

## THE COLUMN 藝術專欄



Image: Adriana Alvarez-Nichol, Founder of Puerta Roja  
圖：Adriana Alvarez-Nichol, Puerta Roja 紅門創辦人

### Out with the new, in with the old: rediscovering artists from the late 20th Century 破新立舊：對20世紀末期藝術家的 重新發現

The last few years have seen a series of robust comebacks for once-celebrated 20th-century artists from around the globe. Particularly exciting has been the focus by institutions such as MoMA, Tate Modern, the Centre Pompidou and the Mori Museum, to reevaluate the contribution of artists from the 1950's-70's. Korean Dansaekhwa and South American Kinetic and Op Art, for example, have been the focus of important retrospectives and new acquisitions that re-examine previously “under-valued” artists.

The art market, unsurprisingly, followed suit. After twenty years or so of tremendous growth in prices for “unripe” emerging artists, art dealers and collectors started rebalancing resources towards the now ubiquitous term “old but new guard”: artists with historically seminal material, but who also continue to produce new work. Amidst uncertain economic times, the balance between the safety of a solid track record and possibility of new creations has become increasingly attractive.

Beyond a correction of the institutional narrative of art history and the renewed market interest, a more thought-provoking question is: why are these artists still relevant today? Perhaps some of the forces that originally drove these movements still resonate with our own concerns today.

At first glance, many of these artists explored the realms of abstraction as an open language with which to communicate, one that granted the viewer much greater room for interpretation. Unconstrained by historical and societal readings, these works can reach a much broader and increasingly international audience. A work by Lee Ufan may resonate as much with a young Mexican viewer when presented at the Museo Tamayo in Mexico City as the work by Franco-Venezuelan Op Art artist Carlos Cruz-Diez with the Chinese public during his year-long touring exhibition in China.

The spirit of Op and Kinetic Art, in particular, was deeply universal. The movement used optical illusions and geometric patterns to produce effects that both confuse and stimulate the eye. Whilst artists had been intrigued by colour and illusions for centuries, it was in the 1950's that these preoccupations, aided by technological development, blossomed into a concrete movement. Launched with Le Mouvement, a group exhibition at the iconic Parisian Galerie Denise Rene in 1955, it was formally recognised after MoMA's seminal show The Responsive Eye in 1965. The eye-catching, imaginative and vertigo-inducing works swept the art world and enamoured viewers. Works appeared on the walls of major museums and galleries around the world and heavily influenced architecture, design and fashion of the time.

Artists such as Hungarian Victor Vasarely, English Bridget Riley, Venezuelan Carlos Cruz-Diez and American Frank Stella, strove to create a new, shared vision of art that better reflected their times. Beyond formal and technical explorations of colour and movement, at the heart of the artists' discourse were its progressive ideals, new egalitarian and hopeful perspectives about the future. Such ideals had been brewing deeply in South America since the 1930's. Uninterrupted by the horrors of the World Wars, diverse currents of geometric abstraction, developed particularly in Argentina and Venezuela, would become the forefront of international trends. Fuelled by idealist notions of progress, and inspired by science and mathematics, artists looked to change the world through reason and order. A number of these artists, including Luis Tomasello, Julio Le Parc and Carlos Cruz-Diez, would move to Paris to work alongside

other international artists hoping to lead the way towards a better society. They would all become pillars of the MoMA exhibition and key drivers of the movement until the present day.

These artists desired collective achievement and dialogue. The incorporation of the viewer himself as a key component of the work, and the straightforward unpretentious representations, made the art inclusive, a common language of optimism that could reach all. Whilst at first sight, the works may be seen as void of political undertones, these artists had a powerful social agenda, seeking ultimately to democratize the art experience.

After an amazing run, Op Art started to decline and during the 1970's conceptual art became the “next big thing”. Ideas, instead of formal or visual content, became the new fascination. However, it was the strength of the philosophical ideals at the heart of the artists' intent that would ensure the movement's lasting legacy and current revival. The Pompidou's Permanent collection, recently reinstalled along the lines of art theory, includes a dedicated section to Kinetic and Op Art. The Tate Modern would also present a permanent room for the movement in its new building. This year, The Illusive Eye reopened at El Museo del Barrio in New York with a celebration and revision of the original MoMA show. These exhibitions attest to the enormous influence of these artists and open the door to reevaluate the relevance of the movement to young contemporary artists and to society in the 21st century.

