

主编 李德庚 / 副主编 吴建功 郭红雨

国际现代设计艺术大系

欧洲设计现在时

SURFACE 瑟菲斯工作室



中国青年出版社

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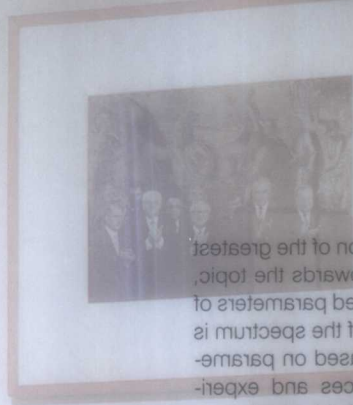
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GRASPING THE SITUATION FROM AN EXTREMELY UNFAVOURABLE VIEWPOINT

Markus Weisbeck, Frankfurt am Main, September 2003



This example may be an illustration of the greatest possible degree of "neutrality" towards the topic, insofar as we accept the predefined parameters of the apparatus. At the other end of the spectrum is a purely subjective translation based on parameters influenced by the preferences and experiences of the respective individual's biography.

This results in an agreement to limit the individual ideas and, on the other hand, the acceptance, albeit critical, of the existing parametric system of the technical description. It is a "neither-nor" state that is not really occupied by any one system, but which, precisely because of this, permits many different shades of uncertainty – a hybrid that seeks to portray the selective individual expression while taking into account the technical parameters.

In this case especially it can be advantageous to build up libraries, lists of forms and elements with no awareness of their function and description. Positioned as combinatorial elements within a certain context, they suddenly take over part of the necessary description. The result and/or the process becomes less clear, tending instead towards a lack of focus that acts as a painterly element without any attempt to illustrate the proximity of its thematic significance. With other elements, it is easy to lose sight altogether of the original target.

This is especially useful when work is undertaken simultaneously on two similarly weighted issues that develop mutually dependently or – directly the opposite – on the degree of individual control – during the positive. Both issues monitor each other during the entire development process. Perhaps it is precisely this process of observation that permits many and varied forms of expression, the results of which nevertheless invariably retain a deliberate similarity to the topic that is to be portrayed. Ideally, therefore, the result is a tautological loop characterized by interpretative play.

It is possible to walk through a group of ball-play- ing children without actually being hit by the ball, if you keep an eye on where the children are looking and so grasp the situation by knowing where the ball is at any given time.

Concepts make no headway, ideas refuse to surface, combinations defy arrangement. What emerges is a great deal of one-dimensionality: one-dimensionality that has no real reason to be and can hardly be pinned as a no-hoper in the virtual wasteland of the basket.

A renewed attempt, more systematically charted and analyzed this time, seeks out the openings that allow a fresh start. The discovery and exploration of a new module, a potential new connection, an approach, but all too logical, all too self-evident, lacking contour, failing to ignite that spark of astonishment when the results are examined.

A huge variety of graphic techniques (including historical techniques), most of which are the results of a new medium and its innovations, serve as vehicles or, rather, as tools, by which to transform a topic into a graphic work. By focusing on the topic that is to be translated in this way, it becomes possible to explore deeper levels, trying to grasp the topic in its entirety, or, by contrast, merely gaining a vague impression of it. Both these approaches have their pros and cons in the translation process: depth of content can become a "bottomless pit," while a superficial impression can take the form of failing to understand the system to be described. If the content is physical, for instance, there is also the possibility of conducting a "neutral" assessment by means of a specially designed apparatus that indicates transformed information according to predefined parameters on a specifically determined scale.

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Concepts make no headway, ideas refuse to surface, combinations defy arrangement. What emerges is a great deal of one-dimensionality: one-dimensionality that has no real *raison d'être* and can happily be binned as a no-hoper in the virtual wastepaper basket.

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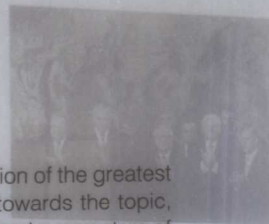
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从一群玩儿球的孩子中穿过时，只要留心他们的目光所在，即便看不见球当时的位置，你也知道自己不会被砸到——

藩篱之中，纵览全局

9

马库斯·维斯伯克，法兰克福，2003年9月

世界上的很多事都不能以固有的角度理解，设计中的情况也同样如此。只注重观念的延展，你就拿不出具体的解决办法；光靠脑子里的点子，便很难保证视觉表现的成功；仅仅建立事物之间的联想，也不能使整个信息传达过程安排就绪。其实，现实世界中根本没有“一维”事物的立足之地。不必犹豫，应该痛快地将它们拖到回收站里去。

