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Shanghai Art Museum

陈显栋

CHEN HSIENTUNG

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具有人性亲切感的诗象画

——陈显栋晋京展作品集序

王仲
美术杂志总编辑
2008年1月
于索洛维茨基画室

认识台湾画家陈显栋先生的艺术是非常偶然的。那是1999年在深圳评选第九届全国美展港、澳、台作品的现场，挂着琳琅满目候选作品的几大间屋子里，一幅摆放在墙角地上的气质不凡的作品从远处将我吸引到跟前，我兴趣盎然地蹲下身来细赏。收件者告诉我，这是台湾画家陈显栋的作品，作者满怀参加大陆全国美展的热情，不辞劳顿亲自带着这件作品赶到深圳来参加候选。这位台湾画家的不俗画作和参加大陆全画美展的热情，给我留下了很深刻的印象。我请收件的责任人帮我转告这位台湾画家，我希望他能寄些图片和文字资料来，以便我找机会在《美术》杂志上向大陆美术界介绍。

事隔不久，一天我在《美术》杂志办公室接到一个从台湾打来的电话，电话里传来一位普通话清晰、语气温文尔雅的男士声音，这就是陈显栋先生。半年之后，陈显栋先生随一个大陆观光团来京，我们得以第一次见面。这是一位充满青春活力、比实际年龄年轻得多的长者，为人热情而诚笃。

《美术》杂志新世纪2000年第一期，发表并介绍了陈显栋先生的作品，引起了大陆美术界对这位台湾画家的关注。接着经我推荐，陈显栋先生又两次有作品参加“北京国际美术双年展”，并两次都热情地赶到北京来参加盛会交流活动，由此他的作品和他本人也就逐渐为大陆美术界所熟悉。作为友人，我曾多次建议他能有机会到北京来办个展，这样可以较为充分地向大陆同仁展示自己艺术追求的面貌，同时也可促进两岸艺术的深入交流。陈显栋先生本人也非常有此愿望。经过几年的酝酿和筹划，这个愿望终于能够得以实现了——今年阳春三月陈显栋先生的个展将在中国美术馆展出，这无疑也是一件令人可喜可贺的盛事。

作为一个苛刻的艺术欣赏者，我喜欢陈显栋先生的作品。在艺坛上画此类画的人不少，但看他们的画作我似乎从来没有真正动过心，可以说，陈显栋先生是此类画中目前真正让我动心的唯一一位。画此类画的一些国际知名度很高的被称为大师的画家的作品，我看后只是在认知层面上感到新鲜奇异，但在感情层面上却很有距离，虽有评论界的高度赞誉，我在实际感情上难有同构共振的自然引发，不能真正动心，在自己

的艺术欣赏领域里只好敬而远之。正如一位媒人向一位男士介绍一位女士，虽然佳言美语颇丰，但见面后男士不能真正动心也是无奈。艺术与爱情好像有某些类似之处，自己的真实审美直觉恐怕是决定一切的，他人再说什么也没有用。我看陈显栋先生的作品和看上述某些作品时的真实感觉不一样，陈显栋先生的作品让我感到很亲切，在情感上没有隔阻，一见就能画我交融，好像见到了自己很愿意见的很亲近的人一样，心中充满愉悦。

