



中國第二代油畫

閔希文畫集



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作品翻拍

出版者 敦皇藝術股份有限公司

地址 台北市忠孝東路一段138號地下一樓

電話 (02)3961864

傳真 (02)3966618

登記證 行政院新聞局版台業字第三七四二號

印刷 利得印刷有限公司

訂價 新台幣1000元整

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淺論老畫家閔希文其人其畫

徐龍森

繪畫藝術以它的歷史進程來看，實在只是給這雜亂冷漠的人間世界以美感的享受而已。其它一切，那僅僅是人們附加給它的外衣，決不是它的本性。

老畫家閔希文一生追求的也就是這種美感享受。這種享受是既超越民族又超越地區的一條近代藝術之路。

他生於一九一八年人們稱作「魚米之鄉」的江蘇常熟縣。常熟也像江浙一帶的小縣城一樣，是個水城，到處有橋和船。民風淳厚，是出才子的地方。城傍山而建，山不高，但玲瓏剔透。離城不遠，保存一座唐代古寺——興福寺。在這幽美的環境中，自然很容易孕育出像閔希文這樣的畫家。

閔希文從小就喜歡繪畫。當他上初中時，畫家龐薰琹和溫肇桐組織的「春陽」畫展給幼小的他著了迷。那時人們的欣賞水平還僅是月曆的審美情趣，而龐薰琹卻把最時新的巴黎派引進了進來。

他也曾夢想做個化學家。可是他表姐在蘇州美專作的畫，誘發了他的天性，但家中堅持讓他選了該校的製版系。在蘇州美專一年的學習，逐步萌發了他走純藝術的路，他和同班的一位同鄉殷以禮偷偷去杭州報考國立藝專，由於已經有了點基本功，很順利地被錄取了。

杭州藝專的學習奠定了他一生的藝術傾向，也就是說使他走了一條不是模擬自然的道路。實際上藝術和自然從來不是一回事，即使標榜照搬自然的寫實主義，也決不是它的翻版。更何況近代繪畫，自然只是它的一種憑藉，一種啓迪。畫家通過自然去創造與自然平行的一個新天地，一種新境界。

三〇年代的杭州藝專，不僅聘有承襲法國近代畫派的一批老師，也有培養了一批優秀的學生，如現已有了名望的畫家趙無極、董希文、朱德群、朱膺、彥涵、吳冠中、羅工柳等。他們崇尚發探個性和內心感受。校長林風眠的畫是紅色青色的強烈對比，吳大羽教授的畫有著像火焰般燃燒的色彩，方幹民教授的畫則是立體的形體結構。閔希文是方幹民先生的得意弟子，追隨先生四十多年，曾在上海協助創辦「中華藝術研究會」。另外他又汲取其他老師的色彩精髓。

這一代老畫家的一生都不太幸運和平靜，閔希文尤其如此。小時就遇上不少戰亂，他記憶中經常要去鄉間避難。小學中學都沒能上好，大學一大半時間在抗日戰火中。四九年之後，以為可以過上太平日子了，卻一個運動接著一個，五七年他又被劃上了右派，不僅下放去勞動，還不讓他教課。在圖書館工作了二十多年，工資降了四級，生活也就變得十分清苦。這樣，作為畫家的閔希文，作畫的可能和條件都被降到了最低限度，他不得不把興趣轉向美術理論與翻譯上去。

我們現在來看看閔希文的創作情況，就不難理解他作品如此少的原因了。幾十年來，他幾乎很少有整塊的作畫時間，又沒作畫條件和環境，都是利用業餘的假日，從夾縫中爭取的。抗戰八年，靠貸金吃

飯，沒錢買顏料和畫布，作品也就不會太多，但也全丟失光了。一九四九年後，生活上有了好轉，可是繪畫思想產生了差距，非脫胎換骨改造不可，不然就是反黨。直到了改革開放，閔希文不僅右派平了反，繪畫思想也得到了恢復。他的這種藝術觀點上的反復，可從他留存的一百四十多幅作品中顯示出來。他現已近八十高齡，可他整個藝術生涯不免短了些，實在是很可惜的，這又能去怪怨誰呢？歷史上的許多傑出畫家像高更、梵谷、莫狄格里亞尼、八大、石濤、徐渭不也都是顛沛坎坷，生前不為人知！

