

幻象·本质
——“当代”工笔画之新方向

IDOLUM · HYPOSTASIS
— New Trends of *Contemporary* Fine-Line Painting

主编：杭春晓
Editor in Chief: Hang Chunxiao

安徽美术出版社
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Prologue

Wang Wenzhang

President, China Art Academy

I am very glad to attend the opening ceremony of *Illusion · Nature — New Trends of “Contemporary” Fine-Line Painting* and to see its catalogue has been published. This catalogue and its exhibition showed us the new direction of using traditional Way of Chinese Fine Line Painting to express contemporary spirit. Of course, I am pleased that the curator, Hang Chunxiao, and some exhibiting artists, such as Xu Lei and Zhang Jian, are from the China Art Academy, representing our academy's latest achievements of research and discovery in This Field.

For a long time, contemporariness of indigenous culture has been a focus of academic debate and discussion. It is because that along with the comprehensive economic boom of China, on one hand, China enjoys the rapid development of globalization; on the one hand we are also facing the danger of aphasia of local culture. It is an unavoidable issue of this era that how to make the modern transformation of traditional culture in these conflicts. Studies of modern culture indicate: the rise of a country needs not only hard power, but also needs support of soft cultural power. And a country's cultural power is directly from the modern transformation of traditional culture.

We should be aware that globalization does not mean "total westernization", because China is also an integral part of the globalization process, and it should input elements of China, thereby we can regenerate local culture in integration, and become one of the impacting strengths in globalization. This is a strategy of cultural intervention, stressing on local expression in integration. Because only in this way can the local culture become the driving force to influence the development direction of globalization, and play an increasingly important role in the journey of overall rejuvenation of China.

The development of Chinese painting also face above issues. But for a long period of time, there are two fallacies of cultural attitude in the world of fine art: colonial enslavement and nationality solidification. The former is mostly for nihilism, acquiring the identity of the west in the wave of globalization in exchange of shedding their own characteristics; the latter is mostly conservative, resisting the modern transformation opportunity from globalization, resting on its laurels, and falling to exhaustion. I should say that both gestures restrain contemporary Chinese Painting from building its own global strategy, and fail to promote the complete revival of Chinese culture. Historical experience shows that, at any time, the success of a culture is based on local culture, with a tolerant and open strategy to foreign cultures.

This catalogue and related exhibition try to show through their own efforts that besides above-mentioned mis-understanding, there are still many another ways to make modern transformation of Traditional Chinese Painting, one possibility is: using Traditional Chinese Painting as a Basic Language, while stressing on modern transition of expression of contemporary spirit. On them, I see a possibility: Chinese painting can intervene in the pattern of the development of global arts, input Chinese elements to the process of globalization through their oriental attributes, and become one of the powers to influence the development of the art world.

In this regard, I am sincerely pleased and hold great hope.

March 26, 2008
China Art Academy

前言

王文章

中国艺术研究院院长

很高兴，在《幻象·本质——“当代”工笔画之新方向》展览开幕之际，也看到同名画册的出版。这本书及相关展览，让我们看到了用传统工笔画语言表现当代精神的新探索。当然，令我感到欣慰的还有：策展人杭春晓，参展画家徐累、张见等都来自中国艺术研究院，代表了我院洋溢着艺术创新朝气的青年艺术家们在这一艺术方向上探索、研究的最新成果。

长期以来，关于本土文化的当代性问题，一直是学术界争论、探讨的焦点。因为，伴随现代化进程，中国一方面是全球经济一体化带来的高速发展，一方面也面临着本土文化失语的危险。怎样才能在这种矛盾中获得传统文化的现代转型，是我们不可回避的时代命题。现代文化学研究表明：一个国家的崛起除了需要硬实力，还需要文化软实力的支撑。而一个国家的文化软实力，则直接来源于本土文化的现代转型。

我们应该意识到：全球化并不代表“全盘西化”，因为中国也是全球化进程的组成部分，我们应该在这一过程中注入中国元素，从而在融合中实现本土文化的再生，并成为影响全球化进程的力量之一。这种文化介入，强调融合之中的本土表达。因为只有这样，本土文化才能成为影响全球化发展方向的动力，并在中华民族整体复兴的过程中发挥越来越重要的作用。

中国绘画的发展，同样面临上述问题。但相当长的一段时间内，美术界一直存在着两种文化姿态上的误区：殖民性奴化、民族性固化。前者多表现为虚无主义，在全球化浪潮中以消失自我特征为代价，获取融入西方的身份；后者多表现为保守主义，抵制全球化带来的现代转型之契机，固步自封，从而走向衰竭。应该说，这两种姿态都会制约中国当代绘画构建自己的主体艺术体系。历史经验表明，任何时期，文化的实力和影响都是以本土文化为基础，并从对外来文化的兼容、开放中产生。

这本书及其相关展览，正试图以自己的努力表明，在上述误区之外，中国绘画还可以以多种途径实现自己的现代转型，此即一种可能：以本土绘画语言为基础，同时强调当代社会精神表达的现代转型。这些青年艺术家的艺术创造、尝试，呈现着活泼的生命活力，无论从形式到画面传达给我们的文化甚至哲学层面的思考，都让我们感知中国画的艺术魅力与内在精神。我们相信：中国画可以介入世界艺术的发展格局中，并因其东方属性而为全球化进程注入中国元素，从而成为影响世界艺术发展方向的力量之一。

对此，我感到由衷欣慰，并寄以极大希望。

2008年3月26日于中国艺术研究院

Prologue

Angela Lu

CEO & President

Beijing Guardian Online Auctions Co. Ltd.

(www.artrade.com)

The catalogue of *Illusion · Nature — New Trends of “Contemporary” Fine-Line Painting* is finally published after almost a year of preparation.

As the most professional authority in online art business, www.artrade.com is privileged to collaborate with these brilliant artists, and make its own contribution to carrying on traditional forms as well as to exploring the direction of contemporary Fine Brush Painting.

The connection between the market and the academics has always been a hot topic. It seems that this question is investigated from all related aspects, when academic works face the market, or the market accepts academic works. Our hope of this exhibition is that excellent and cutting-edge academic ideas are not in conflict with market. A manifestation of their integration is that generations of so-called “avant-garde” artists have gradually grown from pioneers to mainstays of the art market. More importantly, they and their works have become cultural totems and memories for generation after generation.

Lastly, I would like to acknowledge and thank the talented curator and artists of this exhibition, Chinese Institute of Arts, and Anhui People's Art Publishing House. It is our joint efforts that accomplished our beautiful dreams.

