



古老的现代

A N C I E N T M O D E R N

韩美林岩画艺术集

HAN MEILIN ROCK ART

韩美林 著
Han Meilin Create

韩美林艺术基金会 编
Edit by Han Meilin Art Foundation



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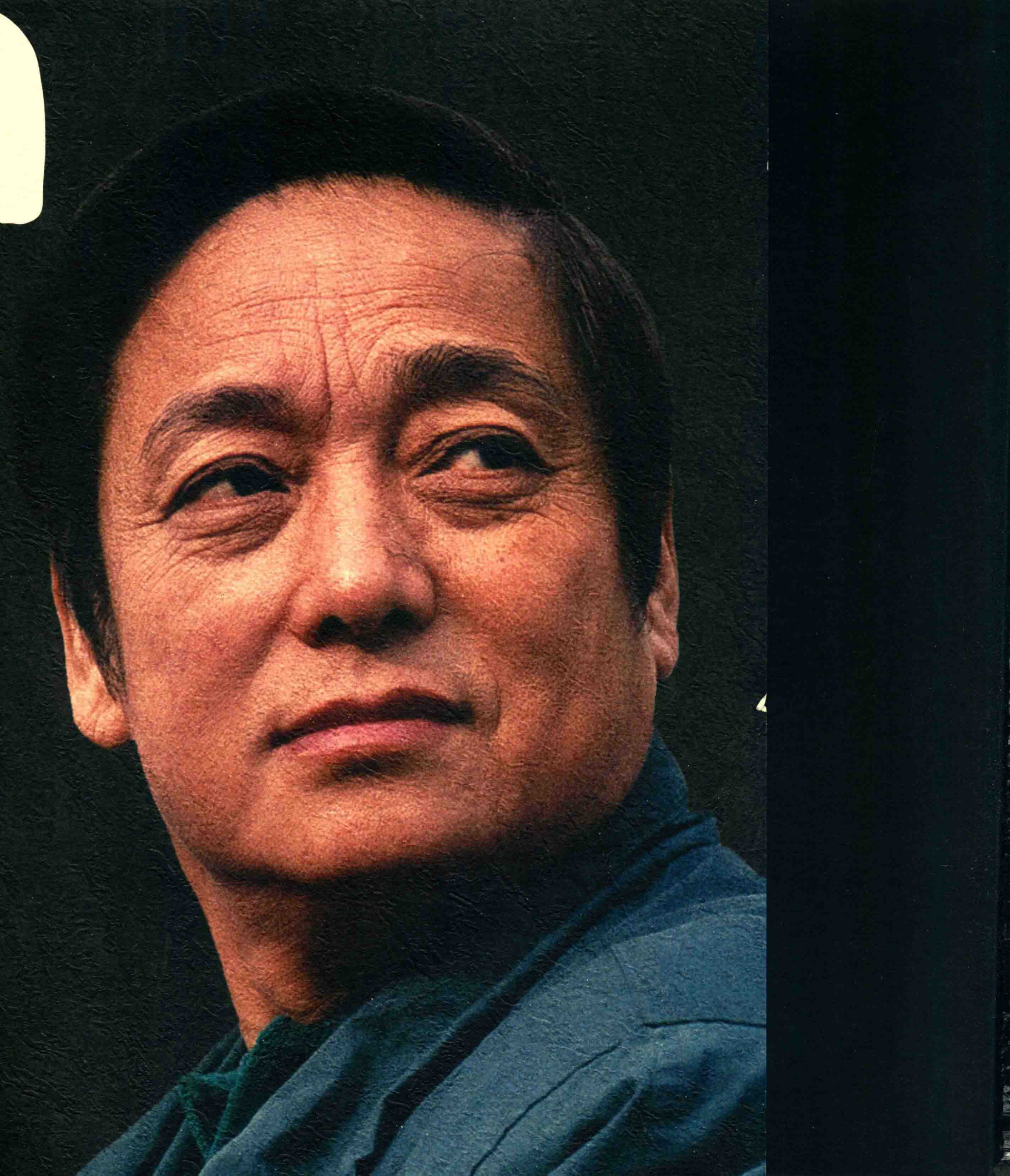
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上苍告诉我：韩美林，你就是头牛，这辈子你就干活吧！
God told me: Han Meilin, you are a bull, this life you will work!

