

# The Autonomy of Cultural Inheritance and Innovation from the Process of Venus' Ideological Development

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## ABSTRACT

Venus' ideology has gone through various stages, including the primitive reproduction worship in the Paleolithic Age, the classical goddess of love and beauty in ancient Greece and Rome, the humanism of decline and revival in the Middle Ages and the early Renaissance, the secular humanity of vigorous development in the late Renaissance and the deconstructive cultural symbols after the twentieth century. The "Venus" is currently the convention of public aesthetics, the reconstruction of love and beauty, and the desire to impress people forever. It breaks the boundaries between classical art and public life, and stimulates the autonomy of cultural inheritance and innovation. This paper will specifically analyze the development of Venus' ideology, and analyze the connotation and practical path of the autonomy of cultural inheritance and innovation through this example.

**Keywords:** Venus, Ideology, Culture inheritance, Culture innovation, Autonomy

## INTRODUCTION

Venus, who was originally the goddess of gardens and production in ancient Roman mythology, eventually combined with Aphrodite in Greek mythology to become the world's most famous goddess of love and beauty. Venus is the symbol of love and the representative of beauty, and has the power to conquer all things. Venus was destined to become a classic motif for her creators from the moment she was born, a true expression of people's social needs at the time, and thus the ideology of Venus at each stage was real-time feedback of the period's social, humanistic, and artistic development, with great significance for the times. Through development of Venus' ideology to discuss the autonomy of cultural inheritance and innovation is vivid and easy to corroborate each other.

## THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS OF VENUS' IDEOLOGY

### The Primitive Reproduction Worship

In the Paleolithic age, limited by natural and human conditions, social productivity was low and people's needs and emotions are relatively simple. Survival has become the main pursuit, and reproduction has thus shown great power. Therefore, the worship of reproduction by primitive human beings has

reached its climax in this period. In such a social form, the corresponding organs representing reproduction are emphasized and exaggerated to the maximum extent with the exploration of numerous unearthed female nude sculptures. The clear aesthetic purpose has not yet appeared, and the aesthetic form of reproductive worship has emerged.

*Venus of Willendorf* (about 15,000 BC to 10,000 BC) is regarded as the most typical “Primitive Venus”. The sculpture has a rough face and has no obvious facial features. The whole head only shows curly hair with wave lines. The overall shape highlights the characteristics of female reproduction, such as breasts, abdomen, hips, thighs, vulva, etc. *Venus of Russell* (about 30,000 B.C.) is a work among a group of limestone relief unearthed in Dordogne, France. Like *Venus of Willendorf*, the head of the relief is vague, with emphasis on female characteristics. Both sculptures reflect the maternal reproductive worship in the Paleolithic Period.

It can be seen that in the primitive period, Venus’ ideology was generally closely related to reproduction, reflecting the worship and praise of the supremacy of reproductive capacity at that time.

### The Classical Goddess of Love and Beauty

There are many stories about the origin of Aphrodite, the predecessor of Venus. The two main sources of Aphrodite are *Homer Epic* and *Shinto*. In *Homer Epic*, Aphrodite was born by Zeus and Dione (an Oceanid). In the *Shinto*, she was born in the bubble caused by the throwing of Uranus’ (the earliest supreme god) genitals into the sea. Later generations are more inclined to the *Shinto* about Aphrodite’s pedigree, not only it is closer to the original reproduction worship, consistent with the religious ceremony at that time, but also because the Greek meaning of the name Aphrodite is “born from the bubble of the sea”.

It can be seen that the Venus’ ideology began to develop and grow in ancient Greece and Rome, and gradually became the well-known classical goddess of love and beauty.

