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傅中望主编

Re - appearance
of Crosses.
Ding Yi

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责任编辑 徐秋红 韩方敏

装帧设计 姜庆共

责任校对 齐少楠

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傅中望 主编

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主编：傅中望
责任编辑：徐秋红 韩方敏
特邀编辑：吴笑非
责任校对：齐少楠
特邀校对：丰静帆 吴笑非
翻译：费祖志 黄一

主办：湖北美术馆
武汉市武昌东湖路三官殿1号
电话：+86 27-86796003
www.hbmoa.com

艺术总监：傅中望
策展人：冀少峰
展览委员会：傅中望 李和清 冀少峰
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丁乙工作室：吴笑非、邓云飞

画册设计 / 平面设计：姜庆共
设计助理：周祺
摄影：车皓楠

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Chief Editor: Fu Zhongwang
Executive Editor: Xu QiuHong, Han Fangmin
Guest Editor: Wu Xiaofei
Executive Proofread: Qi Shaonan
Guest Proofread: Ariane FENG, Wu Xiaofei
Translator: George Fleming, Steven Huang

Host: Hubei Museum of Art
No.1 Sanguandian, Donghu Road,
Wuchang District, Wuhan,
Hubei Province, China
Tel: +86 27-86796003
www.hbmoa.com

Art Director: Fu Zhongwang
Curator: Ji Shaofeng
Exhibition Committee: Fu Zhongwang,
Li Heqing, JiShaofeng, Xiao Chuanbin,
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Catalogue / Graphic Design: Jiang Qinggong
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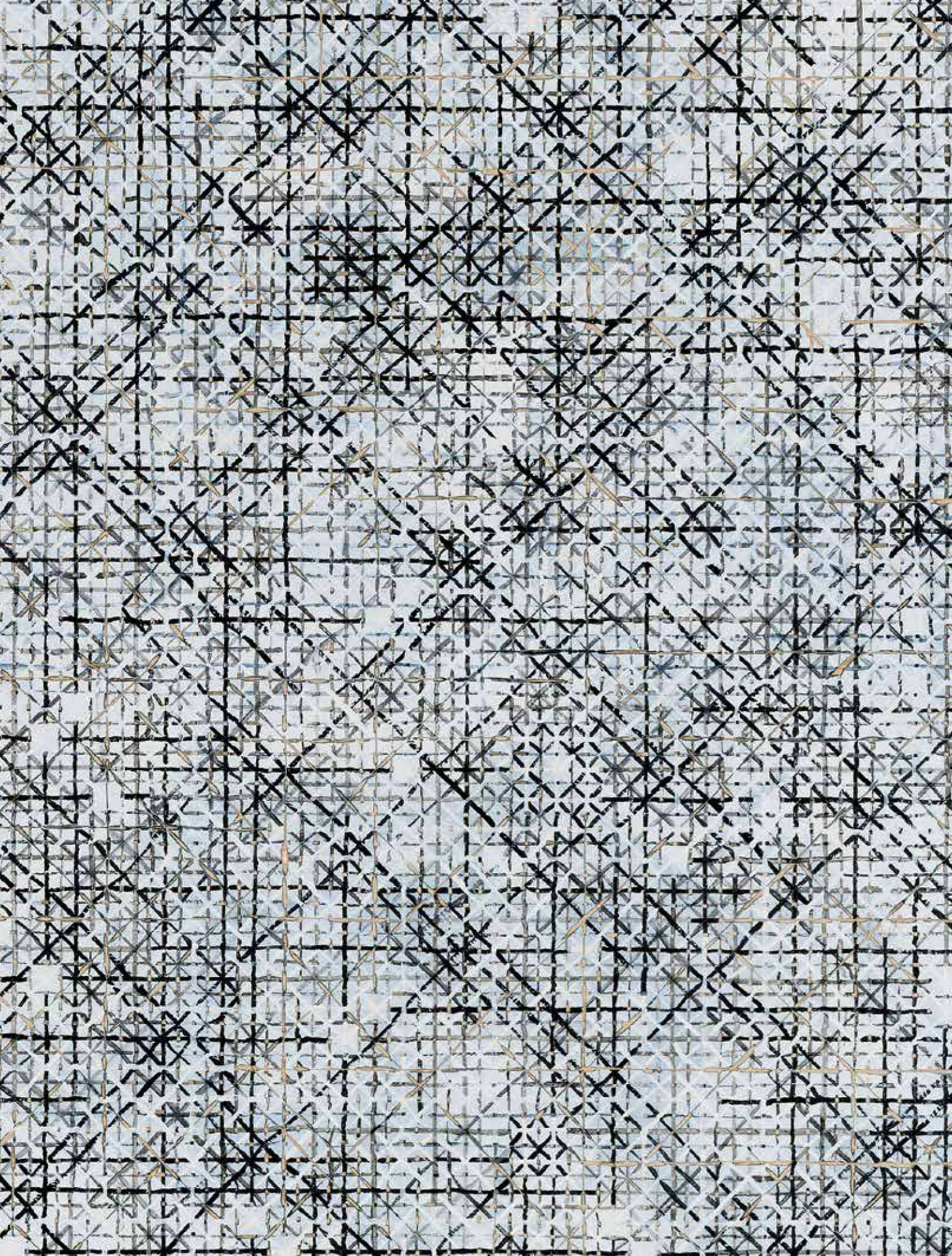


