c. 1482  tempera on panel  207 x 319 cm  Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence</p>		



27	<p>Giovanni Battista Caporali (?)</p> <p><i>View of the Porta Romana</i></p> <p>Early 16th century</p> <p>Fresco from Palazzo Pontano (dem.), Perugia,</p> <p>Now in Galleria Nazionale dell'Umbria, Perugia</p>	
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## **List of Text Panel**

Entry Panel: Botticelli and Women

Room 1: Women in Profile

Room 2: A Woman in her Prime

Room 3: Female Agency?

## Sample Text Panel

### Room 2: 'A Woman in her Prime'

Gender is now generally viewed as a social construct as much as a biological given. Renaissance women were constructed in accordance with the male needs and ideals of the specific society where women were conceived as being unable to protect male prerogatives. The Florentine fathers, brothers and husbands preferred their women to remain in the domestic realm, which was essential to ensure the honour and virtue of the women and their families. The furniture and images attached to them, though commissioned by male members, were always imparting moral messages targetted at women who spent most of their lives at home. The costly girdle, included in the dowry and bought by the bride's father, and the spalliere depicting scenes from the Old or New Testaments or vernacular literature, functioned in the same manner.

In Renaissance Florence, a woman's primary task was to serve as the vessel by which the lineage was maintained. In addition to the social and religious sexual ethic, the woman's function was reinforced by law. When a woman was married, her legal persona underwent changes into a mother (a social fiction) even without children and became *materfamilias* on their birth. In essence, a woman became *mater* not by giving birth but by marrying. Law attached her status to the legal marriage contract, not to the natural act of birth or the moment of conception. Thus it fell to the wife to safeguard a lineage's integrity, perpetuate it, and preserve its honour by premarital virginity and marital chastity. Moreover, a woman was considered as the means of attaching to the lineage by marriage allies from other Florentine families with desirable attributes.

Word count: 270

## Sample Exhibition Label



Workshop of Sandro Botticelli

*A Lady in Profile*

mid-1480s

Tempera on wood

59.1 cm x 40 cm

Lent by National Gallery, London

The woman portrayed in profile, displays the attributes of idealised beauty sanctioned by Petrarch and being pervasive in fifteenth-century Florentine female portraiture: curly tresses, pearly skin, arched eyebrows and high forehead. Her averted and lowered eyes, signifying an inactive object, emphasise her modesty and obedience. The sitter's extravagant jewellery, not allowed to be worn by women at that time, symbolises the wealth and social prestige of her family. The window behind her indicates that she is placed indoors, a domain preferred by her father or husband, to ensure her chastity, the virtue on which the family's honour depended.

Word count: 98

## Sample Catalogue Entry

Sandra Botticelli

*Portrait of a Lady known as Smeralda Bandinelli*

c. 1470-1475

Tempera on panel

65.7 cm x 41 cm

Lent by Victoria and Albert Museum, London

In 1867, the Pre-Raphaelite painter Dante Gabriel Rossetti purchased it and fancied that the sitter was the model of the Venus in Botticelli's *Primavera*.<sup>1</sup> The sitter's identity as Smeralda Bandinelli, can be discerned by the Italian inscription on the windowsill, though it was a later addition by her grandson, the sixteenth-century sculptor Baccio Bandinelli.<sup>2</sup>

The lady is viewed at three-quarters and standing at a window embrasure denoting a domestic sphere on an upper storey. The handkerchief in her hand and tightly bound hair under a white cap mark her as a married matron. A typical element of late fifteenth-century fashion appears in her sleeves of the red silk dress worn over a white linen *camicia* (chemise), which was laterally open and fastened by ties. The effect of the puffed sleeves lends a singular freshness to her appearance. Over the dress, she wears a loose-fitting *guarnello* (a kind of overgarment) of sheer fabric with hanging cuffs, open to show the silk beneath, which was appropriate for indoors. Her informal outfit, a marked contrast to the ostentatious attire of women in profile (cat. 1-6), signifies that she should remain inside and out of sight.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Costaras, Nicola and Clare Richardson, 'Botticelli's Portrait of a Lady known as Smeralda Bandinelli: a technical study', in *Botticelli Past and Present*, ed. Ana Debnedetti and Caroline Elam (London, 2019), p.36

<sup>2</sup> Mark, Evans and Stefan Weppelmann, *Botticelli Reimagined*, exhibition catalogue, Victoria and Albert Museum (London, 2016), p. 36; David Alan Brown *Virtue and Beauty*, exhibition catalogue, Victoria and Albert Museum (London, 2001), p. 172.

<sup>3</sup> Jacqueline Marie Musacchio, *Art, Marriage, & Family in the Florentine Renaissance Palace* (New Haven, 2008), p. 84.