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HAN MEILIN ROCK ART COLLECTION

韩美林艺术与贺兰山岩画

Han Meilin's Art and Helan Mountain Rock Art

邹文

Zou Wen

“正在进行的敦煌，三百年后的汉唐。”这是当代文化界一批代表人物对韩美林艺术的盛赞。如果我们认真研究韩美林这一罕有却不失典型意义的当代个案，看清韩美林艺术的来龙去脉，定会相信此番评语并无溢美。

让我们先设想一个图示：一边是韩美林，一边是贺兰山。如果为这两个对象拉一根线的话，中间跨度至少是五千年。贺兰山岩画被倾向认为是新石器时代的遗存。两个五千年以上的端点之间，无疑是史上已知最长的一条没有中断的文化连线。因为它背靠全世界文化里唯一没有中断的中国文化。有学者研究认为，中国文化的五千年几乎每一天都有记载。这是非常神奇的人类文明现象。由于这边有了韩美林，那边有了贺兰山，这条五千年的文脉没有中断，又有了一个力证。

对韩美林而言，这条连线使他的艺术有了更远渊源的寻找，揭示出艺术发生学逻辑的起因。所谓源远流长的“源头”，就在贺兰山。中国文化一脉相承，承到哪里？承到韩美林这里。“流长”何处？流长至二十一世纪的今天。如此关系，更加清晰。韩美林的艺术，因为有了贺兰山的岩画而得到一种自证——他正是中国文化纯血统的后代。韩美林与贺兰山的联系不是偶然的，也不是松散的。他的艺术里面，处处都有贺兰山的血缘或称基因。韩美林曾六上贺兰山，其实是在穿越时空隧道重返历史。他以五千年的长途大礼拜，对中国传统文化做了诚笃的顶礼，也让我看到他创作的一个规律：他只要创作，必得选择连线最长的“长线”创造。

大约二十年前，我采访韩美林先生，他讲了对于雕塑的理解：不一定非要有三度的空间，也不一定非要在几个面上都好看，但凡某个立体艺术造型有其最佳面，就可以作为雕塑而成立。这次访谈发表在刚创办的《雕塑》杂志上，对雕塑界的触动很大。我当时相信，韩美林先生有据可追汉代——画像石、画像砖、帛画、织锦、陶绘、铜镜装饰浮雕等等，无一不是韩美林有力的论据。汉代的艺术，就是二维平面的艺术，强调影像轮廓的剪影，标示着简约写意的主张，锤炼着中国的艺术传统。这种高度强调提炼概括，但求物像剪影轮廓的样式，现在明白不仅仅在汉代，更可以追溯到五千年前的贺兰山。韩美林是这五千年艺术宣言和承诺的忠实践行者，他的艺术形式或言论，首先是数千年艺术哲学的雄辩！窃议者凭几十年的阅历、成就或理论，实在无法撼动他被五千年支撑的观念和自信。

韩美林所从事的主要艺术大类，前提都要“源远”。他的书法，在贺兰山寻源到刻符文字，中间至少有五千年；他做雕塑，再往上找，可找到五千年以上的新石器时代的雕塑；他做陶艺，往上推至新石器的陶器，又是五千年。韩美林其他综合艺术饱含民间艺术的真诚与灵动，最早的艺术出自没有阶级、没有国家的时候，都是民艺。所以，韩美林从艺的四个主要方面，全部有五千年的连线长度。

韩美林不善于或者刻意避免的是什么呢？他几乎不画“士大夫文人画”，因为这种文化延上去，最多延到唐

代的一千五百年；他也几乎不画油画，因为油画延上去，虽然可以延到文艺复兴以前的五百年，但是在中国这条分叉线上，最多延到一百年，也是一条支流短线；他做雕塑，却几乎不做写实雕塑，因为写实雕塑要上溯，远端可抵埃及的七千年，但是在中国流域或载体之中，超不过八十年；韩美林也不跟风观念艺术或行为艺术，798 类型的艺术，最多只能延到五十年。凡是“短线”的，韩美林都不做，不涉足；凡是“长线”的，他都在投入，在竭力。他和中国文化之间的关系，真正是长途追随的关系。

由于韩美林都是“长线”选择，他得到了相对更长的半径。一百年左右的“短线”选择，其行为半径，即从艺作业的半径自然就会相对局促。如果选择油画，他最多有五百年半径。但是韩美林艺术都是五千年以上的半径，长度长，圆周大，形成一个海纳百川、广泛覆盖的领域。他的陶艺、雕塑、书法、艺术设计附着于悠远的历史，构成宽广且宏阔的行星轨道，让他的造型艺术几乎无所不能。中国美术家协会近二十个艺委会的专业门类，除了油画，韩美林无所不及，而且行行出彩、成绩斐然。他一个人，差不多等于一个袖珍的美家协会。宽阔的视域、多样的作为，蔚为大观，当然得益于一极致化的连线长度支持的半径范围。

可以看到，由于连线如此长、半径如此大，他的文化关怀面也很广，形成他大美术的架构。虽然很宽、很大，统一在韩美林艺术总体旨趣之下的东西却很单纯——是阳光、吉祥、和平、亲和、友善、达观、兼爱和唯美。相对阴郁、恐怖、战争、争斗、批判、哀怨、训导、玄乎，韩美林只选择前者，只因前者反映人类的正价值，是永恒的，是长久的。这就是韩美林的扬“长”避“短”。

