

Clemens Klaus: 'Little Emperor'

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Abstract: Clemens Krauss, a German artist, was born in Graz, Austria in 1981 and has worked and lived in Berlin for a long time. His works focus on the relationship between social context and personal behavior patterns, and are good at presenting human migration, reproduction and interpersonal changes in a unique social environment. His exhibition in Chengdu on 2016 named "Clemens Claus - 'Little Emperor'", which is also Clemens' first solo exhibition in China. "Little Emperors" presents China's "only children". The "little emperor" is based on the analysis of the inducements and general appearances of social movements in different contexts.

1. Introduction

Clemens Krauss, a German artist, was born in Graz, Austria in 1981 and has worked and lived in Berlin for a long time. His works focus on the relationship between social context and personal behavior patterns, and are good at presenting human migration, reproduction and interpersonal changes in a unique social environment. His works have been exhibited in art institutions in the United States, Germany, Israel and other places. On March 18, 2016, he held an exhibition "tailored for Chengdu" in Chengdu Contemporary Art Museum, which was composed of oil paintings, on-site murals and images. The exhibition included more than 30 oil paintings that Clemens had conceived and created according to the cultural context of Chengdu Contemporary Art Museum, as well as one on-site mural. The title of the exhibition is "Clemens Claus - 'Little Emperor'", which is also Clemens' first solo exhibition in China.

2. The "little Emperor" is based on the Analysis of the Inducements and General Appearances of Social Movements in Different Contexts

As the most important international city in Southwest China, there are not a few foreign artists who come here to hold solo exhibitions, but almost all of them simply display the original works and ideas of artists. An exhibition "tailored for Chengdu" like this one, which is related to the local context of Chengdu, is a very unique existence. The works in this exhibition are more than 30 oil paintings (the latest works created in January 2016 in Berlin, Germany), three video works, and a mural created on site by Clemens according to the cultural context of Chengdu Contemporary Art Museum. The exhibition is curated by Tereza de Arruda, an art historian and independent curator. She has known Clemens for nearly ten years. This is the seventh exhibition they have cooperated with. She knows the artist's works very well, and no doubt she is fully confident of making the most appropriate interpretation of Clemens' new works. Teresa named the exhibition "Clemens Claus - 'Little

Emperor". Teresa's explanation of the "little emperor" is based on the analysis of the "Culture is an ideographic practice, which forms the ideology and values of society through the transmission of symbols and their meanings. The function of art has undergone profound changes in the transformation from traditional society to modern society."[1].



Figure 1: Clemens' new work, 2016

Clemens Klaus incorporates the meaning and importance of various manners into his works (Figure 1). By analyzing the inducements and general appearances of social movements in different contexts, Clemens Klaus pointed out the ambiguous and subtle contents hidden behind them. His research and artistic creation always revolve around these contents, and run through his rich experience accumulated in different cultural backgrounds, like some of his art works showed (Figure 2). The established breakthrough point of society depends not only on the cultural, political and economic environment, but also on the structure of interpersonal relationships into his works (Figure 3). In terms of cultural and political change, human migration and reproduction, the achievements of China, Brazil, Russia, India and other BRICS countries exemplify social development in the 20th and 21st centuries.



Figure 2: Clemens' new work, 2016



Figure 3: Clemens' new work, 2016

3. China's "Only Children"

Clemens Clemens' solo exhibition "Little Emperors" presents China's "only children", a "personalized group", in a playful style, and reflects their potential influence on the whole social group. China's family planning policy is an important policy reason for the emergence of "only child". Family planning is a basic national policy of the People's Republic of China, that is, family planning according to the population policy. In September 1982, it was determined as a basic national policy and written into the Constitution in December of the same year. The family planning policy has also brought about great social problems, such as the accelerated aging of the population, the increasing imbalance between men and women, and so on. According to statistics, one in ten people in China is over 60 years old, and one in four will be in 2030. By 2050, one in three Chinese people will be over 60! This is undoubtedly a very serious social problem.

