

'89-'92
中国现代艺术



CONTEMPORARY
ART OF CHINA

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感觉中的'85 新潮美术

杨志麟



《江苏青年艺术周·大型现代艺术展》的部分组织者及参加者

当一切都留给阐释与叙述,我不得不放下“语言总是片面地澄清”的看法,重拾那相互纠缠的朦胧影像——它是那样地遥远,尽管,它应是记忆清晰的数年前……

潮 汐

历史:一代人就是一出有着四、五
千名优秀角色的戏剧——巴尔扎克

'85 新潮美术的震荡,集中于 83 至 86 的三、四年间。它波浪急涌、蔚为壮观;它以决堤的洪水、卷着涡漩,夹带着泥沙冲刷而下。〔《江苏六人油画展》南京·1984.12、《前进中的中国青年美展》北京·1985.5、《新具像画展》上海·南京 1985.6、《新野性主义绘画作品展》南京·1985.6、《国际青年年画展》北京·1985.7、《江苏青年艺术周·大型现代艺术展》南京·1985.10、《现代绘画展》重庆·1985.10、《中国画新作邀请展》武汉·1985.11、《十一月画展》北京·1985.11、《湖南“O”艺术集团展览》长沙·1985.12、《'85 新空间》杭州·1985.12、《零展》深圳·1986.1、《86 最后画展 No.1》杭州·1986.1、《首届上海青年美术作品大展》上海·1986.4、《红 70%、黑 25%、白 5%》杭州·1986.5、《'85 青年美术思潮大型幻灯展暨学术讨论会》珠海·1986.8、《“晒太阳”艺术交流活动》南京·1986.9、《“厦门达达”系列艺术活动》厦门·1986.11、《湖北青年艺术节》武汉等九城市·1986.11、《86 凹凸展》上海·1986.11、《观念 21·行为展现》北京·1986.12、《“M”艺术体表演艺术展》上海·1986.12……〕也许是时代的命运,也许是历史的必然,'85 新潮美术在汇聚无数偶然因素后的凸现、使得十几年激情干涸的河道一下敞开了。

大量艺术群体产生了。青年美术家集群凸出了与传统艺术观的对立面,集群的形式十分有利于聚集新观念、推出新画展,同时,社会观念也被东西南北大面积呼应的气势震荡了。〔“北方艺术群体”(哈尔滨·1984.9)“鲁西南艺术群体”(菏泽

·1984.11)“红色幽默”(舟山·1986.2)“南方艺术家沙龙”(广州·1986.5)“池社”(杭州·1986.5)“红色·旅”(南京·1986.8)“西南艺术研究群体”(昆明·1986.8)“M 艺术体”(上海·1986.12)〕

新型艺术刊物的出现伴随着'85 新潮美术的始终。这些刊物不仅仅是复制、宣传的途径,重要的它们是震荡器,使新潮艺术影响迅速扩大。〔新创刊:《美术思潮》(武汉·1985.1—1987)《中国美术报》(北京·1985.7—1989.12)《画家》(长沙·1985.11—1991)《工业美术新潮》(上海·1985.12)新改版:《美术》(北京·1985.1)《江苏画刊》(南京·1985.1)〕在这些刊物上陆续刊登的文章为新潮美术全面走向社会提供了机会与理由〔《中国画之我见》(江苏画刊·1985.7)《新兴美术家集群》(中国美术报·1985.11)《重要的不是艺术》(中国美术报 1986.7)《关于理性绘画》(美术·1986.8)〕这些文章不仅有意识地组成了批判、建立、怀疑的三大部分,同时无形地为新潮美术建立了最初的档案。要知道:历史毕竟是写出来的!

颤抖的一页

今人:人们酷肖自己生活的时代甚于
酷肖自己的父亲。——阿里《格言集》

'85 美术新潮似乎是被一只坚定的手翻开的新的一页,然而这一页却无疑是颤抖着的。

1985 年所发生的“突变”聚敛了几代人几十年的心理准备。在共同的期待中,心理的沉重感集中地反映在这被打开的一页——对旧有艺术观批判的困难、新的艺术形式的困境以及良莠不齐的实况。但'85 新潮艺术的出现是无条件地顺应着普遍的需求:“突变”的心理,——“求新求变”成了'85 新潮美术实际上的纲领。它所引发出虽很幼稚却带着批判锋芒的作品填补了这个心理上的空缺。人们似乎忘记了新的批判与怀疑的责任,把新的艺术的价值与激情鼓吹得膨胀。在这个



西南艺术研究群体在《新具像第三届展》上的留影 1986年



《中国现代艺术展》全国筹备会议在安徽屯溪召开

嘉许勇气与激情的年代,肯定创造性是对青年艺术家必需有的褒词,否则就意味着保守,这是所有的人都不愿承担的。然而,大多数具有批判的需要而没有批判的自觉,保守的艺术观依然根深蒂固地存在于各色人物的内心。一时间保守与非保守的界限含混不清,种种抛而不弃的艺术观时时闪现。这是个复杂的滚滚而来的人流——赶潮的一致性与创作意识、创作风格的随机应变构成了复杂的喧嚣。人们几乎无法保持冷静;况且,在强大的喧嚣面前,冷静只是对自己的伤害。

直到今天,对新潮美术的价值判断与性质区分都十分困难。它是一场运动,是毁灭甚于建立的运动。它在艺术上的成就似乎只是各种焦虑不安的呈示,但这并不妨碍我们在精神上的最大获取——对抱残守缺的规则的从未有过的蔑视——这是精神解放过程中的必须。

'85 确实是颤抖的一页。这颤抖中容纳着保持勇气的艰难、心理承受能力的有限以及时势的变幻不定。'85 新潮美术带来的冲突,是几十年来首次真正文化意义上的文化冲突,在种种显露的困境背后,潜藏着心理与文化的惨白。它带来了传统文化粗暴的否定,带来了感觉的粗糙,带来了激情的涌动……在变革的大背景下,种种被利用起的偶然条件涌汇于'85 这个特定年代的“决堤豁口”。它对未来的昭示也许比它自身重要得多。

循环锁链

锁与钥匙:这是文明与启蒙
的杰出发明。—— 妥·比尔斯

'85 新潮美术引进了新的视觉样式,它基本上是通过模仿的重新组合来实现的。'85 新潮美术作品的模仿性质一直倍受非议。然而大家都很清楚:艺术家对其他艺术的亲尝是新的艺术感觉生成的必要条件;模仿只是艺术吸收时的必要吞噬过程。值得注意的并不是以“模仿”作为攻击籍口的对立面,

