

向卡戴珊学习

Keeping Up with the Kardashians

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1. 刚到纽约的时候，我偶然地在一家书店发现荒木经惟的摄影书被放在了色情类画册里。在我的印象中，这位摄影师虽然以拍裸女闻名，但还总是被奉为一位艺术家，因此他的书被放入了色情读物之列让我意外不已。

两年前，当我再次走进书店，一本名叫《金·卡戴珊私藏》的书被放在了当季推荐畅销书之列。看到封面女星暴露的自拍，我饶有兴味地翻了翻，发现整本书几乎全是同一类的暴露自拍。我的头脑中产生的第一个问题是：这算是一本艺术家创作的摄影书吗？

2013 年，牛津词典将 Selfie 一词列为国际年度单词，并对它做了如下定义：“……通常是一个人用智能手机或者网络摄像头为自己拍摄，然后上传到社交媒体网站的照片。”自拍与我们经常所说的传统自拍的本质区别在于，它们通常在拍摄完后极短的时间内被上传到社交网络。自拍是数码摄影与社交网络的杂交产物，这两者的功能——比如滤镜、标签、圈人、点赞等等——以及交互界面决定了其内容以及人们运用它的方式。

2. 因为功能上的变化，社交网络等新媒体打破了传统上占据主导地位的广播电视媒体的单一对群体的传播方式，而变为了群体对群体的传播方式。亨利·詹金斯曾非常乐观地预测道：“……考虑到上述这些原则，我们应当期待数码民主将会以去中心化、不均匀地散播、深刻的矛盾性的面貌慢慢地浮现出来。”

如果追溯历史，这一预言的形式其实也并不陌生，在摄影、广播、互联网、Photoshop 等技术发明的时候，走向终极民主的脚步似乎从来没有停下来过，每当“新媒体”、“新技术”出现，我们就会再度重复这一预言。詹金斯这则针对 Photoshop 的预言放在自拍身上也完全说得过去。它为亚文化群体提供了罕有的展示自身的机会，诸如朱丽安娜·哈克斯塔布、Boychild、艾未未等一批艺术

家，音乐人，和行动主义者都通过自拍建立并维护自身的形象和活跃度，并让更多的人以此作为入口了解他们的政治理念与诉求。与此同时，虽然流行文化成为了主流传播的一大信息来源表明流行文化正在逐步进入政治图景，但是这一吸收同时也意味着新想法和替代性观点的篡改与妥协。

如今，越来越多的年轻人认为娱乐媒体，而非传统新闻，更能反映出他们对当下事件的观点。美国著名的脱口秀节目主持人诸如乔恩·斯图尔特，约翰·奥利弗已经逐渐成为了意见领袖，在他们的节目中，事实与讽刺相夹杂，这就要求观众具有极高的信息分析能力。对于只把它们当作娱乐节目看待的观众来说，这会不会引发另一种形式的娱乐至死呢？

3. 鲍里斯·格罗伊斯曾提出，相较于 20 世纪的艺术，当代艺术似乎陷入了无力介入社会和政治现实的困境当中。但问题并不在于艺术无法兼备真正的政治性。艺术家谢泼德·费尔雷在 2008 年制作了一幅波普风格的奥巴马海报以支持大选，这张海报一经面世迅速红遍全球；第一夫人米歇尔·奥巴马则两登《时尚》杂志的封面；在今年的总统大选中，特朗普更是将自己的漂亮女儿当做拉票的筹码。真正的问题在于，当下的政治环境已经完全审美化了。

如今，名人——政治家，娱乐明星，甚至恐怖分子——都拥有大量的图像报道，这些图像的总量远超艺术家生产的图像总量。那么艺术家的出路则是使用与政治家和娱乐明星们相同的手段，将自己的媒体形象塑造成一件艺术品。今年，泰特现代美术馆在题为“为相机进行表演”的展览中展出了阿玛利亚·欧曼的 Instagram 自拍项目。在这个项目中，她以自拍的形式塑造了一个渴望成为电影明星的演员形象。这不禁让人联想到辛迪·舍曼在上世纪 70 年代拍摄的“无题电影剧照”系列。前者是人们对于生活中的女演员的刻板印象，后者是对于电影塑造的女性形象的刻板印象。不同的是，舍曼的作品从不是为媒体而创作的，她也无意将自己塑造成一件艺术品。