中国文化特征何谓？面对长城我们会有更直观的认识。全世界建筑比年龄、比高度、比宽度，我们都不是最有优势的。但是我们有一个建筑，是全世界从来没有的，长到万里，从秦代建造到清代，行为时间之长足令本民族历史小于二千年的国家惊艳和自卑。中国文化一直在以“长”取胜，这一特点和韩美林艺术的选择是一致的。

我常带外国朋友去爬长城，他们多半没一会儿就在那里喘气。爬长城都这么累，不要说修长城了。他们感叹说，你们中国人，这么费劲把砖搬到这么高的地方去，就为了修一个障碍物，挡住敌人。有这精力，为什么不先发制人，拒敌千里，用修长城的力量，组成军队把潜在的敌人消灭掉呢？我说中国文化不是这种思路，中国文化的思路是以和为贵。其实这也是韩美林艺术的特征。

从这个思路，也就是从贺兰山岩画影响的逻辑上，我们更进一步认识了韩美林的风格。艺术界总有一种误解，觉得韩美林艺术甜美，没有阳刚，过于轻巧。但是，这条线让我看到的是韩美林更有另外一种大气与刚强。大家知道，韩美林受过难以想象的苦，他被挑过手筋，坐过牢，捡过别人吃剩的包子维命，受过各式各样的歧视、批判和虐待。经历了长期非人的迫害与折磨，最容易滋生仇恨。他有理由比一般人对社会有看法，对他人有敌意。但是受过这么多苦的韩美林，其作品里竟没有一丝仇恨，全部是亲和、仁慈、兼爱和感恩。他的性格和他对艺术的理解，是另外一种强大，强大如圣雄甘地。大家可以看到，甘地坐在那里，披一块麻布，穿一双拖鞋，戴一副眼镜，手上没枪，但是你会感觉到这个人有力无比。他嘴里从来只讲和平即“非暴力”，但话语的征服力是武器级的，这力量很强大，物极必反地柔化成为了承受力、感召力、影响力。韩美林的艺术，创建起一个人类无力到达、动物和谐相处的理想国，那里的宪法是宽容与爱，是天人合一。他笔下的儿童、女性、小动物，自在地照顾负价值或消极面，标示着作者如甘地式的刚强和力量，还有长城般的性格。他完全在艺术里面抛弃了一切的阴暗、哀怨、世故，埋葬了他最有资格滋生并珍藏的仇恨、冷漠，依然阳光、亲和、友善、达观、兼爱和唯美。这样的人，是非常需要意志的；这样的人格，意味着柔情流露的男儿血性和英雄主义精神。

韩美林已经到了一种境界，不需要地位、钱财、名望，加上一位美丽的妻子，便是真的什么都不需要了。

无“欲”则刚。韩美林是可以不在乎他人评价的艺术家。他的率性、他的执著，已经没有人可以比肩。但我们恰恰更易被他的贺兰山岩画血统的小动物打动，因为这类作品逆向反证着一种宏大及厚重。韩美林艺术的温婉、童稚的画意背后，有着甘地般的刚强。他固执美善，以和为贵。就像长城，任何情况下都坚持性格中的“和”，让中国的精神响亮地飘扬着。他的支撑，就在贺兰山。

贺兰山的岩画，相当多的造型是动物。韩美林艺术相当多的题材兴趣也在于动物。他画了数以万计的小品画。几根线条，几个圆圈，像童画，像涂鸦，简单至极，稚拙率真。我们久违的心灵感动，会在一瞬间的视觉邂逅中实现。

绚烂之极归于平淡，也归于简单。人的世故、社会的复杂，被韩美林以关心小动物来忽略。中国的十二生肖，或各国的珍禽异兽，全是韩美林艺术作品的座上宾。韩美林的世界，成了动物们的家园。韩美林创作过千姿百态、活灵活现的形象，猫头鹰是其中一个特殊成员。往往遭到忽视甚至歧视的猫头鹰，是夜的精灵。世人皆睡唯它独醒。它守望在暗夜之中，守候在城市外围，忍辱负重，终于接受了韩美林代表正义给自己的平反。在画家善于发现美的眼睛里，它其实十分入画。头大身小，双眼夸张，很对称，很整体，其憨态可掬却又不失机灵，天生一副卡通形象。作为模特儿，它与韩美林的艺术语言天作之合。关怀小动物、倾心小动物，可以看做韩美林正在建造真善美的避难所。这是韩美林的乌托邦。阳光普照，万物生长，尘世磨难，一笔勾销。无忧无邪、返璞归真的虚拟世界，是韩美林用画笔建造起来的。他一直在寻求自己精神的方舟。在画家的眼里，自然界的一切都自有灵性，而艺术可以将其唤醒。在这个具象的现实世界里，韩美林用一颗童真未泯的心，搭积木一般献出一个理想国。小品的形式，却有丰盛的底蕴，包含许多艺术感悟或人生哲学。小品不可小觑。

