



MAO YAN



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**CHINABLUE** 环碧堂画廊

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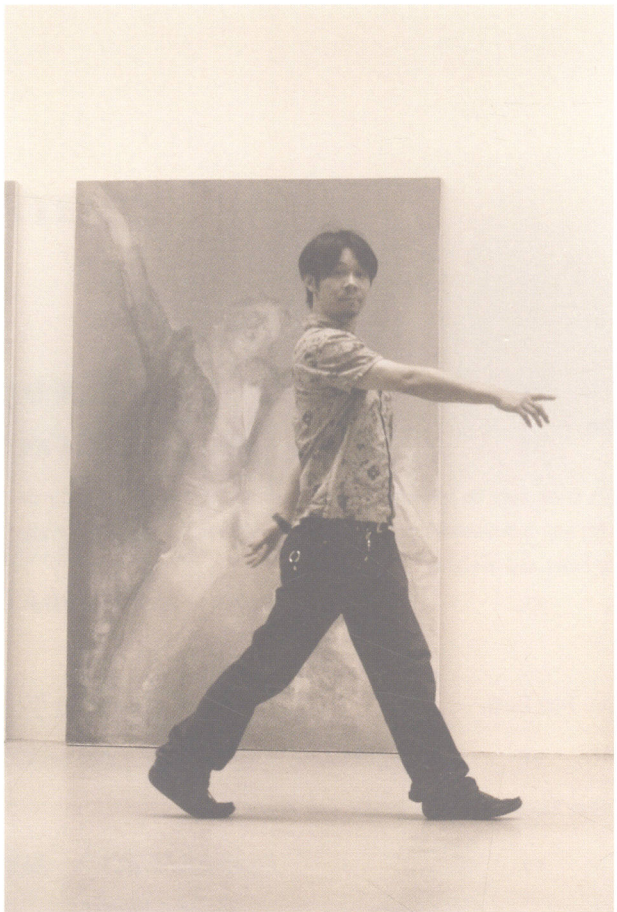
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毛焰的画中，所有形象都是一个，那就是他自己，是他自己内心的呈现。当我看到那些神经质的紧张的表情，看到夸张有度的外形，我在想，也许毛焰一辈子只画一幅画。在此意义上，毛焰是个孜孜以求探索人性的深刻的艺术家，人的外形在他那里退居到次要的地位，精神的质地成为他的主旨，他要挖掘人性中最隐蔽最细微的部分，将它们提炼为视觉的冲击。他说他故意不去描绘衣着之类，故意抹去人的外表的时代特征，因此人变成了人的符号，个性变成了共性，形象不再局限于形象本身，而成为一种普遍意义上人的灵性。个体的人进入了普遍的人，物的存在演化成形而上的存在，毛焰由此提升了自己艺术的品格，从貌似简单的做法中获得了复杂的表述。

毛焰的作品越来越单纯，抛开了他擅长的对色彩的敏锐把握，将画面处理得阴郁而灰调。这是否体现了他人生和艺术两个方面的观念？单纯到极致也就达到了艺术的极致，它是一种难度很大的减法，是接近0点，却不越过负数界限的自我磨练的功夫。

节录李小山《悬空：毛焰的状态》1999年



Of all the portraits painted by Mao Yan there is in fact only one single portrait, that of Mao Yan himself. When I look at those neurotic faces and elegantly exaggerated features, I tell myself that there is probably only one picture he will ever paint, which is his own face. In this respect, Mao Yan is an ardent explorer of the soul, so much so as to ignore the richness of external features of humankind. He seeks to expose the most concealed and delicate traits of the human character, and turn them into visually striking images. He intentionally erases from these figures emblems of their age, for instance clothing and ornaments, in order to turn them into general symbols of the human figure. He paints the individual personality as a representation of human nature in general, so that the human figure can no longer be restricted by figuration alone. Through elevating the individual figure to a general statement about human beings, Mao Yan has elevated his own artistic character to achieve a rich narrative in seemingly simple statements.

Mao Yan's paintings have become progressively purer and simpler. He has abandoned his own unique sensitivity to colour in order to create a mysterious dimness and greyness. Perhaps this is a reflection of Mao Yan's evolving views on life and art. Through extreme purity art arrives at its most rarefied state. This is a challenging experiment in the art of reduction. Tempting the edge of precipice and not transgressing it is a rigorous discipline for both the soul and for artistic creation.