從他的作品來分析，大體上可分成三個階段；早年學習是一個階段，中年新中國成立後汲取蘇聯技法第二階段，改革開放後是最後一個階段。

他在無意中保存了一幅學生時代畫的《自畫像》，那還是在一九三九年昆明郊外的安江村，正是本科一年級，教他們的老師恰好又是方幹民先生。畫上自是可以看到受方先生主體結構表現的影響。他追求的是顯然不是惟妙惟肖，而是一種美感形成，一種明亮色彩的交響。他認為「作畫不是爲了超同，而是各人的真實感受，自己的美感。」他對方先生自是十分崇敬的，但並不走同一條路。藝術貴在獨創，說自己的話，還要有像兒童一樣的天真，脫去一切塵世污穢，讓靈魂淨化。

如一九五五年作的《中學生》，一九五六年作的《老人像》等，採取完全寫實的方法，摒棄了個人想法和個人的美感。作品不多，文革又抄走了一些，現留存下來沒幾幅。尤其戴上右派帽子後，從此沒能作畫。

真能代表閔希文的是他在晚年作的一些作品，一九七九年改革開放之後，他的右派也得到了平反，又回舞台美術系去執教。這樣他才有可能動手作畫，加上隨著西方科技和經濟的引介，西方的文化藝術也一起湧入。一直被看成頹廢沒落的印象主義也得到了平反，這使閔希文有了轉變的氣候和土壤，但也不是一下子就能轉變過來，得有一定的過渡。同時，他雖有了作畫的可能，仍沒什麼條件，只好專門以自己爲對象，畫了許多幅《自畫像》；另外也沒法畫人體，沒法去畫風景，不得不用靜物作爲對象。而當時國內的許多畫家多半不可能有自己的畫室，擠在一間十四、五平方既是臥室又是餐廳的一角裏作畫。

他晚年能放膽作畫的時間少得僅那麼幾年，從八〇年到八六年的七、八年中。從刊印在一九八四年第四期《上海畫報》上的他一九八二年作的《靜物》中，他從對象的整體出發，去表現它們形與色之間的關係。當然拋棄了如實的描繪，拋棄了質量感，也不管它們的空間效果和真實細節。在我國，繪畫除官方和仕大夫的作品外，還有大量的民間藝術。這種民間藝術恰恰和上層繪畫走了兩條不同的道路，它們重視的，無形中吻合歐洲近代繪畫的畫旨，沒有真實感、沒有陰影、沒有透視解剖，畫面響亮，色彩

耀眼。又如高更曾向他學生塞尚西埃要求的：「你若看到樹的綠色，那你就用最美麗的綠色，你若見到花是紅色，就不妨用最響亮的朱紅」。看來他作的這幅「靜物」，也僅僅只想畫他感受到的那個色彩世界和紛繁形態。如果說，閔希文在色彩和造型上受到了後印象派塞尚和高更影響的話，那麼，在有序和無序的隨意佈局，以及對紅色、桔黃色的偏愛上所折射出來的東西，應該說是受了我們熟悉的東方民間藝術審美趣味的啓迪。

他那幅印一九八四年年曆上的《碩果》，是一九八三年作的。他總愛把景物放在鏡前，但他並不是爲了想擴大畫面的空間，而是祈望造成色彩的豐富層次。當然在他的畫上，仍能看到水果，茶杯和玻璃器皿等形象。這些形象對他來說只不過借來創造明部、暗部、反光、折光等的燦爛色塊，由於有了鏡中的映像，色塊就顯得更豐富多彩。使觀衆的視感如墜入了色的迷霧之中。他這種色彩上的獨特之處，正表明了他這方面的深邃涵養。這在年輕一代的畫家中是少見的，即使在老一輩畫家裏也是很突出的。可以說閔希文是在色彩大師林風眠、吳大羽、蔡威廉諸畫家的基礎上，又繼續攀上了另一座色彩高峰。

