15 SOME THOUGHTS ON THE ABOVE THEORIES part 4

written by Aobing Wang

As art theories with far-reaching influence in modern and contemporary times, relational aesthetics theory and surrealism respectively focus on social interaction and subconscious liberation, attempting to subvert traditional art paradigms. However, these two theories still expose many limitations in the new contemporary cultural context.

In the theory of relational aesthetics, Boucheux argues that art should construct "social gap" through temporary communities, but this vision is too idealistic and ignores the hidden authority behind participatory art. Even if the audience is invited to "co-create" the work, the curators and artists still control the space rules and the allocation of resources; Some participatory art may be commercially funded, which makes the emotional sharing in its connotation a marketable commodity; Some marginalized groups are often excluded from participatory art because of technical barriers or cultural barriers (for example, people with disabilities may not be able to experience some participatory art that requires vision). The trend towards commodification also appears in surrealism. With the rise of consumerism, the subversive aesthetic presented by surrealism was labeled a "niche aesthetic," and the melting clock in Dali's painting was printed on handbags by luxury brands. Surrealism, on the other hand, pursued irrational beauty. But when modern academic institutions included surrealism in the classic school of art history, the rebellious spirit contained in it was domesticated by the "white box" space of the museum, and it became an empty and seemingly empty avant-garde art.

Do we still dream when our dreams are data, goods, weapons, or other things? There is no standard answer to this question.

But through this exhibition, I want to lead the audience to think about this question and give their own answers. By stripping away the romanticized illusion of the "dream" created by power and capital, we can approach the true dream self.

14 SOME THOUGHTS ON THE ABOVE THEORIES part 3

written by Aobing Wang
Similarly, Lacan's mirror stage theory exposes a limitation similar to Jung's collective unconscious theory, that is, it ignores the subjectivity of non-Western cultures. Lacan emphasized the discipline of language on individuals in his theory, which regarded language as a neutral system and ignored the cultural discourse power represented by language itself. In non-Western contexts, native languages are forcibly replaced with colonial languages, such as African Frenchification and Indian Anglicization, and the universality of this symbol is actually the result of colonial violence. On the other hand, the Western patriarchal family structure presupposes in Lacan's theory does not actually apply to the symbolic order of matriarchal societies in some regions. In addition to the continuation of colonial violence mentioned above, Lacan's theory overemphasized the role of external symbols such as language and words, and ignored the possibility of body resistance field. For example, some chronic pain patients often use language to describe their pain experience. Lacan's mirror stage theory reveals the underlying logic of an individual disciplined by a symbolic order, but in today's digitally permeated life, this discipline has become more secretive. Therefore, we need to

deconstruct the basic framework of his theory in the new cultural context. Only after realizing the limitations of Lacan's theory can we open up the path to resist the symbolic hegemony.

13 SOME THOUGHTS ON THE ABOVE THEORIES part 2

written by Aobing Wang

Limitations also exist in Jung's theory. Jung tried to give cross-cultural universality to the meaning of dreams, but his archetypal system was still essentially based on Eurocentric cognition. In the process of understanding the collective unconscious theory, I gradually feel that some aspects of Jung's collective unconscious theory are actually a reproduction of cultural hegemony. It is undeniable that his theory provides a larger narrative dimension for understanding the deep structure of human psychology, but the problems of cultural hegemony, gender essentialism and scientific legitimacy hidden in the core of the theory become more and more obvious in the new cultural context of modern and contemporary multicultural integration and the development of science and technology. The first is its roots in Eurocentrism. On the pretext of "collective unconsciousness", Jung stripped the cultural symbols of Asia, Africa, America and other non-European regions from their original cultural context and forcibly incorporated them into the European system centered on Greek mythology and Christianity. For example, the power of destruction and rebirth of the goddess Kali in Hinduism was classified by Jung as the prototype of the "Great Mother". Dispelling the connotation of its original radical resistance to patriarchal oppression. Second, Jung

often engaged in "academic picking" when constructing his theories, perfecting them by analyzing the dreams and art forms of non-European patients without realizing the subjectivity of these cultures. This is, in effect, a continuation of the intellectual looting of the colonial era, in which indigenous peoples' experiences are transformed into European academic capital, while indigenous peoples remain excluded from the discourse. It seems to me that Jung's theory is like a fine, old map of the world, on which Jung tried to condense the vast expanse of the human spirit into a finite island. However, this set is obviously not applicable in the modern and contemporary society with cultural integration, gender flow and technological breakthrough. What we need is not a new map, but a subversion of the old map and the right to draw. The individual unconscious should not be colonized by theory, we need to decolonize Jung's theory and reconstruct it so that the collective unconscious becomes a spiritual Commons shared by multicultural subjects, rather than a cognitive tower standing in the European theoretical system.

