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## Flattery or Abuse: Art Criticism in China

In a small but provocative book, *What Happened to Art Criticism?* James Elkins presents a wide array of evidence suggesting that “Art criticism is in worldwide crisis.”<sup>1</sup> Is the crisis really worldwide? At least in China, the case is different. Elkins’ book was published in 2003, when art criticism in China had just started to thrive. The first China Annual Art Critics Assembly was held in 2007. The China Literature and Art Critics Association was founded even later in 2014. Why do Chinese art critics set up these organizations while world art criticism is in crisis? What are their purposes? To withstand the crisis or to meet prosperity? What happened to art criticism in China?

### 1. Traditional Chinese Art Criticism

If we look back into the long history of China, we can find numerous texts related to art criticism since the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. In addition to short comments on music and painting recorded in *Analects*, *Zhuangzi*, *Hanfeizi*, and so on,<sup>2</sup> Ji Zha’s *Viewing the Music* in the Zhou Dynasty, is a systematic, detailed and quite longer text and can be regarded as a standard text of art criticism,<sup>3</sup> if we take art criticism as “criticism of any work within a certain group of artforms, including: literature, drama, dance, music, the graphic arts (encompassing photography), sculpture, architecture, and moving-image arts (film, video, and computer generated visuals),” as Noël Carroll does.<sup>4</sup> After one thousand years,

<sup>1</sup> James Elkins, *Whatever Happened to Art Criticism?*, Prickly Paradigm Press, Chicago 2003, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> The three books record the dialogues and essays of Confucius (551 bc–479 bc), Zhuangzhou (369 B.C.–286 B.C.), and Hanfei (280 B.C.–233 B.C.), respectively. For English translation, see Li Yutang, *The Chinese Theory of Art: Translations from the Masters of Chinese Art*, Putnam’s Sons, New York 1967, pp. 21–24.

<sup>3</sup> Jizha’s commenting on music happened in 544 B.C. and is recorded in *Zuo Spring and Autumn*, in *Zhuzijicheng*, Zhonghua shuju, Beijing 1954, vol. 6, p. 58.

<sup>4</sup> Noël Carroll, *On Criticism*, Routledge, New York 2009, p. 11. However, I will focus on the criticism of visual arts in this essay.

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in the 5<sup>th</sup> century A.D. artist and art critic Xie He in his *Criticism and Catalogue of Ancient Paintings (Guhua Pinlu)* divided 27 painters of the third to fifth centuries into six numbered grades. In a short preface, Xie He briefly introduced the principles of his critical evaluation, that is, the “Six Laws,” which is seen as “the first Chinese attempt at a systematic approach to the theory of the art.”<sup>5</sup> However, Xie He’s text and similar texts in the history are seldom read as art criticism today, while they raise the interests of art history and aesthetics.

Art criticism seems to have a contemporary character that sets it apart from art history. This contemporaneity means not only that art criticism often deals primarily with contemporary artworks,<sup>6</sup> but also that, more strictly speaking, art criticism itself is contemporary writing or talking. For example, Denis Diderot was an art critic since he focused on contemporary artists of his time and their recent works. But, after two and a half centuries, today Diderot’s writings on paintings and sculptures are read as materials of art history and art theory or aesthetics rather than art criticism. Art criticism can be transformed into art history and art theory or aesthetics as time goes on. In other words, art criticism by its very nature doesn’t have a history not only because it concentrates on contemporary art scenes, but also because only contemporary writing or talking can be treated as art criticism. Xie He was likely an art critic in the fifth century, but he is not treated as art critic today by the scholars who are interested in his writings or in Xie He himself as a historical person.

However, the distinction between art criticism and art theory or aesthetics does not depend on contemporaneity but on universality. Both art criticism and art theory or aesthetics can focus on contemporary phenomena of art, but art theory or aesthetics pursues universality while art criticism focuses on individual art works, artists, and art movements. In this sense, art theory or aesthetics is a typical second-order discipline while art criticism is a first-order discipline. One of the differences between art theory as a second-order discipline and art criticism as a first-order discipline is that the former is not interested in evalu-

<sup>5</sup> Alexander Soper, “The First Two Laws of Hsieh Ho”, *Far Eastern Quarterly*, vol. 8 (1949), pp. 412–423; citation from p. 412. There are many different interpretations of Xie He’s Six Laws, also see James F. Cahill, “The Six Laws and How to Read Them”, *Ars Orientalis*, vol. 4 (1961), pp. 372–381. Hsieh Ho is the old Chinese phonetic alphabet of Xie He.

