

# 质性：实验水墨报告

## The Quality of Materiality

Experimental Ink and Wash

策划/张 羽

主持/郭雅希



湖北美术出版社

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以“质性”作为本次实验水墨展的主题，其目的在于通过此次展览方式，提出“质性”理念。近年来我在实验水墨创作研究向内质深入的过程中，发现“质性”是当代艺术创作与艺术批评值得探讨的一个有意义的话题，尤其对实验水墨的发展与推进而言。

我以为“质性”从实验水墨创作理念与批评视角看都是一个非常有价值的课题，对其艺术创作向至高层面推进与延伸更是至关重要的。

“质性”在当代艺术创作中虽是一个广义的概念，但从实验水墨的角度去探讨、挖掘，必然触及以下问题：

**一、媒材质性：**利用媒介材质的特有质能经过技术操作传递质性的表达理念或观念。

**二、媒材与操作技术的质性：**利用媒介材质的特有质能，通过创作的技术手段表现艺术理念的质性特征。

**三、异质媒材通过操作技术的异变质性：**挖掘媒介材质与综合材料的碰撞与联接的最大复合能限度，通过技术性操作反映作品的能量质性。

**四、媒材与图式关系的质性：**在媒介材质的原惯性层面上，运用图式或图像阐释其结构质性的张力与空间。

**五、媒材通过操作技术的物化质性：**通过对媒介材质的可能性技术操作，改变材质的原初状态而呈现的物化中性痕迹质性及体量与张力。

从实验水墨的创作及研究的角度提出这个问题，不仅仅是对实验水墨领域的拓展具有特别意义，对当代艺术创作也有一定的作用和价值。

2005.3.28 于天津

## The Quality of Materiality

Curator's Comments

**Zhang Yu**

The quality of materiality forms the theme of this exhibition of experimental ink painting, and it is hoped that this exhibition will highlight the importance of the quality of materials for both creativity and appreciation in experimental ink painting over recent years. The discovery of "materiality" has significance for all modern artistic creation and critique, but it has been especially significant in the development and advance of experimental ink painting.

I believe the role of materiality in the theory and critique of experimental ink painting is of crucial importance, and will play a major role in promoting the development and expansion of creative work in this genre.

Although materiality remains a broad and relatively non-specific concept in contemporary arts generally, experimental ink painting encourages us to investigate this theme more closely and examine its implications for the following:

1. The original nature of the media materials: The use of particular media materials is capable of conveying particular concepts of materiality.
2. The materiality of media materials and techniques of application: We can excavate the limitations of the most composite media materials, and through technical application reflect the principles of materiality.
3. The materiality of the relationship between media materials and illustrative forms: On the original familiar surfaces of media materials images and iconographic hermeneutics can serve to explain the materiality of these structures.
4. The materiality of material traces of technology applied to media materials: Through potential technical application to media materials, the original form of a material can be altered and exemplify a new quality of materiality.

By presenting these questions raised by creation and critique in experimental ink painting, we hope that not only is the special significance of this theme for the expansion of the realm of experimental ink painting, but that it can also have a definite function and value for all modern artistic creation.

2005.3.28 Tianjin



# 质 性 : 实 验 水 墨 报 告

→主持人语

★郭雅希

中国实验水墨是在传统水墨画的基础上延伸出来的,既有传统水墨的属性,又迥异于传统水墨。说她有传统水墨的属性,第一,是在媒材上,仍然以传统最基本的水、墨、纸、色作为表述手段;第二,从创作形态相应的艺术观来看,尽管很多实验水墨艺术家自我标榜他们的“实验”“与传统无关”,但他们实验的形态相应的艺术观仍在传统的“自然论”范畴之中。说她迥异于传统,第一,从势态上,传统为守势,实验水墨为开势;前者重守,后者重创。第二,从认识上,传统水墨视“水墨艺术”为国粹,实验水墨视“水墨艺术”为不断生长、发展的生命体和艺术本体——因此有着在不同时空构架下,与自己、与他人、于其他生物、与自然、与其他知识结构不断交叉、突破、超越的自由内在精神。

中国的实验水墨自'85思潮以来,从朦胧状态到初露头角,到对其抽象性的认同,又到逐渐形成一定的阵势;从第一本进入媒体的《中国现代水墨画》到《二十世纪末中国现代水墨艺术走势》丛刊等最初历史文献的建构,到《当代艺术》

