

畫，就是畫——

略談尚濤藝術中的書畫問題

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寫生 Sketching

1985年，在北京中國美術館舉行的那個被視為反映了一代人“心境”的《半截子畫展》中，尚濤是唯一一位以“花鳥”為表現母題的藝術家。那時候，他那單純、明淨的筆墨，怡靜、雅潔的境界，幾乎成了《半截子畫展》艱澀、苦悶的主題不和諧的“噪音”。然而，有趣的是，這種趣味的差異並沒有妨礙尚濤愉快地加入他所認同的行列。因為，在尚濤看來，《半截子畫展》所宏揚的嚴肅的藝術精神，較之它後來被闡釋的社會內涵更為重要。

借鑑錢前人實驗 達藝術新和諧

在“新潮”迭起，古老的傳統法則受到普遍的懷疑和嘲諷的時候，在“花鳥畫”這片被中國文人灑落了太多的孤憤和不平的荒原上建功立業可能是一種冒險而又令人興味無窮的選擇。對一切無所作為的人來說，我們除了對齊白石以往的傳統頂禮膜拜，別無出路；而一些雄心勃勃的野心家則堅信：繞過傳統的峰巔，山那邊就是一個可以自由稱孤道寡的天國。事情也許正如波普爾所說，正是“這種傳統，這種歷史的延續性、與推翻、壞、傳統的革命一起建立和哺育了科學和藝術”（貢布里希《理想與偶像》附錄：波普爾《貢布里希論情境邏輯以及藝術中的時期和時尚》）。值得慶幸的是，在一個相對自由的空間，尚濤可以借鑒前人在創造相同類型和價值的秩序中所作的無數次實驗，他在他的創作過程中能夠發現一些意外的新的關係，並且，利用這種關係達到藝術的新和諧。

眾所周知，“書畫同源”是中國藝術界一種由來已久、根深蒂固的看法。儘管作為一種學術假說，“書畫同源”已受到學術界的徹底否定；但是，在大多數場合，人們仍然一如既往地把“以書入畫”看作所有一切有教養的中國畫家的標誌。尚濤是廣州美術學院中國畫系書法研究專業的碩士課程導師，然而，在這裡我並不準備依循慣例，把尚濤在繪畫藝術上的成就看作他的書法修養直接引導的結果。道理很簡單，在尚濤的知識結構中並不存在一種先書後畫的秩序；而且在傳統的批評體系中，對書畫問題的闡釋差不多都是在“文人畫”這一範疇中展開的。而作為一種別具個性特徵的視覺形態，尚濤繪畫中的形式句法基本上是以完整的“塊面”結構為單元的。他很少因為追求書法中那種用“筆”的完整性而放棄視象結構層次；相反，無論淡墨還是濃墨，他都著意強化水漬、墨漬的排列對比來達到節奏的過渡。在近期的“墨荷”系列中，這種偏執理性的營構似乎稍作改觀，少數作品突出了茸厚鬆軟的筆墨量感，模糊輪廓邊線使弱化對比的結構轉換顯得更為柔和。但是，就他整個的藝術狀態而言，還不能指証：尚濤的畫風毫無保留地接受了傳統文人畫那種“以形就筆”的“句法”的影響。

用筆如用刀 奇險中求平衡

其次，如果可以認為，由於傳統“書法”的豎行書寫慣例使確信“書畫同源”的畫家更多地選擇卷軸形制的話，那麼，尚濤繪畫中的方陣佈局正像林風眠一樣是對這種傳統規範的反叛。不過，稱為不同。林風眠除了利用他的油畫知識來建立畫面情境的時空概念外，他那些平滑，流麗的線條更徹底的拋棄了“一波三折”、“如屋漏痕”、“如錐劃沙”一類的美學信條。而尚濤在一般情況下並不考慮視象具體的時空秩序；所謂“空間感”在他那裡並不是一個十分重要



取諸懷抱 坦然 Taken from embrace- candid 69×46cm 1998

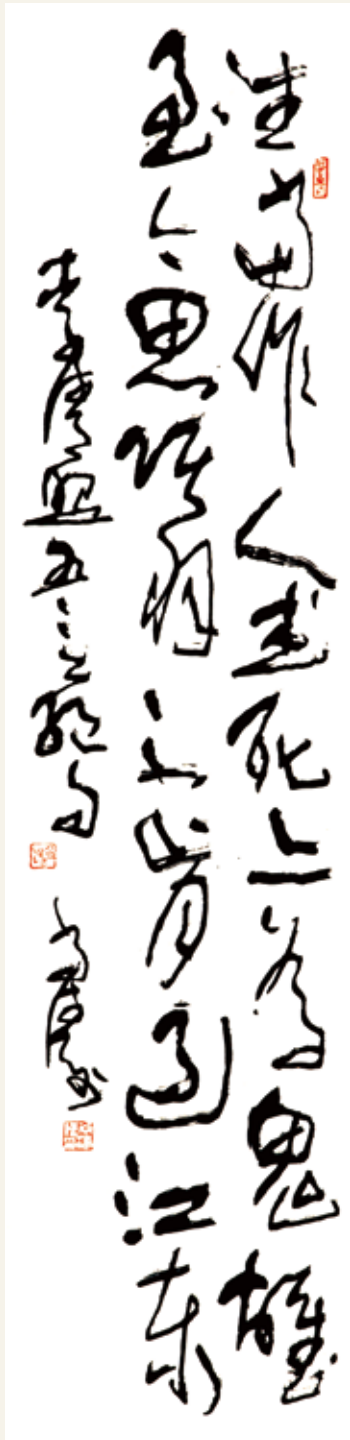
的概念；他的線條組合以及以完整的塊面為單元的“墨漬”之間的協調，雖然並不通過“筆斷意連”一類的途徑，但卻明顯地受控於某種“傳統”的向心力—從中，我們不難看到存在於秦漢碑版、鑑印中的結構形態及其形張力。由此反觀尚濤的書法，其用筆如用刀，側鋒逆行，用力凝重均勻，如虫蝕木；結體於奇險中求平衡，極少率任草草，謹嚴整飾；整體上體現了近拒帖札、遠追秦漢碑版、鑑印的傾向。