*Selected from "Impendence: The State of Mao Yan" by Li Xiaoshan, 1999*





## 毛焰的绘画

## 毛焰的绘画

皮力

毛焰想竭力恢复古典绘画在当代艺术中表达的可能性。毕业于中央美术学院油画系的毛焰，曾经受到过最古典的油画语言的训练。他所在的二画室对学生的主要要求便是熟练地掌握和运用现实主义的油画语言。这种训练的方法造就了毛焰作品中特殊的艺术品位，也使得毛焰总是能在心态上超脱于所谓“当代艺术的实践”。毕业以后，毛焰被分配到南京艺术学院，从而在地域上远离当代艺术的中心，就像所有在那个地方的文化人一样，毛焰坚决地从事着自己认为重要的工作，即古典绘画语言的当代转型。肖像是毛焰工作的重点，在过去将近十年的时间中，画家一直将表现的对象集中在自己周围的朋友中。肖像画是一个相当古老的题材。它几乎是伴随着油画这种艺术门类同时出现的。当人类的历史进入到现代主义时期，由于民主政治的建立，作为一种对祖先和权力之崇拜的肖像画的发展动力也就消失了。在当代绘画中，我们似乎已经很难看到艺术家将肖像画作为自己毕生工作的主题，同时摄影术的出现也大大削弱了肖像画的权威性。就物理形态的真实性而言，手工绘制的肖像画肯定不如摄影照片的效果。这是毛焰肖像画创作的文化背景，也是他坚持肖像画创作的前卫性所在。毛焰所试图捕捉的不是物理学意义上的“像”，而是一种心理学层面的“像”。我们将他的绘画理解为当代人的精神肖像是一点也不过分的。他所描绘的人物，或者被他所描绘出来的人物总是处在一种深深的不安之中，显示出某种特有的神经质的特质。在这些肖像作品中，人物仿佛被抽离出了具体的时间、空间，不存在于任何场景之中。场景的匮乏导致了他们身份、地位和具体的文化所指的丧失。所有的这些人物看起来就像是悬浮在空中，虽然具有体量感，但是却失去了自己的重量。在毛焰这里，肖像画作为一种古老的艺术门类，意味着一种观察方式和一种呈现方式的结合。他所强调的首先是一种“看”。科技的发展赋予了我们各种看的方式，从间谍卫星到显微摄影。在这种“看”的方式无限扩大的同时，我们似乎忘记了“看”的目的。“看”的目的是为了了解，“看”的方式的无限扩大所提供的只是内容，而内容的增多并不能直接导致我们获得更多的深度，特别是对精神世界关注的“人文深度”。有时我们甚至忘记了我们看的目的。毛焰所做的工作就是试图恢复这种“看”的合法性和合理性。在他看来，艺术的“看”不仅仅意味着一种观察方式，同时也意味着一种精神性的游历。这种方式虽然有些过时，但是却仍然有效，或者说在我们忘记了我们“为什么看”的时候，它似乎还具有特别的效应。在艺术趣味上，毛焰是古典的。他如此坚持要画出“好”的画，有品位的画，甚至是高雅的“画”。这是他和所谓当代艺术家的最大区别。但这些丝毫不损害他作品中的当代性。在毛焰的作品中，并没有具体的人的存在。从表面上看，这些人物似乎都有一个原型，但是从一个广义的范围上看，他们却又是没有具体的身份所指的。他们是当代人中的一分子，而毛焰所试图展示出来的是一种精神性的东西。这种精神性的东西敏感、脆弱，但是不乏尖锐。也正是出于这个原因，毛焰绘画的对象并不





MAD. YAN. 9/15/11







多，而且往往是以一个人为对象反复描绘。对于画家来说，这种反复描绘是对人的一个研究过程，是对人的多面性的把握。当然，这个过程首先还是对技术和语言的一种锤炼过程。但恰恰是因为这种过程，在毛焰作品中出现的不单单是某个人的肖像，而是整个时代的“精神肖像”。毛焰用一种古典主义的方式接近并且揭示了当代人的精神世界，这便是他的当代性之所在。在这些绘画中，我们可以直观地感觉到艺术家对于纯净的偏爱已经达到了无以复加的地步。人物特征的把握和精神气质的传达只是作品的一方面，从另一方面看，在这些作品中画家发挥出了特有的语言特点，即对形体节奏和微妙的色彩的把握。他的每一个笔触都是随着形体的一个结构来完成的，但是在笔触和笔触之间却具有一种“奏鸣曲”似的节奏关系。如果你有机会亲自和画家交往的话，你就会发现这些并不是理智思维的结果，而纯粹是出于一种艺术家的感觉，确切地说是一种“才华”的自然流露。在人物的背景中，色彩的变化和笔触的铺陈是如此的灿烂，画家的才华在这里体现为对于细微差别的把握与了解。如果你仔细地盯着这些背景看，你会发现它们就像一个“小宇宙”一样蕴涵着无穷的变化。也正是从这个意义上说，毛焰通过他的创作重新恢复了绘画语言，特别是古典语言在当下表达中的可能性。和很多当代艺术家不同的是，他在他的创作中始终保留了古典绘画的精神气质，排除了艺术家的“虚妄”。这种精神气质使得他恢复了艺术的“古老含义”，同时这种含义也和当下的文化语境形成了一种特殊的文本关系。他恢复了“看”与“画”的意义，通过这种最自然也是最原始的方式，他深刻而尖锐地捕捉到了当代人特有的精神气质。他用最原始的方法表达出了一个丰富的当代世界，就像英国诗人和画家威廉·布莱克所说的那样：一粒沙里隐藏着一个世界，一朵野花里一个天堂，将无限紧握在手中，永恒便在一刹那收藏。



