

The Selected Wood Engravings of Niu Wen

牛文畫選



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序

版畫家牛文多年來擔任美術方面的領導工作，但仍始終堅持版畫創作，這固然是他會擠時間，但最根本的是由於他對版畫創作的熱愛、執著，可謂“鍥而不舍，金石可鏤”。

我認為，一個藝術家對創作總應不斷探索、不斷創新，做到“山重水復疑無路，柳暗花明又一村”，這才會不斷給人以新意，令人感到他在前進。牛文的創作，正是沿着一條不斷探索，不斷創新的道路，一步一步走到今天的。

牛文1922年出生於山西靈石縣一個貧農家庭，1937年投奔共產黨領導的軍隊。他的童年時期雖處在貧窮落後的山區，但抬頭可見，俯首可得的剪紙、年畫、門畫以及箱櫃上的描金裝飾畫等民間美術，却在他幼小的心靈中播下了藝術的種子。在革命軍隊中，尤其在1941年考入延安魯迅文藝學院美術系後，童年時代的藝術愛好，得到了良好的發展土壤，終使他走上藝術創作的道路。在魯藝，他得到了系統的藝術知識，學習了素描，接觸了木刻畫；與此同時，還讀了當時所能找到的馬列主義哲學、政治經濟學著作和中外文學名著，為他後來的藝術創作，打好了基礎。

他正式從事版畫創作，是在解放戰爭時期的晉綏邊區。延安文藝座談會後，藝術家們深入火熱的鬥爭生活，力求創作出反映社會新貌，表現新時代、新主題的作品。他參加了晉北崞縣、代縣土地改革工作後創作的《領回土地證來》、《丈地》等木刻作品，使我們不難看出他的可貴意圖。作品中的人物形象刻劃和木刻的刀法的運用，都已較為嫺熟，且洋溢着濃郁的生活氣息。應該說，晉綏時期是他積累生活經驗和創作經驗的良好開端。

全國解放後，他從北國晉綏邊區調往南方的四川工作。爲使作品有新的開拓，他立志把藏族地區當作創作的新基地，以木刻作品反映藏族人民解放後的新生活、新命運和新希望。從五十年代初開始，他十餘次往返於西藏和四川的藏族自治州，經歷了數年時間，終於熟悉了藏族人民的生活習慣和風土人情，以滿腔熱忱創作出了一批歌頌藏族人民在共產黨領導下，一步跨千年，由農奴制社會進入社會主義社會的作品。這個時期，非常成熟的作品是《吉祥如意遍地錦》和《歡樂的藏族兒童》。這兩幅木刻，不論構思和構圖的新穎、人物形象的生動美好；不論刀法的流暢有力、黑白處理的妥貼、套色的典雅簡朴，都達到了較高的水平，以致時隔十年、二十年後，仍經得起推敲，其原因就在於作品不僅具有思想性，而且具有較高的審美價值。

十年動亂後，牛文又拿起刻刀，重新耕耘他久已荒蕪了的版畫園地。面對藝術上盛行盲目學習西歐現代派美術的風氣却不以爲然，他說：“咱們不能老是抱着金碗討飯，自己民族的精華不學，跑去撿人家的零碎”，又說：“如果誰能把中國民族民間藝術和西方藝術有機地結合起來，創作出既有中國特色，又有時代感的藝術品，那就好得很”。他不僅這樣說，而且在藝術創作中努力這樣做了。從他近幾年推出的一批版畫新作中，使我們驚喜地看到，他從我國民族民間藝術和外來藝術中吸取了精華，巧妙地創造出一種新的藝術形式，使我們不得不爲之贊嘆。

他近年的作品如《草地新征》、《芳草地》、《朝陽》、《賽馬圖》等，是在藝術形式上探索的試驗，雖還不能說已完美無缺，但却令人感到形式的新穎和線條的秀美，整個畫面有清新淡雅之風，明快秀麗之貌，具有濃郁的民族特色。因此，受到中國群眾和國外友人的喜愛，這些作品是他向我國明清徽派版畫學習的結果。我認爲他的努力方向很對頭。徽派版畫是一種復制版畫，但其刻工之細膩潤滑、雋秀婉麗，在中國版畫史上享有盛名，可惜一向不爲我國從事創作木刻的版畫家們所重視。牛文能對此感到興趣，爲之青睞，深入研究，從而創作出富有民族特色的新風格的木刻，不但令人感到在中國新興版畫大花園里出現了奇葩，而且也說明我們確乎不應“抱着金碗討飯”。

願牛文同志在此可貴的基礎上更上一層樓。

力 群 一九八八年

Preface LiuQun

Busy as he is with his leadership in the art field, Niu Wen, the engraver, is still able to keep his creating work in the wood-block engraving, which is of course due to his ability to make good use of time. But the main reason lies in his love for the artistic creation of wood-block engraving and his perseverance in it, just as an old saying says: "By carving without rest, one can hollow out metal and stone."