把尚濤藝術上的形式句法與“金石趣味”聯繫起來，並非毫無根據的臆斷。從廣義上來說，碑版、鑑印也可以納入“書法”藝術的範疇；但其視覺形態，實際上已遠離書法中“筆”的意味而迫近現代裝飾藝術中的平面佈局；尤其是碑版、鑑印的“刀味”，與現代版畫藝術的基本語匯更為接近。這就難怪，有許多觀者聲明他們在尚濤的畫中看到“版畫”的影子。從這一角度來看，尚濤在繪畫中注入的“書法”因素，較之他在書法中注入的繪畫因素可要更少一些。他更樂於對所有的筆蹤墨跡進行預先設定，“適度”這個詞對尚濤來說，具有更為深刻的的理性內涵和美學價值。

跨越傳統藩籬 加入當代主流

書法和繪畫是兩種不同的視覺符號。在中國文化譜系中，當書寫文字作為一種單純的指事會意的手段逐漸發展為“書法”並在觀念上被看作人格品位的象徵物的時候，書畫藝術才開始在共同的工具材料領域尋找到結合的媒介。“水墨畫”無疑是書畫藝術一種理想的聯姻形式，它曾以“異性”結合的優勢，在中國繪畫史上取得了異乎尋常的成果。但是，也必須看到，這種結合最後—以文人畫末流為標誌—是以中國畫家繪畫能力的退化為代價的。於是，近百年來，每當中國畫藝術出現“危機”的時候，復興“唐宋傳統”總是被作為一種自我療救的“藥方”。事實上，所謂“唐宋傳統”，簡而言之就是“以畫為畫”的傳統。畫，就是畫，並不是書法。在中國本土，林風眠無疑是一位以百折不撓的毅力進行廣泛的綜合實驗，最終成功地走出了“詩、書、畫、印結合”這一位傳統藩籬的最偉大的畫家。尚濤的實驗精神，在某種意義上與林風眠有相通之處。取法碑版、鑑印剛健的力度以排拒帖札柔弱的氣息，在水墨滲化的平面佈局中引進碑版、鑑印及現代版畫藝術的裝飾意趣，使尚濤的藝術遠離傳統習用的形式句法，最終加入了中國當代藝術的主流。☞

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生當作人杰 Alive, I should be a hero
33×138cm 1989

Painting Is Painting-

On the Problematics of Calligraphy in Shang Tao's Art

Li Weiming

In 1985, among the artists participating in the *Dabbler's Exhibition* held at the National Art Museum of China in Beijing, which has been seen as reflecting the spirit of the generation, Shang Tao was the only artist to select bird-and-flower as his subject matter. At the time, his simple, clean brush- and inkwork and tranquil, elegant quality was almost a dissonant interference to the tortured, angst-ridden theme of the *Dabbler's Exhibition*. But interestingly, this difference in aesthetics did not prevent Shang Tao from happily joining this group with which he identified. Because for Shang Tao, the spirit of serious art brandished by the *Dabbler's Exhibition* was more important than the social meaning accorded to it in retrospect.

In a time when “new waves” come one after another and the traditional ways are generally satirized and held suspect, establishing oneself in bird-and-flower painting, this dried-out field sowed by Chinese intellectuals with cynicism and *ressentiment*, is a risky yet fascinating choice. For those of us who have not achieved much, we can but venerate the traditionalism of Qi Baishi; while some of those who have burning ambition are convinced that just over the summit of traditionalism is a paradise where we can all be our own masters. Perhaps it is just as Karl Popper said: “It is this tradition, historical continuity, together with revolutions which overthrow ‘bad’ traditions, which builds and nurtures the sciences and the arts” (“Gombrich on Situational Logic and Periods and Fashion in Art.” *The Philosophy of Karl Popper*, ed. Paul Arthur Schilpp). Fortunately, in this relatively free space, Shang Tao has as models the innumerable experiments of forbears who created structures of similar type and value; he can discover unexpected new relations in the process of composition, and use these relations to attain a new artistic harmony.

