

## Estetika ir menas

### CHINESE AESTHETICS IN THE PAST TWO DECADES

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*This paper is devoted to the discussion of Chinese aesthetics in the last two decades. In the early 1980s, there was an "aesthetic craze" in China, which endeavoured to develop the autonomy of art by breaking away from the art in the service of politics during the period of Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). This "craze" declined in the late 1980s, when people switched to the study of classic Chinese aesthetics in order to find their own cultural identity. During the early 1990s, when some scholars were interested in cultural studies, aesthetics in its narrow sense disappeared in China. In the late 1990s and the turn of the centuries, there was a sign of the revival of aesthetics. Many aestheticians tried hard to develop their studies in various fields, such as to combine aesthetics with contemporary cultural studies and to follow the new development of Western aesthetics, but, more importantly, to establish a Chinese aesthetics in the context of the development of world aesthetics.*

During the past two decades, many events happened in the Chinese society and Chinese aesthetics. In fact, the situation of Chinese aesthetics has changed every five or six years. In the Western world, aesthetics is usually a specialized research pursued by a small group of scholars. It has no direct links with the social and political development, nor does it play any important role in daily life. It is not the case in China, however. In the last 20 years or so, the fate of aesthetics has been closely connected with the development of Chinese society due to such facts that China went out of the social and political ideology of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), and that the society transformed from a Soviet-style political and economic system to a market-oriented economy and a characteristic social system different from its counterpart in other countries. It seems quite unusual, but understandable if the discussion of Chinese aesthetics is placed into social contexts of these periods.

#### **1. The revival of aesthetics after the Cultural Revolution (1979-1984)**

From 1979 to 1984, it was a golden period for Chinese aesthetics that witnessed a so-called 'aesthetics craze'. During this period, the whole society showed great enthusiasm for aesthetics. Aestheticians became important figures of the society. When giving lectures, they would attract

audiences as many as thousands each time<sup>1</sup>. Books on aesthetics could enter the list of bestsellers<sup>2</sup>, and a post-graduate opening could appeal to more than a hundred applicants<sup>3</sup>. It might be a miracle, but there were certain historical reasons for it.

First, it was a historical recovery of aesthetics as a discipline. From the late 1950s to the early 1960s, there was a “great debate” on aesthetics. The “debate” was originally intended to establish Marxist aesthetics in China. This is part of the effort to build up national ideology after the Chinese Communist Party took over in 1949. During this period, there were many forms of “debate” in the fields of literature, art, history, and philosophy, and all of them shared the same purpose. Among them, the “debate” on aesthetics was different, however. There was a common pattern among all forms of “debate”, i. e. at the beginning, different opinions appeared, and then, the highest political leader made a conclusion that was immediately accepted, and in the end, the criticism towards the exponents of the “wrong opinions” began, which sometimes were even accompanied by personal punishment. The aesthetic “debate” might be the only exception, however, which ended in no consent, and each of the participants of the “debate” voiced their own opinions separately and independently, and, along with the continuation of the discussion, the discussants paid more and more attention to the character of scholarship in their arguments. Everyone claimed to be the true Marxist, and in order to prove that they read Marxist classics carefully. This “debate” educated a generation of Chinese aestheticians, and cultivated a general interest in the discipline. Although aesthetics was overwhelmed by the ideological propaganda, political crisis, and social turbulence during the subsequent Cultural Revolution, the achievement of “debate” did not disappear, but became a precious legacy of Chinese scholarship instead.

Compared with the historical cause, “aesthetics craze”, more importantly, met the need of Chinese society soon after the Cultural Revolution. An ideological movement (which was called

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<sup>1</sup> To take as an example, I was told by some former students of Sichuan University that in 1980 after the first Congress of the Chinese Society of Aesthetics held in Yunnan, some aestheticians went to Sichuan University and gave lectures there before they came back to Beijing. The lecturing hall was filled by students, many of whom had to stand outside the windows.

<sup>2</sup> I published a paper entitled “The ‘Aesthetics Craze’ in China – Its Cause and Significance”, *Dialogue and Universalism*, No. 3–4/1997. I gave statistical figures for this “craze” in that paper, here it is:

Li Zehou: *Meixue Lunji (Analects on Aesthetics)*, a collection of twenty-five papers, most of which had already been published in various journals or newspapers from the 1950s to 1970s), 1980: 15 000 copies; 1981: 21 000 copies.