I think an artist should never stop exploring and renewing his artistic creation so that the readers can feel that he is advancing and making something new, just as an ancient Chinese poem goes: "Just as the weary traveller despairs of finding a road, Lo! a village appears and shade of willows and riotous flowers beckon." The way Niu Wen has been following is just what has been described above.

Niu Wen was born in a poor peasant family in Lingshi county of Shanxi province in 1922. He joined the army led by the Chinese Communist Party in 1937. Although he spent his childhood in a poor and backward mountain area, the folk art in the area, such as paper cuts, New-Year pictures, door pictures and the gold-drawing decorative pictures on the cupboard, sowed art seeds in his young heart. It was in the revolutionary army, especially after entering the Department of Fine Arts of Yan'an Lu Xun Institute of Literature and Art that his love for art beginning from his childhood was able to develop and make him take the route of artistic creation. In the Lu Xun Institute he acquired systematic knowledge of art, studied sketch and got in touch with wood engraving; he also read Marxist philosophy and political economy and some famous Chinese and foreign literary works available at the time, which laid a foundation for his later artistic creation.

It was in the Shanxi-Suiyuan Border Area during the Liberation War that he was formally engaged in the creation of wood-block painting. After Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art, the artists went into the thick of struggles, trying to create works reflecting the new face of society, new times and new theme. His valuable efforts in this aspect can be clearly seen in the woodcut works Receiving Land Certificate and Measuring Land, which he created after participating in the land reform in Guo county and Dai county in northern Shanxi. His portray of characters and the techniques he used displayed great skill and strong flavour of life. It is appropriate to say that the period he spent in Shanxi-Suiyuan Border Area was a good beginning of his accumulation of life and creation experiences.

After liberation of the country, he was transferred from Shanxi-Suiyuan Border Area in the north to Sichuan province in the south. In order to have a new development, he decided to make the Tibetan area his new base for creation, trying to reflect with woodcut the new life, new lot and new hope of the Tibetan people after liberation. Starting from early 50s, he traveled to and fro over ten times between Tibet and Tibetan Autonomous Region in Sichuan province. After several years he finally got familiar with the life and the local conditions and customs of the Tibetan people and created works extolling the Tibetan people leaping over a thousand years from serf system to socialism under the leadership of the Communist Party. His works Good Luck and Beauty Everywhere and The Happy Tibetan Children made in this period are very mature. These two pieces of woodcut attain a very high level in the novelty of conception and composition, the vividness of characters, the ease of cutting, the arrangement of black and white and the elegance and simplicity of colour process. Although they have undergone the test of decades, they remain to be the best loved, just because of the ideological content and the value of beauty.

After the ten years of turmoil, Niu Wen picked up his graver and began anew ploughing the long-deserted land of wood-block engraving. Not approving the blindly learning from the modern art school of Western Europe, he said, "We can not always beg while holding a gold bowl in our hands. We can not run about picking up odds and ends of others while disregarding the cream of our nation." He also said, "It would be better if someone could combine the Chinese folk art with Western art and create artistic works having both the Chinese character and the tendency of the day." He has done what he said in his artistic creation. We are pleasantly surprised to find that in his recent wood-block engravings he has absorbed the quintessence of both Chinese folk art and the foreign art, ingeniously creating a new form of art, which we cannot but admire.

His recent works, such as The New March on the Grass Land, The Fragrant Grass Land, The Morning Sun and The Horse Racing indicate his efforts in the exploring of art forms. Although they cannot be said to be very successful and perfect, they give people the feeling of novelty in forms and elegance in lines, with the general appearance of the pictures full of pure and fresh air and strong Chinese flavour, so they are loved by both Chinese and foreigners. These works are the results of his learning from the School of Hui, which is a kind of reproduced engraving. Its fineness and smooth enjoy a good reputation in the history of Chinese wood-block engraving. It is a pity that few wood-block engravers in China pay attention to it. Getting interested in it and carrying out a thorough study of it, Niu Wen has been able to create wood-block engravings of new style with rich national characters. His wonderful works of art show that we should not "beg while holding a gold bowl in our hands."