Technology as well as modern materials have undoubtedly opened further paths to explore new variations of colour theory and optical illusion. Indeed, artists like Carlos Cruz-Diez, at 94, continue their research, bringing it forward to the digital age and pursuing ever more ambitious projects in response to renewed interest amongst curators, collectors and also younger artists. As examples, the Tate commissioned Cruz-Diez a monumental project to cover a naval ship during the Liverpool Biennial and this year, after being approached by Chinese artist Liu Bolin, they both embarked to produce an exciting collaboration.

Most importantly, I believe, is that the essence and profound undercurrent of optimism and democratisation of art is more important than ever. I quote a recent Financial Times article by Edwin Heathcote on the current retrospective of Julio Le Parc, at the Perez Art Museum in Miami, “Colourful, noisy, irreverent and surprising, this is a life-affirming show which combines value with something far rarer in contemporary art: fun”. Amidst our present troubled era, experimenting with illusion is not a sign of denial but one of hope for the future, an optimistic stand of resistance against an increasingly unstable sociopolitical world. A stand that can make us feel confident and empowered to confront today's harsh realities.

Puerta Roja, pioneering the introduction of Latin American artists to Asia since 2010, will present a solo exhibition of of Franco-Venezuela artist Carlos Cruz-Diez during the spring season in Hong Kong.

近幾年來，一群會活躍於20世紀的著名藝術家相繼在世界各地裡再次冒起並重返我們的視野。尤其令人興奮的是，現代藝術博物館、泰特現代藝術館、龐比度中心和森美術館等藝術機構都開始著手重新評估1950至1970年代藝術家的貢獻。例如，韓國的單色畫和南美洲的動力藝術和歐普藝術都成為重要回顧展的主題，並且成為藏品收購的新寵，這一切都重新檢視了這群過往“被低估”的藝術家。

藝術市場也不出所料地跟隨了這股藝術潮流。過去的20年間，成長中的新晉藝術家的市場價值大幅上升。如今，藝術買手和收藏家出於平衡投放資源的考慮下，開始將目光轉向“老先鋒(old but new guard)”，這個名詞指的是那些曾在藝術史上作出過重大的貢獻，並仍然站於藝術創作最前線的藝術家。在經濟形勢動盪的當下，有著豐富創作經驗和漂亮履歷的藝術家所創作的新作品更具吸引力。

除了學院機構對現代藝術的重新檢視和投資藝術市場興趣的改變外，引出了另一發人深思的問題：為何這些藝術家仍然值得我們的重視和關注？也許，這些藝術運動背後的理念和思潮仍能在我們今天的社會中引起共鳴與迴響。

這群藝術家起初探索抽象藝術的領域作為一種與外交流的藝術語言。抽象藝術不受限於歷史及社會制度，因而能讓觀者用自己的角度來解讀藝術家的創作心態與想法。這種沒有規範的藝術語言，能為來自不同文化的人所分享。例如韓國藝術家李禹煥的作品，在墨西哥城的塔馬約博物館中展出時能夠激起當地觀者的共鳴。又如著名法裔委內瑞拉歐普藝術家卡洛斯·克魯茲-迭斯(Carlos Cruz-Diez)的作品也能夠在為期一年的中國巡展中激起中國觀者的共鳴一樣。尤其值得一提的是，歐普藝術和動力藝術的理念很容易被接受並打入我們的世界當中的。這兩藝術運動利用視覺幻象與幾何圖案來製造讓人費解卻又目眩神迷的效果。顏色和錯視自幾個世紀以來一直都令藝術家著迷，直至1950年代，在科技的進步和啟發下才真正發展成一個實實在在的藝術運動。1955年，歐普藝術在法國巴黎著名的鄧尼斯·勒內畫廊(Galerie Denise Rene)所舉辦

名為《Le Mouvement》的展覽中初次面世，該展覽標誌著歐普藝術運動的開始。但直到1965年，美國紐約現代藝術博物館舉辦重要展覽《The Responsive Eye》之後，歐普藝術運動才正式受到認可。眼花繚亂、天馬行空和令人暈眩的作品在藝術界掀起新一輪熱潮。歐普藝術作品在世界各地的美術館和畫廊中展出，對當時的建築、設計和時裝文化影響深遠。

