

诗 蓝

LI CHEVALIER



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以诗蓝的灵感与目光「凝视东方」  
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**[ Contemplating the Orient ]**  
**through an inspired gaze of LI CHEVALIER . . .**

**Frédéric MITTERRAND**  
**FRENCH MINISTER OF CULTURE AND COMMUNICATION**

**PREFACE FRANCO CHINESE CULTURAL FESTIVAL 2010**

弗雷德里克·密特朗 法国文化与通讯部长  
2010 年中法文化之春开幕前言





诗蓝 北京 2010

Li Chevalier Beijing Oct.2010

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步董其昌之迹，  
阅千卷之书，  
挥笔而画。

Before executing a painting it is necessary to study thousands of books

TONG K'I-TCH'ANG

# 诗、 禅与诗蓝的画

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中国是一个诗的国度。这不仅因为中国历代诗人创造了大量脍炙人口的诗歌作品，而且因为中文在根本上是诗意的。用结构主义符号学 (structural semiotics) 的术语来说，符号可以区分「能指 (signifier)」和「所指 (signified)」两个部分。简要说，能指是符号能够被我们的感官所识别的外观，所指是符号所代表的为思维所识别的意义。在通常情况下，能指与所指之间的关系是任意的，除了代表所指之外，能指自身没有意义。但是，在艺术中情况有所不同。诗歌的意义，不仅在诗句所表达的思想，而且在诗句的音韵和节奏；绘画的意义，不仅在画作所表达的思想，而且在画作的颜色和形状。一首诗，在不影响它所表达的意思的情况下哪怕改动一个字（比如换一个同义词），它的诗意就会受到影响；一幅画，在不影响它所表达的意思的情况下哪怕改动一点颜色（比如换成它的补色），它的画意就会受到影响。因此，在艺术中，符号的能指与所指之间的关系不是任意的，它们之间有一种自然的意义关联，符号的能指本身也有意义。我们说中国是一个诗的国度，原因在于中文是诗意的或者艺术性的，因为中文的能指与所指之间的关系不是任意的，它们之间有自然的意义关联，我们可以通过直觉和想象跨域能指与所指之间的鸿沟。有了这种自然的意义关联，中文在如下三个方面与艺术的关系更为密切：（1）中文的所指不是固定的，而是自然生成的，开放的，充满诗意的。诗无达诂，诗的意义是向阐释者无限开放的。具有漫长历史的中文，它在不同时期的不同用法构成了繁复的隐喻关系。借用古德曼 (Nelson Goodman) 的术语来说，中文的每个词语都是充满“语义密度 (semantic density)”的，因而是诗意的。（2）中文中的能指并不是一个毫无意义的记号，汉字的外观本身就具有意义，借用的，因而是诗意的。（3）中文中的能指与所指之间的关系不是任意的，它们之间有自然的意义关联，因此汉字书法可以是一种「有意味的形式 (significant form)」，因此汉字书法可以是艺术。（3）能指与所指之间自然的意义关联，培养了使用中文的人发达的想象力和直觉力，这种能力是诗必不可少的，借用海德格尔 (Martin Heidegger) 的话来说，使用中文的人，是「诗意地栖居在大地上 (poetically dwells on this earth)」。尽管关于诗的界定各种各样，但是，在我看来，诗的一个重要特征就在于凭借直觉在自然与文化之间架起桥梁。诗存在于能指与所指之间、文化与自然之间、心灵与世界之间、精神与物质之间、有限与无限之间。崇尚天人合一的中国哲学和文化，为诗提供