Zong Baihua: *Meixue Sanbu (Peripatetics in Aesthetics)*, a collection of twenty-two papers written from the 1920s to 1970s) 1981: 25 000 copies; 1982: 46 000 copies.

Zhu Guangqian: *Tan Mei Shu Jian (Letter on Beauty)*, a book in the form of a collection of letters in which some aesthetics ideas are explained in simple language), printed four times from 1980 to 1984, altogether 195 000 copies.

Li Zehou: *Meide Licheng (The Path of Beauty)*, a book describing the development of tastes in ancient China), more than 200 000 copies.

It is difficult to know how many copies of these books have been printed eventually, since they were printed by many different publishers later. Each of them, particularly the latter three, must have been sold more than a million copies.

<sup>3</sup> For example, there were 344 applicants taking part in the test for the post-graduate studies under Cai Yi, and only 8 were admitted successfully.

ideological liberation) occurred during this period, which can, in some sense, be regarded as both the cultural Renaissance and Enlightenment in China.

To take the movement as Renaissance, the Chinese scholars of humanities meant to restore, first of all, the state of cultural development existing before the Cultural Revolution, and then the earlier periods of cultural flourishing trends.

They were first attracted by the “great debate” of the 1950s. Many scholars who used to play a crucial part in the debate remained academically active. When the Cultural Revolution was defined as a political blunder, the first response among the intellectuals was a crying demand for a return to normal before the mistake was made. Li Zehou (b. 1930) and Cai Yi (1906–1993) were leading figures in this regard. They continued their arguments that were interrupted and suspended by the Cultural Revolution. But in a new context, the arguments were endowed with different significance<sup>4</sup>. Li published a book on Kant, attempting to combine Kant’s ideas with those of Marx’s<sup>5</sup>. Cai published a revised version of *The New Aesthetics*, retaining his form of combination between Hegel and Marx<sup>6</sup>.

Under such circumstances, the Chinese scholars continue their work of reviving aesthetics by reading the books published before 1949, particularly those which came in print in the 1930s and 1920s. The old works of two persons became influential again. They were those by Zhu Guangqian (1897–1987) and Zong Baihua (1897–1987). Both of them had been educated in Germany in the 1920s or 1930s, and their ideas were more Western than Soviet.

This is a period generally referred to as the “New Enlightenment”. In the mind of the people then, the Cultural Revolution was a continuation and restoration of the feudalist and despotic system of the Middle Ages, and it was thought that China needed modernization and modernity. As we know, in China the whole 20<sup>th</sup> century was actually a period of modernizing from an imperial kingdom to a modern nation, and the Communist Revolution was also an effort to modernize the country. This nation had its own history for several thousand years and was forced under the foreign pressure to “modernize” itself, however. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, China lost a series of humiliating wars to the Western Powers and its neighboring country of Japan as well. It then realized that it was only by means of learning from the West that this nation could survive and develop. The purpose was very simple: to learn from the West with an aim of fighting against the West. This became the double themes of modern China: to enlighten and to save China. In order to save China, they needed the Enlightenment; while the Enlightenment was intended to save the nation, it was supposed to be endangered. These

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<sup>4</sup> There were two most important journals for aesthetics during that period, the one was called *Meixue* (*Aesthetics*), which was edited by students of Li Zehou, and the other was called *Meixue Luncong* (*Aesthetics Forum*), which was edited by students of Cai Yi.

<sup>5</sup> It was an influential book in China entitled *The Critique of the Critical Philosophy*, in which Li Zehou tried to mend Kant’s philosophical system with some ideas from Marx. Since Li stressed the concept practice, which later became a key concept in Chinese political life, this book was widely read in China. See Li Zehou, *Pipan Zhaxue de Pipan* (*The Critique of the Critical Philosophy*), Beijing: People’s Press, 1979, 1984.

<sup>6</sup> Cai Yi published his work *The New Aesthetics* in 1940s, in which he criticized Western aesthetics, particularly the one introduced into China by Zhu Guangqian, on the basis of his understanding of Marxism. This was the first book on Marxist aesthetics in China, which was a mixture of ideas between Marx and Hegel. He was revising this book during the 1980s, which was eventually published in the end of 1980s.

double themes or missions could promote each other, or overwhelm one another. Revolution was used to save the nation, while educational and humanistic reform was to enlighten the populace. In a famous paper, Li Zehou argued that, for a long time, the mission of enlightening the nation as a whole had been overwhelmed by that of saving the nation. He maintained that now it was the time for enlightenment<sup>7</sup>.