前言

陆 昂

北京嘉德在线拍卖有限公司总裁

经过近一年的准备，《幻象·本质——“当代”工笔画之新方向》的画册终于可以付梓出版了。

作为国内最大的艺术品交易网站，嘉德在线很荣幸能够与参展的一流艺术家合作，在探讨承载着传统形式和当代思考的工笔画方向问题上，做出自己的贡献。

一直以来，市场与学术的关系经常被人们提起，仿佛当学术作品面对市场，或者市场接纳学术作品时，这个问题总在拷问被涉及的方方面面。而我们希望通过展览表达的是，优秀、尖端的学术观点与市场并不矛盾，它们融合具体的表现是一代代被当时判定为前卫的艺术家逐步从时代先锋成为艺术市场的中流砥柱，更重要的是，他们和他们的作品成为了一代又一代人心中的文化图腾和记忆。

感谢才华横溢的策展人和参展艺术家，感谢中国艺术研究院、安徽美术出版社，是大家的共同努力，成就了我们美丽的梦想。

新东方绘画：幻象与精神表达的重建 ——中国工笔画“语意结构”转变中的“当代性”

杭春晓 批评家、策展人

对徐累、张见等新型工笔画的关注，源于我对画史的一个设问：东方绘画语言，有无现代意义上的表达？如果有，怎样才恰当？问题看似简单，答案却很复杂。它涉及东方与西方、古典与现代等诸多因素的混融与碰撞。

试图回答，可能存在两条线索：一、就本土画史来看，现代意义的表达与古典绘画差异何在？二、就世界范围艺术潮流来看，它与全球化语境下的艺术发展有无关联？对架上绘画的“消亡”有无建设性价值？两者中，后者的判断似乎决定了前者的结果。

但有关后者的思考，让我们不得不面对一个尴尬的话题：艺术中心向非架上偏移，架上绘画日渐边缘化，那么采用东方绘画语言的表达，在根本上亦属架上范畴，它与架上绘画的“消亡”是否命运同步？

1. 架上绘画必定走向“消亡”？

这是一个宏大而沉重的话题，它不仅涉及长达百年的艺术史潮流，还隐含了一个抽象的艺术理论问题——“我们应该采用怎样的模式来分析艺术史”？简单说来，就是艺术是什么？它由哪些因素构成？其中，某一因素的改变怎样引导了其它因素的改变，从而产生艺术史的推进？这种推进，为什么在20世纪会出现反架上的倾向？

或许，《草地上的午餐》有助于对上述问题的思考。这件作品对当时画坛的触动给了我们一种启示：让人们不安的裸女出现在《田园交响曲》中，并因此破坏了古典油画“语言”与“语义”的结构稳定。如果，我们将艺术看作是由“语言”、“语义”两个因素组成的“语意结构”，那么马奈的行为无疑以个人化的视角演绎了经典题材，改变原本结构中的语义意象，从而打破了古典油画的结构平衡。对于这种平衡的破坏，我们可以看成：因为社会情绪的改变，马奈不再满足原有“语意结构”中“语言”、“语义”的稳定组合，于是他改变了其中一个因素，并因此获得表达上不同于过去的审美样式。如果，事情仅仅发展到这一步，或许20世纪的艺术史还能相对稳定。然而，“遗憾”的是，马奈提供的审美样式似乎仍然不能满足他的后继者。印象主义继承了马奈对经典油画“语意结构”的破坏，并将破坏深入到这一结构中的色彩“语言”。于是，在科学主义观念的引导下，印象派的“点彩”彻底颠覆了文艺复兴以来经典化的语意结构，以及由此带来的审美样式。然而，“文艺复兴”的噩梦并未因此终结。随着反理性主义思潮的逐渐汹涌，印象派刚刚建立的语意结构又迅速显得那么不合时宜。它的后继者沿着印象派“点彩”的步伐进而破坏了这一结构中的造型“语言”。于是，在强调自我理性表达的观念下，塞尚的“解构主义”造型、野兽派的“东方主义”造型、立体派“四维空间”造型，相继冲击着艺术史不断被破坏又不断被重建的“语意结构”。

在这一过程的描述中，我们看到了一个有趣的“艺术史演进模式”：曾经稳定的“语意结构”，因为某种表达需要而被改变了一个因素，结构的平衡遭到破坏。于是，新的表达需求就更为便捷地介入这一进程，从“语义”因素引导到对于“语言”因素的破坏，而且这种破坏在时间上呈现出了加速度的趋势。于是，不断的解体与重建成为20世纪绘画“语意结构”革命的常态，直至人们发现因为强烈的个人表达需要而要破坏的“语意结构”，已经不再存在可

以破坏的“因素”对象时，这种因破坏而构建的表达欲望便将矛头指向了这一结构存在的根本方式——架上。

当杜尚的小便器堂而皇之地走进美术馆时，由马奈开始的破坏便达到了阶段性的巅峰：经典油画语言与语义表达结构的彻底瓦解。之后，艺术的语义表达似乎获得了脱离语言束缚的自由空间，于是，20世纪现代主义在反理性主义大旗下，完成了自己最伟大的革命。但是，历史似乎开了一个不大不小的玩笑，为了表达自由而破坏的语言体系表面上退出艺术的“语意结构”，但实际上却以另一种不确定的方式走进了艺术表达的过程。也就是说，他们虽然成功“解聘”了架上“语言”，却又立即遭遇了“架下”语言——即便杜尚经典的小便器，现成品本身的选择也是一种语义表达的“语言”！

于是，现代主义也不得不面对一种艺术表达结构上的重建任务——“语义”与“语言”的重组。然而，尴尬的是：当他们痛快地否定原语意结构中的架上语言后，他们不得不重新寻找语言，并且新的“语言”具有极大的模糊性与不稳定性，从而难以确定新的稳定的结构体系。于是，他们只能延续一直以来的“破坏”方向，在“非架上”的表达中不断否定曾经的“语言”而寻找新的“语言”。因为无法提供相对稳定的语意结构，现代主义运动留给我们永远革命的印象，一直处于不断尝试新的“语言”而获取新的“语义”的过程中。表面上看，这对于艺术的终极目标——“表达人的存在”具有无限拓宽的可能性。但同时，这种无限可能中也隐含了一种危险：艺术概念的自我消解。因为不断尝试而导致的艺术语言生活化，最终导致了艺术与生活界限的消失。于是，当“激浪运动”振臂“人人都是艺术家”时，艺术存在的价值也就自然消逝。因为如果人人都是艺术家，那么艺术就成为日常生活，而不再是具有特定精神表达价值的文化形态了。