However, she dominates the painting, as she is confidently staring out of the window, perhaps after pulling the wooden shutter open herself, making eye contact with the spectator. The receding lines of the window ledge at the left, cast shadow by the column and the upper edge of the right door all converge on the sitter's eyes, emphasising her gaze. This feature was characterised as 'one of the boldest inventions in Florentine fifteenth-century portraiture',<sup>4</sup> given that modesty and obedience, exemplified by lowered or averted eyes, were a Renaissance woman's attribute and her task. To further highlight her boldness and agency, her thumb placed over the window frame increases the illusionism of the space that extends from the realm of the sitter to that of the spectator. The position of her thumb was a last-minute change, because the incision of the architecture does not encroach into any other areas of the figure, except her thumb. Due to the location of her thumb, the lady appears to be more active.

Other changes between the underdrawing and finalised painting can be found according to the infrared reflectography. In the early stage, the drawn position of the sleeve featured draperies spilling out onto the windowsill in the right-hand corner, while a design for drapery on the left-hand side of the sill can also be seen, possibly as an extension of the handkerchief. (fig.1) In the finalised painting, Botticelli omitted these details probably for bestowing more decorum on her, considering that the drapery on the sill may imply excessive proximity between the spectator and the woman. Possibly to achieve the similar purpose, the right part of her torso was shaded with black washes, either narrowing her bosom or turning her pose to a more profiled position.<sup>5</sup>

Botticelli's seemingly contradictory designs indicate that female agency was not likely to be his priority to be concerned with. Rather, he may have wished to overcome the limitations of the static profile in an attempt to convey the physical and psychological presence of the sitter<sup>6</sup> by depicting her gaze resemble those of Saint Catherine in Botticelli's *Madonna and Child enthroned with Saints* (cat. 24) and Venus in *Primavera* (cat. 26). Probably women's gaze was merely his strategy to arrest the spectator's attention. No matter whether Botticelli intended to lend her any degree of agency, the spectator might have been offended by her direct glance

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<sup>4</sup> Patricia Lee Rubin, Alison Wright and Nicholas Penny, *Renaissance Florence. The Art of the 1470s*, exhibition catalogue, National Gallery (London, 1999), p.327.

<sup>5</sup> Costaras, 'Botticelli's Portrait', p. 46.

<sup>6</sup> Brown, *Virtue and Beauty*, p. 172.

challenged the expectations of female customary modesty in the Renaissance, and deliberately vandalised the image, especially the sitter's eyes. (fig.2)

Word count: 598

## Appendix to Sample Catalogue Entry

Figure 1 Sandro Botticelli, *Portrait of a Lady known as Smeralda Bandinelli*, infrared reflectography. © Victoria and Albert Museum and the National Gallery, London.



Figure 2 Sandro Botticelli, *Portrait of a Lady known as Smeralda Bandinelli*, detail after cleaning showing vandalism. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.





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# 最精彩的画作，如同宏大戏剧中的华丽一幕

日本浮世绘缘何风行世界

王佑佑



▲歌川国贞以描绘现实主义的人像见长，比如歌舞伎演员、美人像以及华丽的历史场景。图为歌川国贞《雪中美人》。

►1765年，江户地区盛行绘历交换会，人们竞相比较绘历制作的优劣。铃木春信就在此中崭露头角。他是优秀的雕版师、印刷师，在“红摺绘”的基础上混合中间色，印刷出瑰丽的色彩，使绘历呈现前所未有的美感，受到欢迎。图为铃木春信《夜之梅》。



▲葛饰北斋的风景画为日本画坛带来一股清新之风。图为葛饰北斋《富岳三十六景 武州玉川》。

►喜多川歌麿将美人画推向空前的顶峰，被认为是美人画家中最最高者。他毕生孜孜不倦地追求以线条和色彩表现女性美，从整体美深入到局部的细节美，并创造了自己的风格——大首绘，即着重女性头部特写。他将女性的上半身在画面中尽量放大，细致地捕捉女性肌肤的弹性、优雅的姿态、微妙的表情变化，同时略去服饰和布景的赘述。站在喜多川歌麿的美人画前，能感到画中人温热的呼吸和有力的心跳声。画作不仅写实地展现了人物的形态，更似在传达其难以言明的复杂内心，也正好说明了画家极强的洞察力。《青楼十二时》系列是喜多川歌麿的代表之作，记录了游女二十四小时的生活细节。张爱玲也为之倾倒，称其为“忘不了的画”，并在文章中评述过其中一幅《丑之刻》。丑时约为深夜两点，起床外出的游女睡眼惺忪，手持用于照明的纸捻，正趿拉着鞋，背景上施设的金粉映衬出斑斓夜色。张爱玲认为喜多川歌麿画出了理想中的女性，并给予了游女一定的尊重。他笔下的人物“格外接近女