了它所需要的广阔的中间地带。流连于中间地带的中国文化，更接近于诗，而不是宗教和科学。

起源于印度的佛教，在传入中国之后被中国化为禅宗。禅宗与其说是宗教，不如说是哲学或者诗。禅成了中国文人士大夫追求的精神境界，成了中国人的一种生活艺术。什么是禅？从禅的角度来说，这是一个不应该提出的问题，当然也是一个无法回答的问题。因为禅追求的是如此这般的存在，是刹那间显身的真实存在，任何关于这种存在的追问和回答，都是对它的再现，对它的遮蔽。禅让我们拨开各种障碍，直接进入存在，进入现在这里，而不是攀缘于过去、未来和那里。当我们进入现在，现在就由一个几乎无法识别的瞬间敞开为无限的世界。这是一个停留在现在的世界，一个没有运动而无限宁静的世界。禅师们所说的刹那永恒，也许指的就是这个在现在中敞开的宁静世界，一个空的世界。我们可以将这种宁静世界或者空的世界称之为禅境。中国哲学的最高境界，就是获得这种禅境，就是在现在中实现至善，享受洪福，得到极乐。

以中国文化为代表的这种诗意和禅境的东方，并不是萨义德（Edward Said）意义上的由西方殖民者作为他者构造出来的东方。中国人对诗意和禅境很早就有清醒的认识，它们一直是中国人的精神生活所追求的目标。当然，这并不排除用他者的眼光来看，中国文化中的这种特征有可能变得更加明显。在差不多一个世纪之前，美学家宗白华曾经有这样的感叹：「我以为中国将来的文化决不是把欧美文化搬来了就成功。中国旧文化中实有伟大优美的，万不可消灭。譬如中国的画，在世界中独辟蹊径，比较西洋画，其价值不易论定，到欧后才觉得。所以有许多中国人，到欧美后，反而「顽固」了，我或者也是卷在此东西对流的潮流中，受了反流的影响了。但是我实在极尊崇西洋的学术艺术，不过不复敢藐视中国的文化罢了。」一个世纪之后的诗蓝对此仍然深有同感。

诗蓝早年在国内学习音乐，后赴法国学习哲学，在著名的索邦大学获得哲学硕士学位，随后又赴英国中央圣马丁美术与设计学院学习绘画，长期生活在巴黎和北京两地。诗蓝作品给人最直观的感受就是诗意和禅境，一种典型的东方意境。诗蓝作品中的东方意境，比大多数生活在中国的中国艺术家的作品都要清晰得多。诗蓝为什么能够实现中国艺术家心向往之的目标？我想除了她长期在国外求学和生活的经历





有助于她看清和珍惜中国艺术的优点之外，另一个原因是她所学到的西方思维方式和技术手段，有助于她将认识到的东西直接中肯、清晰明了地表达出来。对于哲学与艺术的涉猎，对于东方与西方的体验，练就了诗蓝能出能入的本领。正是凭借这种出入自由的本领，诗蓝将中国艺术的精髓用一种更加直接的形式传达出来了。由于有了更加直接的传达手段，诗蓝绘画中的东方意境就变得不那么费解，即使是没多少中国文化背景的人也能读懂。

出于对诗意的追求，诗蓝没有走向彻底的抽象，也没有走向严格的写实。诗蓝喜欢游走在具象与抽象的边界上，让它们保持为一种摇摆状态，既不进入抽象，也不落入具象。正是在这种抽象与具象的张力中，诗蓝所追求的意境得以生成。无论具象还是抽象的因素，在诗蓝的作品中都服务于诗意的表达，禅境的营构。诗蓝对诗意的坚守，对抽象与具象的边界的拿捏，都得益于中国文化的浸染。

诗蓝对诗意的理解，也有她的独到之处。由于诗意具有明显的时间特征，因此多数中国艺术家喜欢用水墨书写的形式来表现它，从而创造出具有明显的表现主义色彩的抒情诗意。由于酷爱音乐，诗蓝对这种抒情诗意并不陌生。也正因为如此，她并没有让绘画去与音乐竞争。因为在表达具有时间性的抒情诗意方面，音乐比绘画更有优势。研究过哲学的诗蓝，自然熟悉这种区别。诗蓝用她的绘画表达的是具有空间性的哲理诗意。我们可以将这种具有哲理性的诗意称之为诗境。在诗蓝的作品中，我们仿佛能够感受到王维那充满禅意的诗境。与大多数诗人追求时间性的抒情诗意不同，王维追求的是空间性的哲理诗意。换句话说，王维的诗中是有画的。对此苏轼早就有所领悟，他赞美王维说：「味摩诘之诗，诗中有画；观摩诘之画，画中有诗。」「空山不见人，但闻人语响。返景入深林，复照青苔上。」这是王维的诗，也是诗蓝的画。