现在，我们可以回到“架上绘画必定走向‘消亡’”上了。这一命题的产生源自20世纪艺术“语意结构”在破坏中走向不稳定状态下的产物，古典状态下偏向意象表达的“语义”被一种强烈的观念“语义”取代。人们不断寻求着更为直接、个体化的认知表达，并因此舍弃传统语意结构中的架上方式。于是，“架上绘画必定走向了消亡”。然而，在这一过程中，激进运动的艺术家忽略了一种可能：并非一定要舍弃架上语言，才能进行新的艺术表达。也就是说，在不破坏架上语言载体的前提下，经过重新调整的语言是可以融入新的表达需求中，并因此提供新的结构，而无需在不断的新的语言载体中重复破坏与重构的“宿命”，甚至是消解艺术独立存在的价值。就此而论，所谓架上绘画的“消亡”只是现代主义不断摧毁经典语意结构的逻辑结论，并非艺术史的事实。即便现代主义运动的高潮中，架上绘画仍以语言调整为方式来尝试新的语义表达。并且，现代主义在“语义”表达上不断的突破，也为这种尝试拓展了精神表达的空间。诸如德国新表现主义，正是将传统表现主义语言与新的观念表达重组，并以此构建结构平衡的成功尝试。

经过现代主义结构性破坏的革命，艺术面对的表达空间与价值指向，相对经典绘画的表达更为开阔，并因此可以更自由地选择“语言”、“语义”的平衡点。或许，这正是现代主义反架上运动，却能成为架上绘画发展新的契机的原因所在。从这一角度理解，现代主义尝试的各种语义表达，都可以在架上方式中重新寻找

语言的连接、组合。那么，经过现代主义表达之后的“语言”、“语义”的重建，绝非重回经典绘画的结构平衡，而是20世纪不稳定的现代主义表达获得稳定“语意结构”的机会。当然，这个机会更是架上绘画的——“语义”表达的拓展引发“语言”适应的调整，并因此重建艺术表达上的结构体系与审美样式。不过，这次变化和马奈以来的尝试有所差异，因为“语言”因素已经成为了我们需要强调的因素，而不再是能够被忽视、甚至“舍弃”！

2. 东方绘画语言怎样介入当代？

架上绘画并未死亡，相对非架上，它正面临着一种机会——重构稳定的艺术“语意结构”。其关键，在于绘画语言需要重新介入到表达中！然而，这一结论与我所关心的这批工笔画又存在着怎样的联系？表面上看，两者缺乏联系，工笔画是东方抒情意象表达的绘画手段，与世界性的艺术运动似乎没有关联。但换一个角度，如果把工笔画置于世界艺术格局中，它属于架上绘画的大范畴，那么，它就与我们所说的结论发生关系了。

这里，存在着一个简单的逻辑推断：因为工笔画属于架上绘画的一种类型，而架上绘画存在着重构稳定表达的“语意结构”的机会，故而，工笔画也就存在着这种可能性。但是，这一推断在前提上隐含了一个悬念：东方绘画语系与以西方为中心的现代艺术本是两种艺术的“语意结构”系统，它们之间存在着互通的交集吗？思考这一问题，日本的东山魁夷给了我很大启示。或可以说，东山魁夷为世界艺术提供的独具东方语汇神秘、宁静气质的现代审美样式，正是东方绘画语言介入世界艺术“语意结构”重建的成功案例。也就是说，在现代绘画“语义”、“语言”互动的演进史中，并不排斥东方语言的介入，它们之间存在着视觉方式上融合的可能。如果将问题还原到“艺术是什么”上考虑，似乎会更简明一些。因为艺术是借用一定的语言形式，表达特定的关于“人的精神”的语义指向。那么，虽然东西方绘画语言因为文化隔离，在各自的历史逻辑中形成方式上的差异，但它们作为“语义”表达的手段存在则是一致的。故而在文化交流状态下，当“人的精神”表达具有趋同性时，两者便有着嫁接、互动的可能。其演进过程，也存在着元素相结合的状态，诸如造型趣味、色彩经验乃至“语义表达”等等，并因此产生新的绘画风格。尤其当不同体系的绘画经验碰撞时，更是如此。当然，这种描述仅是针对一种可能性。这种可能性，在中国当代画坛有无内在需求以及怎样具体实现，则是另外的问题。

那么，类似东山魁夷这样的“语意结构”在中国当代有无产生的内在需求？回答这个问题，还要回到我们一直强调的“艺术的本质是借用一定的语言形式，表达特定的关于‘人的精神’的语义指向”上。为什么呢？因为如果中国画既有的“语意结构”能够满足当代“人的精神”的表达，那么我们就没有必要改变这种结构。但反之，就存在改变的必要。我们知道，中国画经典的“语意结构”——以水墨线条、渲染及勾勒、敷色为中心的笔墨语言，表达以文人理想为中心的语义指向，强调在人自然存在状态下对物我的平静体验，往往带有意象化抒情特征。这样的“语意结构”，更契合节奏缓慢的自然主义状态下的精神表达。但在工业化乃至后工业化的今天，反自然主义的物质利用，导致人的精神存在与物质世界

容易发生冲撞与不适应，而不再是和谐状态下的共存。因此，人的反思容易在对立的物我关系中强调自我精神“孤独的深刻”，并往往因为这种“深刻”的无解而产生困惑、怀疑、否定、颓废、虚无、悲观、幻灭等理性体验，乃至自我虚构的理性满足。它不具有群体理想主义稳定的精神指向，而多带有个体化不稳定的精神特质。对这种“人的精神”，意象化抒情方式的“语意结构”很难获得满意的表达效果。虽然，我们不能说这样的“人的精神”就是今天生活的全部，或许古典状态下“物我”平静体验的精神状态在一定程度上有所保留，但谁都会承认它绝对不是今天“人的精神”的主流。那么，这种“人的精神”主流的改变，必然要求中国画出现一种调整，以适应新生的语义表达。因为只有这样，才能保证我们所说的艺术本质。但，充斥当代的中国画主流却仍然采用过去的“语意结构”，与我们所认可的它的“非主流”地位相互矛盾。这种矛盾说明了什么？或许，它说明当代中国画的发展遗忘了它作为艺术存在的价值与责任，在很大程度上成为古典艺术的吊唁、重复。即便这种吊唁的形式极为精彩，那也仅是一种手工艺层面上的绘画，而非艺术。这样的判断也许过于尖刻，但却是今日国画家大多仅是画家而非艺术家之现状的合理解释。

也就是说，在全球化的今天，在东西方人因交流而生活状态趋同，精神方式也趋同的今天，用东方绘画语言介入现代语义的表达，不仅是能够丰富世界范围内架上绘画之“语意结构”重建的手段，也是中国画自身适应当代社会表达的内在要求。当代中国画需要一种新的“语意结构”，类似东山魁夷路线的新的审美样式。或许，这正是我之所以关注徐累、张见、姜吉安、徐华翎、崔进、陈林、雷苗、高茜、杭春晖、郑庆余等一批新型工笔画家的原因所在。这批画家采用中国工笔画语言，却尝试着一种不同于传统中国画的语义表达。他们或从自我精神状态的反思出发，或借鉴当代艺术的表达样式，从而形成“语言”、“语义”连接上的重新组合，并构建了新的中国画的“语意结构”。面对这批作品，我们很容易发现这种语义表达上的特点——有别古典精神吊唁的中国画的精神质地。他们多采用反自然状态下的情境虚构，表达个体的理性体验。其图像方式往往具有主观营造的特点，受超现实主义、观念图式等现代艺术的影响，试图在虚构的图像经验中表达个人化的认知、判断，具有某种观念的隐喻性或象征性。

