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WANG QINGPING'S  
OIL PAINTINGS

BY CANGZHEN CHAMBER

藏真閣·珍藏

王慶平油畫選集

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油畫家王慶平先生與藏真閣主人夏祿清先生 >  
*The Oil Painter, Wang Qingping and the Owner of Cangzhen Chamber, Xia Luqing*



# 藝術的朝聖路

中國人民大學教授 王家新

前年夏天，我和詩人多多一起游歷膠東半島，在青島時，我們有幸拜訪了畫家王慶平先生。一到他家，我們不僅驚異於那幢現在已很少見的德式老房子，更是被那到處懸掛的繪畫作品所吸引。在那座寬敞、明亮、散發着舊時代典雅氣息的房子裏，我和多多（他不僅是著名詩人，從很早起他就開始畫油畫）從一幅畫到另一幅畫，從一個房間到另一個房間，一邊看一邊禁不住贊嘆有聲。我感到這安靜的房間不僅被窗外的陽光所照亮，更是被藝術本身的光輝所籠罩。我不僅被這些畫的藝術魅力所打動，也被藝術家傾注在這些畫中的愛和痛苦所深深觸動了。

後來，我更深入地了解了這位藝術家的創作和生活。我知道近些年來人們對他的繪畫十分關注，許多人“在唏噓贊嘆之餘，感慨那份遲到的幸運”，稱贊他“對於光和色彩的理解非常了不起”“對於自然風景的表現有着杰出的成就”“技法高超，本事足夠，可以稱得上是大師”“思想很老到，屬於‘獨門絕技型’”。這些是我從一些評論和座談記要中看到的話。這些評價和贊嘆都引起了我的同感。的確，這是一位功底深厚、畫風成熟的藝術家，也是在他那一代人中很少見的值得我們去深入認識的藝術家。

不過話說回來，即使沒有得到應有的關注，那又有什麼關係呢？這樣一位獨自奮鬥了一生的藝術家，早已把那種等待贊美和承認的階段拋在了身後。他已來到了歌德所說的那種“充實而有光輝”的境地。從他那些成熟而有份量的畫作裏，從我和多多同他本人的深入交談中，我都深深感到了藝術對於一個人的無上意義。他對得起自己這麼多年來的奮鬥，也對得起藝術對他的期望。他已處在他一生所追求的藝術光輝的朗照之中了。

因此，第一次見面，我就對這位藝術家有了深深的認同感，雖然我們並不是一代人，雖然他比我年長一二十歲。我和多多都同他談得十分投機，這不僅因為在我們看來他真正把握了那貫通古今的藝術真髓，還在於——無論在生活上還是在藝術上——我們都分擔了那麼多共同的東西！分擔了什麼呢？分擔了對藝術和生命意義的赤誠追求，分擔了人生的痛苦和愛，分擔了一位藝術家那詭譎、凶險而又多情的命運！

這就是我所了解和敬重的王慶平。他生於一個子女衆多，雖有着小資本家頭銜，建國後却一貧如洗的家庭。父母和藝術無緣，但他却從他們那裏秉承了吃苦耐勞、堅忍不拔的性格。這種性格比什麼都重要，在以下我們將會看到，正是這

種性格使他能任坎坷多艱的藝術生涯中一步步走到了今天。

那麼，藝術的種子是怎样落到一顆心靈中的呢？這真是一個謎。王慶平說在他還是一個懵懂無知的學童時，同桌小同學的鉛筆盒上印着的米洛的維納斯雕像吸引了他。他第一次驚奇地發現世上還有這麼神聖、美妙的事物。也許正是在那一瞬，他已被賦予了藝術的生命。那時他照着這個鉛筆盒痴迷地畫了無數幅維納斯像，並把它們訂成了一個小本子。這就是一種藝術生命的開始。

正是懷着這種強烈、奇異、不為人知也不為人解的愛，他在十歲時就到夜校去學繪畫。他每周學三個晚上。家裏拿不出錢，他就借錢交學費；買不起畫本，他就從收舊書報的小販那裏買舊書上無字的扉頁用來畫畫。他還用一角二分錢從收破爛的人那裏買回了一個舊水彩盒，用來畫他心愛的水彩畫。這種貧寒而又讓人發奮的早年，使我不禁想起了出生在阿爾及利亞的法國作家加繆的話：“人必須生存，必須創造，人必須生存到那想要哭泣的心境。”這樣的早年經歷，使一個人對藝術的追求，擁有了最純潔的、水晶般的質地。