During this period, the earliest statue of the naked goddess in Greece, *Aphrodite of Knidos*, came into being. Before that, the naked images in the large statues were limited to men and few women. Even if there existed, there was no goddess but only underclass women, indicating that in the era of hero worship, the naked image was merely a display of the beauty of men’s strength. The appearance of *Aphrodite of Knidos*, a goddess’ nude statue, reflecting the materialized new aesthetic program and value system. Among all the naked goddess of this period, the most famous is *Venus de Milo*, the upper body of whom is exposed and has a calm and pure face. This “edle Einfalt und stilleGröße” (“Noble Simpleness, Great Serenity”, Winckelmann) embodies the unique aesthetic style of Greek classical art.

At this time, Aphrodite is at the stage of blending and infiltration of divinity and human nature. The characteristics of Greek mythology “Anthropomorphism” make the gods personalized and humanized. So that the gods come to the secular world, have the secular flavor to the maximum extent, and maintain their own noble and solemn.

The fusion of Aphrodite and Venus took place in ancient Rome. Venus was the goddess of agriculture and production in ancient Rome. “Venus emerges from Rome’s historical records as an increasingly powerful deity of sex, war, and politics, whose most prominent patrons were generals and statesmen (Mueller and Hans-Friedrich, 2012).” Ovidius praised Venus in 115 lines in Volume IV of *Fasti*, describing the origins of Venus and Roman ancestors, and the power and influence of Venus throughout the universe. She dominates the world, reproduces and controls everything, gathered the will of the world, and endowed the world with beautiful love.

“After the disaster at Lake Trasimene in 217 BCE, the dictator Quintus Fabius Maximus vowed, in compliance with the Sibylline books, a temple to Venus Erycina”. During the Roman civil war, the recognition of Venus was rising. The Greek goddess with whom Venus was increasingly identified. Sula, who first attacked Rome, called himself “Epaphroditus”, that is to say, “Aphrodite’s Chosen One”. Pompey claimed Venus Victrix (Conquering Venus) as his special patron (Mueller and Hans-Friedrich, 2012). Emperor Hadrian also highly praised her as the goddess of luck, and built temples in Roman squares, claiming to be dedicated to respectable Venus and eternal Rome. Caesar, who won the civil war, claimed to be the descendant of Venus Genetrix through the legend of Trojan refugee Aeneas. The foster son of Caesar, the emperor Augustus, also claimed that Venus was his ancestor. All those facts pushed the Roman worship of Venus to the peak.

### **The Humanism of Decline and Revival**

In the later period of ancient Rome, as the establishment of a stable imperial order at that time, the weakness and extremeness of Epicurus’ hedonism itself began to be mistaken as sensual indulgence. Together with mammonism, sensualism brought extravagance, and the moral standards became lower. The poetic halo of the classical goddess of love and beauty disappeared irreparably.

The concept of “female evil” emerged as a result of the clash of Christianity with ancient Greek and Roman civilizations. Since then, what has been hidden from women for thousands of years, in addition to enslavement, has been an insult, and the annihilation of women is destined to annihilate love and beauty. In this time, religious art moved away from the classical age’s copying principle and towards the symbolic realm. To get the qualities in that period, art is merely a clue and symbol of divinity and thearchy. To achieve the needs of a spiritualistic worldview, artists must sacrifice beauty in their work. The beauty of reality, imagination, and expression vanished at that time, and Venus perished.

The gloomy medieval era lasted for thousands of years, until the Renaissance shattered the millennium’s bonds in the fourteenth century. Dante Alighieri, Francesco Petrarca, Giovanni Boccaccio, Filippo Brunelleschi, Donatello and other Renaissance geniuses appeared in Florence, ushering in the Renaissance’s first light. This daybreak, on the other hand, was given to Venus by Botticelli.

Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus* (1487) is a masterpiece from the early Florentine School of Painting. Venus comes from the turquoise waters on a shimmering shell, and the god of wind transports her to the land, where the god of spring receives her with a brocade. What's more remarkable is that, in addition to purity and modesty, Venus' delicate face displays a sense of sorrow and perplexity, exactly like the individuals who lived at the crossroads of the two eras.

