The Question of Artwork Identity in the Age of Digital Reproduction

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Abstract

In the age of digital reproduction, the way artworks are presented and created has changed, as has the way attribution is defined and the identity of an artwork is judged. The ease with which digital artworks can be copied has also raised new copyright concerns. The digital parameters of representation are merely a technical tool, and the question of an artwork's identity must be returned to the immaterial level for abstract analysis and attribution discussion.

Keywords

Digital Reproduction Era; Artwork; Cultural Identity; Copyright.

1. Introduction

In an age of information explosion, the digital space is a hotbed for creating all kinds of digital artworks. However, as the technical barriers to creation have been lowered, large-scale digital reproduction has emerged. This has led artists to face a problem similar to that of the aftermath of the second industrial revolution - the disappearance of the 'aura' of the artwork[1]. Artworks are brought closer to the masses and given the status of ordinary commodities. The prevalence of piracy compounds this. Piracy itself also harms the creative spirit of the artist. Here wonder whether it might be possible to set up an exclusive label for artwork containing additional cultural information. At the same time, in the Chinese context, with globalization, various cultures are beginning to move towards integration, and it is even more critical for Chinese artists to preserve the cultural identity of their work from their cultural background. The current NFT artwork has a unique code attached to the block-chain as an identity tag. More information about the creation of the artwork can be added, such as the cultural identity of the creator, the background and motivation of the creation, Etc. This extends the integrity of the artwork to a link between the motivation, the cultural aspect, the visual information, and the author's personal identity. To enhance the uniqueness of the artwork.

2. The Age of Digital Reproduction

The development of internet technology has led to an explosion of digital information, with all immaterial and non-solid information being able to exist in digital code in the virtual space of the internet. Digital artworks are also easier to disseminate because they can be reproduced in their form. In his book The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction, Benjamin proposed the theory that artworks became massively reproducible and lost their halo effect as works of art due to the advent of industrial mass production [1]. Nowadays, with the development of science and technology, solid artworks have a new form of presentation; the material carriers on which they depend are transferred to the world of computer networks that exist as immaterial in parametric form. Furthermore, the way artworks are reproduced, from the era of manual and mechanical reproduction to the era of digital reproduction. With the development of VR and AR technology, the art form of virtual reality will bring digital

reproduction into people's actual lives; that is to say, human beings will inevitably face the tendency to virtualise their real lives. At that time, real-life will be wholly integrated with the virtual network world, where material information is immaterial and solid existence is non-solid. But according to Paul Sartre's existentialist theory - existence precedes essence[2] - things do not change according to people's different descriptions, so even if the form of existence of the artwork changes and the medium of transmission of information changes, the artwork is still an artwork. The artwork is still artwork. The artwork as a commodity embodies intangible concepts and ideas by transforming them into material goods that can be marketed, sold and collected.

Following Benjamin's theory, the work of art, which can be reproduced on a large scale, loses its sacredness and is attached to the attributes of a common commodity[3]. When artworks are transferred from galleries, museums and showrooms to cyberspace, their unique personality will again face the same problems that existed after the second industrial revolution - the ease of reproduction brought about by technological upgrades will contribute to the loss of the "aura" of the work. The "aura" of the work will be lost. When this aura is lost, the artwork is caught between counterfeits and its identity is compromised, i.e., defining who the work belongs to. If an artist creates a work of art and then uploads it to the internet, the work of art exists in a virtual form. If the work is then stolen or counterfeited, the work's artistic value is objectively compromised. Hence, the artist needs to find a reasonable way to protect the artistic value of his work, preserve its originality and artistry, and clarify the identity of artist's work.

3. Copyright Crisis

In the age of digital reproduction, all kinds of legal and illegal reproduction can occur quite easily because the cost of reproduction itself is reduced. In the old days of manual or mechanical reproduction, the cost of reproducing a work of art was the cost of time and the cost of human labour. Nowadays, the cost of reproducing a work of art in the digital age is the low cost of reproduction and secondary data modification, which increases the risk of plagiarism. The resulting copyright crisis is also a myth in the age of digital reproduction: how can artists protect the originality of their work when they create it? In recent years, plagiarism of artworks has become a common occurrence, and copyright owners should pay attention to protecting their rights. According to Article 2 of China's Interpretation of the Supreme People's Court on Several Issues Concerning the Application of Law in Hearing Cases Involving Computer Network Copyright Disputes (Fa Shi [2004] No. 1), "Works protected by the Copyright Law include the digital forms of the various types of works stipulated in Article 3 of the Copyright Law. The People's Court shall protect other intellectual creations in the field of literature, art and science that cannot be classified as works under Article 3 of the Copyright Law in the online environment but are original and can be reproduced in some tangible form."[4] While the issue of the continuation of traditional copyright in the contemporary digital age and virtual cyberspace after the digitisation of artworks has been resolved at the legal level, the value of copyright in artworks is still subject to the problem of authentication and valuation. There is room for flexibility in determining the value of artworks themselves, which is influenced by multiple factors, such as the influence of the financial and capital markets, policy-oriented factors, popular trends, the value of the creator's reputation, Etc. The value of the artwork itself is flexible and subject to multiple factors, such as the influence of the financial and capital markets, policy-oriented factors, trends, the popularity of the artwork and the personal prestige of the creator.