王慶平自幼以來對藝術的痴迷和努力終於得到了回報，十七歲那年，他有幸考上了中央美院附中！對無數懷有藝術夢的青少年來講，這真是一個改變命運的轉機。那時美院附中和美院在同一個大院，他不僅在那裏接受了最扎實的美術教育和繪畫基本功訓練，還親自感受到一代大師王式廓、董希文、吳作人、李可染的藝術熏陶。不過，對自幼以來勤奮好學、習慣於“自我教育”的他來說，在那裏還有一個更神奇的世界，那就是美院圖書館。以前他曾從一個青島的畫友那裏看到一本日本出版的世界名畫集，他稱那是“影響我一生的一小時”。現在，他把自己全部投入到一本本世界藝術大師的畫冊中。這不僅使他大開眼界，他的藝術之夢也有了更光輝、更切實的坐標。

不僅如此，在美院圖書館，他還借閱了大量文學名著。那時他白天上課，晚上閱讀但丁、普希金、萊蒙托夫、托爾斯泰等名家的作品。這些文學大師的作品，更深刻地開啓了他的心靈。那時他很激動地背誦下了普希金的《皇村的回憶》等詩篇。尤其是法國作家羅曼·羅蘭的以藝術家的自我奮鬥為主題的小說《約翰·克裏斯托夫》和《貝多芬傳》，不僅在當時完全抓住了他，也深刻持久地影響了他的一生。貝多芬那種超乎常人的對命運的抗爭，那種對藝術的聖徒般的奉獻和犧牲，在他面前似乎第一次展開了一個真正藝術家的一生。他從此知道了什麼才是偉大的人生和藝術的榜樣。他立誓：真正的藝術信徒要像丹柯那樣捧着一顆發光的心，在人生的荆棘路上前行。

這使我想起了多年前我自己第一次讀到裏爾克《給青年詩人的第一封信》（馮至譯）時所記住的那些話，它在我內心引起的顫栗已超出了一切言語：“我必須寫嗎？你要在自身內挖掘一個深的答復。若你以‘我必須’對答那個嚴肅的問題，那麼，你就根據這個需要去建造你的生活吧！”“你的職責是藝術家，那麼你就接受這個命運，承擔起它的重負和偉大。”

當然，年輕的王慶平當時還沒有讀到過這些，但我猜想他必定也經歷過這樣的心路歷程。不然，他不可能和藝術建立起一種更深刻內在的關係，也不可能為此堅持終生。正因為有貝多芬這樣的藝術榜樣，他不僅以超乎常人的意志力在後來承受住了命運的考驗，而且也有力地避開了“文革”那個時代對藝術的扭曲。他步履艱難，但卻始終走在一條藝術的正道上。這不能不受之於他在美院附中期間所形成的藝術精神和理想。

這樣，一位藝術家創造和奮鬥的一生展現在他的眼前。他感到在課堂上再也學不到更多的東西了，他也不想走一條循規蹈矩的



路。他要像梵高和俄國巡回畫派畫家們那樣，像“行萬里路，讀萬卷書”的中國古代大師們那樣，成為大自然和生活的追隨者。這樣，他沒有讀完美院附中，就離開了北京。那時，他的計劃是到烟臺海邊的一個漁村裏寫生、畫畫、體驗生活，甚至永久地落戶在那裏。

當然，在當時那種社會條件下，他不可能按照自己的夢想生活。他祇能像螺絲釘一樣被擰在某一部機器上。20世紀50年代末期以後，他在山東工業展覽館做美工，後來又轉到青島美術公司。無論如何，這帶有工藝美術性質的工作為他從事藝術提供了一定條件。

然後是“文革”風暴的來臨。最考驗他的時候到了。像他這樣的有着自己倔強、獨特藝術個性和精神追求的人，在這場駭人的運動中必然會成為一個“靶子”。因為他堅持自己的審美趣味，尤其是因為在畫領袖像時，他注意色彩的對比運用，被誣稱是把領袖畫成了“陰陽臉”。他遭到了一次次批鬥，他家中所有的藏書、畫冊，多年來所畫的五百多幅水彩畫被付之一炬，連他多年用來畫水彩畫的那個心愛的舊水彩盒也被造反派一脚踩爛。他被揪鬥，被隔離審查，被勞動改造——被指令在單位上打掃和運送垃圾。