The equally prestigious *Sleeping Venus* (1510) is by the Venetian painter Giorgione. Set against a bright, tranquil field, Venus lies in the center of the painting in a languid and feminine reclining stance, her eyes slightly closed, exuding a transcendent, divine beauty. This painting created a new paradigm for Western nude painting, while the passive, natural, and expressive aspect of the stance (Wu, 2013) sparked numerous conversations in subsequent decades, and the concealed cultural themes and nuanced implications are even more interesting.

From the late Roman period to the pre-Renaissance, Venus' ideology experienced a process of resurrection, and the humanism embodied by her ideology proceeded from degeneration to rebirth, setting off the secularization and humanization process.

### **The Secular Humanity of Vigorous Development**

In the late Renaissance, artists depicted Venus as a woman to record their bathing, napping, and other postures. A transformative change from the previous Venus, which also symbolized another innovation in the thinking of contemporary masters, and Venus was dubbed the "secular Venus" during this period.

*Venus of Urbino* (1538), a painting by Giorgione's colleague Titian, replaces the natural background with an interior scene, the grass with a bed, and the natural with the desirous, the goddess becoming a noblewoman; at the same time, Venus opens her eyes and gazes at the viewer, the quiet passivity giving way to active desire. Instead of the restraint of Giorgione's Venus, Venus in this picture is more carefree and relaxed than Giorgione's Venus, with magnificent ornaments and a bunch of flowers in her right hand, displaying a noble and languid posture. Venus thoroughly embraces the secular life, and her humanity is fully realized.

Many great nude painters followed Titian in creating variations on the same topic, but such a representation paradigm eventually came to an end, and subversive misuse was ready as well. *The Nude Maja* (1798–1805) by Francisco José de Goya is considered "the first mortal woman" in the history of Spanish painting, and Goya is considered "one of the great founders of modern realist art". Maja is still reclining in the artwork, but the painting approach is significantly different from the norm. This naked picture is no longer an idealized human body that follows the classical formula, but rather a "contemporary" one, and it no longer sanctifies the representation object in the name of Venus. The "Maja" is the secular image of a "beautiful woman" ("maja" in Spanish).

Maja's gaze provokes the male-dominated viewing system to crumble since she is not just secular and nude, but also wild and provocative. She abandons

the classic reclining Venus' passive, exhibitionist character in favor of a straightforward assertion of her own wishes and a "anti-show" and "anti-performance" stance, which is also an essential representation of Goya's "modernity." This is also a significant example of Goya's "modernity."

The *Olympia*, created by Édouard Manet in 1863, triggered a serious upheaval in Western European art history. For a brief while, the criticism was like a tidal wave, with the onslaught on the painting intensifying. *Olympia* is a "genuine reference" to *Venus of Urbino*, including domestic settings, laying postures, jewels, flowers, animals, servants, dark curtains, and other comparable features, but Manet made his own adjustment throughout the reference process.

The dark curtain, for example, is employed as the depth of the manufacturing space in Titian's paintings, while it fractures the three-dimensional space and forms a wholly flat picture in Manet's works. This kind of correction adjustment allows the painting topic to be moved from the "display space" to the "space where the artwork is located". Other aspects, such as the dog morphing into a black cat, flowers from the master's hand to the maid's hand, and headgear morphing into a flower, all point to the hostess prostitute's identity. Manet enlisted the help of a prostitute to "appear" to be Venus, but the prostitute was neither unhappy nor obedient. Her daring eyes, as well as the name of painting "*Olympia*", took aim at the established visual system.

The three paintings, which progressively verified Hegel's famous argument that anthropomorphism destroyed God by bringing Venus from heaven to the human world, and from a lady to a beautiful woman and ultimately to a prostitute, followed the same pattern.

### **The Deconstructive Cultural Symbols**

During the Renaissance, Venus took the final step down the altar and into the secular world. After entering the twentieth century, the technological revolution of industrial revolution ushered in a new era of science, philosophy, and other disciplines. At this time, the aesthetic notion has experienced significant transformations. Traditional artists have boldly defied the concepts of time, space, and logic in order to create a surreal realm.

