

人性与爱
LI ZIJIAN
HUMANITY & LOVE
COLLECTION OF OIL PAINTINGS

李自健

油画作品集

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著 者 李自健
翻 译 李 涵 丹 惠
策划编辑 侯样祥
责任编辑 侯样祥
特邀编辑 戴树铮
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画家 李自健 ARTIST LI ZIJIAN

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李自健先生：

你具有伟大的才能。我深感欣慰：你将你的天才奉献于人类的服务。祝愿你获得更大的成功。

—— 柯菲·安南

(联合国秘书长)

一九九七年六月七日

Mr. Li Zijian:

You have a great gift and I am gratified that you are placing your talents at the service of mankind. I wish you ever greater success.

—— Kofi A. Annan

The Secretary General of the United Nations

对李自健来说，忠实于自己的美学远重于顺应某种艺术时尚，他始终在当代艺术潮流中保持着一种独立，并开拓自己的艺术道路。

我们有幸看到还有李自健这样一位画家，仍执着地以其内在的热情感应这个世界。

——丹尼斯·怀伯曼

(美国纽约著名艺术评论家)

Li has chosen rather to remain true to his own aesthetic than to follow artistic fashion. He remains indepent of the course of contemporary art and pursues his own artistic path.

In an age in which painting has grown increasingly cerebral, it is a rare pleasure to fine an artist who is unabashedly positive in his emotional response to the world.

——Dennis Wepman

(Art critic in New York)

被称作“人性与爱”，李自健的画充满了感情。他以各种表现形式，体现了挽救人类的懊恨之仁爱。他尽量追求，想把一瞬间变为永恒，用对于人类的理解表现出对东西方人民的热爱，因为他们作为人类的一部分，都有同样的目标，感受同样的寂寞和喜悦。

就这样，在李自健的画中，他发现中国人和他们所处的环境，正告诉我们宇宙中人类的共性，并用他的艺术来确认所有的这些时刻，和他自己追寻的时刻，再次肯定人性与爱的悲剧条件，包括同情和感恩。

——耶满诺耶欧·阿拉乌就

（巴西现代艺术大师，圣保罗州立美术馆馆长）

A painting full of emotion, grandiloquently, which he calls it "Humanity and Love". Remorseful humanity for rescuing the condition of Mankind in his infinity variety of manifestations. Love of who seeks to perpetuate the instant and, with it, the understanding for Mankind that, in the West as well as in the East, as part of the same species, shares the same goals, same solitude, same happiness.

This way, the painting of Li Zijian, as he discovered the Chinese man and his circumstances, it telling us also about the universal Man, to confirm with his art all these moments, and his own seeking moment, reaffirming the tragic condition of love which is compassion and obligation.

Emanoel Araujo

Famous Artist of Brazil The Director of Pinacoteca State Museum in Sao Paulo

李自健以艺术为引导而走进了人性的中心。

画家的艺术阐释了人性的本源——人性是智性的和善性的。

达·芬奇说过：伟大的爱是伟大的认识的女儿。

画家的作品揭示了：

——爱是世界秩序的核心；

——爱是人的精神最本源的推动力；

——爱是繁衍的力量，又是创造的力量。

经典写实油画的美学法则和审美理想的整合，使李自健的艺术具有了广泛的公众性。

李自健的艺术是以中国文化为母土，但他的艺术超越了地域和文化而具有了人类性。

李自健作为一个艺术家，他同时是一个爱的使者和文化的使者。

——凭 祥（中国著名艺术评论家）

Li Zijian uses art to guide him into the heart of humanity.

His art interprets the originality of humanity-wisdom and goodness.

In the words of da vinci, "great love is the daughter of great understanding."

Li's works remind us that:

——Love is the center of the world.

——Love is the most fundamental motive of the human spirit.

——Love is a creative and multiplying power.

Having incorporated the aesthetic rules and ideas of classical realistic oil paintings, Li Zijian's art has significantly widespread his public influence.

While Li Zijian's art is rooted in chinese culture, its expression of humanity has transcended geogographical and cultural boundaries.

Li Zijian is not only an artist, but also an emissary of love and culture.

