



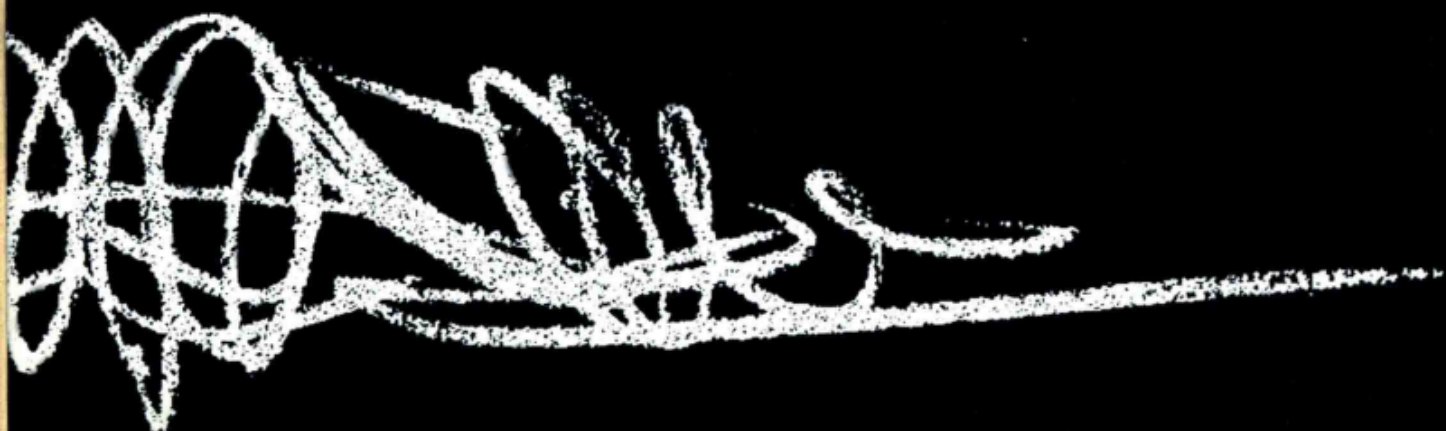
SILK-SCREEN PRINTINGS OF ZHANG GUILLIN

张桂林

作品集

人民美術出版社





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走出历史

——张桂林的艺术历程

易 英

张桂林的艺术历程具有一种历史的意义，这个历史是特指的，不仅指他作为中国丝网版画的先行者，参与建立了中国第一个丝网工作室；也指他在丝网语言的探索上体现出的历史过程，一个从必然到自由的过程。

在张桂林的艺术中，历史还是一种真实的存在，如果我们从题材类型上把他的艺术历程分为三个阶段的话，那么前两个阶段都与历史有着密切的联系。历史来自他的题材，他在80年代的创作题材主要是中国古代的建筑。从故宫到长城，从老屋到民居，古旧建筑一再出现在他的画面上。从整体上看，这是一个语言寻找对象的时期。任何艺术语言都是通过它的对象体现出来的，就象木刻、铜版一样，每种艺术形式都有其相适应的题材，即使有其历史和文化的规定性。张桂林开始进行丝网创作的时候，也是中国现代艺术运动开始兴起之时。这对于作为新媒材的丝网版画是一个契机，它从一开始就进入一个相对自由的空间，形式实验的自由为丝网版画探索其在中国现代艺术中的位置与发展提供了条件。不然的话，这种语言形式也将服从政治宣传的需要，最终在复制现实场景的要求下丧失自己的语言特征。张桂林在80年代的丝网创作明显反映出把丝网语言与现代艺术形式有机结合起来的追求，但是在现实主义传统的影响下，也可以认为他是用丝网语言对现实题材进行了改造，力求在一种（丝网语言的）形式感中再现历史与文化的主题。总之，张桂林在这一阶段的作品主要是丝网语言与现实题材的磨合，简化是其典型的形式特征，尽管他在某种程度上还吸收了一些现代艺术的手法，但不是主流。在古代建筑的题材中，他主要采用了大面积单纯的色彩对比，均衡对称的构图。在80年代的特定环境中，他的这种探索也反映出在现代艺术的影响下，力求寻找一种现代艺术观念的中国表现方式，通过对立体主义的借鉴来表现民族文化中特有的视觉张力。