而是大多数新潮艺术家不甘于对“模仿过程”的肯定的现象,他们强调其“成品”性质、回避过程的存在。为了掩饰事实上所存在的窘态,那些具有“完整”理论构架的“辩护词”便出现了。这些为修饰所累的文章大都无法卒读,但却拥有生气勃勃的气氛;不少理论家对此孜孜不倦地“破译”,但不仅没能澄清思绪,反而增加了神秘感。艺术创作者的盲目自信加上理论界的盲目肯定,模糊了'85 美术新潮的形象,流露出精神上的仓促以及缺乏文化自信的痕迹。

艺术的变革是以感觉的新的需要为始点,以创作方式的转变为基础的。'85 新潮美术顺应了感觉的新的需要,但在创作方式上依循着习惯的政治化创作程序——找寻而非感受真实、归纳而非激发情绪;一个个新时代的“最强音”被搜求得凸现。我们看到的是沿用几十年习惯的创作方式对其相似创作方式的“反动”,这种“反动”只是昭示着叛逆而非叛逆本身。由此,“感觉的新的需要”便难以完成,它所始终缺乏的正是感觉的深刻,如同一条循环的锁链,使得新潮美术止步于概念地反映。

应该说'85 新潮美术只是套用关于现代的概念,它的真正涵义是与旧艺术观对抗。这种狭隘的对抗的“现代”尚缺乏自觉的精神叛逆,——我们难以看到矛盾与困惑的心理反映、绝望与抗争的思想冲突;难以透过艺术的描述去感觉现实的真实。在'85 新潮美术作品的表现中,观念的说白几乎占据全部;这种现象不能不使人觉得'85 始于思索止于思索。尽管此时我们内心的情绪已开始觉悟,我们已痛恨艺术旧形式在表现上的匮乏,那条无形的锁链依然桎梏着我们。那桎梏带来的伤害——感觉与表达能力的贫瘠,使我们难以到达灵魂的深处。这是个充满困境,需要重新建立感觉的时期;那无所不在的禁锢——循环锁链——仍然囚闭着能带来精神叛逆的内心的深刻的感觉,而缚住我们双手的正是我们自己。

墙



《中国现代艺术展》展出内厅

在 85 年我们通常陷入这样的感觉：面对着一堵堵高墙，我们大声叫喊，但仅仅听到传来的回声。我们受到的只是自己回声的鼓舞。我们多么渴望有个情绪自然交融的氛围，有个与世界文化彼此映照的环境。然而……

“与世界文化对话”的口号被适时地提出了。它是‘85 新潮美术延续至今的议题。在这个口号笼罩住的复杂的认识后面，一个被动的文化心理呈现着暗影。从表面上看，它集中了交流的企望。试图把中国文化融入世界文化的大潮。但它实际所包涵的消极面是孤立地看待中国文化、将中国文化与世界文化相割裂，从而显现出高与低、主导与从属的概念来。在这个背景下，“对话”不包括平行与平等的概念，“世界文化”也不是作为参照物而是作为榜样存在着的。这样的文化心理的滥觞，使我们背上的文化包袱显得更加沉重和累赘——我们不仅要放下包袱，而且必须在指导下抛弃包袱。在这样的认识下，“对话”不是外来文化启示我们发掘自己，而是怎样酷似别人的挖掘动作。“对话”在彼时彼刻沾染上一层功利的取媚的色彩，一直难以消褪。人们苦于交流的困难，感觉到一堵无形的墙阻隔了视线。人们恐怕难以认识，正是我们自己蹲踞在事实并不存在的台阶上，想象着那堵墙的高低，而那堵墙实际上正是我们自己筑造的。

近距离·远距离

时间：“年”教会我们许多“日”所不懂的东西。——爱默生《论文集》

‘85 新潮艺术已被文字描摹叙述多次，那些重复交叉的复线将它的轮廓涂抹的朦胧。尽管如此，对这个特定的文化时期的反复审视，已使得我们可利用时间的远近距离来感觉它的真实存在。在此基础上认识到它所处的空间位置，使得认识益加立体。

‘85 新潮艺术在时间空间上都是个标识。作为文化的一种开创性端点，它的存在即是个醒目的刻痕。我们将重担起的、或未来人将负担起的依然是它必将延续的东西——批判、建立、怀疑、毁灭。如果说‘85 美术新潮在时间上开了风气之先，反不如说它在空间占的位置之大。它如同虽稀薄但充溢着空间的大云团，我们为它所笼罩并难以拒绝它投在我们心中的影子。我们将背负着创造的使命，背负着批判的精神同时还背负着一次又一次毁灭的使命，而这一切是在经历‘85 美术新潮之后所自觉且必须面临着的。

‘85 新潮美术并不是玻璃柜中的标本，它是生命与运动着的精神。虽然时间的推移会打磨掉浮于表面的光泽，但在我们一次又一次的重新审视中，那热潮冷却后逐渐显露出的形象会不断警醒着我们：为了记忆而不是为了忘却那艺术无法拒绝的命运。

永远的“？”

艺术与怀疑论：艺术产生于人类对确定性开始怀疑的时刻。——赫伯特·曼纽什

当我们对一切都充满热望的时刻，也希望有怀疑主义精神陪伴着左右，以使得我们经常拥有沉寂的空间。在经过‘85 美术新潮的荡涤之后，我们对怀疑的觉悟，是使我们获得重新认识的钥匙。我们的不可遏制的创造欲、我们的彻底的叛逆精神正是那普遍的怀疑精神所寄寓的。我们的真正令人震动的创造，将会出现在怀疑精神高扬的时刻。如果说 1985 年是艰难地揭开的一页的话，那么，当我们试图揭开以下几页就更加显得不易。没有怀疑的精神，我们将难以看清未来的映象。

我们不得不承认，透过时间这层玻璃来描述以往，似乎一切都在变形。我们感到最难把握的，是对自己的真实。好在我们对一切均持怀疑的态度。

但愿我们误解历史，而历史没有误解我们。

Reflections On The New Wave Art of 1985

Yang Zhilin

When everything awaits description and explanation, I suppose I have to give up the view that language is only partially explicit and resort to words that are vague and interdependent in conveying meaning. I would like to write down something when my memory of the events over these years is still fresh.