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12 Some thoughts on the above theories part 1

written by Aobing Wang
As Breton says, "Beauty must be shocking, or it will be nothing." I think surrealism is not only an artistic movement, but also a spiritual revolution, whose core idea inspires us to keep thinking: when reason rules the world, have we become prisoners of order? Are there more real possibilities beyond the edge of human dreams and irrationality? Based on this, I have a new idea about the core topic of the exhibition.

In the initial conception, I planned to capture and reproduce dreams through the effect of the five senses presented to the audience by art works, answering the question "What is a dream?" However, it ignores that the essence of dreams is ineffable that cannot be symbolized, and the deconstruction and reconstruction of dreams is like capturing ethereal ghosts with a large net of image symbols. Hence the paradox at the heart of the original exhibition discussion: the more we try to interpret dreams, the more we misinterpret their origin. In the theoretical system of dreams and the unconscious mind, the aforementioned theories and other theories in the system together form a complex cognitive matrix. However, due to the historical background and social form, the continuous development of digital technology and the cultural context that advocates rationality, all the above-mentioned theories have limitations in various aspects.

In his theory, Freud defined human dreams as "the disguise and satisfaction of repressed desires," a definition itself rooted in the complex social environment of Vienna at the end of the 19th century. Politically, at that time, the liberal political forces in Austria were suppressed by conservatives, and the social control over individual internalized morality and the suppression of individual desires were strengthened. Economically, the Industrial revolution not only accelerated the urbanization of Vienna, but also led to the instability of the economic situation. The ensuing changes in the family structure (men's authority in the family was strengthened, but women were confined to the family field) affected the competition and fear of the father's authority in Freud's theory. Culturally, in 19th century Europe, strict sexual repression (especially for women) prevailed, and the theories of scientific rationality, such as Darwinian evolution and the physics revolution, shook the original religious worldview. In summary, I think Freud tried to study the subconscious with the "scientific" method representing rationality at that time, trying to reveal the hidden surge of irrational power under

the trend of advocating rationality at that time and the spiritual tearing of people due to a series of changes at that time. However, in a society where gender fluidity is enhanced and individual desires are infinitely amplified by the prevalent consumerism, the form of "repression" has changed, people's "libido" is transformed into user preferences by algorithms, and the platform predicts individual desires by tracking the number of clicks, externalizing the subconscious into the label and slide matching of data flow. In addition, Freud presupposes a continuous individual self in his theory, but the modern identity split (social media personality, game role, workplace personality, etc.) makes the dream no longer belong to a single individual, but a tangle of multiple identities. When a person's dream identity is also a delivery rider, a virtual idol, and a bank teller, it is obvious that the individual psychological framework of Freudian psychoanalysis cannot be applied directly, which also reflects the paradox mentioned earlier: the more we try to interpret dreams, the more we misinterpret the origin of dreams.

11 Feedback for peers in week 5

written by Aobing Wang

To Zhouyuan Wu：

Your blog to date has developed a series of reflections around the curatorial practice of non-colonialism. I was very interested in your discussion of traditional archival records versus oral history in Week 2 of your blog. As official records in the conventional sense, the historical objects, books, archives and other records collected in museums provide

curatorial practice with an objective perspective to tell the content to be displayed, but this objectivity is also influenced by Western hegemony to some extent, as you said: some artists or histories have been erased from the mainstream art history by the force holding the historical narrative power. I think this kind of erasure may create certain logical holes in the existing mainstream narrative, and perhaps you can try to find some meeting points between official records and personal oral history through these logical holes, and provide a multi-perspective narrative for the curation of the theme of "revisiting history".