像历史一直重复的那样，人的探索欲会一次次被所面临的问题激发出来。在新时代到来时，人们想通过比以往更加系统的计划与分析，发现一个崭新的模式、一种潜在的联系、一扇通向新空间的大门，没有人能够确定这种探索的终极会是什么。但是，无论怎样做，当评定其成效的时候，你会发现，一切都太逻辑化了，既缺乏足够的完整性，也不能带给人焕然一新的激情。

从信息视觉传达的发展来看，人们创造出了十分丰富的视觉设计方法与技巧，它们往往是媒体创新及应用的结果。通过这些途径，或者说，借用这些方法与技巧，人们把某一主题或信息转化成了视觉表现。如果我们把目光回撤到视觉转化模式及其背后的主题内容与信息本身，便不难发现，其中有更多东西值得我们去思考：是全面了解主题内容与信息并将其完全表达出来，还是仅仅去获得一个大致的印象并模糊地传达这些信息？应该说，两种方法，各有利弊：深度挖掘信息内容固然不错，但整个过程往往会成为一个“无底洞”，设计师容易迷失在其中；而“获得一个大致的印象”虽简便，却可能由于缺乏对主题内容和信息的清晰理解，容易指引公众误入歧途。其实，假设信息内容属于自然的、科学性的范畴，设计师借助一些原本已为大众接受的计算、理解模式（如度量衡），便可以将已转换过的信息表示出来。即使找不到可以借用的模式，自己设定一种也未尝不可。通过这种“跳板”，视觉传达或许便能以一种“中性状态”接近主题本身。

然而不能忽视的是，一旦我们借助某个模式，就意味着我们已经接受了对该模式的先验理解。从另一个角度分析，转化与传达本身同样是非常主观的行为，因为任何所谓客观的转化与传达，其基点都是创作者个人的选择，而凡是个人选择，都不可能避免个人喜好、个人经历，这些非客观因素的影响。正如上一段的分析结果证明的那样，要准确传达信息内容，就必须限制个人选择所造成的主观性；而反过来，那种借助某些技术参数模式也并不是一贯可靠的。恰恰就是这种“一维”的思维方式造成了左右不是的“两难”处境——无论采取哪一种都将存在巨大的缺陷。正因为如此，个人理解的表达+技术模式的辅助，两者兼顾，或许是最佳解决方式。

这样，在面对主题时，首先就要收集相关的形式与视觉元素，而不必先考虑它们有什么作用，代表什么意义。因为特定环境中的“上下文关系”可以将这些视觉元素贯穿起来。突然，你会发现，它们会自动显现出一些主题所要表达的东西，而视觉元素转化的结果和（或）过程却变得模糊起来。没有哪个信息元素是焦点所在，它们都失去了个体意义，就像绘画中的某一笔或某块色彩一样，即使你靠近了，盯住某一点看，但退后一步，它们便都融入到其他元素中，再也寻不着了。因为，在这个新结构中，所有个体视觉元素都不再是某一具体信息的载体，而成为新的共生链中的一个分子。

当一件作品同时传达两个同等重要的内容点时，这种信息转化方式会变得更有效。因为同一主题下的两个内容点必定存在某种关系，或相互依存，或直接对立（这取决于不同人的不同理解）。在信息传达中，两个内容点被表现、接受与理解的过程也都是彼此制约的。也许正因为如此，才需要在视觉表现中给形式与元素更多样、更广阔自我演化空间，而主题内容的传达也会因此而更完整、更准确。

最终，十分理想地，在反复点题之后，主题内容会一览无余地展现在公众眼前，就像是一场戏剧经过了充分的诠释与演绎。

We are right in the middle of things, which can be a perfect place. This is not a specific moment to stop and take stock of the work of Surface, but it is a crucial slice from an ongoing and constantly mutating practice. Surface slip – and they do not slip – they retain a thoughtful, reflected and constructive relationship with the factors that we know they must consider and their most significant work also floats free of all directed links. The work of Surface carries some clear traits. Primary is the considered use of precise typography. This would seem like an obvious statement when thinking of people whose design is mainly graphic, but in their case the text is significant in its relative understatement and its tendency towards abstraction and contradiction in terms of its subordination – then primary – then subordination. The text shimmers then sits – pulling in and out of focus in relation to the whole. There are moments when the type dissolves into a classical formal interplay, but that moment of dissolution is temporary each time. There are other moments when it sits mute and slides around the nebulous forms that appear to support it.