对“实验水墨”转型策略的评估,到主流媒体《美术星空》对“实验水墨”的关注,到被编入《黑白史》、《中国当代美术现象批评文丛》、《新中国美术史》进入中国当代艺术史册。就展览情况来看,从1990年代初在日本展出的“中国现代水墨展”,到在比利时展出的“墨与光——中国当代抽象水墨展”,到在美国展出的“重返家园——中国实验水墨联展”和“蜕变与突破——中国新艺术展”,还有在西班牙、德国、英国、奥地利等国举行的大型画展;从90年代中期在国内的“张力的实验——表现性水墨展”到2001年在广州举行的“中国水墨实验二十年”大型文献展,中国的“实验水墨”近二十年的艰难发展历程已经从被冷落的媒体边缘渐渐地进入了主流。作为一种美术形态,作为多元文化中的一元已堂而皇之地进入了中国当代美术史、文化史并依靠其自身的实力创造了一个“创造——被收藏——再创造”的自然生态系统。

非具象的实验水墨其感知方式与其逐步完善起来的学科理念是两种最本源的互动元素,而推动这两种元素互动的



动力源，一是通过不断地实验不断丰富艺术的表述方式和感受方式，一是逐步完善其相应的学科理念体系。

从人类艺术史的角度来看，任何一种形态都有相应的创作理论和学科理念。如西方传统绘画与“再现论”，西方近代绘画与“表现论”，中国传统绘画与“自然论”，中国近代写实艺术与“再现论”，西方现代抽象艺术与“构成论”，中国‘85思潮的现代艺术与“表现论”、“构成论”等等。

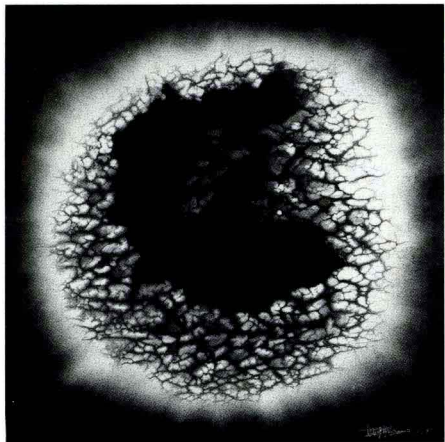
表面看来，中国的实验水墨受到了西方近现代表现性艺术、构成性艺术的影响，但实质上与西方的“表现论”和“构成论”无关。

西方的表现性艺术是针对其传统的再现性艺术，借鉴了东方的意象性艺术并在其基础上发展起来的。从性质上看，或与“再现论”对立而走向极端主观化、情绪化和个性化（如表现主义和抽象表现主义），从而极端地否定形式存在的意义；或又因极端地强调形式的个性化而走向了“有意味的”形式“构成”（如“冷抽象”、“热抽象”、极少主义等）；或与“再现论”显示着某种亲和关系，借具象表现主观意念，借具象满足某种意趣，从而走向了象征，走向了超级写实，走向了对客观形、色的解析（如立体派、奥弗斯主义等）。

中国的实验水墨虽然或多或少地受到了西方“表现论”和表现性艺术的影响，但与“再现论”和再现性艺术没有任何关系，既不存在“对立”因素，也不存在亲和关系。它是经近现代西方“表现论”的催化，超越了近代中国“再现论”的催化，超越了近代中国“再现论”隔绝历史的断层，又找回了中国传统“自

然论”根基的当代表达。

经过了‘85现代美术思潮的洗礼，实验水墨艺术家，第一，找回了中国式的以不变的阴（--）阳（—）黑白关系应万象缤纷的“执简驭繁”的看世界的辩证哲学观；第二，找回了以虚静明澈之“心”感受、观照、感悟自然、社会之“物”的，像自然本身那样自由、自在地“观物取象”；第三，找回了把现实中的人、现实中人生存的社会、人间所发生的事物看成是宇宙自然中的一部分，即“人”、“事”



张羽《灵光 75 号：漂浮的残圆》，68cmx68cm，2003 年  
Zhang Yu, The Floating Incomplete Circle, No. 75, 2003

