



回藝
reframing

writings on
the art of michael cherney
秋麥藝術作品評述

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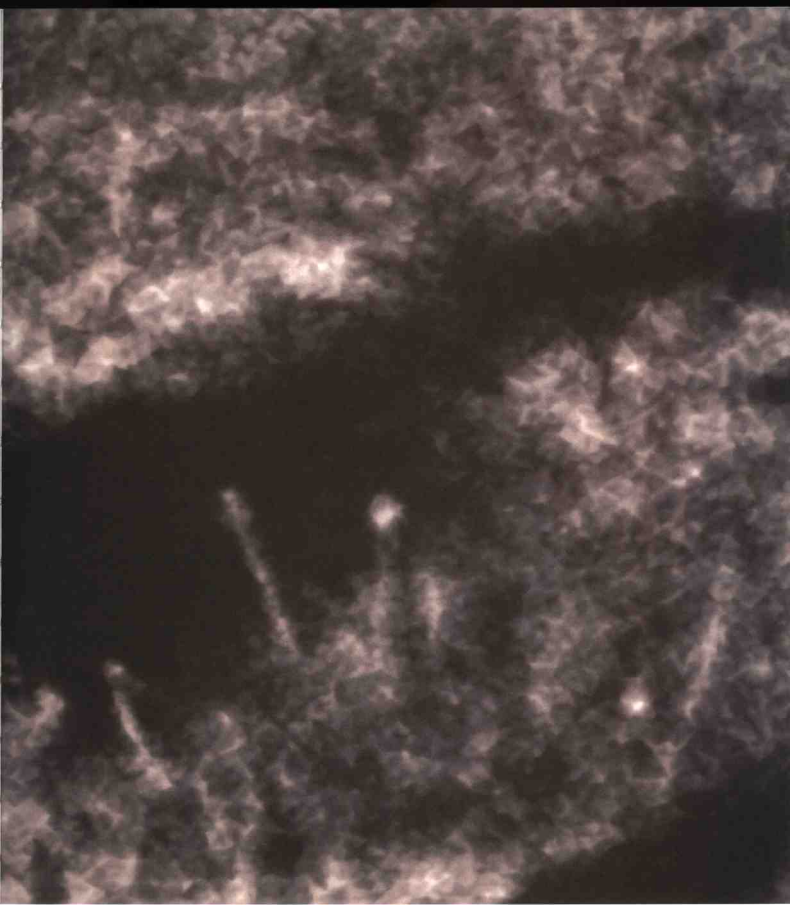
秋麥個展輯錄
百年印象畫廊

Curator: Britta Erickson
策展人：林似竹

Beijing, China
中國・北京







When I first encountered Michael Cherney's art I felt both surprise and pride. What surprised me was that Michael, an artist who has grown up in the United States, could penetrate to the essence of traditional Chinese art to the point where he has been able to blend its spirit and materials with new ideas and sentiments to create a new artistic form that is both at variance and in harmony with Chinese tradition. My feelings of pride stemmed from the vitality of Chinese art, which possesses such an extraordinary ability to adapt and regenerate over countless generations; the key is to have artists who understand the value of this vitality, and who both dare to and have the talent to utilize it. Michael is steeped in the Chinese artistic tradition, yet he is not constrained by set rules. His acute sense of discernment enables him to choose elements from traditional Chinese art that are suitable for his ideas and combine various media and methods to form bold experiments that express his impressions of life. Michael's art is a fusion of both traditional and modern, Eastern and Western; nonetheless, the work is in essence a manifestation of traditional Chinese art. He is a truly imaginative and creative artist; these skills should serve him well during future exploration.

Michael's achievements thus far are impressive; we wish him even greater success down the road.

Shao Dazhen

Professor, Central Academy of Art; Director, Chinese Artist Association Theory Committee

面對秋麥的作品，我感到吃驚，也感到自豪。吃驚的是，秋麥，一位生長在美國的藝術家，能如此深入到中國傳統藝術的精髓，用其精神，用其材料，注入新的思考和新的感情，創造出源于中國傳統又異于中國傳統的新的藝術樣式。自豪的是，中華民族的文化精神和藝術成就，確實有非同尋常的活力，它在現代社會和遙遠的未來，都會有適應和再生的能力，關鍵在于有懂得它的價值和敢于及善于運用它的人。秋麥沉緬于古老的中國藝術傳統，但他不泥古不化。他有很好的眼光，有很好的判斷力，從中國傳統藝術中選擇適合自己創造的資源和元素，結合各種新的媒材和手段，做大膽的試驗和實踐，來表達自己在現實生活中的感受。他的藝術是傳統和現代、東方和西方的嫁接和融合，而主體則是中國傳統藝術的彰現。這充分說明他是一位非常有想象力和創造性的藝術家，而他身上所具有的這種最可貴的品質，將會推動他勇往直前，探求未來之路。