在那漫長、屈辱而無望的日子裏，他也曾絕望得想以死了此一生。的確，他聽到了那召喚。但也正是那些偉大的藝術榜樣，激勵他以超人的信念堅持下去。這正如一句話所說：“置於死地而後生”，正是在那樣的人生逆境中，在不再對現實抱任何幻想的情形下，他把藝術視作宗教，像一個皈依了宗教的信徒那樣更堅定地走上了一條藝術的朝聖路。在多年來用心血畫就的水彩畫連同水彩盒一起被毀掉之後，他決定以畫油畫為主，他要用另一種更富有表現力的藝術形式來實現他靈魂的不死的追求。那時他偷偷做了一個能放在口袋裏的指托畫箱，每天五點就起床，在八點開始的勞動改造前，天蒙蒙亮就來到海邊、小樹林或街巷深處寫生，晚上再躲到家中閣樓上根據這些巴掌大的小油畫來創作較大和完整的布面油畫。

他就這樣“流着淚迎接早霞”，送走了一個個黎明和夜晚。為躲避政治和人們的注意，在那些年，他基本上不畫人物，祇畫靜物和寫生。尤其是大海，成為他苦難心靈的寄托。他那時畫的大海，充滿壓抑不住的激情，使人感到藝術家與大海在相互呼喚和傾吐。他那些展現海水撲向礁石的金屬般的筆觸，不僅真切傳達了海的轟響，也有力地傳達出他面對大海時內心的震顫。

這就是“文革”的煉獄對他的“造就”，使他深入命運的底層而和藝術建立起一種更深刻的關係。他那時畫的海景畫，有一種前途渺茫、壯志未酬的荒涼感，這其實是他心靈和命運的寫照。而他那些畫幽僻小巷、山林和花卉靜物的作品，則表現了在一個動蕩、苦難的年代對於寧靜的渴望。他的心情折射在那些畫作的色調上，時而燦爛，時而陰鬱。

縱然如此，他不是一個抽象表現主義者。他忠實於他的“現實主義”的藝術信條，而這源自他在早年所受到的俄蘇式美術教育和俄國巡回畫派列賓、蘇裏柯夫、列維坦等人的深刻影響。命運的不公，不改他對生活和自然的愛，他要使自己的藝術首先建立在對大自然和生活的觀察和感受上。

正因為如此，他對於光和色彩有了真切而深刻的把握。在他的作品中，對光的感受和捕捉，尤其是天蒙蒙亮時開始映照在海面上的光，被表現得十分真切動人。面對黎明時分那清新而富有重量的光，我們觀畫者的眼中似乎也有濕潤的細沙磨擦。我想，一個畫家的職業敏感，還有他人生的磨難，都促使他投入到對光的研究和贊頌中。他在這一階段的觀察和體驗，也為他後來在藝術成熟期對光的把握和處理打下了堅實的基礎。

“文革”後期，他的情況稍有好轉，由打掃衛生和運送垃圾，到為單位做畫框，到後來又可以畫畫了，這期間他有機會到外面寫生。他去了紹興、蘇州、貴州、四川等地。這不僅豐富了他的創作題材，更增加了他對大自然和民族文化的歷史底蘊的體驗。

也正是藝術的支撐和慰藉，使他學會了對苦難坦然承受。到了“文革”末期，似乎有一點自由的氣息已開始悄悄飄蕩在空中。那時他創作了幾幅人物畫，它們都十分感人。《老教師》（1975）在厚重和苦澀中，透出了生命的信念和尊嚴；畫他大兒子的《少年》，則更多了些靈動和喜悅，表現出對生命的愛和未來的希望。他的寫生和靜物畫，則日益精進，臻於成熟之境，其中作於1976年的《窗前組畫（一）》表現了有寒意的早春，現在看來也堪稱傑作，畫中那透明的花瓶、骨節剛硬的花枝、深色調的水果、桌面上和窗玻璃上的寒意和光的反照，這一切冷冽而富有生氣，富有一種詩的韻味。作於同年的《陰雨的早上》，描繪陰雨連綿的早上身披雨衣的司機走向小三輪車即將出工的情景，雨的光亮表現得十分動人。在那濃鬱、昏暗的色調中，我們仿佛聽到了雨聲。這樣帶有獨特藝術感受和表現手法的作品，和當時“文革”那個時代盛行的一切是多麼不同！

而作於1975年的《夜色》，窗外是濃重的夜色，臨窗則是一瓶盛放的被室內光所照亮的紅碩花朵。在那樣一個年代，這真是一個有內在堅定信仰的人才可以畫出的畫！在那漫漫長夜中，他就這樣守着他的“心靈的家園”。在對苦難和不公的承受中，他不僅保持住了作為一個人的信念、尊嚴和良知，他的藝術也在一步步地走向深沉、開闊和成熟。

