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写景 写意 写情

——读张仁芝的画

邵大箴

张仁芝是近十年来在画坛受人注目的一位画家。他之所以受到人们的注意，不是靠新闻媒介的宣传和一些不负责任的批评家的吹捧“包装”，而是靠他的创作成果。他通过勤奋的劳动和默默无闻的探索，使自己的作品不断完善，使自己的个性风格不断强化，从而在艺术界逐步树立起自己的形象，受到人们的尊重。

张仁芝1962年毕业于中央美术学院国画系。虽然在校期间，他受到了李可染、叶浅予等名画家的教导，但当时艺术院校国画系的教学体制遵循的是中西融合的原则，把训练素描造型和写生放在首要位置来训练学生，对传统中国画特有的艺术情调、情趣虽有所注意，但一般重视不够。受过当时学院训练的人，写生和造型能力较强，但缺少中国画传统中固有的格调和趣味。这在人物画中有所表现，可还不十分明显，因为清代以来，传统的人物画日渐衰微，引进素描造型以振兴人物画势在必行。写实人物画的兴起，所引起的人们的满足、兴奋，使“格调”、“情趣”的不足这一缺陷暂时不为人们注意。而在山水、花鸟画，尤其在山水画中，这一矛盾却显得十分突出。中国山水画有自己的体系和审美标准，它不同于西画的风景，它是属于写意类型的，不要求像油画那样写实。它强调书法用笔，自由挥写。它要求画家认真观察自然、研究自然，从自然中获得感受与灵感，在此基础上进行创作。它也运用写生法，通过写生加强技艺，加深印象，积累素材，为创作服务。面对宣纸，中国传统山水画家是写胸中丘壑、胸中意象，而不是写真实的自然景象。当然，山水画的创作与自然景象有密切的联系，决不是凭空臆造。由于中国山水画有独特的审美要求和相当成熟的模式，习画者要对此有所认识和领悟，应该首先从临摹入手，以掌握前辈大师积累的宝贵经验，而不至于在门外不得要领地摸索、徘徊。在艺术院校中，经过正统训练的画家，要真正在传统中国画领域有所创造，必须补“传统”这门课。“传统”即包括笔墨的运用，也包括画面意境的营造。当然，也可以侧重通过借鉴西方古典绘画和现代绘画观念与经验，另辟蹊径，像林风眠、吴冠中那样（他们主要借鉴西方早期现代主义艺术）。这样说来，在现代中国山水画的创作中，“中西融合”是个很重要的课题，尤其是对受过西画教育而后走向中国画领域的人来说更是如此。在融合中，技法可以偏向“中”一些，也可以偏向“西”一些，但必须自成一格，精神必须是中国的。后一点，即“中国精神”尤为重要。

张仁芝走的是以中为主适当融合西画经验的道路。他从学院毕业之后，主要是研究传统、深入观察、研究自然和不断地作创新的尝试。他研究传统，通过观摩、临摹和体会其精神与技法；他通过不倦的写生，观察和研究自然。他的足迹遍及大江南北，积累了大量的写生稿，有些写生本身就是创作。他的画风不断在变，反映了他不满足于自己，希冀有所突破的愿望。因为他的功底深，即写实造型能力强，传统修养好，生活体验丰富，所以他的创作路子很宽。他的画有的偏重于写实，有的偏重于写意，有的有较强的表现与抽象的意味。他主要画山水，时而涉足花鸟，荷花画得尤其精彩。西画写实的痕迹在他的作品中还明显地保留着，但他努力把它们纳入中国写意画的审美规范之中。因此，他的创作愈来愈具有鲜明的传统特色。读他近期的画，也明显地看到他在努力加强画面的整体性和简练性，加强笔墨的力度与韵味。他作为成熟的艺术家，愈来愈意识到绘画创作要从生活中汲取营养，要有强烈的生活气息，但绘画创作是有别于生活，有别于客观自然的另一个世界。丹青最难写精神，写出来的这“精神”，仅仅寄寓于客观物象的，还是浅层次的；发自画家内心世界的，才是最充足、最有力量、最感动人的。当然，中国写意画是注重意象创造的艺术，不同于西画的抽象画，画家的思想、感情，他的主观世界，不是通过抽象的点、线、面来加以表现，而是通过“似与不似之间”的自然物象，用水墨媒介、笔墨技巧来加以表达的。写客观物象，写自然景色，与抒发自我的内心感情，表达自我人格是密切联系在一起的。张仁芝掌握了中国画创作的这一规律，他便游刃有余地在中西融合上施展自己的才能。西画的写实造型被他渐渐融入中国水墨的天地之中，成为中国水墨的一部分。可以这样说，张仁芝中西融合的水墨画，整体来说是中国传统的，有些细部和有些因素来自西画，而这些细部和因素又是经过他消化、吸收和改造过的。这是一种很自然的融合，不觉生硬和勉强。这大概是张仁芝不同于一般受过学院写实训练，而后虽走入中国画创作领域但始终被写实造型束缚，不能深入领会中国写意画奥妙的画家们的一大特点。当然，张仁芝在这方面还有不少路要走，但他已经有明确的方向和目标，有自己的艺术追求，并且取得了可喜的成绩。

