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Journal article

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# A theoretical exploration of breaking through the dilemma of contemporary painting in the context of spatialism

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**【Abstract】** The contemporary development of painting is facing certain dilemmas, and the problem of "two-dimensional bondage" of painting is one of the main reasons. This paper extracts experience from the concept of spatialist art, sorts out the connotation of painting, starts from emphasizing the physical space of painting and the behavior of painting, explores more open creative ideas, strives to break free of the "two-dimensional shackles", and provides theoretical reference for today's painting to find new breakthroughs.

**【Keywords】** Spatialism; Contemporary painting; Painting behavior; Luzzo Fontana; Two-dimensional bondage; The dilemma of the development of painting; Artistic medium.

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一、 The "two-dimensional bondage" in the traditional concept of painting has become one of the main reasons for the dilemma faced by contemporary painting

The earliest human paintings existed on the rock walls of caves, and it had an important attribute - spatiality. This spatiality is real, physical, not an optical illusion. After that, people have architecture, flat, treated walls remove uncontrollable factors such as undulations and textures, and the masters of painting can focus more on the portrayal of content, and murals appear. With the further development of civilization, people have cloth, with paper, and painting has completely entered the era of flat expression. Indeed, whether it is the impressionism, post-impressionism, abstraction, expressionism, etc. of ancient Greece, ancient Egypt, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance or the modern period, it seems that every peak of art in human history is coincidentally presented through a flat module, which has promoted the development of vision and painting for a long period of history. The plane, on the road of the development of painting, excludes the uncontrollable complex form and texture of the carrier, and provides a more stable and pure creative platform for the painters, such as the content portrayal of the classical masters and the sketches of the Impressionists. The expressionist masters indulged in content to provide convenience. In short, the plane plays a pivotal and even decisive role in the historical development of painting. At the same time, in the development of painting to today, the square plane module, as the most obvious appearance of art, has naturally become one of the important features of painting, and even beyond doubt, over time, people are more and more acquiescing that painting exists on the

square module, even Without thinking, the so-called space is an optical illusion formed by the change of shape and color, that is, painting has become a two-dimensional platform combined with the expression paradigm of optical illusion.

It can be said that one of the most fundamental dilemmas facing painting today is due to the "two-dimensionality" of painting. This two-dimensionality not only includes two dimensions in space, but also contains the concepts and thoughts of painters to paint on this four-dimensional two-dimensional painting platform and the corresponding media, including frames, tools, materials, languages, styles, and so on. This two-dimensionality prevents artists from responding positively to today's rapidly advancing techniques and ever-changing ideas, and hinders the pluralistic development of today's painting. This article refers to this dilemma of painting as "two-dimensional bondage".

At the time of realistic exploration to the extreme, when the exploration of form is exhausted, painting gradually begins to be considered difficult to appear new development possibilities, facing the crisis of the end, "two-dimensional shackles" is a huge obstacle to the further development of painting. Today, novel shapes and color schemes, deepened themes, unique perspectives, and avant-garde concepts are no longer able to persuade audiences to endure traditional and tedious presentations. However, at present, the real physical space is still neglected at the level of painting, and few people mention that the essence of painting is actually one of the important behaviors of human beings, which is the expression of human instinct. And behavior is dependent on the limb, the limb exists in real space, and the expressive activity contains space and time!

In fact, in this regard, there has been a positive reaction in the middle of the last century - spatialist art. However, perhaps because of the technical limitations of the time, or because the ideas were too advanced and the concepts were too open, the spatialist art did not form a revolutionary influence in the history of painting. But this does not mean that this idea is invalid. Seventy years after its birth, we can still see the excellence of his ideas through meticulous research and get rich inspiration.

Second, spatialism and its concepts

Spatialism was founded in Italy in 1947. The central figure of the movement was the Argentine-born Italian artist Lucio Fontana (1889-1968). In the 1940s, Italian painting showed signs of intolerance towards traditional methods and a general interest in science and technology. Artists at that time gradually believed that technology and art were inseparable. According to these ideas, artists who adhered to the manifesto of spatialism turned their interests to science and technology, media and communication. In 1946, Fontana and some friends and students founded the Artamira Art Institute and the Cultural Promotion Center in Buenos Aires. In the same year he wrote the first manifesto with a spatialist conception, the Manifesto Blanco .D. Then, in 1947, Fontana signed the First Manifesto of Spatialism with the writers and philosophers he worked with, officially marking the birth of the art of spatialism. From 1946 to 1952, five versions of the manifesto were published and became the core theoretical support of the spatialist art movement.