►菱川师宣1672年第一次出版了署名绘本《武家百人一首》，画像与文字各占一半篇幅，这本出版物是平民画家第一次出版的署名绘本，标志着浮世绘画家正式登上历史舞台。到了1680年代，菱川师宣创造性地出版单幅版画，并以多幅为一套，这种形式也为后世大多数浮世绘画家所沿袭。也因此，菱川师宣被学界公认为“浮世绘鼻祖”。图为菱川师宣《江户风俗图卷》(局部)。



今年恰逢中日友好和平条约缔结40周年，大大小小的日本浮世绘展最近于全国多地相继举办，不期形成艺展领域的一个热点。

很多人知晓的日本浮世绘，似乎仅限于它的盛名，比如，莫奈、梵高等一众西方艺术大师都曾追慕于它。而浮世绘究竟凭什么成为世界艺术史上的璀璨华章，又为何让西方画坛对其产生浓厚的兴趣？这些或许更值得人们深究。

本期“艺术”，聚焦日本浮世绘艺术。

——编者

## 17世纪在日本江户地区流行开来的浮世绘，表达的是当时日本社会迅速扩大的社会阶层的趣味、欲望和快乐

一生只为那一刻，我们一起去望月、赏雪；在樱花和枫叶下饮酒、唱歌，在浮世漂着多么快乐；就像漂在水中的葫芦，让我们把尘世的烦恼忘却。

这一首俳句，流行于17世纪的日本江户地区（现东京），可以从中学会所谓“浮世”是何意。日语中的“浮世”发音与“忧世”相同，后者来自佛教用语，意指“人生皆苦”。15世纪，“浮世”泛指人间世相、社会百态；16世纪以后，专指享乐世界；到了17世纪，“浮世”一词变得愈加流行，经常出现在当时的报章上，带有现世炎凉、玩世不恭的嘲讽与享乐况味，并且出现冠以“浮世”之名的小说和物件，如“浮世袋”“浮世帽”和“浮世发髻”。“浮世绘”（Ukiyo-e）也应运而生，通常描绘风景、日常生活和剧目演出。英语世界将其译为“The Floating World”，字面是“虚浮世界的绘画”，正如苏轼所叹“荡摇浮世生万象”，喻以及时行乐、人生如过眼云烟之意。

17世纪初，德川家康在诸侯混战中取得胜利，从而结束了日本一百多年的内

乱，掌握统治权，并于1603年将首都从京都迁至江户，建立幕府。从此，日本进入由武士统治的江户时代。宽永十五年（1638），德川幕府镇压了岛原之乱，既而采取锁国政策，并推行和平政策，振兴文化艺术。社会逐渐趋于安定，江户也由此发展成为可与京都相媲美的政治、文化中心。社会最重要的组成部分——市民阶层掌握日本经济命脉，他们的趣味便很大程度上决定了除上层阶级外的日本社会审美风气。而且，浮世绘在当时的价格并不昂贵，大约等于今天400至500日元，成为了平民的艺术。于是，以江户为舞台、专门描绘江户特有风俗的浮世绘大受欢迎。浮世绘不仅仅是图画，同时包含很多信息，比如新闻、政治、最新的时尚、旅行趋势等，就像一本本社会杂志，不断审视当下。换言之，它也表达了当时日本这个极度闭关自守、不与外界接触的社会中迅速扩大的社会阶层的趣味、欲望和快乐。

早期的浮世绘多由画家直接在绢、纸等材料上亲手绘制而成，又被称为“肉笔绘”。木板刻印兴起后，图画被大量复

## 站在喜多川歌麿的美人画前，能感到画中人温热的呼吸和有力的心跳声；对于生命与自然世界的思考，都凝聚在葛饰北斋的风景画里

性的善美的标准”，其完美程度甚至使她联想到谷崎润一郎在《神与人之间》中对游女的描写。

浮世绘画家的职业生涯通常从绘本插画起步，获得一定声誉后制作单幅版画，这是一个循序渐进的过程。役者画家东洲斋写乐可以说是横空出世，骤现于画坛10个月，发表了一系列精美的锦绘后销声匿迹，如同彗星一般照亮了浮世绘艺术世界。他与喜多川歌麿几乎活跃于同时，且两者的出版商也是同一位。东洲斋写乐的大首绘集中刻画人物眼睛和嘴巴，在这两个部位创造性地使用多套版印技术，用以强调人物形态，因而画中人无论淡漠还是惊愕的神情被强化、夸张，“不求逼真再现，但求印象性的把握”，被评论家称为“怪诞天才”。他笔下近似卡通的人物造型、对比强烈的色彩让他在役者绘画家中立树一帜，如《三代大谷鬼次的奴江户兵卫》。虽然他丑化演员的行为招致了许多非议和演员们的愤恨，日本学界却认为其最大魅力在于对于人生本质上的寂寞与哀愁的表现，也应对了江户市民在浮华世风下感叹人生苦短的心理潜流。