作为语言寻找对象的阶段，一个不可避免的倾向就是自我的遮蔽。也就是说，画面上过多地体现出丝网语言的实验和形式的趣味，而没有显示出个性化的特征。张桂林在90年代中前期的创作可以说是进入一个探索个性化语言的阶段，与第一个时期明显拉开了距离。从丝网语言来说，他进入了一个相对自由的阶段，语言不再是有效表现的障碍，而是把丝网语言

的多种手法综合起来以表现更深刻的文化主题。实际上这仍是一种形式的设定，通过一种富于创造性的形式关系来确定个人表现方式。尽管张桂林在这个时期进行了多种可能性的探索，但最突出是90年代前期的《墙系列》和中期的胡同系列。虽然两者在形式上有一定的区别，但前者是后者的铺垫，后者是前者的深化。在《墙系列》中，他将写实的长城城墙与传统建筑的斗拱相并置，前者是三维的，后者是平面的；两者都是历史与文化的象征。可以认为他的这种手法主要是象征性的，而且是多重象征性的复合。但重要的并不是象征性本身，而是作者力求从民族文化的传统中寻找一种有表现力的形式。值得注意的是，我们看到在这两种形式中间有一些随手画出的素描线条，这是一种非常个人化的记号。作者显然意识到了，丝网版画作为一种现代图像的批量复制手段，与自我的表现存在着潜在的对立性，这些线条标志着作者正在完成语言寻找对象的过程，而进入到一个在语言上相对自由的境地。

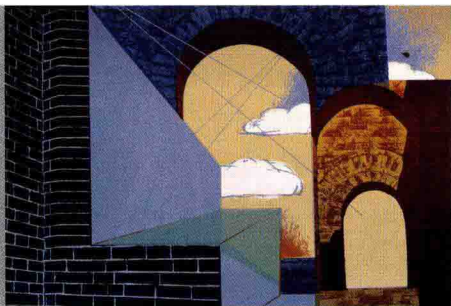
这是一个从寻找对象转换到寻找自我的过程，自我是艺术家作为个体的生命在社会上的存在方式，是艺术家的个人经验、个人记忆、人格意志等在形式与题材上的反映。在90年代中期同样是以胡同为题材的作品中，张桂林开始显现出一种个人的品格，这些作品不再是为了适应丝网语言而进行的形式探索，而是在自由地表现这种语言的基础上将个人的主观性呈现出来。这些作品透露出一种深深的个人情感，它将个人的记忆与文化的思考融为一体，历史与文化的反思不再体现在客观的评论与象征，而是从个人的记忆与体验中涌现出来。象《胡同里飞着的纸鹤》和《流着红色的烟囱》这样的作品，建筑是作为真实的背景而存在的，似乎没有任何形式的介入，在前景飞着的纸鹤和纸飞机象从现实生活中掠过的一道记忆的轨迹。纸鹤和纸飞机是童年记忆的象征，背景的房子则象征个人生活的历史。无论老房子承载着多少文化与历史的内容，它只有存在于个人的经验中才会使艺术的形式获得感人的表现力。我们面对着的不是单纯的形式，尽管在这批作品中也有立体的背景（老房子）与平面的纸玩具的对比，但我们的思绪会超越形式，明显感受到画家本人的述说，这既是对文明的忧思也是对自我的关怀。有一幅题为《灰色》的作品，那个明显的“拆”字似乎是为这一批作品点了题，人所生活过的环境与经历的事件都是符号化地存在于记忆之中，经过符号的提示唤起记忆而感觉到生命的存在。符号的消失也就意味着记忆中的这一部分将永远地封存。张桂林这批作品的意义也就在于个人经验借助视觉语言的传达，受众感觉到的不只是形式的张力，而是生命的存在，共同的文化背景与现实环境又使这种个人经验进入普遍经验，实现文化反思的共识。