Ping Xiang (Famous art critic in China)

序

著名油画家李自健的“人性与爱·李自健油画新世纪巡展”，即将在中国美术馆拉开帷幕，谨表示热烈的祝贺！

李自健在四十多年的油画创作历程中，一直执著地坚守自己的艺术信念。他以直面人生的创作态度，撷取历史和现实生活中人的生存状态加以表现，不管是悲剧性的、艰难困苦的，还是田园牧歌、静穆平和……没有浮光掠影，每幅作品都倾注着他的心力和情感。李自健以全身心的投入，用画笔营造着他独特的审美追求，表达着深刻的人道主义思想。多年来，他以“人性与爱”为主旨，创作了众多的艺术形象，或以其表现的深刻性使人内心震撼；或以其善良美好情感的传达使人如沐春风；或以其描摹人生的真实使人如在其境。李自健的作品，正是以艺术表现的真实性、深刻性，以人性与爱的呼唤，深深地感动着人们。

今天的世界，是一个艺术观念、艺术流派和艺术表现方式异彩纷呈的时代，人们的审美趋向和艺术家们秉持的美学原则都在演变。在这样的背景下，创作的浮躁心态，使得不少艺术家们丢失自我，以追赶新潮为时尚。李自健不去盲目顺应艺术时尚，而是坚持自己的艺术探索，以扎实的写实功力，以真挚感人的艺术形象，去传达人性与爱的永恒主题。

从根本上说，艺术是情感的表现，艺术以情感人。李自健的作品具有深沉的艺术感染力，其中重要的因素就是他把饱满的情感赋予其中。这种情感，来自于他对乡土、父老乡亲 and 祖国的爱。他多年来热心于公益慈善事业，也曾在汶川大地震前后九次入汶川写生，这一切都表现出一位艺术家的仁爱之心。他的感情既是个人的，同时也包涵了丰富的社会历史内容。他以这种感情融汇在自己的艺术创作中，融汇在自己塑造的艺术形象中，他的作品以真诚情感的展现而真实、生动。

李自健是一位走向世界的艺术家。十多年来，他的作品在世界上几十个国家巡回展出。今年4月从北京中国美术馆，他又开始了自己新作品和代表性作品的全国和世界多国的巡展，我相信，一定会获得圆满成功。同时，一位真正的艺术家要在坚守自身艺术的追求中探索，也要在博采众长的融汇吸收中不断提高，相信李自健会在坚守和创新中取得新成绩。

中华人民共和国文化部 副部长
中国艺术研究院 院长 王文章

2010年3月20日

PREFACE

Reknowned oil painter Li Zijian's "Humanity and Love - New Century World Tour" will open in Chinese National Art Gallery, and I wish to express my warm congratulations! Li Zi Jian, throughout the 40 years of his painting career, has been dedicated to his artistic beliefs. His creative approach to life is to capture the historic and present-day realities of life and the conditions of the human existence, whether it is tragic hardships, or the idyllic scenes of solemnity and calm... there is no skimming over the surface - each piece of his work is imbued with his devoted energy and emotion. Li Zijian wholeheartedly invests himself into his work, using the brush to create his unique aesthetic pursuit, expressing profound humanitarian thinking. Over the years, using "Humanity and Love" as the theme, Li has created a wide range of artistic images – paintings whose inner depth can shock people, whose depictions of good people and warm breezes can move people with nostalgia, or portray life in its full reality. Li Zijian's works are an artistic expression of authenticity, calling forth the spirit of "Humanity and Love" which moves viewers deeply.

Today's world is an art concept, a colorful era of art genres and artistic expression. Aesthetic trends and the aesthetic principles that artists adhere to are constantly evolving. In this context, the impetuous for creativity makes many artists lose themselves in order to catch up with the popular and in-demand. Li Zijian does not blindly conform to expectations of contemporary artistic fashions, but rather sticks to his own artistic explorations, a solid skill based in realism, along with the genuine pursuit of using image to convey the eternal theme of humanity and love.

Fundamentally speaking, art is an expression of emotion, art uses emotion to move people. Li Zijian's works have deep artistic influence, partly because he imbues them with his own sentiments, feelings which come from his love for his native soil and his fellow countrymen. Over the years he has been enthusiastic in supporting public welfare charities, and has visited the region of Wenchuan nine times, both before and after the major earthquake there, in order to capture the spirit of the region and its people into the paintings. Through all this, he has revealed an artist's sensibilities and heart. His works come from the feelings of an individual, but they also encompasses a wealth of social and historical content. His works are a manifestation of genuine emotion – true and vivid.