到了19世纪，以市井风俗为题的浮世绘市场逐渐低迷，葛饰北斋和歌川广重的风景画为日本画坛带来一股清新之风。葛饰北斋的《富岳三十六景》系列，从



歌川广重《江户名所百景 深川洲崎十万坪》

### 相关链接

## 创造浮世绘的，不仅仅是画家

木刻板早已成为浮世绘的主流，这一艺术媒介的吸引力主要在于将木板上的线条印在纸张上。线条经过雕刻后，意味着木板画有了三维的特质。加上如果拓印得当，木头的纹理也会自然地呈现在纸张上，因而有了木头的温度。

除了媒介的特性之外，浮世绘版画因不断将新的印刷技术纳入其艺术创作之中，而不断向前迈进。从最初的“一枚摺”，到1765年的多色套印版画，两百多年的江户时代里，浮世绘的发展史上也可视为一部版画技术革新史。

浮世绘的怒放依托于一种新生事物的广泛需求，即绘历，将传统的和歌、俳句或汉诗与月份结合在一起，并将月份的数字巧妙地隐藏在图案之中，设计成既方便记忆又具装饰效果的画面。绘历通常被当作新年礼物送给亲朋好友，制作要求越来越高，甚至不惜工本也要将其设计得趋于完美。1765年，江户地区盛行绘历交换会，人们竞相比较绘历制作的优劣。铃木春信就在此中被挖掘、斥资赞助，从而崭露头角。他是优秀的雕版师、印刷师，在“红摺绘”的基础上混合中间色，印刷出瑰丽的色彩，使绘历呈现前所未有的美感，受到欢迎。迷恋浮世绘的富商们向他订购大量绘历作为私人礼物。出版商专门收购质量上乘的绘历雕版，挖去月历，作为普通版画再次拓印出售。于是，用于绘历上的多色套印技术逐渐移植到浮世绘版画的制作上。商人们将江户地区这一新开发的多色木版画与产于京都的精美锦缎相提并论，称其为“锦绘”。至此，浮世绘版画真正开始大放异彩，葛饰北斋所绘的《富岳三十六景》即为其中典例。

与此同时，在成本的考量下，版画制作的专业分工体制也逐渐确立。一般来说，浮世绘版画的创作需三个手工艺人的共同努力：画家、雕版师、印刷师。多色木版画是由出版商协调三位手工艺人和整个过程而完成的复合艺术品。出版商手中握有资金，十分了解当时最流行的人物和话题，他们会去寻找艺术家，并委托创作一幅画。接下任务后，画家会先用墨线绘制画稿，这一画稿被称为版下绘。画稿完成便被带到雕版师处，雕版师根据画稿在木板上雕刻一个单色的主版。之后，画家还将指导上色和拓印的过程。通常一幅多色木版画的版数和雕刻细节的部分时，如头发，仍然需仰赖于雕版师的美感与能力。最后由印刷师实现成品的木版画。首先拓印主版，以便在纸张上确定整体画面的位置，再拓印各个色版，并且按照面积最小的最浅色到面积最大的最深色的顺序。画家是架构整体画面的主要负责人，而雕版师和印刷师的出色技巧对于实现画家所设想的世界而言，亦是不可或缺的。

青年时期的葛饰北斋，在木版雕版师的工作室做学徒。成为一名艺术家之前，他的基本功便是学习如何雕刻木版。雕刻是一个复杂的过程，雕版师得在木头上复制画中那些线条，这并非易事。其中最大的一个挑战就是，当雕版师尝试在木板上雕刻线条时，必须做到模仿画中的线条：分辨、模仿画家从何处下笔，如何延伸，也就是说，必须将诗意的用笔及其蕴含的美学了然于胸。最终，雕版师能够做到雕刻线条的方向，与画家在画稿中的运笔方向一致。

(作者为艺评人)