“文革”結束，整個民族從一場噩夢中醒來。他就像“聞官軍收河南河北”的杜甫一樣，壓抑多年的創作激情噴發而出。一個苦難的藝術家一生所追求的光，又照臨到他的窗口。他在20世紀70年代末所作的臨窗的靜物和風景，色調溫暖、明亮、清新，可稱為他這一階段的代表作，表現了重獲光明和再生的喜悅之情。

我們也發現，在那時，他的藝術追求也來到一個突破性的臨界點上。除了深化、完善原有的風格外，在更多地接觸到法國印象派的作品後，他也創造性地把一種印象派式的感受力和光與色的技法帶入他的創作中。在他描繪外光的風景和靜物寫生中，色彩豐富、強烈，富有詩意和厚重感，正如有的批評家所說的那樣，“充滿於前景透入畫面深處的陽光與透明的空氣，彌漫游動的霧氣構成了微妙的層次變化，並營造出引人入勝的魅力和氛圍”。

這說明他永遠不滿足於自己。在“文革”過去的那幾年，他不僅每天都在畫，而且每天都懷着巨大的饑渴感在讀，在接觸新的東西。他邊研讀邊思索自己在藝術上的突破，用他自己的話來說“將自己讀進去”。他這樣深有體會地說：“讀好畫比自己多畫幾幅畫更重要。”

表現市井生活和以早市為題材的寫生作品，他畫了很多，如《紹興早市》（1979）、《四方路早市》（1988）等等，他畫了許多這樣的市井生活場景，每一幅都十分動人。可以說，對市井生活和早市的描繪，是他整個創作中的一大“亮點”，表現了那個時代的人們壓抑了太久的對於生活和自由的渴望，出色地運用了印象派式的感受力和光與色的技法。整個中國都很難找到比他畫這類題材更多、畫得更感人的人。這不僅和他的普通市民的生涯有關，和他多年來堅持天一亮就出去寫生的習慣有關，更重要的是，和他對生活和生命的摯愛有關。從他這類作品中透出的，是任何力量都無法遏制和斬斷的生活的最古老的脈動。

這樣，從“文革”結束到整個20世紀80年代，他迎來了創作的一個高峰期。《陰霾的早上》（1984）是一個重要標志，他的藝術變得更加成熟、厚重了。畫面中那古老的江南水巷，水巷兩側錯落有致、富有歷史滄桑和厚重質感的石瓦屋頂，屋檐下老太太彎腰

生着的煤爐子，還有那動人的火苗和我們在觀畫時似乎可以聞到的煤烟味……天空雖然布滿陰霾，河道上也升起了薄霧，但那不可阻擋的光已把一河沉沉死水變成了流動的金子！

作於1979年的《紹興早市》，更是一曲色調濃鬱、氣氛動人的生活的贊歌，它把畫家一生的藝術追求推向了一個高峰。黎明時分喧囂嘈雜的市井、人頭攢動的小吃店以及從那裏透出的火光和鍋碗瓢盆聲，撐着雨傘擺開地攤的辛勤小販、疾駛而過的三輪車以及車夫那繃緊的彎下的脊背，還有從青黑的店鋪屋瓦上不斷傾注而下的晶瑩雨流……這一切同時呈現、同時到來，色彩互相輝映而厚重。它可以說是一幅新時代的“清明上河圖”，功底深厚，具有史詩般的力量。

但時代的變化，尤其是一個商業化時代的全面到來，也給他帶來新的矛盾和痛苦。上有父母，下有求學的孩子，還有繪畫所需，這些都給他帶來了很大的壓力。但他寧願去業餘繪畫班教畫畫，也不願使自己的藝術商業化。他的原則是：生活用減法，創作用加法。他的座右銘是“秀句出寒餓，身窮詩乃享”（蘇東坡）。在一個物質消費主義的時代，他仍背着他的畫箱去畫那些在別人看來“過時”“無用”的東西。那山坡上的寒捨，通向那裏的一步步堅實的石階，而在路邊的亂石上，光明一陣陣輝耀（見《嶗山深處人家》等畫）。他寧願去過這樣的貧寒、艱辛而富有詩意的生活。他永遠不會忘了自己的本色和出身。

他就這樣不為時尚所動，忠實於自己的藝術理想和良知，真正做到了像徐悲鴻所說的“堅持己見，一意孤行”。20世紀八九十年代以來，他不僅在青島帶出了一大批學生——這些學生許多是現今知名的藝術家，而且在他的教育和影響下，他的大兒子後來也成為一位十分優秀和有影響力的藝術家。從他們身上，我們都看到了一種難得可貴的精神傳承。