<sup>6</sup> For discussion of the contemporaneity of art criticism, see Kerr Houston, *An Introduction to Art Criticism: History, Strategies, Voices*, Pearson, Boston 2013, pp. 3–7.

ation while the latter makes evaluation its priority. Evaluation is so crucial to art criticism that Barbara Rose claims: “The act of criticism is the value judgment. The rest is art writing.”<sup>7</sup> However, art theory or aesthetics always avoids making evaluation. “As a second-order discipline or metacriticism,” Richard Shusterman writes, aesthetics, especially analytic aesthetics “was a strong tendency to avoid evaluative issues, generally by relegating them to the first-order level of criticism itself.”<sup>8</sup> According to this distinction, Xie He’s *Criticism and Catalogue of Ancient Paintings* is both a second-order discipline and a first-order discipline. The “Six Laws” is highly generalized and universal and so can be classified as a second-order art theory. The evaluation and classification of artists can be regarded as a first-order art criticism.

Like Xie He’s *Criticism and Catalogue of Ancient Paintings*, most texts of traditional Chinese art criticism, including criticism of painting (huapin) and criticism of calligraphy (shupin), is not only art criticism, but a trinity, including art theory, art history, and art criticism.

## 2. From Art Commentary to Art Criticism

Under the influences of the classification and compartmentalization of western modernity, the integrated traditional Chinese knowledge has been divided into different disciplines during its modernization processes. Art is no exception. Art criticism is gradually separated from art history and art theory or aesthetics. There are two modern Chinese words corresponding to art criticism in English: *yishu pinglun* and *yishu piping*. *Yishu pinglun* literally means art commentary or art review, while *yishu piping* exactly captures the meaning of art criticism. Word frequency statistics based on China National Knowledge Infrastructure reports that a big shift from art commentary to art criticism happened in 1996. Before 1996, art commentary was used more often than art criticism in essays published by journals and newspapers, but the gap between the two words was not big. However, after 1996 art criticism has been preferred to art commentary, and the gap has been getting bigger and bigger. Especially in the contemporary

<sup>7</sup> Barbara Rose, *Autocritique: Essays on Art and Anti-Art, 1963–1987*, Weidenfield & Nicolson, London 1988, p. 215.

<sup>8</sup> Richard Shusterman, “Introduction: Analytic Aesthetics: Retrospect and Prospect”, *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 46 (1987), p. 119.

art circle, art commentary has been almost abandoned. How to interpret this change?

In his essay *The Changing Role of Critics in the 1990s*, Qian Zhijian observes the change from art commentator to art critic in the 1990s. Qian writes, “The term ‘art critic,’ or *yishu pipingjia* in Chinese, was not widely adopted and accepted in China until the early 1990s. Before that, especially in the 1980s, those who practiced art criticism were generally addressed as ‘art theoreticians’ and later ‘art commentators.’”<sup>9</sup> However, art criticism did not completely replace art commentary in the 1990s. Art criticism and art commentary have been coexisting up to now. Qian also noticed this co-existence:

Two groups of art writers who practiced criticism were now clearly formed, whether consciously or not. One group saw themselves as defenders as well as advocator of “art in tune with socialism,” while the other group tried to stick to their modernist ideas and ideals. Interestingly, those from the former group preferred to be addressed as “art theoreticians” or “art commentators.”<sup>10</sup>

There are many differences between art commentary and art criticism. The first is a political difference. The distinction between art commentary and art criticism is, as Qian mentions, the difference between socialist realism and capitalist modernism. It is a difference not only in art styles but also in political stances. As China has been developing from socialism into a mix of socialism and capitalism, or, in other words, socialism with Chinese characteristics, China’s political system is no longer a single socialist system, but a multi-component system that includes both socialism and capitalism. Art criticism and art commentary coexist but represent different political stances. Art commentary represents socialism and its realism, while art criticism stands for capitalism and its modernism. The increasing use of art criticism in some ways means that modernism trumps realism, and, correspondingly, capitalism plays an increasingly important role in China.