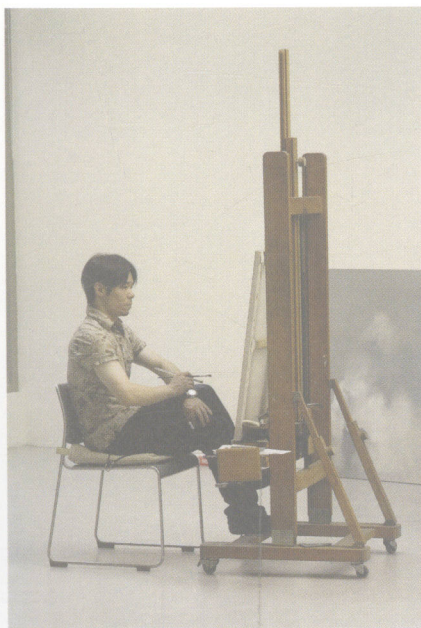
## Mao Yan's Painting



## Mao Yan's Painting

*Pi Li*

Mao Yan tries rigorously to retrieve the possibility of expression of classical painting in contemporary art. Graduated from the Oil Painting Department of the Central Academy of Fine Arts, Mao Yan received the most traditional training in painting technique. The Second Studio, from which he hails, demanded of its students a highly proficient mastery and adoption of realistic painting language. Such training nurtured special artistic taste in Mao Yan's work, and has also always enabled him in terms of mind-set to surpass the so-called 'contemporary artistic practice'. After graduation, Mao Yan was sent to work for Nanjing Academy of Fine Arts where he is now far away from the centre of contemporary art. Like all the literati from that region, he insistently engages in the important work he sees for himself, which is contemporary transformation of the classical painting language. Portraits are the focus of Mao Yan's work. During the last ten years, the painter has been concentrating on his immediate friends as subject matter. Portrait painting is quite ancient. The genre appeared together with the rise of oil painting. When human history entered modern times, the establishment of democratic politics led to the demise of the momentum for the development of portrait paintings which used to serve as admiration for ancestry and power. In the arena of contemporary painting, we can hardly see any artists who take portrait painting as their lifelong subject. Meanwhile, the appearance of photographic technology also reduced the authority of portrait painting. In terms of authenticity in physical form, portrait paintings could compete with photographs. It is upon this cultural background that Mao Yan creates portrait paintings. It is also the pioneering nature of his insistence on portrait painting. Mao Yan does not try to capture an "image" in the physical sense. He wants to capture an "image" on the psychological level. It would not be an exaggeration to interpret his paintings as portraits of the spirit of contemporary people. The people he depicts or the people who are depicted by him are always put into a deep instability and present certain unique neurotic features. In his portrait paintings, all the figures seem to be separated from concrete time and space, not existing in any backgrounds. Their absence leads to the disappearance of their identities, social status and concrete cultural references. These figures seem to float in the air; even though they have a sense of volume, they seem to be



weightless. For Mao Yan, the very ancient category of art, portrait painting, means the combination of observation and presentation. What he stresses first is to “observe”. The development of science and technology has enriched the variety of ways of looking at things from spy satellites to photomicrography. While methods of observation may have expanded dramatically, we seem to have forgotten its true purpose. The purpose of “observation” is getting to know about things. What the infinite expansion of methods of “observation” has provided us is only an increase in content. However, this increase in content cannot lead directly to the depths of our understanding and in particular deep understanding of the human spirit and time. Sometimes, we seem to forget the purpose of our gaze. What Mao Yan does is to retrieve the rational and legitimate features of this gaze. For him, the “gaze” of artistic perspective means not only a way of observation, but also a tour of spirituality. This manner is out of date, but still very effective. Or in other words, when we forget why we look at it, it seems there is a special effect. In terms of artistic taste, Mao Yan is very classical. He is fascinated with producing “good” works of good taste, and creating graceful paintings. This is the largest difference between Mao Yan and other so-called contemporary artists. However, this does not blemish the contemporary features in his paintings. In Mao Yan’s artwork, there is no concrete human existence. On the surface, these figures all have one prototype. From a more extensive perspective, they have no specific identities. They are one element from the large pool of contemporary people. What Mao Yan attempts to depict is something spiritual, which is very sensitive and fragile, though very sharp at the same time. It is because of this that the objects that Mao Yan paints are so few. He often paints one figure repetitively. For painters, this repetitive depiction is a research process for analysing human beings and a mastery of human versatility. Of course, first and foremost, this process also involves meticulous refinement of technique and language. Because of this process, Mao Yan presents not only one portrait, but also a “spiritual portrait” of the present day. He applies the classical method to approach and expose the spiritual world of his contemporaries and herein lie his contemporary traits. In these paintings, we can sense directly the artist’s supreme preference for purity. Capturing his figures’ characteristics and spiritual sentiments is only one aspect of his work. At the same time, the artist plays out incredibly well his unique language in these paintings, which is his excellence in delivering corporal melodies and delicate colours. Each of his touches is complemented with the structure of the body. However, there is a sonata-like relationship between the touches. If you have a chance to communicate with the artist, you will