张桂林的近期作品可以说是他的第三个阶段。这批作品可以称为“角色”系列，他

告别了老房子，无论在形式还是在题材上，他都进入了一种自由的状态。这种自由首先是语言的自由，它象水墨画的笔墨和油画的色彩与笔触一样，完全实现了手与眼、心与物的一致。画面上视觉要素的鱼与网，但这些形象更接近抽象，更象体面与线条的对比，在色彩关系的衬托下，达到了交响般的和谐，这应该是张桂林潜心数十年探索丝网语言所应得的回报。实际上，这种和谐还不仅是线面的配置与色彩的对比，也包括运动的和谐，这也不同于他在以前的作品中以静态为主的构图。动态的感觉反映了思绪的流动，“角色”暗示了一种社会的关系，即人与人之间、人与社会之间的依存与对抗的关系。但他没有强化这种冲突，而是把它们组织一种近乎完美的视觉关系之中，这在某种程度上也反映出他不想表达直接的社会意识或人生哲理，而是把一种个人的感觉淡淡地融入艺术语言之中。这样，我们也看到了他一以贯之的艺术观念，个体的存在依赖于语言的表现，语言的完善最终在表现自我的过程中实现。

无论如何，张桂林的艺术历程还是体现出一个由客观向主观生成的过程，语言的漂移最后在自我中找到归宿。当然，这并不等于说他已完结了探索的过程，在语言与自我由对抗走向融合而实现的自由境界，也是语言与自我的位移与互换的自由关系。我们总是无法预测未来，但我们相信，张桂林在今后的创作中仍会不断告别现状，开始新的精神探险，就象他已走过的创作道路所说明的那样。他的每一个阶段都走得非常沉稳，而一旦预期的追求与效果实现了对接，他就毫不犹豫地走向新的转换。

墙系列之一
NO.1 "WALL" SERIES
46×66CM
1992



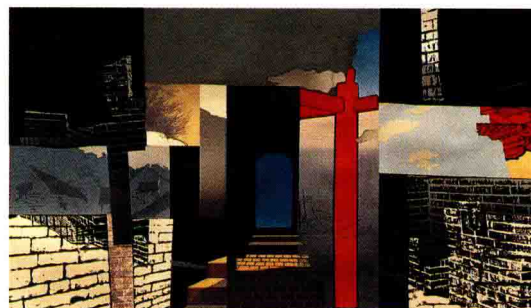
A Journey Away from History

—— Zhang Guilin's Art

Yi Ying

Zhang Guilin's art has a historical significance. It is historical in that he is not only the pioneer of silk screen printing in China, but also one of the founders of the first silk screen print studio in the country. The historical significance is also found in his explorations of the silk screen language, an experience that took him from the realm of necessity into the realm of freedom.

In Zhang Guilin's art, history is an existing reality. If, by theme, there are three stages in his artistic production, the first two are invariably related to the past history. His prints in the 80's are dominated by ancient Chinese architecture. Historical and traditional buildings ranging from the Forbidden city to the Great Wall, the Old House to residential quarters, were recreated in his works. This was a stage when the artist was trying to find a subject for his artistic language. Every artistic language is expressed by way of a proper subject matter and each artistic form has a theme more pertinent to it than to others, which can be defined as its historical and cultural delimitation. Zhang Guilin's initial efforts on silk screen printing coincided with the emergence of the modern art movement in China. This meant greater freedom and opportunities for this new medium at the very beginning of its development. The freedom to experiment with different artistic forms has created a favourable context for silk screen printing to establish its due position in modern Chinese art. Without this freedom, the new language would very possibly have been deprived of its own characters and reduced to replicating reality to suit the needs of political propaganda. It is easily discernible from his works in the 1980's that the artist made a deliberate attempt to integrate the language of silk screen with the modern artistic form. However, under the influence of the prevailing realistic tradition, his works could be described more as a renovation of realistic themes, an attempt to reproduce historical and cultural objects with a new formality. Modern artistic methods, though employed to some extent, were not predominant in his production. In his prints on ancient architecture, Zhang used large patches of pure colours and a balanced and symmetric layout. Under the special circumstances of the 80's, his works reflected his efforts to search for a Chinese expression of modern artistic concepts by introducing elements of cubism in creating the visual impact special to Chinese culture.