# 他在拍卖场上凭什么“一刀成名”

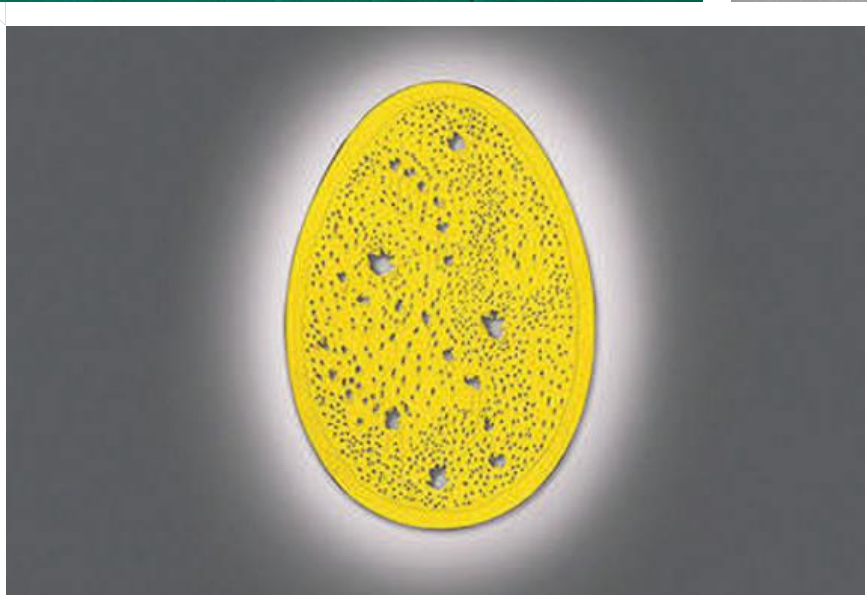
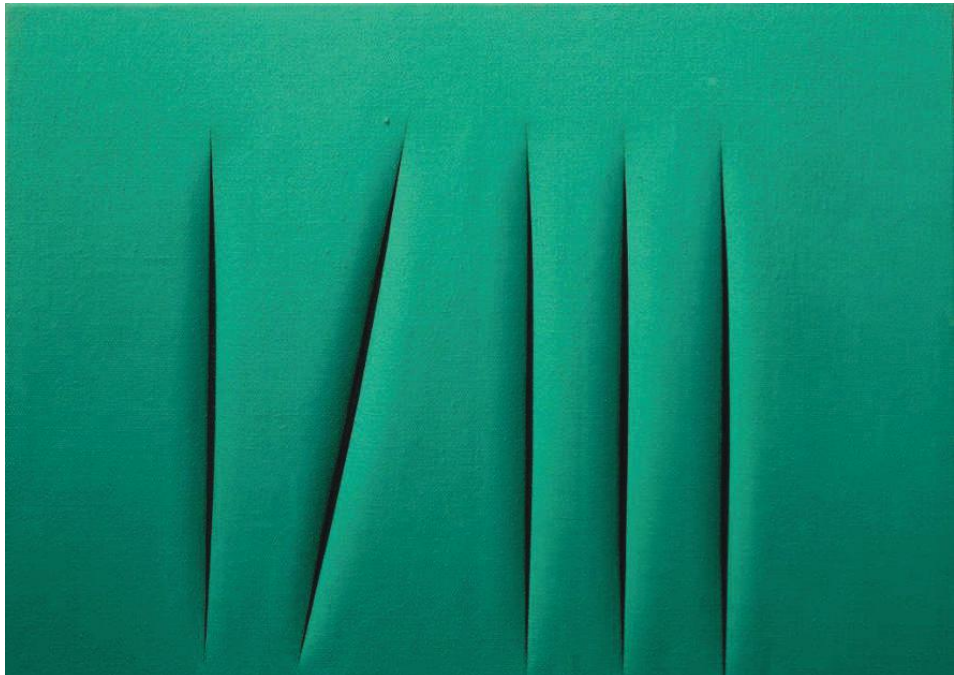
今年是意大利艺术家卢齐欧·封塔纳诞辰 120 周年。在他刺穿画布的那一刻，新的艺术诞生了。这些被刺穿的帆布代表了雕塑，雕塑的新形式。

王佑佑

▼意大利艺术家卢齐欧·封塔纳



▲2015 年,封塔纳创作于 1964 年的作品《空间概念,上帝的终结》拍出 2917 万美元(约合 1.85 亿元人民币)



▲封塔纳最具辨识度的刀痕画

寥寥数刀划破画布,近年来,开创出这样一种特别的艺术样式的意大利艺术家卢齐欧·封塔纳,俨然成为拍卖场上的传奇;2008 年,他创作于 1963 年的一件《空间概念,上帝的终结》以 2468 万美元成交;2015 年,他的另一件《空间概念,上帝的终结》拍出 2917 万美元;2018 年,他的《空间概念,期望 24》以 1048 万美元出售……

今年是封塔纳诞辰 120 周年,一个规模庞大的封塔纳回顾展相继在纽约大都会艺术博物馆、巴黎现代艺术博物馆等举办,以 200 多件雕塑、油画和瓷器作品对其艺术进行全面展示。刺穿的画布缘何屡创天价?人们需要看到的是,在他刺穿画布的那一刻,新的艺术诞生了。

