

大氣度 大寫意——

名家評論摘錄

2010年12月17日上午10時30分，中國美術館七樓學術報告廳內座無虛席，來自美術界的眾多著名美術評論家、畫家和新聞媒體記者共同參加了在此舉行的「尚濤寫意花鳥畫展研討會」，回憶和探討了尚濤先生的藝術之路和藝術風格。

中國美協中國畫藝委會祕書長孫克：

尚濤先生是在北京成長起來的一位畫家，在中央美院附中受到非常好的教育，在中央美院又受到大師的薰陶，打下了非常扎實的基本功。他後來到廣州，得益於廣東得天獨厚的自然環境和人文基礎，形成了很有特性的藝術，十個優點不如一個特點，這就是他的特點。另外，他在書法上有很深、很高的造詣。中央美院都是要寫魏碑的，書法對他的繪畫影響很大，他一直堅持下來。他在文化修養方面，在書法、繪畫藝術互相滲透、互相促進方面做的都很好。

中國國家畫院原院長劉勃舒：

尚濤先生的畫和學院派不一樣。他的成長看起來是一貫性的，但又是跳躍性的。把所有老藝術家的畫放到一塊看，都打不過他的花鳥畫，他的畫是立體的，有張力的，但是有他在學院裡下的苦功夫，有他吸收中西藝術的優點、感覺。我希望他還往前一步，他走到大寫意，還要來一個大中國、大改革、大氣度，大到讓你害怕。總之，太好了。當然，這裡面還有很多需要突破的地方。

中央美術學院美術史系教授、近代美術研究專家李樹聲：

尚濤的畫很有個性，也很有創造性，還能繼承傳統，能把傳統的筆墨運用在自己的花鳥畫裡面。對於藝術，他有自己的追求、自己的想法，他的個性在全國也是獨一份。他的繪畫裡面選用的是廣東常見的花卉，但是他體現得渾厚、厚重、有衝擊力，這方面確實很到位。另外，在構圖安排的留白部分，舒密安排都是下了功夫的，都不是隨便一揮而就的東西，使得筆墨滲得下去，能夠有分量，有厚重的感覺。體現一種非常大氣的美學，這是渾厚的美、厚重的美。

中國美院教授金鴻鈞：

尚濤不愛說話，不愛跟人交際，不善於表達，可是他有內秀。他就是把從美院附中到美院吸收的好東西融合起來，然後找到自己的那條道路一直走下去，不迎合，也不取媚，就一直這麼搞。他的畫中，李可染、李苦禪等先生的優點都有，他綜合在一起，而且按照他的方式走下去。他的畫題材很豐富，形式比較多，色彩也比較多。尚濤的畫，不是老式的，不是古人的，也不是西方的，而是我們民族的，是現代的，還有他自己的特色，有中國的特色，獨一無二的。不僅在全國，在世界上也是獨一無二的。

中國美術學院教授薛永年：

尚濤先生寫意畫獨樹一幟，他的大寫意花鳥畫非常耐人玩味，不輕飄、不討好，而是大筆、大墨、大花、大鳥，精雄大氣，渾然整體，有一種永恆的生機，有雨後江山鐵鑄成的造詣。他的畫深厚像李可染，渾樸像李苦禪，簡約像八大山人，多了平面構成，多了難忘的形式感。他不畫寫實的造型，而畫心中的意象，可以說他在畫文化和修養。他的大寫意之所以大氣有衝擊

力，甚至是震撼力，從形式上看把古人的以線為主，發展成以大塊墨色為主，仍然有線條，但是盡可能減少，而且粗獷雄健，突出了大的幾何形態，減少了用墨層次，強化了方圓濃淡乾濕的對比。尚濤對花鳥畫造型和筆墨的理解，融入了新時代的視覺經驗，善於繼承，勇於創造。

中國藝術研究院研究員郎紹君：

在三四十年代出生的花鳥畫家中，尚濤極富個性，是特別執著的探索者和追求者。執著是不輕易改變主意，能夠堅持，咬定青山不放鬆，尚濤的畫是最好的證明。可以用凝重拙厚來形容，這是尚濤所獨有的凝重拙厚，強調形象結構化，並帶有裝飾意味，其畫法改變了傳統寫意花鳥的書寫性和抒情性。

清華大學教授龐媛：

尚濤不擅講話，作為藝術家不要用嘴皮子，一定要用畫來說話，他外表平和，內心卻非常倔強，一意孤行。另外，尚濤把幾年美院附中、美院國畫系的功夫都表現出來了，把傳統的、現代的，甚至裝飾性的東西都放到一起，這是他的優勢。他有強烈變成視覺的感覺，這就是他的特點。還有一點，尚濤的畫是越大越好看，尚濤適合畫大畫，越大越好。希望尚濤在精力充沛時多畫一些大畫，就是要獨闢蹊徑、一意孤行。

