

## Experience and Art

Fine art and applied art (e.g. painting, sculpture, architecture, etc.) are distinguished by the audience subjectivity in that the audience has the mobility to choose from which angle to experience and investigate them. Similarly, literary art relies on the readers' imagination to manifest its poetics (i.e. readers are the co-authors of texts).

In performance art, there are many different ways through which the audience can experience a performance. In many avant-garde theatre performances, audience is "free" to move around the space and obtain the mobility to choose their experience just like fine and applied arts, and similar to literary art, but not as much, great deal of imagination is at work when experiencing a theatre because theatre only partially reveals. *The sense of freedom in such sense, however, is merely conceptual but not realistic* because it creates chaos and people who are more "physically apt" get a better experience over kids, babies, people who are short, old, etc. I have been to these performances in which I was too short to experience anything but the accompanying music – I simply had no freedom of experience. Unlike fine and applied arts, a performance has an end, so audience cannot "go back to the thing". In "regular" theatre, people are seated by their tickets, which create economically and socially unfair experience to the audience. I once bought a \$20 ticket to see a show, which I could hardly see from where I was seated whereas the people who paid \$1,000 to sit in the front row greatly enjoyed the show. Such theatre makes the audience feel their social and economical standings. Critical downside of theatre is that it does not leave behind an artifact since it is live. Art is production of artificiality, which leaves behind an artifact. In Chinese, art (艺术) denotes "skill and technique". Theatre, therefore, is not a wholesome art since it does not leave behind an artifact, but rather human sensibilities. What if when theatre performance is filmed from far away to capture all the actions on stage without a cut? Can theatre then leave behind an artifact? Well, it is not theatre then. It is merely a video documentation for festival submissions. It is emptiness filled with shit signifying nothing.

Here comes the most wholesome art in terms of audience experience: cinema. Everyone pays the same amount to see a movie (there are different types of movie theater, but people who are in the same theater pay the same amount). One can even screen a film for free. Important thing is that an audience of a film experiences the same *artifact* as any other one in the cinema. Everyone in the movie theater sees the same image equally. When an actor breaks the forth wall in cinema, every audience connect with that human image on screen. *Cinema puts the audience in the equal ground.* Further, because cinema at its core consists of only images on a screen, it feeds directly to the audience the filmmaker's vision. Audience can neither imagine nor investigate while watching a film. Only after the viewing, audience can then convene and discuss about the film and start imagining and investigating. Audience, of course, is free to leave the cinema at any moment, which many do quite often.

If cinema is the most wholesome art, then music is the perfect art. Music embodies everything that any other forms of art can manifest. It is because *music is an artifact and a performance.* Only a passionate idiot will argue that music is inferior.

Alexander Kang  
2016/03/06  
Shanghai, China