Such is Salvador Dali's *Venus de Milo with Drawers* (1936), which is considered a surrealist icon. In this work, Dali shaped a portion of Venus' body as a drawer; each drawer is filled with pessimism, emptiness, negative, ludicrous, and other emotions, as well as incomprehensible secrets. This work has left the observer with a significant psychological shock and effect, and it is a profound representation of the author's views, as well as traditional aesthetic obstacles. *Sleeping Venus* (1944), by Belgian painter Paul Delvaux, depicts a bizarre scene in which Venus, the temple, the moon, the skeleton, the lady, and the naked woman are all crammed into a single image, using unconventional time, space, and logic techniques to obfuscately express the concepts of love and death.

The audience's visual system is stimulated by such a unorthodox, illogical approach, which has a profound influence on people's aesthetic notions and

ways of thinking. And this influence in an era of fast progress sparked a new wave of artistic expression, with a diversity of Venuses emerging, as well as significant shifts in Venus' philosophy. Venus has evolved into a cultural icon rather than a singular goddess of love and beauty. To reconstruct the public aesthetics convention, core love and beauty are decomposed. Venus moved from the "point" to the "surface" as a result of this transition. Venus, as the goddess of love and beauty, bridged the gap between classical art and everyday life, breaking down obstacles to classical art diffusion that had existed since antiquity and ushering the public's aesthetic perception into a new age.

## **ON THE AUTONOMY OF CULTURAL INHERITANCE AND INNOVATION FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF VENUS' IDEOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT**

### **Inheritance and Innovation of Culture**

The evolution of Venus is a crucial component of European culture and art history. Her distinct humanistic meaning and aesthetic image are the result of human history's growth and spiritual civilization's consolidation. A culture has been established from her material and spiritual production capability, as well as the amount of material and spiritual wealth accumulated during her ideological growth process. From the current scenario, this culture's legacy and creativity are unquestionably successful.

Venus' ideology has experienced various stages, all of which are significant. Creating a strong sense of self, a respected culture, dispelling the "divinity" of culture, and integrating them into the secular, further dispelling "human nature." The familiar culture gets unfamiliarized, and it then resides in the group's legacy as abstract cultural symbols, through which we may discern a type of cultural self-awareness that exists in it and that we own.

The prerequisite of cultural existence, as seen along the route of cultural evolution, is cultural inheritance and succession from one generation to the next. The true substance of cultural heritage is found in the self-awareness and endogenous identity of culture's grassroots people. It is a shape founded on the individuals who live there making their own choices, which is acknowledged and then externalized and established by the existence of stuff. The basic identity of the people and material producers has been preserved throughout Venus' evolution. This intentional cultural inheritance must and can only happen in the presence of the cultural owners, who must assure their knowledge with culture and participation in cultural practices (Zhao, 2021).

The definition of "innovation" and "how to innovate" have emerged as major concerns in today's cultural transformation study. Things that are entirely natural are becoming increasingly rare, and new things are being created as a result of people's ongoing selection. Similarly, culture will cease to be entirely generative, shifting from a gifting to a selected culture. These two periods were slanted towards generativity, which was a culture that people could not select and naturally embraced at the time, similar to Venus' "primitive reproduction worship" and "classical goddess of love and beauty". People's independent selection becomes more apparent after then, especially during the age of "deconstructive cultural symbols". Culture is no more a

monolithic, repetitive entity, but rather one that is diverse, inclusive, and self-contained.

When it comes to cultural innovation, what matters most is how the present culture attracts people. Today, Venus is disassembled and recreated into a public aesthetics convention, allowing the aesthetic category of art to be broadened to embrace a wide range of disciplines such as entertainment, consumerism, and commerce. Venus has aesthetic and consumer value, as well as being a popular source of amusement. As a result, this culture has gone from being appreciated by a select few to being widespread culture. This stage of Venus' deconstruction opposes and reverses tradition, pursues other aesthetic forms from idealized classical beauty, opens the door to aesthetics, and shapes Venus' current fundamental attraction.

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