In these comprehensively innovative documents, Fontana clearly put forward his own philosophical and artistic concepts, and tried to define a modern art to solve the problem of "stagnation" of art at that time. He advocated the combination of art and the technological

innovations of the time, "We live in the mechanical age. Painted cardboard and upright plaster no longer have a reason to exist. and explicitly resisted the "illusory space" of traditional painting. He proposes the "dematerialization" of art itself, in favor of "holistic" art, in which "color, sound, movement and space can be perfectly unified". The manifesto mentions, "Color is the element of space, sound is the element of the movement of time, they progress with each other in time and space, and the basic shape of these arts contains the living quaternary space." "

Under the influence of its theory, spatialist art did not regard the image itself as a priority object of creation, and did not just seek to define a trend of style, but more deeply explored the problem of the all-encompassing perception of space, which is understood as time The sum of the various forms, the painting is no longer just a picture.

Third, the enlightenment of the concept of spatialism to break through the "two-dimensional shackles" of painting

This article discusses the solution of the "two-dimensional bondage" of painting from the following two aspects.

(1) By emphasizing the material and spatial genera of painting, break through the "two-dimensional shackles"

The so-called materiality consists of two elements, namely: media and physical space. Some of Fontana's most famous works are his "Cut Paintings", and before he created this series of works, Fontana explicitly questioned the sense of virtual space in traditional painting and boycott. He once said: "The discovery of the universe is the discovery of a new dimension, it is infinite, so I pierce the canvas, which is the basis of all art, I create an infinite dimension." "It is true that these works are neither two-dimensional paintings nor three-dimensional sculptures, which transcend the boundaries of the art form and bring new dimensions to painting. One of the fundamental reasons for the success of this series of works is that Fontana fully realizes the most essential physical nature of the canvas: the canvas is not a conceptual plane, but a material, flat, with a certain thickness and toughness, and can be damaged. In these works, Fontana successfully broke through the "two-dimensional shackles" by destroying the canvas, thus giving space to the paintings on the shelf Extension. It emphasizes through this series of works: painting is material! And matter exists in real space! Therefore, painting creation should not stop at the idea of flatness from the beginning.

This perception inspires us extensively. First of all, we can innovate the traditional painting materials and methods. Spatialist artists generally refuse to follow the traditional painting medium, they take the initiative to try to use fabric, stone, glass, clay, metal, etc. to create, the way and method also remove the traditional depiction, and the use of flat painting, poke, cutting, tearing, burning, etc., the carrier of painting is not limited to the frame and canvas. This idea has been recognized by many domestic artists at present, and they have personally practiced it, applying more diverse materials to their own creations and producing a more distinct and diverse painting language. In 2009, the 11th National Art Exhibition was established as a separate painting, and in 2010, the China Artists Association established the Comprehensive Material Painting Art Committee, which established an academic status. At the practical level, after years of persistence and exploration by artists, we have seen the infinite vitality and vitality of this kind of painting, which has now become an innovative

platform for Chinese painting art, and the theory of comprehensive material painting has gradually been systematized.

Artists such as Zhang Enli further explored this aspect, paying more attention to the physical space of painting. In 2007, Zhang Enli began what he called "space painting" and began to fight back against the rules of painting on shelves. Even though he mentioned in the interview that he did not have the ambition to break the framework of flat painting, it is clear that the space painting presented in his solo exhibition "Moving Room" has jumped out of the square plane module and walked towards the entire exhibition space. It is worth emphasizing that the spatiality of this series of works does not only mean that the works break through the traditional way of presenting works on the shelf, but also that the artist rejects the traditional way of painting on the shelf and will create The process is connected with the whole space, gaining some new experience in the process of "opening up, by repeatedly stimulating the understanding of flat painting, and finally returning to the painting itself." Zhang Enli said in an interview with the exhibition. Obviously, artists such as Zhang Enli have taken a longer-term step in this regard.

