

尚濤藝術簡析

遲鈍

1985年，一個自名為「半截子畫展」的美術展覽轟動了京華，十位中年美術家之中，尚濤是中國畫方面的代表。取名「半截子」，略含自嘲之意；其實，恰是在這一批中年畫家中，顯示了當代中國美術的中堅力量，他們不但對傳統文化具備豐厚的基礎，同時視野廣闊，敢於汲取外來的滋養；而且，如他們自己所說，大多體驗人生的「苦辣酸甜」。

對傳統文中的某種優秀技藝，全盤繼承照樣再現，固然也具有一定的價值（事實上人類的智能和氣質的許多方面，都不可能完全回復到過去）；不過，藝術的本性在於創造，縱觀近百年來中國畫的發展，凡是有代表性的畫家，都是在傳統與外來文化的借鑑取捨融匯的探索中，迂迴前進，尋求新途。

當然，這是一條艱辛的道路。

自尚濤於50年代入學中央美術學院始，至今的三十餘年，正是中國畫經歷了幾次大變異的時期。近十年來更是各種實驗與思潮，此起彼伏，競相湧現。不過，冷靜地加以考察之後，我們可以客觀地說，在花鳥畫創新的領域中，像尚濤教授這樣，對藝術始終懷著獻身精神，步履堅實，追索不懈，確立了鮮明的個人風格並取得卓越成果的人，又是極為難能可貴，甚至是屈指可數的。

懷抱獻身精神 追索不懈

尚濤曾從蔣兆和學習素描及人物畫，掌握了精嚴的寫實技巧，又從李苦禪習花鳥，對於墨色的精妙變化和筆法的剛勁雄放，深有所得。前人形容宣紙上作水墨寫意，如「脫鞍騎駿馬，赤手提毒蛇」，筆墨之道豈可輕易得之？

或許，使尚濤得益更多的，是他還曾從一代宗師李可染學習山水。他所得到的益處不在於章法筆墨上的摹倣，而在於藝術的精神和作風的陶冶。李可染曾說自己從齊白石老師學得一個「慢」字。「慢」不僅顯示了嚴肅與深思，而且體現了用筆的沉著與從容，掃除浮華與輕率，故云「筆意貴留」。「慢」與「留」，常能獲致更高的審美效果——含蓄與雋永。李可染還曾讚美齊白石是「大大才下大功夫」；又稱自己是「困而知之」的「苦學派」，以勵後學。天資的高低當然影響成就的大小；但急功近利或恃才傲物又常令天資斷送。尚濤的資質優厚而悟性敏捷，但更重要的是他勤學多思、鍥而不捨和虛懷若谷的探索精神。

廣徵博採 鎔鑄出自我風格

尚濤廣徵博採的諸多源流中，有三個方面是較為突出的：一是中國古代的書法和繪畫（尤其是八大山人學派）；二是中、外的民間藝術（玩具、陶瓷等）；三是西方現代藝術（油畫、版畫等）。「吃透」了這些東西已經不易，更難的是使它們溶解以後鑄造出一種新的藝術語言——這語言具有突出的個性而保持自己內在的諧和與統一。



藝術考察，印度卡久拉霍
Researching art in Khajuraho, India



仲夏 Midsummer 179×96.5cm 1989

尚濤在書法的探討方面遠攀秦漢，受石鼓文的啟迪創造了一種寓方於圓、寓剛勁於渾厚的筆法。又融合篆、隸、狂草於一爐，形成自己獨具一格的書體。他的繪畫，依對象與情趣的需要，筆法更為豐富多變：或如雕版，或如錐畫沙，或如屋漏痕……但又總是能夠與書法的風格相一致。

他在用墨方面也有很多創造。有時流動如濃煙《仲夏》；有時凝定如剪絨《天鵝》；有時在晶瑩的淡墨上擦幾筆漆黑的宿墨，煥發出琉璃般的光彩《白梅》。

清雅沉著 惜色如金

水墨寫意畫上的用意，歷來是一個難題；而要突破吳昌碩、齊白石創造的格局，尤其不易。尚濤深知「色不礙墨」的重要性；因為宣紙水墨的無窮變化，乃是寫意畫的精魂，是中國文化遺產中特有的寶藏。但大自然顯現的色彩美的確又是誘人的，觀眾對此的審美需要也是不可忽視的。尚濤在色彩運用方面的創造性，至少有三點是可以注意的。第一是含蓄，他畫中的色彩大多清雅沉著，而避免生硬火爆；尤善於在水墨中略混色彩，於若有若無之中構成畫面統一的色調。第二是別致，他所運用的色彩常能越出傳統的花青赭石藤黃洋紅之類的固定程式；如藤花上的粉藍《長春》、枯葉上的赭黃《清寧》、荷葉上的淡紫《夏》，都因其色彩的別致而增添了新鮮的生氣。第三是精煉，常言「惜墨如金」，尚濤的繪畫可說是「惜色如金」；他很少在同一幅畫上施用多種色彩，而每用一兩種，也都是面積很小或純度很低。惟其精煉，反而倍覺精彩。