Aesthetics in its narrow sense also played an important role in that social context. "Aesthetics" was translated into Chinese as *meixue*, which literally means the study of beauty, which was a translation made by the Japanese (pronounced as *bigaku*, but written in the same Chinese characters) in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and later accepted by the Chinese. This translation is not a literal one of the word in Western languages, but a coinage in accordance with the Japanese and the Chinese understanding of the content of this discipline. This understanding is, of course, under a strong influence of certain Western aestheticians of that time, particularly some German philosophers, such as Kant, Schiller, and Schopenhauer. On the other hand, a translation as such would inevitably affect people's understanding of this discipline in return. In the minds of the Chinese for a very long time, aesthetics consisted of three parts, the first was the study of beauty, the second was of the study of the sense of beauty, and the third was about art.

This way of translation played a special part in the period soon after the Cultural Revolution dominated by "class struggle" that was regarded as the engine of social progress. A social revolution is indeed accompanied by class struggle, and the unfair distribution of wealth may be one of the main causes of a revolution. But the Cultural Revolution is not a real revolution, and the "class struggle" is not a real one among social classes in political and economic senses. Instead, it is a *laissez-faire* campaign among people who were holding different political opinions and struggling against each other. When the "class" lost its original meaning as something associated with property, capital and status of social groups, the "struggle" would soon become a war of everyone against everyone. It could only lead to chaos and indeed did so. In this situation, the word beauty or harmony gained an implication of reducing political ideology, and resuming to a state of non-political life such that it was welcomed by the whole society at that time.

If one saw the aesthetics with reference to the development of the subject in the West, one might be disappointed to find it too old and out of fashion as it was in China then. Chinese aestheticians tried hard to prove an old argument that art should be autonomous and beauty be disinterested. Books by Kant, Schiller, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Benedetto Croce and Edward Bullough, etc. became influential again. It is these old books that paved the way for a new and modern aesthetics in China. During the Cultural Revolution, art was utilized as an instrument or weapon for political struggle, and the so-called artistic quality was only determined by the effectiveness of political propaganda. Now the Chinese longed to return to art itself. To them

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<sup>7</sup> Li Zehou, "The Double Variations of Salvage and Enlightenment". See Li Zehou, *The History and Review of Modern Chinese Thought*, Beijing: Eastern Press, 1987, 7-49.

art for art's sake was much better than art for dirty political tricks, and aesthetics of this form offered a strong backing.

## **2. Expanding outlook (1985–1989)**

From 1979 to 1984, aesthetics was closely connected with social life, the spirit of the age, and artistic practice, but it was no longer this case in the second half of the 1980s. After aesthetics as a discipline was established, it became more and more a subject studied exclusively at universities and research institutes. The idea of artistic and aesthetic autonomy has its double effects. It served the needs of getting out of the routinized ideology of the Cultural Revolution in the early 1980s, and was welcomed by the society. It continued to maintain the standpoint of the autonomy of art and aesthetics in the late 1980s, and began to be ignored by the society afterwards.

1985 was an important year for literature and art in China. It was a turning point and many important events happened then. Generally speaking, Chinese literature and art from 1978 to 1984 were realistic on the whole. It was a period of restoring the traditional realism by breaking away from the totalitarian arts produced during the Cultural Revolution. During this period, some modern Western works of literature and art were introduced into China, and received mixed responses. It was impossible for the Chinese, particularly for leading writers and artists of the time to accept avant-garde, though they adopted certain techniques from Western avant-garde works.

The year 1985 marks a new generation emerging in the field of literature and art with a challenging stance. This is a generation of the young writers and artists educated after the Cultural Revolution. They are subject to a strong influence of the avant-garde of the West in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Many Western works of literature and art were introduced into China, and the Chinese writers and artists started to imitate them. There were diversified motives behind the imitations. Some artists only tried to test new styles so as to make their works different, but there were also some artists who tried to break away from the old conventions of art as constructing something beautiful, and to destroy the autonomy of art.

Chinese aesthetics of the time, nevertheless, had nothing to do with the trend in art and literature. In the early 1980s it had a close connection with the production and appreciation of art and literature, but now it refused to follow the new trend. After several years' efforts, Chinese aestheticians established a Kantian idea of the autonomy of art, and they were not prepared to accept the avant-garde conception of art. In their eyes, the avant-garde art was only the mischief of certain youngsters, which did not deserve serious theoretical studies. As a result, the avant-garde movement in China was not accompanied by any theoretical thinking at the beginning, and the artists of the time did not read Western theories concerned, partly because they could not read foreign languages and there were no translated texts available, and partly because they were not interested in theory. What they did was only to imitate foreign works in literature and art.