不难看出欧曼的项目中有许多对于以卡戴珊为首的名人的指摘，而她所期望达到的应当是让图像真正进入流行文化的管道。但当这些照片成为美术馆中的展品时，它们所遵从的是与舍曼的作品一致的观看逻辑，于是又成为了严肃的批判。这样一来，她对于卡戴珊现象的讽刺在真正的现象面前就显得如此无力。

4. 运用媒体将自己变成一件艺术品——即自我设计——首先是一个制造怀疑的机制。自从现代艺术以来，艺术家们就一直在试图塑造自己的诚实形象，舍曼通过作品展出的环境来证明自己诚实的批判态度，而同一环境并不适合欧曼。正如卡戴珊和特朗普所做的，她要为人们提供的是裂痕，丑闻，灾难——这些才更能够让人们相信这些素材是真实的，才能够得到更广泛的传播，这才是媒体的逻辑。对于这一点，理查德·普林斯一直都有着清醒的认识。从早年挪用万宝路到近年挪用 Instagram 上的自拍，每一次新作品的面世带来的都是争议与诉讼。

如此说来，格罗伊斯有关当代艺术家的审美责任的分析格外值得借鉴：想让公众认可一件作品的方式是让其参与进来，这样一来任何针对作品的批评同时也是自我批评。共有的政治信仰让审美取向变得无关紧要。当我们抱持着对于流行文化的鄙夷态度翻看卡戴珊的 Instagram 或是她的那本自拍画册，我们可能会说这样的策略太低级了。但我们无法否认的是，卡戴珊才是当下图像文化经济中的胜者，我们也无法停下模仿她的营销模式的脚步。不妨说，当代艺术家想要做到真正的政治性，就应当向名人们学习流行文化的游戏规则。

1. 亨利·詹金斯，《为了民主的 Photoshop：政治与流行文化之间的新关系》，收录于《融合文化：新旧媒体的碰撞》，NYU Press, 2008 年。
2. 鲍里斯·格罗伊斯，《自我设计与审美的责任》，收录于 e-flux journal #7, 2009 年 6–9 月。

1. Shortly after arriving in New York I found a copy of Nobuyoshi Araki’s collected photography shelved in the adult section of a local bookstore. Even though Araki is known for taking pictures of naked women, I’d always thought of him primarily as an artist, so seeing his work lumped together with pornography was something of a shock for me.

When I walked into the same bookstore two years later, I saw Kim Kardashian’s *Selfish* (2015) on the shelf of recommended bestsellers. Intrigued by the revealing selfie on the cover, I flipped through the book and was surprised to find that the contents were pretty much the same. The first thought that came to mind was: Should this even be considered a photography book of an artist?

In 2013, “selfie” was the Oxford Dictionaries Word of the Year, being defined as, “a photograph that one has taken of oneself, typically one taken with a smartphone or webcam and uploaded to a social media website.” The key difference between a selfie and self-portrait is that selfies are usually posted online directly after being taken. While critic Jerry Saltz has retraced the history of the selfie vis-à-vis the development of the self-portrait, this analytical framework—rooted in art history—largely overlooks the role of technology. In fact, the selfie is a complex product of digital photography and social media. The unique functions of both (filtering, tagging, groups, likes, etc) in addition to the interactivity of the interface decides what content is posted, and how that content is used and circulated.

2. Advances in functionality have led social media networks and other forms of new media to achieve breakthroughs in broadcasting, shifting the one-to-one mode of dissemination of traditional media towards peer-to-peer communication. Now that inter-community communication is not only possible, but universal, Henry Jenkins optimistically predicts that, “…we should anticipate that digital democracy will be decentralized, unevenly dispersed, profoundly contradictory, and slow to emerge.”¹

Looking back through history, predictions of this sort are, of course, nothing new. With photography, broadcasting, the internet, Photoshop and other inventions the march toward democracy seems to be a never-ending series of new media and new technologies. Jenkins’ analysis of Photoshop can apply just as well to the selfie. Selfies provide subcultures with a unique opportunity for self-display: artists, musicians, and activists such as Juliana Huxtable, Boychild, and Ai Weiwei have employed selfies to safeguard their own images and actions, while also providing a point of access for viewers to become familiar with their political ideals and demands. While the fact that popular culture has become a major source for mainstream broadcasting demonstrates that popular culture is starting to encroach on the borders of politics, this assimilation also implies

背景图片取自 Boychild 的 Instagram
Background image taken from Boychild’s Instagram
Courtesy the artist

the usurpation and compromise of new representations and alternative viewpoints.