The Upsurging Tide

The New Wave art swept the country in the middle of last decade, that is, from 1983 to 1986, with its peak in 1985. It came so swift and became so spectacular that it seemed as if it were a great flood that had broken the bank. Many art exhibitions were held in Beijing, Shanghai, Nanjing and elsewhere in China. They were, among them, Exhibition of Paintings by Six Jiangsu Artists (Nanjing, December 1984), Exhibition of Works by Young Chinese Artists in Progress (Beijing, May 1985), Exhibition of New Portraiture (Shanghai and Nanjing, June 1985), New Brutal Art Exhibition (Nanjing, June 1985), Annual Painting Exhibition by Young Artists of the World (Beijing, July 1985), Art Week of Jiangsu Young Artists: A Grand Exhibition of Modern Art (Nanjing, October 1985), Exhibition of Modern Paintings (Zhongqing, October 1985), Invitational Exhibition of New Works by Chinese Artists (Wuhan, November 1985), November Art Exhibition (Beijing, November 1985), Exhibition of Works by Artist Group O in Hunan (Changsha, December 1985), New Space of 1985 (Hangzhou, December 1985), Starting from O Art Display (Shenzhen, January 1986), Last Painting Exhibition of 1986, No. 1 (Hangzhou, January 1986), First Grand Display of Works of Art by Young Artists in Shanghai (Shanghai, April 1986), Red 70%, Black 25% and White 5% Art Exhibition (Hangzhou, May 1986), 1985 Lantern Slides Exhibition and Symposium on Art (Zhuhai, August 1986), Basking in the Sun (Nanjing, September, 1986) Dadaist Creative Activities in Xiamen (Xiamen, November 1986), Art Festival of Hubei Youth (Wuhan and eight other cities in Hubei, November 1986), Concave and Convex Art Exhibition (Shanghai, November 1986), A Forum on New Ideas and New Behaviour (Beijing, December 1986), Art Exhibition and Performance of Artist Group M (Shanghai, December 1986) and so on. Either because of the call of the era or because of the inevitability of history, many fortuitous factors combined to form a great wave of art in 1985; the river that had dried up for over a decade again swelled with water.

A lot of artist groups appeared. The young artists put forth artistic views diametrically opposed to traditional ones. The formation of artist groups facilitated pooling together artistic views and holding exhibitions. Meanwhile social ideas were greatly influenced by the reverberation throughout the country. Those artist groups were North China Artist Group (Harbin, September 1984), Southwest Shandong Artist Group (Hezi, November 1984), Red Humour (Zhoushan, February 1986), South China Artist Salon (Guangzhou, May 1986), the Pond Artist Society (Hangzhou, May 1986), Red Brigade (Nanjing, August 1986), Southwest China Art Research Group (Kunming, August 1986), Artist M Group (Shanghai, December 1986), etc.

The appearance of the New Wave art was accompanied with that of new art periodicals, which not only provided media for duplication and propaganda, but also served to shake up the art circles with new thinking. Of the numerous art periodicals suffice it to mention just a few. They were New Wave of Fine Arts (Wuhan, January 1985—1987), Chinese Fine Arts (newspaper, Beijing, July 1985—December 1989), Painters (Changsha, November 1985—1991), New Wave of Industrial Art (Shanghai, December 1985). Meanwhile some long existent periodicals came out with a new format, for example, Fine Arts (Beijing January 1985) and Jiangsu Pictorial (Nanjing, January, 1985). All these periodicals provided the artists with opportunities to introduce new artistic thoughts to the reading public throughout the country. Among others there were such essays as My Views on Chinese Paintings (Jiangsu Pictorial, July 1985), The Emerging Artist Groups in China (Chinese Fine Arts, November 1985) and What is Important is Not Art (Chinese Fine Arts, July 1986), which roughly fell into three categories in nature: critical, constructive and skeptical. The essays helped to form the archives of modern Chinese art. It must be remembered that history is written by human hand.

A Trembling Leaf

The New Wave art of 1985 seemed to be a new page in the history of artistic creation turned over by a firm hand, a page like a leaf trembling in the wind.

The abrupt change of art in 1985 was the concentrated reflection of art searches of several decades, by generations of people. The page showed that the artists were depressed, although they had looked forward to the changing situation.

They were confronted with the difficulties of criticising traditional artistic views, the embarrassing situation of new artistic form and the unevenness of new works. Nevertheless the New Wave art answered the prevalent need for change. The search for the new and for change was in reality the programme of the New Wave art. Artistic products which appeared as a result of the propagation of the programme served to fill the void in the mind, no matter how immature and critical they were. People seemed to have forgot that they were entitled to criticise and to be skeptical; they praised the value of the New Wave art to the skies. At a time when only courage and zeal were approved of, it was deemed necessary to give a full appraisal of the positive merits of young artists. One was otherwise liable to be considered conservative, an epithet no one liked. Most people were not often conscientious in criticising, though they felt the need of doing so. For some time it was very hard to tell what was conservative from what was actually not. Artistic views of every description co-existed. This was a noisy stream into which people of all sorts were drawn. Artists shared the desire of catching up with the new wave and differed in outlook and style which in their turn changed with environment. They found it hard to remain calm. It seemed to them, moreover, calmness would only bring harm to themselves in front of the sound and fury of the New Wave art.

Up to now it has been difficult to estimate the value or tell the difference of the New Wave art. It was a movement more destructive than constructive. Its achievement seemed to have revealed great concern and anxiety. Nevertheless we reaped a harvest in terms of mental emancipation. It showed great contempt for some dated rules which were dying hard.

The New Wave art of 1985 was like a trembling leaf. Under the circumstances, it was difficult to remain courageous with the limited capability of psychological endurance and the uncertainty of changeable situation. The conflict which came in the wake of the New Wave art was, in the true sense of the term, the first of its kind in several decades. Hidden behind the dilemma were the barrenness of the mind and poverty of culture. It brought about a rude negation of traditional culture. And it revealed the dullness of sensibility as well as the great emotional turmoil. Against the background of change, various fortuitous conditions combined to create an opening in the bank. It contributed more in revealing the future than in asserting itself now.

A Link In The Cycling Chain

The New Wave art of 1985 introduced new modes of visual art, which were essentially imitative in turning out new products. The imitative quality of the New Wave art has incurred criticism. But the tasting of works of art by artists of other lands is, as is known to all, indispensable in cultivating the new artistic feel. Imitation is a necessary process in absorbing the merits of artistic works of other nations. Noteworthy was that most artists of the new wave did not set themselves against the criticism at imitation, but on the contrary, were dissatisfied with the approval of the imitative quality in their works. Art critics laid stress on the quality of finished products, making no mention of the creative process. In order to cover up their embarrassment, they put forth complete sets of doctrine to justify their viewpoints. Their critical essays were hard to understand, though they seemed lively and vigorous. Quite a few theoreticians tried hard to decode their meaning. But far from making things clear they put a mystic veil over the New Wave art. The artists' blind confidence plus the critics' blind affirmation obscured the image of the New Wave art. The fact revealed spiritual hastiness as well as a lack of confidence in culture.

The revolution of art stems from the new sensual need and is based on the innovation of techniques. The New Wave art met the new need of sensibility. But in terms of techniques, it followed the habitual process of creating, which was coloured by politics. It tried to find but did not experience reality, and it generalized but did not arouse emotions. The strongest voice of the age cried out for representation. Yet what we saw was the artistic techniques that had been used for many decades reacting against the similar artistic techniques. The reaction pointed to rebellion, but it was not rebellion itself, and thus could hardly meet the new sensual need. What it lacked was just the profundity of perception. Just like a link in a cycling wheel, it remained in the same place of conception.