To Puxian Wang：

In a series of blogs, you have analyzed the curatorial strategies of four different regional museums/galleries from the perspective of contemporary art theory. In the second week of the blog, the comparison of curatorial approaches between the Louvre and the Pompidou Center is a special entry point for research. I think the difference in curatorial form between the two is probably due to the difference in the main collections: the Louvre has a more historical collection, while the Pompidou Center has a lot of modern and contemporary art. The two institutions chose curatorial methods that were more in line with objective conditions according to their own collections. In your blog, you also consider the inadequacies of the curatorial strategies of art institutions, which I find very nuanced. Taking well-known art institutions as reference cases for analysis, taking the essence and discarding the dross, can constantly improve their curatorial projects. In addition to this, the artist collective cooking sections that you mentioned in your blog post in Week 3 are also very interesting. The concept of sustainable eating in an artistic way seems to me to be a unique one. Sustainable eating touches on issues of food production, ecology, geopolitics and business dynamics. I think the curatorial strategy of Reina Sofia Museum is more suitable for this theme. Or a more comprehensive approach. The following blog can try to think

about how to combine the personal curatorial practice project with the previous weeks of research on the curatorial form of large art institutions.

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10 SOME THEORIES THAT MIGHT BE USED IN MY CURATORIAL PORTFOLIO: ABOUT Art and Culture part 2

written by Aobing Wang

The Surrealism movement is an ideological movement that arose in the field of art and literature from the 1920s to the 1960s. The core idea is to liberate the subconscious mind, challenge the hegemony of reason, and try to explore the "absolute reality" in illusion and irrational thinking through art and literature. The predecessor of Surrealism was Dada, but it abandoned the nihilism contained in Dada, and turned to systematically explore the subconscious. In 1924, French poet Andre Breton published *the Manifesto of Surrealism*, officially announcing the birth of Surrealism. Deeply inspired by Freud, Breton believes that the subconscious mind is the source of artistic creation, and irrational thinking contains the truth beyond reality. The surrealists represented by it try to create "surrealite", that is, a higher level of reality, by solving the opposites (such as dream and reality, rationality and madness). The revolution of art and literature is inseparable from the social revolution. In his *Manifesto of Surrealism*, Breton defined surrealism as a pure mental unconscious activity in which people express the real operation of thought in oral, written or other forms, with the

goal of breaking the shackles of reason and morality and realizing individual and collective freedom by liberating the subconscious mind. Under the influence of this thought, many new creative methods have emerged, such as artists directly describing dream images, or creating random beauty through collage, rubbing and other techniques (such as Salvador Dali's *"The Eternity of Memory"*). In the field of literature, it is shown that creators abandon the control of logic. Leave your hand free to write or paint with the flow of your subconscious mind (e.g., Breton and Philippe Soupault in *Les Champs Magnetiques*).

Salvador Dalí. *The Persistence of Memory*. 1931

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09 A space dominated by artists themselves

written by Aobing Wang

The lecture in this week's class was explained by Adam, which mentioned the concept of Artist-Run Spaces. Adam introduced that "artists-run Spaces" is essentially a curatorial platform initiated by and for Artists. Their purpose is not to cater to the needs of the market or art institutions, but to build a relationship network for the artist community, and to exist more as a tool for cooperation and expression. Taking the non-hierarchical structure in Transmission as an example, Adam mentioned Artists-Run Spaces represents more of a sense of autonomy and flexibility, not just to display one's work, but to allow artists to form a support system for each other. In addition, Adam also emphasized the social responsibility of Artists-Run Spaces; Giving voice to marginalized groups; Actively break the exclusivity in the art system; Practice true inclusion and equity. I am deeply touched that curating exhibitions is not only about displaying works, but also about building a mechanism for the generation of certain cultural discourse. Who can get in? Whose voice can be heard? In my opinion, these issues are more important than form and aesthetics.

My personal curatorial project is stuck on a very real problem: there is only a temporary space. This week's lecture broke my previous inherent thinking about art exhibitions, and also provided me with a new idea to solve this problem, which is to transform this temporary into the characteristics of the exhibition, and plan an exhibition with decentralized and non-linear narrative. Adam also mentioned that the meaning of Artists-Run Spaces is not to make perfect exhibitions.

