

# 07 Some theories that might be used in my curatorial portfolio: Psychology and Psychoanalysis

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\*Note before reading: This blog may be a little long.

My personal curatorial portfolio has two sets of keywords: "Reflection of Reality" and "Fluidity of Time and Space." Taking these two groups of keywords as the main entry point, I started to read the exhibition supporting theory. Next, I will describe the theories that may be involved in the subsequent exhibition.

**Reflection of Reality**□Dreams are symbolic representations of one's unfulfilled desires in reality, and various emotions in reality appear in dreams in abstract ways

The idea that dreams are abstract symbolic expressions of emotions in reality has been demonstrated in many psychological and neuroscience theories. The core theory is the psychoanalytic theory proposed by Freud in his book *The Interpretation of Dreams*. The 'Condensation' and 'Displacement' mechanism between dreams and reality is proposed in the book to illustrate how people's emotions and desires in reality can be transformed into symbolic symbols in dreams (for example, dreaming of exam failure may symbolize anxious feelings about challenges faced in real life, rather than directly representing the exam itself). Freud's psychoanalytic theory inspired a series of subsequent academic studies on the symbolic and emotional associations of dreams.

The second is Jung's analytical psychology. Jung believed that dreams are a combination of the archetypal symbol of the

collective unconscious and the experience of the individual unconscious. It reflects both the unresolved conflicts of the individual and the common symbols of the collective. In *Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, he proposed that "Archetypes are typical modes of apprehension, and wherever we meet with uniform and regularly recurring modes of apprehension, we are dealing with an archetype. "His view builds on Freudian psychoanalysis to further interpret the main clue that dreams are symbolic expressions of the contents of the human subconscious. Both believe that dreams reflect unresolved conflicts in reality, and advocate to understand people's deep psychology through the analysis of symbolic millionaires in dreams. But there are differences. Freud's purpose was to reveal the individual's potential mental trauma through the interpretation of dreams and free association, so as to relieve the symptoms of trauma. Jung, on the other hand, promoted the integration of individual consciousness and collective subconscious through the analysis of dreams and active imagination to help individuals achieve the integrity of "self". Take the dream of being chased by wild animals and eventually jumping into a deep well. In Freudian interpretations, the beast symbolizes repressed sexual impulses or a childhood fear of authority (such as a parent), while jumping into a well symbolizes a return to the source of life (such as the womb), death, and the desire to disappear (escape from real conflict). In the Jungian interpretation, the beast may represent a dark side that the individual does not want to acknowledge, and the act of jumping into the well symbolizes the individual diving into the unconscious in search of an opportunity for self-integration.

In addition to the above two classical theories, there is also Lacan's mirror stage theory which is strongly related to the central point of view of this exhibition. Lacan believes that the formation of human self-consciousness begins with infants recognizing the existence of their own image in the mirror for the first time. This marks the transformation of infants from

“fragmented body” to the fictitious identity of “unified ego”, and forms the basis for the construction of subsequent individual subjective cognition. This theory of Lacan emphasizes the unity of the fictional self and expounds the connection between the subject and the other: Self-identification in the mirror stage is essentially the construction of the self through the evaluation of the other (such as the baby in front of the mirror is told by the parents “this is you”), and this process strengthens the symbolic binding of the relationship between the individual and the other. During the mirroring phase, the infant also uses language and symbolic systems (such as the pronoun “I”) to further consolidate the sense of self-identity, but this process is always based on the dependence of the symbols of others. The theory applies to adult psychology, as exemplified by people’s willingness to get likes and comments on well-groomed photos on social media. Relying on others’ comments to recognize and maintain an idealized self-image is essentially a repetition of the mirror stage.

Lacan’s mirror stage theory reveals the fictionality of human self-consciousness and emphasizes that the self-identity constructed by individuals through others (mirror images, language, social symbols, etc.) is always incomplete. This theory overturns the assumption of “self-unity” in traditional psychology. The unrelenting pursuit of “complete self” in human life is essentially a never-ending symbolic game. Lacan’s theory accepted the concept of “ego” in Freud’s theory, but his focus turned to the influence of external forces such as language and symbols on the construction of individual self-identity, and explained Freud’s theory of “narcissism” as the process of “establishing self through the mirror image of others”. If one compares Lacan’s theory with that of Jung, in which the “self” seeks inner integrity, Lacan’s theory holds that the individual can never be truly complete, and that the oneness he feels is only an illusion brought about by the evaluation of the other.

The above three theories explain the inextricable connection between dreams and the subconscious from the dimensions of individual emotion, collective archetype and symbolic alienation. With these three theories as part of the main theoretical support of the exhibition, I try to answer the main question that my exhibition discusses: What are dreams? In my opinion, dreams are not only a private psychological theater, but also a wrestling arena between the invisible forces of power structure, cultural wind direction and collective memory in contemporary society. So when we fly in our dreams, is it the flapping of our own wings or the performance of being pulled by invisible threads? Perhaps art can give a different answer.

## References□

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