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再十示——谈丁乙的画
冀少峰
湖北美术馆副馆长

面对丁乙的视觉图像世界，它不仅带来的是评述与阅读的艰难，更因丁乙的“十示”光晕所散发出的那种神秘与迷醉。它吸引着阅读者一次次不间断地走近它，一个毋庸置疑的事实是，“十示”已然成为中国当代艺术的一个标识。数十年来，丁乙一直在坚持描绘这么一个基本元素，看似极简单的，实则在简洁中寓意着一种不可名状的丰富与冲动。阅读“十示”就阅读了丁乙的艺术，走进“十示”，就走进了丁乙的内心世界。正因为数十年来对“十示”无休止的追寻与探究，才成就了一个与众不同的丁乙，而丁乙正是透过“十示”一次次完成了自我的蜕变与超越。“十示”以一种无可争议的事实构成了丁乙的视觉叙事语符，这个语符不仅凝聚着丁乙对当代社会和艺术人生的体察与体验及其象征性表达，更是在“十示”的背后，又的确潜伏着丁乙那难以察觉的深邃的思想。“十示”是一个知识谱系，更是一种知识结构和价值认同。当丁乙携带“十示”走向一个又一个国际舞台时，人们透过“十示”亦体验到一个开放而又充满着激情、速度和戏剧感的中国。那么“再十示”将会为阅读者带来在新的社会秩序下丁乙的精神诉求和文化关怀。

探寻丁乙的视觉表达行迹，不难发现在 30 多年的艺术生涯中，他一直以一种低调、平和而又严谨、严肃的态度精确而又精致地在尺寸、材料和不同的“十示”间向自己发起挑战。这从其早期的艺术实践中就能感知到其日后的辉煌，这些作

品连接了以后的十年、二十年甚至更长远。通过变幻不定的“十示”，丁乙表现出了不可多见的一种品位，一种激情，一种幻想，而阅读者透过“十示”亦充分感知到了丁乙的一种逃离，一种精神特质和一种从书写到符号的视觉叙事逻辑。