It should be pointed out that New Wave art was called so by adopting a modern conception. It was essentially a confrontation with dated views on art. The narrowness of the confrontation was its want of a conscious spiritual rebellion. We could hardly see any reflection of theoretical conflict and dilemma, nor any mental clashes between despair and struggle. We could hardly feel the truthfulness of reality. In the critical essays of the New Wave art the explanations of its

concept occupied a prominent place. The fact could only make us feel that art critics began and ended in abstract discussions. In spite of all this, we were experiencing a new awakening, and began to loathe the poverty of the old artistic techniques in presentation. We realized, nevertheless, there was still an invisible chain binding us. The harm it had done was no less than the dullness of our sensibility and lack of artistic expression. It prevented us from reaching the depth of our soul. It was a period of time when there were difficulties to surmount and the need to cultivate new sensibility. The omnipresent fetter, the cycling chain, could have hindered the birth of new sensibility. But in the final analysis what bound our hands was none other than ourselves.

The Wall

In 1985, we often felt puzzled; we were confronted by a wall. We shouted at the top of our voice, but there was nothing but the echoes of our own shouting. How we longed to have an atmosphere wherein we could relax and exchange our ideas about art and an environment wherein we could communicate with world culture. But...

"Promote cultural exchange" was a timely raised slogan. It was a topic of conversation in 1985, yet it was overshadowed by a great complexity of ideas. Apparently it reflected in a concentrated way the longing for cultural exchange, a wish to join in the mainstream of world culture, hence the question of what was high and what was low and which was dominant and which was subordinate. Under such circumstances, the "exchange" was not bilateral and equal, and world culture was not taken as a frame of reference but as an example to follow. The spreading of such ideas resulted in a heavy burden on our backs. We must get rid of it and get rid of it under guidance. For such ideas meant we did not have to express ourselves independently, but we should imitate others in terms of artistic creation. At that time the slogan took on a colour of utilitarianism. And the colour was too fast to fade. One felt it difficult to communicate with others as if there were an invisible wall which prevented him from seeing far. We might not be aware of the fact that it was we who were squatting on the non-existent steps of the wall. But the wall was actually something built up by ourselves.

Long Distance, Short Distance

The New Wave art of 1985 has been described in numerous times. These overlapping lines have obscured its features. Nevertheless, the examination of this specific cultural period

has enabled us to feel its existence by adjusting the distance of time. On the basis of this, we can locate its place and can make our recognition of it more concrete.

The New Wave art of 1985 is a sign post in time and space. As a terminal of artistic creation, its existence leaves an obvious sign. What we are to take up and what our successors are to take up is still something that will go on continuously, that is, the task of criticising, reconstructing, questioning and abandoning. The New Wave art of 1985 has contributed much in enlivening the atmosphere. But it would be more accurate to say that it has occupied a vast space. It can be compared to a mass of vapour, thin but expanding. We are surrounded by it and can hardly resist its influence. We are going to take up the task of creating and criticising and at the same time we are going to shoulder the task of destroying. Since the appearance of the New Wave art in 1985, we have become more conscientious in doing so.

Works of the New Wave art are not something to be placed in a glass case. Art is life, something constantly moving. Although with the passage of time it will lose some of its brightness, yet in examining and reexamining the New Wave art, something will come out after fits of heat and cold to remind us that we must remember, not forget the inevitable fate of art.

It Will Remain Forever?

When we entertain great hope, we at the same time feel that it is accompanied by doubt, so we often have capacity for silence. After the sweeping of the New Wave art of 1985, our realization of doubt is our key to a new awakening. Our desire for artistic creation and our rebellious spirit are fraught with doubt. Our best works of art will be created at the height of doubt. If it was difficult to open the page of 1985, it will be even more difficult to open other pages. Without skepticism, we can never hope to see the image of future.

We have to admit that in reviewing things of the past few years in retrospect we have realized that everything is changing. What we find difficult to handle is nothing but the real existence of ourselves. Fortunately we are skeptical about everything.

We might have misunderstood history but history has not misunderstood us.

Translated by Zhang Xilin

Edited by Zhang Ziqing

89以后——中国制造？

南 沙



武汉艺术家群像

1989年，中国现代艺术的河道在这里拐了个弯。这不仅因为“中国现代艺术展”的举办成为总结性的标识，使“85新潮”在一段时期的发展步入喧闹的“最后的晚餐”，更由于这一年时局的波动变化，极大程度地影响着艺术家的价值判断。89年以后的现实境遇，客观上抑制了正在无限膨胀的，或者说越来越被虚饰化了的“前卫意识”。恰好中国现代艺术的内部运作，也差不多在丧失舞台的同时，面临着一个自我转向的时机——只要透过艺术家的私下谈话，便很容易得知，许多人其实已经开始厌倦“新潮艺术”里太多的乏而无味的艺术论调和行为上滑向于把戏的做法——该告别这个激情的时代了。

一些领尽风骚的前卫艺术家们移出国门，投入西方艺术的圈子，打着他们的“哑语”。而国内的同行们与其说关注他们的行为并作为参照，倒不如说关心自我的“当下经验”来得更切乎实际些。在各自的已有位置上，原先的观念正被悄悄调整。而那些被称之为“新生代”的画家，却极具主见地登上了艺术主导的地位。沉潜的中国现代艺术和艺术家，在喘息中虽然还未能明晰出确定的方向，但在短暂的空白后，总算透出一些端倪，预示着将来的发展趋势。《西三环艺术文献资料展》（各地巡回）、《新生代艺术展》（北京）、《车库91展》（上海）等艺术展览意味着新的综合能力指导下的新的风貌。“89后艺术”，作为一个艺术史家乐于论证的命题，似乎已经露出点“文化相”来。

有意思的是，在现代艺术落入谷底的最初一、两年时间里，“新文人画”却被推上了浪峰，它大张旗鼓呼应南北，恰如其份地印证了一时弥散于人们中间的消闲态度。这种与现代艺术总体观念相悖的姿态，似乎不能简单归结为彼此消长的替代功能。从整体的社会情绪观之，89年以后，近乎“民族主义”的思潮出现了新时期以来前所未有的高涨，尤其是文化上的认同，在传统思想的复归和寻找毛泽东时代的印迹上都有

反映。这种复杂的集体意识有其深邃的来源，至少可以认作在意识形态的选择上，当“全盘西化”的论调在现实面前不攻自破时，人们在精神上急切地希望凝聚到另一个支点上。

作为某种共振，艺术家也不约而同地自叩：中国的“文化和现实本源”，究竟能不能成为“现代艺术”体系的基础？以往仅仅演示西方视觉艺术风格的做法，在现实背景中尤其显得无足轻重，尽管这是一个必不可少的过程。而空泛的理想主义大观念，首先不能替代艺术本身的自律，同时与现实生活的切实感受尚有距离。另一方面，西方文化沙文主义的倨傲姿态，也使艺术家渺茫于无法得到艺术本体归宿的失落之中——所谓国际化语言是否存在？如果有，是否应以牺牲个人表达意愿和本土文化经验为代价？