Surface are creating the clearest images from some opaque sources and vice versa. At all times it appears that there is a lucid play with signification and form. Yet at some moments you are surprised when you stop to review the elements that have led to this assumption. The work is the creation of a sequence of functional parallels in relation to whatever issue is under consideration. Work by Surface never appears to be from "in-house," it always carries a sequence of crafted markers that speak of conscious acknowledgment of the achievements of the past combined with a sophisticated neo-innovative ability to create a matrix of rolling stability in the present. It is the creation of a set of designed markers that sit between the subject and the reviewer/passerby that leads towards the subject while at the same time retaining a rigorous independence from the world of relativism and imbalanced ultra-reflection.

Because we deal with designed things at all times we imagine that the tools used to analyse their successes and failures are wide-ranging and well understood. Yet because the primary discourse of twentieth-century modernism was disciplinary the subsequent critique of design, once it was forced free from its relatives, is undergoing constant revision. Within this maelstrom there is a constant struggle to ensure that good work exists within a context of relativism and mediocrity. Surface are involved in a sequence of processes that grows and shifts in relation to the subject. They create a sequence of semi-autonomous signifiers that permit space to exist between the subject and the user without that gap being a zone of alienation but without filling it with a great quantity of free-floating visual noise either. The work of Surface reconfigures the subject. Whether dealing with cultural institutions, contemporary music or the corporate sphere, what they offer looks between the foreground and the understructure.

Surface are collaborators who shadow play in and out of dynamic relationships with the partner in question. Their approach to a sequence of problems never overwhelms the dichotomy at hand but it can sweep beyond it to replace the apparent paradox with a new network of superpositions.