一、逃离现实主义的束缚与羁绊

阅读丁乙，特别是他的“十示”必须重构丁乙的历史语境，否则你难以洞悉在丁乙“十示”的背后散发出的那种意义。当现实主义成为社会风潮，当题材决定论成为社会主流，对于一个有追求有理想的艺术青年而言，他的艺术环境无疑是充斥着迷茫、困惑与寻找，特别是当改革开放扑面而来时，你是否有充足的思想准备和知识储备。此时中国的艺术界“伤痕”美术、“乡土现实主义”已成过往思潮，西方现代主义思潮滚滚而来，丁乙早期即被郁特里罗和塞尚强烈吸引着，郁特里罗的简洁、塞尚的多维度艺术精神不仅感染着丁乙，也激励着丁乙不断向艺术内核挺进。当“85思潮”在全国蔓延时，丁乙虽并未在核心，但其低调的参与，比如他也曾以行为艺术的方式试图摆脱一种僵化的束缚。有两件作品则能代表20世纪80年代丁乙的艺术情境，创作于1985年的布面油画《破祭》（123 cm × 93cm）和创作于1986年的布面油画《禁忌》（84 cm × 84cm）。这两幅作品在今天看来很难见容于当时的艺术语境。其间“十示”的端倪已充斥其间，它一改现

实主义注重再现典型环境中的典型人物和事件，亦没有一种主题的叙事，但抽象的结构、色彩、线、面却深埋期间，有结构，有力量，有情感，但似乎又看不出有什么内容，正是《破祭》和《禁忌》启发了以后的“十示”。由此不难理解，当《十示》（1988·丙烯画布·200 cm × 180cm）以红黄蓝横空出世并开启丁乙以后的绚烂与辉煌时，早期的艺术探索，又是多么地惊险与珍贵。如果沿着现实主义，抑或说主流叙事模式继续走不改变的话，那么就很难有今天这个充满着开放意识，平和态度和自由精神的丁乙，其实从早期的《破祭》和《禁忌》中，已经深埋了丁乙那种脱离体制叙事的野心及其摆脱一元化叙事束缚的激情努力。

二、“60”一代的精神特质

在丁乙身上有着深深的“60”一代的精神症候和特质，数十年来，丁乙不厌其烦地重复着这个给我们这个时代留下深深印迹的“十示”，这不仅仅是丁乙从业经历的记忆，亦是其视觉修辞的关键词，更成为当代艺术领域的一个重要标识。丁乙于简洁明快和理性秩序中，悄然无声而又不露痕迹地记录着我们这个时代，我们的城市及我们的生活，在看似无意义的“十示”间，不仅让绘画回到了形式，回到了精神，更传达出的是一种精神力量和难得一见的国际范儿。

对于丁乙这代人的研究，已然构成了一种现象，

并越来越引起了学界关注。出生于 20 世纪 60 年代的丁乙很显然与其师辈余友涵那代人有着明显差异。他没有师辈那代人的悲情意识与沉重，但他又和“70”一代人的轻松和游戏的心理不同，丁乙就像“60”一代人那样，是过渡年代的过渡体。一方面他承载着理想主义和英雄主义的余绪，骨子里浸透着一种不甘平庸，他以自我真实而又真诚的视觉表达，从另一种抽象叙事视角让阅读者感知到这代人的生命活力与理想责任及使命。丁乙这代人自觉地用他们的激情感染着这个时代，其实透过丁乙的“十示”叙事，阅读者也清晰地窥见到这一代人心灵的声音及他特立独行的文化立场。记得北岛和李陀在《今天》杂志“七十年代专号”的编者按中，曾着重说明了“60”一代人对中国社会的意义，从中不难发现，为什么说丁乙这代人如何能构成中国当代艺术的主体力量。北岛和李陀这样写道：“我们这里说的一代人，是比较具体的，主要是指 20 世纪 70 年代度过少年和青年时代的一代人，这代人正是在那样一个特殊的历史环境里成长起来的，这种成长的特殊性造就了很特殊的一个青少年群体，而正是这群体在‘文革’后的中国历史中发挥了非常重要和特殊的作用。”很显然，丁乙就是其中的重要一员，丁乙的命运、经历、抑或说他的“十示”无疑是和这个社会、政治、经济、文化的发展密切相关的。其实透过“十示”也依稀让阅读者感知到了社会结构的转型所带来生活方式和思想观念的变化。而丁乙所开启的那种自由精神和