建立自己的标准，顺理成章地成为一种理论上的呼声。事实上，艺术家在创作实践的同时，已经先行地于思考中注入了明确的“本土文化”情结。重要的，是自己所处时代的状态，无论它是源自个人还是整体。正如一位艺术家手记中说的那样：“‘母语’和‘土地’的问题关系到我们个体精神和整个民族性是整体性的，关系到我们个体生产和整个民族性的紧密联系。这种联系决定了我们当下经验的基本现实精神——我们如何更有活力地思考，我们如何凭借更强有力的源泉去生存。”（宋海冬《作为问题讨论的笔记》）

“中国制造”，一种希望？

最简便、最实际的做法，是让现代艺术包装上一点本土的或民族的色彩。这使我们发现私下流传甚广的做法：利用包括文革时期在内的社会或政治景观遗留在人们记忆中的符号，去落实文化上的特定烙印——领袖形象、样板戏造型、标语与报头剪接之类，它们被掺入多样形式的画面里。这种纯粹中国特色的“波普”主张，从外观上很容易成为联系国门内外、乃至艺术内外的中介：西方人看到了乐于承认的、中国味十足的



上海部分批评家，艺术家在李山画室

“现代”形象，而公众们则被唤回了恋旧热情，如果他们还有机会看到的话。这或者是另一种意义上的“寻根”，或者与逐渐以宽松心态接纳一切传统的当代文化形态相合拍。甚至原先在“85新潮”中强调图式的理性观念的弄潮儿们，也直接跳到这种“政治波普”的领域里，他们小心地但又是接近躁动地求证着“中国方式的自觉。”

这里沿用的内容绝无颂扬，也较少戏谑的成份，对大多数艺术家来说，倒是相当严肃地把尘封的收藏，置于当代评价中。不过，从某种角度看，这些曾经或正在家喻户晓的影像符号只代表着某种借口，某种手段，因为多数艺术家并没有来得及想透，我们究竟能从中分离出什么来。他们宁可接受一种暧昧的态度，而不作过份的理论诠释——这与89年以前宣言此起彼伏的情况显然形成对比。问题在于，内容上的“波普”化虽然反映了时代衍生的文化需要及“本土”色彩，但是不是仅此于此就够了呢？如果说个性的创造，是以艺术的方式对应其感受的话，那么这种个性，或者独特的感受，就应避免淹没在对内容的津津乐道里。作品的主题成为唯一的依赖，而省略具体语言的专注角度，是很难提携艺术自身进入一个新的层次。换一种简单的说法便是，画什么是一回事，怎么画却又是另一回事。我们尽可以暗自夸耀自己对文化切入的敏感性，但这不应该成为视觉贫乏和叙述方法含糊其词的理由。其实，艺术家对此不是没有感悟，他们中的一些人在逐级聚焦中已自敛出习惯做法的力度，如此以往，当从“波普”表象中抽离出属于艺术家个人的语法时，或许才能出现最有魅力的艺术事实。

一种更为鲜明的艺术现象登临了九十年代初的画坛，几乎被酝酿成公开的反叛势力——同样针对“85新潮”来说。这便是评论家众说纷纭的“新写实”画风。所谓的众说纷纭仅仅是指流派标签上的界定，而对其内涵的发现，理论界很快便达到了共识。如果说人们正观望着“89后艺术”能抛出些什么玩

艺儿来的时候，“新写实”的发言，无疑称得上是第一阶段中最为明朗的。人们已经习惯将89年以前当成昨天看待，“新写实”逆动中的重创，完全具备了建立新格局所拥有的基本条件，尽管其中的一些主将也参加过“中国现代艺术展”，但在当时的情况看，他们的作为，似乎显得局外了一点。

明确的差别来自这样的方面。首先，“新写实”艺术家不理睬一般认定的“前卫”媒体：装置、物质材料乃至行为表演。他们重新捡起传统的作画方式和材料——油画颜料和布、刻刀和木板，诸如此类——回到画室，这是再“保守”不过的做法了，况且又是以描绘具体的形象见长。这种局面不是预先商量的结果，他们实际上也缺乏对群体意识的兴趣。尽管写实的形态各异——恣意的、照相的、表现的，但不可否认，学院的美术教育方法在这里发挥着共通作用，使之创作上形成没有技术断裂的必然延续。所以，“新写实”的画家比“前卫艺术”家多了一份自信和优越，“活儿要地道”是他们爱表白的，因为在有限的范围内，操作技术的优劣是有标准可寻的。八十年代后期，“新潮艺术”倡导的“纯化语言”口号，没料到是以蓦然回首的方式，归化到中国美术正统准则的基点上。这仅仅是指形式风格而已。而在其它方面，它肯定不是正统的，也迥然有异于以往的现实主义传统。

这便牵涉到我们所认定的“观念”问题。同样是中国“本土文化”的觉悟，“新写实”画家却在表达上甘愿承认自己的平庸：不以代言公众的共有经验为夸口，只承认自己目之所极的范围；不以语言选择上的惊世骇俗为圭臬，宁可平静地展现个人的潜能。一切都以低姿态的面目出现。也许这批年轻的“新生代”在知识、阅历和道德判断上，更直率地摒弃那些理想主义的使命感和责任心，确切地说，或许只是换一种方式来诠释这方面的思考罢了。他们认为，“所谓‘时代感’只蕴藏在现在和现实的生活里，即我们周围的一切之中”，应清理“新潮艺



刘小东与电影导演张元、王小帅摄于《刘小东画展》前

术”中的“狂妄和自卑”，因为“狂妄的是企图抛开历史和经济的现实去直达所谓的未来，自卑的是看不到现实生活所蕴藏的希望。”艺术中“并无一个凌驾于现实之上的所谓‘现代’，因为‘现在’即‘现代’”。（王华祥语）

实际上，这种说法显然在为“新写实”语言上的滞留作辩解。从艺术史的进程看，存在的合理性有时不等于文化进步上的合理性，而文化时势绝不能混同于社会时序。当我们于艺术自身范畴里，去寻求“新写实”在“现代性”上的界定时，语言上的妥协是显而易见的。但从对上一回运动的检讨和反拨来看，这一步的跨越是非常合理的。对究竟哪里是中国“本土”现代艺术的突破口来说，返回到既有的旧体制中，又未尝不是一条切实可行的路子。