——编者

二战过后,需要一个艺术发展的新方向,抽象艺术是第一个被纳入考虑的

1947 年 5 月,卢齐欧·封塔纳返回米兰,他发现自己原本生活的地方,包括他的工作室和 1940 年遗留在此的作品,全被二战的炸弹摧毁。或许封塔纳早年作品的遗失,让人们更以“战后艺术家”的身份去理解他。

第一件作于 1949 年的刺穿作品,不仅艺术家本人认为是自己职业创作分水岭,在评论家眼里也是如此,很多人将这件作品视作意大利战后艺术的开端。1989 年约尔·德·萨纳曾写道:“卢齐欧·封塔纳在 1949 年的刺穿行为是一种典型的批判传统的姿态。在他刺穿画布的那一刻,奠定了新意大利艺术的基础。”封塔纳在这期间也曾声明,战争过后的当下需要一个艺术发展的新方向。抽象艺术是第一个被纳入考虑的。在他第一件刺穿作品中,他明确希望抛弃浮华无用的艺术。“太空中的一只蝴蝶刺激了我的想象力;从浮夸装饰中解放出来,我将自己完全投入到刺穿作品的创作中,十分沉迷。”他的话语被收录在上世纪 50 年代中期发表的一本艺术家集中。

然而,不能简单地将战后的封塔纳艺术创作仅归纳为刺穿一个特征。他于 1947 年 4 月回到意大利后做的第一件作品是在阿尔比索拉·马佐蒂陶瓷工作室中完成的。在此期间作品包括表面有狭长裂缝的具象陶瓷雕塑,比如幽灵般的《小丑》。这与他战前的作品有些关联,也融入了创新实验的成分:无规则形状、看似融化的石膏块堆积在一起,组成一个中心偏移的

圆形。1949 年,封塔纳开始创作现在被称为“空间概念”的作品。事实上,“空间概念”被用作他之后 20 年大部分作品的标题。在绘画主题方面也能看到封塔纳的“空间概念”系列与未来主义的关联,它们都会使人想起螺旋状的星云或星座。未来主义绘画和雕塑中经常出现如太空飞行路径的螺旋和漩涡形状。而封塔纳的作品不仅让观众想起行星的运动,更在于表现物质基本粒子的恒定运动。“巴洛克时期的物理学首次将自然看作是动态、不断变化着的。人们认为那种变动是物质内在的法则,第一次让人们有机会洞悉宇宙。”他和他的学生在 1946 年发表的《白色宣言》中写道。这种对于事物动态的内在观察力,反映在封塔纳于 1949 年所作的立体主义陶瓷雕塑表面那层猛烈旋转的漩涡之中。

用一系列“空间环境”装置作品宣告实用抽象艺术的到来

1949 年 2 月,封塔纳在米兰纳维利奥美术馆安装了第一件“空间环境”装置作品,那便是《黑光下的空间环境》,具有革新意义。批评家奎多·巴洛观看这件作品时,生发出“对月球上空间氛围的诗意遐想”。巴洛回忆:“你进入了一个洞穴,紫色光束照射在悬停于空中的物体和重型之物上,它们形似史前生物。这件看似鬼魅的作品,让你感到如坠海底。我们就同被一块巨型陶瓷包裹着,而陶瓷内部被紫外光照亮。四周没有边界,一切都让人如漫步于无意识的边界,在此,空间没有中心,不存在任何物体的表面。”漆黑的美术馆里,部分墙面被刷黑或遮盖上黑布,天花板上悬挂着涂

有荧光颜料的纸,黑光使得涂色部分发出光亮。《黑光下的空间环境》的展示持续一周,更接近一次艺术事件,而非艺术展览。多种媒介,包括绘画、雕塑和建筑,在紫外光中融合为一个整体,并将观者纳入其中。

《黑光下的空间环境》展出后,引发媒体的广泛关注,评价这件作品如奇观般具有吸引力。在看到黑光下的荧光颜料时,批评家拉斐尔·卡列里回忆起封塔纳对 20 世纪 30 年代官展览所作出的贡献:“这些发光材料,体现出封塔纳焦虑不安,这都吸引着他们。”在纳维利奥美术馆展览开幕后一天,他写道:“我想起他第二次参加三年展时做的巨型马,看上去就像是一个自然景观。冰川在灯光下变得粉碎。”——显然这在很直白地回忆 1936 年第六届米兰三年展中的参展作品。在卡列里的文章中,有一张插图是一位舞者的照片,根据图注可知,他暗含着对封塔纳的作品“启发了神秘的舞台布景设计”之意。很清楚的是,封塔纳装置作品在展示时,至少在一