事实上，韩美林的动物并不等于小品。动物们在绘画世界中多半是食草的，如兔子、山羊、小鹿、骏马或耕牛，它们善良、可爱、益人。而韩美林雕塑世界的动物，则会因勤勉、勇敢、激昂、正直被征召，被强调力量与精神。雕塑傲立的鹰、耕作的牛、奋蹄的马和迎风长啸的狮虎，甚或龙、凤等，形成对平面绘画艺术的视觉补足。

关切生态、亲近美善，反映在韩美林的作品之中，是一种有境界的精神、有品质的生活。人类对动物的关怀、兴趣，成为它们之间连接的又一个结合点，不谋而合，说明中国人的趣味、中国人的价值观其实在五千年以前就形成了。如果中国艺术上溯端点不是贺兰山的这种样式，而是埃及的东西。即如果我们传统的源头是埃及希腊艺术，肯定就不是我们今天的文化面貌。我们文化源头的艺术跟今天韩美林的艺术，完全是一顺的。后者作为一位继承人，忠实于文化的正统和清流，从来不曾摇摆，令一条直线很坚挺很流畅，展示着传统的强大、坚实和纯粹。

城市雕塑是韩美林艺术的另一类呈现。

作为一位高产艺术家，韩美林的城市雕塑如同其他收成，第一性征在于原创，反映其美学主张的体系化和专属化。一是，韩美林的性格和经历，特殊的成长和蜕变，决定了韩美林不可复制的个人来路和出口，也决定了他边缘清晰的美学趣味和价值观。二是，韩美林特殊的知识结构支持了他的原创性。他善绘画、书法、陶艺、艺术设计，还是中国作家协会的会员。凡是人工视觉美的行为，他几乎都有涉猎，而且都从基本的形式源头出发，即不起步在同代同行艺术探索成果的基础上，不太倚重平行的学习。把发生点向贺兰山方向前移的艺术创作习惯，为自己带来乐趣，也易于逃开思维定势。综合嫁接的知识结构，韩美林跨界而突破，创作每每具有初始性、新面貌。与他独特的风格相对比较，这一点十分突出。韩美林为艺从不循规蹈矩，不守纪律、不信天条，活力与个性夺“框”而出。他似乎总愿意游弋在各种艺术领地的边疆，无视制约。因为很新、很另类，很出其不意而别开生面。但见

他临习碑帖，很快自成韩体；搞城市雕塑，开始就我行我素，独树一帜，无不隐现贺兰山的影响。

大型城市雕塑建造，往往让原创受损或受伤，唯韩美林的城市雕塑可以感受到原创的完整和鲜明，该是中国现代城市雕塑的幸运。

韩美林城市雕塑代表一类中国样式。韩美林城市雕塑的第二性征是“很中国”。这并不意味着他拒绝吸取其他各国艺术的优长，但却反映了他一贯坚持民族本色和气派的固执。韩美林智慧地选择了依靠中国文化来实现原创。韩美林的城市雕塑因之具有鲜明的中国本色，表现在：频繁出现的中国视觉元素，多半呈纹样的形态，上至贺兰山的岩石、石器刻画，近及当下还在山东、陕北或广西时兴的民间图案，都可能经过艺术转换附着于他的城市雕塑。韩美林雕塑常见的纹样，多来自青铜器铭文和附件。中国汉字、陶瓷装饰也常会变身光影构件或细节肌理，寄附其上，显示韩美林的城市雕塑，为中国美术语言开辟了通道，让许多大型城市雕塑容易单调、空虚、薄弱的结构空余之处，因中国元素的填充而丰富起来、生动起来，同时形成中国文化附丽。更进一步，他利用影像营造所长，把篆刻、皮影、剪纸或太湖石的镂空、穿孔，巧妙用在雕塑上，让白当黑，虚实相间，阴阳互补，更加中国化。

从影像学的角度看，他的城市雕塑极致化地完成了二维平面经营。不仅解决了城市雕塑面面俱到的失守和弱环，更彰显了中国美术的标志性特征。三度空间艺术对二度平面效果的包容，产生了去芜存菁的美，更集约、更概括、更升华。

韩美林的城市雕塑，水平占地面积一般不低于十平方米，垂直高度一般不小于三米，最大的近百米。在周边景物比照下从不示弱，如贺兰山本身充满视觉张力，气势如虹，形态撼人。韩美林这样以大气量和大手笔向中国的汉唐文化致敬。浩然大观和盛世长风，展现了韩美林城市雕塑的泱泱大国气象，终至中国品相在韩美林城市雕塑中的奠基。这一类中国特征和民族气派鲜明的城市雕塑，令人敬佩地贡献了世界城市雕塑的多元化格局。

从雕塑创作上溯美林艺术之源，贺兰山还是殊途同归的来路。对贺兰山的岩画而言，这条连线证明了自身的文化影响力。代表一种远古文化的贺兰山岩画，文化生命力犹在。没有韩美林，贺兰山的岩画也照样成立，但它会化石化、文物化，会定格在十二世纪的西夏。在当代文化传播看来，不无遗憾。韩美林的艺术和贺兰山连线以后，我们可以看到中国文化一柱最旺的香火。贺兰山的岩画，更因为韩美林的艺术，而可以当代化，这是至为关键的。