May Comrade Niu Wen make greater progress.

青出於藍

王 偉

一九八一年，版畫家牛文到南斯拉夫參加斯洛文尼亞十四屆世界版畫展覽時，把《四川民間桃花圖案》與《一九八二年四川年畫縮樣》，贈送給南斯拉夫版畫家，受到了意想不到的歡迎。他們對我國民族民間藝術贊嘆不已，給予了高度的評價。事實一再證明魯迅先生在一九三三年所說的：“地方色彩，也能增畫的美和力，自己生長其地，看慣了，或者不覺得什麼，但在別地人，看起來是覺得非常開拓眼界，增加知識的。”

牛文同志本人就酷愛剛健、清新、生動活潑的民間藝術。他生長在農村，小時就接觸到豐富的民間藝術，窗戶上的窗紙，炕頭上的年畫，箱櫃上的漆器裝飾畫，天花板上的雕畫，廟宇里的塑像、壁畫、磚刻，以及木偶、皮影、陶瓷、印染等等。這些藝術作品都凝聚着勞動人民的心血與智慧，它所體現的藝術才能和強烈的中國作風，深深地熏陶着畫家，正如他自已說：“我愛這些畫，也愛這些作畫人。他們是我學習作人和學習藝術的啟蒙老師。”

他在美術的天地里起步時，民間藝術是老師，到了成為版畫家後，仍孜孜以求地向民間藝術學習。他熱愛民間藝術，象勞動的蜜蜂一樣到處尋覓花朵，不停采集花粉釀蜜。有一次他偶然看到了收藏的綿竹民間木版年畫原稿，就象小孩過年穿新衣、戴新帽那麼歡暢。他抽出時間，如飢似渴地細看細讀，反覆品味，後來索性借去十多張，日以繼夜地臨摹，達到身心迷醉的程度。

在藝術表現上，一眼就可以看出，牛文的作品從不滿足已有的表現方法，總不斷地探索着新的東西。早期作品《領回土地證來》、《保衛延安》、《听勝利消息》等，工整精細；中期作品《歡樂的藏族兒童》、《吉祥如意遍地錦》、《錦花披》等，粗壯豪放、簡潔有力；近期作品《草地新征》、《芳草地》等，秀麗洒脱、流動如生。不論是用黑白塊面，或者用線，他總是努力做到為祖國人民喜聞樂見，以他們的欣賞習慣為愛好，使畫風清新明快，使自己的版畫既有明顯的個人風格，又具有民族特色。儘管表現手法時時更新，然而他那以少勝多、生動洗練、簡潔明快的氣質則始終沒變。

版畫家牛文從民間藝術的寶庫中不斷吸取了有益的養料，以滋養及發達新的生體，使自己創作的花朵開得更加艷麗奪目，這大約就是古人說的“青出於藍，而勝於藍”吧！

藝術創作是很複雜的，象人體一樣需要的養料應是多方面的。拙文所談僅僅是諸多因素中的一點一滴，不可能以點代面，更不可能以點代全。如果這一點滴，能夠引起讀者對畫家如何在生活中吸取營養，向民族藝術和外國藝術學習的研究，那就在實際上彌補了這一篇幅文的缺陷了。

Indigo Blue Is Extracted from the Indigo Plant

Wang Wei

When attending the 14th World Engraving Exhibition in Yugoslavia in 1981, the engraver Niu Wen presented the Yugoslav engravers the paintings, Sichuan Popular Embroidery Patterns and The Reduced Version of Sichuan New Year Pictures of 1982, which received unexpected welcome. They gasped with admiration at the superb skill of the folk art of our nation and gave their high praise. Facts have shown what Lu Xun said in 1933 is right: "Local colour can add beauty and force to the picture. As you were born and have lived in a place, you find nothing unusual there. Things you are used to would seem new and enlightening to people from other places."