“我為藝術耕耘此生”，王慶平如是說。在他退休後，他的精力更充沛了，心靈似乎也更年輕了。20世紀90年代中後期以來，他的創作量不僅十分豐富，而且不斷拓展出新的境界。1996年，他赴法國和歐洲其他國家進行藝術考察，不僅遍訪他神往已久的藝術博物館，而且在巴黎專門挑選了一家昂貴的旅館房間，為的是畫窗口正對面的街頭咖啡館。他在那裏畫了整整一周，結果是《巴黎之夜》這幅杰作的誕生。畫面中光色的運用，不僅顯示出高超的技法，更透出靈魂深處的喜悅。說實話，即使在印象派那裏，我們也很難看到如此動人的表現細雨中巴黎夜景的作品。難怪他會這樣謙卑而喜悅地說：“我似乎真正摸到了藝術的脈搏，好像當年老柯羅那樣，八十多歲了才高興地發現了怎樣畫好天空的秘密。”

值得注意的是，這些年來，他還試圖將來自中國傳統的修養和功力帶入油畫創作。自“文革”中後期以來，除堅持練習書法外，他還悉心身體力行地研究芥子園畫譜，研究中國傳統的工筆、寫意文人畫。這使他的油畫創作日益呈現出新的境界和面貌。在構圖和立意上，他發揚以簡潔概括見勝的中國傳統，以最樸素的手法對景觀做最直觀的描寫。在用筆上，他那得自於中國書法的深厚功力也日益顯示出來，在表現大海的潮汛的《拍岸的激浪》等作品中，他運用一種特有的“骨法”用筆，刀砍斧鑿，光色跌宕，氣韻貫通。在《黃月季》《小院春光》這樣的描繪外光的風景和靜物寫生中，他對光的處理和氛圍營造，不僅富有油畫本身的質感和微妙的層次變化，而且創造了“類似於中國文人畫的深遠意境”。他就這樣將俄羅斯畫派的藝術體驗、法國印象派的光與色技法與中國傳統的神韻、功力和意趣化為一體，體現了多重視角和技藝的有力融合。他後期的作品有一種內在的中國氣質和精神。

在長期修煉的基礎上，他的油畫技藝不僅更為精湛，也更為自由、大氣了。“畫筆要像在油彩裏洗澡一樣，”他這樣說。無論畫光照下的水波，還是雨景中的光亮，他的用筆更為大膽，時時帶來出奇制勝的效果。他仍盡力把握細節、肌質，但不是客觀的描繪，

而是更多地融入了他的直覺和主觀情感體驗。在《仲春風輕揚》中，他用簡潔、傳神的筆觸幾筆就勾勒出整個紅土山坡的肌理，在樹林遠方則是風起雲涌的天空，在那裏光明朗照。一幅看似簡單的風景畫，却感人至深。在這樣的畫中，風景成爲心靈的語言，樹的搖曳則富有靈性。在那裏，當風吹動着樹身，似乎一切都在對我們講話和訴說。這樣的風景畫不僅富有“意境”，還洋溢着一種對上蒼、對光與色的詩的贊頌。

現在，王慶平已被公認爲一位在他那一代中功底深厚、成熟，取得較高創作成就的油畫家。2005年，河北教育出版社《中國名畫家精品集》系列隆重推出了《王慶平卷》，這是他前段創作的一個總結。但我想，這對他而言也是一個新的起點。縱觀中國現代油畫的一些名家，到後來都有某種力疲之感，似乎愈到後來難度愈大，愈對一個畫家構成考驗。像他這樣愈畫愈好、愈來愈把一生的學養、功力和追求呈現出來的油畫家還真不多！這使我們有理由對他的藝術抱以更大的期待。

這樣一位藝術家能達到今天這樣的境界，令人驚異，但又勢出必然。回溯他的一生，我們看到，他所踏上的，乃是一條藝術的朝聖路。這是一條艱辛而又感人的自我實現的路，也是一條自我奉獻的路，一條在人生的煉獄中以那神聖的“光”爲自己的全部信仰的路。正因爲如此，在任何情形下，他都會永遠葆有他藝術生命的內驅力。也正因爲如此，他給我們帶來的，不僅是藝術上的造詣和成就，還有更深刻重要的人生啓示。在今天，我們還能像這樣的“藝術信徒”那樣，歷盡艱辛，而“守住心靈的家園”嗎？所以，我要向這樣的藝術家獻上我深深的敬意。

2008年早春於北京慧谷陽光

# A Pilgrimage to Arts

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Two years' ago, Poet Duoduo and I had a summer journey to the Jiaodong Peninsula. We met Mr. Wang Qingping, an oil painter in Qingdao then. At the first visit, both of us were fascinated by his old German style house and his paintings hung all over the home. In that spacious, bright and elegantly decorated house, Duoduo (who has drawn oil paintings for a long time) and I appreciated the paintings piece by piece and room by room with endless praises. To me, the quiet room was not only brightened by sunshine but also by the brilliance of art. I was deeply touched by the glamour of art and the passion and pains of the artist in these works.