中國美協編審李松：

尚濤適很實在、很厚道的人，也是極其聰慧的人。李可染的幾個字概括就是「實者慧」。嶺南地區處在文化的前沿，具有很大的包容性，對尚濤藝術的創新給了很有力的支持，他的作品能夠在那立足，能夠發展，跟大環境是有關係的。尚濤在美院打下的基礎很好，70年代畫的人物畫造型能力非常強，也有很深的文化底蘊。他的藝術特點，我想借用齊白石的一句話「縱橫歪倒貴天真」，他的畫非常自由，非常有天趣，這一點非常可貴。筆墨用得非常好，變化很豐富，畫面很有張力，而且標題大多就兩個字，非常耐人尋味。

國家畫院畫家、河山畫會會長李寶林：

看他的畫想起：畫品如人品。尚濤這個人非常忠厚，非常實在，是大智若愚的一個人。所以，他的畫畫得深厚、實在、樸拙，張力非常大。五代荆浩說過「生死剛正謂之骨」，這句話在尚濤的畫中得到充分的體現，筆墨問題絕不是單純技法問題，它有很強的精神因素。尚濤對藝術、生活有獨到的見解，在藝術表現上按照自己的想法去畫，與其他人不同。尚濤的畫像秦磚漢瓦，像鐘鼎文一樣，非常札實，每一個線條都是刻出來的，沒有一筆是輕浮的。另外，尚濤受李可染先生的影響，以積墨法畫花鳥畫，從古到今，畫得這麼好的，尚濤是第一人。

嶺南畫派紀念館副館長李勁堃：

尚濤老師以沉穩的學養形成自己的繪畫風格，給我們帶來了幾種啟示：一、在技法上，他的墨象處理，在我們所見的歷代花鳥畫裡面，他使用墨象能夠出彩、出現圖形，出現一種讓人聯想到紙面上的分割，這種案例的畫家不多，我們發現他在繪畫平面上能夠考慮到美感的成立，所以，整個畫面的感受非常有意思，也很有啟發。二、尚濤老師的繪畫風格，在南方水墨畫壇上，

起到很好的啟示作用，就是用傳統的筆墨符號，去書寫一種美感，這讓我們聯想從中西方各種各樣的元素中可以得到一種啟發，這種啟發由此打通了晚輩學生涉獵到對其他欣賞、學習、借鑑的作用。三、在他自己的圖式裡面能夠對一件作品進行反覆錘鍊，就是即興跟錘鍊本身可以相通。錘鍊的結果形成了一種有把握的去實施這種感受，對今後中國畫的發展會提供一個很好的案例。

中國藝術研究院研究員王鏞：

尚濤的畫符合一些理論，我認為強化個性與簡化形式是現代藝術的特徵。我總結出中國現代藝術四大家，即齊白石、潘天壽、林風眠、吳冠中，我認為齊白石是中國現代藝術之父，潘天壽也是現代感極強的藝術家。尚濤的畫就是強化個性、簡化形式的典型代表。他的個性非常強烈，雄強樸拙、陽剛大氣，而且有一種內在的力度，不是鋒芒畢露的那種。李苦禪說他笨拙實在，這是對他個性的一個評價。我還想到潘天壽的「強其骨」。他的個性修養當中，很大成分就是一種內在的骨力，表現在形式上就是結構簡化、造型簡化、色彩簡化，這就構成了他獨特的風格。用徐悲鴻的話就是「獨持偏見、一意孤行」，要堅持走自己的路。他在廣東畫壇是一個領軍人物，在全國畫壇也是比較罕見的。他是當代中國寫意花鳥畫現代感最強的代表畫家之一。

中央美院教授、《世界美術》雜誌主編易英：

尚濤先生的畫非常難，難在花鳥畫能夠有自己的面貌。他在傳統個性、文化和現代性方面有很大的難度，既要有形，又要有筆墨；用現代語言來講，就是結構問題。他的形、筆墨，既是傳統的，但又不是孤立存在的，都把它簡約了。這種簡約不是一般的簡筆，是保留了中國傳統繪畫的很多元素，體現在結構上就是從濃墨到中間層次比較簡單。在形上注重的是結構式的形，直線的、幾何的相對多一些。尚濤的畫有變、有新，都不一樣。

