

Zhiyan Cheng's Batik & Silk Paintings

程之彦蜡染与绸画



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by Hsiaoling Cheng

程小玲

FRONT COVER:

Detail from the Horse, 1988

Batik on velvet, 84x70cm

BACK COVER:

Birds, 1990

Watercolor on silk, 36x22cm

FRONTISPIECE:

Silk Road, 1990

Batik on velvet, 102x82cm

Photo: Zhiyan Cheng, 1978

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封面：唐三彩，1988

彩色蜡染，天鹅绒布 84x70cm

封底：鸟，1990

水彩，36x22cm

插图：丝绸之路，1990

彩色蜡染 102x82cm

画家照片：程之彦，1978

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Dedicated to My Father, Zhiyan Cheng

献给敬爱的父亲

程之彦

1918 - 2001





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Introduction

Zhiyan Cheng's Batik and Silk Paintings

Zhiyan Cheng's textile paintings are so richly colored and beautiful that people who have viewed his artistic creations for the first time, find his artwork to be incredible, because his paintings were not painted; they were hand-dyed.

Cheng studied traditional Chinese painting when he was a child. At college, he majored in industrial arts. He was very skilled at Chinese ink and wash, oil painting, watercolor, and sculpture. However, what he loved doing the most was the traditional Chinese handmade batik.

Traditional Chinese batik belongs in the craft category. The craftsman paints a pattern on the cloth and the unpainted areas are coated with wax. After dyeing and removing wax, the cloth shows a white background with colored patterns. The color bleeds through the wax and creates a natural crackling design. Chinese batik was mainly used for clothing and accessories.

Cheng possessed a keen sense of perception and imagination. He discovered that although Chinese batik had simple patterns with monotone coloring, its natural cracklings made it a unique artistic idiom. This led to incredibly attractive patterns in the painting, resembling ripples on a lake, clouds in the sky, or veined marble. These varied crackling patterns could evoke innumerable, imaginative responses in the viewers.

Cheng's goal was to create a brand new art form by adapting Western drawing skills to watercolor and oil paintings, as well as Chinese ink and wash on cloth. Using Chinese batik dye method to formulate the colors was part of the process. Cheng began to develop his idea of combining painting and dyeing when he was in college. He held two solo batik art shows in Beijing in 1941 and 1942. These shows resulted in a wave of enthusiastic approval throughout the art circles. Cheng elevated batik from a handmade craft to a new, highly elegant, fine art platform.

Dye colors commonly used in traditional Chinese batik, are dark blue, bright red, light yellow and greenish blue. The dyeing method is simple; the colors do not show layers or depth. Since

Cheng desired his batiks to achieve the same results as that of watercolor and oil paintings, he had to use complex painting techniques. His greatest challenge however, was to chemically invent new dye colors and to discover an entirely new method of dyeing.

Many kinds of dye pigments existed; Cheng constantly thought about which materials would produce the best results. His home was transformed from an artist's studio to a chemical laboratory. It was littered with chemical dyes and lab equipment. He collected as many dye pigments as he could and invested countless hours examining the brightness and saturation qualities of each. He also tested the durability of the colors on the various textiles. If the colors on the fabric did not debilitate after exposure to sunlight and soap wash, the batik artwork was worthy to be part of a collection. Ultimately, Cheng selected a vast variety of colors, which remained constant and durable after the textile dyeing procedures.

Paints and dyes are very different in their application. In oil or watercolor painting, the color used by the artist is the hue that shows on the painting. With dyes, however, the dye color usually appears differently after the application. For example, the green dye will show up later as a dark purple, and brown dyes will appear as grey. Furthermore, dyes, which are initially all water-clear before application, ultimately create the red, blue, and grey colors after application, thus, the artist cannot perceive the final color while painting with the dye colors and this is the most challenging part of the process. Cheng's vast knowledge regarding textiles and dyes made him a master of dyeing skills.

The most important artistic aspect of Cheng's batiks was the variety of his subjects. He could paint scenery, animals, still life, figures and more, without having the limitation of the traditional Chinese batik pattern forms. Cheng's other improved method was to adopt the Chinese ink and wash painting technique for use on batiks. Although Chinese ink and wash had only one color, variety was featured through its various shadowing and shadings. This allowed the batik to appear complex thus, inviting the viewer to venture into the depths of Cheng's designs to absorb the greater details. It is a travesty that most of Cheng's single color, ink and wash batiks have been lost and therefore cannot be shown in this book.

Another of Cheng's achievements was his silk painting. He was able to express his artistic abilities by incorporating both his paint and dye methods on silk, much better than on paper. Cheng's

silk paintings pursued a natural, lifelike idiom, and reflected the traditional Chinese ink and wash artistic concept. To blend his art motifs, Cheng elected to paint on selected silks. The natural textured patterns of the silk enhanced the painting, adding depth, detail and reality to his designs. He used different painting styles based on the painting motifs. With all of these techniques combined, Zhiyan Cheng created his own silk painting style.

This book represents only a part of Zhiyan Cheng's collection of batik and silk paintings. Cheng produced many beautiful batiks during the 1940's; but most of them have been lost. Cheng's family was impoverished at the time; his cloth batiks were used as bed sheets or pillowcases. Everything that was not used was sold. The few masterpieces, which he retained in his collection, did not survive the artistic holocaust of the Great Cultural Revolution in China. Most of the batik paintings in this book were produced after Cheng retired in 1988.