最后想说说自由书写与“创作”的关系。近几十年来，在中国画界，人们一提起“创作”，就意味着画大画，画精心制作和繁复构图的画，逐渐地把中国写意传统的“自由书写”丢掉了。“做”画成风，“写”味减弱。我这里说的“做”还不包括那些用“特技”手段制作的画，那些我认为离中国画更远，我这里是指那些为大型展览会评委们青睐和重视的、过分雕琢的大画。而中国画之所以不同于其他民族的绘画，就在于它是通过作者运用笔墨来直接书写的，在书写中去表现出作者的心情、灵性，寄托某种思想和感情。画可以“做”，但必须是在“写”的基础之上“做”，“写”必须为主要手段。那些涂满画面、精心雕琢而忽视了书写的画，貌似宏伟有气势，但缺乏趣味，感情不真切，不耐看也不能打动读者的心灵。张仁芝在“写”与“做”之间的关系上处理得比较好，他在写生的基础上创作，不论写生还是创作，他都注重书写，他的画是有情有味有看头和经得起琢磨的。张仁芝的新作即将结集付梓，嘱我作小文，在讨论他作品的同时，我也借机说一点有关中国画的浅见，就教于张仁芝和诸位同道。

一九九八年十一月六日于北京中央美术学院

PORTRAYING LANDSCAPES

WITH SENTIMENTS AND FREEHAND BRUSHWORK

—A Review of Zhang Renzhi's Paintings

by Shao Dazhen

Zhang Renzhi is a painter who has aroused attention in the painting circle in recent 10-odd years. Such attention has not been a result of media propaganda or flattery by irresponsible critics. Instead, it has been a result of his achievements in creation. Through hard work and silent exploration, Zhang has buried himself in the continuous improvement of his works and incessant purification of his personality. As a result, he has gradually established an image of his own in the art circle and won respect from his audience.

Zhang graduated from the Traditional Chinese Painting Department of the Central Academy of Fine Arts in 1962. Although he was lucky enough to be taught by such master painters as Li Keran and Ye Qianyu, the teaching principle followed in the department at the time of his schooling was integration of the Chinese and the Western painting skills, a principle that gave top priority to sketching, modeling and painting from nature in the training of students. Although some attention had been given to the artistic appeal and taste of traditional Chinese painting, such attention was far from enough. Those who received academic training were usually strong in painting from nature and models, but lacked the appeal and taste of traditional Chinese painting. Such a situation was not so apparent in figure painting because traditional figure painting has been on the decline in China since the Qing Dynasty and there was a tendency to borrow the Western skills of sketching and modeling to invigorate figure painting in China. The satisfaction and excitement generated by realist figure painting covered up the above-said weakness from people's attention. In paintings of landscape and birds, especially in the former, however, the weakness came into full exposure. Chinese landscape painting has its unique system and aesthetic standards. Different from the Western landscape painting, Chinese landscape painting stresses vivid expression and bold outlines instead of painting realistically as in the case of an oil painting. Emphasizing unrestrained manipulation of the brush, Chinese landscape painting calls on the painter to carefully observe and study nature so as to get experience and inspiration from nature and lay the basis of artistic creation. Chinese landscape painting also uses the method of sketching from nature. It uses this method, however, mainly to improve skills, deepen impressions, and collect source materials for the purpose of artistic creation. Spreading a piece of Xuan paper, a Chinese traditional landscape painter will produce images of hills and ravines standing in his mind instead of any realistic scenes in nature. Landscape paintings are, of course, closely linked with natural scenes and are by no means imagined out of the void. Since Chinese landscape painting has aesthetic requirements and fairly well developed models of its own, beginners must first of all gain a clear understanding of these requirements and models. They will also have to start by copying so as to learn the precious experiences of their predecessors and avoid blind practice. Painters who have received orthodox training from colleges of fine arts will have to learn the lesson of 'tradition' before they can come somewhere in Chinese traditional painting. This lesson will include the manipulation of the brush and the creation of the moods of painting. They may also borrow from the ancient and modern concepts and experiences in Western painting to blaze new trails, just as in the case of Lin Fengmian and Wu Guanzhong (who have mainly learned from the early modernist art developed in Western countries). In this sense, integration of Chinese and Western painting skills is a very important topic in the creation of modern Chinese landscape paintings. This is especially true for those who have first learned the skill of Western painting and later taken up Chinese landscape painting. During the process of integration, one may be more Western or Chinese in terms of application of skills. All must, however, develop a style of their own and the spirit embodied in their works must be Chinese. The latter, namely, the "Spirit of China", is of special importance.

Zhang Renzhi has taken the road of integrating the Chinese and the Western painting experiences, laying his main focus on the former. After graduation from the Academy, he has buried himself mainly in the study of tradition, in-depth observation and study of nature, and incessant experiments with new artistic creations. In the study of tradition, he has tried to get into the essence and learn the skill by observation and copying. He has also tried to observe and study nature by sketching from nature. He has traveled throughout the country and created large quantities of sketches, of which some are artistic