中央美術學院教授羅世平：

尚濤先生的畫有三個特點：一、氣象剛重平正。在他的畫裡面，用墨很厚實，但不是狂放的、張揚的、外露的，是很平正的氣度，能看出他非常成熟的控制能力。他的畫很純厚，畫得非常好，非常有深度。二、他的畫外表是拙的，其實是很巧的。他的畫面裡有很多小的講究，黑白灰的排列，小點和大面之間的關係，線條粗細的搭配，包括圖章大小、位置都很有推敲，這是多年的藝術修養在成熟以後表現出來的繪畫功底。三、他的畫充實感特別強，這正是中國美學、審美價值的存在。筆墨的形態也好，還是造型的各種變化也好，只要做到了充實、有壯氣，就一定會有雄強的感覺在裡面，這一點在尚濤先生的畫中體現得非常充分。

海軍政治部創作室畫家、中將張道興：

我跟尚濤先生認識很多年了，準確的說，我是他的老粉絲。他的作品看了以後不容易忘，忘不掉、甩不掉，閉上眼就是尚濤，張開眼還是尚濤。原來只是喜歡，這次又認真地看了他的作品之後，發現尚濤是用工筆完成的大寫意。他的工筆意識很強，他有很多細節精緻、精妙，筆法、墨法、皴擦、正反，都有細節強化。一個石頭都有點線，看起來用的是很簡約的形式，但裡頭仔細看很有涵養，很有功夫，很精心，用心血來畫；包括很多題款位置、內容，都是一種性情

的表現。他用很現代的形式，摻入自己非常細膩的情感、非常深厚的情感、非常詩性的情感。

中國藝術研究院美術研究所研究員、理論研究室主任、教授、博士生導師陳醉：

簡單的概括四個方面：一是符號化的趣味。他的畫有某種符號化的味道，但又很有趣味，他把符號化放到趣味裡面，也就是有意味的形式在作品裡面出現，這需要很大力氣的提煉，需要很高程度的概括。第二點是響鼓重錘於濃墨。他用濃墨，響鼓重錘一樣，鐵劃銀鉤，非常厚重，非常有力量。他的濃墨一下子就架構了整個畫面的形式感和效果。第三點，藏筆墨於範式。他所有的作品都套進這樣的範式裡面，在那幾塊大的濃墨支架後面，中間有很多黑、白、灰層次，有畫鳥羽毛的，有畫石頭的，淡墨非常漂亮，用西洋畫來形容顏色很透明，用中國畫的形式形容很美。第四點，人格化的生靈。他畫的很多東西都人格化了，他畫的鳥、熊、青蛙，甚至是花，有一幅花叫《盎然》，都是人格化的，包括植物也是人格化，給人感受很深。

北京語言大學教授、蔣兆和藝術研究會會長馬振聲：

看了尚濤的畫一點不突然，我覺得就是尚濤能畫出這樣的畫。他有兩點特別值得我學習，一個是真誠。他做人非常真誠，對待藝術真誠，對待生活真誠，所以，畫裡沒有一點油滑的跡象，都是兢兢業業地把自己真心的東西吐露出來。第二點，尚濤擅於學習。他的畫有現代因素，但不是一看就非常西方的那種。傳統的東西非常深厚，但是又沒有一個傳統的模式在重複出現。他學了那麼多老師，但沒有老師的痕跡，他把所學的在心裡融會貫通，創作出自己的東西，這是真正到了化境，完全融化在自己的血液當中，這是他身上非常可貴的一面。

國家畫院畫家、研究員趙力忠：

簡單談三點：一是關於他的作品由概括而提煉、而簡約的方面，前面好多先生都提了，我就不談了。最感慨的一點是在筆墨上的提煉和簡約，我們畫大寫意的時候講究筆墨很豐富，他是簡約。二是他是嶺南畫派，我感到很驚訝的是人都要受環境影響，奇怪的是他到那裡以後，似乎他沒有受到影響，而是他影響了別人。三是近三十年關於中國畫的變革，好多人做文章，採取了種種手法，像打仗一樣，有人打游擊戰，這試試、那試試；有人搞迂迴包抄，動了腦子，我發現尚濤打的是陣地戰，是正面強攻，這必須要用實力，有了實力才敢打正面戰。他是有實力的，憑實力，不張揚，完全靠「真傢伙」出東西。所以，我很佩服。

廣州美術學院教授林若熹：

在傳統筆墨運用得非常好的有兩個人，一個是潘天壽，他的筆墨側重於筆，另外一個就是尚濤，他的筆墨側重於墨。尚濤老師在嶺南畫派，我們嶺南畫派的後輩們沒有在筆力方面進行革命，尚濤老師有筆力的革命，但是有一點不一樣，他在筆力方面進行了現代探索，為現代水墨實驗培植了方法、方式、技巧，這對中國現代水墨是非常重要的因素。我們拋開了尚濤老師傳統筆力的外衣，他的形式完全是現代語言。這麼多年來，尚濤老師已經面壁五十年，終於達到這麼高的境界。

