

An abstract painting of a face, rendered in a highly expressive, almost cubist style. The face is composed of bold, sweeping brushstrokes in vibrant red, yellow, and blue. The eyes are large and white, with dark outlines. The overall composition is dynamic and energetic, with a strong sense of movement and form. The background is a deep red, which contrasts sharply with the other colors.

L.L.I

THE PAINTINGS

力之画集



天津人民美术出版社



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——在中国第七届全国美展的油画作品“河边”的最后制作时图



中国画“北大荒人”系列作品之一——“男人们”

Header

My inspiration derives from an eternity of instinct, and arrives at a sudden conclusion. I do not care whether it resides on the peak of a snow-capped mountain, in the cup of a delicate flower, or whether it gallops onward like the frothing waters of a mountain river, or trickles like a drop of morning dew. It is all my work and shall never be with limitation.



Atlanta, 2005

卷首

……我的灵感源于本能的永远，忽然的总之……与然后……我并不在乎她憩落在冰山之顶或花蕊之上，或奔泻如江河，或点滴若春露，她都是我的作品，从无局限……



2005 年于美国亚特兰大工作室





Artist's Statement

Preface

I am a passenger on a charcoal sketching of a wooden boat meandering in the ocean of art. On the East atoll of artwork I discover gems left behind by our forefathers and while on the West, I chance upon the classical gems of Da Vinci and Picasso. Cloudforms and raindrops of multifarious hues drift in from diverse regions of the wide Earth, melding and fermenting to form the touch and style of my brush.

L. Li

I started painting at the tender age of 7 under the tutelage of my artist father. Shortly thereafter, I was dispatched to the countryside during the Cultural Revolution, where I constructed roads, quarried for stone in the mountains, built houses, planted and harvested crops, taught at a rural elementary school, and was a guard at a fishery. Upon returning to the city, I studied sculpture and became the technical director of a sculpture factory. After obtaining my degree from the Lu Xun Art Academy in 1983, I stayed on to teach traditional Chinese painting and sketching. I came to America in 1992.

Courses in Chinese painting and sketching far from conflict with each other, but each has the support of a profound and systematic theory unique to itself. By examining the Chinese name for painting, one can see that it mainly refers to traditional methods. This, of course, involves its corresponding technical skills, characteristics, and theories. And take sketching, for example: its essential purpose is "simplistic depiction." In Renaissance art it was called "the basis of everything scientific," which refers to the profundity of the theory. If one says that philosophy is the forerunner of scientific progress, then what is repositied within the theoretical elements of sketching generally enlightens the philosophical thought process; this can be seen from the discourses on sketching made by many philosophers. (In the past, I myself wrote over 100,000 characters for a "Tutorial on Understanding Sketchwork," a treatise nearly complete. Upon arriving in the United States, however, it was lost. I do not know when I will be able to remember everything in the original manuscript, but I will attempt to re-form and publish this tutorial in sections; no more need be said here.)

With their predominant ink coloring (black as the fundamental color) and aesthetic foundations in metaphysics, Chinese painting and sketching have little disparity between their basic theories. Sketching itself knows no national boundaries or regional restrictions. It does, however, know a variety of styles and characteristics formed through a diversity of culture. It is expressed in light, form, the understanding of techniques, and the method of dealing with the variables involved.

In the developed world of today, one word-"contemporary"-has already shattered or blurred many regional limitations. Many comprehensive or marginal domains become independent, or they develop into an enormous independent system. It is the same with painting. For this reason I conducted extensive research and summarized my findings, including comparisons of the traditional and contemporary in the East and West. I also touched upon the inherent historical relationships of each artistic school, from its techniques to its basic theories. In this volume one can perhaps discover traces of my research into these areas.

In the process of studying Chinese painting, one learns that we progress and develop from a technical style of meticulous brushwork called 'Gongbi,' to a freeform of depiction called 'Xieyi,' and then to calligraphy. We progress from birds and flowers, to people and landscapes, and further on, until we are making a print. In my research of Western painting I paralleled this path using not only the aesthetic principles from classical "workshop style," and its execution of brush, oil, and canvas; but also from the painting methods of Da Vinci, Ingres, Rembrandt, the Impressionists, and many modern artists. I researched all of this in minute detail.