独立品格，特别是在艺术背后对人的自由生活方式的追寻，无疑又有着深刻的启蒙意义。

三、从书写到符号

丁乙在对“十示”漫长的坚守与书写中，“十示”也越来越带有一种符号逻辑而深入人心并走向了越来越广阔的公共空间。

如果从艺术史线性叙事逻辑来看，丁乙的“十示”又有着阶段性的明晰。1988 年“十示”风格初显，这是其叙事风格和概念的确立期。也表露出早期工业化的痕迹，比如对尺、直线和胶带纸的依赖，至 1991 年，丁乙则放弃了对精确与平滑等关系的追逐而进入了口语化笔触时期，那么至 1993 年，丁乙又尝试突破材料间的禁忌，开始尝试马克笔、水笔、铅笔、圆珠笔、教学用粉笔、木炭、不打底亚麻布、瓦楞纸、手工纸、计算纸、拷贝纸等，至 1997 年，对于丁乙来说是至关重要的一次突破，他直接在现成品苏格兰格子纹样成品布上直接书写，由此也大大拓宽了“十示”的表达视域和文化内涵，他开始放弃有节制地描绘，而进入一种随心所欲的表达境遇，1999 年则又引入荧光色和金属色，他开始重新聚焦视觉兴奋点，并从内省的体验或绘画迈向了当代都市生活的主动回应。及至 2015 年的龙美术馆个展“何所示”所展陈出的尺幅巨大有着强烈的木刻痕迹的“十示”，让阅读者再一次身临其境感知到丁

乙那种突破自我束缚及“十示”困扰的努力。之所以对丁乙进行如此的艺术史钩沉，一方面有助于阅读者对“十示”的理解，同时也为“十示”从书写到符号提供一个观看与凝视的过程。

在丁乙对“十示”漫长的视觉描述间，阅读者可以看到“十示”的密集排列，感受到“十示”之间的相互撞击和有序及节奏感。亦感受到“十示”以一种力量感扑面而来，“十示”的结构——圆形、方形、长方形……都由这么一个个简单得不能再简单又丝毫不起眼的“十示”来决定。重复出现的“十示”表现的是在不同时间、地点、季节看到的不同景致和不一样的心情。“十示”的繁殖与复数般叠加与倍增，“十示”单独拿出来虽形单影只，但其迷人的重复，却能给阅读者带来一种欣赏和愉悦。丁乙创造性地将视觉心理与城市之间的语境，阅读者与创作者、作品与场域间融为一体。虽说从视觉表象而言，“十示”单一形式固定，理性痕迹较重，但它的确引诱读者在“十示”图像间产生一种激动，读者和作者通过在画布上的“十示”而相遇，则不期然进入了同一个世界——“十示间”，丁乙则在“十示”中不间断地注入自我的激情与思考，并不厌其烦地精心编织着这个绚烂丰富而又光彩夺目的空间维度和精神的秘境。

在“十示”所营构的这个精神秘境中，丁乙又颇耐人寻味地将时间、空间、心里都带入了绘画，“十

示”似乎还没有穷尽的意思，它就像座蕴藏着无尽的宝藏，一直强烈地吸引着它。“十示”似乎也预示着一场场沉思与激变，其实丁乙每一次对“十示”的探求都充满着奇迹般的求索。透过“十示”，阅读者看到了丁乙和这个世界的亲密与疏离，而“十示”简洁的表象之后，又的确昭示出了有种更接近理性精神的光芒。单一的笔触，不同的材质颜料，不同的观看角度，带来的是“十示”的变幻莫测、迷离神奇。无数的“十示”起伏和颜色本身的颤动，也颤动着每一位走进“十示”阅读者的心灵。而在对“十示”的描绘与阅读间，又一次次充满着偶发性和意外效果。这也是作者和读者始终能够对面“十示”而葆有一种激情的缘由。“十示”所呈现出的高度结构化，又不能不让人面对它而充满着对空间的渴求，透过“十示”人们看到了城市的街道、走动的人群、飞逝的车流，就像从建筑物顶部俯瞰整个城市那样。移动的城市、公路、人流戏谑地混合在一起，经“十示”的组合而成为另一个元素，像音乐中的音符在跳荡，时常又让你联想到频率异常的心跳，可以毫不夸张地讲，丁乙用“十示”在表达对城市社会的一往情深和激情四溢，他在有限的“十示”间，试图表达出一种无限的思想。在看似极简的书写中，也找到了通往艺术本质的通道。