现代艺术美学界把问题搞得太神秘太复杂了，其实艺术美学的真问题是很单纯的——它只需要艺术欣赏者的审美直觉来检验和判定一切。作为一个艺术评论家（其实我也就是一个艺术欣赏的平常人），你问我为什么喜欢陈显栋先生的作品，我会告诉你：因为它引起我喜欢，所以我喜欢它；如果不能够引起我喜欢，我怎会违心地说我喜欢它呢？具体来说，我之所以喜欢陈显栋先生的作品，是因为它充满了人类亲切的生活诗意，充满了人性中最亲切最优美的情感和思绪。再简言之，我之所以喜欢陈显栋先生的作品是因为他充满了人性的亲切感。“人性的亲切感”——这恐怕就是我最喜欢陈显栋先生艺术的根本原由。许芳智先生说：“大自然是陈显栋老师创作的主要题材”，确实，陈显栋先生表现的对象是大自然，但我想强调指出的是，这个“大自然”不是一般的大自然，不是人类史前的大自然，而是有人类关照的大自然，是“人化大自然”，是充满人性的大自然。站在陈显栋先生的画作前，我们会感到一种温暖的生活亲切感，会情不自禁地发出一种感恩的叹谓：“啊，活着多么美好啊！”我想车尔尼雪夫斯基的美学定义“生活即美”的真实含意恐怕也在于此。陈显栋先生的艺术所展现的，不像某些流行大师所表现的那种虚空的、无生命的、阴森的、死寂的神秘或那种动乱的、狂暴的、毫无安全感的灾变世界，令观者难排恐惧和绝望和窒息思绪。他的作品与这种情绪截然相反，充满人性的诗意和生命的喜悦，虽然这里也有某种神秘性，但这种难以言传的神秘意味却是热爱生活的人们所希冀的一种美学期盼和意外惊喜。认识陈显栋先生本人的朋友都会有这种认识：画如其人，他本人的生活态度和他的艺术追求是一致的，在生活中他不是一个心灵遍布伤痕的愤世嫉俗的悲观存在主义者，而是一个热爱生活、积极有为、充满感恩和爱心的艺术家，他爱亲人、爱朋友、爱这个激发艺术创造灵感的生命世

界。我想这样心理健康的艺术家，是绝不会有兴趣去搞那种心理变态的狂乱绘画，也更不会跑到大庭广众面前脱光衣服制造轰动效应的所谓行为艺术。坦率地讲，有什么样的人生态度就会有什么样的艺术，不信，你可以随意找一个艺术家来考察考察。

在时下流行于世的那般浮躁不安的艺术潮流面前，我觉得陈显栋先生这种追求心灵的宁静、含蓄、诗意、和谐的艺术走向更显其难得与珍贵。孔子虽然不信“人性本善”，但他坚信人类向善的前景是美好的。我想陈显栋先生能有这种引人向善的乐观艺术追求，无疑与孔老夫子的理想有某种超时空的心灵沟通。

陈显栋先生的作品洋溢宜人的诗意与音乐感。其实溯其源来讲，诗歌和音乐并不是人类凭空从外创造出来的艺术形式，人类本性之中本来就内在地潜存着诗意和乐思的抒发本能。正是由于这种人性本质，在求生存劳动过程中不断地对象化冲动，才造就了这两种艺术形式的诞生，绘画亦然。我不知道陈显栋先生绘画的诗性品格和音乐品格是经过一个什么样的过程形成，这方面我没有和他交换过意见，不能想当然地乱发议论，但我相信这和陈显栋先生这方面的素养有直接关联。但我可以可靠地说从他作品画面的实际效果可以看到，把音乐引入绘画，陈显栋先生比康定斯基（Wassily Kandinsky）高明而成功，前者把音乐引入视觉可以意会的意境，而后者只是把机械的节奏符号生硬地搬上画面，只能提示指挥家，不能让广大的观众感性地意会。

熟悉陈显先生的朋友都知道，他很重视研究材质、颜料和特殊技法，但他探索这些表现手段的目的很明确——为他营造令人意外惊奇的人性诗境服务。我们在欣赏陈显栋先生的作品时，首先是被他那令人心旷神怡的诗境所抓住、所感动，然后在琢磨这种神奇诗境是怎么营造出来的时候才会逐渐发现他在材质、颜料和特技上的独具匠心。这个先后关系摆对很重要，这是保证感人之作能够源源不断问世的前题原则。不像有些朋友费了九牛二虎之力营造出来的画作，我们从中只能看漂亮色块和奇异肌理的精心构成配置，但却无法从中发现任何人文意蕴，这应该只能是一块很杰出的宾馆墙饰或花裙布料。