Li Zijian is an artist of the world. Over the course of over 10 years, he has exhibited his work in over 30 countries throughout the world. He will be showing his new works along with a retrospective of representational works in the National Art Gallery of China in Beijing in April this year, launching a new national and international tour. I believe will be a great success. A true artist must stick to their own pursuit of artistic exploration, but also simultaneously, in the eclectic fusion of absorbing influences, continuously improve, utilizing innovation to achieve new results.

The People's Republic of China Vice Minister of Culture

Wang Wenzhang

China Art Research Institute

March 20, 2010

李白健的环球之旅

——穿越国界的艺术

丹尼斯·怀伯曼

李白健环球艺术之旅的卓越表现，在许多方面都让人觉得印象深刻。首先，李白健是第一位举办全球巡回展的中国大陆画家，而且此项空前的艺术展览所涵盖的地域，跨越了六大洲中的许多国家，在历史上，我们可能很难找到一位艺术家的展览曾经巡回并穿越如此众多的文化与国界。更值得注意的是，他的艺术得到各国欣赏者一致的接受与欢迎，他的作品也在世界各个多元文化的城市，诸如巴黎、纽约、阿姆斯特丹、吉隆坡、柏林、圣保罗、开普敦、伦敦和曼谷等地，赢得了赞美与掌声。不论是联合国的秘书长、马来西亚的首相，还是荷兰、圣堡罗、新加坡和德国博物馆的馆长们，以及纽约的大学生们，都被李白健的绘画深深感动，而一致表现出他们由衷的赞赏。在他的作品中，他以一种含藏宇宙真理与超越语言和世代的声音，不分种族与时代的界限，诉说着一幕幕感人的情境。

李白健的绘画，不论是对社会的描写，或是家庭生活的表现，都能巧妙地唤起一股庞大动人的力量，传送着超越他画面与主题的深层意义。正如古往今来所有真诚的艺术，李白健的绘画作品中的主题，往往只是隐藏在画面背后更深更远的象征，那也正是这批巡回世界的作品要我们去深入思考与咀嚼，由画家倾力灌注的独特风格与国际的诉求中，所隐藏的超越画面之上的深层意义。事实上我们可以发现，在李白健所描绘的各种主题与内容中，全都围绕在巡回展的主题“人性与爱”的圆心旋转，同时“人性与爱”也像一缕主轴贯穿着，同样也传达着画家所有作品的中心信息。

由于画家所要传达的理念，具备广大包容与永恒的特质，使得他的艺术表现，自然而然地超越了时间与空间的限制，而与古典时期以来的艺术家一起弹奏古以来动人的和弦。更贴切地说，李白健的绘画技巧深受古典传统，如希腊、罗马与文艺复兴时期艺术的影响。由于坚实地注重对称、比例、和谐的线条与形式等理念，李白健作品中的结构与笔法所展现的特质，

使得他的艺术与全世界的艺术传统合流。

李白健的作品得到不同文化背景的欣赏者同声赞赏，的确是深具意义的。他赢得荷兰博物馆馆长卢尔德·史普鲁特的赞扬，正如中国的艺术家们看到作品中所蕴含的东方精神，而美国的观众也能感受到他作品中所蕴含的对新世界的意义。在卢尔德·史普鲁特先生的文章中，他从伦布朗和维米尔的角度出发，讨论李白健的作品，他说到“整体而言，他是对自我了解深刻的艺术家。他那令人难以置信的技巧，对色彩艺术感受与光彩的表现，一再提醒我们想到荷兰黄金时期或海牙十九世纪印象派的大师们的作品，在李白健的作品中融入所有荷兰人一向喜欢的绘画元素及形式”。正如所有观赏李白健作品的各国观众一般，这位荷兰艺术评论家对李白健这位中国艺术家的绘画技巧印象深刻，但是他也强调，在李白健作品中，他发现了对于身为荷兰人而言的特殊意义，主要在于李白健的作品超越了表面的技巧层面，而忠实表达了“卡尔文教派对绘画艺术必须具备某种意义与哲学内涵的主张”。

李白健对于视觉形式与风格的选择，显示出他所要传达的世界性特色，正如中国的谚语所说的“四海之内皆兄弟”，李白健以他的绘画技巧，向不同国度的人们宣示着宇宙的真理。尽管现代绘画的潮流有与忠实叙述性的视觉表现分离的倾向，李白健仍然坚定地忽视这瞬息万变的抽象与反启蒙主义的潮流，而遵循他自己的美学，倾向于直接传输他所见所感，而非单纯地只是绘画技巧优美的呈现。在李白健的作品中，不仅显示出一位训练有素的艺术家绝妙而且纯熟的绘画技巧，同时也展现出他敏锐的感性和创造力，以及理性与感性兼具的内涵。