这种图像虚构在他们的画面中大致可以分为三个类型：文本观念虚构、场景情节虚构、语言表意虚构。当然，上述划分是相对的，三种虚构在一件作品中并生的现象也时常有之。大致说来，文本观念虚构多采用语义预设的方式，借助某种文本概念、经典图像以及观念样式营造具有脚本性质的图像幻境。如徐累《路易威登的迷失》，一个时尚品牌的概念在明式椅子的经典图像、遮蔽的床沿与切割空间甚至暗示路易威登经典标志“LV”的墙体中，共同营造出虚幻的现代精神世界。在这个世界中，古典与现代、经典与流行在错乱的空间陈列中再现了一种怀疑与虚无的现代理性感受。其中，所谓的路易威登与其说是画面内容，不如说是虚幻图像的文学脚本。另如姜吉安的《恍兮惚兮NO.1》，源自《道德经》对“道”的描绘概念，被附加于丝网遮蔽中的石膏几何体与古典家具上，光线变化的微妙呈现，隐喻了画家内心深处冷静的困惑与迷惘；杭春晖的《失乐园》，以亚当、夏娃的经典传说为本文，在象征男性的

熊、沉思的女人、蛇与餐盘、苹果的组合中，鲜红与黑白的色彩对比象征着一种无助、压抑的情绪；郑庆余的《逝去的青春——摇曳》，以时间中的“物是人非”为语义假设，生命体的透明与物质世界的对比暗示了画家内心无奈、苦涩的生命感受。

场景情节虚构受到超现实主义主观营造方式的影响，多在时空逻辑的矛盾中呈现一种精神反思。如张见的《桃色》，人物向下倒垂的场景中，画家正面俯视的角度与配景的石块、桃花形成空间表达上的矛盾，并进而造成一种不稳定的虚幻场境。饱和、暧昧的色彩强化了这种不稳定的矛盾，象征着一种现代诱惑与不安全感的心里体验；高茜的《忧郁症》，以大于瓶颈的鱼与瓶子的空间组合，体现了一种逻辑上的矛盾，并因这种矛盾而暗示着一种欲罢不能、困惑而不自由的现代情绪；陈林的《困惑·疑》在镜子的辅助下，以一个“寻找”的情节设置，将两个状态下的空间进行矛盾组合，错乱的视觉感受隐含了画家内心深处彷徨、失落的困惑；秦艾的《走出非洲》将动物的活动场景，置换为由马赛克与迷宫墙组合出的迷幻空间，长颈鹿拟人化的企望背影与短促孤独的投影，营造了一个画家自我迷惘、期待的心理经验。

与上述两种虚构相比，语言表意虚构并不注重文本或场景语义的预设，而更在意语言的虚化所呈现出的一种虚幻的镜头感，并以此烘托某种情绪的表达。如崔进的《黄昏》，成团状构成的少女们被一种沉闷、灰暗的色彩氛围所笼罩，隐约透出的白粉与黑暗虚幻的色彩构成强烈的语言对比，带有悲剧感的精神压抑成为画面语义的表达中心；徐华翎的《依然美丽》在造型原则上遵从写实化基本方式，但在色彩语言的运用上，却模糊了对象的实体感，块面化的色彩斑驳赋予人物一种虚幻情境中的视觉感受，隐含了一种不可靠而虚无的精神体验；雷苗的《叠加的器皿·十》在日常的视觉经验中，提取器皿的质地与形态，进行一种光影、色彩的语言转换，在细腻的语言节奏中赋予对象妥帖的主观感受，形成一种虚幻的优雅与华丽。

应该说，无论这些画家采用了哪种虚构的手段，他们的作品都共同呈现出游离现实感受，追求主观、个体化观念表达的图像精神。他们虚幻的图像经验，是现代生活状态下“人的精神”在不同层面上的视觉营造。其虚幻影像的背后，是画家对传统抒情意象的“语意结构”的不满足，并尝试新的“语义”表达。而正是这种尝试，促使这批画家的作品摆脱了经典中国画“语言”、“语义”的连接，犹如马奈转换古典油画的语义表达一样，预示着一种旧的审美样式获得重新表达的机会。我们前文曾述，现代生活中“人的精神”的转变，要求中国画改变陈旧的语意结构，否则它就只能成为手工艺品，而非艺术。那么，这批工笔画家对传统工笔画语意结构的改变，正是从一个新的角度拓展了中国画表达现实精神的能力，从而有望重构一种“语意结构”，并实现一种“审美样式”的转换。相对于近三十年来中国画领域中出现的新文人画、都市水墨、实验水墨等话题，这批工笔画家以图像营造为中心进行中国画语言形式与现代语义结合的尝试，在意图与结果上都似乎更加明确。

就上述而言，如果我们能够认可这批画家，在某种程度上代表了工笔画“当代性”的方向。原因有两点：一、他们的作品获得了表达现代精神状态的可能性，使得中国画可以重新在艺术的层面上展开讨论，而不是一种手工艺品的讨论；二、艺术史的演进取决

于新的“语意结构”的出现，它在时间纬度上的“当代性”体现在新旧“语意结构”过渡与转折的过程中，而这批工笔画家，无疑正处于这样的过程中。

3. 介入“当代”的东方语汇有无独特的建设价值？

然而，前文的讨论中，还保留了一个疑问：这批工笔画家实现的新语义表达，受到了已有的现代艺术的影响，那么他们的价值是否会遭受怀疑？答案，是否定的。正如东山魁夷，日本画语言介入到表达中后，一种神秘、含蓄而宁静的感观表现是油画语言所无法取代的。而这种不可取代的视觉感受，则导致了东山魁夷的表达在精神指向上不同于油画，并因此获了得全新的“语意结构”。应该说，这批工笔画家也有着类似的特征。他们依靠工笔画层层渲染的方式塑造形象，其语言在表意过程中具有一种“间接性”，故而表达效果与油画的笔触或平涂完全不同。这种内敛、含蓄，在视觉效果上具有深邃、迷幻等特征的语言质地，与他们画面中隐喻、象征的语义目标极为吻合。

于是，一个有趣的现象出现了：如果把这批工笔画转换为其它绘画语言，即便是完全一样的图像，也不再具有原来画面中特定的氛围与气质，在隐喻、象征的结果上会大打折扣。甚至，会因为语言表意的“直接性”而丧失这种隐喻、象征的表达效果。也就是说，这批工笔画的语言已经成为语义表达的有机组成部分，并因此具备了不同于其他画种的“语意结构”。这也是我们在光怪陆离的现代艺术中，能够发现这批工笔画具有一种别样气质的原因所在。