为什么要讲当代化的问题？因为这条连线给我们一个当代化的启示。国际社会对中国的关心，其实更在于对当代中国的关心。他们也敬畏和赞叹中国古代文明，但有敷衍或保留，更愿意排在埃及、玛雅或者印度之后。就算是中国古代文化的粉丝，今天也出现了审美疲劳。为什么 798 那么火呢？因为只有 798 那里，他们以为看到了当下中国美术及其状态。而我们的文化宣传和外交，弃守了这一块。一切古代的积累，由于没有当代的价值凸显和影响联系，就只会让别人把我们放进“过去式”。而我们现在要强调的是“现在进行时”和“将来完成时”。用古代孔子去宣传当代中国形象，我觉得是缘木求鱼。向世界推崇老子、庄子、孔子或韩非子，本应该着眼各自思想智慧中的当代文化价值与意义，如老庄无为观中的生态绿色即低碳主张，孔子的仁与社会和谐、世界和平的关系，韩非子“实用为要”的主张如何警示奢靡之风等等。贺兰山岩画，要力避像孔子那样被化石化、文物化。

北大教授张颐武说“一百个孔子抵不上一个章子怡”，引起哗然。章子怡是当代的，孔子是过去的，世界既更加关心当代，就自然会让章子怡而不是孔子登上《时代》周刊封面。但是，对于章子怡或 798 这样的世界性围观，也容易走偏，因为它们连不成长线，长线连上去就是西方，不是中国文化的骄傲。798 出现的东西，最多可以推到上世纪三十年代到七十年代的时间，太短太轻太不中国。我们现在需要一个在当代史闪光，但又可以连线连到远古的文化楷模，反映中国文化的真实。就是“孔子 + 章子怡 = 韩美林”。韩美林艺术正是连通传统的当代，有助

于告诉世界一个活态的文化大国的真实，赢得更广泛的尊敬和全球化时代的话语权。

贺兰山岩画连线韩美林艺术，实际是在证明中国传统文化生命的继续。几千年的贺兰山，当下状态就在韩美林。两者连线的益处是：一、举证贺兰山岩画一个盛大的当代成果，显示其远程影响的一种文化能力；二、因为韩美林艺术的接口很多，它可以凝聚本地艺术家的群落，活跃创作和研究，增进交流。三、它可以借韩美林艺术，获得形象代言和一种文化的反哺。不仅是韩美林受贺兰山影响，他也会影响贺兰山，反哺贺兰山。贺兰山韩美林艺术馆的硬件载体一旦创成，就是一个文化品牌，必将提高旅游目的地的美誉度，实现一种建设性的保护——在发展中保护，在创造中延伸。

从韩美林个案，我们应该注意当代文化艺术与传统的关联，注意传统的当代传播。这是一项紧要的课题。

从广西花山、内蒙古阴山到宁夏贺兰山，那种简单刻画留下来的远古痕迹，标示着“天书”、肖形艺术五千年的华诞。韩美林的艺术一经连线五千年开外的中国文化，便散发出亘古弥新的神奇魅力和渊源绵长的深厚资历。

妙笔生花的韩美林，其实正是因为背后有一个海量文化库存，方会才思泉涌、灵感不绝。古老的岩画，总在韩美林笔下激发出新的活力。它一头连接着我们五千年从未中断的文化脉络，一头伸展到艺术家那颗永远年轻的心，重树着当代，延展向未来，令韩美林的艺术个性那么闪亮，那么中国。韩美林笔下千千万万岩画的子孙，浩浩荡荡带来恒久愉快的旋律，山鸣谷应，天宇传响，旺盛地展示着悠久的中国文化的可持续力！

"Living Dunhuang, new millennium Han-Tang." This is the acclamation to Mr. Han Meilin's art from some prominent contemporary cultural critics. After a careful study of Mr. Han's art, a unique and representative case of our times, and of his artistic lineage, we would understand this statement is not a flattering review.

Let us picture an imaginary chart: with Han Meilin at one end, while the Helan Mountains at the other. The line connecting these two points is a time span of at least 5,000 years. Helan Mountain Rock Art is generally regarded as Neolithic relics. A lineage of more than five thousand years between the two endpoints is undoubtedly the known longest unbroken cultural history. Its backbone is the Chinese civilization, which, according to some scholars, is the only one in the world with uninterrupted daily documentation. Now here with Han Meilin, there with Helan Mountains, they again attest to the continuity of a five-thousand-year long cultural lineage.