李白健已经掌握了光影在绘画中立体表现的技巧，而且在他的作品中，也呈现了他与生俱来的对于掌握色彩与体积的天分。更具体地说，他是一位能够全然掌控材料与技巧，并且晓得如何运用它们的艺术家，但是他的目标并不在于表现他的绘

画技巧，他的作品也不在于只是掌握媒材能力的展示，他的作品也不像许多现代主义艺术家的作品一般，是任由作品反映它们自我的美学本质。在他的画布中所显现的，是一种直接叙述的风格，陈述着作品与周遭世界与观赏者的关系，在“母与子”、“美国流浪汉”和“西藏的牧羊人”等作品中，同样都融入了人性的因素，也唤起了观众相对的感受。正如荷兰博物馆馆长卢尔德·史普鲁特发现了李自健作品中能够感动荷兰人的原因，巴西国立艺术馆的馆长耶满诺耶欧·阿拉乌就，也表示出李自健作品对于巴西的观众所产生的相同影响。他指出李自健的作品“表现了对全人类的了解，反映出不论东方西方民族，都源属于人类的大家族，也都分享着彼此共同的目标，分享着相同的寂寞与快乐”。他又写道：“李自健的艺术告诉我们，什么是全体人类（Universal Man）的真谛，同时也再度阐释了人类无私与悲悯的爱的真相”。

令人感到惊讶的是，李自健运用了像是炼金术的神秘配方，将一群分散的人或物，转变成彼此紧密联系的视觉影像。这些日常生活所见的事物，超越了眼见的物质外表，而带有符号般的象征意义，同时它透露了画家意图让我们感知潜藏在事物背后的意蕴，那似乎就是在他的绘画符号中所要尝试表达的一种真实。这属于中国传统所强调的美学观念，绘画作品不仅呈现外在的自然形象，更必须抓住其中微妙的内在精神，并使其含藏的“促进人与人，人与社会彼此和谐的意涵”具体化。在李自健以他的妻子与小孩为主题所绘制的一系列光彩焕发的人物画中，不仅仅是他以作为一位丈夫与父亲的心情，所精心描绘如此令人陶醉的人物，更是他绘画技艺炉火纯青的展现。正如画中的主题人物怀抱着所有的与最初的希望，它们是一系列对人类母性光辉图像式的描述，无怪乎，它们都能够引起中国、荷兰、巴西和美国等地广大的观众一致的回响。

李自健，创作于 1992 年的《南京大屠杀》，是一部雄辩的声明。在这幅唯有毕加索《格尔尼卡》可与之相比的描绘可怖战争作品中，作者再现了 1937 年日军占领南京时的暴行。在一群血肉模糊的尸体左边，站着两个自鸣得意的日军士兵；在这个尸山的右边，则站着一名僧侣；一个孩子在成山的血肉上哭喊，他是唯一的幸存者。这幅画展示了一种绝妙的平衡，以及这平衡中撕心裂肺的寓意。

即使充满柔情的家庭生活描写的画作，主导着这次李自健的展览，仍然有数幅作品，藉由平凡无奇的人物来提升并阐述其内在的意义。我们可以在画家作品中，不断欣赏到他以间接、暗示的手法所反复提及的，启发我们有关人类在家庭与社会中彼此互动、互相依恃的主旋律。在他所描绘的《我的姐姐》、《山溪悠悠》、《冬季》、《摇篮》、《童年》和其它画作之中，李自健企图表现人类童真时代的向往，虽然这些都是独特的中国人文景像，但是它们却以含蓄的手法承载了庞大的“人性与爱”的密码，深刻地吸引观众的眼睛，也震撼着他们的心灵。

同样地，像是在《宝贝》、《祈》、《暖冬》、《高原》和《青苹果》等画作中，我们也可以得到相同的感动。画家将婴儿时期与老年时期的人物表现在同一幅画作之中，使得他的作品不可避免地，都一致传达着世代之间爱的联系。然而因为这种世代的感情的联系，在西方社会早已经逐步泯没，因此相对地，能够给予西方国家的观众直接而特别的感触。