With time going on, I understand more and more about the artist's work and life. I know his works have drawn lots of attention in recent years. Many people gasp in admiration for his amazing understanding on light and color and emotionally sign for his late success. I also agree with some comments on him like the great achievements in description of natural landscapes, superior skills and ability as well as the mellow wisdom. His keen awareness of art and mature painting style indeed make him rare in his generation that is worth our further recognition.

However, it matters nothing if there is no deserved attention to his works. As a self-strived artist, he discarded the mind of waiting for others' praise and recognition long time ago. He has already reached the "luminous land" said by Goethe. I truly feel his commitment to art from his powerful and mature works as well as from the profound conversation among him, Duoduo and me. He is worthy of his struggles for years and the expectation from the Muse. He has already been brightened by the glory of art of his lifetime pursuit.

Since our first meeting, I found he was congenial to us though he is more than ten or twenty years older than me and at the same generation with my father. Duoduo and I enjoyed the conversation with him not only because he grasped the essence of art which links the ancient and modern times, but also for the common views we share both in life and art. What are they? They are the sincere pursuit of art and the truth of life, the passion and pains of living and the grotesque and romantic fate of an artist.

This is Mr. Wang Qingping, the one I understand and respect. Born in a large and poor family, he inherited values of bearing hardships and working hard as well as the

indomitable will from his parents who did not create an artistic atmosphere for him. Thanks to the inheritance, which means the most important thing to him, he reached the "land" by overcoming difficulties and frustrations again and again.

However, when was the seed of art first sown in his heart? It is indeed a riddle. According to Wang, he was fascinated by a picture of *Venus de Milo* printed on a pencil box of his deskmate at the first sight as an ignorant schoolboy. It was the first time that he found such a beautiful and divine figure in the world. Maybe at that time, art rooted in his heart. He copied the picture countless times and stapled his works into a book. This is the start of his artistic life.

With such a strong, whimsical and secret love, he began to learn painting three times a week in a night school when he was ten. He borrowed money from others to pay for the tuition fee and used the blank head pages of old books bought from peddlers as drawing papers. He even spent 0.12 yuan buying an old color box from a ragpicker to draw his favorite water color. His poor and struggling early life reminds me of a saying of Camus who was born in Algeria, "Men must live and create. Live to the point of tears." Such early life makes a man's pursuit to art as clear as crystal.

Wang did not waste his previous efforts and the passion for art since childhood by getting into the High School of Fine Arts as seventeen. To young men with dreams of art, it was a great opportunity to change their lives. At that time, the High School was in the same yard with the Central Academy of Fine Arts (CAFA). He received a systematic education on art and painting skills as well as lectures by maestros like Wang Shikuo, Dong Xiwen, Wu Zuoren and Li Keran. However, as a diligent student who was used to self-education, he found the CAFA library a more fantastic world. He once read an archive of world famous paintings published in Japan from a friend in Qingdao. He described the reading as "an hour which influenced my whole life". He ploughed into many archives of masters' works which broadened his horizon and set a clear coordinate of his dream of art.

Besides, he spent many nights reading lots of literary classics like the works of Dante, Pushkin, Lermontov and Tolstoy in library and was enlightened by these masterpieces, *Jean-Christophe* and *Life of Beethoven* by Romain Rolland in particular. The lives and spirits of the self made artists grabbed his heart and influenced him profoundly and lastingly. Beethoven's fight against destiny, the passion and sacrifice to art as a saint unfolded an artist's life in front of him at the first time. Since then, He had known what was great life and the model of art. He took a vow of sacrificing himself to art like Warrior Danco(a hero in Gorky's *The Story of Danco*), who took out his own heart and burnt it to show his fellowmen the way out of a forest.

This reminds me of the words in Rilke's *Letters to a Young Poet*. I felt a quiver beyond any words passing through my body when I first read them. "Must I write? You should dig out an answer from the innermost. If you answer it solemnly with 'I do', then construct your life according to your need." "You should accept your title as an artist and bear the duty and greatness."