廣東省美協主席許欽松：

尚濤除了靠實力之外，還有對藝術的操守。他是守在藝術這方淨土裡面，不斷磨練，每天躲在書齋裡面作學問，把藝術當成終身情懷來做。尚濤老師本人很有品味，他的作品也很有品味，他對待生活更有品味。這種品味煥發出來精神的張力，給我們一種雄壯的力量。還有他的墨塊，他的充實，都給我們很強的精神力量。

中國改革報記者張艷華：

尚濤老師年逾七旬，經過社會風風雨雨幾十年的洗禮，依然保持一顆童心，這一點是難能可貴的。他的作品詮釋著他內心的童趣世界：《大吉圖》裡那隻用筆誇張、帶點稚樸的大公雞；《極地》中那隻可愛的、會微笑的北極熊。還有《綠蔭》中那兩隻相偎相依的小鳥，並肩而立，傳達著那麼感人的溫馨甜蜜。欣賞尚濤老師的作品，能強烈地感覺到真正的藝術品是有靈魂的，不僅僅從技法上、載體上這些表面內容，而是畫家的思想情感注入於藝術的鮮活生命力。尚老師雖不擅言談，但畫由心生，透過他的作品感覺到這是一個很有生活情趣、很溫情的人。

林墉（中國美術家協顧問、廣東省文學藝術界聯合會副主席、廣東省美術家協會名譽主席）

由誠實而產生的美感，往往既有魅力，又有重量：這重量恰恰產生於誠實所包涵的高尚品德之中。

花鳥畫之所以能沁入欣賞者的心靈，根本不在於花、鳥、蟲、魚本身的自然特徵—美色，而在於畫家只強調個別和某些美質的同時，注入了畫家的力與情感之火。從另一意義說，好的花鳥畫應是畫家心中的花、鳥，絕非我們眼見的花、鳥！

“突破”是指從森嚴的重圍中廝殺酣戰，過關斬將，而後奔突而出的成果，因而不是智勇雙全的謀斷里手，哪能成事？這，怕是在祖傳的封地或自劃的荒漠中舞筆弄彩，狂吼“突破”者所難料及的！然而“創新”是以“突破”為其起點啊！

畫水嫩鮮靈的花兒，以厚重凝煉的筆致出之；畫錦繡斑斕的花葉，以單純淋漓的水墨出之；小小的物象用重重的線條勾勒；乾乾的樹枝用溼溼的濃筆書寫；花果用了飽和熱烈的純色來刻劃，周圍就用水墨來烘托……：這種種，就是“對比”的妙趣，而那「妙」字正是對比之中的和諧！這和諧難就難在有「分寸感」。

以大胸懷入小幅畫，能得氣勢之壯。點睛處窮其形變，究其精微，把狂散的伴襯統而籠之，即並得聚散趣味。

趣因情茂而橫溢，格唯意高而拔升。世俗物象能得詩化的表現，全賴心靈美神的雙翼！

拙不是板、不是稚、不是蠢、不是愚。拙是巧極的飛躍—巧於心而拙其手，以求留、求穩、求重、求透，就其實質而言，拙是巧的變相。

張治安（廣州美院中國畫系教授、廣州美院前院長）

尚老師的作品樸實、奇崛、雍容、大器。前後八個字，前四個字是外在的風貌，後四個字是一種境界。

皮道堅（華南師範大學教授、美術評論家）


我發覺不僅是風格的獨特性，仔細研究的話，尚濤先生應該在中國畫的筆墨方面，在中國畫表意抒情這一特質上有新的發揮。包括那些魚、鳥的造型，都有很多新的內容，這種內容是時代性的。我很欣賞學術主持楊小彥給研討會得這樣一個主題：尚濤花鳥畫與時代精神。他確實是我們時代的一種產物，尚先生在筆墨形體，在造型、章法、構圖上，都取得了令人欣賞的成就。

麥麗紅（廣東畫院理論部主任）

…然而在其濃重渾厚的焦墨之中，在他蟠曲的富於韌性的線條之中，在那些飽含石鼓文韻味、飽含篆意的題跋之中，我們看到的是某種渾樸、厚重、頓挫、沉吟的東西，某種不過份張揚、不過份饒舌的東西。這種沉吟，既不是倪瓚式的曠世的緘默，也不是八大式的憤世的枯啞，而是融桀驚於雍容。在這種沉吟之中，人並未抽身於生活之外，並未凌懸於藝術之上…

劉仁毅（中國美術家協會會員、廣東畫院專業畫家）

尚濤的畫真奇。把圓畫成方，拈輕尤覺重。軟中藏硬，遇厚益雄。是弱肉，卻變作強體；是小題，竟造成大器。

尚濤的畫好笨。笨魚笨鳥、笨蛙笨貓、令人忍俊不禁。笨水笨石，笨花笨木，儼然各安其居。尚濤的畫無人跡？您看那澀筆生秋實，濃墨漏春痕。分明是老者的精神，童稚的天真！

Great Spirit, Great Painting—

Selections from Expert Critics

November 17, 2010, 10:30 a.m. There were no empty seats in the 7th-floor Academic Briefing Hall of the National Art Museum of China. Many renowned art critics, painters, and journalists had come to attend the *Shang Tao Freehand Style Bird-and-Flower Painting Exhibition* to recall and explore the artistic journey and style of Shang Tao.