At present, the number of only children in China is up to 200 million, and the biggest problem facing them is how happy they were in childhood and how painful they will be in adulthood. In childhood and even in youth, the "only child" can easily and freely get the all-out help and meticulous care from the family. However, after the parents' long-term indulgence, the "only child" lacks the sense of responsibility, the strength after setbacks, and the care for parents. The "only child" is more likely to be selfish and form egoism. In this context, what kind of self-image will be formed? When the whole family, from father and mother to grandfather and grandmother, focuses on children and believes that this is the most legitimate and meaningful thing in life, the whole society will derive a huge market for children's education and children's entertainment. Almost 60% of a family's income may be used for children's education and the cultivation of extracurricular interests. When the child reaches adulthood, the parents will also use almost all their savings to make contact, buy cars and buy real estate for them. When a child gets married, he or she cannot be completely independent, because at this time he or she also needs the help of his or her parents to take care of the new baby born in the new family.



Figure 4: Clemens' new work, 2016

As a result, once the "only child" gets married and has children, their happy and carefree life will almost come to an end. What awaits them, like their parents, will be a terrible circle of endless contributions to the next generation. This is one of the important reasons why the marriage rate in China is very low at present. Young people who grow up as "only children" have more self fulfilling wishes and aspirations., like Clemens' new work showed(Figure 4).They are very afraid of becoming "little emperors" who have little room for self life like their parents. So, what forms of social interaction exist between independent individuals?

In fact, before the "only child" era, China was a society that advocated the tradition of "many children and many blessings". The image of "pomegranate" in Chinese classical auspicious patterns was the meaning of "many children and many blessings". Because, in the traditional farming civilization, if "many sons", especially a family can have more sons, it will get more strong farming labor, and the competitiveness of the whole family in social reproduction and development will be enhanced accordingly. Thus, it also derived the contempt and discrimination against women in this civilized mode. The emergence of the "only child" era, to a large extent, alleviated or even solved the discrimination against women in urban areas or some villages and towns, and improved the social status of women. Because when a family has only one daughter, parents will still devote all their love and economic resources to the daughter. As a result, this part of Chinese women are lucky to get high-quality education resources and careful upbringing.

On the other hand, in the clan society with "many children and many blessings" as the main social belief, there are more than five children in the family or in the family, which will also form the phenomenon of mutual care and competition among children, which is conducive to the cultivation of children's sense of responsibility and empathy to a certain extent. Especially in families with many children, older children who play the role of "elder brother" or "sister" will be required to take care of, or even raise, younger brothers and sisters. Folk sayings such as "elder brother is like father" and "elder sister is like mother" appear. The social adaptability of children from families with many children has also been exercised, and the risk resistance of the whole family as a social collective has also been strengthened. This is unimaginable and unacceptable for the "only child" with a relatively high degree of selfishness and selfishness. The concept of the multi child family model of the previous generation is patriarchal, and its appeal lies in the unity, friendship and mutual help within the big family with brothers and sisters as the core. At present, the social trend of thought, which is dominated by "only child", pays more attention to the construction and management of small families with husband and wife as the core. "If this is true, then the relationship between the infrastructure and the superstructure is neither causal nor dialectically mediated, but directly communicated" [2]. Then,

what kind of changes in social ethos and philosophy of life will occur from the similarities and differences in thinking between the two generations? How do people define a social breakthrough? In this specific context, what does the representation and boundary mean? These are all potentially interesting issues discussed in Clemens Klaus' works.

4. The Unique Phenomenon of "Only Child" and This "Personalized Group" Similar to "Little Emperor" Reflect a Huge and Continuous Potential Impact on the Whole Chinese Society

The context of this exhibition is the existing interpersonal relationship structure in contemporary Chinese society and the reason for its formation. The unique phenomenon of "only child" and this "personalized group" similar to "little emperor" reflect a huge and continuous potential impact on the whole Chinese society. As an interactive role of a social group, human beings will be put on paintings of all sizes and murals created on site in the exhibition hall. Here, what role did the inherent media attributes and inherent quality of paintings play in the content of this project?