透过“十示”，他可以无需任何准备便可随心、随性、随情地在画布上游走穿行，他亦可以直抒胸臆，读者穿行在“十示”间，又可以去感知感受丁乙

的宇宙观、艺术观及城市、社会和人的多维存在。

“十示”的这种深远和神秘，又透露出在空间结构之外对时间的感受，在“十示间”没有多余的素材，以鲜有多余的叙事，有的就是对“十示”的直接描绘、直接观察和直接体验，平铺直叙的“十示”似有生命般的活力吸引着读者驻足期间，既流连忘返又时时难以忘怀，它还时时萦绕在读者脑海里而散发出一种生命的激情。这种既简单又普通的“十示”恰恰折射出丁乙的人生态度和对艺术的执着追求。

四、既是一种逃离，又是一种释放

虽然丁乙的“十示”书写已到了精熟的境界，面对“十示”所带来的成功喜悦和寄寓着众多的期待，丁乙表现出来少有的清醒和克制。面对风云际会的社会和都市景观，城市的急躁、焦虑也会侵蚀到每一个身处其间的个体，今天的都市社会也越来越充斥着物质欲望的陷阱，当人们拼命追逐欲望的满足时，一旦欲望不能得到满足，就会陷入一种焦虑的生存体验中。很显然，丁乙洞悉到了欲望社会人性的变化，因而他能够没有迷失在“十示”所带来的成功魅惑中。他通过对“十示”有节奏的控制来控制自我的欲望，它的“十示”充满着难有的丰富性和一望无际的想象，纯粹的精神纯粹的力量开启了生命的无限丰富性，去逼迫你不得不反思我们生存的空间化和秩序化。

他不断以“迷人”的“十示”去塑造一个又一个令人熟悉的场景，画布与场景侵蚀了读者和作品之间的心理距离，而丁乙对上海那种强烈的本土文化情怀及对城市飞速发展的节奏，既保持着一种低调参与和敏感，又充满着感觉和兴趣。

“十示”来源于上海这个生于斯养于斯的城市，但他的视觉表达显然又超越了这个城市表情，它给读者又提供了一份上海未来发展计划的档案，因而又有着一种超现实的意味，于平凡的表述中彰显出一种非凡的视觉体验。回到“十示”他的“荧光期”，即融汇着一种城市的时尚风情和东方迷幻色彩，不同的荧光“十示”似乎蒙受着农耕文明向现代工业文明转型的洗礼，并呈现出了一种充满着激情速度、霓虹灯、高架桥的都市景观，交织着社会从乡土社会迈向城镇化的急速与暴风骤雨般的狂热。在社会结构的转型中，透过“十示”丁乙呈现着这个城市的节奏和丰富多彩，这也为他的“十示”走向未来提供了源源不断的动力。

至此，我们亦清醒地感知到丁乙“十示”之所以能够流行至今的秘密所在。事实上，丁乙始终与读者站在一起，它不仅注重作品与作品间，作品与读者间，作品与场域间的关系，他还把这种迷人又令人迷醉的重复推向极致极简，也把很多人视为严肃的东西消解的不露痕迹或微不足道。比如当政治偶像消失后资本神庙兴起时，人们的那种欢呼雀跃与无奈无望，期间夹杂着的那种无聊，

Re-appearance of Crosses
An Interpretation of Ding
Yi's Paintings
Ji Shaofeng
Deputy Director