Sun Ke, Secretary-General of the Arts Committee, China Artists Association:

Shang Tao is a painter who grew up in Beijing, his solid foundations laid by the outstanding education of the High School of Fine Arts and the influence of masters at the Central Academy of Fine Arts. He later came to Guangzhou, where Guangdong's advantageous natural environment and learned atmosphere helped him cultivate a distinctive art, his distinction being that a singular trait is worth more than the best excellence. He also has a profound and great achievement in calligraphy. The Central Academy requires its students to practice the style of Wei-dynasty steles, and the lasting influence of calligraphy can be seen in his painting. He has done well in his cultural refinement and the mutual permeation and enhancement of calligraphy and painting.

Liu Boshu, former Director of the China National Academy of Painting:

Shang Tao's paintings differ from works of academicism. His growth seems continuous, yet also by leaps and bounds. All of the paintings of the old artists combined cannot compete with his bird-and-flower paintings; they are three-dimensional, full of tension, but display the results of the effort he spent in his academy years, as well as the merits and affects of Chinese and Western art that he has absorbed. I hope he continues in the future to a great freehand style, a great China, great reform, great spirit—so great that it terrifies. In sum, it is wonderful. Of course, there are still many breakthroughs to be made.

Li Shusheng, Professor of Art History at the Central Academy of Fine Arts, expert on modern art:

Shang Tao's paintings have character and originality, as well as the inheritance of tradition, and he uses this traditional brush and ink in his bird-and-flower paintings. Regarding art, he has his own pursuits and ideas, and his personality is also one of a kind. His paintings employ plants common in Guangdong, but he gives them a natural power, makes them solid and forceful, and does it well. Moreover, the density arrangement of his white spaces also show the fruits of long labor; it is not something easily accomplished. These spaces allow the ink to permeate, to gather weight and solidity. His aesthetics of greatness is a naturally powerful, solid aesthetics.

Jin Hongjun, Professor at the China Academy of Art:

Shang Tao is taciturn, dislikes socializing, and is not well-spoken, but he has an inner brilliance. He has integrated all that he had learned at the High School of Fine Arts and the Central Academy of Fine Arts to find his own path and stay on it, refusing to pander or please. In his paintings can be seen the merits of Li Keran and Li Kuchan combined in his own way. He has a wide range of subject matter and even more various forms and colors. Shang Tao's paintings are not in the old style, nor the ancient style, nor the Western style, but are of our people, are modern, and have personal and Chinese characteristics—they are unique, not only in our country, but throughout the world.

XueYongnian, Professor at the China Academy of Art:

Shang Tao's freehand style paintings are unique. His large freehand style bird-and-flower paintings are very interesting, not adrift, not pandering, but with great brushstrokes, great ink, great flowers, great birds—with audacity

and wholeness, an eternal vitality, an achievement of indomitable spirit. His paintings are as deep as Li Keran's, as natural as Li Kuchan's, as simple as Bada Shanren's, but with more arrangement, more unforgettable form. He paints not realism but images of mind, or, one might even say, culture and refinement. His freehand style paintings are great and impactful, even stunning, because, from a formal perspective, he has developed the ancients' focus on lines into a focus on ink patches; there are still lines, but they have been reduced, and their roughness and strength emphasize large geometrical shapes, reduce ink gradations, and enhance the contrast between square and round, thick and thin, dry and moist. Shang Tao's understanding of bird-and-flower painting stylization and brush-and-inkwork incorporates the visual experience of our new era; he excels in his inheritance and is courageous in innovation.

Lang Shaojun, Member of the Chinese National Academy of Arts:

Of the generation of bird-and-flower painters born in the 30s and 40s, Shang Tao is one with character who perseveres in exploring and seeking. Perseverance means not changing one's mind easily, sticking to one's guns; Shang Tao's paintings are the best proof of this. One can describe them by saying that they are condensed and authentic, unique traits of Shang Tao's that emphasize the structuration of images and are, in a sense, decorative. His style has changed the narrativity and expressivity of traditional freehand style bird-and-flower painting.