与客观性描绘方法一致，在观念的输入上，“新写实”提供同样直观的视角。画家大都只以个人的生活经验作揭秘的依据，描述的对象逃不出自己熟悉的人，熟悉的环境这样的圈子。艺术家的生存状态——当然可以外延为广泛的生存状态——在这里被艺术本身充分尊重和完满体现，使之看上去有点自恋和自囚的复合体的感受。其中，隐含着极为重要的主旨，那就是，如此一来，艺术家可以无所顾忌地评论生活，因为谁都有权利自由地享受自我评判，只要你有足够的体验和足够的勇气。就象刘晓东做的那样，“我将自己心中的‘内容’直接插入他们当中，现实本身是一种样子，我们重新组合又成了另一种样子。这就和传统现实主义产生了某种差别。”（刘晓东《尊重现实》）所谓“近距离审视”，便包括了如此主观的针对性，他们甚至乐于抛出自己的尊严，作为游戏中戏谑的对象——无论对镜自画还是摹写亲友，不仅缺少美化的兴趣，有时甚至恶意夸张，看上去充斥着浓烈的“黑色幽默”语调。这分明是经过心灵折射的现实和人生，或许他们真的是现实主义艺术阵营中最离经叛道的人。

可能“新写实”艺术家算得上是实在的一群，却又是接近狡黠的一群。从各个方面，人们都很少能抓住他们的把柄，因为它兼容并蓄了事物的两极：存有观念，然而又于图像中遮遮掩掩；尚持文化批判，可在姿态上却是逃避；语言选临正道，但分明经过许多修正；尊重个人经验，不过并不放弃社会认同感；甚至纯粹意义上的艺术探索，竟也赢得了商业上的急速成功——所有不偏不倚的综合，代表着一股中庸的势力。自然，这种稳妥的应变策略，是容易受到89以后艺术界多方面的欢迎的。因而，如果“新写实”还算得上一次被普遍承认的现象的话，与其说它是画家的选择，倒不如说是画坛的选择更令人信服些。它造就了一批有水准的乃至特殊气质的艺术家，并无疑起到一段时空里的辐射作用。但其语言叙述功能上的消极因素，绝对不能满足现代艺术的课题要求。从前瞻的眼光看，它不可避免地面临着被新浪潮超越的一天。

另一种现象在89以后的画坛默默加深，它不象“新写实”那样惹人注目，但却分明是与之并驾齐驱的，虽然艺术观完全不同——“抽象艺术”在全国各地都能找到呼应。其实，自“新潮美术”发展以来甚至更早，画坛上处于零星状态的“抽象艺术”，从来没有停止过声音，只是由于内容及功能上的特殊性，细语很容易被呐喊所掩盖。然而，从九十年代开始，对它的再识成为画家的自觉行为，这中间包括了符号风格的再创、可感触性材料的应用和稍加引用的具象物，形成单一的、或是综合的“抽象艺术。”

“抽象艺术”其实也意味着中间道路的灵活性，甚至更宽泛意义上的灵活性。首先，纯粹的形色研究，淡化了人文思想的态度，如果尚存文化针对性的话，也只是相对隐匿。这样一来，只要艺术家愿意，便能很方便地排除来自意识形态方面的压力，但同时却冒着放弃艺术外围直面解读的危险——模棱两可的方式，让表意符号也可以认作是装饰需要。其二，“抽象



• 南京《艺术与神话》—现代艺术文献传递及展览
组织者和部分成员 摄于黄峻画室

艺术”本身即是永远的主题,它的纯粹性与“前卫观念”形成若即若离的关系,在潮来潮往中进退自如,艺术家的超越姿态也跨临于国际化和本土化的纷扰之间。所有“中国现代艺术”可能受到怀疑,在这里很容易得到化解:最少涉嫌媚俗的“纯艺术”,最大程度地被归化到“前卫性”中,因为无论怎么说,“抽象艺术”是“现代的。”

然而,包括艺术家本人在内,我们所审定的“纯化语言”,大多是参照艺术史曾有过的审美经验得来的,这便给当今中国的“抽象艺术”添上一点尴尬:如果看上去某一位艺术家语言上成熟得游刃有余,又正好他缺乏语言演示的逻辑过程时,这等于承认他仅仅在沿袭已有先例上的敏感;而如此一来,恰恰证明了在逾越艺术传统范畴的程度上,艺术家努力不够,还有待提供更有说服力的原创性。这是对中国“抽象艺术”里没有出现过多的、令人激动的作品的直观感受。然而,苟求处于发展中的、尚不明朗的局势是不明智的,我们确实看到一些具备“抽象艺术”固有素质的画家,正在衍变出新的东西来。他们试图调和精致与粗陋、优雅与尖锐的关系,把握着良好的生涩状态。只要他们锲而不舍,极有可能让画坛等来一些具备个人优势的“抽象”画家,而对目前的他们来说,重要的是“强化语言”,而不是“纯化语言。”

如果说“89后艺术”完全割离了同以往的联系,这肯定不是事实。有些艺术家,仍然默默不懈地维持着现代艺术革新的原动力,又用同样的责任心维护“前卫艺术”的延续性。这是指从事“观念艺术”的那一拨儿。他们执着于义无反顾的挑战精神,在国际潮流的隔岸召示下,思考九十年代中国氛围里的“当下经验”,并将陈腐幼稚的东西远远抛在后面。细细审视,虽然他们每一次新的行为都有着令人惊奇的深探,但在“观念”的进化上,却是犹豫而审慎的,因为现实对这些艺术家的要求,已不仅仅是他们个人心智的表述,更难回避的是,他们

的艺术行为在某种意义上,代表着中国当代艺术自由发挥的极限程度。有一种事实证明了这一点,即他们更多地依靠成品本身传达其意念,而较少显示艺术家本人,(89年以后的背景中,“行为艺术”似乎已消声匿迹)因而,九十年代的“前卫艺术”与以往相比,变得儒雅了许多,学术味了许多。这些完全归于个人风格的表述,一旦汇入国际性的现代体系中,便很快显示出它的专注和灵活。从作品本身看,也接近于某种既定的规范。处于不断变化中的“观念”标准,可能给中国前卫艺术家的无意歪曲或有心应变,都带来了一次机会。或许,目前处于散兵游勇状态下的“观念艺术”家,未尝不会以特殊的个人才能,去激发“中国现代艺术”整体意识上的跃动。

与以往相比,“89后艺术”的各类形态,至少在一个方面是倾向于一致的,那就是,艺术家聪明地意识到放弃作品里面浅显阐述的必要。他们干脆采取照录的方法——无论“政治波普”的符号引录,“新写实”对生活现象的直接记录,或是“抽象艺术”对物质手段的满足,“观念艺术”延用影像或物质原型——而将其余的反应留给了观众。因此,作品里包含的可视因素,仅仅只是激起观众心理变化、猜测、同构的催化剂。这种追崇客观,少作表态,丰富心理复杂层次的做法,事实上形成了宽泛的文化释义。“85新潮”中文化解释的相对单一,被艺术家或许有意设防、或许其实并无深究的态度所代替。完全依恃于视觉形象本身同样会提供深奥,而不必非得理论构筑上的喋喋不休。揭示它而不去言说其秘密,不仅诱引着观众的投入激情,而且也考验着评论家的判断能力。至于如何处理艺术中必须拥用的精神因素的问题,艺术家的真实看法是,“一秒钟可以想到一切”(刘晓东语)。他们绝对不是没有理性感知,因为重要的在于提出问题。提出问题,也许就是“89后艺术”所能给我们的最好答案。

一九九二年八月于南京

Post-'89 Period. Is It Made In China?