creations themselves. His painting style has been changing all the time, a demonstration of his dissatisfaction with himself and his hope of new breakthroughs. With a solid foundation, namely, a strong ability in sketching and modeling, great accomplishment in tradition, and rich life experience, Zhang travels along a wide road of artistic creation. Some of his paintings are more realistic, some are more imaginative, and some are more expressive and abstract. Zhang mainly paints landscapes, and flowers and birds once in a while. He is especially good at painting lotus flowers. The traces of Western realistic painting are still clearly visible in Zhang's works. What Zhang has tried to do, however, is to bring realistic painting into line with the aesthetic standards of Chinese painting. As a result, Zhang's works have become ever more distinctive in terms of traditional features. A review of his latest works shows clearly his efforts to improve the wholeness and simplicity of the looks of his paintings and the force and taste of his brushwork. As a matured artist, he has come to the ever fuller awareness that painters must get their nutrition from life and must be full of life. Painting, however, is a world different from real life and objective nature. The most difficult thing in painting is, so to speak, to paint a kind of spirit. The 'spirit' on paper is embodied in a natural object and as such is only superficial. What comes from the inner hearts of painters will be most forceful and most impressive. Chinese freehand brushwork is, of course, an art emphasizing the creation of images. Chinese painting tells the ideas, emotions and inner minds of painters via natural objects that are neither true to life nor untrue to life, via brush and ink, and via demonstration of painting skills. This is different from Western painting which achieves expression via abstract dots, lines or faces. In Chinese painting, reproduction of objective items and natural scenes is closely linked to the expression of the inner feelings and the personality of painters. Zhang Renzhi has mastered this rule in Chinese painting, and as a result can integrate Chinese and Western painting skills with ease and fully display his painting talents. In Zhang's works, realistic painting and modeling have gradually been integrated into the domain and turned into part of Chinese landscape painting. It can be said that the landscape paintings Zhang has created by integrating Chinese and Western painting skills are of Chinese tradition as a whole, with just some details being painted with Western painting skills. Even these details, however, have been created through digestion, absorption and transformation of Western painting skills. Natural as it is, such integration never gives one the impression of farfetchedness. This is, perhaps, the major characteristic differing Zhang Renzhi from those painters who, having first received college training in realistic painting and later entered the field of Chinese painting, are still struggling in the cocoon of sketching and modeling and can never get the essence of Chinese freehand brushwork. Zhang Renshi still has a long way to go in this direction, of course. But Zhang has already chosen his direction and set up his targets. He has artistic pursuits, and has already reaped encouraging results.

Before conclusion, I would like to say something about free painting and 'creation.' In recent scores of years, there is a tendency in the Chinese painting circle to interpret 'creation' as production of major painting works or works that are produced meticulously and structured complicatedly. As a result, the tradition of 'freehand painting' in Chinese freehand brushwork has been gradually abandoned. 'Production' of works has now come into vogue, while 'painting' of works has been losing attraction. By production, I have not taken into account those works that have been produced with special tricks, works that stand, in my eye, even farther away from Chinese paintings. What I am talking about here are those produced scrupulously for major exhibitions. What differs Chinese paintings from foreign ones is that the former comes out directly from the painter's brush and ink, through which the painter expresses his or her state of mind and intelligence or tells his or her thoughts or emotions. Paintings can be produced, but they can be produced only on the basis of painting. Painting should be relied upon as the major method. Although a painting that has been delicately produced to fully occupy a piece of paper but that has neglected the skill of painting may look magnificent, it will lack appeal and be untrue in feeling. It will not stand looking, or impress the readers. Zhang Renzhi has well handled the relationship between production and painting. He creates on the basis of sketching and pays close attention to painting in both sketching and creation. His paintings appeal and stand scrutiny.

I was told to write this article when the new collection of Zhang Renzhi's works is going to the press. Taking the opportunity of reviewing his works, I have also said something about Chinese painting as a whole in the hope of getting comment from Zhang Renzhi and other colleagues.

勤于探索 不断超越

孙克

在国内中国画界,张仁芝向以勤奋多思、风格多变、不断追求、超越自我而著称。

艺术创作作为人类高级精神文化活动,其发端与归宿乃是阐发客观万象在各个艺术家心中激起的思维与情感的形象反映,自会因各人天分、经历与学养的不同而千差万别。故其基本特征是创造性,即人生视野与表现手法与别人不同方更显其价值。张仁芝从1962年走出中央美院大门进入北京画院做专业画家时起,便逐渐地显露出他在艺术上有意寻求自己的路。就性格而言,仁芝的耿直和倔犟在朋友间是共知的。但在艺术上能否挣脱学院门派与传统习俗的局限,向真正属于他个人的艺术理想步步接近呢?当然这就要看他这几十年的创作实践。如今他已为此付出大半生的艰辛跋涉而始终不改初衷,这就说明他认准了自己的奋斗目标不计得失,为追求个人的艺术理想而无怨无悔地努力,已经取得的成就正是他应得的回报。

从1953年开始,中央美术学院附中和美院国画系前后九年的绘画基础学习,带有苦行僧色彩的科班式学生生活,一方面夯实了比较坚实的艺术功底,更重要的是坚定了毕生献身艺术的信念,培养了一种内在气质。这也是五六十年代艺术青年的普遍心理特征。我们是同窗好友。今天回想起来,那时我们是那样天真烂漫,对艺术和人生充满幻想与美好憧憬。当时被认为能反映现实的人物画最走红,最有机会入选画展和出版,从而扬名画坛。但在国画系四年级,仁芝却选定山水科作为自己今后的主攻目标,这表明在他心中相对地排除了社会功利之想,更多的是对心灵中艺术殿堂的虔诚和对山川自然美的深情依恋。1962年,为毕业创作他选择去皖南山乡和黄山、齐云山写生,希望将自己课堂所学与真山真水相印证。毕业创作即以江南山川田园为主题创作一套山水组画《忆江南》。一个北方青年心目中感受到的江南是如此明媚秀丽,而画面情调又是如此空灵清新,以今日观之笔墨虽显稚嫩,但它在仁芝的山水画创作中却是有意义的一步,即从一开始就想画出在他心中所感受到的山川灵性,并努力不蹈俗辙。