The influx of funds into the art investment market has led to a capital premium when the price of an artwork exceeds its actual value, and this phenomenon has contributed to a financial bubble in the art market[5] and accelerated the collective copyright crisis. Furthermore, some

works by famous artists have been targeted by copyright thieves because of their vast investment potential in the auction market. When a large number of copies of a work of art appear after its debut, this affects the revenue of the original work in the commercial market. The original work is destined to exist as a work of art because of its artistic and original nature. However, when it is copied in large numbers, the imitation takes on the guise of a work of art as a commodity, and the forgery rises to the top of the market, forcing the actual work to retreat three feet.

4. Cultural Affiliation

In order to discover the identity behind a work of art, it is necessary to connect with the creator. Each creator has a different style of creation, depending on their background, life experience and education. The question of attribution of such immaterial properties can be attributed to the cultural dimension of attribution. In his book The Interpretation of Culture, the anthropologist Gertz says: "Culture is a pattern of meaning transmitted through history from one generation to the next utilising symbols, which express the idea of transmission in symbolic forms." [6] Culture as a symbolic form, although not quantifiably manageable, can also be treated as a form of abstract information. Monet's works, for example, are labelled Monet because of their national identity, time, and historical context in which they were lived. After the Franco-Prussian War, the influence of Turner and Constable, and a profound rebellion against realistic figurism, Monet became the 'Monet of Impressionism'. All of Monet's works have a 'cultural affiliation' that can range from the connection between the work itself and its creator to the emotional involvement of the creator in the work to the immaterial penetration of the work by the creator's own experiences and the encroachment of the broader cultural context. In the age of digital reproduction, the change in the medium of presentation and the immaterial transformation of the work of art makes it more difficult to trace the context of its creation and authorship. The channels through which the work can be traced and the channels through which it can be reproduced overlap after being divorced from real channels. In the same way, that data is analysed or information is digitised, it is necessary to identify a work of art in order to identify it, to determine its 'cultural affiliation', to find the larger cultural state of the historical period behind the work, and its creator's own smaller cultural experiences and expressions in work.

It is necessary to find out how the more significant cultural state of the historical period behind the work and the creator's own small cultural experiences and expressions are attached to the work of art. This particular nature is not the solid or physical nature of the object itself, but more like the observer seeing the work in the present moment and extrapolating back in time to a historical perspective.3. Results and discussion.

5. Identity

In addition to the basic analysis of non-material information to determine where the "roots" of a work lie, it is also possible to embed technical aspects of identity information in works of art that exist in virtual digital space. This information has a minimal impact on the colour of the image and is not visible to the human eye, but can be read from a specific angle and not displayed when the work is presented, but the information cannot be erased. In today's globalised world, it is difficult to escape from the 'cultural fusion' of every national form of cultural existence, but if a work of art is to be identified, or if the uniqueness of a work of art is to be preserved, it is necessary to retain the distinctive character of the work. But artists living in an era of 'cultural globalisation' will inevitably be influenced by the phenomenon of cultural cosmopolitanism. But the aesthetic, creative standards and ideas that come from the 'West' are not necessarily appropriate to the cultural development of each country. The same is true of

artistic creation, and the best source of inspiration for Chinese artists is still our 5,000-year-old history and civilisation. Although the influx of Western culture has given rise to many new forms of artistic expression, it has also led to the problem that the identity of a work of art has been blurred, or that it is difficult for the viewer to distinguish where a work of art comes from and to whom it belongs. The history of artistic creation in China predates that of the West, but there is a certain lag in the development of contemporary art. Ultimately, the current system of judging and thinking about contemporary art is still largely established by Western scholars. If we only refer to how the West builds tall buildings, without inheriting the spiritual power of Chinese civilisation, we will lose the unique national and cultural symbols that belong to Chinese artists. The identity of artworks in the age of digital reproduction can still inherit the characteristics of traditional artwork identity. From an anthropological perspective, we can determine where a person's 'roots' lie by looking at the language he or she speaks, the community he or she is accepted by, the sense of belonging he or she has within him or herself, and what his or her identity is and where his or her 'roots' lie where[7].

In the same way, the identity of an artwork can be determined by its creator and the information behind the work itself. Where does the creator belong? What is the language of expression of the work? What cultural denomination can the work be classified as, and what cultural attributes can it be attributed to? What do the work and the creator themselves want to say? These questions can be used to determine the identity of the work, to identify the artwork. It is like putting an ideological stamp on a work of art, which becomes a signature of the work's identity. In simple terms, the artwork's identity tag is treated as a sign containing additional information that, when read, allows the observer to access deeper cultural aspects of the work and its author than just the visual information.

The NFT artwork is currently in the blockchain and uses cryptography to attach an identity code to the artwork, to which we can attach information other than the identity code. For example, the motivation of the artist, the cultural background to which he belongs, etc., thus expanding the complexity of the artwork's identity tag. It is as if the ID card provides basic data about the individual, but we can use the card reader to learn about the person's fingerprints and other information. This information would be more useful in distinguishing between different works of art, as well as being used to increase the independence and uniqueness of the artwork.

6. Conclusion

1. Technological advancements in the age of digital reproduction will produce a situation similar to the loss of the "halo" of artworks following the second industrial revolution.

2. The technical barrier for digital replication is shallow, and the spread of piracy will have a negative impact on the artist's revenue and creativity.

3. To define this work's 'cultural affiliation', it is required to first ascertain the wider cultural state of the historical period in which it was created and how the creator's personal minor cultural experiences and expressions are linked to the artwork.

4. The most common methods for encrypting digital artworks are NFT encryption techniques, which can be used to increase the code's complexity by layering personal information about the author, the creation's motivation and philosophy, the cultural context, the creation process, and so on on top of the existing encryption code.

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