Comrade Niu Wen himself loves the vigorous, fresh and lively folk art. Born in the countryside, he from his childhood got in touch with various kinds of folk arts, such as the paper-cut on the window, the New Year pictures over the bed, the lacquer ornaments on the cupboard, the statues, wall paintings and brick carvings in the temple, the puppet, the shadow play, the pottery, the printing and dyeing, etc. These art works were the embodiment of the painstaking labour and the superb wisdom of the working people. Their artistic skill and the strong Chinese flavour exerted a great influence on the artist. As he said himself: "I love these folk artists as well as their art works. They are my teachers, teaching me how to make pictures and how to conduct myself."

In his art career, he started with learning from the folk art, and did not stop this learning even when he already became a famous woodcutter. He loves the folk art and work like a honeybee, always looking for flowers, collecting pollen and making honey. He was thrown into ecstasy, like a child having new clothes and a new hat, when he first saw the manuscript of Mian-zhu Folk Wood-Block Engraving for New Year. He appreciated and studied them eagerly and carefully and even borrowed over ten pieces home, copying day and night.

Never resting content with the existing techniques of expression, Niu Wen always tries to find new ones. His early works Receiving the Land Certificate, Defence of Yan'an, Listening to the News of Victory, etc. are carefully and neatly done. His works in a later period include The Happy Tibetan Children, Good Luck and Beauty Everywhere, The Beautiful Hillside, etc., which are forthright, concise and powerful. His recent works A New March on the Grass Land and The Fragrant Grass Land are graceful, charming and lively. No matter how he creates works, he always tries to make them to the taste of Chinese people and thus loved by them. He strives to keep them rich with both individual style and national characteristics though he often changes the techniques of expression, the makings of his woodcuts characterized by vividness and conciseness never change.

Niu Wen, the wood-block engraver, absorbs the useful nutriment from the folk art treasure-house to make his works more bright and colourful, just as the old saying goes: "Indigo blue is extracted from the indigo plant."

Artistic creation is a complex process, which needs nourishment as human body does. This article only concerns a few of the many factors. The deficiency would be made up if the readers got interested in the study of the way the artist absorbs nutriment from life and learns from national and foreign arts.

彩色版

COLOUR PROCESS

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13 Good Luck and Beauty Everywhere (46 x 31 cm)	1959
14 Summer (27.5 x 20 cm)	1958
15 The Jialing River in Autumn (19.7 x 14.8 cm)	1957
16 Pictures on the Match Box (11 x 8.7 cm)	1956
The Red Sun (10.5 x 8.5 cm)	1956
Plucking Mulberry Leaves (30.5 x 20 cm)	1956
17 On the Bank of the Yalu Zangbu River (25 x 9.5 cm)	1956
(Black and White Plate)	
18 1 and 2 of Wood-Cutting Sketches of Figure Graphic (13.5 x 10.5 cm)	1988
19 3 and 4 of Wood-Cutting Sketches of Figure Graphic (13.5 x 10.5 cm)	1988
20 5 and 6 of Wood-Cutting Sketches of Figure Graphic (13.5 x 10.5 cm)	1988
21 7 and 8 of Wood-Cutting Sketches of Figure Graphic (13.5 x 10.5 cm)	1988
22 9 and 10 of Wood-Cutting Sketches of Figure Graphic (13.5 x 10.5 cm)	1988
23 New Road (83 x 56.5 cm)	1987
24 The Summer Wind (79.5 x 56.8 cm)	1984
25 Spring Thunder (68.6 x 54.7 cm)	1984
26 The Autumn Moon (61.8 x 40.3 cm)	1984
27 New March on Grass Land (83.6 x 55.5 cm)	1980
28 The Fragrant Grass Land (86 x 67.5 cm)	1979
29 The Place Where We Fought (25.5 x 19.2 cm)	1977
30 Illustrations 1 and 2 for the Novel "The Glory on Qingjiang River" (25.5 x 19.2 cm)	1977
31 Illustrations 1 and 2 for the Selected Letters from Tibet "New Songs on the Plateau" (27.8 x 20.4 cm)	1977