SLIPPAGE-NON-SLIPPAGE CULTURAL LAYERING AND GRAPHIC PRECISION

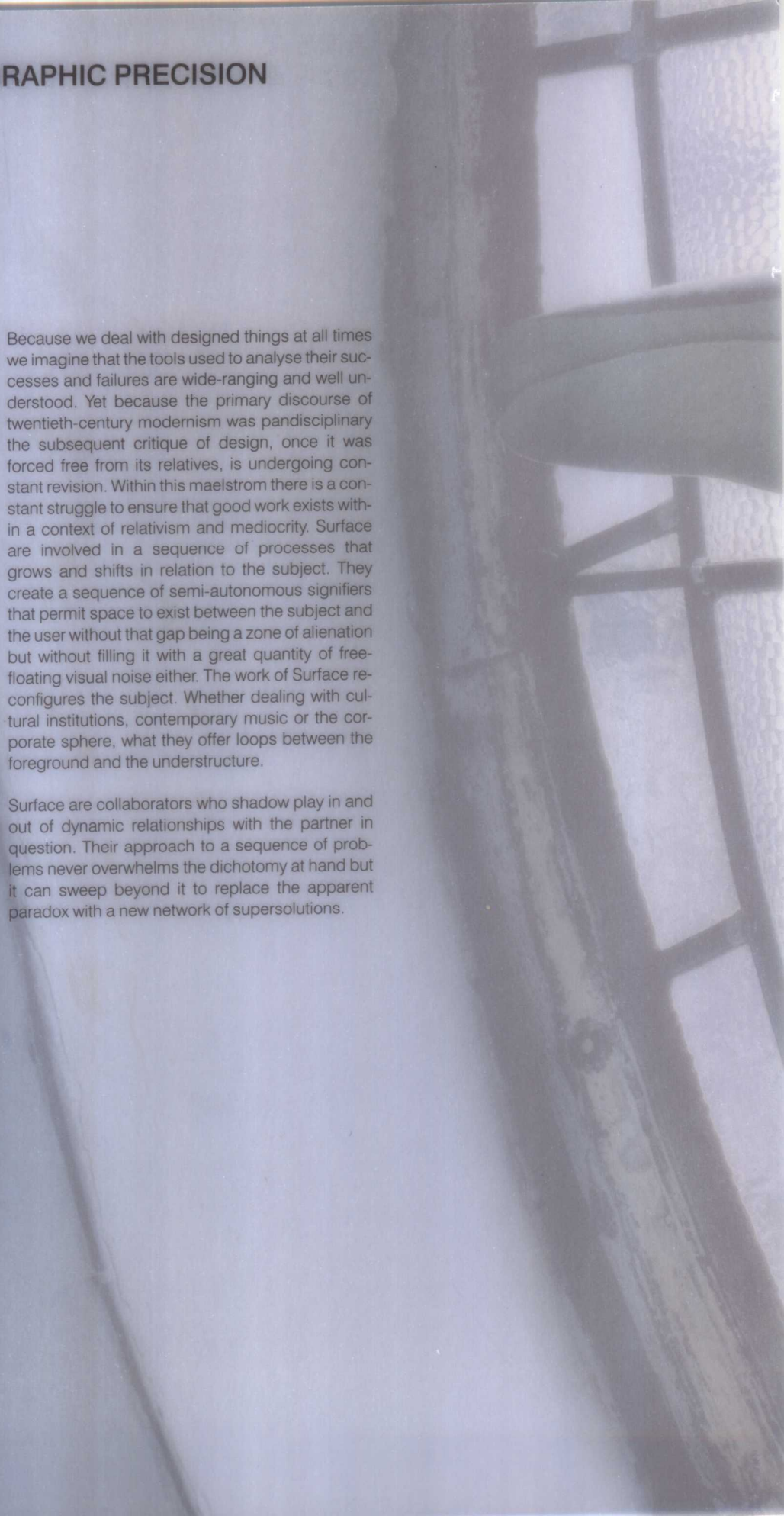
Liam Gillick, New York, May 2003

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利亚姆·吉里克，纽约，2003年5月

恰好处于事件的中心，或许是一种理想之境。停下来对Surface的作品加以审度，并不意味着得固守某一特定时刻。从一场正在进行且持续变化的实践中选取一个至关重要的片段，才是我们要做的事情。Surface的设计里充满了若即若离的东西，即使他们最意味深长的作品，也像“不系之舟”那样无拘无束。可我们知道，他们与必须考虑的设计因素之间一直保持着那种经过深思熟虑、相互映衬并含有助益的关系。

Surface的设计有着鲜明的特点，其中最根本的，是对清晰版式的精心运用。凡遇到以平面图形为创作对象的设计师，似乎都可以这么说。但单就Surface而言，文字本身形态虽相对简单，其价值却非比寻常。它们在设计元素中所扮演的角色反复切换于主角——配角之间，活跃与平和的姿态交替出现。在整个信息视觉传播过程中，文字熠熠生辉，然后悄然褪下，它们时而处于视觉和思维的焦点，时而又游离其外。有时，看上去文字会淹没在画面元素的构成与相互作用中，但这往往是瞬间现象，在其他大多数情况下，文字周围那些光怪陆离的图形元素反而成为了配角，即便文字本身并不一定表现得很活跃。

Surface正在从不透明的信息资源中创造最清晰的图像，或者说，反之亦然。他们的设计似乎一直是意义与形式之间的一场转换游戏。当你从那些导致自己作出想当然判断的画面元素中跳出来时，就会有如梦初醒的感觉。与设计师考虑的所有问题相比，这一结果的出现，是因为设计元素之间有一系列功能上的相似之处。Surface的工作从不“自说自话”，他们借助了人类自身所具有的、复杂的新直觉能力，使一系列精心设计的符号于当下建立起了一种恒动的母体结构，里面包含了对过去的一种有意识的认可。Surface的目的是在设计中创造出一整套的传播介质，将设计主体（即信息源）与使用者/观看者/过路者（即信息接受人）连接在一起，并正确引导后者向前者靠近。但与此同时，在这个“牵一发而动全身”的信息世界里，设计元素仍恪守着独立的准则，并没有失去其固有的特性。

因为总在论述这些经过设计的事物，所以，我们通常会想当然地认为那些用来分析成功与失败的准则放之四海而皆准。然而，由于20世纪现代主义的最初叙述都是泛学术性的，随后出现的设计评论，即使与之划清了界限，恐怕仍然有许多观点有待修正。因此，在这个泛泛而谈的理论风潮中，为使那些佳作能在相对主义和平庸当道的环境里生存下去，抗争是不可避免的。作为抗争者之一，Surface历经了一连串成长与转变的过程。他们最终创造出一系列具有半独立性质的符号能指。所谓“半独立”，是指设计主体和使用者之间有一定的灵活空间存在，这一空间既不会因扩张而造成信息在传递中的断裂，也不会因填充而塞进大量无意义的视觉噪音。Surface的工作是使设计对象改头换面（信息主体做视觉转化）。无论针对文化机构、现代音乐还是企业社团，他们均展现出一种在前台（视觉表现）与后台（信息源头）之间不断转换的移花接木之术。

