

The concept of postmodernism and its representation in korean art



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POSTMODERNISM: From the renaissance period all through out the 19th Century, the concern of the artist was presenting their world as truthfully as possible. This concern for truth got shattered with the advent of Modernism in art, the era of which started by the first half of the Twentieth Century. The philosophy of the Modernist's, was " Art for art's sake". They concentrated more on the form searching for subjective truths. This lead to abstract forms, and surrealistic content.

Postmodernism was a counter movement to modernism and came into being in the 70s. It was also a reaction to the domination of the popular culture by corporate interests. The traditional media of entertainment were all converted into mass media entertainment by modern technology. The viewers were bombarded with sounds and images by this mass media, dominating him completely. His thought process was effectively arrested by this bombardment. Reflections during entertainment ceased to happen. The ideas, heaped on the hapless spectator were all consistent with capitalist view points, which dominated the society. This condition, according to the Marxist theorist and French philosopher Guy Debord, is the " historical moment at which the commodity completes its colonization of social life." (Thesis, The Society of Spectacle, Guy Debord 1967) Post Modernism was a revolt against such a social situation. The post modernists believed in no single universal truth. Instead of searching for historical accuracy, they tried to probe the present. " Time has become a perpetual present and thus spatial. Our relationship with the past is now a spatial one." -- Declared the postmodern Marxist literary critic Fredric Jameson (Anders Stephanson --- Regarding Post Modernism ---A Conversation with Fredric Jameson). The post modernists looked at the fragmented modern life as a liberating force. They <https://assignbuster.com/the-concept-of-postmodernism-and-its-representation-in-korean-art/>

also encouraged multiplicity of style and view points.

KOREAN POSTMODERNISM: Minjung art movement, of 1980s is considered to be the major Postmodernist movement in Korea by critics like Yong-na Kim.

Minjung art movement was a reaction to the modernism of Korean

Monochrome art, dominant then. The Minjung artists opposed the formalism of the Monochrome art. They found this formalism not reflective of the

Korean social realities. The Minjung artists were socially committed to the problems of the people like the impoverishment of the farmers, hardships of

the lives of urban poor and the working class. " In retrospect Minjung art can

be regarded as a break from a dominant modernism of Monochrome art,

paving the way to postmodernism. It can also be considered Postmodernist

art because of its strong social content." (Korean Contemporary art in the

1990s ---20th Century Korean Art - Yong-na Kim - page 269) Politically, the

movement was for more democracy in Korea. Like the western

Postmodernism, they encouraged multiplicity of view point and style. A

variety of styles and forms like wood cuts, murals, photo montages were

experimented by these artists. Paintings became banners during people's

protests. At the same time, the Minjung movement refused to be a photo

copy of the western Postmodernism. They tried to stick on to the Korean art

traditions like the Buddhist art. The major painters representing this

movement are Lim Ok-sang , with his master piece paintings like " A Modern

History of Africa" , " Family Series" , and " The Earth Mother .", O Yun with

his " General Green Pea" and Kim Bong-jun.

By early 1990s this movement got weakened, may be because of the

democratization of Korea and the weakening of the leftist forces globally

with the disintegration of the Soviet Union. It was an art movement that "

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strongly emphasized subject matter and narration and involved a realistic style that the masses could easily understand (Tradition, Modernity and Identity: Modern and Contemporary Art in Korea, Kim Young-na, page 53)

Sources Used:

- 1) Debord Guy, , The Society of Spectacle, Rebel Press,
- 2) Stephanson Anders, Regarding Postmodernism, A Conversation with Fredric Jameson, Universal Abandon?: The Politics of Postmodernism, ed. Ross Andrew (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 1988)
- 3) Kim Yong-na , Korean Contemporary art in the 1990s- 20th Century Korean Art, Laurence King Publishing, U. K.
- 4) Kim Yong-na, Tradition, Modernity and Identity: Modern and Contemporary Art in Korea, Hollym Internal Corp. 2005.