关于陈显栋先生的艺术，有朋友认为应该归类“抽象画”，有朋友认为应该归类为“意象画”，我认为他的艺术独树一帜，不归类为好，就叫“诗象画”更为贴切。关于“抽象画”一词，我在80年代与老美学家洪毅先生的美学通信中已明确表示，我们认为“抽象画”一词是日常用语中的误用，“抽象”是看不见的思维功能。时下的“意象画”一词也并不适用陈显栋先生的艺术。“意象画”论者讲主观的“意”和客观的“象”的艺术统一，而陈显栋先生的“象”不是“客观的象”，而是“诗象”。你说这是山，但仔细看又不是山；你说这是湖，仔细看又不像是湖；你说是农舍，仔细看又不能确定是农舍。这是似是而非的“诗象”，它给你某种物象联想而你又绝不能确定其称谓。可贵的是，这些“似是而非的诗象”并不是一些冷冰冰无生命的符号，它们的有机构成能够唤起你对熟悉的、亲切的、生活经验的诗意联想，但又绝不是一幅意象风景画。如果你观画的感觉直接落实到某种具体物象的认知，诗意的联想就会受到削弱，如果完全引不起对熟悉的生活经验的物象联想，这种诗意联想又唤不起亲切感，这种既能够联想起风景又不是风景意象画的诗意画，正是陈显栋先生独特探索的成功之处。陈显栋先生创造的“似是而非的诗象”之妙，也不是齐白石老先生所说的“似与不似”之妙，齐白石老先生的“似与不似”讲的是，我主观画的白菜“似”实际客观存在的白菜，但这种“水墨白菜”又“不似”（不等于）实际客观存在的“真实白菜”，但前后两者都可以确定无疑地称之为“白菜”，而陈显栋先生所创造的“诗意形象”却不能确定无误地指称为某具体事物。我认为，陈显栋先生的画既不是西方所谓的“抽象画”，也不是中国的所谓“意象画”，它是介于两者之间的“抽象画”，这无疑是陈显栋先生为世界美术史作出的独特贡献。其实如何归类或如何称谓并不重要，重要的是这种艺术所表达的思想情感及其表现力是否感人、服人、益于审美需求和精神需求。我赞赏陈显栋先生的不仅仅是他手法的独创，而更是这种手法的独创所成功表现了感人的“具有人性亲切感的诗象境界”。

陈显栋先生年近80岁了，但仍保持着年轻人的生活态度和旺盛活力，我相信他独创的诗象画今后一定还会不断有令人惊喜的佳作精品问世。藉此机会，我谨以老朋友的身份，衷心地祝他这次在北京中国美术馆的80回顾展览获得圆满成功。

Poetry and Human Warmth

—The Chen Hsientung Beijing Exhibition

Wang Zhong
Editor-in-chief of Art Magazine
January, 2008
Suoluoweikanji Studio, Beijing

It was largely by happenstance that I became acquainted with the art of Chen Hsientung. In 1999 in Shenzhen, I was involved with selecting paintings from Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan for the 9th National Fine Arts Exhibition. At the preparatory site, a brilliant and colorful array of paintings was scattered through several large rooms, but one, leaning against the wall in a far corner, projected a character and presence that drew me across the room. Excitedly I knelt down to take a closer look. I was told it was by Taiwanese artist Chen Hsientung, who, in his enthusiasm for the exhibition, had traveled to Shenzhen to personally deliver the painting for the selection process. So impressed was I with the depth and character of this artist's work and his keenness to participate in China's national exhibition that I asked the exhibition organizers to contact him on my behalf, hoping to obtain images and background information on his work through which, in *Art Magazine*, I could introduce Chen Hsientung to the art world of China.

Not long after, in the offices of *Art Magazine*, I received a call from Taiwan; the male voice I heard, the voice of Chen Hsientung, spoke crisp, clear Mandarin in warm and elegant tones. Half a year later when he arrived with a tour group in Beijing, we met, and in person, I saw an elderly man, warm and sincere in manner, who projected a degree of youth and energy that belied his actual age.