历史 追忆二

NO.2 THE MEMORY
OF HISTORY

52×98CM

1994

It is inevitable that the self of the artist was concealed when he was still at the stage of seeking objects for his artistic language. In other words, the prints are more interesting in terms of the artistic language and forms the artist experimented with rather than carrying his own individual marking. In the mid-90's, Zhang Guilin began to explore his own individualistic language, a major shift away from the first stage of his production. He became freer and more at ease in employing the silk screen language. Language was no longer a barrier to expression, but rather a tool to be manipulated to describe more complicated and profound cultural themes. In fact, he continued the process of ever redefining his individualist forms of expression by establishing a richly creative relationship between the forms. Among all his works at this stage, the most outstanding ones were the Wall Series in the early 90's and the Hutong Series of the mid-90's. Despite their difference in form, the two series were interrelated in that the former foreshadowed the latter and the latter was a further extension of the former. In the Wall Series, he set the realist Great Wall side by side with the traditional Chinese bucket-arch eave support structure, with the former depicted as a 3-dimensional vision and the latter in plane. As both are symbols of history and culture, he employed symbolism or a combination of multiple symbolic images. However, the symbolism is not important in itself, but it reflects the artist's attempt to search for a more expressive form from national traditions. What is particularly worth noticing is the random scribble, a very individualist marking, between the two distinctive forms. Obviously the artist has realised the inherent conflict between silk screen printing as a modern mass image replication method and an artist's self expression. The random scribbles mark the end of his search for subjects for his artistic language and the beginning of relative freedom with the language.

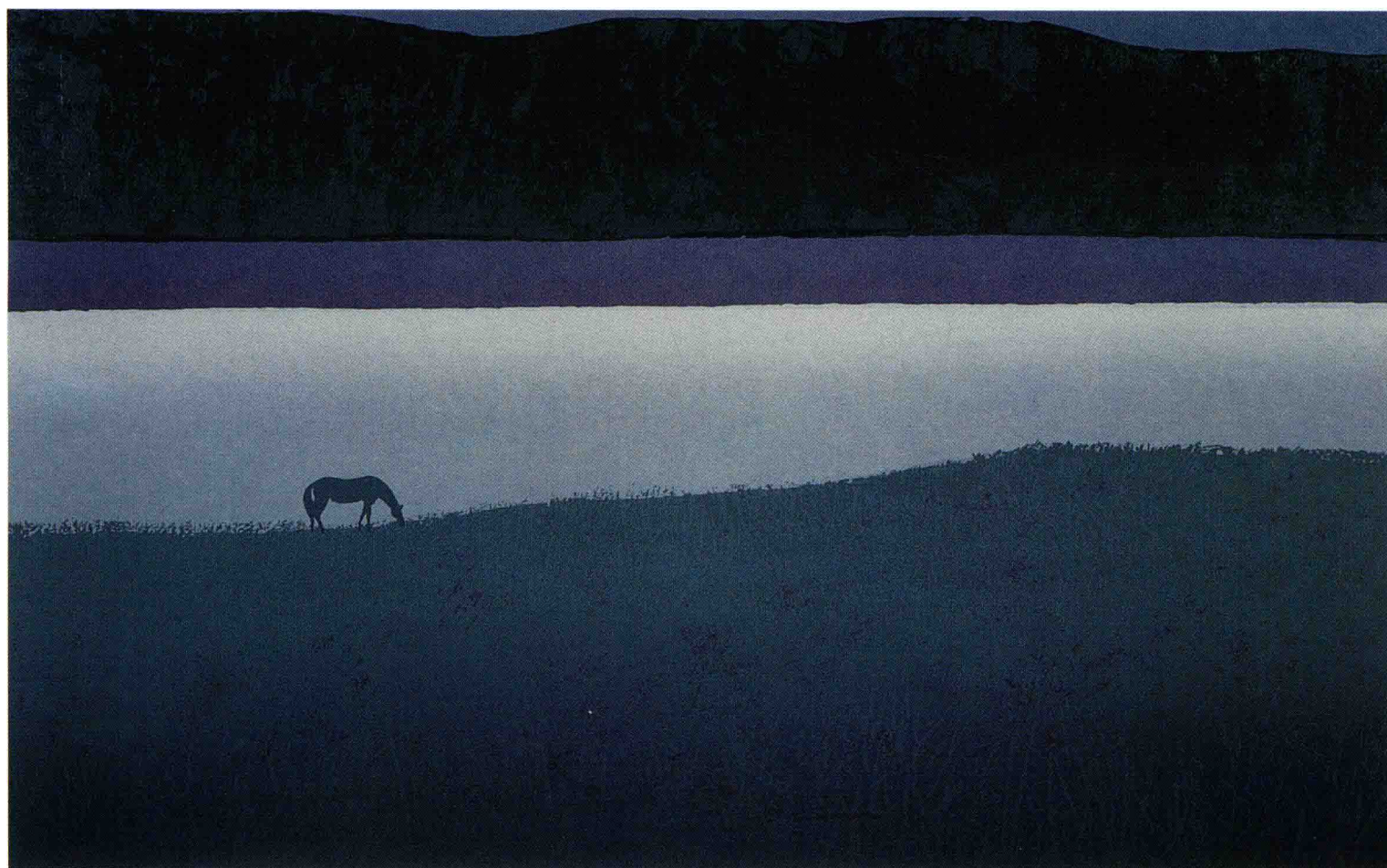
This is also a shift from searching for subjects to searching for his ego. The artist's ego is his very way of existence in the society and a reflection of his own personal experiences, memories and character in the forms and themes of his works. In the mid-90's, although Hutong was again the theme of his new series, Zhang Guilin had begun to show his own special style. Instead of trying to conform to the formality of the silk screen language, he expressed his subjective impressions on the basis of a free expression of the language. The prints, permeated with personal emotions, are an integration of personal memories and thinking on culture. The reflections on tradition and culture are not longer expressed by way of objective comment and symbols, but in the form of personal memories and experience. In "The Paper Crane Flying in the Hutong" and "the Bleeding Chimney", the buildings serve as a realistic background without any form of protrusion. The flying paper crane and paper plane in the fore seem like the trace of memories in real life. Both are symbolic of childhood remembrances and the houses in the background are signs of the past personal life. Whatever culture or tradition the old houses carry with them, they have to be embedded in the memories of the individual person before they could be recreated in a touching artistic form. What we see is no longer the formality, although there is contrast between the 3-dimensional buildings (old house) and the flat paper objects. Our thoughts are carried beyond the form to the narration of the artist himself—his concerns for civilisation and for the individual.