Pang Yuan, Professor at Tsinghua University:

Shang Tao is not loquacious; as an artist, he need not be quick-witted, but he must speak through his paintings. He has a calm exterior, but inside he is obstinate and determined. Aside from this, Shang Tao displays all the training that he has received at the High School of Fine Arts and the School of Chinese Painting, Central Academy of Fine Arts, integrating the traditional, the modern, and the decorative to his advantage. His characteristic trait is a strong and transformative visual sense. Finally, Shang Tao's paintings are better the larger they are; he is best at big paintings, the bigger the better. I hope Shang Tao turns his energy to painting more great paintings, to blaze his own trail and remain obstinate.

Li Song, Editor at the China Artists Association:

Shang Tao is a practical and dependable person, and a very wise person. Li Keran sums him up as “the practical wise man.” Southern China is at the cultural forefront and excels at accommodating the arts. This lent strong support to Shang Tao's artistic innovations, and the success and development of his art has much to do with his environment. The foundation that Shang Tao built at the Central Academy of Fine Arts was a sturdy one, and the portraits he did in the 70s were highly stylized with deep cultural roots. His artistic quality can be expressed with a phrase from Qi Baishi: “Crisscrossed, lopsided, and estimably natural.” His paintings are admirable for being very liberated, very unpretentious. He uses brush and ink very well, has abundant variations, fills his surface with tension, and titles his works with only a couple of characters-very interesting.

Li Baolin (Vice-Chair of the Chinese Fine Art Committee of the China Artists Association, and the Vice-Director of the China Painting Academic Society):

His paintings remind me that the character of a painting reflects the character of its painter. Shang Tao is very loyal, very practical, a man of humble wisdom. Thus, his paintings are deep and solid, earthy, unadorned, and full of tension. Jing Hao of the Five Dynasties once said, “To maintain integrity in life and death is to have backbone.” This can be seen clearly in Shang Tao's paintings, where the uses of brush and ink are not only questions of

technique, but also reveal spiritual elements. Shang Tao has his own unique take on art and life, and unlike others, he paints according to his own ideas. Shang Tao's paintings are like Qin and Han stone engravings, like bronze inscriptions, in their power and in how each line is engraved onto the paper; no line drifts away. Also, Shang Tao shows the influence of Li Keran in using layered ink to paint bird-and-flower paintings; in all of history, Shang Tao is the only one to paint them so well.

Li Jingkun, Vice-Curator of the Memorial Hall of Lingnan School of Painting:

Shang Tao's painting style is formed from his well-grounded cultivation. This gives us a few points of reflection: 1. In terms of his ink imagery technique, in all of bird-and-flower painting history, seldom do we find a painter whose ink imagery can support color and form shapes that evoke divisions on paper. He can take into consideration the aesthetics of the page, so that the entire painting gains a very interesting and inspirational effect. 2. Shang Tao's painting style uses traditional brush and ink symbols to compose a kind of beauty, which is inspirational for the southern ink wash painting world. It reminds us that various elements of Chinese and Western painting can inspire up-and-comers to explore the appreciation, learning, and emulation of other artistic traditions. 3. In his work, Shang Tao repeatedly hones his skill, which shows that improvisation and skill can go together. The result of this training is an assurance in manifesting experience, and this will be a good precedent for the development of Chinese painting.

Wang Yong, Member of the Chinese National Academy of Arts:

Shang Tao's paintings conform to certain theories; I believe that a strengthened character and simplified form are features of modern art. To me, the four great modern artists of China are Qi Baishi, Pan Tianshou, Lin Fengmian, and Wu Guanzhong. Qi Baishi is the father of modern art in China; Pan Tianshou is also an artist with an intense sense of modernity. Shang Tao's paintings are a classic example of a strengthened character and simplified form. His character is prominent, audacious and natural, masculine and great, and has an inner strength not easily displayed. Li Kuchen says of his character that he is rough and practical. I am also reminded of Pan Tianshou's "strong bones," an inner strength in his refined character that manifests itself formally in simplified structure, stylization, and color to constitute his unique style. In the words of Xu Beihong, he "stands by his beliefs and does things his own way," persevering on his own path. He is a leader in the Guangdong art world, and a *rara avis* in the national art world. He is one of the most modern freehand style bird-and-flower painters of contemporary China.

Yi Ying, Professor at the Central Academy of Fine Arts, Chief Editor of *World Art* magazine:

Shang Tao's paintings are very difficult to emulate in that his bird-and-flower paintings have their own look. They are difficult in the aspects of traditional character, culture, and modernity, in that they attend to both form and brush-and-inkwork; in modern terms, it is a question of structure. His form and brush- and inkwork are traditional but not isolated, rather: minimal. His minimalism is not just reducing strokes; it also preserves many elements of traditional Chinese painting, structurally speaking having a simpler gradation between thick to intermediate ink. He values structural form, with relatively more linearity and geometrical shapes. Shang Tao's paintings have change, have the new, and are completely different.