人与人彼此心灵的互动，在以“家书”命名的一系列的画作中，也被李自健以不同的方式表现。画面显示一位手持信件正在读信的年轻妇女，或沉思、或哀愁、或喜悦的神情，我们无法得知书信中文字的内容，但在这一幅幅生命影像里，未被画家叙述的部份，唤起了观赏者浓浓的好奇，因此画家没有刻意地描写细节，反而有意地留下许多空白，但是事实上，画家

所精心描写的部份，已经足够让观赏者在画面中的主角与其心爱的伴侣，没有因为身隔两地的阻碍，而仍然能够亲密地两相联系的情境里悠游与沉思。

另外，一个存在李自健画作中的普遍要素，在于表现人类的高贵与尊严，不论在青年和老者、富人与穷人，还是城市佬与乡巴佬的身上，我们都可以体会出画家作品的这项特质。我们常可以注意到，李自健画作中的小孩常常显示出庄重的神情，可能此种神情是亚洲小孩的特色，但是却表现了一个特殊的生命意义，此种意义在于联结婴儿所象征的生命的起点到达智慧与沉静的老人阶段。在《韧》这幅作品里，画家表现一位老祖母专注于穿针的神情，在展览会场中博得了众多的赞美，如今这幅作品已经被联合国选为一九九九年国际老人年的主题印刷品，这幅作品正能够反映出相同的微妙意义。在《夕阳》中一对老夫老妻正享受着他们晚年生命中的微光，这些作品都一一展现了人类社会中性关怀的特质。

在李自健的作品里，个人的尊严往往超过种族、社会阶级与年龄的藩篱，在他的作品中，不论是对台北和湖南具备富贵气质女子的描写，或是对客家、鲁凯族、西藏人物的绘写，或是画家父亲的描绘，乃至对他艺术生涯大加鼓励与帮助的高僧星云大师肖像的表现，他都一视同仁地做出正式而且精细的创作研究。在国家官员方面，李自健曾经被委托制作出马来西亚首相马哈迪尔和联合国秘书长柯菲·安南的肖像，它们被分别悬挂在他们的办公处所或官邸，忠实地呈现出这些国际杰出人士的尊贵特质。然而在他其它作品中的那些描写中国农民与洛杉矶街头流浪汉肖像里，画家也同样地以他怜悯的胸怀，表达出蕴含其中的人性的尊严特质。事实上，在李自健的艺术里，所有的人类不分贵贱、贫富、智慧与年龄，他们都有如兄弟般的平等。

这项名之为“人性与爱”的环球巡回展，已经巡回世界多个重要国家，吸引了各阶层的人士前往观赏，并获得世界各地主要媒体的赞扬。更重要的是，李自健的艺术已经深入世界各地超过七十万人以上的心灵之中，其中不乏国家的领袖、一流艺评家与艺术家们，但是最值得关注的部份，还是广大的人群的欣赏与赞美，因为代表人类全体的各地群众，才是李自健的艺术所真正想要诠释、传布与歌颂的对像。

联合国秘书长柯菲·安南盛赞李自健的“艺术天赋”，更称许此项展览为“对你的艺术以及你的祖国的献礼”。柏林世界文化展览中心的馆长也评论说道“李自健的艺术是生动活泼的呈现与深富意味的表现力量”，并且宣布他的展览馆很高兴有此荣幸展出李自健的作品。然而，在写满几十册留言簿上，

来自各个民族、文化与各个阶层的群众，以各国语文写下的评论与感想，才是李自健艺术的最佳见证，不论小孩与老人、专家与劳工阶级等，来自各种不同的工作、语言与文化背景，他们如潮水般，写下了他们衷心的感动。

这项“人性与爱”的巡回展的行程，将包括在荷兰西法拉逊博物馆、苏富比阿姆斯特丹总部、荷兰泽斯特皇宫、华盛顿、北京、上海、长沙、广州、吉隆坡等地的展览，之后将在公元两千零一年五月于台北画下一个完美的句点。