In "Grey", on doomed wall, the dominating Chinese character "Chai" (meaning "demolish") tells the message. The places we have been to and the life we have been through are stored in our memories in the form of signs, which could rekindle memories and remind us of the existence of life. When the signs disappear, so will the memories. Zhang Guilin's works are significant in that they convey a personal experience in the visual language to the audience, who will not only feel the impact of the form, but also the very existence of life. The personal experience is turned into a common experience and a consensus on cultural reflections because of shared cultural background and a real-life environment common to all of us.

Zhang Guilin's latest works, the "Roles" series marks the third stage of his production. Bidding farewell to the old houses, he has gained complete freedom in his works. It is, in the first place, a freedom of language. With this freedom comes a total rapport between the eye and the hand, the heart and the object, just like between the brush and Chinese ink or between oils and strokes in paintings. The visual images of the "fish" and the "net", more abstract than real, are more like a contrast between the plane and the lines. The harmony between this contrast and the colour combination could only have been achieved after years of hard work. Zhang Guilin deserves such a reward. The harmony does not stop at space and colours. There is also the harmony of movements, which differ from the static configurations of his earlier works. The dynamic movements symbolise the fluidity of thoughts. "Roles" hint at social relations, i.e. the interdependent and conflicting relationship between people, and between individuals and society. Instead of emphasising the conflict, he arranged his objects in an almost perfect visual pattern. This is, to some extent, a reflection of the artist's reluctance to make outright statements on the social reality and his philosophy of life. He would prefer to add a more subtle personal touch to the artistic language. He has consistently tried to impart to his work his artistic thinking and convey a message to us: the existence of the individual depends on the expression of the language and the language becomes perfected in the process of self-expression.

The artistic production of Zhang Guilin followed a formative process from objective observation to subjective expression. The wandering explorer of a new artistic language found his destination in the expression of his self. However, this does not mean that the artist has come to the end of his long journey of exploration. The freedom he has achieved by harmonising the conflicting language and ego also means the freedom in the interchangeability of language and the ego. It is always hard to tell the future, but there is one thing we can be sure of: Zhang Guilin will continue to leave the present behind him and go on new adventures of the spirit. His progress in the past was steady and persistent. Once he gains what he expects to gain, he will not hesitate to venture on new changes.

河夜
WHITE NIGHT OVER THE MO RIVER
41.5 × 64.5cm
1984



北方九月
SEPTEMBER IN THE NORTH
31 × 51CM
1984



江晨
DAWN ON THE RIVER
43 × 66CM
1984



小院
A LITTLE COURTYARD
49.5 × 49.5cm
1986