During my research of artistic form and the language of painting, I looked at both technique and theory since these concepts are equally important. Many concepts appear to guide each other. For the ideology of art, I regard both subjective and

objective factors as equally important, even though I emphasize the subjective in painting (which is the supreme expression of subjectivity). But I am never able to divorce myself from the objective, since it is a procreative principle. Of course, the meanings of many words are spoken comparatively.

Over a decade ago, having just arrived in America, I held lectures called "About Chinese Painting" at some American universities. The students were incredibly interested in Eastern metaphysics and the Chinese people. They meticulously examined and discussed every brushstroke. During their debates, many students chose black as the most mystical, profound, and powerful of hue. The conventionalization of pen and ink in Chinese painting, they theorized, was expressing a bridge between the intangible and the tangible; that it springs from the same starting point as the immateriality of corporeal existence. I consolidated the comprehension Western students have of Eastern art theory. In my innermost being, I asked myself whether I have any blind spots toward Western painting, and so I traveled around America for two years. In that time I must have seen every famous museum and art gallery in the country. In these bastions of art, I discovered the spirit and historical import of nearly a century of contemporary Western art. In the early days of the Republic of China, at the time of argument over the "androgynous" style of painting, the artistic revolution of Western Post-Impressionists, Picasso, Matisse, Kandinsky, and other artists had already surged through the barriers of convention.

I have deliberated in depth about the Chinese reforms and "opening up" period, and also about the regeneration and revolution taking place on the cutting edge of art following the policies of "opening the door" and "loosening restrictions." In this period I have become acquainted with a great many contemporary artists from Germany, France, Japan, and America. Some of them are college professors, while others are professional artists. We have had numerous unforgettable get-togethers and discussions, and some red-in-the-face arguments (which were usually no more than a defense of our own particular culture!). It is simply a kind of obstinacy prior to fusing as a whole, and it is a justification for defending our rearguard position.

At the end of 1993, I set up a workshop in Sacramento, California. For two years, it was a gathering place for artists. The building owner was a wealthy sculptor so the rent was very cheap, but each resident artist was specially chosen. In my building, and the two-floor building in the rear courtyard, there were around twenty artists. Most of them were contemporary artists. The group included sculptors and one photographer. Once every three to five months, we would open the doors to the general public, uniting amongst ourselves to exhibit twenty workshops all at the same time. It was a "Super Gallery." There were cocktail parties, reporters, and printed publicity leaflets. It was not only a show to the outside world, it was also a time for everybody to communicate. That time was one of great transformation for me, in my way of thinking about art and in my artistic practices. Both before and after that time I have amassed much personal experience in different international shows, but the "open workshop collective exhibition" will always be an unforgettable and stylish form of exhibition.

I am fond of understanding and experiencing life, and I am fond of challenge and contest. Lu Xun once said, "Danger? One can only fully experience the power of life by making one's way through danger." In my decades of life, it has been a sentence I think of almost every time I encounter a formidable challenge. In China I have been to the fural parts of the northwest and the water-rich regions of the south. I have traveled to the border hinterlands of Inner Mongolia, Tibet, and Yunnan. I have contemplated the meaning of the Great Wall at Badaling, and spent over ten days to climb the 40-mile length of it. I have seen the different scenery and nature's imprint on its unique sections. I once crossed the desert on foot in order to experience its aridness. I have traveled by truck along the long, winding and jarringly-rutted Qinghai-Tibet highway, and across high passes and steep mountain ranges to Lhasa. I have spent time on bustling street corners in Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou making idle conversation with good friends and drinking delightful spirits on the roof of tall buildings. I have gone to sea with fishermen trawling for fish and gone hunting in snowy mountains. I almost sank into the fathomlessly deep ocean and almost lost my way in the depths of a primeval forest. It was a powerless terror I felt in the ocean's waters, and a feeling of helplessness when lost in the mountains-the connection of these emotions is the reason for the "dark and chilly" hue that tinged a period of my young life.