匈牙利的維克托·瓦薩雷裡(Victor Vasarely)，英國的布麗姬特·賴利(Bridget Riley)，委內瑞拉的卡洛斯·克魯茲-迭斯(Carlos Cruz-Diez)和美國的弗蘭克·斯特拉(Frank Stella)等大師級藝術家都致力於創作一種全新的、共同的藝術理念。他們不但從形式和技術角度上大膽地探索顏色與藝術，他們的作品更反映時代，表達出他們對未來的樂觀憧憬、對社會的理想和對新平等主義的勘探。

這種藝術理念自1930年代開始在南美洲的大地上醞釀。各種各樣的幾何抽象流派在阿根廷和委內瑞拉萌芽，不但沒有被世界大戰的恐怖所扼殺，更能引領當時的國際藝術潮流。這些藝術家從社會的理想主義中追尋動力，從科學和數學中汲取靈感，希望通過理性和秩序來改變世界。路易士·托馬塞洛(Luis Tomasello)，胡裡奧·勒·派克(Julio Le Parc)和卡洛斯·克魯茲-迭斯(Carlos Cruz-Diez)都是當時活躍於歐普藝術派系中移居到巴黎的藝術家，他們與來自各國的藝術家交流，希望透過藝術引領人們走向一個更美好的社會。他們的作品是當代藝術上的典範，對世界各地的藝術文化影響深遠。

歐普藝術家嚮往通過集體成就作為一種溝通的橋樑。歐普藝術將觀者成為作品的一部分，觀眾的參與是歐普藝術創作不可或缺的元素。加上其直接而不做作的表現方式，成為一種能夠傳達樂觀精神的共同語言。當藝術家與觀眾同時完成一件作品時，歐普藝術的確可以被視為藝術的民主化。

1970年代起，概念藝術開始盛行。風靡一時的歐普藝術開始走向衰落。概念代替形式或視覺內容成為新的魅力。然而，歐普藝術運動之所以能夠產生深遠影響並能在今天重新煥發生命力，正是因為藝術家的創作核心理念為運動留下永久的思想遺產。法國巴黎蓬皮杜藝術中心最近為動力藝術和歐普藝術設置專區。英國倫敦泰特現代博物館亦在新翼中也為該運動設置一個永久展廳。今年，美國紐約厄爾尼諾博物館德爾巴里奧(El Museo del Barrio)再次重展當年的展覽《The Illusive Eye》。這些展覽重新評估歐普藝術運動的重要性及對當代藝術家和21世紀社會的影響。

現代科技和媒介無疑拓寬了藝術家探索色彩理論和錯視原理的創作道路。現年94歲高齡的卡洛斯·克魯茲-迭斯(Carlos Cruz-Diez)仍致力於創作，並和當代的年輕藝術家一起將色彩理論的探索帶進了數碼時代，一同追尋新的創作模式來應對大型藝術項目和不斷變化的市場口味。例如英國泰特現代美術館邀請卡洛斯·克魯茲-迭斯(Carlos Cruz-Diez)參與一次紀念性的項目，於利物浦雙年展期間為一艘海軍艦添上色彩。今年，克魯茲-迭斯亦應中國藝術家劉勃麟的邀請參與藝術合作項目。但我認為，樂觀主義精神和藝術民主化才是歐普藝術的本質，這一點在今天的社會顯得比以往任何時候都更加重要。我引用愛德溫·希思科特(Edwin Heathcote)最近在金融時報發表的一篇文章，他評論了胡裡奧·勒·派克(Julio Le Parc)在邁阿密佩雷斯美術館的回顧展，“鮮豔的、喧囂的、不恭的和驚喜的，這是一場鼓舞人心的展覽，它將重要的藝術價值與當代藝術中極為罕見的元素結合——趣味。”在這社會政治動盪的年代，幻覺錯視的體驗並非一個否定的符號，而是意味著對未來的希冀，是一種樂觀的態度。這一種樂觀的立場使人們有信心和力量去面對殘酷的現實。

紅門畫廊(Puerta Roja)於2010年創立，是亞太區唯一一間專注拉丁美洲及西班牙藝術的畫廊。紅門畫廊將於春季為法裔委內瑞拉藝術家卡洛斯·克魯茲-迭斯(Carlos Cruz-Diez)舉辦大型回顧展。

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Image: Collaboration between legendary Franco-Venezuelan artist Carlos Cruz-Diez and Chinese "invisible man" Liu Bolin in Panama. 2016 ©Liu Bolin Instagram