藝術需要的是心領神會，而不是用言語或文字作解釋，有時越說越難以說清楚，幾乎是越說越糊塗。抽象畫拋卻了主題，就爲了不讓去作畫外思考，直向畫面去感受，從畫上的一點一劃中去體會、去尋求。閔希文的畫也不是讓人欣賞瓶瓶罐罐。所以我在這裡作介紹，也只涉及他和畫的概況。觀賞者需要具備一付聽音樂的耳朵，一雙辨別色彩的眼睛。繪畫和音樂已經十分相似，它們要求是讓人陶醉和領悟。他畫上的各種色塊和形狀，不是單純的紅色或綠色，方形或圓形，而是組成一種情調，一種美感。我相信人們一定能從他的畫中獲得一次美妙的遨遊。

閔希文是一位性情內向，不愛交往的人。在上海、在全國美術界很少爲人知曉。然而他作出的成績，卻是有目共睹的。台灣七〇年代刊印的《中華民國文化史》的「油畫」章節中，提及之十年代的代表畫家有趙無極、朱德群、閔希文等十二人（註①）。最近香港「亞洲藝術基金會」將編纂一本《中國早期油畫史》，也把閔希文列入其中。我相信閔希文通過各方面有識之士的介紹，通過我們的推荐，一定會有更多的人了解他，喜歡上他的作品。

徐龍森寫於東海堂高中

註①中華民國文藝史第八章〈美術〉第 624 頁。

An Introduction to Artist Min Xiwen and His Works

Xu Longsen

The function of painting, as evident in its history, is merely to provide an aesthetic perception for people in this chaotic and indifferent world. All the other functions artificially invented by others have nothing to do with its intrinsic quality.

Professor Min Xiwen has devoted his entire life to the pursuit of this aesthetic perception, which is, according to his understanding, also a modern road over and above a region and a nation.

Professor Min was born in 1918 in Changshu County, Jiangsu Province--a beautiful place abundant with fish and rice, and a cradle of Chinese scholars. Like most of the towns in Jiangsu and Zhejiang, Changshu is surrounded by water and you can see bridges and boats everywhere. The town he was born in was built beside a mountain, which is not very high but extremely graceful, in fact a work of art itself ingeniously and exquisitely carved by Nature. Not far from the town is a well-preserved ancient temple built during the Tang Dynasty called Xing Fu Temple. So, it is not surprising an artist like Min Xiwen was fostered in such a favourable environment.

As a boy, he showed great interest and aptitude for drawing. As a middle school student, he was especially struck by the "Spring Sun" art exhibition organized by Pang Xunqing and Wen Zhaotong, for they introduced the art of modern Paris at a time when most people could only appreciate the pictures in calendars.

He once dreamed of becoming a chemist; however, his cousin's paintings aroused his innate passion for art. Instead of studying in the Fine Arts Department, he had to follow his parent's decision to major in Plate-making in his cousin's college--Suzhou Fine Arts College. After a year of art instruction, he was inspired to enter a more creative and purer branch of art. So, he went secretly with his townsman, Ying Yili, to Hangzhou National Fine Arts College for the annual matriculation examination, and was soon accepted due to his sound artistic foundation.

Studying in Hangzhou decided his life as an artist and, moreover, his principle in painting, that is, never to imitate nature for the sake of imitation. Art always differs from real life, and practitioners who claim that they copy every detail of the reality are not merely imitating. Modern paintings are even more inconsistent. To modern artists, nature only provides them with a kind of inspiration; by observing nature, they create a new world, a new artistic realm that is equal to nature itself.

In the 1930's, Hangzhou National Fine Arts College employed a number of followers of French modernism as teachers, and at the same time, cultivated many outstanding students, including those who are today nationally, even internationally honoured and recognized such as Zhao Wuji, Dong Xiwen, Zhu Dequn, Zhu Ying, Yan Han, Wu Guanzhong, Luo Gongliu, etc,

who all emphasized the sensuous statement of individual feelings and responses. For example, Lin Fengmian, the head of the college, creates a strong, artistic effect in painting by contrasting red and azurite color; Professor Wu Dayu's powerful and blazing hues often thrill people; Professor Fang Ganmin is especially well-known for his stereographic paintings. Min Xiwen was Professor Fang's favourite student. He followed Fang for more than 40 years and helped Fang establish The Chinese Fine Arts Institute in Shanghai. Besides learning from Professor Fang, Min made every effort to learn from other professors.