秋麥已經取得了可喜的成就，我們祝他未來更大的成功！

邵大箴

中央美術學院教授，中國美術家協會理論委員會主任

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Foreword

by Britta Erickson

We live in an age of short attention spans and rushed days. Sound bites replace news; fast food replaces leisurely meals; e-mail replaces letter-writing and telephone conversations. Frenetic activity seems an end in itself, ironically resulting in less time and patience for the new, unless it be sensational or bombastic or readily accessible. The artist Michael Cherney has turned away from this mind-set. He examines minutiae for meaning, and expresses that meaning in labor-intensive works of art that require the audience to stop, look, and think.

In searching for meaning in minutiae, Cherney is following a practice described by the British poet and artist William Blake (1757-1827):

*To see a world in a grain of sand
And a heaven in a wild flower,
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand
And eternity in an hour.¹*

While Blake drew a sense of the vast universe from an examination of nature's smallest components, Cherney looks at cultural fragments to extrapolate larger cultural meaning. For his *Passages of Bronze and Stone*, Cherney pored over rubbings of inscriptions on Shang and Zhou period vessels and stelae to extract details expressive of an aesthetic wholeness. He then translated these details into seals, to be reproduced as a book of seal imprints, so that others can readily appreciate the form and beauty of the selected details. In a way, we can think of the selected details as an unorthodox kind of *objet trouvé* — while not a physical object, nevertheless a found form to be employed in a work of art.

A second work by Cherney, *Shadows of Ancient Peng*, shows the extreme to which an appreciation of detail can be taken, featuring very small details of rubbings of ancient carvings enlarged to the point of abstraction. The resulting images are reminiscent of splashed ink landscape paintings, and also call to mind the eleventh century master Guo Xi's "shadow walls." Guo Xi is said to have based landscape paintings on the irregular convexities and concavities of a roughly plastered wall:² there is a history in Chinese art of basing a work of art on chance-created forms. *Shadows of Ancient Peng* belongs to this tradition, as does *Passages of Bronze and Stone*, albeit in a less obvious fashion.

All the works in this exhibition involve fresh visions of the familiar. While some look to detail for meaning, others create meaning from a novel vantage: works in the *Bounded by Mountains* series each are based on a narrow slice of a photograph. *The Northern Song Spirit Road*, from this series, depicts a set of statues lining a road from two distinct perspectives.

The kinds of words we can use to describe the mechanisms of meaning in Cherney's works remind of us of the close ties between seeing, thinking, and connecting to the larger world; and they relate also to the processes of photography: The *focus* of the work, a fresh *vision* of the world, the *perception* of a grand aesthetic, and so on. Through his camera, Michael Cherney shares with us an alternative window on the world, hinting at the rewards resulting from close and thoughtful scrutiny of the visual realm.

¹ "Auguries of Innocence."

² Deng Qun, *Huaji* ["Painting" Continued], Book 9 (ca. 1167), in *Early Chinese Texts on Painting*, Susan Bush and Hsio-yen Shih (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985), p. 122.

前言

林似竹

我們生活在一個注意力不能夠持久的匆匆忙忙的時代。三言兩語的提速取代了新聞，快餐取代了悠閒的飯食，電子郵件取代了書信和電話。忙亂似乎成了目的之本身，對新鮮的事物反倒缺乏時間與耐心，除非它們是轟動一時的、誇大其詞的、或者唾手可得的。藝術家秋麥卻從這樣的心態中擺脫出來。他從微小中找出涵義，再通過精工細作的藝術作品來表達這個涵義。他的作品使得觀者停步、注視、思考。