For Han Meilin, this artistic lineage leads him back to the distant origin and to explore the logical source of art, which is located in the Helan Mountains. Where can we see the Chinese cultural heritage? Han Meilin inherits the tradition. How long is the run of the lineage? The legacy extends right into the 21st century. This relationship is more explicit in Mr. Han's art, of which the elements of Helan Mountain Rock Art help validate its identity as the purebred offspring of Chinese culture. Han Meilin is neither accidentally nor loosely related to the Helan Mountains. His art is imbued with the spirit or mapped with the genes of Helan Mountains. Han Meilin has made six trips into the Helan Mountains; in fact each journey is a time travel back to history, a five-thousand-year long pilgrimage to pay homage to traditional Chinese culture; from this pious act, I see a pattern of his working habit: he only chooses the longest "lineage" in every

production of an artistic work.

About 20 years ago, in one of my interviews with Mr. Han Meilin, he talked about his ideas of the sculpture: sculpture is not necessarily three dimensional nor contains a certain number of good-looking faces; as long as a visual art in stereoscopic form has its best face, it substantiates a sculpture. This interview was published in the just founded Sculpture magazine and caused a great impact in the sculpture community. I believed then Mr. Han Meilin's supporting evidence can be traced to the artifacts of the Han Dynasty, such as the stone relief, pictorial brick, painting on silk, brocade, painted ceramic, decorative relief on bronze mirrors, etc., which are powerful arguments since the art of the Han Dynasty is two-dimensional, emphasizing the contours of image silhouette, marked by simple and symbolic ideas, and pressed with Chinese artistic traditions. Now I realize this idea that highly accentuates refinement and generalization, and the style that only outlines the silhouette of represented objects, can be traced back to the Rock Art of Helan Mountains five thousand years ago, much older than the Han Dynasty. Han Meilin is a loyal, devoted and committed practitioner of the antiquity arts; his art form or theory is first of all an eloquent expression of the centuries-old philosophy of art! Anyone holding disagreement derived from decades of experience, achievements or theory cannot alter his conception and self-confidence supported by a five-thousand-year tradition.

The proposition of the major art categories Mr. Han Meilin engages in is an "extended lineage." His calligraphy can be traced to at least five-thousand-year old pictographs found in the Helan Mountains; his sculptures can then be traced to the sculpture of Neolithic period, more than five thousand years back into the history; his ceramic can be traced back to the pottery of Neolithic period, another five thousand years away. Han Meilin's other comprehensive artworks are filled with the sincerity and astuteness of folk art, which is the earliest art form born in a time when there was no class, no state. Therefore, all the four main areas of Han Meilin's art are connected with the five-thousand-year heritage.

What is it that Mr. Han Meilin deliberately avoids or is not good at? He seldom creates "literati painting", a 1500-year cultural practice only traced back to the Tang Dynasty; he barely produces oil painting, an art form dated back to 500 years before the Renaissance while its Chinese branch is only at most 100 years old; he makes sculptures, but almost never realistic sculpture, which was born in Egypt 7,000 years ago, but was seen in China for only 80 years; he never follows conceptual art, performance art, or "798" style, which is at most 50 years of age. Han Meilin does not ever get involved in any "short term" vogue but dedicated to every "long-term" trend. The way he follows the Chinese culture attests a real long-term relationship.

Since Han Meilin stays with "long-term" trend, he obtains a relatively longer radius. A "short-term" option of 100 years or so has relatively limited radius in artistic movement and production. If oil painting is chosen, the "radius" is only up to 500 years. But Han Meilin's art has more than 5,000-year radius, which encircles a diverse and broad area with greater length and circumference. His ceramic, sculpture,

calligraphy, art and design are attached to the long history, and constitute a broad and expansive planetary orbit; as a result, he can do almost anything in artistic design. Of nearly twenty professional categories defined by Chinese Artists Association which correspond to its art committees, Han Meilin is good at almost every category and has impressive accomplishments except in oil painting. He is an individual but equivalent to a miniature of Artists Association. With broad view and diverse approaches, he creates a splendid world, which is, of course, by virtue of an area covered within an optimized radius.

Therefore, the extensive lineage, the long radius, and his all-embracing cultural concerns formulate the grand framework of Mr. Han's art. Although expansive and big, the artworks unified under his artistic gist are very simple - they represent the sun, blessing, peace, harmony, affinity, optimism, compassion and beauty. Contrasting to the gloom, horror, war, fight, criticism, grievance, discipline, and abstrusity, the ones he choose all reflect the positive values of humanity, which are timeless and everlasting. This well exemplifies Mr. Han's belief in the "long-term" instead of the "short-term."

What is Chinese cultural characteristic? The Great Wall will give us a more intuitive understanding. Chinese architecture is not any better than other buildings in the world in terms of age, height, and width. But we have a structure that is unique on earth, a continuous construction project spanning thousands of miles in space and from the Qin Dynasty to the Qing Dynasty in time, a prolonged action that would amaze and awe any nation of less than two thousand year history. Chinese culture is traditionally notable by its unparalleled "length", which is the characteristic consistent with Han Meilin's artistic selection.