As far as Clemens' painting works are concerned, the thick accumulation way of combining color and paint he uses is his consistent painting style. His pictures maximize the process of stroke movement and the freshness of the paint's own color, both referring to the "color quality seen by the human eye, and also referring to the structure and integrity of the body"[3]. The figure uses the non-representational modeling technique to accurately express the action form of the figure while blurring the specific details of the painting, and uses the most concise large touch to outline the dynamics - recently, there are only pieces of fresh and insufficiently mixed paint, step back a few steps, and you'd better squint to see the figure in the painting surface easily. This is coincident with Monet's "Water Lotus" series in painting techniques. The extremely flat background and large area use of solid color, sometimes even directly present the white canvas without any treatment. The huge contrast between the background and the characters in thickness and texture and the more prominent characters' sense of center vision and independent self isolation - the huge difference between the characters and the environment is a metaphor for reflection and inquiry of the embarrassing situation that people are incompatible with the social environment in reality.

Clemens' paintings have a strong sense of space and the characteristics of German minimalism. The contents of the pictures are concise, the arrangement of characters is very careful, the sense of modern composition is strong, and strict order rationality is hidden in the pictures. This is inseparable from the one-sided ultra complex current social situation. The style of murals created on site in the art gallery is the same as that of canvas oil painting, but the extension from the screen to the wall is itself a time, and painting works in the exhibition site space is also an artist's practice, which reflects the timely expression of space scene. It is a reflection and challenge to people and space environment, art works and space environment.

To put it simply, Clemens tried to open space, which is also a way to find personal loopholes in the social, political and cultural background to study the moment when society was split. What he discussed seems to be "the main role of art is to directly or indirectly point out what people should be like, and how they feel about living in a fair and happy society, and to make people struggle for the realization of such a society." [4]. As an artist, he believes that he is actively involved in the position, at the same time, the meaning and conclusion may only stay in the scope of responsibility of onlookers. Or think that this is the work carried by the contradiction between private history and personal identity. His works emphasize the specific organic quality of "body" in a broader sense, including working materials and living environment. And "body" does not only refer to the human body, but also extends to the surrounding environment or specific buildings. On the contrary, people's view of life (that is, "culture "in the eyes of anthropologists) determines the way people produce, exchange and consume material" [5].

For example, in the video work "Parents' House" played by the projector at the entrance of this exhibition, the artist used anthropomorphic techniques to cut and observe the parents' house in a "violent" way. In this video work, Clemens Klaus used a 15 meter cable with an endoscope camera to pass through his parents' house in Graz. He drilled a small hole through the ceiling, from the floor of one floor to the floor of another. The camera he used was usually used for surgical intervention, from the attic to the basement, and then back. It's like exploring architecture and studying a surgical operation. This work reflects the artist's thinking on the issue of "self identity" and involves his thinking on monitoring and control.

With regard to houses and protection, a biographical reference and project conducted in this family place, the observation perspective is quite intrusive and mysterious. This unusual way of observation, by means of the camera's working angle, can usually observe the surroundings from a shorter perspective of bird's eye view, and at the same time, it also gives the artist a lot of inspiration for his creation - in his oil paintings, there are indeed paintings that are painted from an overhead perspective.

5. Conclusions

Clemens Klaus is an artist with international vision and humanistic care. His works have been widely exhibited in art institutions around the world, such as the Wesselberg Museum of Modern Art in Bremen, Germany (2016), Tel Aviv Art Port in Israel (2014), Malta Helford Museum (2014), Bonn Art Museum (2013), Tel Aviv Art Museum (2012), Stockholm Cultural Palace (2012) Berlin Art Gallery (2011), Los Angeles Museum of Modern Art (2010), Berlin House Waldsay Art Museum (2009), etc. The exhibition held in Chengdu was jointly hosted by Chengdu Contemporary Art Museum and Sichuan University Art Museum, and was strongly supported by Austrian Embassy in China and other institutions. Salins believed that "people's view of life is not determined by specific material conditions. In today's China, there is everywhere a desire for real materials represented by houses. Of course, this is not innate. It is constructed by the mainstream spirit, which in turn profoundly affects people's views on life. Clemens keenly observed these and expressed them in an obscure way in this video work.

References

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