

A Modern Critique of Orientalism in Contemporary Visual Art

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Abstract

Orientalism is historically understood as a cultural phenomenon of 18th and 19th century Europe, when Western artists emulated Asian culture and aesthetics in their work. Such representational work generally carried a patronizing attitude in their depictions. In 1979, Edward Said's Orientalism first introduced a post-colonial critical analysis to the European, Western portrayal of Eastern cultures in the Middle East. In spite of the perceived progress since the publication of Said's book, the underlying principles of Said's Orientalism critique are still widely applicable to modern visual art in 2023. This study is a fresh look at the persistence of Orientalism in contemporary Asian art. Research will show that Orientalism is not just a historical phenomenon, but an ongoing unsavory, and harmful reality in today's art world. Using data, and examples collected from contemporary sources, I will examine and analyze the artwork of visual artists in Western countries that reflect Orientalism in their portrayal of Chinese and East Asian cultures.

Keywords: Asian, Chinese, colonialism, culture, exoticism