In 2000, *Art Magazine's* first issue of the new millennium brought this Taiwanese artist to the attention of the mainland China art world. Later, through my introduction, he also participated in two Beijing International Art Biennales, where his presence at the exhibition and related events brought him and his art into closer contact with artists and art lovers in China. As a friend of the artist, I encouraged him to hold a solo exhibition in Beijing to enhance awareness of his art in the mainland, and to encourage stronger exchanges between Taiwan and China. These were Chen's aims also, and now, after

several years of planning and preparation, our goal is being realized—Chen Hsientung's solo exhibition, an event worthy of celebration, is taking place in March of this year in Beijing's China National Art Museum. *

As a critic and art lover, my standards are demanding, but I hold great admiration for the art of Chen Hsientung. While his favored genres are ones he shares with other artists, few of their works ever move me as his do. Viewing the works of those other artists—some of whom enjoy significant international status—I experience a transient sense of novelty or stimulation at the perceptual level, but find little that draws me in emotionally. Despite their critical acclaim, I feel no natural kinship with their work, and can only feel a kind of detached respect for their art, rather than love. Art, in fact, is like love: While a matchmaker can try to bring two people together, a matchmaker's glowing descriptions of a potential mate can never ignite a spark where no mutual attraction exists. Likewise, in art, subjective feeling and aesthetics are all that ultimately count: My experience of work by the above artists is simply not the same as with Chen Hsientung, whose paintings invoke the intimacy and approachability of a meeting with an old friend. As soon as I set my eyes on them, they draw me into their special world.

Much of what is happening in art and aesthetics today has grown overly complex and mysterious, when in fact the real question is simple: what is required is simply that viewers examine and judge works using their own aesthetic intuition. As an art critic (and as an ordinary person who loves art), I would say to you I like Chen Hsientung's art because I respond to it instinctively, and it would go against my conscience to praise it if I didn't feel that instinctive attraction. Beyond that, I would say Chen's art possesses a poetry that is intimately connected with our personal experience, a kind of beauty in thought and feeling that is near and dear to the human heart. Most simply, I love it for

the great human warmth it exudes. Xu Fangzhi has said that "nature is the chief subject of Chen Hsientung's art," and Chen indeed gives expression to nature through his art, though I hasten to point out that this is not nature as we imagine it in a prehistoric or primordial state, but a nature humanized by concern and emotional involvement. Chen Hsientung's art presents us with the warmth of his feeling for life, and encountering his work, we can hardly avoid saying, with a thankful sigh, "Isn't life good?" Here we find the true meaning of Chernyshevsky's definition of the beautiful: "Life is beauty." Chen differs from those artists who portray the world as barren and lifeless, with a kind of ghastly mysteriousness; neither does he present us with a shattered, insecure world of upheaval, stifling in its fear and despair, as some others do. The mood of Chen's art is diametrically opposed to these: he gives us poetry from the heart and a sense of the joy of life. His work does possess mystery, but the ineffable mystery of Chen's work responds to the aesthetic longings of those who truly love life, and the mystery of his art holds unexpected surprises. Those who know Chen well know how much his work is informed with his personal outlook. His is not the scarred and cynical outlook of a pessimistic existentialist, but that of an artist with an engaged, thankful, and loving personality, one who loves friends and family and the living world that is the source of his inspiration. Given Chen's healthy outlook, it's hard to imagine him having much interest in some of today's warped, frenzied painting experiments, much less in the shock effect of something like disrobing for an audience as part of a performance art spectacle.

Readers can sense for themselves, in the work of any artist, how deeply their personal worldviews are reflected by the nature of their artistic output. Against the backdrop of much of the edgy, rash, impetuous art currently enjoying a vogue, Chen Hsientung's art seems all the more valuable for its sense of reserve, for its tranquility, poetry, and harmony. While the ancient philosopher Confucius did not believe that human nature was necessarily inherently good, he nevertheless believed in the notion that humanity seeks

what is good. The affirmation of Chen's art encourages us to find the good in what we see, and speaks to us of a worldview that transcends time and shares its ideals with this great thinker of ancient China.

Chen's art exudes a most appealing poetry and musical feeling. Music and poetry were not artistic forms that human beings created out of nothing; the impulse toward lyrical expression through music and verse arises from our deepest instincts. These deep impulses, throughout the course of the human struggle for survival, have continually sought objectified form, and thus were born our music and poetic arts. The same is true of painting. I cannot speak directly of what process might have led to the uniquely musical and poetic character of Chen's art, having not discussed this with him, though I would hazard a guess that the artist's cultivation in these areas is a significant factor. But from what I experience when in contact with the paintings themselves, I can say with certainty that Chen succeeds even more brilliantly than did Wassily Kandinsky at invoking the atmosphere of music on the canvas. Kandinsky's is often only a stiff, mechanical placement of rhythmic symbols on the canvas, which suggests a conductor at work but cannot make the viewer feel the pulse of the music, whereas Chen Hsientung's very conception embodies a music that viewers feel and sense instinctively.