生于自然，又回归于自然的人生感、历史感、宇宙感和“天人合一”感（如张羽的《每日新报 2002 年 5 月 16 日纽约》、《每日新报 2002 年 5 月 26 日巴拉维》）。但在表现形态上完全突破了线性语言的构成方式，以致将虚静明澈之“心”对社会、自然的关照、感悟的不确定性状态更加自由、自在地将无意识空间、情绪空间、心理空间、精神空间与“墨象”空间融为一体（如刘子建的《宇宙中的纸船·7》、

《天音,1》,张羽的《灵光第46号:飘浮的残圆》、《灵光第67号:悬置的破方》等)。这种植根于传统“自然论”的当代表达直接颠覆了传统“自然论”天经地义的“以形写神”的意象形态。

任何一种语言形态的创造,既是艺术家的需要,又是观赏者的需求,也是时代的需要。实验水墨是中国绘画史上的图式革命,是前所未有的创造,又是“对大众要求艺术再现物象的审美习惯的超越”(栗宪庭语,见《展示形式与中国水



刘子建《迷离错置的空间》, 150cmx150cm, 1999年  
Liu Zijian, *Misty and Dislocated Space*, 1999

墨画的革新)),实际上,也是中国水墨画合乎逻辑的发展和必然的延伸。(见拙文《中国实验水墨发展考察报告》,《中国实验水墨》,黑龙江美术出版社,第26页)。

然而,作为新的历史条件下孕育出来的实验水墨除了形态本身还有没有其他的感知方式有待丰富呢,还有没有其他价值评判标准有待建构呢?这正是本文想要探究的。实验水墨以“非具象”的“绘画性”颠覆了天经地义的“以形写神”

和“书写性”早已被人们所共知。而今天摆在读者面前的这次实验水墨展,策划人张羽将“质性”作为该展的主题。而面对“质性”一词,我们一定有所感觉,但作为学术问题反映在实验水墨的“质性”探索,学术界却从未引起足够重视。

“质性”在美术创作中是一个广义的概念,虽然在古典的、现代的、东方的、西方的以及各个门类的艺术创作中都存在着“质性”问题,可是对“质性”的探讨应该说还是一个崭新的概念和学术课题。我想这是我们共同的课题。因为在古典的、现代的、东方的、西方的和各个门类的艺术创作中的“质性”问题长期以来都被“现实的”、“非现实的”、“表现的”、“抽象的”、“具象的”、“意象的”的表层或其他问题所掩盖着,人们不去注意或无视“质性”语言要素的表述作用。从实验水墨的角度来看,由于它特有的非“具象”和非“意象”属性,又不同于西方的“抽象”、“表现”和“构成”,所以“质性”的学术问题便日益突出地反映出来。那么,今天的探讨对实验水墨的艺术创作、艺术批评,我以为是一个有意义的、新的视角。

从实验水墨的角度来看,美术创作中的“质性”应该包括媒材的质性、媒材与操作技术的质性和媒材与图式关系的质性。这是一种艺术创作中非常重要而又被长期忽视的语汇。因此,从实验水墨的角度把这个问题提出来不仅对实验水墨感知领域的拓展有至关重要的意义,对于大美术创作也有着同样的作用和价值。实际上,这也是我们长期以来一直忽视而又在美术各个领域存在着的,但却没有引起足够重视的价值评判系统。它



是一个从物质质能资源创作思路出发，相对注重过程（有形或无形），轻视结果，但又能通过物态的结果或图像反应过程的一种创作方式。这种创作方式往往也纳入了直接的“行为”在其中的创作过程。如张羽的《指印》系列，是直接在宣纸上一指一指地将红色或黑色手指印“印”在纸面上。从一衍生出二，二衍生出三，三衍生出百，百衍生出万，万衍生出亿……这一指一指的“印”既是张羽通过“手指印”的“行为”感受并体验自身生命质能的过程，又是手指的物质质性与“墨”、“色”、“水”、“纸”的质性发生关系并生成图式质性的过程；更特别的是在手指印数以万计的反复印入纸面时，必然改变了纸性的原初质性，并呈现其物化的中性质痕和特有的体量感、张力感。于是，他的《指印》系列便显示出以前实验水墨从未有过的单纯、纯净和干净，没有惯常概念中的“观念”、“表现”、“意象”，也没有惯常概念的“意义”，只有充满悟性的智慧的“质能”本身。刘旭光的《自然的声音》系列是先将常用的书写和绘画性的工具、材料转换概念，然后创造性地使司空见惯的墨与丙烯、白粉以及从未被人使用过的“铁锈”材料发生绘画和书写中从未有过的“质性”关系，这种“质性”碰撞又在疏密交叉、点线对应，似“卜”似“人”的图像中形成了极富“质性”质能特质的图式。