<sup>9</sup> Qian Zhijian, “The Changing Role of Critics in the 1990s”, in: *Chinese Art at the End of the Millennium*, John Clark (Ed.), New Art Media Limited, Hong Kong 2000, p. 25.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

The second is a difference in attitude. Art criticism prefers critique to praise, while art commentary is fond of positive evaluation. The art commentators before the 1990s, as Qian observes, “were virtually nothing more than trumpeters of artists who dedicated their work to the socialist cause.”<sup>11</sup> Since art criticism is imported in China from western sources, it bears the meaning found in its western contexts. Concerning art criticism in English, as Houston points out, “when first encountered, the term sounds inherently negative or aggressive.”<sup>12</sup> In this sense, art criticism in China has certain risks, since it criticizes not only the artworks, but also the social phenomena and even the authorities. Meanwhile, art criticism focuses more on analysis and interpretation, while art commentary is full of assertions and descriptions. The analysis and interpretation in art criticism are based on art theory and art history, while the assertions in art commentary are based on political positions.

The third is a difference in time. Before the 1990s, art commentary was used more often than art criticism in Chinese publications. There is a tendency of art criticism replacing art commentary. This change is an epitome of social change in China. The society can tolerate different voices and dissents, which means China is becoming more democratic, diverse, and open. However, art commentary does not disappear, since China has not become a capitalist country. With its great economic achievements, China is increasingly convinced of the superiority of its political system. The so-called socialism with Chinese characteristics is actually a mixture of socialism and capitalism, but the proportion of the two varies from time to time. Briefly speaking, before the 1990s socialism took a larger proportion, capitalism surpassed socialism after the 1990s, and since the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, socialism and capitalism seem to have reached a certain equilibrium. This change is somehow reflected by the frequency of the two words: art commentary and art criticism.

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### 3. The Emergence of Commercial Art Criticism

In addition to the change from art commentary to art criticism, there are some changes within art criticism itself. As Qian observed:

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>12</sup> Kerr Houston, *An Introduction to Art Criticism: History, Strategies, Voices*, p. 1.

The transition of the art critic from “spiritual leader” to “critic-as-curator” or “critic-as-dealer” is a phenomenon that in a way marked the art world of the 1990s. It was brought by dramatic changes in the art world itself, on which this changing role itself had a large impact, whether positive or negative. That critics played and are playing such multiple roles in the contemporary art arena complicates the understanding of art criticism in today’s China.<sup>13</sup>

Actually in Qian’s text “spiritual leader” cannot be separated from “critic-as-curator.” Some “critic-as-curators” such as Gao Minglu and Li Xianting at a special historical moment were respected as “spiritual leaders.” As Qian points out:

This new role of critic-as-curator, though the majority of the critics were not yet familiar with the concept of curatorship, won art critics in China unprecedented honour and respect as well as power that was beyond the older generation’s expectation. Such a situation culminated during the ’89 China/Avant Garde exhibition co-organized by Gao Minglu, Li Xianting and others, which was held in early 1989 at the China National Gallery in Beijing. This exhibition won both Gao and Li fame as “spiritual leaders.”<sup>14</sup>

Not every “critic-as-curator” could win fame as “spiritual leader.” Only a few critics, who had received good academic training “from art academies,” a special “position in between the official and semi-official,” and intention to “promote their modernism-oriented ideas,” could be “spiritual leader.”<sup>15</sup> But there were new roles for the critics; among them the most important one is “critic-as-dealer.”

Since the mid-1990s, the art market in China began to grow. “The desire to invest in art made sponsorship available to art critics who were eager to realize their ideas in exhibitions that seemed ideologically less dangerous. Many critics willingly took the role of curators, and the majority of important exhibitions throughout the 1990s were organized by these critics/curators.”<sup>16</sup> Most of these shows did not get financial support from the government. The critic-as-curators had to find sponsorship by themselves. They did not only need to satisfy

<sup>13</sup> Qian Zhijian, “The Changing Role of Critics in the 1990s”, p. 28.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 25–26.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

the commercial purposes of their investors, but also needed to earn a living by curating exhibitions. “To make art criticism a profession in China seems to be extraordinarily difficult and challenging” in the 1990s, as Qian reports:

For many of the critics, to survive as a professional/independent critic is likely very often a question. They receive very low fees for their writings from publishers, and nothing from art galleries or museums when their writings come up with certain exhibitions. In 1993, critics Yi Ying and Yin Shuangxi drafted the so-called Critics’ Agreement, which declared that critics had the right to receive payment from artists who requested their articles. Thirty-six critics from different cities signed the agreement.<sup>17</sup>

As the art market started to boom by the end of 1990s, critics could manage art exhibitions and shows by buying and selling art works. “Again, for financial reasons, some critics started to try to play the role of critic-as-dealer.”<sup>18</sup> A few critics ventured to open their own galleries and were finally away from art criticism.