段时间内,都伴随着音乐和舞蹈。一位意大利评论家发现《黑光下的空间环境》中乌托邦的概念,认为封塔纳尝试去创造一个“纯粹颜色和声音的环境”,创造一个远比日常生活更加和谐的空间。还有很多评论家将封塔纳的多媒介组合装置与史前生物形态联系起来:天花板上悬挂的纸张让卡列里想起恐龙化石和猛犸象的脊柱;丽莎·庞蒂以“原子时代的第一只长颈鹿”为题发表了相关文章。事实上,封塔纳早期艺术作品的各种闪光之处都汇集在他创作的第一件“空间环境”作品中:陶瓷的意象源自深海生物,将史前洞穴理解为艺术的起源。《白色宣言》曾宣称,要重新回到史前时代的原始人类状态。封塔纳的《黑光下的空间环境》便可看作将此想法付诸实践并投入三维空间中。

以“空间环境”为名的系列作品,以及与空间相关的装置,都蕴含了封塔纳的构建想法,并在具体实施中与多方合作,尤其是与建筑师和室内设计师。从最基本的来说,这种形

式的合作不仅是出于实现材料所需的技术要求,正如封塔纳一次谈到:“(实现)灯光雕塑,你无法使大理石发光,无法使青铜发光。但是再想想,可以利用霓虹管。所以,我决定使用霓虹灯来实现……对于艺术家而言,霓虹灯难以控制。因此,需要与技师和工程师合作。”一个最有力的案例是艺术家的《霓虹结构》,与建筑师卢西亚诺·巴尔代萨里和马尔切洛·格里索蒂合作,为 1951 年第九届米兰三年展而作。在展示大厅中央楼梯井上方,安装了一件长度超过一百米的霓虹灯,弯曲形状如阿拉伯花纹。仅固定霓虹灯的几个点,让它在空中看似无力地盘旋。这件霓虹灯装置使平面的阿拉伯花纹超越维度,充满整个空间。带有“自主性”的雕塑、照明器材,再加上整个建筑环境,整个作品都回应了三年展想要实现的目标——比起在狭义上举办一个艺术展览,三年展更关注实用艺术、建筑和工业。

“我刺穿画布并非为了摧毁图像。正相反,我制造孔洞是为了寻找别的东西”

在 1949 年,封塔纳一点点地刺穿了一张纸,所形成的孔洞从中心向外螺旋展开,孔洞组成的形状没有规则。刺穿纸面、产生孔洞的同时,孔洞边缘的纸会翘起、突出于纸张表面。从侧面打光,图像就因此产生了阴影,变得立体。封塔纳没有将纸张视作二维的平面物,而认为纸的可塑性极高,值得用于探索、创造纵深感和空间感。回顾封塔纳的作品,可以将刺穿的这一时刻看做他艺术人生的转折点。在上世纪 60 年代,封塔纳接受卡拉·隆齐的采访时,曾激动地说道:“毋庸置疑,我的艺术创新发现就是这孔洞。在此之后,即便死也甘愿。”

第一件孔洞作品之后,封塔纳将这一系列作品命名为“空间概念”。通过一个看似简单的方式——在过去几十年里被不断地重新阐释——他成功地解决了绘画本身自带的错觉感,将真实的空间放入二维平面的艺术作品中。这便满足了对于现代艺术发展的期望,《白色宣言》在其中提到:艺术能够将自己从文艺复兴的遗骸中解放出来。而“文艺复兴的遗骸”就包括了利用透视法在图像中创造纵深感的错觉,以及利用图像的具象内容吸引观者。

自 1949 年起,封塔纳持续创作,以刺破画布表面为中心,发展了几百种变体。封塔纳从画布正面或背面刺

穿,所产生的小孔形状各不相同,都被精心排列,有一定规律。封塔纳有时会为画布贴上装饰衣服的小亮片或者有色玻璃的小碎片,并用帆布或刷上油性颜料的帆布替代纸张,以此增强空间效果。虽然封塔纳对于刺穿的行为十分着迷,但他也强调这一行为之上的观念的重要性,并说,“一次刺穿行为或某一个创口便已足够,其他的一切变化,包括使用不同颜色的画布,对孔洞和创口不同的排列,都是为了公众而作。”

1952 年,封塔纳的作品被意大利国家广播公司的一档电视节目报道,“孔洞”系列由此被更广泛的公众所知。这档节目在官方层面推广由封塔纳与其他几位艺术家合作撰写的宣言。如战前的未来主义宣言一样,怀揣着对科技进步的欣喜与狂热,封塔纳发表了空间主义的宣言。宣言的作者们推崇一种与空间相关联的艺术,在现代科技的辅助下,这种艺术将其从物质材料的束缚中解放,“即便仅仅电视广播了一分钟,将在外太空持续存在一千年”。在电视节目中,封塔纳第一件刺穿画布的作品被展示出来,灯光从画布背面照射,产生一种宇宙空间感。