一位洛杉矶的艺术评论家在反复观赏李自健的艺术作品之后，认为李自健拥有“照相机般的眼睛和雷射般的笔触”，而且似乎没有发生与任何当代事物矛盾或格格不入的迹象。这是一项事实，在李自健的艺术作品之中，的确与当代没有矛盾与格格不入之处，虽然他的作品中，有许多取材自生活周遭但是却非当代文明社会里的时尚题材，它们仍然是超越时间、具备永恒意义，而不受限于当代时空所制约的。同时那也是一项事实，作为一位艺术家，李自健是一个敏锐的世界观察者，但是，却不是记者所拥有的、不带感情的“照影机般的眼睛”，他投注全然的感情，并以他所拥有的图像的智能与能力，述说着他所观察的世界。他的才华不是来自锐利的眼睛，或是善于批判的心智，而是来自于一颗充满温情与关爱的心灵，就是这颗充满柔情与关怀的心灵，藉由他像“雷射般的笔触”而尽情表现。或许我们应该这样说，“人性与爱”才是他的艺术所要奉献与表达的焦点。也因为这颗充满“人性与爱”的心灵，才使得他的展览得到如潮水般广大的感动与关爱。他的展览将随着千禧年的交替而画下句点，但是不可否认地，八年来，此项带着不凡的精神信息、并且获得巨大成功的展览，将绕巡我们充满纷扰的世纪末，同时也将预先为人类标示着另一轮充满“人性与爱”精神的，新的千禧年的来临。

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● 丹尼斯·怀伯曼，美国纽约著名艺术评论家，先后于美国及欧洲出版艺术理论和艺术史著作二十余部，美国重要艺术杂志资深撰稿人。

● 译文 曾肃良，英国莱斯特大学博士、艺术家、评论家。

THE WORLD TOUR OF LI ZIJIAN: ART ACROSS FRONTIERS

Dennis Wepman

The international tour of the artwork of Li Zijian has been extraordinary in several respects. The first is its unprecedented geographical range, including six continents and many countries in which it has been the first solo exhibitions of an artist from Mainland China. There has probably been no presentation of a single artist in history that has traveled so far and crossed so many closely guarded borders. More noteworthy, however, has been the uniform warmth with which the art has been received by its international audience. It has earned plaudits in places as culturally diverse as Paris and Wollongong, Australia, Kuala Lumpur and Berlin, Sao Paulo and Cape Town, London and Bangkok. The Prime Minister of Malaysia, museum directors in the Netherlands, Singapore, and Germany, and college students in New York City have all been profoundly moved, and have expressed their feelings in almost the same words. Something in the work of Li Zijian speaks to Asian and Westerner, male and female, young and old, with a voice that crosses frontiers of language and generational in the universal accents of truth.

A painting by Li Zijian, whether it makes a specific social statement or simply illustrates a humble domestic scene, invariably evokes a powerful feeling, conveying more than the physical elements of its subject. As with any true art, the subject matter of Li's work is always emblematic of something larger and more significant than what it literally represents. It is only in examining a range of these pieces, as this traveling exhibition permits us to do, that we can see what invests the work with its distinctive character and its universal appeal. Varied as the subject matter and the themes are in the show's several self-contained series, a common thread binds it together and identifies the artist with the central message of humanity and love that provides the exhibition with its title. As these ideals are universal and timeless, the appeal of art dedicated to them is uninfluenced by the taste of any place or period, touching a chord that has vibrated since earliest antiquity. Appropriately, Li's technique too draws on a classical tradition, as relevant to our time as the art of ancient Greece and Rome

of the Renaissance. Solidly based on ideals of symmetry, proportion, and harmony of line and form, Li's composition and brushwork place him in the great tradition of world art.

It is significant that in the chorus of praise these paintings have received from viewers of all cultural backgrounds, he has won the admiration of Ruud Spruit, the director of a museum in the Netherlands. As Chinese critics have seen in Li's work an expression of the Asian spirit, and Americans have been able to identify with what speaks to the New World in his art, Mr. Spruit, writing from the land of Rembrandt and Vermeer, has written of Li, "First and for all, he is an artist who understands his profession very well. His technique is fabulous, his feeling for colours very special, the use of light reminds [us of] the masterworks of the Dutch Golden Century or the Impressionists of the School of the Hague in the 19th century....All the elements the Dutch people have loved during centuries in the art of painting, the most beloved form of art in the Netherlands, are resolved in the painting of Li Zijian." The Dutch critic is impressed by the technical mastery of the Chinese artist, as viewers from all countries are, but he remarks especially on something that is particularly meaningful to the eye of Dutch viewers. He notes the thematic element that elevates the art above the formal success of its technique, appealing, as he puts it, to the Dutch viewers' "Calvinistic need for a meaning, a philosophy in a painting."