在实验水墨中，有人在实验中注重挖掘水性，有人注重挖掘墨性，还有人注重色性和水墨性，可是从没有人想梁铨如此这样地开掘纸性。为了避免陷入中国传统的用纸惯性，挖掘最能代表中国身分的宣纸未被发掘的最大物质材料

“质性”特征，他将“好好的”宣纸撕裁成“垃圾”一样的条条块块，然后依据自己的兴趣、审美和嗜好任意“编织”拼贴组合，再精心地用色、用墨涂绘。于是，其作品呈现出了中国水墨画从未有过的“撕裁”之质，“编织”粘合之质与水质、墨质、色质，与纸质的交融。其“交融”的过程，也呈现了作者的性格、兴趣、审美、嗜好……的生命“行为”之质。虽然他那极具破坏性的“撕裁”和“编织”颠覆了用“好好的”完整的“纸性写意”规范，但却变异出中国传统纸性从未有过的冷逸、蕴蓄、纤弱、精微、自然、优雅、兼容、包容、多容的丰富的“质性”图式语言。

自90年代以来，刘子建一直坚持其“硬边语言”的实验。他是将传统概念的以“笔”为媒材的表达方式转换成了非笔的“版”质媒材，并通过其“版印”在操作过程中的轻重缓急，以及不同的版质，用水、用墨的控制、把握和泼洒、拼贴的配合，间接而充分地将传统水墨中从未有过的版质、水质、墨质、纸质、“拼质”（拼痕之质）开掘出来，从而，显示出与其生命内控之质有关的特有的“质性”语言。由间接“版质”的质性与水、墨、版以及承受水、墨、版、力等质的质能的交融与变通，使其独特的“硬边语言”表述呈现出了传统水墨中从未有过的软硬、强弱、轻重、薄厚、虚实之质能的图式语境。

张进的《水墨与赋格》和孙佰均的《对生命的另类解读》系列，从“质性”角度来看，虽然并没有突出地表现在物质性的媒材和操作上，但从图式的角度来看，前者那种都市与原始自然，那种现实



与理想、抽象与具象二元对立的感受却非常明显。实际上这是一种软性的“质性”特质，这种“质性”特质的内在冲突能够使人油然而生地涌现出一种对大自然的依恋之情。回过头来，我们再感受一下他那既一般又特殊的媒材，既传统又当代的操作，无不隐含着“质性”的特质；而后者的作品，如果从媒材与图式关系的质能角度来看，却明显地显示出一种在传统媒介材质惯性中令人耳目一新的图式语言结构——即一种游动着的，有



张进《水墨与赋格.8》，50cmx50cm，2004年  
Zhang Jin, Ink and Wash, Fugue, 8, 2004

体量、有空间、有张力的抽象生命质能体，这是一种利用传统媒材转换出来的新的“质性”语言，也是与其自身生命质能状态相契合的“质性”语言。

在这7位艺术家中，最年轻的魏青吉则有着一种无拘无束“泼皮”精神，他的《定点风景写生研究》系列从所使用的媒材：毛笔、板刷、墨、水、茶、白粉、铅笔、综合拼贴材料来看，那种绘画性与非绘画性材料的并用颇像劳生勃格式的

“前波普”；从操作技术与图式的质性角度来看，那种水与墨、水与茶、水与白粉的丰富混合透叠，那种毛笔、板刷、铅笔、拼贴的穿插交织，那种笔痕、流痕、泼痕、茶痕、划痕、染痕又颇像塔皮埃斯和巴斯科特式的“涂鸦”；不同材质的质性，不同操作方式、技术的质性有着丰富与单纯、经意与不经意、调侃与严肃、实验与经验的多重感受，这是一种图式语境，也是多种媒材“质性”的反差、冲突、交汇、融合所营造出来的质能语言。