美院毕业后,他幸运地被分配到当年的北京中国画院,这一步对他日后的创作生涯很是关键。众所周知,五六十年代中央美院的中国画系教学,一方面沿袭的是康有为、徐悲鸿一脉相承的以西法“改造中国画”的思想,另一方面,从解放区进城的革命美术家们从革命的“功能”角度看中国画,只有陈腐和不能反映社会现实的一面,故很自然地与徐氏教学路线合拍。加之当年的艺术教育全面照搬苏联方法,强调“素描是一切造型艺术的基础”,中国画系也不例外。李可染先生的山水画写生教学法形成并被采纳、相沿至80年代,也正是因为同总的思路相协调之故。而主要靠口传心授、临摹入手、注重程式的传统中国画教学方法在国画系迄今未被采用过。课程安排中请些院外传统派画家来系里讲座表演只是系统教学的辅助手段。今日看来,美院国画系的教学,既有注重培养学生写实能力,对景写生功力扎实之长,也有疏离传统,低估中国画美学价值,对程式体系研究不足之种种问题。

1962年夏,仁芝来到北京中国画院,正好补上传统这一课。60年代初的北京中国画院乃是本世纪京派传统画家精华荟萃之所。画院为初来的青年画家专设进修班,学习的重点是补习古代画论及临摹元明清名家之作,兼有中外美术史、诗词欣赏和书法篆刻等课程。仁芝在进修班内师从老画家秦仲文,在两年多时间内潜心临习传统山水百余幅,这对他理解和深入领会传统山水画的精神内涵与笔墨精髓获益匪浅。在临摹古画的同时研读近代山水画大师黄宾虹的作品,理清山水画优秀传统的发展脉络。记得在1963年至1964年间我们一起欣赏并讨论黄宾虹的艺术,对老前辈出神入化的笔墨意趣和高超境界赞叹不已。说明他这个阶段对传统文化精神已逐渐有所领悟,开阔了上下千年的审美视野,这些内功为他日后的山水画创新、探索,拓宽了纵横的余地。

中国画较强调程式,这不仅是千百年来中国人尊师重道的思维定式,更是由于中国画从构图章法到笔墨之皴擦点染,都有一套特定的古人总结下来的语言形式,一如京剧的唱念做打、投足举手的表演程式一样,确是需要习画者系统掌握、熟练运用的。然而掌握这些程式只是入门的方法,并不是要画家照搬或者用这些“零件”拼凑自己的作品,而应是领会精神,灵活运用。古人云,作“透网之鳞”,李可染先生所谓“打进去”复能“打出来”即此意。其次便是跳出师门自立门户的问题。中国画界历来较重视师承。但由此便很自然地派生出门派之分与门户之见,这本是艺术发展与鉴赏之常,原无可厚非,其弊端则是门派内难免风格雷同。这在中国画史中可屡屡看到,例子不胜枚举,而在美院中国画系教学中亦在所难免。以山水画科为例,五六十年代几届毕业生在以后的山水画创作中仍多以李派山水画面貌出现,能自立门户者寥寥,足见个性创作走出自己的路之为难事。由此我想,近二十年来仁芝在其山水画创作中屡屡改变画风,不断拓宽题材视野,探索新的笔墨语言,可能正是他力图挣脱思维定式的束缚之表现。

师之道,在授业解惑,在指引门径。学生在毕业后的长期创作生涯中能否做出成绩,关键还在于学生自己的心胸与才智。五六十年代培养的中国画学子,有一部分人是像张仁芝这样,先接受西画造型训练,后补中国传统绘画观念与笔墨技法这一课,这便是中西融合之路。从仁芝的学艺经历看,从他的学养气质看,他的山水画必然是以中为本兼收西画之长的风格道路。这也是由于他毕业后来到北京画院,工作环境与艺术氛围均与美院很不相同,而在此之前,在他的作品上仍可看到受李可染先生画风的影响。从70年代末,在画路上欲自辟蹊径的想法便已现端倪。

为概括仁芝的山水画艺术风貌,我粗略地将其归纳为四类:实感写生型;抽象试验型;笔墨写意型;理念淡雅型。

仁芝长于写生是同辈公认的。自70年代末期以来几乎每年都要外出写生,足迹遍及大江南北,川蜀更是多次前往。以后常画青城、峨眉、剑阁等,其作品具有观察细腻深入、富于抒情韵味与笔墨流畅、表现力丰富的特色。画家在自然面前,如诗人一般怀着虔诚热烈的赤子之情,努力寻求发现与挖掘客观世界的美,触发灵感与表现欲望,经过艺术取舍与笔墨锤炼,突现这些美感在自己画面上,完成自然界与画家的心灵感应与交融,即所谓“大块假我以文章”物与我“神迁而迹化”。故此类实感写生型作品已远非照相式的实地写生,而往往是经作者根据个人审美需要重新发现与大胆取舍,心手配合默契与娴熟的水墨画技巧而产生的和谐生动的艺术品。如《黄山人字瀑》、《双桥清音》、《岁月·涛声》及北京风光系列均属其代表作。1984年秋,他赴苏州无锡写生,日日徘徊徜徉于水乡黑瓦白墙和古典园林之间,深为其构思奇妙、人文积淀浓厚而感动。其后便以灵动多变的点线皴擦画了一系列幽深闲雅、意趣盎然的园林景物作品。他平时对京城及京郊景物亦不断观察揣摩,对常见的湖边春色、宫墙杨柳常常记于心间,出现于笔下。此种于平淡中求韵味,于平常中见功力之作,实非凡手所能。这一类北京风光作品几近百幅,亦可划归实感写生型之列。

80年代中期,仁芝曾有湘西张家界之行。此地统称武陵源,地貌山川奇谲,迥出意表,给他以新的审美启示,内心揣摩如何才能传神表现这里有如神话般的川景气象。归来后很做了些具有抽象意味的创作尝试。他想,如果着意刻画这奇特景观的山石结构,既缺少审美意味,至多画成放大的盆景而已。于是采用较随意的点线和适度的皴擦,在似不经意中组成具有抽象意味的画面,有如即兴演奏的爵士乐,在看似杂乱的线条旋律中,仍按照沙锤和鼓点的节奏有序地编织画面。这类作品显示画家在探索新的表现语言上的尝试。它们的出现与当时美术界“新潮”涌动或许不无联系,因为此类作品90年代后就不再多画,很可能是时过境迁,因之探索方向有所转移,然而其探索的苦心堪称可贵,本集中所收入此时所画“张家界系列”可以看到其画风的演变。故此类作品我称之为抽象试验型。