I have been to many American cities, both large and small, and I feel an understanding towards them. Those I understand

most may be as large as Chicago, Los Angeles, Miami, and Atlanta, or as small as Macon or Columbia. I also understand rural mountain villages. It is an understanding that comes from having lived in these kinds of places. Each time I arrive in a strange and unfamiliar city, I experience an unexplainable excitement; it is like being intoxicated. For example, when people from the North of China first take a taste of Yellow liquor or a liquor such as Shaoxing wine, they dislike it-but I am able to discover a subtle pleasantness among the different types of liquor. Partiality is merely something that changes with the mood of each day or each season. Upon first entering a region, I do not necessarily take an instant liking to it, but after a time, like liquor, I find a taste for it. It is like finding an extraordinary flower, a white linden among the snow, or meeting an especially elegant and refined being, or partaking of fine food and drink.

People often distinguish love or hatred for something before they understand it, but serious love and serious hatred often occur after coming to a conclusion. It is said that artists are a group of people with a prolific amount of sentiment and emotion. I think this mainly describes an artist's tendency to actively discover, comprehend, and experience; to seek out the beauty in life, to create. There is a Chinese saying that expresses this concept: "When looking at mountains, passion brims with mountains; when looking at the sea, passion overflows with the sea." A wealth of experience is like a wellspring for realization and creativity.

The melody of a tune may bring to mind a rotten taste in the mouth, a period of unspeakable suffering, or the excitement of familiarity. I attribute this to the effect of certain unforgettable experiences. I always feel that although change is not the same as evolution, evolution certainly must incorporate change. Experience will influence an individual's artistic inspiration and inclination, while technique and form are the instruments of expression, which like the tools employed, are selectable. Yesterday I employed a rhyming poem in ancient prose to describe the beauty of an apple; it came out well and described exactly what I desired at the time. Today I have the sudden inspiration to use contemporary metaphorical techniques; segments of emotion is exactly what I require this time. Why is it not cliché, even though the imprint of experience on the form of a painting is concealed? In most situations what emanates from the tip of the brush shouts out an emotion close to the influences felt in the environment at the time, notwithstanding that its source is memory! The work is your personal accomplishment, a unification of experience, and an object of expression. Each time is different from the past, and it is in this which lies the significance of a painting. The themes I paint are sometimes produced entirely from a dream or an unexplainable period of hallucination. Sometimes it is merely painting form for the sake of form. The advantage of attempting a poetic depiction of a dream is its symbolic interpretation of an image. Sometimes it is a childlike and garbled recollection of a garden, or an attempt to shadow that period of civility and simplicity; sometimes a single transitory vision is fixed in order to express the depth of an emotion. Or maybe it is abstract; maybe it is a specific image to describe some meaning. The source of this dream and emotion is closely correlated to experience and environment.

Classic topics of debate include "Art is subject to reality" or "Art supersedes reality." I will not make judgment here, but it is clear that "Art is not equal to reality!" The understanding and expression that artists have of "reproducing reality" are all different, and each has their own reasons for neglecting and emphasizing these. For me, they are different at different times, depending upon my mood and the subject. I personally feel that the highest praise a person can be given is "expansive and profound." This is the direction for which I strive. Both of these are limitless. This is why I have such deep admiration for Da Vinci and other outstanding and talented artists. If one hopes to surpass such huge figures from history, it cannot be done by talking big or showing at a few museums. It requires exceptional talent, iron-willed determination, and effort. It does not matter how I pursue change in form and painting, the feeling of movement with hue and line, or the passion for strong and powerful objects-they all spring from my own natural constituents. If someone asked me to express my personal experience of art in a single sentence, it would be this: "All answers lie within a sketch."



Written in the Atlanta workshop

June 2005

自序

……我乘着素描的木舟在艺术的大海中漫游，在东方绘画的岛上找到先人遗下的珍宝，又在西方巧遇了达·芬奇与毕加索精神的宝典……天上的从世界不同地方飘来的各色彩云与雨露酿醉了我的笔触……