按照这种方式理解，将这批画家比较于当代艺术，无论是方力均那样强调图式的，还是尹朝阳这样强调语言的画家，我们都会发现一种独具价值的精神表达效果。他们没有上述画家那种直接的图像力度，却具有另外一种沉静的思想表达。而这，正得益于东方绘画语言宁静、舒缓的表达特征。我们在他们的画面中，看不到其它当代艺术中常见的不安与动荡，虽然他们也在表达着当代人灵魂深处的某种矛盾、冲突，但在表达效果上却将之消解于某种理性主义的安详与宁静中，带有哲学化的修辞特点。从这个意义上说，在当代中国画坛上，他们不属于我们习惯理解中特定的“当代艺术”的范畴，而是一种新的能够表达“当代”的艺术。并且，相对“西化”潮流下特定概念的“当代艺术”，他们是更能代表中国的“当代艺术”。

这样一种论述，并不是为了否定习惯认知下的“当代艺术”的价值，而是为了指出——实现当代语义表达的可能性是多种多样的，西画语言可以完成一种架上绘画“语意结构”的重建，中国画语言同样能够达到。我在前文曾指出：“工笔画属于架上绘画的一种类型，而架上绘画存在着重构稳定表达的“语意结构”的机会，故而，工笔画也就存在着这种可能性”，正是基于这样的认识与判断。如果，我们将这种认识、判断置于世界艺术发展的视野中，我们可以大致这样描述他们的价值：东方绘画语言作为与西方绘画语言并置的图像表现手段，同样具备表达当代精神的能力。并且，这种表达能力的发现，极大丰富了架上绘画重建稳定“语意结构”的空间，并且有助于在现代主义瓦解了艺术概念的经典范畴之后，重新确立“因语言而存在表达”的艺术概念。

当然，在讨论这批工笔画家的时候，出于叙述的方便，我曾

以日本的东山魁夷为路线、方向的例证，那么这批工笔画家与东山魁夷之间又具体存在着怎样的异同呢？毫无疑问，两者都属于东方绘画语言介入现代“人的精神”表达的案例，并且都因为东方绘画语言宁静、舒缓的表达特征而具备一种沉静的画面效果。但是，他们在表达现代精神的角度上却稍有差异：东山魁夷用东方绘画语言，表达了现代社会因动荡而产生的对于神秘主义的宁静、优雅的向往，虽然是一种现代语义范畴的表达，但却没有直接面对现代精神。而这批工笔画家则是直接面对现代精神中某种困惑、彷徨的精神体验，他们不是用画面呈现的希望来消解精神苦涩，而是将之转换为具有隐喻、象征色彩的理性反思。这一点，是东山魁夷不曾具有的。

最后，有一点需要补充，或者说是前文刻意回避了一个问题：关于架上绘画死亡与否的讨论，在今天并非一个新鲜的话题了，因为二十世纪八十年代德国“新表现主义”、法国“新具像主义”与意大利的“超前卫”艺术已经采用后现代的方式给予了答案：在现代主义消解艺术概念的确定性后，重归架上传统，发掘“传统”的“现代”表达能力，以对经典的复制、嫁接、组合以及重构来重建艺术的稳定概念。而这一特征，从某种角度上看，也正是这批工笔画家艺术表达上的方向——他们发掘传统工笔画语言的现代表意能力，借助经典物象重新构建的虚幻场景，在带有哲学化修辞的表达中，隐喻、象征了现代精神中某种碰撞、矛盾或困惑、虚无、颓废之类的精神状态，从而以东方的绘画方式解决了现代主义到后现代主义在绘画中的转换。如果依照这样的观念，我们或可以称这批工笔画为“新东方绘画”——一种中国绘画传统中衍生出的后现代方式。

但是，对于这样一个判断，我在前文还是因为某种谨慎的担心而加以了回避：后现代主义是与复杂性、多样性交融的概念，具有“反归纳”的思辨特征，与现代主义并非前后更替的概念，甚至在一定程度上具有共生性与混同性。在反“二元对立”中认为任何“命名”都存在凝固对象的危险的后现代主义思想中，我们不能因为这批工笔画借用了的某些策略性方法——如复制、摹仿、解构等，就给予简单的归纳、定性，因为这样做很容易会走向庸俗化的后现代主义陷阱中，而忽视了后现代主义强调的对“人的精神”进行多样性阐释的根本思想。甚至会因此而遭受某种误读，并被再次简单归纳、定性为“后殖民主义”。所以，在论述中，我更倾向于采用一种新的“语意结构”的分析方法来探讨在“语言”、“语义”互动的艺术史演进过程中，这批工笔画运用传统东方绘画语言、资源来编织、营造幻象图景并拓展现代性“语义表达”的努力，以及这种努力对于整个架上绘画复兴的价值、意义。并因此而注重东方绘画语言在这种表达中所具有的不可替代性，以及由此带来的有别于西方后现代主义绘画的“语意结构”。我想，这种“语意结构”，称之为“新东方绘画”是有效的。

当然，我们虽然不能强调此类绘画就是中国的后现代主义，但认为这批工笔画所代表的“新东方绘画”，和西方“新表现主义”、“新具像主义”、“超前卫”艺术一样，与后现代思潮具有某种不可否认的联系，则是恰当而准确的。

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**"New Oriental Painting": Illusions and the
Reconstruction of Spiritual Expression
— the "Contemporariness" of the Changing Chinese
Fine Brush Painting "Semantic Structure"**

Hang Chunxiao Critic and Curator

My interest of Xu Lei, Zhang Jian, and other new types of Fine Brush Painting is originated from my question to art history: does the language of Oriental painting have an expression in the modern sense? If it has, how to be appropriate? This question seems simple, the answer is complicated though. It's about the merge and clash of the east and the west, the classical and the modern.

In search of the answer, there could be two clues: first, according to Chinese art history, what's the difference between modern expression and classical paintings? Second, according to the trend in art world, does it relate to the development of arts in its globalized context? Does it have constructive value to the "disappearing" of easel painting? In those two, it seems that the judgment of the latter decides the results of the former.

However, reflecting on the latter, we have to face an embarrassing topic: the centre of art is shifting to non-easel painting, while easel painting is becoming marginalized. Therefore, since the expression of Oriental painting language basically still belongs to easel painting, is it going to have a synchronizing fate of the "disappearing" of easel painting?

1、Will easel painting "disappear"?

It is an open and serious topic, which is not only about the a-century-old development of art history, but also implies an abstract theory issue—"what kind of model should we use to analyze art history"? To be simpler, what is art? What basic elements does it consist of? Among them, how does the change of one element affect others and thus push art history to evolve? This push, why has a tendency of anti-easel painting in the 20th century?