(2) Emphasize the behavioral nature of painting and break through the "two-dimensional shackles"

After fully affirming the concept of physical space in painting, we may wish to extend our research to the behavior of artists, acknowledging that painting, like dance, belongs to human behavior and is an instinctive expression need of human beings.

Around the same time as spatialism, Pollock began the exploration of action painting in the United States. Every trace of spillage in his "drip painting" works shows the rhythm of the artist's hand waving in the air, and this direct impulse is reminiscent of the performative posture of his creative process. Through his works, Pollock conveys the most fundamental but easily overlooked concept: the painter's body is the most central medium of painting.

However, even though Pollock and later action painters, although conceptually transcendent, were still slightly weak in the organization of the medium, one of the most obvious features was that almost all action paintings eventually returned to the square flat module in presentation. Fontana has gone even further.

Fontana created the work "The Spatial Environment of Black Light" ("") using pulp as the raw material in 1948 *Ambiente Spaziale a Luce Nera*). These were considered the first spatialist works at the time, breaking the convention of painting on canvas and incorporating real light and space into painting. First exhibited in 1949, the artist painted irregular objects made of pulp with fluorescent paint and hung them from the ceiling of a dark room illuminated by ultraviolet light. The work attempts to disorient the viewer, allowing them to weave under the form in the darkness, experiencing the feeling of oscillating between the infinite and the finite. Influenced by space exploration at the time, coupled with Fontana's own interest in science, the aesthetic of the work is otherworldly, showing the artist's foresight. This environmental painting embodies the vision outlined by Fontana in the manifesto: "... Using the resources of modern technology, we will appear in the sky: artificial forms, rainbows of wonder, luminous words. Art critic Guido Barlow commented: "The gallery has been transformed [The viewer] does not consider a transcendent form before their eyes, but enters the painting environment."

In 1951, the more famous series *Luce spaziale* (lamps of space) was introduced. For the 1951

Milan Triennale, Fontana created "The Neon Structure of the 9th Milan Triennale" ("Struttura al neon per la IX Triennale di Milano"). It stands out for this series of works: a physical structure formed by the bending and winding of more than 100 meters of white lamps. As the first artist to use neon lights, Fontana revealed the shaping potential of materials, as if written with light, fusing the concepts of space, time and movement in a captivating line that reflects the artist's commitment to various mediums Introduce interests.

From today's theoretical point of view, these works will undoubtedly be defined as installations, and indeed many art historians have called Fontana's work "The Spatial Environment of Black Light" one of the first cases of installation art. But it is worth reflecting that there was no concept of installation art in the era at that time, and Fontana was completely from the perspective of a painter. These works are painted. His manuscript effectively proves this view. In fact, if we observe and migrate more closely, it is not difficult to see that the forms of these irregular objects in the work "The Spatial Environment of Black Light" resemble the drama that often appears in Abstract Expressionist paintings The brushstrokes, while the neon structure works, seem to be haphazardly meandering, and are more typical of graffiti on paper. The sheer scale and modern medium elevated these forms of painting to the sensational environment of the time.

All kinds of evidence prove the fact that even if these works are very different from traditional paintings in appearance, these works are essentially painterly, a comprehensive act of painting. Fontana successfully liberated the drawing action from the "flat shackles", preserving the flat form that would have gone to the canvas in reality The space realizes the leap from the canvas to the real world, allowing painting to achieve freedom in the medium. His paintings also encourage the viewer to become participants in the work, not just bystanders, eliminating the space between the painting and its surroundings Estrangement.

From the above theoretical analysis, it can be seen that painting has a new interpretation: painting is not based on any plane, nor is it a beautification of the surface of the object, it is the materialization of the artist's behavior, and it is a real material creation. With the continuous improvement of human "materialization" ability, painting from this perspective has a broad space for development under the addition of today's technology and media. For example, more sophisticated instruments can observe human activities in great detail, record limb movement data, the computer's powerful computing power can realize the processing of these data, restore the trajectory of motion and spatial form, 3D printing and other technologies can achieve virtual to reality conversion. Soon, the paint splashed by Polok can hover in the air, the toes of a ballerina can be regarded as a paintbrush, and the legend of the "magic pen Ma Liang" can become a reality, and can be more Artistic and dramatic.

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