当人们陷入意识形态的困扰而焦虑时,丁乙的“十示”有着一种令人理解的幽默,又浸透着一种手工艺的快乐及丁乙本人在描绘中的愉悦与释怀,又努力表露出一一种试图摆脱日常秩序的束缚和僵化的思想方式。

丁乙透过“十示”让阅读者看到,他用无叙事来消解叙事,用无风格来消解风格,用无个性来消解个性,用个体经济来消解集体主义经验,用无意义来消解意义的智慧。他用“十示”描绘出了一个比现实生活更真实的世界,即一个他所感知到会飞速变幻的社会图景。

“十示”已经在那里了,“十示”似乎也在一次次提醒呼唤着丁乙:“你要思考下一步怎么走了”。也许我们看到的只是“十示”这个表象世界,但在“十示”之外,又充满着种种未知和期许,这不能不说是“再十示”带给我们的启迪。

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东湖三官殿

Ding Yi's world of imagery not only poses difficulties in terms of description and interpretation. On top of these, there is the mystery and fascination created by the halo of Ding Yi's crosses. The paintings viewers in for an ever closer look, again and again. The crosses are indisputably a symbol of Chinese contemporary art. For several decades Ding Yi has persevered with his basic theme. Although it may seem simple in the extreme, there is a richness and compulsion implied beneath the clean surface. To have a reading of the crosses is to read Ding's art. To understand the crosses is to enter Ding's mind. Precisely because of his decades-long crosses quest, Ding has managed to stand apart from the crowd. His crosses have allowed Ding to reinvent and surpass himself. The crosses are the linguistic symbol for Ding's visual narrative; they are not just a symbolic expression of Ding's observations of contemporary society and life. Behind his crosses is also Ding Yi's subtle, meaningful train of thought. The crosses are a genealogy, a structure of knowledge, and moreover a set of values. When Ding Yi takes his crosses around the world, observers experience an open, passionate, fast-paced and dramatic China. "Re-appearance of Crosses" will give viewers an insight into Ding Yi's spiritual quest and concern for culture against

the backdrop of the new social order.

Tracing the evolution of Ding Yi's visual expression shows that throughout his over thirty year long career in art, Ding has remained inconspicuous, calm, and strict and exacting, challenging himself through his crosses of different sizes and materials. Such a spirit has been evident since his early experiments through to his later glory – there is a consistency from the first decade through to the present, and may well continue into the future. The ever-changing crosses are a window onto Ding's rare taste, his passion, and his fantasies. The viewer meanwhile is struck by Ding's desire to escape, his spirit, and a visual narrative logic that runs through from creation to symbolic meaning.

1. Escape from the Strictures of Realism

When interpreting Ding Yi's work, particularly his crosses, it is imperative to place the artist in his historical context. Otherwise, it would be difficult to grasp the meaning behind the crosses. When realism becomes the overriding fanfare of a society; and when definition of an artist by one's subject materials becomes the mainstream, for a young artist with dreams, such

an artistic context is no doubt one filled with confusion and searching, particularly so given the changes brought about by China's reform and opening up. One must be mentally prepared or equipped with the right knowledge. By now, China's Scar Art and Rural Realism have become trends of the past. With the influx of Western modernist thought, Ding Yi was drawn to Utrillo and Cézanne. The former's simple style and Cézanne's multiple perspectives not only infected Ding, but also inspired him to explore to the core of art. When the 85 New Wave movement was spreading across the country, Ding was not at the forefront, but he did participate in a low-key way. For instance, he did attempt to challenge stultified restraints by means of behavioural art. Two of his works are exemplary of his artistic mindset during the 1980s: his 1985 oil-on-canvas *Breaking the Sacrifice* (123 cm x 93 cm) and the 1986 oil-on-canvas *Taboo* (84 cm x 84 cm). These two pieces viewed today seem awkward given the artistic context of the time. These works are full of hints at the future Crosses theme; they are a departure from the realist focus on reproducing typical people and objects in a typical setting and have no subject narrative. The abstract structure and lines of colour are deeply set within the picture. This gives them structure,