#### 4. The Developments in Chinese Art Criticism

Based on Qian’s observation, art critics in the 1990s could be divided into three groups: art commentators for political purpose, critic-as-curator or “spiritual leader” for academic purpose, and critic-as-curator or critic-as-dealer for commercial purpose. Through the development of art criticism from the 1990s into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the divisions between the three groups, that is, political criticism, academic criticism, and commercial criticism are becoming more and more apparent.

Political art criticism dominated the art circle before the 1990s. After entering the 1990s, this kind of art criticism began to decline. But it did not disappear. The political art criticism waxes and wanes as the political situation changes. When capitalism surpassed socialism in the 1990s, political art criticism waned and commercial art criticism waxed. Recently there seems to be a return of political art criticism because of a great shift in international and domestic politics.

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

Academic art criticism has been very weak, but not totally absent. It is weak because there seems to be no place for art criticism in academia. Universities do not consider art criticism an academic discipline. The publication of art criticism is not counted as an academic achievement and so does not contribute to the promotion of university professors. However, the situation in literary criticism is very different. There are positions of literary criticism in the universities, and the publication on literary criticism can help professors in the universities, especially the literature departments, get promoted. Despite these issues, academic art criticism still survives. It played and continues to play an important role in breaking the dominance of political and commercial art criticism.

The academic value of art criticism is questioned because it is inextricably linked to the art market. As the art market flourishes, the independence of academic criticism in China is put into question. It is undeniable that most art criticism in China is commercial criticism. Oddly enough, this is not the case with criticism in other art forms. In addition to literary criticism which we mentioned early, theater criticism, dance criticism, music criticism, and even film criticism are not heavily commercialized. One of the reasons is that the art market is more developed and active than the market of music, dance, theatre and so on.

In short, in the tripartition of art criticism in China, political criticism seems to be outdated, academic art criticism is only a flash in the pan, and what is prevailing at this moment is commercial criticism. The three groups or types of art criticism can also be treated, loosely speaking, as a sequence from the political through the academic into the commercial. It should be noted, however, that these three kinds of art criticism actually exist together, never totally replacing one another.

## 5. The Changes in Western Art Criticism

Art criticism in the West is also undergoing such changes or developments. For example, James Elkins observes a change from judgment to description. "In the last three or four decades," Elkins writes, "critics have begun to avoid judgments altogether, preferring to describe or evoke the art rather than say what they think of it."<sup>19</sup> While, most critics witness a change from judgment to

<sup>19</sup> James Elkins, *What Happened to Art Criticism*, Prickly Paradigm Press, Chicago 2003, p. 12.



interpretation instead of a change from judgment to description. According to Carroll's observation, "the majority of critical theories on offer today are primarily theories of interpretation. They are about getting the meaning, including the symptomatic meaning, out of artworks. They take interpretation to be the leading task of criticism."<sup>20</sup> However, Carroll himself is different from the majority. He is arguing for a criticism based on evaluation. He writes:

In contrast, I argue that evaluation is of the essence of criticism, especially in terms of the kind of artistic category or genre that the artwork at hand instantiates. Whereas I maintain that evaluation is central to the criticism of art, many of the reigning theories of criticism today appear to treat interpretation as key. But I can even envision examples of criticism sans interpretation, so long as they do include evaluation.<sup>21</sup>

If Carroll is right, evaluation may return in the future and there might be another turn or change from interpretation to evaluation. This seems to mean that the three elements of art criticism, namely, description, interpretation, and evaluation, are given different emphasis in different times. There is a circle between the three main elements.

Irit Rogoff's view is different. She charts a sequence of developments in western art criticism from criticism through critique into criticality:

It seems to me that within the space of a relatively short period we have been able to move from criticism to critique to criticality – from finding fault, to examining the underlying assumptions that might allow something to appear as a convincing logic (as in the case of all the aforementioned work on and in museums), to operating from an uncertain ground which, while building on critique, wants nevertheless to inhabit culture in a relation other than one of critical analysis; other than one of illuminating flaws, locating elisions, allocating blames.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Noël Carroll, *On Criticism*, Routledge, New York 2009, p. 5.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Irit Rogoff, "Looking Awar: Participations in Visual Culture", in: *After Criticism: New Responses to Art and Performance*, G. Butt (Ed.), Blackwell Publishing, Malden, Oxford & Carlton 2005, p. 119.