仁芝家学渊源,自幼受父兄指授,打下较好书法功底。中国自古就有“书画同源”之说,故有书法功底而习中国画自然便当得多。因为中国画形式语言这一块,除章法即“经营位置”外主要讲的即是笔墨问题。不论写意还是工笔,一下笔便会遇到笔力以及笔笔相应等问题。此外还有笔中有墨、墨中有笔等一切与笔墨有关的一系列形式美感与技术问题。解决好上述技法问题除每人必须的手头功夫外,关键还在个人悟性高低。由于中国画的创作媒介主要是毛笔和生熟宣纸,而画家的审美趣味主要是通过毛笔线条的轻重、疾徐、曲直以及点、划、波、折等无穷变化以传达个性,此种近乎“笔墨至上”的观念,反映了中国书画相通的抽象审美观。故自古画家多善书。而在章法即构图方面,中国画特别是山水画又有一整套独特的规律,不只讲求散点透视,有时甚至打破时空局限加以虚构。中国山水画要求画家陶泳山川,胸罗万象,千里江山被概括到尺幅之内而“搜尽奇峰打草稿”。且将山川灵气荐之于笔墨,外可赋形,内可蕴美。仁芝所画三峡、漓江、华山等大山大水,多属此类构图概括、气魄开张、笔墨沉雄、内蕴浑厚之作。此类作品我归之为笔墨写意型。

由于年岁的增长,个人阅历和心境的变化之故,仁芝自80年代中期以来,笔下时有回归古典意味之作。较早出现的如《山寺晚钟》,继之有《雪山萧寺》、《高山流水》以及唐人诗意画等等。这类作品抒发了作者高旷的胸襟与简淡超脱的笔墨情趣,沉着痛快、清新流畅,寄意高远而韵味隽永。我把这类作品称之为理念淡雅型,它显示着仁芝的山水画艺术在笔墨功力上渐入炉火纯青的境界。

进入90年代后,我发现仁芝似乎又回到了深沉冷静的思索中来,这表现在他对形式感的探索又进入一个新的层次。在注意构图形式感的同时,似乎更加关注情感意趣的表达与笔墨的洗练。这一时期的作品画面气息平和静穆、笔墨简淡。常以淡墨勾勒,细劲挺健,略加皴点,设色淡雅。整个画面似如高调摄影,平中见奇,淡中求韵,物我相忘,怡悦自然。颇有灿烂之极复归平淡之意。近一时期的作品,在总结以往写生、写意和抽象试验的基础上,着重营造出安详疏朗、可游可居的意境,表现作者对大自然的亲近、崇尚与精神上归隐山林的心灵追求。当然,总体来说,他的艺术风格始终保持着平易近人、清新俊朗、贴近自然与内美蕴藉种种特征。

在张仁芝的艺术理念中,“变”是常数。中国人历来认为宇宙万物不变者道,可变者法。宇宙万物运行的规律是不变的,而人的主观认识与表达则永远处在不断演进与深化之中。即以山水画艺术发展史为例,山水画自二李、荆、关、董、巨、刘、李、马、夏、黄、王、倪、吴……始终在变,且在变中发展前进。其实整个中国艺术史何尝不是在代代演变中向前推动发展的呢?试以今日山水画坛之总体面貌与世纪初去比较,便会发现变化之大真会令古人瞠目。当然,中国画作为与西洋艺术相对应的世界艺术两大派系,其无穷的生命力也正是蕴蓄在永不间断的变通演进中。

时光荏苒,仁芝已届花甲之年,作为一位中国画家可以说正进入成熟期、收获期。我相信他会珍惜时机,并以他一贯的勤奋、热诚与执著,向着他心目中理想的艺术高峰跋涉,大家都这样期待着。作为他的老同学老朋友,可以说差不多亲眼看着他走过这几十年艺术探索之路。近日,仁芝将他的多年劳作结集出版,嘱我为文,故谨叙于上。

EXPLORING IN DILIGENCE AND SCALING HEIGHTS OF SPLENDOR

Sun Ke

Among the traditional Chinese painters at home, Zhang Renzhi has always been known for his diligence in thinking, diversity in style and consistency in self-transcendence.

Art creation is part of man's sophisticated mental and cultural activity. It stems from and ends up in expounding the ideas stimulated by the objective world in the mind's eye of an artist and the image reflection of his or her thoughts and sentiments; hence, the aptitude vary widely with the disparity in one's talents, experience and schooling. That is why creativity represents the fundamental feature of art, while uniqueness in vision and expression is all the more valuable for an artist. Upon graduation from Central Academy of Fine Arts (CAFA) in 1962, Zhang Renzhi entered into the Beijing Studio of Traditional Chinese Paintings (BSTCP) as a professional painter. There and then he began to reveal his intention to go his own way in the field of art. As far as personal character is concerned, Renzhi is known for his straightforwardness and stubbornness among his friends. But could he or couldn't he get free from the shackles of scholarly sectarianism and traditional conventions and inch up to the ideal of art peculiar to him? Of course, that hinges on his decades of art creation practice. The very fact that he has refused to budge from his original intention after trudging a road of hardship for well over half of his lifetime shows that he is never anxious about his personal gains or losses once he has recognized the goal of his career, and that he is ready to forge ahead towards his personal ideal of art, tirelessly and uncomplainingly. The success he has won to his credit is precisely a reward well due to him.