从张羽、刘旭光、梁铨、刘子建、张进、孙柏钧、魏青吉的作品我们可以发现，艺术家极具悟性和个性的，从“质性”角度所反映出来的感知和表述方式与逐步建构的学科理念在实验水墨的发展、实验过程中与整个实验水墨的发展过程同样存在着互动、互促的关系。感知方式预设了逐步建构的学科理念，逐步建构的学科理念也决定着特有的感知、表述和实验方式，任何一种有生命的艺术形态的生长、发展、演进都与这两个元素的互动、互促有关，这是两个最本源的互动元素。这种最本源的互动元素与从实验水墨中反映出来的这种“质性”语言，反映了中国人在艺术表现上的特有的艺术心质，也反映了中国人全然不顾外象，对抽象“质性”语言特有的敏感力、感知力和潜在而且未被充分开发的深厚的文化底蕴。

2005年4月于天津

# The Quality of Materiality : Experimental Ink and Wash

President's Comments

Guo Yaxi

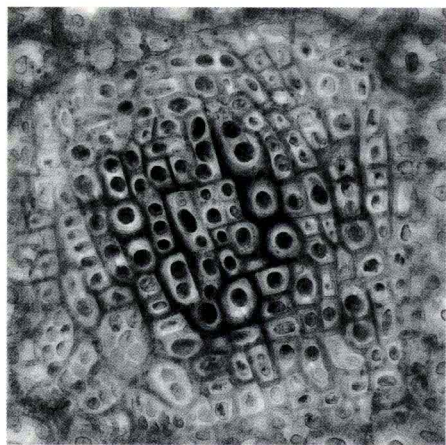
Chinese experimental ink painting is an extension of traditional ink painting, having some of its attributes yet at the same time being quite divergent. Its first shared attribute is the use of the same media and materials – water, black ink, paper and colour ink; the second is its artistic position couched within “the theory of spontaneity” (*ziranlun*) that guided traditional ink painting even though many of its exponents boast that their experimental ink painting has “nothing to do with the tradition”. Yet it is different in the way it positions itself. The tradition plays the defence, while experimental ink painting plays a gambit; the former stresses conservation, the latter creativity. Epistemologically, traditional ink painting is regarded as embodying the Chinese essence, while experimental ink painting is seen as a living and artistic form of ink painting that is growing and developing constantly. In light of the latter, experimental ink painting has its own free internal spirit that in different spatio-temporal frameworks incessantly interacts, breaks free from and transcends the self, others, other living forms, nature and other knowledge structures.

Chinese experimental ink painting first emerged from an undefined, hazy state in the intellectual movements of 1985 when it gradually developed a definite strategy in acknowledgment of abstraction. Its initial documentary establishment can be traced from the first volume exploring the medium, *Zhongguo Xiandai Shuimohua* (Chinese Contemporary Ink Painting) to the appearance of the series titled *Ershi Shiji Mo Zhongguo Xiandai Shuimo Yishu Zoushi* (Artistic Trends in Chinese Contemporary Ink Painting Art at the End of the 20 Century). Later the journal *Xiandai Yishu* (Contemporary Art) presented serious critical assessment of the transformational strategy behind “experimental ink painting” and the mainstream media publication *Meishu Xingkong* (Arts Starspace) paid attention to it. The genre also found itself included in such histories of contemporary Chinese art as *Heibai Shi* (A History of Black and White), *Zhongguo Xiandai Meishu Xianxiang Piping Wencong* (The Collection of Critique of Contemporary Chinese Fine Arts Phenomena) and *Xiandai Zhongguo Meishu Shi* (The History of New Chinese Art). In terms of exhibitions, in the early 1990s the genre staged *Chinese Contemporary Ink and Wash* in Japan, *Ink and Light – Chinese Contemporary Abstract Ink and Wash* in Belgium and *Back to the Homeland – Chinese Experimental Ink and Wash* in USA, as well as major exhibitions of paintings in Spain, Germany, the UK and Austria. In the mid 1990s there was the major documentary exhibition in Guangzhou – *Zhangli's Experiment – Representation Ink and Wash*; this exhibition demonstrated that over twenty difficult years “experimental ink painting” had gradually entered the mainstream locally after being a neglected and marginalized medium. For an art form to succeed in retaining its individuality within the pluralistic history of contemporary Chinese art and culture, it must rely on its own strengths to create a natural ecosystem embracing the stages of “creativity – collecting – re-creation”.