The sequence of developments that Rogoff finds in western art criticism is different from the sequence in Chinese art criticism, that is, as I mentioned early, from political criticism through academic criticism to commercial criticism. But there are some relations between them that should be mentioned. The change from criticism to critique in the West is somehow similar to the change from political art criticism to academic art criticism in China. It is true that political art criticism or art commentary normally flatters mainstream art that caters to the ideology instead of finding fault that is the characteristic of criticism in the West. In other words, political art criticism in China is prone to make positive judgment, while art criticism in the West prefers the negative. But both the positive and the negative are judgment or evaluation. There is also negative judgment in Chinese political criticism, especially when it deals with the non-mainstream art such as avant-garde art. In short, both criticism in the West and political art criticism in China emphasize evaluation or judgment. Whether the evaluation is positive or negative, it is a judgment.

Critique in the West is similar to academic art criticism in China insofar as both emphasize analysis and interpretation. The change from political art criticism to academic art criticism is similar to the change from criticism to critique in the West, since both changes means a shift from judgment and evaluation to analysis and interpretation. In the stage of critique in the West and the academic art criticism in China, both Western and Chinese critics prefer to describe, analyze and interpret from a neutral and objective perspective rather than to judge and evaluate on the basis of political ideologies or aesthetic point of views.

Criticality, the third stage in Rogoff's sequence, is unheard of in the Chinese art community. For most Chinese art critics and aestheticians, criticality is a totally new concept. What is criticality? According to Rogoff and others, criticism in the West is in trouble. Neither the criticism focused on evaluation nor the critique concentrated on analysis and interpretation could accommodate contemporary art that is so obsessed with changing and challenging. The only way for art criticism to get itself out of crisis is to engage in the creation of art. Art criticism is no longer something about art, such as description, interpretation or evaluation of art, but a part of art. Art criticism should change from descriptive, interpretative, or evaluative criticism into performative criticism, in order to respond to new kinds of art that are themselves unpredictable events or improvisational performances. It does not mean that the value or meaning of

an artwork is realized by the interpretation of art critic, as conceived by Danto's theory of the "artworld." According to Danto, to see something as art requires "something the eye cannot descry"—a knowledge of the history and theory of contemporary art.<sup>23</sup> Art critics, not artists, create the "atmosphere of theory," which is the defining property of art. However, according to Rogoff, art critics are not only engaged in interpretation but also in practice. In this sense, art critics are also artists. James Elkins observes this tendency in art criticism. He says:

One of the principal contemporary tendencies in criticism is what might be called performative criticism. By that I mean critical writing that is construed as performance, or as performative; it is intended to respond to new kinds of art that are themselves evanescent, body-centered, and time-based, such as performance art.<sup>24</sup>

Tirdad Zolghadr considers Rogoff's sequence of development of western art criticism, from criticism through critique to criticality as a successful summary. But he argues or acknowledges that the "process is, of course, easily parodied as affected and pompous."<sup>25</sup> James Elkins especially doubts Rogoff's criticality. He says:

My difficulty with it is that I am not convinced that "criticality" has any coherent definition. In practice, Rogoff uses it to describe situations in which the critic's role, her purpose and voice, are so much at risk – so intimately engaged with the artist's work – that her subjectivity, and her practice, may alter, and in turn alter the reception of the work. I find it at once a hypertrophied description of any phenomenologically understood encounter art, and – most important in this context – not cogent as a contribution to the historical lineage that produced the first two terms, criticism and critique.<sup>26</sup>

What I am interested is not the definition of criticality. Literally speaking, criticality means a state of critical urgency. My question is: Could we identify a state

<sup>23</sup> Arthur Danto, "The Artworld," *The Journal of Philosophy*, 61 (19/1964), p. 579.

<sup>24</sup> James Elkins, "Afterword", in: *Judgment and Contemporary Art Criticism*, J. Khonsary and M. O'Brian (Eds.), Artspeak and Fillip Editions, Vancouver 2010, p. 160.