On the other hand, Chinese aestheticians at this stage directed their attention to two tasks: one was to study ancient Chinese aesthetics, and the other was to translate Western books of aesthetics.

There were several books on the history of Chinese aesthetics published during this period. As it was noticed, it was not until then that some scholars began to think Chinese aesthetics should have a history. We know that before Baumgarten there was no such word as aesthetics, and thus a history of aesthetics was impossible. After aesthetics as a discipline was established, people began to trace the history of this discipline back to the ideas of, say, Plato, Aristotle, or Plotinus. In China, there had been certain books on Chinese aesthetics before, such as Zhu Guangqian's *On Poetry*, Xu Fuguan's *The Spirit of Chinese Art*, etc. These books were focusing on the studies of Chinese art, however, they were not regarded as books on aesthetics. Li Zehou's *The Path of Beauty* provides a historical description of the tastes in ancient China, but it was still not the history of aesthetics in its narrow sense. Now it is time for them to write out a history of Chinese aesthetics proper. As a result, they published a number of substantial books in this regard, of which the most important ones might be Li Zehou and Liu Ganji's *The History of Chinese Aesthetics*, and Ye Lang's *An Outline of the History of Chinese Aesthetics*.

Another important task during this period was to translate books of Western aesthetics. The Chinese began to translate Western aesthetics very early, probably from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. But before the 1980s, very few Western books after Marx were translated and published. Some people of that time tacitly approved that Western philosophy or aesthetics developed from the ancient Greece up to Marx and that was the end of philosophy or aesthetics. Modern Western philosophy was regarded as anti-Marxism, and modern Western Marxism was not true Marxism. Therefore, almost no Western philosophical and aesthetic works of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were translated. A great movement of translation began in the 1980s, and many important books were published around 1985, which attracted the attention of all Chinese aestheticians.

The translation was, however, still highly selective. It will be interesting to see why the Chinese choose certain aesthetic works to translate instead of others, and why certain works became influential in China instead of others, even though the latter were also translated and published. Let me take some of them for example. The Chinese version of Rudolf Arnheim's *Art and Visual Perception* was published in 1984, and Susan Langer's *Feeling and Form* was published in 1986. Both were warmly welcomed, becoming very influential in China. Nevertheless, no books by George Dickie and Arthur Danto were translated. There were some of their papers translated, but they made very little response. Richard Wollheim's *Art and Its Objects* was indeed translated into Chinese, but very few copies were printed and very few persons noticed it. In fact, the Chinese aestheticians were to construct their own image of Western aesthetics. This might be caused by the personal taste of certain leading aestheticians of the time. But, more importantly, it is due to the pre-established theoretical framework under the strong influence of the German classical philosophy and aesthetics.

During the second half of the 1980s, "aesthetics craze" declined owing to two causes: firstly, the political implications of aesthetics disappeared and, secondly, the aestheticians lost contacts

with literature and art. Both of these causes may be relevant to the interpretation of aesthetics as the “study of beauty”. For the reason it was a “study of beauty”, it became a popular subject in the early 1980s, and precisely because of the same reason, it lost its popularity in the late 1980s.

### **3. New conservatism and its confluence with the “posts” (1990–1994)**

The early 1990s was a period of real silence for aesthetics. The great changes in 1989 in China, Russia and the Eastern European countries brought about complex responses from the Chinese intelligentsia. It was a great transition: at first, the Chinese intellectuals were shocked, and then, owing to the economic breaking down of Russia, and the booming economy of the East Asian countries, they began to think of the new possible road to modernization. The romantic and optimistic “New Enlightenment” disappeared, and was replaced by a conservative tendency of reviving Confucianism.

1990s marked the emergence of a new generation of scholars in the academic field of China. This was a generation of people educated after the Cultural Revolution, who no longer took the “New Enlightenment” as their responsibility, and no longer regarded themselves merely as the critics of the ideology of the Cultural Revolution which, after all, had gone as a story of the past over ten years before. They had a strong motivation of doing something new and different from that of the older generation. But such new things turned out to be more traditional. To their mind, the old formula “Western = modern” and “Chinese = ancient” was naïve. Modernization was by no means Westernization, and China had to look for her own path to modernization. This tendency encouraged a new wave of rediscovering the classics of ancient China, which was called *guoxue*, or national knowledge. We find an unusual and paradoxical phenomenon of the time: young Chinese scholars were more traditional in academic tendency than the older ones.