Perhaps, Manet's *the Picnic* can help us on above questions. Its influence on the art world then gives us a clue: the disturbing nudes appeared in the *Pastoral Symphony*, and therefore undermined the "language" and "semantic" stable structure of classical painting. If, as we consider art as a "language structure" formed by two elements—"semantic" and "language", thus undoubtedly, Manet's action was a personal interpretation of classical subject. It changed the semantic image of the original structure, breaking the balance of the structure of classical oil paintings. For this undermining, we can take it as: for the changes of social moods, Manet was no longer satisfied with the original stable structure of "semantic" and "language" in the "language structure", so he changed one of the elements, thus he obtained an aesthetic pattern different from before. If it had stopped here, perhaps the art history of 20th century could be relatively stable. However, "regrettably", it seems that the aesthetic pattern provided by Manet cannot satisfy his successors. Impressionism carried on Manet's damage to "language structure", and furthered into the color "language". Therefore, guided by the concept of science, pointillism by Impressionism completely subverted the classical "language structure" since the Renaissance and the aesthetic pattern thereafter. However, the

nightmare of Renaissance did not end. Since anti-rationalism raging gradually, the semantic structure established by Impressionists quickly became outdated. Its followers marched along Impressionist "pointillism" and further broke its structure "language". Therefore, under the concept of on rational self-expression, "Deconstructionism" of Cézanne's, "Orientalism" of Fauvist, and "4-D space" of Cubist impacted one by one on art history's "semantic structure", which was undermined rebuilt constantly.

Here we noticed an interesting "evolution model of art history": once a "semantic structure" was stable, because an element had changed to some need, then balance of the structure was broken. Therefore, a demand of new expression gets involved easily in this process, from leading the "semantic" element to destroying, and this destroying turns to accelerate. Hence, constant disintegration and reconstruction has become a normal state of the revolution of the "semantic structure" of paintings in 20th century. Until people realized that they have a strong need for personal expression to destroy the "semantic structure", but no more "element" to destroy, they turned their desire to the fundamental means of this structure—easel.

When Duchamp's urinal grandly presented in a fine arts museum, Manet's destruction reached the peak of that time: the language of classical oil paintings express and semantic structure crumbled down. Thereafter, the semantic expression of art seemed to break into being a free space without any shackle of language, therefore, modernism in the 20th century completed its great revolution under the banner of anti-rationalism. However, history seemed to play a joke—the withering "semantic structure" was entering the process artist expression in an uncertain way. In other words, although they "fired" on-easel language successfully, they immediately encountered "off-easel language"—even Duchamp's classical urinals, the choice of the ready-made itself is a semantic expression of "Language"!

Thus, modernism has to face the task of reconstructing the structure of artist expression—the reconstruction of "semantics" and "language". However, the embarrassment is: after they abruptly denied on-easel language of the original semantic structure, they had to search new language, and the new "language" was blurry and uncertain, which made it difficult to identify a stable structure system. Therefore, they can only follow the "destroying" direction, denying the old "language" constantly in the "off-easel language" in search of new "language". Unable to provide a relatively stable semantic structure, the modernism movement leaves us an ever-revolutionary impression—unceasingly in the process of trying new "language" for acquiring new "semantic". Seemingly, this ultimate goal of art, "to express our being", has unlimited possibilities. But at the same time, these endless possibilities also embed a risk: dissolving of art concept. The constant exploration made art more like life, which eventually demolished the boundary of art and life.

So when "Fluxus movement" shouted out "everybody is an artist", the value of art is fading away naturally. Because if everyone is an artist, art will become everyday life, no longer as a cultural pattern to express specific spiritual values.

Now we can go back to the topic of "easel paintings will disappear". This subject was originated from "semantic structure's" moving toward instability through its destruction in the 20th century, while classical imagery "semantic" was replaced by a strong concept of "semantic". People constantly look for a more direct and individual expression of awareness, therefore we abandon easel paintings of the traditional semantic structure. Therefore, "easel paintings will disappear". However, in this process, the artists of radical movements overlook a possibility: it might be not necessary to give up the language of easel paintings for a new artistic expression. In other words, under the premise of keeping the language of easel paintings, the re-adjusted language can be incorporated with the new needs of expression, and thus provide a new structure, without having to repeat the "fate" of destroying and reconstructing, or even dissolving the independent value of art. In this sense, the so-called "demise" of easel painting is only a logical conclusion of modernism's destruction of the classical semantic structure, not a fact of art history. Even during the climax of modernism movement, easel paintings still tried new semantic expressions through adjusting language. Moreover, modernism makes constant breakthroughs in "semantic" expressions, as well as expands the space for the spiritual expression of this attempt. For instance, Neo-Expressionism in Germany reconstructed the language of traditional Expressionism and new concept of expression, and rebuilt a balanced structure successfully.

After the revolution of breaking Modernism structure, art faces more open expression of value, compared with classical paintings, and therefore it can choose the balance between "language" and "semantic" more freely. Perhaps, this is the reason that Modernism movement of anti-easel painting has fostered the development of new semantic structure and aesthetic pattern for easel paintings. From this perspective, all the semantic expressions Modernism tried can be connected and combined in approaches of easel paintings. Therefore, the reconstruction of "language" and "semantic" after Modernism expression is not a return to the balance structure of classical painting, but an opportunity for the unstable Modernism in the 20th century to achieve a stable "semantic structure". Apparently, this is an opportunity for easel painting too—the development of "semantic" expression triggered the adjustments of "language", and therefore reconstructed artistic structure systems and aesthetic patterns. However, this change is different from the explorations after Manet, because "language" has become a factor that needs to be stressed on, and no longer can be ignored, or even "abandoned"!

2、How can the language of Oriental painting involve in the contemporary?

Therefore, easel painting is not dead, compared with the off-easel painting, but faces an opportunity—to reconstruct a stable artistic "semantic structure." The key is painting language needs to return to expression! Nonetheless, what is the connection between this Fine Brush Painting show I'm interested at and this conclusion? Seemingly, these two don't have much connection—Fine Brush Painting is an eastern approach to expression lyrical image, without any relation with the art movement worldwide. However, from another perspective, if we put the Fine Brush Painting in the art world, it belongs to the easel painting domain, thus it has connections with our conclusion.