Uncertainty, incompleteness and lack of professionalism are the normal characteristics of curating exhibitions. Therefore, the process of curating exhibitions is also a process of constant experimentation and repeated attempts. This gives the courage to go deeper into personal curatorial projects.

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08 SOME THEORIES THAT MIGHT BE USED IN MY CURATORIAL PORTFOLIO: ABOUT Art and Culture part 1

written by Aobing Wang
"Relational Aesthetics" and "Surrealism Movement" are my main reading directions when looking for references in art theory. Next, I will introduce the above two concepts in detail and their influence on my exhibition planning.

"Relational Aesthetics" is a theory proposed by Nicolas Bourriaud in his *Relational Aesthetics* published in 1998, which subverts the traditional art paradigm. This theory argues that the core of art is to build temporary social relations, rather than create static aesthetic objects, and has had a profound impact on the field of contemporary art practice such as participatory art, social intervention art and interactive installation. In the theory of relational aesthetics, Boucheux believes that art is a "form within the social interstice". Between the highly atomized individuals in modern society, art restores the nearly broken interpersonal relationship by creating temporary interactive space. Bucio's concept of a "microutopia" (an idealized community created

temporarily by artistic activity, such as a shared dinner or cooperative game, where participants can experience non-utilitarian communication), argues that the core value of art lies in whether it produces new social bonds, rather than in the materiality or visual impact of the work itself.

As a theory that subverts the traditional art paradigm, the theory of relational aesthetics focuses on the shift from "object" to "situation", and pays attention to the timeliness and participation of artistic creation. According to Bucio, traditional art forms (such as painting and sculpture) are centered on aesthetic objects, and the audience plays the role of passive observer. In the theory of relational aesthetics, "context" is the core of artistic creation, and the audience becomes the co-producer of artistic works by participating in the process of art. Artist Rirkrit Tiravanija's artistic activity untitled (free/still) is one example of this theory: the artist himself makes Thai curry soup in the gallery and invites the audience to share the meal. The significance of this artistic act is not the food itself, but the communication between the unfamiliar audience and the artist and the creation of temporary communities. This type of relational work relies on the real-time interaction of participants, and its existence cycle is bound with the timeliness of human social behaviors. A series of behaviors of the audience (such as communication, collaboration, and sharing) directly participate in the composition of the content of the work, while the artist himself provides the basic framework of the relational work.

Rirkrit Tiravanija. *untitled (free/still)*.
1992/1995/2007/2011-

There are many practice cases and application strategies of
relational aesthetics theory in the local art field. A series
by Felix Gonzalez-Torres, for example, features free candy. By
stacking loose candies on the floor or in a corner, felix re-
expresses the non-representativeness of minimalism in a
subversive way. The candy in these works can be removed and
replaced at will, so the size of the works is constantly
shrinking or expanding, which challenges the inherent thinking
of traditional art forms and playfully expands the continuity
and everyday nature of minimalist materials.

Felix Gonzalez-Torres. *"Untitled" (USA Today)*. 1990

Felix Gonzalez-Torres, *"Untitled" (Public Opinion)*, 1991.

In addition to felix, Sophie Calle's 1979 work *fifth sleeper* is also one of the representative works of relational aesthetics theory. sophie invited strangers to sleep in her bed and recorded their behavior during this period, exploring the tension between trust and surveillance by observing the way strange individuals invade private space.

Gérard Maillet, *fifth sleeper*, 1979

Because of its subversion of the traditional art paradigm, the theory of relational aesthetics has been criticized and disputed. For example, Claire Bishop once criticized Buscio for ignoring the existence of conflict and power differences in his theory of relational aesthetics and romanticizing social interaction into a "consensus utopia". On the other hand, relational art is often packaged as an "experience

commodity" by the art market, and audience participation is reduced to the consumption of the commodity. This controversy is mainly found in the field of interactive installation art (such as TeamLab), which is criticized as "Instagram art". In addition, the strong timeliness of relational art works is also its limitation: such works that rely on immediate interaction are difficult to be permanently collected by museums, and their meaning will collapse with the disappearance of the context. For example, if felix's candy pile is not used by the audience, it will lose its metaphorical connotation.

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