Western Sinologists also played a role in this tendency. This was an age of international academic exchange. In the past, Chinese scholars came to know the West from books only. Now they established personal contacts with Western scholars. They first contacted Western Sinologists as scholars of China studies who worked at Western universities. Their main job was to provide the Western society with relevant knowledge of China. But, at this moment, they became the main suppliers of the Western knowledge to the Chinese. These scholars lived in a different social context from that of the Chinese, and their academic outlook was confined by this context. They tended to challenge the mainstream discourse of the West, and did it by relying on two resources: one came from traditional Chinese texts and the other from three “posts,” i. e. post-modernism, post-colonialism, and post-structuralism. This tendency became influential in China.

All this aforementioned encouraged an extremely radical line of thought in China. Some scholars took a complete negative attitude towards the reception of Western ideas in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as well as the establishment of Marxist aesthetics under the influence of the Soviet

Union after 1949. They maintained that the only way to construct a new theory of literature and art was to re-start from ancient China, and, on the basis of the traditional Chinese theory of literature and art they could directly built up a new and modern theory.

In this context, aesthetics became totally out of fashion. Aesthetics, or the study of beauty, represented a Kantian-style modernity, or a formula “Marx + Kant”, which was replaced by another formula “Chinese tradition + ‘posts’”.

#### **4. The rise of cultural studies and redefinition of aesthetics in China (1995–2000)**

In the late 1990s, Chinese aesthetics showed certain signs of reviving, but in a paradoxical way. On the one hand, many aesthetic organizations became active; many new conferences were organized, and many new books were published; on the other hand, there were very few theoretical innovations. As an independent culture with a long history, the Chinese tend to construct their own systematic ideas in every discipline. They did it in 1950s, and developed it in the early 1980s, but were not able to create any new systems in the 1990s. Towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Chinese academic studies were put into a fundamentally different context from that of the previous times. It was a globalized world, and, if one soliloquizes without noticing the development of the world, one will never be able to make any real innovations in any sense.

During this period, the only work of theoretical significance that was still relevant was about the traditional Chinese aesthetics. This work, however, acquired new meanings this time because they came to have more and more sense of the existence of an international society. The Chinese aestheticians during this phase tried hard to join in the international dialogues with the support of their own traditional resources. This was not to put the Chinese materials into Western theoretical frameworks, as what Chinese scholars once did in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Rather, it was intended to compare the Chinese ideas as an independent system with the systems from the West, and see if there was anything new that could be added to the latter.

The Chinese aestheticians continued the work of translating or introducing Western aesthetics, but the focus changed. They paid more and more attention to the Frankfurt School and other Western Marxist studies now. They had been familiar with the works by Marx and Engels, and known very well about the ex-Soviet way of interpreting them. Western Marxism could constitute a dialogue relationship with the knowledge they already possessed.

This reception of the ideas of cultural criticism featured some anti-aesthetic characteristics. In the 1980s, Chinese aesthetics was under a strong influence of the German classical aesthetics of Kant and Hegel. Aesthetics as a discipline then aimed to transform the idea of art as an instrument to its autonomy. This task was challenged in the 1990s, and the “culture craze” that occurred this time constituted a tendency precisely opposite to the “aesthetics craze”. Since aesthetics had been ignored for a long time, it was now to meet a frontal attack in the end. The proponents of the culture critique proclaimed that we no longer needed a study of beauty (literary meaning for aesthetics in China), but a study of culture.

This tendency, however, may turn out to be a momentum for aesthetics to get regenerated in China. One of the purposes of the “culture craze” was to re-unite the academic studies and the artistic practice. China experienced a great change in 1990s and the reform from the planned economy to the market economy put the artistic production of different kinds into a new context that was completely different from the previous one. The concept of art actually underwent a fundamental modification, though there were no abstract disputes about the concept itself among scholars. Alongside the realist literature and art which was still advocated by the authorities, avant-garde and popular arts were flourishing in many aspects. Chinese avant-garde and popular art had two different forms of fate. To the Western audience, Chinese avant-garde art in 1990s might be something, but it was rather marginal in China, and hardly heeded by the intellectuals. It seems paradoxical that the Chinese may know fewer names of these avant-garde artists in China than the Westerners do. The reasons for this might be very complicated. I would like to point out here that the political reason may not be the only one or at least not the major one. In fact, popular arts during this period were much more influential in China. For example, many *wuxia* novels (*kongfu* or swordsman fictions) had neither been mentioned in the history books on literature, nor had they been noticed by critics. But now they attracted more attention from professors at leading universities in China. This gave rise to the issue of how to distinguish between the high brow and the low brow arts, and between the serious and popular arts. Traditional way of defining the high brow and the low brow was challenged, and it was therefore necessary to construct a new model in the eyes of the theorists involved.