我们今天仍然喜欢读王维的诗，喜欢看诗蓝的画，说明具有东方色彩的诗意和禅境并没有离我们远去。随着现代化造成的高速生活节奏，随着物质对精神全面围剿，这种诗意和禅境就显得更加难能可贵了。



## POETRY, CHAN AND SHI LAN (LI CHEVALIER)'S PAINTING

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China is a land of poetry. This is not only because the Chinese have produced copious volumes of poetry collections, but also because the Chinese language itself is fundamentally poetic. In structural semiotics, a sign is defined as being made up of the matched couple of the signifier and the signified. The signifier is the sign, represented by what we can identify with our senses (words, sound-image). The signified is the concept, or the meaning indicated by the signifier. Under general circumstances, the relationship between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary. Apart from representing the signified, the signifier does not have any sense on its own. However, the situation is different with respect to art. The value of a poem cannot be appreciated only from the meaning expressed by the verse, but also from its rhyme and rhythm. Similarly, the quality of a painting cannot be evaluated only by the idea behind the painting, but also by its color and shape composition. If one word in a poem is replaced by a synonym for that word, the meaning of the poem may not change, but the quality of the poem will be affected. Likewise, if the color in a painting is replaced with a different one, for example, by a complementary color, the visual impact of the painting will also be affected. Thus, in art, the relationship between signifier and signified is not arbitrary. The associations between sign and meaning are interdependent. Following suit with poetry, the relationship between the signifier and the signified in the Chinese language is also not arbitrary. We can overcome the gap between the two by using imagination and intuition. The natural association between the signifier and the signified likens the Chinese language to art in the three following ways: (1) In the Chinese language, the signified is not static. Chinese characters offer infinite possibilities of interpretation, which results in natural, open and poetic evolution. Over time, the Chinese language has garnered even greater complexity and richness through the incorporation of various metaphorical roots. As put by Nelson Goodman, each word in Chinese is full of "semantic density," or a textured meaning that makes it intrinsically poetic. (2) The signifier in Chinese is not a meaningless sign because Chinese characters are often representative of ideas linked to their meaning. According to Clive Bell, characters are a "significant form," which explains why Chinese calligraphy can be considered art. (3) The correlation between the signified and the signifier gives speakers of the Chinese language a predisposition to be imaginative and intuitive, two essential components of poetry. As phrased by Martin Heidegger, Chinese "poetically dwells on this earth." Despite the numerous definitions of poetry, in my eyes, one of its most defining characteristics is how central a role intuition plays in its appreciation. Poetry acts as a bridge between nature and culture. It is the subtle link between signifier and signified, between culture and nature, between mind and world, between spirit and matter, between the finite and infinite. Because Chinese culture so intensely values union rather than separation, it provides a broad middle ground for poetry to flourish. From a philosophical perspective, Chinese culture is also closer to poetry than to religion and science.

Buddhism originated in India. After its introduction to China, Buddhism evolved into Chan, which is known as Zen in Japanese. The essence of the Chan spirit is more philosophical and poetic than religious. Over time, Chan has become the spiritual realm of Chinese literati; an art of living embraced by the aesthetically inclined Chinese. What is Chan? From the Chan perspective, this is a question that should not be raised because it cannot be answered. Zen conveys the idea of instant existence; an instant existence of the real. Both the question and answer of instant existence are the excise of the reproduction of instant truth. According to Chan practices, we should sweep aside all obstacles, seize the idea that one can grasp truth only in the concept of now and here. It is useless to search into the past, project into the future, or anywhere else. As we enter the present, it will instantly open an unlimited horizon; a landscape of eternal and infinite silence. This world of silence and emptiness is called the realm of Chan. The highest philosophical realm of Chan involves achieving perfection in the present and enjoying happiness and bliss of life here and now.