32 Illustrations 3 and 4 for the Selected Letters from Tibet "New Songs on the Plateau" (27.8 x 20.4 cm)	1965
33 A Tibetan Woman Teacher (27.4 x 20.4 cm)	1965
34 Take the Gun (72 x 55 cm)	1965
35 Man Sent by Chairman Mao (37 x 21 cm)	1965
36 Peaks in Guilin (53 x 36 cm)	1962
37 Victory Illustration 1 for the Novel "The Red Rock" (33.8 x 15.2 cm)	1961
38 Dream of the "Little Radish" Illustration 2 for the Novel "The Red Rock" (26.5 x 27.3 cm)	1961
39 The Beautiful Hillside (26.3 x 21.5 cm)	1959
40 Golden Flower Illustration for "Sichuan Folk Songs" (23 x 15 cm)	1958
41 Applying Fertilizer on the High Mountain (38.9 x 13 cm)	1957
42 Joining the Red Army (24 x 18.5 cm)	1957
43 By the Side of Xikang-Tibet Road (46 x 23.2 cm)	1956
44 A Tibetan Peasant Family (46 x 26.5 cm)	1956
45 A Corner of Rizee (23 x 15.5 cm)	1956
46 Sunset on a Mountain Village (30.5 x 21.7 cm)	1956
47 The End of a Village (23.1 x 13.9 cm)	1956
48 Returning from a Medical School (37.2 x 25.2 cm)	1954
49 A Freshman of Beijing University (46 x 27.2 cm)	1954
50 When the Happy News of Peaceful Liberation of Tibet Spread to the Plateau of Xikang and Tibet (50 x 32.3 cm)	1952
51 Measuring the Land (29 x 18.5 cm)	1949
52 Listening to the News of Victory (18 x 14.2 cm)	1949
53 Illustrations 1 and 2 for the Story "Selling Chicken" (7.3 x 6.5 cm)	1949
54 Soldier's Dependents Writing to the Front (27.3 x 18.4 cm)	1949
55 Victory Celebration (12 x 10.8 cm)	1948
56 Receiving the Land Certificate (19 x 14.8 cm)	1948
57 Defence of Yan'an (14.4 x 11.8 cm)	1947
58 Troop Training (13.8 x 12 cm)	1946
59 The Yangge Dancers (12.8 x 10 cm)	1945
60 Illustrations 1, 2 and 3 for Primary School Textbooks Used in Shanxi-Suiyuan Border Area (8 x 5.8 cm)	1945

将相和

七九年，趙國
公元前二
的蘭相如，立功
受封首相，武
將廉頗心懷不
服，屢次侮辱
他，相如願全
大局，終一再忍
諍悔悟，負荊
好，將相和。

丁卯春

牛文利





2 宵何月下追韓信 (70×49釐米)

2 Xiao He Running After Han Xin

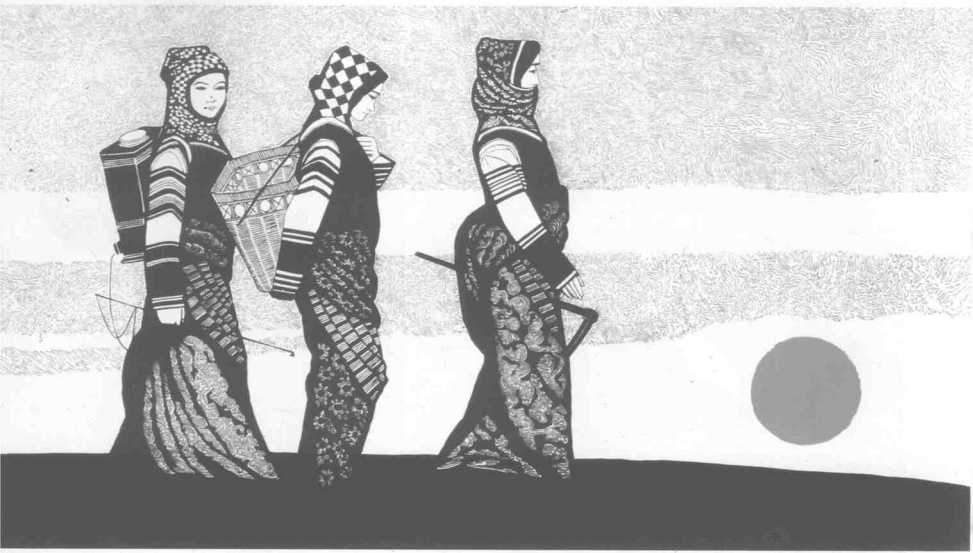
Under the Moon (70 x 49cm)

1986



3 賽馬圖 (96.8×66.3釐米) 1985

3 Horse Racing (96.8×66.3cm) 1985



4 朝 阳 (96×56厘米) 1984

4 The Morning Sun (96×56cm) 1984