在封塔纳的艺术生涯中,“刺穿”系列是一个姗姗来迟的创意,当时封塔纳已经 50 岁,可以回首过去 25 年里高产、多样的艺术作品,尤其是雕塑作品。又过去了将近十年,他才创作出以“割裂”闻名的另一个先锋艺术作品,即在帆布上划开一道口子。封塔纳的同时代人对他 1949 年的“创新发现”万分吃惊。不仅是因为封塔纳在割裂帆布或者在帆布上刺洞的行为,更是封塔纳沉迷于这一单一、激进的手法,许多人将其理解为艺术创作向另一种媒介的过渡,以及艺术家先前辉煌的雕塑创作生涯的中断。“嘲笑笑声数年没有停歇!”封塔纳回忆当时人们对他作品的回应。“人们问我:‘你到底在做什么?你是雕塑家中最出色的那个……’对于他们来说,1949 年前的我很出色,1949 年后的创作很糟糕。我参加 1950 年的威尼斯双年展,打算蒙骗委员会的眼睛,因为我原本受邀的作品是雕塑。但在展览前我只字未提,展示了 20 件被刺孔了的帆布。你可以想象当时的反应:‘这根本不是雕塑,它们就是些画!’……对我而言,这些被刺穿的帆布就代表了雕塑,雕塑的新形式。”直到生命即将终结,封塔纳仍一直在强调:“作为一个画家,当我在刺穿画布时,我并不打算创作一幅画。我想打开空间,创造艺术新维度,超过图片所限制的平面范围,无穷无尽地向宇宙延伸。”

(作者为艺评人)

相关链接

## 这些极简艺术背后的深意,你真的懂吗?

◆ 罗斯科的色块画



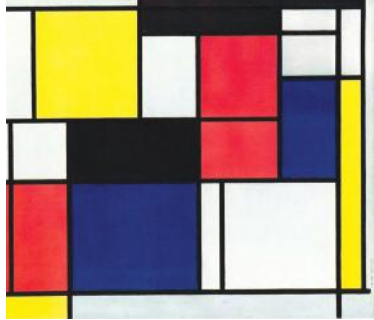
美国艺术家马克·罗斯科的作品通常由两三个排列着的矩形构成。这些矩形色彩微妙,边缘模糊不清。它们漂浮在整片的彩色底子上,营造出连绵不断的、模棱两可的效果。颜料是被稀释了的,很薄,半透明,相互笼罩和晕染,使得明与暗、灰与亮、冷与暖融为一体,产生某种幻觉的神秘

之感。这种形与色的相互关系,象征了一切事物存在的状态,体现了人的感情的行为方式。

罗斯科创造了一种情绪化的抽象艺术形式。这样的画注入了强烈的精神成分,简练、单纯,却磁力般地将人深深吸引。欣赏时,人们会感觉置身于他所营造的精神空间而不是陈列其作品的现实空间里。

◆ 蒙德里安的格子画

1930 年代,荷兰艺术家皮特·科内利斯·蒙德里安反复尝试红、黄、蓝、白、灰在被黑色直线分割后所产生的心理感觉,画面越来越走向简化的极限。他把绘画语言限制在最基本的因素:直线、直角、三原色(红、黄、蓝)和三非原色(白、灰、黑)上。蒙德里安认为艺术应根本脱离自然的外在形式,以表现抽象精神为目的,追求人与神统一的绝对境界。有艺术评论家认为在这样的画中看到了艺术家内省的深刻观感与洞察,以及创造出的普



遍的现象秩序与均衡之美,透过直角可以静观万物内部的安宁。这样的艺术对当时的建筑、家具、装饰艺术以及印刷业都产生过一定的影响。

◆ 克莱因的单色画

法国艺术家伊夫·克莱因发现将纯净的干燥颜料悬浮于透明的合成树脂,并以醚和石油作为溶剂,便能卓越地保持群青色素的美学效力。他进而将这种蓝色运用于绘画、雕塑,甚至还

让模特涂抹了这种蓝色在画布上作画,形成了其标志性的“人体测量学”。对于他这种不断用蓝色进行创作、去定义蓝色的尝试,当时的欧洲艺术界非常震惊。日后,克莱因蓝像是一种魔法,席卷了世界的各个角落和领域。

克莱因是在以这种蓝色表达无形的无限,以及绝对。就用一种颜色进行创作的表现方式,颠覆了艺术的颜色传统。克莱因认为蓝色是一种媒介,能够释放、解放不同的颜色。他说这种颜色是非物质的,所以他的作品想谈的就是物质性和非物质性之间的关系。