意境新穎 不落窠臼

融合各種繪畫因素完成一種獨特的風格技巧，固然是一件艱難的業績；但還要能創造出新的情趣新的境界，才稱得起是「自成一家」。意境的創新乃是繪畫藝術的生命之所繫。

尚濤的花鳥畫的魅力，也恰在於意境的新穎不落窠臼，創造出一個屬於他所特有的藝術天地。八大山人作品的簡潔奇突，當然給他以啟發，不過在他的畫面上卻沒有（或說很少）八大藝術中那種孤憤與悲涼。他的畫大多是充實的，茁壯的，洋溢著溫馨的情感—形態各異的蘭科植物陳列在一起，好像是親戚們聚會《蘭氏家族》；大天鵝和幼禽嬉戲，令人想起兩代人之間的關係《天鵝》；一對鴿子悚神諦聽，更顯得山野的寧靜…。

他的畫裡還時時流露出天真和幽默，無論對於人或對於藝術來說，幽默都是一項難得的品格，因為它不僅需要聰明機智，還需要仁愛與真誠。☺

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蘭氏家族 The Orchid Family 68×68cm 1987

An Introduction to Shang Tao's Art

Chi Ke

In 1985, Beijing was rocked by a self-styled *Dabbler's Exhibition*. Among the ten middle-aged artists, Shang Tao represented the sphere of Chinese painting. "Dabbler" is a self-deprecating term; actually, it is precisely in these middle-aged artists that we can see the bulwark of contemporary Chinese art. They not only have deep roots in traditional culture, they also have broad horizons and are willing to draw on outside nutrition. And, as they themselves say, most of them have experienced the bittersweetness of life.

There is value in inheriting and presenting again the excellent craft of traditional culture (in fact, it is impossible to return to the past incarnations of many aspects of human intelligence and cultivation); however, the essence of art lies in creation, and if we look at the most recent hundred years of Chinese painting, the representative painters all wind their way to new paths by exploring the borrowings, selections, and integrations of traditional and foreign culture.

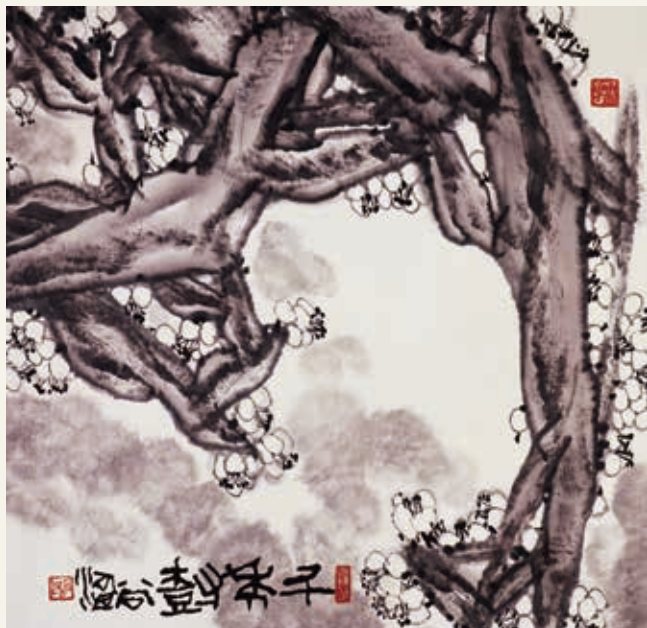
Of course, this is a hard road to travel.

The thirty years between when Shang Tao entered the Central Academy of Fine Arts in the fifties and today, are a period of several sea changes in Chinese painting. The past ten years especially have seen various experiments and movements rise and fall. But if we observe with a calm eye, we can objectively say that, in the realm of innovative bird-and-flower painting, someone like Professor Shang Tao, who has maintained a spirit of devotion to art, who has taken step after sturdy step in his pursuits, and who has established a prominent personal style and achieved excellence in achievement- such a man is a treasure, even a rare find.

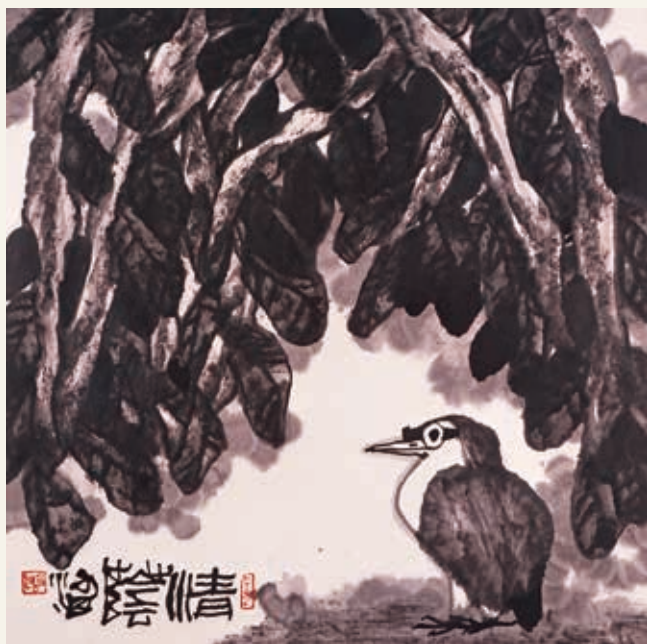
Shang Tao learned sketching and portraiture from Jiang Zhaohe, acquiring a precise and disciplined realism; he also learned flowers and birds from Li Kuchen, deepening his understanding of ink variations and the strength and audacity of brushwork. They say that to paint freehand style ink wash paintings on xuan paper is like "riding a spirited horse bareback, holding a venomous snake barehanded." Skill in ink wash painting is not so easily gained!