Zhang started in 1953 his nine-year basic painting studies, first at the secondary school affiliated to CAFA, and then at the CAFA's Department of Traditional Chinese Painting (DTCP). In his virtually ascetic student life in the regular professional training, he not only acquired a good grounding in art, but more importantly, made firm his conviction to dedicate his whole life to art and fostered in him an innermost temperament. This was a psychological feature common to all youths of art in the 1950s and 1960s. I was his intimate schoolmate. Recalling the past, I find we were so naive in those days: so full of illusions and fine hopes about art and human lives. While paintings of human figures that reflect real life became most popular at the time and were considered most promising and most likely to be selected for painting exhibitions and publications, together with fame on the painting arena in their wake, Renzhi as a fourth-year DTCP student, chose the landscape painting as his life-long career. This indicated that he was relatively free from social utilitarianism. Moreover, he was devoted to the hall of art in his mind's eye and to his deep love for the natural beauty of rivers and mountains. To compose his graduation work in 1962, he opted for the southern Anhui mountainous villages and to Huangshan and Jiuhuashan Mountains for sketching, in the hope of verifying what he had learnt from classroom with the real rivers and mountains. He painted a set of landscape paintings entitled "*In Memory of the Southern Yangtze Valley*" as his graduation creation, depicting mainly the fields and gardens, rivers and mountains on the southern bank of the Yangtze. What an enchanting picture the southern Yangtze was in the mind's eye of a northern youth! And what an inspiring and refreshing mood the paintings seemed to convey! Viewed from today's perspective, the painting skill might look a bit immature, but it was indeed a significant step forward in Renzhi's landscape painting career. It showed that he wanted from the very beginning to bring out the inspiration he felt about rivers and mountains and tried his best not to follow the old rut.

Upon graduation from CAFA, he was lucky enough to be assigned to BSTCP. This was quite a crucial step towards his later creation career. As is known to all, the teaching at the CAFA's DTCP in the 1950s and 1960s inherited the idea of "transforming Chinese painting" with Western methods, the idea as handed down from Kang Youwei and Xu Beihong on the one hand. But on the other hand, the art itself was viewed as decadent and unable to reflect the reality of society in the eyes of revolutionary fine artists, who just entered the cities from the Liberated Areas and looked at traditional Chinese painting from an angle of "revolutionary utilitarianism". So they naturally matched with the teaching line of Master Xu. Furthermore, art education in those days mechanically adopted the Soviet model, stressing "sketching as the very basis for all formative art", and traditional Chinese painting was no exception. The fact that Mr. Li Keran's teaching method for sketching from still landscape took shape and being adopted until the 1980s was precisely due to its compatibility with the general guidelines in

those days. While the traditional Chinese painting teaching method, which is pattern-conscious and based mainly on oral communication and mental perception, and with imitation as the starting process, was never applied in the DTCP. In curricular arrangements, while painters of the traditional school were invited from outside the academy to give lectures and performance in the department, they were merely for show as an auxiliary means in systematic teaching. Viewed from today's perspective, the teaching method of CAFA's DTCP in those days, while admirably fostering in students an ability to sketch from real life, was, however, plagued by all sorts of problems arising from its defective estrangement from traditions, underestimation of the aesthetic values of traditional Chinese painting and inadequate research on the format system.

In the summer of 1992, Renzhi came to BSTCP, where he got the very chance to make up his lesson of tradition. In the early 1960s, BSTCP gathered a 20th-century galaxy of traditional Chinese painters of the Beijing school. It ran a postgraduate class for newly-admitted young painters, with key subjects on ancient painting theories and imitation of famous paintings from the Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties, together with supplementary courses on the history of Chinese and foreign fine arts, appreciation of Chinese poetry and Song ci as well as Chinese calligraphy and seal cutting. In his post-graduate studies, Renzhi practiced under veteran painter Qin Zhongwei. For two years and more, he dedicated himself to imitating over 100 traditional model landscape paintings, which contributed greatly to his understanding of landscape painting in terms of its connotation and brushwork quintessence. While imitating the styles of ancient paintings, he had a perusal of the modern, great master of traditional landscape painting Huang Binhong's works and managed to get a feel of the art's development pulses. I still remember the days between 1963 and 1964 when we pool our heads together to appreciate and discuss Huang Binhong's art, exclaiming beyond words for his fabulous craft and superb world of perception. This revealed he had at that stage some understanding of the essence of traditional culture and widened his aesthetic vision about works handed down through ages. Such perceptive understanding had opened up new vistas for his later exploration and creation in landscape painting.

The emphasis on stylized patterns in traditional Chinese painting stems not only from the centuries-old Chinese reverence for the teacher and his teachings, but more importantly from the fact that the art, from its rules on composition down to the usage of ink and brush at every turn, including texturing, applying, dotting and dyeing methods, was all summed up by the ancients in set vocabulary. All this is to be systematically grasped and skillfully applied by the performer, just as a Beijing Opera performer must follow the stylized patterns of performance in singing, recital, fighting and hand or foot movement. But mastery of such stylish patterns is merely a prelude to the art. It does not mean that the painter should copy them mechanically or use them as "spare-parts" to patch up his works; quite the contrary, he is to perceive the quintessence of the patterns and apply them subtly. As an ancient saying goes, the artist should behave like the "scales of fish that penetrate the net." And this is precisely what Mr. Li Keran meant when he said we should be able to "break into" in order to "break out" of the set patterns.

