

MANUSCRIPT ABSTRACT

THE VISUAL FORCES OF “Ω CURVE”

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One of the most pervasive and enduring motives for artistic creativity must surely be the desire to express the sense of grandeur and sublime awe evoked by the overwhelming powers of Nature. Many profound works of art from every period and culture bear witness to this quest: Yen Zhenqing’s calligraphy exhibits the same heroic power as ancient Greek sculptures; Anselm Kiefer’s paintings express the same grandeur that the Song Dynasty painter, Fan Kuan, captures in his monumental landscapes. Likewise, certain masterpieces of Michelangelo, or Huaisu, or Picasso, are able to evoke powerful responses not dissimilar to the spiritual awe awakened by Nature’s dynamic forces. Such works of art, imbued with a spirit of profound grandeur and sublimity, attest to our fundamental kinship with the transcendent and creative powers of primordial Nature.

Based on this observed expressive potential of the work of art, and adopting the theoretical assumptions and research methodology of formalist aesthetics, this book posits a common stylistic and compositional pattern in masterpieces that embody the expression of grandeur or sublime loftiness within both Chinese and Western art histories. By means of observation, analysis, and a close reading of the research produced by Hogarth, Wolfflin, Fry, Bell, and, with particular emphasis on Kandinsky’s *Point and Line to Plane* and Arnheim’s *Art and Visual Perception*, the “Ω Curve” is identified as a consistent element enabling works of visual art to attain a greater sense of grandeur, visual dynamism and spiritual integrity. This theory is originated from the detailed stylistic analysis of numerous examples of painting, calligraphy, sculpture, and architecture throughout history and across cultures.

The connections between the “Ω Curve” and the expression of grandeur and dynamic force in art are further investigated in the theoretical context of “tension”, as defined by Tate, and the notion of “the Sublime,” as it has evolved in the seminal texts of Longinus, Burke, and Kant. Further, in this study, the relevant concepts from Western aesthetic theory have been brought into line with parallel concepts in ancient Chinese aesthetics and criticism: the notion of “cosmic force,” for instance, and the “spirit of grandeur”, as described by Laozi (*Daodejing* or *Dao of Power*), Mengzi (*Mencius*), and Sikongtu (*Realms of Poetry*). This book concludes that (1) sublime grandeur, or dynamic force, provides an important, widespread, and long-lasting spiritual content present in both Chinese and Western arts; and (2) this expression has been intentionally sought by artists and recognized by critics and aestheticians of many cultures from ancient times to the present-day.

This study, utilizing a research methodology that combines visual analysis with critical theory and aesthetics, makes a contribution in depth and specificity to contemporary art theory and formalist studies. At the same time, the research conclusions reached here may provide inspiration and practical guidance to artists who wish to strengthen the visual impact and expressive power of their work in any visual art media.

(The Visual Forces of “Ω Curve” is a manuscript of approximately 80,000 words in Chinese, equivalent to approximately 160,000 words in English, with 87 illustrations. Manuscript accepted, publication in progress.)