Luo Shiping, Professor at the Central Academy of Fine Arts:

Shang Tao's paintings have three features: 1. A sturdy and upright affect. His use of ink is dense, but not wild, *outré*, or ostentatious, always with integrity, which shows the maturity of his control. His paintings are pure and full,

done exceedingly well with great depth. 2. His paintings seem undecorated, but are in fact sophisticated. There are many minute points of detail in his picture: the arrangement of black, white, and gray; the relationship between points and swathes of ink; the juxtaposition of thick and thin lines; and the size and positioning of his seal imprint are all carefully thought out. This is the painterly achievement of long artistic cultivation come to fruition. 3. His paintings have an emphatic sense of fullness, revealing the existence of Chinese aesthetic values. Be it the brush-and inkwork or the variations in stylization, as long as there is a sense of fullness and ambition, there will be virility and strength-this is sufficiently evident in Shang Tao's paintings.

Vice Admiral Zhang Daoxing, Painter at the Artistic Creation Studio, Political Department, People's Liberation Army Navy:

I have known Shang Tao for many years; more accurately speaking, I am an old fan. His works are unforgettable, impossible to shake off, there in front of me in waking and sleep. Before, it was mere interest; but having perused his work again, I find that his is a rigidly completed freehand style. His rigidity is prominent in the many sophisticated and elegant details, in his brushwork, inkwork, texture, and contrasts. In his paintings, even a stone has texture, so that what appears to be a minimalist form is in fact brimming with cultivation, ability, and effort; the positioning and content of Chinese characters are all displays of character. He uses a modern form imbued with his own perceptive, deep, and poetic sensibilities.

Chen Zui ,Researcher, Director of Theory Research, professor, and doctoral student adviser at the School of Art of the China Art Institute:

There are four aspect I wish to discuss. First is the attraction of symbols. His paintings have a sense of semiotics and yet are still interesting. Symbols are a part of the attraction and constitute part of the form of the work. This requires great concentration and powers of generalization. Second is his emphasis on thick ink. His use of thick ink is akin to beating a resonant drum, each powerful stroke full of density and strength. His thick ink structures the form and effect of the entire image. Thirdly, he hides his brush- and inkwork in templates. Every work of his follows this template: Within the structure of large patches of thick ink are gradations of black, white, and gray; bird feathers; and stones. His use of light ink is very pretty-in Western painting, it might be said that his colors are transparent; in Chinese painting, we say it is beautiful. Fourth is his personification of life. Much of his subject matter is personified: birds, bears, frogs, even flowers; one flower painting is called *Blooming*, and everything in it is personified, even the plants. It leaves a deep impression.

Ma Zhensheng, Professor at the Beijing Language and Culture University, President of the Jiang Zhaohe Art Research Society:

I am not in the least surprised by Shang Tao's paintings; I feel that Shang Tao undoubtedly has the ability to paint these. He has two traits that I would benefit from learning. The first is sincerity. He is a sincere man: He addresses art sincerely, and he faces life sincerely. Thus, his paintings are not the least bit unctuous; rather, they carefully reveal his sincere intent. Secondly, Shang Tao excels at learning. His paintings have modern elements but are not obviously Western. They are imbued with tradition, but without repeating the traditional models. He has been a student of so many masters, yet his work bears no trace of them, for he has integrated them to create his own art; he has attained the enlightenment of absorbing them into his blood, and that is something valuable.

Zhao Lizhong, Painter and Researcher at the China National Academy of Painting:

I will briefly discuss three points: First is how his work is concentrated and simplified from generalization; this has

already been mentioned by many before me, so I will not spend time on it. But his concentration and minimalism in brush- and inkwork is astounding; when we compose large freehand style paintings, we emphasize brush- and inkwork abundance, but his is minimalist. Second is that he is of the Lingnan School of painting. What amazes me is that, usually people are influenced by their environment, but he is an exception and has even influenced others. Third is regarding the changes in Chinese painting in the last thirty years. Much ink has been spilled on this subject, and many strategies have been adopted, akin to strategies of war: Some use guerilla tactics, trying here, experimenting there; others use diversions and ambushes; but after some thought, I realize that Shang Tao employs formations for frontal attack-this requires courage that stems from true ability. He has true ability, and that is all he needs, eschewing ostentation for the real deal. That is why I admire him.

Lin Ruoxi, Professor at the Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts:

Two artists utilize traditional brush- and inkwork very well: One is Pan Tianshou, who focuses more on brushwork; the other is Shang Tao, who focuses on inkwork. Shang Tao is a member of the Lingnan School of painting; we Lingnan painters of the younger generation have not reformed the strength of our brushwork, but Shang Tao has. But his reform is a bit different: His modern explorations in brushwork strength have cultivated modern experimental ink wash painting methods and skill, and this is an extremely important element in modern Chinese ink wash painting. Underneath the exterior of Shang Tao's traditional brushwork strength is an entirely Western semiotics of form. After fifty years of research and contemplation, Shang Tao has attained extraordinary heights.