The sensory perception and the gradually perfected disciplinary theory of non-representational

experimental ink painting represent the interaction of elements of its two most fundamental sources, as well as the sources of strength provided by the impetus and drive of these two elements. Through ceaseless experimentation there is constant enrichment of the modes of artistic expression and perception, and there is also a gradual perfection of the appropriate system of theoretical concepts. From the perspective of human art history, every individual form requires its own creative principles and theory. Thus, Western traditional painting generated its own theories of "reproduction", modern Western painting had its own theories of "expression", Chinese traditional painting had its own "theory of spontaneity", Chinese modern realistic arts had their own theories of "reproduction", Western modern abstract arts had their own "theories of structure", and the modern arts born of the Chinese intellectual movements of 1985 also had their own theories of "expression", "structure" and the rest.

Appearances would suggest that Chinese experimental ink painting had been influenced by Western early modern artistic expression and structure, but in reality there is no relationship with Western theories of expressionism or structuralism.



孙佰钧《被腐蚀过的生命 No. 18》

45cmX45cm, 1999年

Sun Baijun, Corroded Lite No.18 45X45cm 1999

Western expressionist art is the re-production of particular traditions developed on the basis of borrowing from Eastern imagist arts. In terms of its nature, it could move in the direction of extreme subjectivity, emotionalism or individualism (as Expressionism or Abstract Expressionism) in opposition to "theories of reproduction" and have significance for its extreme denial of the existence of form; or it could move from extreme individualism in the stress on form towards a "structure" with "meaning" ("cool abstract expressionism", "hot abstract expressionism", minimalism); or it could manifest an intimate relationship with theories of "reproduction", draw on concepts of representational expressionism and rely on the satisfaction provided by representation and move in the direction of the symbol, surrealism, objectivism and colour analysis (Cubism and Orphism).

Although Chinese experimental ink painting has to a greater or lesser extent been influenced by Western theories of expression and Expressionist arts, it has no relationship with the theories of reproduction that underlie it, nor can it have any relationship to either its oppositions or intimacies. Early and later modern Western "expressionist theories" could only provide a catalyst for transcending the break that occurred in modern Chinese art's "theories of reproduction" and search for a modern expression for the traditional Chinese theory of spontaneity.

After their baptism in China's artistic and intellectual movements of 1985, experimental ink painters sought, firstly, to recover a universal dialectical view through the complexity built up through overlays of the unchanging Chinese style *yin-yang* (Negative-Positive) dialectical elements. Secondly, they sought to perceive and spontaneously sense things from a position of emptiness, tranquillity and lucidity as they observed the "objects" of society and nature in the Taoist manner of "viewing objects and eliciting their images" in a spontaneously free and uninhibited way. Thirdly, they sought to view humans in reality, to view society filled with real humans and to view all human relationships as parts



of a real and spontaneous cosmos, so that “humans” and “events” sprang from spontaneous nature and could be situated in a natural realm governed by a sense of life, a sense of history, a sense of the cosmos and a sense of “the oneness of heaven and man”. Yet in their form of expression these works broke completely with linear linguistic structural forms, by observing and perceiving society and nature with an empty, tranquil and lucid mind acting within an indeterminate mode enhanced by freedom and spontaneity that blended as one unconscious space, emotional space, psychological space, spiritual space and the space of ink symbols. This form of contemporary expression planted within the traditional “theory of spontaneity” overthrew the traditional mode of symbolic consciousness within that theory that sought to “use forms to delineate spirit” in a morally ordered and ordering heaven and earth.

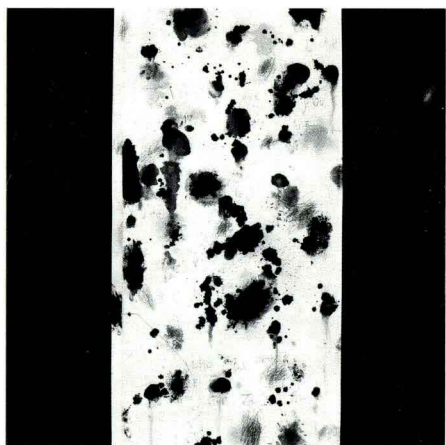
The creation of any linguistic form is required by the artist and demanded by his audience, as well as by the times. Experimental ink painting is an iconic revolution in the history of Chinese painting, as it is something previously not created and “it requires that audiences demand that art transcends aesthetic habits in its re-creation of objects” [Li Xianting’s expression, see *“Zhanshi Xingshi yu Zhongguo Shuimohua de Gexin”* (Displayed forms and innovation in Chinese ink painting)]. In fact, this is a logical development and natural extension for Chinese-style ink painting. [see Guo Yaxi, *“Zhongguo Shiyān Shuimo Fazhan Kaocha Baogao”* (Report on a Study of the Development of Chinese Experimental Ink and Wash), *Zhongguo Shiyān Shuimo* (Chinese Experimental Ink and Wash, Heilongjiang Meishu Chubanshe, p. 26)]

