

寓目難忘的藝術——

看尚濤的大寫意花鳥

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當前的中國畫，精緻的多，簡約的少。花鳥畫中，工筆的、小寫意的、白描的都比較多，唯獨大寫意少。畫大寫意難，難在筆墨的功力，難在程式的提煉，更難在表現的精神。寫意從根本上說是一種民族文化精神，是一種藝術思維方式，是一種交流感情的高級語言，他像書法一樣，是“寫”出來的。現在，寫意的呼聲很高，中國國家畫院院長楊曉陽提倡“大寫意”，中國美院院長許江提倡“意之大者”，說明人們對中國畫的要求已不滿足於描述和記載，而是要強化它的精神品質。尚濤的大寫意花鳥獨樹一幟，他的個展在中國美術館舉辦，識逢其時，產生了廣泛的影響。

尚濤的大寫意花鳥蟲魚非常抓人，又耐人玩味，不輕飄，不討好，不是畫小情小趣，而是大筆大墨、大花大鳥、精雄大氣，渾然整體。有人說其特點是“重拙渾樸”，我看還有一種“凝結的張力”，這種力之美不是一般的“天骨開張”，而是蘊蓄著雷霆萬鈞。他不畫朝花夕拾、四季流轉，而畫一種永恆的生機，有“氣結殷周雪”的古意，有“雨後江山鐵鑄成”的造意。從作品上來分析，他直接的老師有李苦禪、李可染、間接的來源有八大山人、吳昌碩、潘天壽。他的畫，深厚像李可染，渾樸像李苦禪，古厚像吳昌碩，奇崛像潘天壽，簡約像八大山人，但比前輩畫家多了古代民間藝術和平面構成的因素，有中國的，也有外國的，因而多了寓目難忘的形式感。

尚濤的大寫意花鳥畫，不畫寫實的造型，而畫心中的意像，畫所謂的“大象”。他的“大象”極概括，極洗練，有誇張，有變形，不是標榜，不是招牌，而是為了“盡意”，表達獨特的感受，寄託獨有的品味，正所謂“立象以盡意”。由於理念獨特，趣味超拔，所以意象獨到，結構不凡。尚濤的畫有非常簡練的畫題，兩字到四字，兩字的為多，“雍容”、“蘊奧”、“九皋”、“尊者”等，簡約的畫題有詩意，有聯想，甚至有典故。題畫書法在篆隸之間，屬於碑學書法，來自風化的碑刻，古老的拓片。篆隸的方圓關係、拓片的滄桑感和風化感都被他吸收到畫裏來。可以說，他是在畫文化，畫修養。

他的大寫意花鳥畫之所以大氣，有衝擊力甚至震撼力，從形式上看，一是他把古人以線為主的造型手段發展成以大塊墨色為主，儘管仍然有線條，但盡可能減少，而且粗獷雄健。二是他突出了大的幾何型態，減少了用墨的層次，強化了方圓、濃淡、乾溼的對比。尚濤是學院畢業的，20世紀的美術學院，在藝術觀念上，西化是主流，好的老傳統是時斷時續的支流。因而人們對花鳥畫造型和筆墨的理解在很大程度上西化了。但尚濤是少數從學院裏跳出來的中國畫家，他繼承、發揚了幾乎斷裂的民族傳統，又融入了新時代的視覺經驗，善於繼承，勇於創造，吸收新機，追溯篆隸，旁參原始藝術，以古為新，形成了自己獨樹一幟的精神體貌，這是非常難能可貴的。

有沒有什麼建議呢？有一點，那就是他的畫理性成分多了點，緊張了一點，隨著年齡的增長，是否可以略略放鬆一點，給人一種“無心自達”的感覺呢？

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Art Unforgettable to the Eyes-

Viewing Shang Tao's Grand Freehand Style Bird-and-Flower Paintings


Xue Yongnian

Of Chinese paintings today, many are intricate, but few are simple. Of bird-and-flower paintings, sketch-based or minor freehand style works are many, but grand freehand style works are few. Grand freehand style paintings are difficult in their brush- and inkwork, their refinement, and their expression of essence. Freehand style at its core is an ethnic cultural essence, an artistic way of thinking, and a higher-level language for emotional interaction. Like calligraphy, it is “written.” There is currently a call for freehand style works: Yang Xiaoyang, Director of the China National Academy of Painting, advocates the grand freehand style, while Xu Jiang, Director of the China Academy of Art, advocates a “grand intent” - showing that people not only look to Chinese painting not only to depict and record, but also wish for the fortification of its essential qualities. Shang Tao's grand freehand style bird-and-flower paintings are unique, and his influential solo exhibition at the National Art Museum of China is well met.

The birds, flowers, insects, and fish in Shang Tao's grand freehand style are captivating and suggestive, neither flitting nor obsequious, not small scenes but great flowers and birds with great brush- and inkwork, grand and whole. Some say that “simple and unadorned” is his signature style, but I also see a “condensed tension,” an aesthetic of strength that is not a mere broad ambition but a gathering of power. He paints not the transient flower or changing seasons but a perpetual life essence, imbued with ancient purity and resilience. Analyzing his works, we see his masters Li Kuchan and Li Keran and his indirect influences Bada Shanren, Wu Changshuo, and Pan Tianshou. His paintings are deep like Li Keran's, unadorned like Li Kuchan's, bearers of tradition like Wu Changshuo's, unconventional like Pan Tianshou's, and simple like Bada Shanren's, but have something not to be found in these old masters: elements of ancient folk art and planar construction, both foreign and domestic, resulting in a formalism unforgettable to the eye.

The stylizations of Shang Tao's grand freehand style paintings are not realist, but instead paint the image in the mind, the “great form.” This includes aspects such as extreme refinement and some exaggeration and transformation, not to consciously signal a signature style, but to fully express the idea and unique emotions, to realize his unique taste- to “create an image to fully express the idea.” His unique vision and elevated taste create unique images with transcendent structures. Shang Tao's paintings carry simple names using only two or four characters, mostly two; *Comfort and Ease*, *Containing Profundity*, *Mount Jiugao*, *The Admired*- these simple titles have poetry, associations, and even classical allusions. The calligraphy of his titles lies between seal and clerical scripts and is a kind of engraving style, drawn from half-eroded steles and stone rubbings. The relation between angles and curves in clerical script and the sense of age and erosion of stone rubbings have been absorbed into his paintings. One can say that he is painting culture, painting refinement.

The grandness, power, and even shock of his grand freehand style bird-and-flower paintings, formally speaking, comes from a number of traits. First, his development of the ancient practice of basing form on lines into basing form on large patches of ink and color: There are still lines, but they have been reduced in number and made rough and robust. Second, he is not confined by large-scale geometry; he reduces the layering of ink and heightens the contrast between angle and curve, heavy and light ink, dryness and moisture. Shang Tao is a product of the academy. In academies of art in the 20th century, Western concepts constitute the mainstream, with old traditions making up intermittent tributaries. Thus, people's understanding of the style and brush- and inkwork of bird-and-flower paintings have mostly been Westernized. But Shang Tao is one of the few painters of Chinese paintings to have broken out of the academy, inheriting and spreading far and wide the ethnic tradition that has almost been lost while incorporating the visual experiences of the new era. To be a faithful inheritor and courageous innovator, to absorb new possibilities while returning to seal and clerical scripts and even drawing from primitive arts, to see the new in the old to articulate his own unique embodied essence- this is extremely rare and valuable.

Do I have any suggestions? Just one: There is a bit too much rationality in his paintings, a bit too much anxiety; with the accumulation of age, might he relax, just a bit, to give the viewer a sense of effortlessness? 

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