The Eastern culture represented by the poetic Chan spirit is not what Edward Saïd perceived through the eyes of colonists. Chinese has a long and clear history with Chan and with poetry. Of course, this knowledge does not exclude other points of view, as multiple viewpoints could bring more clarity to the understanding of eastern culture. Almost a century ago, aesthetic theorist Zongzibai said: "I think that the transplantation of American culture to China is not a key factor for China's future success. China has its own outstanding, remarkable, and forever lasting ancient cultural heritage. For example, Chinese wall paintings present a unique, distinct voice in the world which is difficult to underestimate, even in a comparison with Western art." He continues, "Upon traveling to Europe, I discovered that many Chinese people become more "stubborn" after a trip abroad. Personally, I was enveloped in the torrent of the cultural confrontation between the East and the West. But my feet remain ensnared in the rip-tide; I deeply admire Western art and its academic heritage, but I dare not look at the Chinese culture with a defiant eye." One century later, Shilan shares the same insight:

Shilan received a musical education in China starting at a young age. She went on to study philosophy in Paris and earned her





master's degree in philosophy from the prestigious Sorbonne University. Following this, she went on to study fine art at the Central Saint Martin's College of Art and Design in England. She lives and works at the crossroads of China and France. The most striking impressions I got from her works were the poetic quality and the Chan influences on her creations; very oriental indeed. The oriental characteristics of her work are even more distinguishable than most Chinese artists who have lived and studied primarily in China. How has she successfully achieved the oriental quality that so many Chinese artists aspire to? In my opinion, her long experience overseas has provided her with the distance necessary to discern a clear vision of Chinese art and its value. The birth of her own artistic language has also been greatly enriched by the broad analytical and technical skills that she gained from her experiences in the west. She transforms her vision and her techniques into artistic expression in a very direct, sincere, and clear way. Her hybrid expertise in philosophy and in art, as well as her multiple experiences drawn from the east and the west offer her great versatility. She propels the essence of the Chinese spirit in a very fluid and intuitive way onto her canvas. As a result of this directness and her instinctive expression, the interpretation of her works can even be done by those who do not have a strong Chinese educational background.

Stemming from her poetic spirit, the artistic language of Shilan does not engage absolute abstraction nor absolute realistic depiction. Her language vacillates on the fringes of the real and the abstract, creating a tension between the two which reflects both her penchant for poetry and her Chan influences. The pursuit of her poetic spirit, as well as the freedom and virtuosity she exhibits in handling both abstract and realistic language unveil the unmistakable influence of Chinese culture in her art.

Shilan has created an original artistic language through her personal understanding of poetry. As poetry is strongly associated with time, most Chinese artists adopt ink calligraphy as their medium of choice. Such works contain the distinct lyrical character of expressionism. Shilan is a passionate music lover who fully understands the lyrical language of poetry, but who knows how to balance her talents in each domain. Her philosophical background has clearly helped her to understand that music has stronger lyrical nature than painting. Shilan's art privileges an inventive depiction of space rather than time. Her expression is more philosophical rather than lyrical. We can call the poetic expression of her philosophy, 'poetic stat.' One may easily associate Shilan's work with the 'Chan spirit' of poet Wang Wei, (701-761). Unlike lyrical poetry, Wang Wei's verses carry a strong Chan connotation. His works are both about poetry and painting. The song by poet SuShi (1037-1101) has praised Wang Wei's poetry in saying: *"Reading Weiji's poetry I see painting, reading Weiji's painting, I see poetry."*

*'Empty the hills, no man in sight, Yet voices echo here; Deep in the woods slanting sunlight, Falls on the jade-green moss.'*  
This is Wang Wei's poetry. This also ShiLan's painting.

We are roused by Shilan's paintings in the same way that we are roused by WangWei's verses. The realm of "poetic Chan stat" has not vanished forever. In fact, this poetic Chan realm seems to gain more appeal in the speedy modern world where spirituality is under a mortal attack by the inflation of material desire.

Sept. 2010 weixiu garden Beijing University