Here is a simple logic inference: since Fine Brush Painting is a type of easel painting, and easel painting has the opportunity to reconstruct a stable expression of the "semantic structure", hence, Fine Brush Painting has this possibility too. However, this inference implies a suspense: Oriental painting language system and modern art with the west as the center are two "semantic structure" systems, do they have any connecting intersection? Thinking over this issue, Japanese painter Kaii Higashiyama gave me great inspirations. Or I shall say, Higashiyama brought the world of art a modern aesthetic style, which has a unique mysterious and tranquil oriental vocabulary. It is a successful case quite temperament of the, Oriental painting is the world language arts intervention "semantic structure," the success of eastern painting language got involved in the reconstruction of the "semantic structure" of the world art. In other words, the modern painting, in the evolution of modern art history with "semantic" and "language" interacting with each other, oriental language is not excluded; it is possible for them to merge. If we retrieve the question of "what is art", the inquiry could be more concise. Because art is a semantic direction to express specific "human spirit", using certain form of language. Then, although due to cultural isolation, the east and the west painting languages have different forms based on their own historical logic, they have the same means of "semantic" expressions. Therefore, in cultural exchanges, when the expression of "human spirit" is close, these two have the possibility of grafting and interacting. In its evolution, different elements can be integrated, such as modeling tastes, color experience, even "semantic expression", and so on, and therefore generating a new painting style. Especially when painting experiences based on different systems encounter. Of course, this description is only for one possibility. It is another issue that whether contemporary Chinese painting has this internal possibility and how to achieve it.

Then, does contemporary Chinese painting have the internal needs of this type of "semantic structure" like Kaii Higashiyama's? To answer this question, we have to go back to what we always stress on—"the essence art is to use a language

form to express specific 'human spirit'". Why? Because since Chinese painting has "semantic structure" to meet the expression needs of contemporary "human spirit", then we don't have to change this structure. But on the contrary, change is a must. We know the "semantic structure" of classical Chinese painting—the ink and brush language is centered with lines with water and ink, wash, outlines, and coloring, while its central semantic direction is to express to the ideal of literati, and stress on serene experience of people's naturally being, both in the inner and outer worlds. It turns to feature a lyrical imagery. Such "semantic structure" is more suitable for the spirit of expression under a slow pace of the naturalism being. However, in this industrial or even post-industrial age of today, the material exploitation of anti-naturalism causes conflict and unease of the spirit being and the material world, no longer a coexistence in harmony. Therefore, people incline to reflect the conflicts between of oneself and the material world, stressing on the "lonely profoundness". Usually, this profoundness can't reach a solution and bring up confusion, doubt, denial, decadence, pessimistic, emptiness, and other rational experience, and even make up a rational satisfaction for oneself. It does not have a stable spiritual direction of collective idealism, but more with unstable characters of personal spirit. It is hard to express this "human spirit" with an approach of lyrical imagery of "semantic structure". Although, we can not say that our life today is all about "human spirit", perhaps there are still some mental experiences of the peaceful "material-me" remain, no one will agree it is the mainstream of "human spirit" today. Hence, this change of "human spirit" calls on an adaptation of Chinese painting to the new semantic expression. Because only in this way can we ensure essence of art that we talked about.

However, the mainstream contemporary Chinese paintings are still using the old "semantic structure", against its "non-mainstream" status we recognized. What does this contradiction illuminate? Probably, it implies the development of contemporary Chinese painting has forgotten its value and responsibility existing as an art form. In a large sense, it has become a condolence and repetition of classical art. Even the form of condolence in extremely exciting, it is still painting in a hand craft level, rather than art. Such a judgment might be too sharp, it is reasonable explanation of why most of the artists today are painters rather than artists.

In other words, in our era of globalization, because the east and the west have more and more exchange, our life as well as spiritual means share more in common; Oriental painting language gets involved in the modern semantic expression, it can not only enrich the reconstruction means of the "semantic structure" of easel painting worldwide, it is also an internal need of Chinese painting itself to adapt to contemporary social development. Namely, contemporary Chinese painting needs a new "semantic structure", similar to Kaii Higashiyama's aesthetic style. Perhaps

this is why I pay close attention to Xu Lei, Zhang Jian, Jiang Ji'an, Xu Hualing, Cui Jin, Chen Lin, Lei Miao, Gao Qian, Hang Chunhui, Zheng Qingyu and other new Fine Brush Painters. They apply the language of Fine Brush Painting, but try semantic expressions different from traditional Chinese painting. They either start from the spiritual self-reflection, or borrow expression patterns of contemporary art, forming a new connection of "language" and "semantic", and building a new "semantic structure" of Chinese Painting. Look at their works, we can easily find this characteristics of semantic expression—different from the spirit of Chinese painting's condolence to classical spirit. Most of them choose anti-natural and fictitious situation to express rational individual experience. Their images are often created with a subjective manner, influenced by Surrealism, Schema concept, and other modern art. They try to convey personal cognition and judgment through fictional images, with metaphor or symbol of certain concept.

There are three types of their made-up images: fiction of text concept, fiction of plot scene, and fiction of language meaning. Obviously, the above categorization is relative, it's common that all the three work together in one piece. Generally speaking, fiction of text concept often applies default semantics, borrows certain text concept, classical imagery, and concept pattern to create a script-like image Dreamland. For example, in Xu Lei's *Bewildered Louis Vuitton*, a fashion brand is mixed with Ming-style chairs, covered bed edge, divided space, and wall implying the classical logo of "LV". All these together create a fantasy of modern spiritual world. In this world, traditional and modern, classical and fashion represent a modern rational idea of suspicion and emptiness in the disordered space. Among them, the so-called Louis Vuitton is rather an illusory image of literary script than a visual content. Another such as Jiang Ji'an *Trance No.1* is based on the concept of Dao from *Dao De Jing*. Plaster objects and classical furniture shielded by wire screen, subtle change of light are all metaphors of the cool, confused and perplexed heart of the painter. Hang Chunhui's *Paradise Lost* uses the classic tale of Adam and Eve. Bear, which is a symbol of male, meditating woman, snake and plate, and apple form a combination. The contrast of bright red and black-and-white symbolizes a helpless and depressing feeling. Zheng Qingyu uses the "vicissitudes of time" as a semantic assumptions in his *Elapsed Youth—Swinging*; contrast of the transparency of life and the material world reveals the artist's helpless and bitter feeling of life.

Fiction of plot scene is affected by surrealistic way of setting, presenting spiritual reflection through logical contradictions in time and space. For instance, in Zhang Jian's *Peach Color*, figures are hanging up set down, thus the artist's overlooking the perspective, rocks and peach blossom in the scene compose a conflict, thus it creates a shaky illusory setting. Saturated and ambiguous colors reinforce this unstable contradiction, symbolizing of a spiritual experience of modern temptation and insecurity. In Gao Qian's *Melancholia*, a

bottle and a fish larger than the bottleneck form a space combination, representing a logical contradiction, which also implies a modern mood of failing to give up, confusing, and restriction. In Chen Lin's *Trapped in · Doubt*, with help of the mirror, *searching* is set as the plot, spaces under two circumstances build a conflict combination. This visual disorder portrays a straying and confusing heart of the artist. In Qin Ai's *Out of Africa*, the scene of animal activities is replaced by a fantastic space of mosaics and wall of maze. The impersonated expecting back of giraffe and its short shadow create a self-bewildered and expecting mental experience of the artist.