Nan Sha

The year 1989 witnessed the course of the development of Chinese modern art making a sudden turn. This is not only because the holding of Chinese Modern Art Exhibition became the symbol of conclusion, causing the "85 New Wave Art" to enter into a boisterous "Last Supper" after a certain period of development; but also because the fluctuations and changes in the situation of that year greatly affected the value judgement of the artists. The objective reality after 1989 also helped to suppress the "avant garde consciousness" which had been inflating uncontrollably, or rather, which had been becoming more and more artificial. Coincidentally, simultaneous with the loss of its stage, modern Chinese art was faced with the time for self-reorientation. If one listened to the artists talking among themselves, one could easily find out that many of them were already sick and tired of the oft-seen dull theorizing and playing of tricks characteristic of New Wave Art. It is high time to bid farewell to this era of passions.

Some avant garde artists who had been much in the limelight left the country and joined the artists in the West and their "silent language". Instead of following and benefiting academically from the movements of their colleagues, the artists who stayed at home were more practical, concerning themselves with what they themselves were doing. Working at their respective posts, they were quietly readjusting their viewpoints. But those who were called "Cainozoic Painters" confidently stepped onto the position of artistic dominance. Modern Chinese art and artists, still submerged and panting hard, did not find a definite direction, but after a short period of blank, they have finally succeeded in showing a sort of clue, foretelling the possible trend of development in the future. Such art exhibitions as the itinerant Exhibition of Xisanhuan Art Literature And Reference Materials, Exhibition of Cainozoic Art in Beijing, and Garage '91 Exhibition in Shanghai represent a new look that appears under the guidance of synthesized abilities. Post-'89 art, a topic which art historians like to study, seems to have acquired a sort of a "cultural aspect".

Interesting to say, in the initial couple of years when modern art was at the lowest ebb, New Scholars Drawing was pushed to the peak. In a very big way, it spread both to the north and the south, aptly corroborating the attitude of resignation and detachment prevalent during those days. It seems that this stance which is contrary to the general spirit of modern art can not simplistically be attributed to the law of substitution, one declining and the other growing. Judging by the feelings and sentiments of the society as a whole, an upsurge unprecedented since the beginning of the New Period has ap-

peared after 1989 in the ideological trend, which is almost nationalistic in character. The seeking of cultural identity, in particular, is reflected both in the revival of traditional ideas and the search for the footprints of Mao Zedong Age. Such complicated feelings on the part of the art world as a whole have their deep-going origins. At least one might come to this conclusion; when the whole-sale westernization theory for the choice of ideology collapsed of itself in the face of reality, people eagerly pin their hopes elsewhere for spiritual support.

As an indication of solidarity, all artists without exception ask themselves: Can the source of China's culture and reality be taken as the basis of the system of China's "modern art"? The past practice of merely demonstrating the style of the visual arts of the West, though an inevitable step, seems to be trivial against the present background. And, big empty idealistic talk can not replace the laws inherent in art. At the same time, it is at variance with the actual feelings one gets from real life. On the other hand, the chauvinistic superciliousness of Western culture has left the artists quite at a loss as to what is the real "home" of art itself? Does what is called internationalized language exist? If it does, does it exact the price of the sacrifice of one's freedom to express himself and his native cultural experiences?

The establishment of their own criteria has justifiably become their theoretical outcry. In fact, while engaged in creation, they have infused into their artistic speculations an already clearly-defined "culture of homeland" complex. What is important is the situation of the times one lives in, no matter whether it relates to the individual or the community. One artist puts it well when he says in his notes, "The problem of 'mother tongue' and 'motherland' affects the integratedness of our individuality and national character as a whole and the close ties between individual work and the national character as a whole. Such ties determine the basic realistic spirit governing our present experiences. How can we think in a more lively way? How can we base our survival on more powerful sources?" (Soon Haidong; *Notes For Discussion*)

"Made In China?" A new hope?

The easiest and most practicable way of doing is to give modern art a little bit of native or national coloring. This reminds us of the fairly prevalent practice; make use of those signs still fresh in the people's memory of the social or political scenes in the past historical periods, including the Cultural Revolution, to realize the peculiar imprints in culture--the portraying of leaders, the characterization in model plays, the editing of slogans and mastheads, etc. They have been fitted into scenes of a great variety. Such pop practices, which are purely Chinese in character, on the surface might easily be-

come the tie between China and other countries, and between laymen and artists. Westerners can see "modern" images full of Chinese flavor which they are glad to see while the public will be restored their nostalgic feelings, if they do have the opportunity to see them. This might be called "looking for roots" in a different sense, or "gradually falling in step" with the attitude of tolerance to accept all traditional forms of contemporary culture. Even those who experimented with schematic rationalism during the 1985 New Wave stepped over to the side of "political pop". They started to cautiously and even impatiently prove the "Chinese-style consciousness."

What is narrated here is not at all meant for eulogizing, nor for bantering. For most artists, it is meant to most seriously present what has long been shelved for contemporary evaluation. However, judging from a certain perspective these signs and images which acquired or are acquiring wide-spread popularity are merely a kind of pretext, and a means to an end, because most artists have not yet got the time to think it out clearly; what on earth are we trying to get from them? They would rather adopt an ambiguous attitude than make too detailed theoretical expositions. This forms a sharp contrast to the situation before 1989 in which one theory cropped up after another. The problem is: art becoming "pop" in content does reflect the cultural needs and "native coloring" of the times. But should we stop at that? If the achieving of individuality is the "impression" with its corresponding artistic form as its inseparable factor, then, this individuality, or this peculiar impression, should avoid drowning itself in smug talk about content. If an artist depends on theme as the only support and refuses to devote his efforts to the use of specific language, he can hardly elevate art itself to a new level. To put it more simply, what to draw is one thing and how to draw it is another. We may have every reason to take secret pride in our keen awareness of cultural infiltration, but this should not become a pretext for the poverty of vision and the ambiguity in expression. In fact, not all artists are in the state of darkness. Some of them have step by step and in the course of their work cultivated effective ways of their own. If they keep up, when a language of their own is distilled from pop, there may appear the most fantastic art.