More and more young people are starting to believe that entertainment media does a better job of reflecting their opinion of the status quo than the news. American talk show hosts like Jon Stewart and John Oliver have become opinion leaders with programs which mix fact with satire, demanding an extremely nuanced analytical ability from their viewers. For viewers who treat these programs as nothing more than entertainment, will this lead to the death of yet another media format?

3. Boris Groys has pointed out that in comparison to 20th century art, contemporary art seems incapable of taking part in social and political crises.² The problem isn't so much that art has become depoliticized—in 2008 for example, the artist Shepard Fairey made a pop art tribute to Obama that was quickly reprinted around the world; first lady Michelle Obama has appeared on the cover of Vogue multiple times; and in the most recent election, Donald Trump has used his own daughter as an enticing bargaining chip to attract voters. The real problem is that politics have become aestheticized.

Celebrities today—politicians, entertainers, and even terrorists—all find themselves recipients of an ever increasing amount of photo-reportage, far in excess of the output of contemporary artists. In response, artists have begun to employ the same strategies as politicians and entertainers, crafting their images like works of art. The exhibition “Performing for the Camera” at the Tate Modern earlier this year included Amalia Ulman’s Instagram selfie series, in which Ulman used selfies to simulate the image of an actress striving to become a movie star. It is perhaps unavoidable that Ulman’s work brings to mind Cindy Sherman’s self-portrait series “Untitled Film Stills” from the 1970s, with the former being response to popular stereotypes of actresses, and the latter responding to stereotypical female images crafted for film. Setting them apart, however, is the fact that, Shermin did not create her works for the media, nor did she intent to turn herself into a work of art.

It is not hard to see that Ulman’s project contains any number of criticisms of celebrity, with Kardashian being perhaps the most infamous representative. Her goal was to bring her images into the mainline of popular culture, but as soon as these works became objects in the museum, however, they were forced to obey the logic of the artistic project, becoming transformed into earnest criticism. In so doing, her satire of the Kardashians as an actual phenomenon seems have lost much of its staying power.

4. Using media to turn the self into a work of art—ego construction—is a mechanism for creating doubt. For as long as modern art has existed, artists have been

trying to create honest self-portraits. While Sherman used her surroundings to demonstrate the sincerity of her criticism, Ulman seems out of place. Just like the Kardashians and Trump, she shows her viewers division, scandals, disaster—this is what allows them to believe in the truth of her material, attracting shares and likes. This is the logic of media, something which the artist Richard Prince has long since understood. From his early appropriations of Marlboro ads to his recent repurposing of Instagram selfies, his work has incited both controversy and lawsuits.

Here, Groys’ analysis of the aesthetic responsibility of the artist seems especially apt: if a work is to be accepted by viewers, then they must be invited to participate in the work, so that any criticism becomes self-criticism. Collectively held political beliefs make our aesthetic orientation insignificant. If we feel nothing but contempt for pop culture when browsing Kim Kardashian’s Instagram feed or flipping through Selfish, we might argue that her work is too vulgar. But what we cannot dispute is the fact that she is the reigning queen of today’s visual culture economy, nor can we avoid following in her marketing footsteps. For contemporary artists who want to be truly political, would it really be that surprising if their best teachers for learning the rules of the game of popular culture turned out to be celebrities?

(TRANSLATED BY NICK STEMBER)

1. Henry Jenkins, “Photoshop for Democracy: The New Relationship between Politics and Popular Culture,” in *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*, (New York University Press, 2006), pp. 206–227.
2. Boris Groys, “Self-Design and Aesthetic Responsibility” in e-flux journal #7, June, 2009.



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Liu Wei, *Untitled*, 2016, Oil on canvas, 180x220 cm. Courtesy Liu Wei Studio and Long March Space