Li's choice of visual style emphasizes the universal character of his message. As the Chinese proverb, used as the title of the country's great literary epic, states, All Men Are Brothers, and a representational technique appeals to people of all cultures for its solid connection to universal reality. Despite the modern tendencies to depart from the literal depiction of visual experience, Li has steadfastly ignored the passing trends for abstraction and obscurantism. He has followed his own aesthetic path, preferring to convey what he sees and feels directly rather than to exploit his painterly virtuosity. His work shows evidence not only of superb technical control

and workmanlike discipline—an achievement we might expect of any well-trained craftsman—but also of keen creative intelligence and a sensitivity to both the intellectual and the emotion content implicit in his material. Li has mastered the demanding skills of depicting the play of light over three-dimensional forms in a two-dimensional medium, and he reveals an innate sense of compositional planning in his distribution of color and volume. Clearly he is an artist who knows his materials and his tools and knows how to utilize them fully. But his goal is far greater than to display his technical proficiency. Li's work is not merely a demonstration of his mastery of the medium in which he works, nor is it a self-referential statement about art, like much modernist painting. The canvases in the exhibition deal directly with the subjects they depict, in their relation to the world around them and, more importantly, in their relation to us. Chinese mother and child, American social outcast, and Tibetan shepherd, all partake of a common humanity and evoke the same response. As the museum director in the Netherlands found an expression of something that moved the Dutch in this work, the director of the National Art Museum of Brazil, Emanuel Araujo, recognized something that produced the same effect on viewers from his country. Mr. Araujo notes of Li's art that it expresses an understanding of mankind that "in the West as well as in the East [is] part of the same species [and] shares the same goal, [the] same solitude, [the] same happiness." The art of Li Zijian, Mr. Araujo has written, tells us about "the universal Man...reaffirming the tragic condition of love which is compassion and obligation."

That is the marvel of Li Zijian's art, that as if by some arcane alchemy it translates a simple grouping of people and objects into a vision that is more than the sum of its separate parts. These simple everyday scenes carry a symbolic meaning beyond their physical presence and disclose the artist's intention to make us see things as more than just things but as symbols of a reality of which we may be unaware. It is an ancient precept in Chinese art that a painting must not only represent the outward form of nature but must capture and embody an inner spirit that binds humans to the world and to each other. Li's glowing portraits of his pregnant wife and of his child are not merely captivating depictions of people, meticulously executed with the devotion of a husband and father and the skill of a master craftsman. They are icons of Motherhood itself, with all the primordial

freight that subject bears, and it is not surprising that the response to them is the same in China, Holland, Brazil, and the United States.

The social realism in these powerful pieces is compelling, but in nothing has Li made so eloquent a statement as in his 1992 triptych "Massacre in Nanjing," a portrayal of the horrors of war that can be compared only to Picasso's "Guernica." Depicting an atrocity committed by the Japanese soldiers on one side and a Buddhist monk on the other. A child, crying to heaven from the apex of the mound of flesh, is the only survivor. The symmetry is perfect, the message heart-wrenching.

But even in the tender domestic scenes that predominate in this exhibition, there is always more in one of Li Zijian's paintings than meets the eye, something that illuminates and elevates the most commonplace subject. A recurrent theme in the artist's work, seldom directly expressed but implicit in many of his painting, is the human interaction on which society and the family depend. "My Sister," "Brook," "Winter," "Cradle," "Childhood," "The Field of Early Spring," and many others show children intently engaged in their won pursuits—wading in a stream, knitting, reading—accompanied by infants in their care. It is a uniquely Chinese image, distinctive to that country's culture, but it contains a larger message that applies to all humanity, conveyed with an oblique poignancy that speaks to the heart as much as to the eye.

Equally moving are the many paintings that bring together infancy and old age. "New Wish," "Praying," "A Warm Winter Day," "Plateau," and "Green Apple" all convey the bond of love and support that links the generations, containing a particularly pertinent message to the West, where that bond is so often frayed. The theme of human interaction, shared effort, and care is expressed differently and more dynamically in such paintings and "Oxcart Road," where men, women, and a child labor together to pull a heavily-laden cart out of the mud.

The theme of human interconnectedness is expressed in a different way in the series focusing on letters. All of these paintings show young women responding, pensively or joyously, to letters they hold. The worlds conveyed in these missives must remain a mystery to us, but the unspoken narratives in these slices of life, though they provoke curiosity in the viewer, need not be defined or given specific form. The artist's point is made clearly enough in the depiction of contact across space, communication with the absent loved on