In early '90s, there has appeared in the field of paintings a more striking artistic phenomenon, which threatens to turn into an open retrogressive force, retrogressive as opposed also to the '85 New Wave Art. This is the New Realistic painting style, over which opinions differ widely. The difference of opinions lies merely in how to define such a label. But as to the discovering and understanding of its implications, there is

soon a consensus of opinions. People had been waiting to see what new things Post-'89 Art could produce. The works of art presented by New Realists could undoubtedly be called the most distinctive one during this period of time. People had got used to regarding pre-'89 years as yesterday; the appearance of New Realism in the course of retrogression gave these realists the basic conditions for the creation of a new situation, although the major proponents of this school also took part in Modern Art Exhibition. But judging by the situation then, what they did then proved that they moved outside the inner circles.

Striking differences exist in the following fields. First of all, New Realists do not use the usual media generally regarded as characterising avant garde: installations, physical materials and even action performance. They pick up again those traditionally used painting methods and materials: oil paint, canvas, burin, drawing board, etc. They return to the studio, a most "conservative" way of working. Besides, they are good at drawing concrete things. This is not the result of pre-arranged discussions. In fact, they are not interested in cultivating the collective spirit or consciousness. Although their methods of portraying reality differ: free, photographic, expressive, yet undeniably what the fine arts institutes taught their students were equally brought to full play. As a result, the natural continuation of the techniques of creating can be seen. Therefore, as compared with avant garde artists, New Realists are more confident, and enjoy more advantages. "We must turn out real stuff," they like to say. For in a clearly-defined field, there are definite criteria for good or bad techniques. The New Wave artists in the late eighties advocated "a purified language", a slogan which, unexpectedly, happens to be the revival of the basic point of the orthodox principles governing Chinese art. This refers to form and style only, and in other fields, it is definitely not orthodox and is entirely different from the realistic tradition in the past.

This has to do with the problem of what we call "concept". Although also possessed of the consciousness of the "native culture", New Realist painters are willing to admit their mediocrity in their methods of expression. Never boasting that they are the spokespersons of the public and their experiences, they willingly admit they paint what they can see. Rather than regard the use of fantastic language as their aim, they choose to quietly display their potentialities and adopt a low profile. Maybe these young "cenozaic" artists have openly discarded the idealistic sense of mission and duty. To be more precise, they are perhaps trying to illustrate in a different way their experiences, knowledge and moral values. In their opinion, "the so-called 'sense of the era' exists

only in now and in practical life, i.e., in what surrounds us." "The arrogance and sense of inferiority" in New Wave art "should be eliminated", because "the former is a vain attempt to shut one's eyes to the historical and economical realities and march to the so-called future, while the latter is the failure to see the hopes buried in real life." In art, "there does not exist a 'modern' which rises above reality, because 'now' means 'modern'." (Wang Huaxiang)

In fact, such a statement is an obvious pretext for the state of backwardness in the idiom used by New Realists. From the angle of the historical development of art, the justifiableness of the existence of something sometimes does not mean the existence is justifiable from the point of view of cultural progress, and cultural situation should not be confused with social development. When we are defining the term "modern" used by New Realists in the field of art itself, the compromise over the use of language is obvious. But from the point of view of reviewing the past, to take a step forward is only expected. As a possible breakthrough point of China's "native" modern art, the return to the practice already adopted might very well be a practical way out.

In harmony with the method of objective portraying, New Realists also provide an equally direct visual angle in the infusion of ideas. Most painters use their experiences in their own life as the basis for the revelation of secrets, and their objects of portrayal are no more than the persons and the surroundings they are familiar with. The situation of their survival (of course it might be extended to mean survival in a broad sense) is fully respected and perfected by art itself that it might seem to be the combination of narcissism and self-imprisonment. Here is hidden a very important purpose, i.e., by so doing, artists may comment on life in any way they choose to, because everybody is entitled to freely enjoying self-evaluation, so long as they have enough experience and enough courage. They can do as Liu Xiaodong has done: "I have planted the 'content' in my heart directly into their midst. Reality looks like one thing; after our regrouping of it, it becomes another. There arises its difference from traditional realism." (Liu Xiaodong, *Respect Reality*) Therefore, the so-called "close-range observation" includes such subjective aims. They are even willing to throw aside their dignity to be used as a target of bantering. Whether they are portraying themselves from the mirror or drawing a picture of their friends and relatives, they not only show no interest in beautifying; sometimes they even engage in ill-intentioned exaggeration. Their works seem to be full of black humor. Evidently it represents the reality and life refracted through their soul. Maybe they are really the most unorthodox persons in the

camp of realistic art.

New Realists might be counted as a group of decent people. At the same time, they are all a bit crafty. In no respect do they give anyone a handle, because New Realism includes the two poles of things; there are ideas, but they are concealed or semi-concealed in the images; the artists are for cultural criticism, but they adopt an evasive attitude; the language they use is orthodox, and yet evidently very much revised; they respect personal experiences, but they don't give up their own identification with society; even their purely artistic explorations turn out to be quick commercial successes. The impartial synthesization of all these represent a middle-of-the-road force. It goes without saying that such prudent tactics for change are extensively welcomed by the post-'89 art field. Therefore, if New Realism could be said to be a widely-acknowledged phenomenon, it would be more convincing if one attributes it to the choice of the art world, rather than that of the painters. A group of artists with the right qualifications and even with peculiar temperament appeared and undoubtedly spread their influence far and wide for a certain period of time. But with the negative factor posed by their language of expression they can never meet the needs of modern art, nor from a long term point of view can they avoid being overtaken by new trends.

Another phenomenon has been quietly growing in the painting world since 1989. Not so eye-catching as New Realism, it evidently is "abstract art" keeping abreast with the former though different in its views on art. This phenomenon prevails throughout the country. In fact, since the development of New Wave fine arts and even earlier, scattered groups of abstract art in the painting world have never stopped speaking out. Theirs are low whisperings, peculiar in content and function, which are apt to be drowned by the loud shouts of the New Wave art. However, starting from the '90s, it has become the conscious behavior of painters to re-examine abstract art. The re-creation of signs and styles, the use of tangible materials and the slight adaptation of visible images... ---these form mono- or poly-abstract art.

In fact, abstract art also embodies the elasticity of the middle road, even in a broader sense. First of all, the study of the form only weakens the attitude of humanism. If the orientation requirement of culture still exists, it does in a relatively hidden state. Such being the case, if the artist wants to, he can easily resist the pressure exerted on him by ideology; but at the same time he runs the risks of giving up the practice of direct interpretation on the periphery of art--the use of ambiguous forms, and even the use of ideographic signs for the purpose of decoration. Secondly, abstract art itself is an eternal