Chen's close acquaintances know how thoroughly he studies every material, every pigment and technical effect, but his experiments with technical methods have a clearly defined goal—to serve in the creation of the amazing, poetic vistas we find in his paintings. A Chen Hsientung painting first seizes us with its refreshing expansiveness, and only later, when we try to discern why his conception has effect, do we gradually discover the unique craftsmanship involved in the materials, pigments, and special techniques he employs. The sequence of these reactions is important: they are the prerequisites that guarantee the artist will continue to produce similarly moving and intriguing works. By contrast,

while some of my artist friends expend similar effort in creating paintings, in the end they convey only a sense of carefully arranged color blocks and textural effects in works that lack real human resonance—certainly outstanding choices for the decoration of hotel walls or printed fabric patterns, but little else.

Some may classify Chen's painting as "abstract," while for others it is "imagistic." For me, it is unique and best remains unclassified, though I suppose it could appropriately be called a kind of "poetic representation." In the '80s, corresponding with the aesthetician Hong Yiran, we decided that the term "abstract" was often improperly used, because abstraction is an invisible property of thought, and that "imagistic" was also an inappropriate term for Chen Hsientung's work. Advocates of imagistic painting speak of a union of subjective concept and objective image, but the images in Chen's paintings are not "objective images," but "poetically evocative images." You can say that a particular image represents a mountain, yet on closer examination it does not; likewise what may first appear to be a lake is actually unlike a real lake, and our first impression of other images, that they resemble rustic buildings, may also be difficult to sustain with certainty. The poetic, evocative images employed by Chen are most deceptive: while they evoke associations with apparently familiar objects, we remain uncertain what name to give those objects. Importantly, these poetic forms are not cold, lifeless symbols, but images that, through their organic arrangement, stimulate our memory of forms familiar to us from our daily experience, though at the same time, they remain distinct from any objective presentation of, say, the forms of a landscape. Whenever we perceive distinct, recognizable forms in a painting, its ability to evoke poetic associations will be diminished, yet if that same work evokes nothing familiar from our own lives, it will remain distant and fail to draw us into its embrace. This artist's poetic representations, at once evocative of landscapes yet strangely containing no identifiable landscape images, constitute an artistic territory that Chen Hsientung has navigated with a success few artists ever enjoy.

These images are distinct from those the venerable painter Qi Baishi described as being "like, yet not like" what they represent: what Qi Baishi intends is the idea that a subjective, painted version of a cabbage is "like" the cabbages that have objective existence in our world, even though an ink-wash painting of a cabbage is of course "unlike," or cannot be equated with, the objective cabbages that exist in reality. But whichever of Qi Baishi's cabbages we are looking at, they can be easily ascertained to be what we call "cabbages." The poetic imagery of Chen Hsientung's art, however, can never be equated, finally and unmistakably, with any particular items from the real world. Thus I believe that Chen Hsientung's paintings are neither what would be called abstraction in the West nor what the Chinese call lyrical imagery, but are a kind of poetic representation lying precisely between the two, and it is this type of imagery which is Chen's special contribution to the history of art. But classifications and terminology are, finally, unimportant: What matters is whether the thought and emotion embodied in these works, their expressive power, is something that moves us, that serves and enriches us, at the aesthetic and spiritual level. What I admire in Chen's work is not just the quality of his technical accomplishment, but the fact that by means of his distinctive technique, he successfully communicates a world of evocative poetic images that satisfy with their warmth and humanity.

Though this is Chen Hsientung's 80th year, he retains both the vigor and the outlook of a much younger person. I believe we can therefore look forward to more of Chen's surprising creations in the unique style of poetic representation he has created. Today, as one who has enjoyed long friendship with this artist, I extend to him my heartfelt wishes for the greatest possible success in this, his 80-year retrospective at the China National Art Museum.