Of course, young Wang Qingping did not read these sentences at that time. But I guess he must have experienced the same spiritual progress as Rilke. Otherwise, he could not set up such a deep and intrinsic connection with art and stick to it through lifetime. Thanks to the art models like Beethoven, he got through the ordeal with an extraordinary willpower and evaded the distortion of art caused by the Cultural Revolution. And the spirit

and ideal on art formed during his study in the High School of Fine Arts guide him a right direction to art after a long trudge.

Therefore, he saw an artist's life full of creativity and struggles ahead. Nothing more he need could be learned in the classrooms. He wanted to be the followers of Nature and life as Van Gogh, the Russian Ambulant School painters and the ancient Chinese masters who read thousands of books, and traveled thousands of miles around. He quit the study in High School of Fine Arts and left Beijing for a fishing village on the coasts of Yantai in East China's Shandong Province with a dream of sketching from nature, experiencing life and living there forever.

However, under that circumstance, he could not live as he wished but as a screw to be fastened in the social machine. Since the late 1950s, he worked as an art designer in Shandong Provincial Industrial Exhibition Hall and later in Qingdao Arts and Crafts Corporation. These working experiences provided source materials for his art creation anyhow.

Later came the storm of Cultural Revolution, a test to man like him who sticks to his own artistic style and spiritual pursuit. He of course became a target in this formidable movement as he was framed to deliberately cast shadows on leader's face by using the color contrast when drawing a portrait of a leader. All his books, painting albums and more than 500 water color paintings were burnt to ash, even the old color box he bought from a ragpicker was trampled by the rebels. He was criticized, kept apart and investigated and reformed through works like sweeping and trash transportation.

During those long, humiliating and desperate days, he thought of death to finish all. Indeed, he heard the call of death. But that great model of art encouraged him to keep on. Like an old saying "Confront a person with the danger of death and he will fight to live", he gave up all the illusions of reality, took art as a religion and walked on a pilgrimage to art like a believer. He transferred to oil painting, a more expressive way to realize his soul's forever seek for art after all his water color paintings and the old color box were destroyed. He made a pocket painting box which could be held by fingers and got up at five in the morning, before the labor which started at eight, to draw sketches at the seaside, in the bushes or quiet lanes. At nights, he created larger and more completed cloth oil paintings based on the palm-sized sketches made in the early morning at the attic.

In such circumstances and mood, he spent days and nights in drawing still lives and landscapes except the figure painting to avoid politics. The ocean in particular had become a harbor of his heart filled with untold sufferings. When appreciating the ocean he painted during that time, one can feel the communication between him and the ocean and the unconstrained passion. The metal-like brushworks depicting the seawater embracing the rocks express his heart's trembling when facing the roaring sea.

The hardships he weathered during the Cultural Revolution set up a profound connection between him and the art on the ground level. The sea view pictures he drew at that time presented a scene of desolation and revealed his depression for the bleak future and unrealized lofty ambitions. While the quiet lanes, forests and still lives show his desire for peace in the turbulent time. His feelings and moods were reflected on the color, sometimes bright and sometimes gloomy.

However, he is not an abstract expressionist but a faithful disciple of realism due to the deep influence from the Russian-style arts education and

artists like Repin, Surikov and Levitan in his early days. The unfair fate had not changed his love for life and nature. He wants his art to be built on the observation and impression of life and nature.

Therefore, he has a deep and genuine understanding of light and color. His sense and hunt for light which is mirrored on the sea at dawn in particular are so impressive that make the audiences' eyes moist when looking at the fresh glory of dawn. To me, the sense of art and the adversity in life have contributed to his study and eulogy on light. His observation and experience at that time set a solid basis for his later achievements.

His situation turned better as time goes on, from sweeping and transporting trash to making picture frames and later drawing pictures. During that time, he got chances to travel to Shaoxing, Suzhou, Guizhou and Sichuan which enriched his materials and deepened his knowledge on nature, history and culture.