I often accompany my international friends to visit the Great Wall; most of them are usually out of breath quite soon. It is already so tiring to climb the Great Wall, not to mention to build the Great Wall. These friends lament that the Chinese people toiled to move the bricks up to such a high location just to build a barrier to keep off the enemy. With this energy, why not consider a pre-emptive first strike to dominate the situation and to destroy the potential enemy with an organized army that possesses the power to build the Great Wall? My answer is that this is not the thinking of Chinese culture; Chinese culture values harmony, which, in fact, is another feature of Han Meilin's art.

Following this line of thought, which is also a logical influence of Helan Mountain Rock Art, we understand more about Mr. Han's style. There is a misconception within the art circle that Mr. Han's art is gracefully sweet, yet delicately light and not robust enough. However, through the connection to the rock art, I notice a different kind of magnificence and vigor in his artworks. As we all know, Mr. Han had experienced unimaginable sufferings-- his hand tendon was cut, he was locked up in a jail, he lived on the leftovers of others, he endured all sorts of discrimination, misjudgments, and abuse. A prolonged period of inhumane treatment and persecution is prone to induce hatred. Mr. Han is more justifiable than anyone else to be hostile toward the society and other people. However, there is not a trace of hatred but only affinity, kindness, compassion and gratitude emitted in his artworks even though he had experienced so many adversities. His character and his understanding of art is another strength, as strong as the spirit of

Mahatma Gandhi. As Gandhi sat quietly, clothed in linen, wearing a pair of slippers and a pair of glasses, with no gun in hand, his strength was discernible and visible. He only talked about peace, that is "non-violent", but his words were forcefully convincing and were so strong that the power eventually dissolved into endurance, charisma and influence. Han Meilin's art creates a Utopia that cannot be attained by mortals, a kingdom where all the creatures live in harmony and are governed by a constitution sustaining tolerance, love, and the ultimate harmony with nature. In his artworks, the children, women, small animals are free from any negative value or prejudices, bearing the artist's Gandhian perseverance and strength as well as the Great Wall-like character. He completely abandons all the dark, sad, and cynical elements in his art, buries his collection of hatred and apathy, and stays sunny, friendly, kind, optimistic, compassionate and aesthetical as always. To become such a person requires strong wills; such a personality manifests a heroic spirit beaming with tender sentiments.

Han Meilin has come to a state that is beyond status, wealth, and fame; coupled with a beautiful wife, he is not really in need of anything. Being freed from "desire" makes a person strong. Han Meilin is already an artist who could care less about any criticism. No one can emulate his honesty and his perseverance. Yet we are just more susceptible to be moved by his little animals from the lineage of the Helan Mountain Rock Art because this type of works is an antithesis of grandeur and stateliness. The gentle and child-like elements in Han Meilin's paintings imply a strong perseverance like Gandhi's. His persistent kindness and highly stressed harmony are just like the Great Wall spirit, characteristic of adhering to "harmony" under any circumstances and clearly resonant with the Chinese spirit. In Helan Mountains he has found his artistic lineage and support.

Helan Mountain Rock Art contains considerable patterns of animals, which are also the favorite subject in Han Meilin's art. He drew tens of thousands of sketch paintings. With a few lines, a few circles, like a child's painting or doodling, the extremely simple and unsophisticated forms would unexpectedly bring viewers an inspiring visual encounter.

Anything beyond being gorgeous is deemed to return to being plain and simple. Han Meilin brings into focus the small animals instead of the overly sophisticated and complex human society. Chinese zodiac animals, rare birds or animals around the world are all honored in Han Meilin's art, which becomes the home to the animals. Of all the varying and vivid images created by Han Meilin, owl is one of the special members. Often ignored or even discriminated, owl is the elf of the night, who stays sober when the world is asleep and dutifully safeguards the city in the dark, and who is finally justified by Han Meilin, a spokesman for justice. In the artist's eye that is quick at discerning the beauty, owl is actually a very good subject for painting: big head, small body, disproportionate big eyes yet very symmetrical overall; as a model with a naturally cartoony image that is charmingly naive yet wittily sharp, it is a natural fit with Mr. Han's artistic language. Though caring for and focused on small animals, Han Meilin is building a sanctuary, or his utopia, where the sun shines, things thrive, earthly tribulations are wiped off; with his pen

and brush, Han is constructing a virtual world that is worry-free and innocent. He has been seeking his own spiritual ark. In the artist's eyes, every creature has its own spirit and can be awakened by art. In this tangible reality, Han Meilin offers a utopia that is built up piece by piece with an innocent heart. His simple sketch paintings contain rich implications, including many artistic insights or philosophy of life, and should not be underestimated.