Maybe Shang Tao benefited even more from grandmaster Li Keran, from whom he learned mountains and water. His knowledge resides not in the imitation of brushstrokes, but in the spirit of his art and the cultivation of his method. Li Keran once said that he himself learned from his master Qi Baishi the word "slowness." "Slowness" encapsulates not only seriousness and depth of thought, but also steadiness and assuredness of brushwork, doing away with superficiality and haste; thus, we say that "the brush values preservation." "Slowness" and "preservation" together can often attain a higher aesthetic effect- subdued and indelible. Li Keran once praised Qi Shibai as "having great training but even greater genius" ; he says of himself, to encourage younger painters, that he is of the "school of labored practice," that he "learns from impasses." Natural talent of course has an influence on one's level of achievement, but arrogance and being too focused on fame and fortune can also negate such genius. Shang Tao has great natural talent and an agile mind, but more important is his diligence and reflection, perseverance, and humble spirit of exploration.

Of all the diverse sources upon which Shang Tao draws, there are three that particularly stand out: one, traditional Chinese calligraphy and painting (especially the school of Bada Shanren); two, folk culture from both East and West (such as toys and ceramics); and three, contemporary Western art (such as oil paintings and prints). "Ingesting" all of these is not easy; even harder is dissolving them to mold a new artistic semiotics, a semiotics



千年樹 A One-Thousand-Year-Old Tree 68×68cm 1988



清蔭 Cool Shade 68×68cm 1990

that has a prominent character but still maintains its intrinsic harmony and unity.

Shang Tao's exploration of calligraphy reaches back to the Qin and Han dynasties; he draws inspiration from stone engravings to create a style of brushwork that couches rigidity in fluidity, strength in density. He also integrates seal, clerical, and cursive scripts to form his own unique calligraphy style. His paintings encompass a wide range of brushwork styles in accordance with object and aesthetics: resembling wood engravings, sand sketches, wall cracks, etc.- but they all match his calligraphy style.

His use of ink is also innovative. Sometimes it wafts like smoke (*Midsummer*); sometimes it is settled as if shorn velvet (*Swan*); and sometimes, a few strokes of dark ink on light ink can bring out a glass-like radiance (*White Plum Blossom*).

The expression of intention in freehand style ink wash painting has always been a central difficulty; to expand beyond the framework set by Wu Changshuo and Qi Baishi is a particular challenge. Shang Tao understands deeply the importance of “color's not impeding ink,” for the variegated effects of ink on xuan paper are the essence of freehand style painting, a treasure of Chinese cultural heritage. But the colorful beauty observed in nature is indeed alluring, and the aesthetic needs of spectators cannot be ignored. There are at least three points regarding Shang Tao's innovations in the use of color that are worth mentioning. First is his subtlety: His use of color is mostly clean and steady, avoiding garishness and excessiveness; he particularly excels in mixing a little color into his ink to arrive at an imperceptibly unified tone. Second is his sophistication: He often breaks out of using the fixed colors of indigo, burnt sienna, rattan yellow, and magenta, such as using light blue on a vined flower (*Periwinkle*), ochre on dried leaves (*Serenity*), and light purple on lotus leaves (*Summer*)- all of these gain a fresh vitality from their color. Third is his condensation: We often speak of “conserving ink as if it were gold” ; Shang Tao can be said to “conserve color as if it were gold” - he seldom uses many colors in the same painting, and the couple of colors he uses are all small in area or low in purity. It is his condensation that makes it spectacular.

Combining various elements of painting to achieve a unique style and skill is undoubtedly a challenging task, but one must create a new aesthetics and a new horizon to be called a “Master,” for the creation of an aesthetics is the lifeblood of painting as an art form.

The attraction of Shang Tao's bird-and-flower paintings is precisely in its innovative, uncliché aesthetics that opens up his own artistic world. Of course he drew inspiration from Bada Shanren's cleanness and oddity, but Shang Tao displays no (or little) of Bada's cynicism and despair. His work is mostly redolent and healthy, brimming with warm emotion: various orchids arrayed together are like a family reunion (*The Orchid Family*); a large swan playing with a fledgling evokes an cross-generation relationship (*Swan*); a pair of pigeons wary and alert bring out the stillness of the wild; ...

His paintings also reveal innocence and humor, and humor is a rare virtue in both people and in art, for it needs not only a quick wit, but also love and sincerity. 📖

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