Thanks to the support and comfort from art, he learned to stand the trials calmly. And in the last stage of Cultural Revolution, when a little bit flavor of freedom was smelled, he created several impressive figure paintings. *The Old Teacher* (1975) reveals the faith and dignity of life in a heavy and bitter color; *The Young Boy*, a portrait of his eldest son, shows us the love for life and hope for future in an agile and joyful brushworks. His skills on sketches and still lives also developed gradually. *Still Lives at the Window (Part 1)* in 1976 embraces you with the chilling and fresh air in early spring, with the glass vase, the sturdy and warping flower twigs, dark colored fruits and the reflection of light on the table surface and window glasses. *The Raining Morning* (1976) which depicts a driver in a raincoat walking towards a tricycle for work in a drizzling morning shows us the light of raindrops vividly and even the sound of rain could be heard in that thick and dark hue. His unique artistic conceptions and extraordinary techniques differentiate him from those who were popular in Cultural Revolution!

His firm belief is also represented by a vase of red flowers blossomed in the dim light of night in the *Darkness* (1975). He had protected his spiritual homeland during the long dark nights by persevering with the belief, dignity and conscience of a man. Meanwhile, his art was getting ripe during the combats with miseries and unfairness.

At the end of Cultural Revolution, when the whole nation woke up from a nightmare, Wang Qingping's long-oppressed desire for art creation erupted like a volcano. The bright he pursued for whole life shone upon him again. His representative works at that time, the still lives and landscapes painted in the late 1970s with warm, bright and fresh colors expressed his joy for regaining the bright.

His art style also turned to a critical point. Except deepening and improving the original one, he absorbed the impressionistic skill on light and color and creatively combined the two. The rich and dense hues he used to depict landscape and still lives have a poetic taste and moods, just as some critics said, "the light and air at background with the overflowing mist create a delicate diversity on spaces and fascinating atmosphere."

He is never satisfied with himself. In the several years just after the Cultural Revolution, he drew pictures every day, read books eagerly and tried to understand new things. He was thinking of a breakthrough on art while studying what he had read. He once said with a deep understanding,



“Studying great works are more important than drawing.”

He also favors theme on lives at marketplaces like *Morning Market in Shaoxing* (1979) and *Morning Market on Sifang Road* (1988). The description of marketplaces shows people's hope for life and freedom after a long time oppression in Cultural Revolution. The impressionistic skill of color and light, his life as an ordinary man and his habitually sketching in early morning make him a unique figure on drawing such subject in China. Moreover, these works enable the audience to feel his deep love for life and the primitive pulse of life which cannot be stopped or broken by any power.

He reached a peak of art production from the end of Cultural Revolution to the end of 1980s. As a symbol, *Misty Morning* (1984) presents the old water lanes in South China with an old woman bending down to light the stove under the historic stone-tiled roof. The depiction of the dancing fire is so vivid that one could even smell the coal smokes! Although the sky is full of haze with mist rising from the river, the mist-piercing light has changed the still water into the melting gold!

*Morning Market in Shaoxing* (1979), his another representative work, is a colorful and beautiful song for life. The busy and lively market at dawn, the fire light and sounds of cookers in a crowded snack bar, a street vendor opening an umbrella for his stall, a spinning tricycle and the driver's strained bending back and the crystal streams of raindrops from the dark blue tiled roofs, all these are presented simultaneously with the overlapping and reflecting colors. It is the *Riverside Scene At Qingming Festival* (a famous ancient Chinese picture) in modern time.

However, he could not avoid the pressure given by social changes, the come of a business time in particular. To balance the expenditure on affording parents and raising up children as well as painting, he taught the part-time drawing classes rather than commercializing his art. He follows a rule that economizing daily life, enriching art creation. With “beautiful and famous poems are from a poverty-stricken soul” (a sentence from famous poet Su Dongpo in Song Dynasty) as a motto, he keeps going out to sketch those “out-of-date” and “useless” subjects in a consuming and materialized world. He would rather live a poor, hard but poetic life which was shown as the humble cottages on hills with stone stairs towards there and shining rocks along the road in his works like *A House in Deep Mt. Laoshan*, *He will never* forget his true color and origin.

With such insistence in and faith for art ideal and conscience, since the 1980s and 1990s, he has educated lots of students including his eldest son who are famous artists now and carry on his spirit.

“I contribute my whole life to art,” said Wang. After retirement, he was rejuvenated both in energy and spirit. Since the mid 1990s, he explored new horizon and produced lots of works. In 1996, he visited many art museums and galleries which he has yearned for a long time in France and other European countries. In Paris, he rent an expensive hotel room for a week to draw a café opposite to the window which produces one of his masterpiece *Night in Paris*. The excellent use of color and light depicting the raining night in Paris and expressing the innermost joy is so impressive that is rare even in impressionism paintings. No wonder that he is modest and joyful when talking about the work as “It seems that I truly touched the pulse of art like the overjoyed Corot finally find the secret of drawing a sky in his eighties.”