The next issue lies in establishing one's own school of thought after apprenticeship under a great master. Traditional Chinese painters have all along held teachers in great esteem. This naturally stems from different sects of art and sectarian biases, which are nothing extraordinary in art flourishing and appreciation, but which inevitably entail defects in the similarities of the same school. Such a phenomenon was not rare in the annals of traditional Chinese painting in which innumerable cases can be traced. And this also found expression in the teaching method of CAFA's department of traditional Chinese painting. Take for instance the section of landscape painting. Works by graduates in the 1950s and 1960s in their later career mostly appeared as landscape paintings of the Li school. Few of them can be described as of a different school. This is a convincing proof of the difficulty involved in individual originality and in going one's own way. This instills in me the idea that Renzhi was probably trying his best to shatter the fetters of thought when he repeatedly changed his style of landscape painting over the two decades, constantly opening up new visions in subject matter and exploring in search of new ink and brush language.

A teacher's mission is to impart knowledge, remove doubts and give proper guidance. Whether or not a student can attain any accomplishment in his long-term creative career after graduation depends on his frame of mind and talents. Traditional Chinese painters trained in the 1950s and 1960s like Zhang Renzhi used to receive Western training in plastic arts first and then make up the lessons on the traditional Chinese painting concept and the ink and brush skills later. That was the training method known as the blending of the Chinese and Western schools. Viewed from his schooling and temperament, Renzhi's landscape paintings are naturally a mixture of Chinese and Western styles based on the former while absorbing the quintessence of the latter. This was also due to the fact that after graduation he came to BSTCP, where he found himself in a work environment and artistic atmosphere vastly different from those in CAFA. Prior to this, his works betrayed the influence of Mr. Li Keran's style. From the late 1970s and on, he began to show the clues of breaking a new trail in his style of painting.

To summarize the artistic features of his landscape paintings, I roughly divide them into four categories: sketching from real life; experiment in the abstract; lyrical portrayal by ink and brush; and portrayal of plain and elegant ideas.

That Renzhi is adept at sketching is well recognized by his peers. Since the late 1970s, he used to make a sketching trip almost every year, leaving his footprints north and south of the Yangtze River, especially in Sichuan, which being his frequent haunt. In later years, he often portrayed Qingcheng, Emei and Jiange landscapes paintings. His works feature delicate and penetrating insights, lyrical mood, free and smooth running and great expressiveness. Confronted by the nature, the painter cherishes a strong patriotic feeling characteristic of a poet; he makes great exertions to discover and dig deep into the beauty of the objective world, and to stimulate an inspiration and desire for portrayal. Through artistic screening and perfection of painting skills, he highlighted his aesthetic feelings in his paintings, accomplishing the mental interactions between nature and the painter's feelings. This is precisely what was known as "the universe affording us all things to depict" and the physical world "linking us with God to work miraculous wonders". So, such real emotion sketches are far beyond the scope of camera-type of field sketches. They are, more often than not, graphic and harmonious works of art as a result of the painter's rediscovery and courageous choice made according to his personal aesthetic needs and through the combination of his mind, eyesight and hand movement, together with his exquisite art skills. Paintings like "*V-shaped Waterfall at Mt. Huangshan*", "*Clear Sound Wafting over the Shuangqiao Bridge on Emei Mountain*", "*The Lapse of Years and Months and the Roaring Sound of Sweeping Waves*" and the series of Beijing landscape paintings are all his masterpieces. In the fall of 1984, he went to Suzhou and Wuxi for sketching, pacing up and down and roaming leisurely every day in front of the houses with black tiles and white walls and classical gardens in the region of rivers and lakes. He was greatly moved by the wonderful ideas and profound liberal arts behind them. Later, with changeable and flexible lines and dots, textures and brush strokes, he painted a series of works on horticulture garden landscapes which being deep and serene, elegant and graceful, full of interest and charm. At ordinary times, he often observed and tried to fathom out the Beijing metropolis and suburbs, often memorized the common scenes of lakeside in the spring and of the weeping willows hanging over the palace walls. He would portray them with his brush now and then. Revealing a rhythmic mood from amidst the plain and a good grounding from amidst the common, such works of art are well beyond the reach of green and immature hands. Totalling almost a hundred, such Beijing landscape works can be categorized into sketches from genuine feelings.

In the mid-1980s, Renzhi made a trip to Zhangjiajie in western Hunan Province, called Wulingyuan in its entirety. The queer configuration of the earth's surface and fascinating rivers and mountains went far beyond his expectations and gave him so fresh and new aesthetic revelations that he racked his brains to convey a vivid and lifelike image of the fabulous landscapes. After his return, he made quite an attempt to create in the abstract. It occurred to him that if he were to focus on depicting the unique scenes of mountain rock structure, he would at the very most produce something like magnified potted landscapes devoid of any aesthetic flavor. Thereupon, he employed casual dotting lines and moderate brush stroke textures to shape abstract picturesque paintings in a seemingly unwitting man-

ner. He composed the scenery in an orderly manner just as a jazz player gave an off-hand performance to the rhythm of the drumbeats in a seemingly chaotic melody or tune. Such works were indicative of the painter's attempt at exploring a new language of expression. Their appearance might have been somewhat connected with the "new tide" surging in the fine art circles at the time, as they were thinning out later in the 1990s. This was so probably because the scenario became different with the change of the time. As a result, the probing shifted for another direction, but the painstaking explorative effort was most praiseworthy. From the "*Zhangjiajie Series*" collected in this album, one can perceive the change in the painter's style. So I would rather refer to such works as an experiment in the abstract.