In fact, animal motif in Han Meilin's art is not just present in these sketch paintings. The animals in his paintings are mostly herbivorous, such as rabbits, goats, deer, horses or cattle, which are kind, sweet, and valuable. The animals in his sculptures, however, are often chosen because of their strength and the qualities they represent, such as hardworking, courage, strong will, and honesty. His sculptures, be it proudly-standing eagle, farming cattle, galloping horses, roaring lions and tigers, even dragons or phoenix, are visual complement to the two-dimensional art of painting.

The environmental concern and the desire for beauty and kindness reflected in Mr. Han's works articulate a sublime spirit and quality life. Mankind's caring and interest of animals become a connection between them and this coincidence shows that the taste and values of the Chinese people were in fact formed five thousand years ago. If the origin of Chinese art is not the style of Helan Mountain Rock Paintings but of Egyptian style, our cultural landscape today is definitely not the same. Our culture today shares the same origin as Han Meilin's art. As a cultural inheritor, Mr. Han stays faithful to the tradition without a moment of uncertainty, so that the cultural lineage is a straight and smooth line, representing a powerful, strong and pure tradition.

Urban sculpture is another type of Han Meilin's artistic presentation.

The achievement of Mr. Han's urban sculptures, same as other art forms produced by this prolific artist, is marked by its originality, embodying the systematic and exclusive essence of the artist's aesthetic ideas. First, Han Meilin's personality, experience, and exceptional development and transformation determine the highly individualized approach and output and also clearly define his aesthetic tastes and values. Second, Han's distinctive knowledge base supports his originality. Mr. Han is good at painting, calligraphy, ceramics, and design, and is also a member of Chinese Writers Association. He is interested in almost anything related to visual art, and delves right into the essence of each artistic form. That is, he does not start on the artistic explorations and findings of his time nor relies on parallel learning. His habitual creativity by moving occurrence points toward the direction of Helan Mountain Rock Art not only delights himself but also frees himself from a fixed mindset. The total synthesis knowledge base enables Han Meilin to move across fields and to excel, by giving each creation an original and new look. This is very prominent in his relatively unique style. In the realm of art, Han Meilin never follows the rules or regulations; he does not believe in supreme decrees; he escapes the "cornering" with his vigor and personality. He seems always willing to cruise in the frontier of various arts, ignoring restrictions. Because new and very different, it is very stunning and spectacular. Once he starts modeling after a certain calligraphy, he creates "Han

Meilin style" in no time; once he engages in urban sculpture, he has his own way and established a unique category; these all implicitly exhibit the impact of the Helan Mountains.

The building of large urban sculpture often damages or hurts the original design; yet the complete and distinctive originals are still retained in Han Meilin's urban sculptures, which is fortunate for China's modern urban sculpture.

Han Meilin's urban sculpture represents a Chinese style. The second characteristic of Han Meilin's urban sculpture is "very Chinese." This does not mean that he refuses to learn from the art of other countries, but shows that he has consistently insisted and adhered to national characters and style. Han Meilin wisely chose to rely on Chinese culture to achieve originality. The distinctive Chinese characters of his urban sculptures are reflected in: the frequent appearance of Chinese visual elements, mostly the decorative patterns derived from the Helan Mountains Rock Art, the inscriptions on stone wares, and the folk patterns still popular today in and around Shandong, northern Shaanxi, and Guangxi; these patterns may be attached to his urban sculptures after artistic modifications. The common decorative patterns used in Han Meilin's sculpture are mostly originated from the bronze inscriptions and accessories. Chinese characters and ceramic ornaments are also often turned into light or shadow components or refined texture and attached on the sculpture. Thus, Han Meilin's urban sculpture opens a new channel for Chinese art language; these Chinese elements not only invigorate and enrich many large urban sculptures by filling in the monotonous, empty, and vacant places where the structure is inadequate but also form a splendid attachment to Chinese culture. Furthermore, to enhance the Chinese impression, Mr. Han uses his talent in handling the shadow and the image and employs the techniques of seal-carving, shadow play, or Taihu rock perforation with a clever application of complementary elements, such as the play between black and white, tangible and intangible, yin and yang.

From the perspective of iconography, Mr. Han's urban sculpture has completed a perfect execution of the two-dimensional plane. His sculptures not only strengthen the overall weakness of this type of sculpture, but also highlight the hallmark of Chinese art. His three-dimensional art embraces the two-dimensional effect and thus produces a purifying aesthetic experience that is more intensive, inclusive, and inspiring.

Han Meilin's urban sculptures usually occupy an area no less than 10 square meters and no less than 3 meters height, with the largest reaching nearly one hundred meters. These sculptures are never dwarfed by their surrounding landscapes, just like the Helan Mountains which is full of visual tension, vital magnificence, and presents a marvelous sight. Han Meilin pays tribute to China's Han and Tang culture with such vitality and grandeur. The grand scale and historical splendor accentuate the stately air of his urban sculptures, and the Chinese elements are finally solidified as the foundation of his urban sculpture. This class of urban sculpture with Chinese characteristics and distinctive national style makes great contribution in diversifying the world urban sculpture.