——力之

我小时7岁始即在画家父亲指导下习画……我曾下过乡，在那段时间里我筑过路，山里采过石头，建过房子，种过庄稼，做过乡里小学教师、中学教师、守过渔场。

回城后学过雕塑铸造，做过雕塑厂的技术厂长……

1983年大学毕业后留在“鲁迅美术学院”任教至1992年来美国。我是中国画系毕业，在鲁迅美术学院任教时教授中国画与素描，这两个体系并不矛盾，但却各自拥有独立的深刻而庞大的美学系统理论作为其支撑。就名称而言中国画主要指的是中国的传统绘画，当然包括其技法特点与理论，就素描而言，主要意义是指“朴素的描绘”。文艺复兴时有人把它称为“一切科学的基础”，主要是指其内在所包含的丰富道理，如果说哲学是科学进步的先导，那么蕴藏在素描中的哲学因素常常启迪了哲学的思维，我们可以从许多哲学家对素描的论述中看得出来。（本人曾写有十余万字的“素描认识教程”几近完稿，但在来美时把稿子寄存在友人处丢失，我不知何时才能凭记忆重整全部原稿，但我试将此教程分章段重整发表，此文中不再赘述。）……而以墨色为主，以黑色为其母色，以玄学为其重要美学基础背景的中国画与素描的基本概念的距离并不十分遥远。素描是无国界与地域之限的，但却有各种不同的因地域与文化的不同而形成的不同风格与特点，表现在对光、形及技术的认识与处理方式上等等，而世界发展的今天“现代”一词已把很多领域的界限打破或模糊起来，很多综合或边缘的领域独立或发展到极为庞大的体系，在绘画中也是如此，我也因此而做了深入的研究与总结，包括东西方传统与现代的比较，也因此涉及了西方传统绘画的从制作技术到基本理论与各种画派的历史上的勾联关系……在这本画册里或者可以找到我对其研究的痕迹。

在中国画的学习过程中，大家都知道我们是从工笔到写意乃至书法，从花鸟到人物、山水并及于制印。在对西画的研究过程里我几乎也走了相同的路，从古典的“作坊式”对笔、油、布的制作及从达·芬奇到安格尔、伦勃朗的画法过程，也从印象派到各种现代艺术的制作及美学原理都做了大量的研究。在艺术形式上和绘画语言上我视技术与理论、观念同等重要，几者间互有导引作用。在艺术思想上我视主观与客观诸因素于同等地位，虽然在绘画上我更强调主观，有时就是极端的主观的宣示，但成因总离不开客观的引发，这是一种生发原理，当然很多词的意义总是相对而言的。

十几年前初来美国时我在美国的大学里做“关于东方绘画”的讲座，学生们对东方的玄学和对中国人把每一种笔法都做的“象形论喻”很感兴趣，学生们在讨论中很多人认为“黑色是最神秘而深刻的且最具包含力的色彩，而中国绘画中那种对笔墨的程式化论喻是显现了无极于有形的桥梁，是通往大象无形的起脚点……我见识了西方学生对东方艺术的理论与技法的理解力，而我也在内心自问和审视了我自己对西方绘画是否还有什么“盲点”，为此我在美国旅行了二年，几乎看遍了各地著名的博物馆和美术馆，在那些著名的博物馆中我找到了近百年以上历史的西方现代绘画的精神与历史意义，在中国民国初期为西方素描之“阴阳脸”画法争论的时候，西方的后印象主义和毕加索、马蒂斯、康定斯基等人的艺术技术革命已波澜壮阔……”我也有对中国改革开放初开国门政策宽松后许多国内的急切艺术革新状态的思考……这期间我认识了很多德国的、法国的、日本的、美国的现代画家们，他们有的是学院里的教授，有的是职业画家，我们有过许多难忘的聚会与讨论，还有“面红耳赤”的争论，有时就是在为自己的文化抗辩，那是一种交融前的固执与底线防守的告白！1993年底我在“加利福尼亚”的首府“沙加腓度”租了一间工作室，在二年时间里那是一幢艺术家工作室聚集的地方，楼的主人是一位富有的雕塑家，租金很便宜，但进驻的艺术家他是要选择的，同幢楼加上后院的另一幢二层楼的艺术家有二十余位，大都是现代艺术家，其中还有雕塑家和一位摄影艺术家，每三至五个月有一次公开的对社会开放的联合展出，二十多间工作室同时开放是一间“超级画廊”，有酒会、有记者、有印刷品宣传，既是对外的展出也是大家交流的时间，那段时间是我艺术思想与艺术实践有很大转变的时期，在那之前或之后我有过很多个人的集体的国际的不同展出经验，但那段时间中的“工作室开放联合展”是非常有风格的难忘展出。