As everyone knows, “calligraphy and painting of one origin” is a viewpoint long and deeply held in the Chinese art world. Even though “calligraphy and painting of one origin” has been utterly disproven as an academic theory, we still on most occasions view “entering painting through calligraphy” as the sign of a cultured Chinese painter. Shang Tao is a master's program adviser for Calligraphy Studies at the School of Chinese Painting, Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts, but here I will not follow convention and ascribe Shang Tao's achievement in painting to his refinement in calligraphy. The reason for this is simple: In Shang Tao's knowledge structure, there is no order of calligraphy before painting; and in traditional criticism, interpretation of calligraphy problematics was mostly undertaken for literati paintings. As a personally characteristic visual style, the formal syntax of Shang Tao's paintings generally takes a complete “block” structure as the basic unit. He seldom sacrifices imagery structure in pursuit of calligraphic integrity of brushwork; on the contrary, be it for thick or thin ink, he emphasizes the juxtaposition of water and ink to achieve continuity of rhythm. In his recent *Ink Lotus* series, he seems to have moderated this obsessively rational structure design: A few works evince a quantitatively downy and fluffy sense of brush- and inkwork, and blurred outlines soften this structural shift. However, in terms of his overall artistic condition, one cannot yet prove that Shang Tao's style has unreservedly embraced the influence of “achieving brushwork through form” that is seen in the syntax of traditional literati painting.

Moreover, if one believes that the vertical order of traditional calligraphy leads painters convinced of “calligraphy and painting of one origin” to choose the format of the scroll, then Shang Tao's rectangular arrangement, like Lin Fengmian's works, rebels against this traditional norm. But with a different appellation. For Lin Fengmian, not only are the spatiotemporal conceptions of his imagery constructed on his knowledge of oil painting, but his smooth and fluent lines completely abandon aesthetic creeds such as “curvy like waves,” “like wall cracks,” “like sand sketches.” But Shang Tao usually does not consider the concrete spatiotemporal order of his imagery; “sense of space” is not a very important concept for him. The coordination between his line associations and his use of



有鳳來儀 Arrival of the phoenix 69×46cm 1998



inkwork that takes the complete “block” as a unit, is conspicuously grounded by a kind of “tradition” even without using traditional techniques such as “severed brushwork with continuous intention” - from this coordination, it is not hard to see structures and tensions that are already present in Qin and Han stele and seal engraving. If we turn back to Shang Tao's calligraphy from this perspective, he wields his brush like a blade, using the side of the tip and moving contrarily, with a condensed and even strength; his lines are like worm-eaten wood; his structure strives for balance in risk, is seldom hasty but, rather, careful and well-rounded, manifesting in general a tendency to distance himself from contemporary calligraphy-by-template in favor of looking back to Qin and Han stele and seal engraving.

The linkage between the formal syntax of Shang Tao's art and the attractions of inscription is not unfounded. Stele and seal engraving can, broadly speaking, be included in the art of “calligraphy” ; however, its visual style is in fact different from the “brushwork” of calligraphy and is closer to the surface arrangement of modern decorative art-the “blade” aesthetic of stele and seal engraving especially is closer to the basic elements of modern block printing. No wonder many viewers claim that they see a resemblance to block prints in Shang Tao's paintings. From this angle, Shang Tao injects less of “calligraphy” into painting than painting into calligraphy. Even more, he enjoys planning out his lines and inkwork beforehand, so that “moderation” for Shang Tao has a deeper rationality and aesthetic value.

Calligraphy and painting have two differing visual semiotics. In the genealogy of Chinese culture, it is when writing characters to signify meaning gradually developed into calligraphy and came to conceptually symbolize personal character that calligraphy and painting started to seek an integrating medium in its shared tools, materials, and domains. “Ink wash painting” is undoubtedly an ideal mediating form, and its “attraction of opposites” enabled its extraordinary achievements in the history of Chinese painting. But it must also be noted that, in the end-represented by the waning of literati painting-this combination came at the price of the deteriorating painting skills of Chinese painters. Thus, in the past hundred years, whenever a crisis appeared in Chinese painting, a return to “Tang and Song traditions” has always been seen as a self-medicating “prescription.” Actually though, “Tang and Song traditions” simply means the tradition of “painting for painting's sake.” Painting is painting, not calligraphy. In Mainland China, Lin Fengmian is undoubtedly the greatest painter to have, through painstaking and wide-ranging comprehensive experimentation, successfully stepped outside the unitary tradition of “poetry, calligraphy, painting, and seal engraving.” Shang Tao's experimental spirit is in some sense similar to Lin Fengmian's. In drawing inspiration from the vital strength of stele and seal engraving, Shang Tao rejects the atmosphere of fragility in calligraphy-by-template; he introduces the decorative qualities of stele and seal engraving and modern block printing into the surface arrangement of ink permeation, so that his art distances itself from traditional formal syntax to ultimately enter into the mainstream of modern Chinese art. 印

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天門中斷楚江開
Through Tianmen's twin-peak portal, the mighty River churns
33×138cm 1989