在微小中尋找涵義，秋麥正實踐著英國詩人、藝術家威廉·布雷克（1757-1827）所描述的：

一粒沙裡見世界
一朵花裡見天國
手掌裡盛住無限
一剎那便是永劫¹

通過對大自然中最微小顆粒的觀察，布雷克體會到了廣大宇宙的意義；秋麥則從文化碎片中領會更廣博的文化內涵。在他的作品《金石窺》中，秋麥細心研究商周碑鼎文拓片，選出富於表現整體美學的局部，把這些局部轉化成印章，使它們重新以印譜的形式出現，使觀者對被甄選細節的形態與美感一目瞭然。在某種程度上，我們可以把這些被甄選的細節看作一種非正統的拾得物——儘管它們不是有形的物件，但仍然以一種被拾得的形象被用於一個藝術作品當中。

秋麥的另一件作品，《古彭城影》把古代碑刻拓片的微小細節放大至抽象，從而展示了對一個細節的欣賞可以達到的極至。最終的影像使人聯想起潑墨山水畫，也令人想到十一世紀大師郭熙的“影壁”：據記載，郭熙在泥牆凹凸不平的陰影上以墨隨其形跡畫山水。²在中國藝術中向來就有利用偶發的形象進行創作的傳統。《古彭城影》便屬於這個傳統，《金石窺》也是，只不過沒有那麼明顯。

這個展覽中所有的作品都是對熟悉事物的新鮮視覺展現。有的審視細節的意義，有的則從新穎的視角創造意義：《山重集》系列裏的每一本冊頁都是一張照片中狹窄的一條切片。其中，《北宋神道》表現了從兩個相反的角度所看到的一條有石像守候的道路。

用來描述秋麥作品涵義結構的語言使我們想到：觀察、思考、以及與外在世界的連接這三个方面是緊密相關的；同時也讓我們想到攝影的過程：作品的焦點，對世界的新鮮視覺展現，對宏大美學的感受，等等。通過他的相機，秋麥與我們分享一個另樣的看世界的窗口，暗示我們近距離地、深思地審視視覺世界所帶來的竊喜與收穫。

1 《天真的預言》，豐子愷譯本。

2 据鄧椿《畫繼》所記：郭熙“令圻者不用泥掌，止以手槍泥於壁，或凹或凸，俱所不問。乾則以墨隨其形跡，筆成峰巒林壑，加之樓閣人物之屬，宛然天成，謂之影壁”。鄧椿：《畫繼》（約1167年），卷九，見 *Early Chinese Texts on Painting* [中國早期繪畫史文集]，Susan Bush 與 Hsio-yen Shih 合著（哈佛大學出版社，1985），頁122。

Replicas of Replicas, Games about Games

by Yin Jinan

Michael Cherney's work serves as a kind of art specimen: an integration of the external mounting form of a traditional Chinese book or calligraphy and painting album with an internal language of art that lies between the concrete and the abstract. Actually, breathing within the work is also a kind of subjective art approach that flows between clarity and elusiveness; this is what I consider to be of greater importance.

Michael's approach to art is a bit complicated, situated in a conceptual tension. I do not want to merely state whether or not he respects or betrays Chinese cultural tradition; this type of discussion sidesteps the core issue. His affinity for and appreciation of Chinese traditional mounting form is as exquisite as his affinity for and appreciation of China's classic steles, historic sites, sacred mountains, painting and calligraphy; both are quite obvious. To imitate, to portray, to make rubbings of traditional classic images and relics, are all means of showing respect; even today these actions are still considered very traditional. However, this is only one tendency in Michael's approach to art.

Whether past or present, paintings, rubbings or photographs, in contrast to nature, are not "genuine items." They are in a sense only "replicas;" the truth they portray is the spirit of the artist. To continuously enlarge or abstract the so-called replica leads to the emergence of a "replica of a replica." In the process, "losing the original," as opposed to "imitating the original," is effectively utilized and emphasized. Highlighting the artist's individual subjectivity and creativity through the process of "losing the original" is referred to as "free copy" (*yi lin* 意臨) in Ming and Qing dynasty literati painting; a playful approach (literati ink-play) that is given free reign to reach its full potential via the artist's unrestrained actions.

Michael's specific characteristics lie in his taking the playful approach of the traditional Chinese literati and the rules of these games that they play, along with classic images and relics, and entering into a new round of games with them. I call this "games about games of classic culture," within which elements of pastiche and deconstruction can be found. This clearly is no longer the traditional model of "I make commentary on the six classics in search of their true meaning, I use the six classics as commentary on my own views;" rather, it is the contemporary model of "the classics play with me and I play with the classics."

Therefore, Michael Cherney's works of art are replicas of replicas of Chinese classic culture, and games about games.

Yin Jinan (1958-), Professor of Art History, Dean of the Department of Art History, and



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