However, does experimental ink painting, as something that has emerged in new historical circumstances, have further perceptual modes of enrichment, or other critical and evaluative standards awaiting it? This is the question I wish to address here. It has long been agreed that the “non-representational” “painterly” quality of experimental ink painting has overthrown the “calligraphic” quality that sought to “write spirit through form” in an ethically delineated universe. The present exhibition has been curated by Zhang Yu around the theme of “the quality of materiality”. This concept evokes a general response, but when we examine the idea of “quality of materiality” applied to experimental ink painting, we find that scholars have paid little attention to the question.

“Materiality” (*zhixing*) is a general term with broad meaning as it is used in the arts. Questions of materiality exist for all forms of art – classical, modern, Eastern and Western, but the study of the quality of materiality is a new concept and a new topic. It is possibly also a concept of common concern to all. The quality of materiality in the various genres of ancient, modern, Western and Eastern art has been long covered over by concern for the layers and modes of expression or representation – “realism”, “non-realism”, “expressionism”, “abstraction”, “representational”, “impressionistic”, etc. People remain focused at this level and disregard the expressive function of linguistic elements of the quality of materiality. Experimental ink painting has non-representational and non-impressionistic attributes different from Western “abstraction”, “expression” or “structure”, yet the study of the question of the quality of materiality addresses the issues. Zhang Yu and I have long believed that this new concept provides a new way of thinking about the creation and evaluation of experimental ink painting.

From the perspective of experimental ink painting, the quality of materiality sheds light on the creation of such works by drawing attention to the nature of the media used, the materials themselves, the materiality of the painting techniques, and the materiality nature of the relationship between the materials and the image forms. This is a very important and long neglected lexicon or discourse in art creation. From the perspective of experimental ink painting, this question raises issues not only relevant to the extension of the realm of perception for experimental ink painting, but one that has a similar role and value in all artistic creativity. In fact, this long neglected question is one that not

only has significance for all areas of the arts, but one that has not received attention as a system of evaluative critique. It proceeds from a consideration of the available material resources, while paying relatively greater attention to process (tangible and intangible) than to results or effects, yet this line of thought successfully pursues a corresponding processual mode of creativity reflected in material results and images. Such a creative mode invariably also imbues direct “behaviour” in the creative process. Zhang Yu’s works titled “Fingerprints” entails the direct application by “impression” of red and black fingerprints on the Xuan paper. One fingerprint gives rise to two, two give rise to three, and eventually hundreds which give rise to tens of thousands and then hundreds of millions ... through the action or behaviour of individually impressing fingerprints onto paper, Zhang Yu acquires an appreciation and perception of the quality of the process of his own material physicality, and the quality of the materiality of the relationship between his fingerprints and the ink, colour, water and paper generates a process entailing the quality of materiality. The critical moment is reached when tens of thousands of accumulated finger prints on the paper and the quality of the paper is transformed manifesting the material change in the quality of the intermediate marks. The “Fingerprints” series



魏青吉《如何以日常的方式叙述 No. 2》  
195cmX180cm, 2001 年

Wei Qingji, *How to Narrate in a Usual Way, No. 2, 2001*

characters for “human beings” and for “prognostication”. In experimental ink painting some artists are able to unearth the material quality of ink while others succeed in bringing out the quality of ink; others focus on both colour and water. Yet Liang Quan succeeds in doing what no other artist before him has done, by excavating the quality of paper. In order to avoid the Chinese traditional habits of using paper, he succeeds in drawing out the material quality of Chinese Xuan paper by taking fine Xuan paper and scissoring it into strips of scrap paper. These he then rearranges to suit his own artistic interest, aesthetic and fondness, while at the same time applying colour and ink to the work. Although his destroyed scrap paper overturns traditional notions of the use of fine art paper, in which the quality of the paper enhances meaning, he nevertheless succeeds in conveying qualities of traditional Chinese paper never realised by earlier artists – feminine gentleness, modesty, fragility, magnanimity, delicacy, gentility, sentimentality ... clearly allowing the artist’s own qualities of life to come welling forth. Since the 1990s Liu Ziyang has devoted himself to experiments in “hard-edged language” have entailed transforming the traditional concept of a brush into a media modelling form that is a “non-