Min Xiwen, like all artists, has undergone various painful experiences and frustrations. He had only a few years' schooling as a boy because the war broke out and he frequently fled with his family to the countryside. His college life was also severely affected by the Anti-Japanese War. After 1949, he had reason to believe that he would have more secure conditions to concentrate on his paintings. Unexpectedly, one political movement after another swept over new China and threw him, together with hundreds of intellectuals, into a sea of troubles. For instance, in 1957, he was labelled as an "Extreme Rightist". Because of this, he was forbidden to teach in school; instead, he had to work as an ordinary librarian for more than 20 years. With low wages, he could not afford for canvas or oil colors. In despair, he quit painting and shifted his focus to translation and the study of the theory of art.

Mr. Min thus produced only a small number of works and, unfortunately, lost almost all of his earlier works painted in times of turbulence, especially during the years of the Anti-Japanese War. After 1949, he was forced to change his views on art, otherwise his work would have been considered anti-Party activity. Not until China adopted its open-door policy was Professor Min's mishandled case redressed and, moreover, his principle of painting renewed. The changes in his viewpoints of the creation of art are all reflected in 140 well preserved works. Now, at the age of 80, his artistic life is much shorter for various reasons. No one can be blamed for this. This is life. In history, countless prominent artists such as Gauguin, Van Gogh, Modigliani, the Yangzhou Eight, Shi Tao, Xu Wei, etc, all experienced great frustrations and were often suffered wretched plights, remaining unknown until after death.

Min Xiwen's paintings fall into three categories:

1. Works of earlier years when he studied modernism and other new techniques.
2. Works of middle age when he worked on Soviet artists' styles after 1949.
3. Works of his later life dating after open-door policy.

SELF-PORTRAIT, an early painting accidentally preserved during the war, was produced in 1939--when he was a college freshman in An Jian Village, a suburb of Kunming. The work reflects the influence of Professor Fang's stereoscopic expression. What he has been pursuing

is not something absolutely lifelike but a form which can successfully bring about aesthetic perception. He holds, "Painting is not to reach convergence but to reduce the picture to a genuine individual sensuous statement of his feelings so as to create the effect of aesthetic enjoyment." He shows great respect for his teacher, Professor Fang, but he later broke away from his style. Art is valued mainly for its originality, for its unique way of expressing artists' true passion and responses. A real artist will usually make all efforts to keep childlike naivety, to escape the dust and dirt of this mortal life so as to purify his soul.

Unfortunately, in his MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT (1955) and A PORTRAIT OF AN OLD MAN (1956), he cast away his unique expression of art and aesthetic pursuits by adopting realistic methods in order to cater to the needs of the then political situation. Yet, most of his realistic works still could not escape their adversity, and were confiscated during the Cultural Revolution.

His later works, also his major works, exemplifies his ability and his aesthetic viewpoints through interpretive brushwork. After 1979, he returned to his teaching post at the Stage Art Department. He resumed his painting, too. At that time, with the introduction of Western science and technology, western art and culture was pouring in. Impressionism, once labelled decadent and downgraded in China, began to win people's recognition. All this provided positive conditions for Min Xiwen to transform his style once more. However, during the earlier years of reform, people were not allowed to depict undies, so he posed for his own PORTRAITS. Like many artists in China, he did not have his own studio at that time. The 14-square-metre space served as his bedroom and dining room as well as his studio.