power, and feeling, but there does not seem to be any particular content. It was precisely *Breaking Tradition* and *Taboo* that inspired Ding's later cross works. It is not difficult to understand therefore that when *Appearance of Crosses* (1988, acrylic on canvas, 200 cm x 180 cm) in primary colours was unveiled, signalling the beginning of Ding Yi's later fame and glory, just how daring and precious his earlier explorations were. Had Ding Yi continued along the realist trend, or the mainstream narrative structure, it is unlikely that there would be the open, calm and free-spirited Ding Yi we see today. *Breaking the Sacrifice* and *Taboo* very early on hinted at his ambition to shake off the system, and his passionate efforts to escape uniform narratives.

2. 1960s Spiritual Mindset

Ding Yi has all of the symptoms of the generation born in the 1960s. For decades, Ding Yi has not tired of repeating his crosses, which have become iconic for all of us born during that period. The crosses represent not only Ding Yi's personal career trajectory, but also the key to his visual semiotics. The crosses have even become an important symbol of contemporary art. Using his simple, direct and

orderly system, Ding Yi is a silent and traceless witness to our era, our city and our lives.

Between the apparently meaningless crosses, there is not only a restoration of form and spirit to painting; there is a spiritual power and a rare international relevance. Study of artists like Ding Yi has become a phenomenon that is gaining ever greater recognition in academia. Ding, who was born in the 1960s, is clearly different from his predecessors like Xu Youhan. Ding has none of their sorrow or heaviness of heart; on the other hand, he lacks the carefree, game-player attitude of today's forty year olds. Ding is like others his age: a transitional object from an era of transition. On the one hand, Ding has traces of idealism and heroism, exuding a determination to be more than the ordinary. Ding's candid, sincere visual self-expression allows the viewer to experience via the abstract narrative the vitality of Ding's generation and their sense of responsibility to pass on their ideals. Ding Yi and those of his age are consciously infecting our era with their passion. A look at Ding's cross narrative is a clear insight into the mindset of his generation and their unique take on culture. In the editors' note for the "1970s Special Issue" in *Jintian* magazine by Beidao and Li Tuo, there was a particular explanation of the significance of the 1960s

generation for Chinese society. It is therefore not difficult to see why Ding and his peers have been able to become the powerhouse of Chinese contemporary art. Beidao and Li Tuo wrote that, "we refer here to a fairly specific group of people: mainly the generation whose teenage and early adulthood was during the 1970s. This generation grew up during such a special historical period, shaping a particularly special group of youth. It was precisely this generation that played an extremely important and special role in Chinese history after the 'Cultural Revolution'."

Clearly, Ding Yi is an important member of this group. His fate and experiences – or, his crosses – are of course intricately linked with changes in society, politics, the economy, and culture. Ding's crosses also give the viewer an impression of the changes in lifestyle and thought brought about by the transformation of society. Ding Yi's emphasis on freedom and independence, particularly the search for a free style of living behind his art, is certainly of important inspirational value.

3. From creation to symbols

Ding Yi's persistent painting of crosses has allowed them to gain an ever-stronger symbolic

logic and everyday quality, becoming ever more visible in the public space.

From the perspective of linear narratives in art history, Ding Yi's cross art can be clearly divided into different periods. The appearance of his crosses in 1988 was the period during which his narrative style and concept crystallized. There were also early industrial elements, such as the reliance on rulers, straight lines, and tape. By 1991, Ding had abandoned his pursuit of precision and smoothness in favour of an informal painting style. In 1993, Ding tried to break taboos of material, beginning to experiment with marker pens, fountain pens, pencils, ballpoint pens, chalk, charcoal, unbordered linen, cardboard, origami paper, graph paper, and photocopy paper. In 1997 came an important breakthrough for Ding: he drew his crosses directly on tartan. This greatly expanded the horizon of his crosses series and added a specific cultural element. Ding abandoned his limited painting and began to paint whatever he wanted. By 1999, he had added fluorescent and gold colours to his art. Ding began to refocus the visual impact of his work, and moved away from introspection on experience or drawing, to an active response to life in the contemporary

city. In 2015, Ding's "What's Left to Appear" solo exhibition at the Long Museum included a huge, striking cross strongly reminiscent of woodcarving. Viewers had a strong sense of Ding's struggle to overcome personal constraints with his crosses series.