Compared with above two fictions, fiction of language is not focused on the setting of script or semantic scenes, but a false sense of camera shot through blurred language. Take Cui Jin's *Dusk* as an example, round-shaped girls shrouded with dull and gray colors, building a strong language contrast with the looming illusionary colors of white and black. A tragic sense of suppression has become an expression center. Xu Hualing's *Still Beautiful* follows the basic realism principle of forms, but in the application of color language, it blurs the object entities. Mottled color blocks bring the figures a visual illusion, hiding an unreliable and empty spiritual experience. Lei Miao's *Piled Containers 10* is based on daily visual experience. The artist extracts the texture and shape of containers and facilitates language conversion between light, shadow, and color. In a delicate rhythm of the language, the artist gives proper subjective understanding to the objects, building a false elegance and brilliance.

I shall say, regardless of the fictitious means these artists applied, all of their works show feelings sliding away from the reality. They pursue subjective and individual spirit of images. Their experience of illusory image is visual creations of "human spirit" in modern life at different levels. Behind the illusory image, it is artists' un-satisfaction of traditional lyrical imagery of "semantic structure", and their experiments of new "semantic" expression. It is because of their experiments that they broke the link of "language" and "semantic" of classical Chinese painting. Just like Manet switched the semantic expression of classical paintings, it foreshows an old aesthetic style regains expression opportunities. As I stated before, the change of "human spirit" in modern life requires changes of old semantic structure in Chinese painting, otherwise, it would only be crafts, not art. Therefore, the change of semantic structure of Fine Brush Painting by these artists expands the capacity of Chinese Painting to represent the spirit of realities. Therefore it is hopeful to reconstruct a "semantic structure", and to realize a conversion of "aesthetic style". Compared with new literati paintings, urban ink and brush painting, experimental ink and brush painting in the past 30 years of Chinese painting, the works of this exhibition are focused on images building to experiment incorporating language forms Chinese painting with modern semantics, seemingly more clear in both intent and result.

To sum up the above, if we can accept these artists, to some extent, it represents "modernity" direction of Fine Brush Painting, for two reasons: first, their works gained the possibility to express modern spirit, and enabled the discussion of Chinese Painting on the level of art, rather than craft; Second, evolution of art history depends on the arising of new "semantic structure", its "contemporariness" is represented in the process of transition and change of the new and old "semantic structures". Doubtless, these Fine Brush painters are all in this process.

3. Any unique constructive value of eastern vocabulary that involved in "Contemporary"?

However, I saved one doubt in the discussions before: This group of Fine Brush painter realized new semantic expressions, which are influenced by modern art, is their value doubtful? The answer is no. Just like Kaii Higashiyama, after Japanese painting language got involved in expression, a mysterious, subtle and quiet sense of presentation is irreplaceable by any oil language. This irreplaceable visual experience led Higashiyama to the spiritual expression different from oil painting, and therefore gained new "semantic structure". This group of Fine Brush painter share similar characteristics too. They rely on the layer technique of Fine Brush to build image. Their language is "indirect", and therefore its effect is completely different from coloring and brushwork of oil paintings. It is implicitly and introverted, while its visual effect has a profound and illusory language texture. It highly coincides with the semantic goal of metaphor and symbol.

Hence it comes an interesting phenomenon: if the language of these Fine Brush paintings is converted to any other language, even if the image is identical, the original atmosphere and temperament will be lost, the effect of metaphor and symbol greatly reduced. Even lose this effect due to "directness" of language. In other words, the language of these Fine Brush paintings has become an organic part of its semantic expression, and obtained a "semantic structure" different from other type of painting. It is why we discovered a unique temperament of these works in the bizarre contemporary art world.

Based on this perspective, compared with contemporary art, no matter Fang Lijun's stress on image or Yin Chaoyang's stress on language, this group of artists provides a unique value of spiritual expression. They do not have the direct image power like artists mentioned above, but they have another type of serene expression of thought. It thanks to the quiet and slow expression feature of Oriental painting. In their paintings, we do not see any unease or unrest in other contemporary art, although these painters also express contradictions and conflicts deep in the soul of modern people, but the effect is dissolved in a rational tranquility and peace, with philosophical and rhetorical features. In this sense that, in contemporary Chinese painting, they do not belong to our specific

understanding of the habits of "contemporary art" areas, but a new expression can be "contemporary" art. Moreover, compared with the "contemporary art" in the trend of "westernization", they are better representatives of China's "contemporary art".

Such a discussion is not to deny the value of "contemporary art", but rather to point out—there are various possibilities for contemporary semantic expression, the language of western painting can reconstruct the "semantic structure" for easel painting, so can Chinese painting. As I addressed before in this article, "Fine Brush Painting is a type of easel painting, and easel painting has the opportunity to reconstruct a stable expression of the "semantic structure", hence, Fine Brush Painting has this possibility too, which is right based on this understanding and judgment. If we place this understanding and judgment in the worldwide development of art, we can basically describe their value as: as a parallel means of image presentation of western painting, Oriental painting has the same ability to express contemporary spirit. Beyond that, the discovery of this ability has greatly enriched the "semantic structure" space of a stable reconstruction of easel painting. It also helps re-establish the art concept of "language starts expression", after modernism disintegrated the classical domain of the concept of art.

However, there is a problem to be clarified. While we discussed these Fine Brush Painters, I referred to Kaii Higashiyama a lot. Are there any similarities and differences between them? Undoubtedly, both are examples of Oriental painting language involving in the modern expression of "human spirit", and both have a serene image effect because of the quiet and slow of oriental language. However, they have slightly different perspectives to expression the modern spirit: Higashiyama applied Oriental painting language to convey the longing for the quiet and elegance of mysticism due to the unrest of modern society. It is an express of modern semantic, but not a direct encounter of modern spirit. Well this group of Fine Brush painters directly face spiritual experience of confusion and indecision in the modern spirit. They don't digest the spiritual bitterness through image representation, but convert it into rational reflections with metaphors and symbolic colors. It goes beyond Higashiyama's achievements.

Finally, here is one more supplement, or a deliberately evaded issue: whether easel painting will disappear. It is not a new topic, since the 1980s, "Neo-expressionism" in Germany, "Neo-realism" in France, and "Super-avant-garde" in Italy have given an answer through a post-modern approach: after modernism dissolved the uncertainty of art concept, art has returned back to traditional easel painting, discovering "modern" expressing ability of "the traditional", to rebuild a stable concept of art by copying, grafting, grouping, and reconstructing the classical. From a certain perspective, this character is exactly the direction of these Fine Brush painters for their artistic expression—they explore the