The avant-garde and popular arts supplied new theoretical possibilities posing questions to the established aesthetics and its conventional doctrines. Aesthetics was not necessary a study of pure beauty, nor was it necessary to be linked with the autonomy of art. The history of Western aesthetics witnessed a long process during which the concept of autonomy of art was formed, developed and surpassed. It was indeed for a period of time that people sought after beauty in itself and the autonomy of art, but aesthetics as a discipline could include something more than that. The “culture craze” accelerated this process in China, and helped Chinese scholars get a new understanding of aesthetics. On the other hand, although the scholars of culture studies in China direct their attention to social criticism in general, they will eventually come back to literature and art, because, after all, they take literature and art as an object of analysis, and the social criticism is only a way to enlarge their hermeneutic horizon or academic vision. We should study literature and art in different ways, but, after all, it has to be a study of literature and art, and be based on a discipline exclusively peculiar to them. This discipline is no other than aesthetics. After the “culture craze”, aesthetics was not suspended but revived instead. This is an epoch of re-establishing aesthetics in China. Everything is just booming and full of promise.

## **5. Chinese aesthetics in the global context**

It is inevitable that Chinese aesthetics has established its contact with the world, and it will eventually become part of the world aesthetics. The history of Chinese aesthetics in the 20<sup>th</sup>

century can, to certain degree, be seen as a dramatic process that was characterized by three waves of foreign influence. The first was the influence of the Western aesthetics from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to the 1930s. It spread into China partly via Japan, but the leading figures of the time, such as Zhu Guangqian and Zong Baihua, were educated in Europe. The second wave was from the Soviet Union along with the leftist movement from the 1930s up to the 1960s. The third was a new wave of Western impact on China in the 1980s and 1990s.

Since China is a large nation with a long history, any foreign influence from outside would take a long time before taking or transplanting its roots in the local soil. Moreover, a Western idea will sometimes have totally different functions in China. An outdated idea in the West may play a rather revolutionary role in China, but a trendy idea in the West may appear rather conservative in China.

In an age of globalization, what would be the possible path of the Chinese aesthetics to follow for further development? It would be still necessary to translate Western aesthetic works. The Chinese have done much in this regard in the past, but they have mainly translated the classical works written by the previous generation. What the Chinese scholars should do now is to translate the works of the present generation, and construct a dialogue relationship with the aestheticians overseas. We have to continue to study the classical Chinese aesthetics, but we should do it with high awareness of the world aesthetics. More importantly, we should develop an aesthetics that keeps a close connection with the current situation regarding Chinese literature and art.

As a non-Western nation with rich historical resources for theoretical thinking, it will go along quite a different road to develop its aesthetics from that of the Western nations and other third world nations. What we are doing now is looking for this road. We have not yet arrived at a conclusion, but remain ready to make continuous efforts to ponder and explore.

#### PASTARŲJŲ DVIEJŲ DEŠIMTMEČIŲ KINŲ ESTETIKOS RAIDA

**Gao Jianping**

Santrauka

Šiame straipsnyje aptariama kinų estetikos raida per paskutiniuosius du dešimtmečius. 9-ojo dešimtmečio pradžioje (nuo 1980 m.) kinų estetikoje išryškėjo vadinamoji „estetikos mada“, sutelkusi pastangas meno autonomiškumui įteisinti ir taip išlaisvinusi jį nuo tarnavimo politiniams tikslams – vaidmens, kuris buvo jam suteiktas Kultūrinės revoliucijos laikotarpiu (1966–1976). Ši „estetikos mada“ atslūgo 9-ojo dešimtmečio pabaigoje, kai buvo susidomėta klasikine kinų estetika ir jos kultūrinio tapatumo paieškomis. Pradedant 1990 metais, siejamais su estetikos atgimimu, jos studijos buvo plėtojamoms įvairiomis kryptimis. Dauguma estetikos specialistų bando ją sieti su šiuolaikiniais kultūros tyrinėjimais, derintis prie naujų Vakarų estetikos krypčių. Tačiau vienas svarbiausių šiuolaikinės kinų estetikos tikslų yra integruoti ją į pasaulinės estetikos tyrinėjimų lauką.

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