The reason for this plumbing into the history of Ding's career is twofold: it is helpful for readers to understand Ding's crosses; and it allows the reader to focus on Ding's journey from drawing to symbols. Throughout Ding Yi's long portrayal of his crosses, viewers can see the dense line-up of the crosses and sense the collision, order, and rhythm within the grids. There is also the palpable power of the crosses: the structure of the art – round, square, or rectangular – is all determined by these simple and inconspicuous crosses. The repeated appearance of these crosses portrays changing visions and moods, at different times, places and seasons. Ding's crosses appear in plural: although they are a repetition of the same singular, their fascinating repetition is a joy for the viewer. Ding Yi manages in a creative way to fuse the context of visual psychology and the city, with viewer and artist, and artwork and its context.

Although in terms of visual expression, the crosses are always set to appear in their monotonous form and there are strong echoes of the artist's design, they nonetheless excite the viewer. Viewer and artist meet on the cross-grid canvas and unconsciously enter the same realm: the "Cross Space". Meanwhile, Ding continues to inject his own passion and thinking into his crosses, never tiring of creating his rich and dazzling, mysterious realm.

There is also a provocative introduction of temporal, spatial and emotional elements into Ding's spiritual realm. His crosses do not appear to have uttered their last word – they seem to contain an infinity of treasures, drawing him in forever. The crosses also seem to point to a series of meditation and sudden inspiration. Each one of Ding's cross-pieces appears to indicate an extraordinary adventure. By reading the crosses, the viewer understands the closeness (and distance) between Ding Yi and this world. Behind the simple representation of the crosses, there is indeed a glimmer of a rational thought process. The same style, using different materials and paints, and different perspectives, make the crosses unpredictable and mysterious.

Countless crosses shimmer, while the flickering of the colour itself shakes every visitor to the crosses exhibition. Furthermore, between the painting and the viewing of Ding's crosses, there are many chance and unintended effects. This is the reason why Ding Yi and his viewers can maintain their passion when it comes to the crosses. The highly structured artwork necessarily leaves the viewer thirsting after space. The crosses place the viewer on the top of a building looking down at the entire city, seeing the streets, people moving, and cars flashing by. The moving city, roads and people are fused together – with the action of the crosses, they become another factor altogether, dancing like the notes in music and evoking associations to irregular heartbeats.

It is no exaggeration to say that by means of his crosses, Ding Yi is expressing his passionate regard for urban society. Within the limits of the space on his grids, he attempts to express something that is without limits. Within his apparently simple style, one can find a path to the heart of art.

Ding's grids allow him to move as his mood takes him across the canvas without any preparation, and to express precisely what is on his mind.

As the viewer moves across the grid, they can experience Ding's outlook on the world and art, and the diversity of the city, society and the individual.

The deep and mysterious cross grids also express, in addition to space, ideas about time. There is neither waste, nor surplus narrative, in Ding Yi's grids. Instead, the crosses are expressed, observed and experienced directly. This presentation of the crosses attracts passing visitors. While they are rooted to the spot, they experience a sense of nostalgia that swims around their mind and sparks a passion for life. These simple and ordinary crosses are precisely the medium through which one can understand Ding Yi's outlook on life and his consistent pursuits in art.

4. Both escape and release

Ding Yi may be a practised hand at his crosses by now, but when it comes to dealing with the success it has brought or the hopes of the public, Ding has retained a rare cool-headedness and discipline. In an opportunistic society and city, restlessness and anxiety eat away at every individual. The snare of materialistic desires has an ever greater hold over contemporary urban