Born into a scholarly family, Renzhi was tutored from childhood by his father and elder brother and had a good foundation in Chinese calligraphy. As an ancient Chinese saying goes, "Chinese calligraphy and traditional Chinese painting are of the same origin." So, to have a good grounding in the former would naturally make it much easier to go in for the latter. As far as the formative language is concerned, traditional Chinese painting focuses on brushwork except in the field of art composition, i.e. the proper locale of application. Be it freehand or fine brushwork, it involves the vigor and character of brushwork and interactions between strokes from the very beginning. Besides, there involve such technical problems as evoking ink application with brushwork and brushwork with ink application. To tackle the series of technical skills as mentioned above, apart from the expertise on hand, it all depends on the painter's own capacity of comprehension. As things stand, the creation of traditional Chinese paintings is done mainly through the medium of the brush and Xuan paper in different variety, while the personal character and aesthetic appeal of the painter are communicated mainly through the variable changes in brushwork, thin or bold, quick or slow, straight or curved as in the application of dots, strokes, waves and curves. This is almost tantamount to the concept of "brushwork above everything else", a concept which implies the compatibility between Chinese calligraphy and traditional Chinese painting in their abstract aesthetic approach. That is why almost all the traditional Chinese painters from ancient times have been adept at Chinese calligraphy. Furthermore, as far as the art of composition is concerned, there is a complete set of unique laws governing traditional Chinese painting, especially landscape painting, not only stressing transparency with scattered dots, but sometimes even breaking down the limitations of time and space to fabricate. Traditional Chinese landscape painting requires the painter to get intoxicated with the rivers and mountains, cherish everything in the universe in his mind, and grasp the thousand li mountainous landscape within one-foot space, "composing his manuscript picture encompassing all the queer peaks." On top of these, he has to commit the inspirations of the rivers and mountains to the ink and brush, lending them an outward appearance and an inward natural beauty. Renzhi's paintings on such great rivers and mountains as the Three Gorges, the Lijiang River and the Huashan Mountain, are mostly works of such a category characterized by general summation in composition, magnificence in atmosphere, boldness in brushwork and profound depth in implications. Thus, I have categorized them as lyrical portrayal.

With the advance in years, and the change of personal experience and the frame of mind, Renzhi occasionally returned to composing classical paintings from the mid-1980s. Among the earliest works in this respect was "The Evening Bell in a Mountain Temple" then followed by "*The Desolate Temple on the Snow-capped Mountain*," and "*High Mountains and Flowing Waters*," as well as some poetic paintings characteristic of the Tang Dynasty, and so on and so forth. Such works served to release the painter's lofty mind, his simple and supernatural humor in his brushwork, which was steady and penetrating, fresh and smooth, carrying lofty and lingering flavor or taste. I have categorized them into the portrayal of plain and elegant ideas, which indicated that Renzhi's landscape painting art was approaching perfection in brushwork.

Starting in early 1990s, it seemed to me that Renzhi was again thinking calmly and cool-headedly. This showed him to be entering a new stage of exploration on the format. Apart from being keen on the format in composition, he seemed to focus more on the expression of emotion and charm and to the simplicity of brushwork. With a tinge of peace, tranquillity, and simplicity, his works at this stage were often painted in pale ink, in slender yet vigorous lines, using texturing methods occasionally and apply-

ing light and elegant colors, giving a general impression of high-caliber photography. Pleasant to the eye and natural and unaffected, they are characterized by novelty in the common, a poetic appeal in the plain, and the harmonious blending of the objective and subjective worlds. They give a message that the painter intends to return to a plain life after accomplishing the height of splendor. On the basis of summing up the sketching, freehand brushwork and abstract experiment of the past, his most recent works tend to focus on building an imaginary environment of peace and solitude, good for travel and for dwelling, indicative of the painter's affinity to and admiration for nature as well as his aspiration for living a secluded life in mountains and forests. Of course, generally speaking, he has always sustained an artistic style of easy access, characterized by refreshing brightness, affinity to nature and inner beauty.

In the concept of art cherished by Zhang Renzhi, "change" is a constant. The Chinese have all long deemed the way as immutable and the rules as mutable. The laws governing the operation of all things are immutable, but man's subjective cognition and expression keeps changing and deepening all the time. Take for instance the history of development in the art of landscape painting. The ways of painting rivers and mountains have always been changing since the creation of the two Li's, the Jing, Guan, Dong, Ju, Liu, Li, Ma, Xia, Huang, Wang, Ni and Wu schools of thought....., and above all, have been advancing in the course of change. As a matter of fact, is it not true that the whole history of Chinese art was advancing in the course of evolutionary changes generations after generations? If we make a comparison between the general features of today's landscape painting with those of the art in the early 1900s, the tremendous change would be stunning to our ancients. Of course, as one of the two great world art system, traditional Chinese painting as opposed to Western art hinges its everlasting vigor precisely on its uninterrupted evolutionary change.

Time is elapsing fast. Renzhi is now 60. As a Chinese painter, he is entering a stage of maturity and yields, so to say. I believe he will cherish every opportunity to scale the new height of art he has been aspiring for, with his consistent diligence, zeal and tenacity. This is our expectation of him. As a close schoolmate and old friend of his, I can claim to have followed with close attention his decades-long explorations. Of late, Renzhi asked me to write an introduction to the album of his works accumulated over the years. So I have committed his story to the pen in the foregoing paragraphs.

Written in early winter, 1998

At the author's study in his Beijing residence



双桥清音(103.5×201cm) 1984
Clear sound wafting over
the Shuangqiao Bridge



黄山松云(56×83.5cm) 1978
Pines on Mt. Huang



玉屏峰下望莲峰(写生)(46×69cm) 1980
Peak Wanglian and Peak Yuping