在我的生活经历中我喜欢了解与体会，喜欢挑战与战斗，鲁迅的那句“危险？在危险中漫游才能感到生命的力”几乎是我几十年中每次应对大的挑战时都想到的句子。

我在中国时去过东北农村和南方水乡，也去过内蒙、西藏和云南边疆，曾在八达岭思索长城的意义并为此沿着长城日行四十余里的走了10几天察看其不同段落之风光与自然痕迹。曾为体会沙漠的枯燥而徒步穿越沙漠，也曾乘卡车沿着漫长而颠簸的青藏公路翻越崇山峻岭去拉萨。我也曾留连于北京、上海、广州之繁华街头与朋友谈天说地饮美酿于大厦之顶，也曾坐小板凳端着粗酒碗品尝白乳般香甜的糯米酒于西北街头。我随渔民出海捕鱼，也曾随猎人在长白山里狩猎，曾险些沉落入大海，也曾独自在山区原始森林里迷失方向。那海水中无助的恐怖，那渐黑的傍晚，山风在枯木中刮出的哨音与我迷失中的绝望之感的交汇是我年轻时一段时间里“黑冷”色彩的原因。

美国的大小城市我去过很多地方，但如果了解较多的城市是大如芝加哥、洛杉矶、迈阿密和亚特兰大，小城如梅肯、哥伦比亚……还有一些山里的村落，所谓了解较多是因为我在这些地方住过。每当我进入一个陌生的城市时，我都有一种莫名的兴奋，如饮酒，中国的北方人初饮黄酒或如绍兴酒之类并不很喜欢，但我细尝之后便爱上了，我饮酒无甚大的偏好，因我都能找到不

同酒类中之妙处，所谓偏好仅是随每日或某季的心情而已。初入某城可能我并不非常喜欢，时间一久，就如饮酒般寻找其妙处了，或花季奇美，或冬雪极白或人文特雅或饮食香绝……

虽然某些时候，人们对事物的感情在不了解之前就已有爱恨之别，但大爱与大恨通常发生在大了解之后。如果说艺术家们是一群感情丰富的人，我想主要指的是艺术家们较为注意，勤于发现了解，体会并寻找生活的美，并加以创造吧！所谓“观山情满于山，观海情溢于海”即是此意！而丰富的经历是体会与创造丰富美之源泉。

某首歌的曲调会勾起一阵鱼腥的味道，或一段难言的苦楚或熟悉的兴奋，指的就是一些经历和挥不去的印象。

我总认为虽然变化并不等于“进化”，但“进化”一定是要有所“变化”。经历会影响一个人的艺术感受力和艺术倾向，而技法、形式是表述的手段，与工具一样是具选择性的，昨天我用旧体韵律诗表述一个苹果的美很拿手也正好是我当时的意愿，那么我就发挥了一下，今天我以忽然的灵感用隐喻的现代手法画一段情也正好是我此时的需要，为什么不立刻做呢？尽管有时经历的痕迹在绘画形式里被藏得很深，但大多情形下笔底喊出的感动总是距你当时环境中所受的影响不远，尽管源于记忆也罢！那作品常是你个人修养、经历与所表现物的“合一产品”，此时的非彼时的画的意义在于此了。我有时画的主题内容完全是由梦里或由一段莫名的幻觉中产生，有时仅仅是为了形式而形式的画下去！有时试图对梦作诗般的描绘，有时对表象做符号般的解释，有时是对远去的童稚做呢喃的回忆，或试图追回那段未开化般的纯真，有时为表达情感的神秘而固定了一次短暂的景象，可能是抽象的，可能是具象的，只为留下一些意图……而这梦与情感之源与经历环境都有一定的关联。

有个古典的议题是：“艺术低于真实”还是“艺术高于真实”，我这里不做评论，但“艺术不等于真实”是一定的！画家们对“真实的再现”之理解与表述很不一样，忽略与加强的理由也各自有别，这些对我来说都是不同时间随个人心情与题材不同而有所区别。我认为对一个最高的赞美应是“广博而深刻”这是我努力的方向，而这两者是无极限的，这也是我那么敬佩达·芬奇及许多历史上杰出的多才多能的画家的原因，想超越历史上的这些大山不是吹吹牛或烧了博物馆就解决了的事，需优异的天资与坚持不懈的努力……

……而无论我在形式与画种间如何追求变化，其色彩与线条的动感和对强有力事物的热爱，源于我自然的因素。

如果有人要我讲一句最具有个人艺术经验的话语，那么我的一句话是：“一切的答案都在素描里”。



写于亚特兰大工作室

2005年6月

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