皮影戏里的一切是时隐时现的，因为操纵者在手中的道具快撞到一起时，总会令其中一个从一旁绕过。Surface的作品是若即若离的，因为他们和这些幕后操纵者一样，遇到表面上相互抵触的事物时，不是去强行克服，而是用一套全新的体系去解决。

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"Gracefulness" does not mean highbrow art and literature. Since design is organic, "Gracefulness" has a double meaning here: first, the designer should have the ability to master the information precisely and apply visual language and grammar flexibly. Second, the designed product itself should be of artistic. The world created by the works of Surface is full of vigor and interest. Information is not the collected still specimen, but what is living in original ecology. Art is not a beautiful coat but an existent style of information. Look at the deductive creation of Surface, you can completely relax yourself; the information can reach your heart through your eyes and your sense and moisten everything unconsciously.

"To achieve Faithfulness is already difficult enough." Don't forget the impairment mentioned by the founder of these translation criteria, Yanlu. As a matter of fact, when it comes to any means of information transforming, "value equivalent" and "effect equivalent" may be hard to seek. Therefore, for the certain words above, there is no need to go word by word. Information communicating is not propaganda, but speaking. Surface's visual creation has already made it, so should the pretace be.

languages. As far as literal information is concerned, it is not easy to transmit the content from one language to another accurately, fluently and excellently. And there is no doubt it is more complex to accurately transform and transmit through visual means, what originally might be entities, rhymes, other visual forms and even a kind of conceptive information. Since Surface claims to do "visual translation", it is not difficult to find that "Faithfulness, Expressiveness and Gracefulness" provides us with a perfect analogy. It is a good approach to analyze and understand their visual design from this point.

"Faithfulness" is a fundamental principle for transforming information. That is to say, in the process of information transforming, accuracy is of priority. Confusing and misleading the public should be avoided. Surface's regular practice is to deconstruct the content and information with concept, and then rebuild it in visual form. In their works, the information is brief, clear and direct, and the principal part of design will never be covered by garish visual effect. Owing to the great difference in information presentation, it may be difficult for you to find the exact "characters", "words" or even "sentences" corresponding to the "original text" in their "translation". But with the honest work of Surface, the clients may find what they want to express have been accurately presented in public in visual form. And the public will find, if they want to get the information they need, they do not have to cast around for breaking through the flashy surface of visual media: the media form itself is media content as well.

"Expressiveness" is the essential requirement for the transmitting channel and structure established by designers. To transform the abstract and non-visual information to the visible, sensible and realizable entity, it is requisite to take media, transmitting means, graphic figure and picture construction into overall consideration. What must be borne in mind is whether it can form a reasonable and fluent information channel with all aspects colligated. The value Surface's design embodies does not lie in the superficial effect of rationality of the information circulating process integrated in the product. To achieve this goal, Surface tries "by fair means or foul": they do not only focus on traditional visual elements such as photos, fonts, colors and picture composition, but also focus on the larger scope that media and

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People need to express themselves and communicate with others. The information they send has to be transmitted in a certain form, so people create languages and characters, music and graphics. These symbols are all information vehicles, which are adopted to indicate a given concept and reflect a given phenomenon. However, information communicating by a certain symbol system is still restricted by many factors. Most people in the artistic circle can not understand education, most modern people can not understand ancient prose, and most Chinese can not understand English, because various information-transmitting patterns have absolutely different "rules of coding and decoding". Meanwhile, people's capability and means for information receiving are different due to the difference in age and the environment they live in. Any qualitative diversity in varied fields, groups and cultures will make it difficult to exchange information. So, the society need someone to transform the information originally directed to a given field, a given group of people and a given environment to another field, another group and another environment. Transforming the information in one language to another is what we called "translation". And transforming information to the form that could be directly perceived by eyes from other forms is called "visual design".

In China, "Faithfulness, Expressiveness and Gracefulness" is regarded as the literature translation criterion which points out the three goals that the translation should achieve. When translating a text from one language to another, what should be achieved first is "Faithfulness", that is to say, to be faithful to the original text and to faithfully translate it for some purpose. And then, what should be achieved is "Expressiveness", which is to make the translated text fluent without obscuring, conforming to the custom of the target language and completely embodying the spirit of the original text. Finally, as the highest goal, "Gracefulness" means to vividly and gracefully represent "literary grace" and to "recreate" the meaning in the target language without being restricted by its original form, which is based on a thorough understanding of both

"FAITHFULNESS, EXPRESSIVENESS AND GRACEFULNESS"

By Li Degeng, Leipzig, Sept, 2003

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