<sup>25</sup> Tirdad Zolghadr, "Worse than Kenosis", in: *Judgment and Contemporary Art Criticism*, p. 19.

<sup>26</sup> James Elkins, "Afterword", in *Judgment and Contemporary Art Criticism*, p. 160.

of critical urgency in Chinese art criticism? Could we find a parallel between criticality in the West and commercial art criticism in China?

## 6. The Criticality in Chinese Art Criticism

In recent years, the most salient recent phenomenon in Chinese art criticism is abuse and fighting between critics. These abuses and fights could be regarded as the Chinese way of interpretation of criticality in the West.

These are some examples. In the spring of 2013, curator and critic Bao Dong and Cui Cancan abused each other via Sina Weibo, the Chinese Twitter, since Cui criticized the exhibition “On/Off” of which Bao Dong was one of curators. They agreed to settle their argument by a fight in the middle night of the 28<sup>th</sup> of February. The fight did not happen since Bao Dong did not appear at the last moment. In the summer of 2014, curator and critic Duan Jun criticized performance artist Han Xiao’s work at a conference in Shenlongjia. This event provoked abuse and threats toward Duan from Han. Duan was so angry that he beat Han. As a consequence, Duan was detained for a week. In the winter of 2015, an associate professor of China Academy of Art Zhu Yeqing released an announcement via Wechat that he would like to challenge four full professors of the Academy, including the president and three vice presidents. In the second half of 2016, there was a large-scale quarrel of long duration between poet and critic Yu Xinqiao and curator and critic Liang Kegang as representatives of one group and curator and critic Zhu Qi and Wen Song as representatives of another group. Many critics and curators engaged in this quarrel. Recently the debate about artist Chen Danqing has been intensifying. The abusing and fighting in the art circle attracted a lot of media attention. The critics were somehow becoming famous through fighting and abusing each other.

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In addition to a focus on abuse and fight, Chinese art criticism is full of flattery. Abuse and flattery have become two sides of commercial criticism in China. Critics raise awareness by abusing, in order to make money by flattering.

So criticality in Chinese art criticism is really in a crisis or a state of critical urgency. It is obviously negative. This crisis is the inevitable result of commercial art criticism. Neither political art criticism nor commercial art criticism can make art criticism healthy.

## 7. The Return of Critique

After 40 years development, art criticism in China has changed from political criticism into commercial criticism. The pressures of ideology are replaced by the worries about capitalist co-option of criticism. How to get rid of the political pressures and commercial worries? One way might be to develop independent or academic art criticism. Compared to political and commercial criticism, independent criticism is very underdeveloped. Firstly, newspapers and magazines do not have space for art criticism and so they do not have their own art critics, such as Arthur Danto for *The Nation*, Roberta Smith for *The New York Times*, Peter Schjeldahl for *The New Yorker*, and so on. Most art critics in China only write for catalogues and commercial magazines. They are not paid by newspapers or magazines but galleries, museums or artists themselves. Secondly, art academies and universities have education programs for art history and aesthetics, but they do not have programs for art criticism. Art critics in China have different educational backgrounds, such as aesthetics, art history, literary theory, and so on, but nobody was originally trained as art critic. Thirdly, art criticism essays have neither literary value nor academic value. On the one hand, these essays cannot be read as fiction or literary prose. On the other hand, professors in universities and art academies cannot get a promotion by these essays. They need to publish academic papers and books in art history or aesthetics.

Because of the pressure of capitalist co-option, criticality does not look like a promising solution. The orientation of criticism in China seems not to be from criticism to critique to criticality but from criticality back to critique. We need to develop the academic, professional, or independent criticism that amounts to the critique in Rogoff's sequence. The good news is that some universities such as Peking University began to extend the program of aesthetics and art history to include art criticism. The department of art history and the graduate program of aesthetics join up and set up a new department of art theory, history and criticism. Thanks to the joint efforts of Peking University and other universities, art finally separated from literature and became an independent discipline in China in 2012. In addition to art practices, art research, or, in Chinese *yishuxue* (artology), is developing very fast. Together with art theory, art history, and art management, art criticism has become an integral part of artology. We are expecting to see that the critics who are trained in the program of art criticism

can provide more detailed descriptions, insightful interpretations and objective evaluations, rather than engaging in flattery and abuse. When art criticism is practised as a discipline that aims at the production of knowledge, instead of political grandstanding or commercial collusion, criticism in China will have bright prospects.