In Zhiyan Cheng's diary, he once commented, "Fine art is not commonly seen in the creation of batiks, because it calls for craftsmen and artists who are skillful and knowledgeable both in painting and dyeing techniques. Through my experimentation, my work alone shows that it is possible."

程之彦的蜡染艺术与绸画介绍

一幅幅精美、绚丽的绘画作品，竟然是用手工蜡染的技法绘制出来的，简直令人难以置信。几乎所有看过程之彦蜡染作品的人都会发出这样的感叹。

程之彦自幼学习中国山水花鸟画。在大学期间主修西方工艺美术。他的艺术爱好十分广泛，中国画、油画、水彩画和雕塑他都很精通。而最让他着迷的是中国的传统蜡染。

中国传统蜡染，是用蜡刀蘸熔蜡绘花于布，然后再用蓝靛浸染，染后去蜡，布面就呈现出白底蓝花的多种图案。中国传统蜡染主要用于制作服装、服饰和各种生活实用品。

程之彦对周围的事物敏感且想象丰富。他发现中国传统蜡染中蕴含着一种独特的艺术表现力。在染色时，染料顺着蜡片碎裂后形成的裂纹渗到布面上，留下了形态各异的纹理，就好似湖海的波纹、天上的浮云和岩石上的花纹一样，呈现出一幅浑然天成的自然图画，给人带来无限的遐想。

程之彦对蜡染产生兴趣的真正原因，是要创造出一种全新的蜡染艺术。他希望能够用中国蜡染的方法染出西方油画、水彩画和中国水墨画那样的美术作品。大学期间，他就开始尝试先在棉布上直接绘画，然后用蜡染的技法着色。他于1941和1942年两届在北京举行个人蜡染画展，表现题材一举突破了传统蜡染所沿用了数百年的花边和图案形式，令人耳目一新，在当时的美术界产生了很大反响。评论说，程之彦的蜡染作品把民间传统手工艺带进了高雅的艺术殿堂。

采用传统蜡染技法来表现绘画作品，最大的挑战是染色。中国传统蜡染常用的染料有藏青、朱红、鹅黄、淡青等少数几种。染色的方法一般是单色平染，颜色单调且缺乏层次感。如果想使蜡染达到油画或水彩画的艺术表现力，就必须尝试新的染料和染色方法。

世界上的染料品种很多，究竟使用哪种染料绘画可以达到最佳效果则成了程之彦日夜琢磨的事情。他的居室由画室变成了化学试验室，各种化学染料和实验器皿摆满了房间。他收集了当时所有能得到的染料并细心地研究和挑选。蜡染色彩的形成不仅取决于颜色的色调，还取决于颜色的亮度和饱和度。为了掌握染料的实际色彩效果，他对每一种染料都

要多次试染、反复尝试。这样形成的染色样品和染色时的物理、化学条件就成为他以后蜡染绘画的“调色板”。在筛选染料时，他不仅考虑色彩，还考虑颜色的稳定性和染料对画布有无腐蚀作用。只有当一幅画染色完成后，其颜色能长时间的稳定不变，且经得起水洗日晒，它才可能成为有收藏价值的作品。程之彦选中的染料大多数属于活性还原染料，这类染料的优点是色彩丰富，染成的作品颜色亮丽而持久。

在着色方面，使用染料绘画与使用颜料绘画有很大的不同。在绘制油画或水彩画时，画家把颜料调成什么颜色，它在画中就显示出什么颜色。而使用染料绘画着色时，则包含上色和显色两个步骤。很多染料在显色前后呈现的颜色是不一样的。例如：绿色染料的颜色在显色之前呈酱紫色；棕色呈浅灰色；而红、蓝、灰居然是无色的。在绘画时画家不能当时看到最终的颜色，这正是用染料绘画的最难之处。经过长期对染料的潜心研究，再加上程之彦对纺织品及染色技法的丰富经验，使得他在蜡染着色方面达到了驾轻就熟的地步。

题材广泛是程之彦蜡染绘画的另一个显著特点。他摆脱了传统蜡染的局限，尽情地表现自然风景、动物、静物、人物等题材。他将中国画的绘画方法融入蜡染制作也是一个创新。他认为，虽然水墨画是单色，但也有色彩元素，即墨色的明暗度。以水墨画法绘制成的单色蜡染笔触效果强，表现技巧复杂，层次丰富。可惜的是他的单色蜡染绘画作品所剩无几。

丝绸绘画是程之彦艺术生涯中的又一个亮点。对熟悉纺织品和印染的程之彦来说，在丝绸上绘画比在纸上绘画可以有更大的表现空间。他既可以使用染色的方法，也可以使用颜料的方法着色。程之彦的丝绸画追求的是一种形神兼备的境界，他善于利用丝绸提花纺织出来的图案纹理，来丰富绘画的层次和表现景物的真实感。他的作品既体现了中国画的“意境”理念，又不拘泥传统国画的常规模式和套路，绘画手法因题材而变，使得他的丝绸绘画呈现出了自己特有的风格。

本画册收集了程之彦的部分蜡染和丝绸绘画作品。在四十年代，他绘制了较多的蜡染作品。由于那时家中生活贫困，其中的大部分被卖掉或家用；余下的部分在文化大革命动乱时期也未能幸免。在这本画册中所展示的蜡染和丝绸绘画作品，多是程之彦在1988年退休以后绘制的。

在日记中程之彦曾这样评价自己：“在蜡染领域，表现绘画艺术的作品还很少见。它需要染色技术和绘画艺术的结合，我就是做这种尝试的人。”



Batiks

蜡染作品



Sapphire Dragon 1988, Batik on velvet 80x60cm 龙