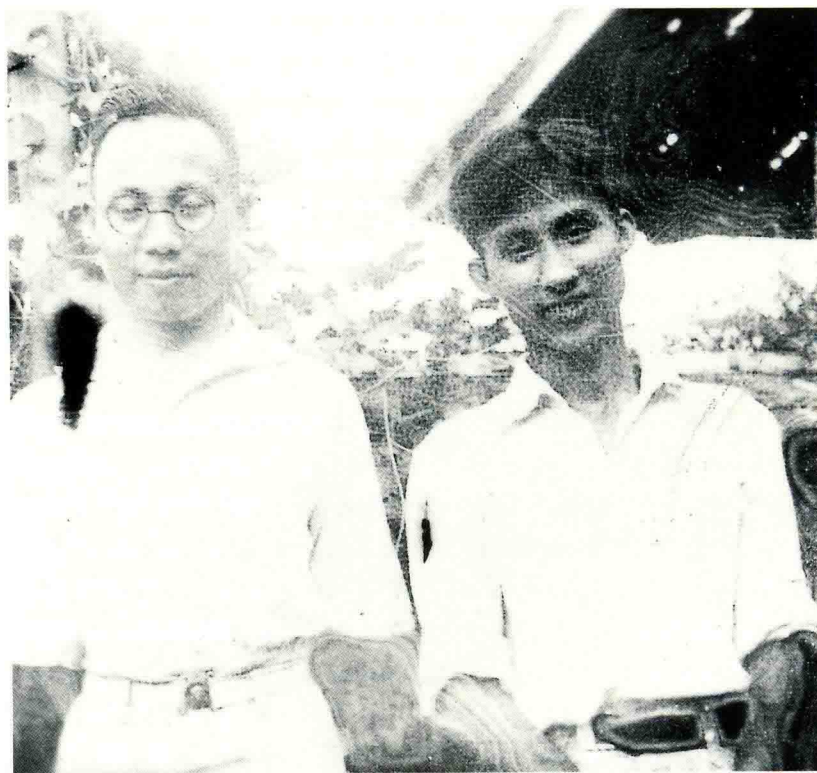
The 6 years from 1980 to 1986 were most precious, for he could paint at his own will. STILL-LIFE (1982), printed in the 4th issue of Shanghai Pictorials 1984, demonstrates that he had abandoned realism to depict carefully every thing in detail. He started to focus on the whole object to express the relationship between form and color. In China folk art is quite distinct from those painted by official artists. Folk art, vastly different from high art, coincides with many modern European art principles: no sense of reality, no shadows, no perspective or anatomical draftsmanship; loud scene, brilliant color just as Gauguin said to his student, "When you see the green leaves of a tree, employ the most beautiful green color to paint it; when you catch sight of a red flower, utilize the loudest red to express it." His STILL-LIFE (1982) thus merely reflects his experience of the colorful yet complicated world. If we say Min Xiwen received influence from the post-impressionists Cezanne and Gauguin in terms of color and form, then his haphazard compositions and employment of his favourite red and orange colors were prompted by Chinese folk art.

RICH FRUITS, printed in a 1984 calendar, was produced in 1983. He preferred to lay the objects in front of a mirror to create richer shades of color. You may see the fruit, the cup or the glass in painting, but to him they are only borrowed to create a colorful and sensuous effect through his brushwork in the bright or dark part and reflective or diffractive part. Because of the impression he got from the mirror, the color in works seems exceptionally rich, and people can lose themselves in this exquisitely intricate arrangement of colors. His unique use of color exhibits his sound self-cultivation, which is rare among the younger generation and even in some of the old artists in China. Min Xiwen is climbing another mountain of colors on the basis of his study of the masters of colors such as Lin Fengmian, Wu Dayu, William Cai and so on.

Telepathic understanding is central in the appreciation of art. Language or written forms of illustration do little good, even sometimes bewildering people. Impressionists cast away the theme so that viewers could feel direct and spontaneous responses from every dot and brushstroke without associating the scene with other irrelevant subjects. So, Professor Min does not invite people to simply look at his vases and jars, but to appreciate his color. What I have introduced here is part of his life and art. Just as people need keen ears to appreciate music, it is also essential for people to have sharp eyes to distinguish colors. The forms and colors in his paintings are not solely round or square, red or green, but are combined to bring about a special appeal, a sort of aesthetic reception. I'm sure people will greatly enjoy the artistic trip offered in these works of art by Professor Min.

Min Xiwen is introverted and unsociable and, therefore, is little known by artists in Shanghai. Yet, his achievements are there for all to see. For example, THE HISTORY OF LITERATURE AND ART OF REPUBLIC CHINA published in 1970 in Taiwan mentions in the Oil Painting Section that Zhao Wuji, Zhu Dequn, Min Xiwen, etc, were among twelve well-known representative artists of the 1930's in China*. The Asian Art Fund in Hong Kong also plans to publish a book called EARLY OIL PAINTING IN CHINA and Min Xiwen will be included in it. I am confident that through our introduction and recommendation, more and more people will come to know Professor Min and his works.

*page 624, chapter 8 "Fine Arts", HISTORY OF LITERATURE AND ART OF REPUBLIC CHINA



一九二八年閔希文和方幹民合影。



一九八三年八月在杭州，左起閔希文、趙無極、浙江美院教授金冶先生。