Xu Qinsong, Chairman of the Guangdong Artists Association:

Aside from true ability, Shang Tao also relies on artistic integrity. He resides in the pure world of art, honing his skill, researching and contemplating in his study, treating art as a lifelong passion. Shang Tao the person has great taste, and so does his work, even more so his attitude toward life. This taste evokes tension of the spirit, giving us a virile power. His ink patches and his sense of fullness also give us a strong spiritual power.

Zhang Yenhua, reporter for *China Reform Daily*:

Shang Tao, now in his seventies, has maintained a youthful spirit in the face of decades of vicissitudes in society-this is precious. His works interpret his youthful inner world: the exaggeratedly painted, youthfully rough large rooster in *Picture of Great Luck*; the adorable, smile-faced polar bear in *The Pole Area*; and the two companion birds in *Green Shade* standing side by side, all express a moving warmth. Appreciating Shang Tao's work, one can intensely feel the soul of true art, not just in the superficial skill and vehicle, but in the vivid vitality that the painter's thought and passion injects into his art. Shang Tao may not be eloquent, but he paints from the heart, and one feels through his work that he is a compassionate person who enjoys life.

Lin Yong (Consultant to the China Artists Association, Vice-Chair of the Guangdong Federation of Literary and Art Circles, and Honorary Chair of the Guangdong Artists Association)

Beauty from sincerity often has both charisma and gravity: This gravity comes from nothing other than the high moral ground of being sincere.

The reason bird-and-flower painting can move one's soul lies not in the natural beauty of the flowers, birds, insects, or fish, but in the power and emotional fire that the artist puts into each individual point of beauty he emphasizes. In other words, a good bird-and-flower painting should paint the birds and flowers in the artist's mind, not those in front of the viewer's eyes!

A “breakthrough” alludes to the result attained by fierce fighting when heavily surrounded, when one defeats hero after hero to finally carve open a path to escape; thus, how can one achieve a breakthrough if one lacks cunning, courage, or determination? Perhaps this point has eluded those who, playing around with ink and brush on their own ancestral lands or in the middle of the desert, madly scream “break through!” “Creativity,” though, begins with a “breakthrough.”

To paint a delicate flower requires heavy and condensed brushwork; to paint an elegant leaf of a flower requires simple and fluid inkwork; to evoke small objects requires heavy lines; to paint dry branches requires a wet and thick brush; if one paints fruits with pure, saturated color, use black ink to juxtapose the surrounding area—all of these show the wonder of “contrast,” and this “wonder” is precisely the harmony of contrast! The difficulty of this harmony lies in its “sense of proportion.”

One can achieve powerful spirit in putting one's soul into a small painting. If one explores variations in the details and can capture what is wildly scattered, one will have attained mastery of gathering and dispersion.

Delightfulness springs from lush emotion; taste is elevated by great intention. The poetic expression of the everyday depends entirely on the beauty in one's mind.

Unadornedness is not unoriginal, is not immature, is not stupid; it is a flight of skill- skillful mind but clumsy hands in pursuit of preservation, stability, gravity, and transparency: In essence, unadornedness is a variation of skill.

Zhang Zhian (Dean, School of Communication and Design, Sun Yat-Sen University)

Master Shang's works are unadorned, unconventional, graceful, and magnanimous. The former two words describe their appearance; the latter two their achievement.

Pi Daojian (Professor, South China Normal University; art critic)

I find that Shang Tao's achievement lies not only in the uniqueness of his style, but also, if one considers his work in carefully, in the innovations that he has made in the use of ink and brush in traditional Chinese painting to express affect. In the design of his fish, birds, and other subjects, there are new, contemporary elements... He is indeed the product of our times; in the form of his ink- and brushwork, in his design, underlying principle, and construction, Shang Tao has achieved much to admire.

Mai Lihong (Director, Theory Department, Guangdong Painting Academy)

In his thick and dark inkwork, in his curving and supple lines, in his accompanying calligraphy and its flavor of stone engraving and clerical script, we see something that is uncut, firm, frustrated, and melodious, not ostentatious, not overly baroque. This melodiousness is neither the ageless silence of Ni Zan, nor the nihilistic ineffability of Bada Shanren, but integrates audacity into grace. In this melodiousness, humans are neither isolated from life nor above art...

Liu Renyi (Member, China Artists Association; professional painter, Guangdong Painting Academy)

Shang Tao's paintings are wondrously odd. He paints curves into angles and makes lightness seem heavy. His softness conceals hardness, and he is more ambitious the tougher it gets. If it's weak, he makes it strong; if it's little, he makes it great. 🍵