has a simplicity, purity and clean quality lacking in earlier experimental ink painting and there is none of the “conceptualisation”, “expression” and “imagined images” with which we are familiar, nor is there any of the “significance” of familiar concepts, only the fully enlightened “material sense” of intelligence itself. The creative process used in Liu Xuguang’s series of characters titled “Prognostications” (*Bu*) entails the initial re-conceptualisation of tools and materials usually employed to write or paint, and then the creative application of familiar ink together with acrylic, ceruse and ferrous rust, a material not used previously, to create a clash in the quality of materiality as he paints and writes. These conflicting materials in which disparate elements intersect and dots and lines correspond form unique icons with rich materiality that seem to be simultaneously images of the similarly shaped

brush" block. He then uses this "block"-style brush to attempt traditional artistic conception forms altering traditional perceptions of the interrelationships of the qualities of water, ink, paper and the board to express qualities that traditional artistic conception painting could not achieve – in hardness, strength, lightness, thickness and emptiness ... all in an artistic iconic language which is at once isolated, anxious, oppressive and untamed. Liu Zijian: "Suspension Scenery" Series, Quality of the medium and approach: With the printing block in the place of writing brushes, the approach departs from the "images" of brush and ink to seek expression through "printing blocks". Through varied pressure and timing, and different blocks, the control of water and ink, the "printing block" develops a distinctive language of "materiality" by indirectly yet fully exploring the potentiality of water, ink, and paper. The transmutation of the quality and nature of materials and the graphic quality: The merger and mutual absorption of the materiality of the "printing block" and that of water, ink, and paper come to express through a "hard language" the hardness, force, weight, thickness, and texture that are absent from traditional water ink painting. Zhang Jin: "Ink and Wash" Series, The quality of the medium, approach, and graphic language: In respect of "materiality", Zhang Jin's experiments show few obvious features in either medium or approach. From the graphic perspective, however, there is a remarkable contrast between urban and primitive nature, between the reality and the ideal, and between the abstract and concrete. In fact, it is a kind of soft feature of "materiality", whose inherent conflict arouses a sense of reliance on Mother Nature in the breast of all human beings. From another point of view, we have another experience of his both ordinary and extraordinary media, traditional and contemporary approaches, and all the "materiality" embodied therein. Sun Baijun: "A Different Interpretation of Life" Series, The quality of the medium, approach, and graphic language: In respect of "materiality", there is no visible departure from traditions and the works do not display any "materiality" in respects of the medium and approach. That, however, doesn't rule out the presence of "materiality". Careful observation and contemplation will help viewers to see the kind of inherent "materiality" embodied in the works, that is, an abstract manifestation of the artist's existence through his own experience. This is a very subtle context of "materiality" that corresponds to the essence of the artist's life and is filled with the pulse, tension, and dynamics of life. Wei Qingji: "Studies on Scenery Research" Series, The quality of the medium, approach, and graphic language: in relation to the quality of the medium, the combined use of painting and non-painting materials resembles the style of "pre-Pop Art". In relation to techniques and the graphic quality, the rich merger and combination of water and ink, water and tea, water and white powder, and the marks left by brushes, splashes, drips, and scratches look very like the "graffiti" of Tapies or Basquiat. The difference in the quality of materials, approaches, and techniques conveys a multitude of experiences of rich and simple, intentional and unintentional, joking and serious, and practice and experience. Such a graphic context is the language of materiality produced by the contradicting, clashing, overlapping and merging of multiple materials.

From the works of Zhang Yu, Liu Xuguang, Liang Quan and Liu Zijian we discover artists imbued with great awareness and individuality, and from the modes of perception and expression in the perspective of the quality of materiality we can discern the steady development of conceptual frameworks for experimental ink painting. In the process of experiment and indeed the entire process of development of experimental ink painting itself there are similar relationships of interaction and impetus. These perceptual forms lay the foundation for the construction of theoretical concepts, which will in turn determine unique modes of perceptual knowledge, expression and experiment. The development and evolution of any living art form necessarily requires the interaction and mutual impetus provided by these two elements, and these are the two fundamental sources of this art.

*April 2005 Tianjin*

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