

Wu Fan and His Art

# 吳凡藝術

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# 吳 凡 藝 術





是凡救世

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吳凡  
新中國  
現實主義版畫的代表性  
藝術家之一  
Wu Fan  
representative  
of realistic graphic  
art since 1949





## 作者概况

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出版有《吳凡作品選集》《吳凡版畫選》

《中國巨匠美術週刊·陳子莊》《美術雜談》等

獲國務院“在文化藝術上有突出貢獻”表彰 享受政府特殊津貼

## A Brief Introduction to Wu Fan

Wu Fan, from the ancestral home at Suining County in Sichuan Province, was born in Chongqing, China in 1923. as the first-grade painter in China. he was once the member of the Executive Council of Chinese Artist Association, member of the Executive Council of the Chinese Graphic Association and Deputy Chairman of Sichuan Branch of Chinese Artist Association. He is now the adviser of Sichuan Branch of the Chinese Artist Association, artistic adviser of Sichuan Academy of Poetry, Calligraphy and Painting, and artistic adviser of Chengdu Painting Academy. His wood-block print *Dandelion* won the Gold Medal of the World Engravings Competition at Leipzig, East Germany in 1959, and the Second Prize at the Seventh International Youth Festival of Peace and Friendship. Many of his works are collected by art galleries at home and abroad. His major publications include *Selection of Wu Fan's Paintings*, *Selected Wood-block Prints of Wu Fan*, *Chen Zizhuang: Master of Chinese Painting*, and *Random Comments on Paintings*. He was granted the special honor of the Outstanding Personnel in Culture and Arts by the State Council, People's Republic of China.









2002年黃永玉在成都吳凡家中為其畫像。(左二為吳凡夫人傅文淑,右為吳凡的三女兒吳小艾) (吳小葵 攝)

Mr. Huang Yongyu drew a portrait of Wu Fan in Wu's home in 2002. Wu Fan's wife (second from left) and his youngest daughter Wu Xiaokui (right). (The photo was taken by Wu Xiaokui.)

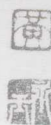




吳凡

二〇〇二年小遊成都見老友寫此

黃永玉



Brother Wu Fan  
"I met my old friend on a tour in Chengdu." Huang Yongyu.



# 寫生·寫意·意境

## ——談吳凡繪畫

● 劉驍純



《蒲公英》（水印套色木刻）  
Dandelion, 1958, water-color block print,  
34.8 × 55cm



早春（水印套色木刻）  
Early Spring, 1979, water-color block print,  
37 × 46.5cm



小站（水印套色木刻）  
At Coach Station, 1964, water-color block print,  
38 × 38.5cm

吳凡是新中國現實主義版畫的代表性藝術家之一。

新中國現實主義版畫的基本傾向是以大眾便于接受的方式批判舊社會歌頌新生活，寓教於樂地發揮為政治服務的功能，其中的優秀作品之所以不會因時代變遷而失去光彩，是因為那些藝術的作者沒有放棄藝術規律和藝術責任。吳凡在20世紀50、60年代創作的一批水印木刻版畫，如《蒲公英》、《小站》、《炊事員》、《村郵》等，既在這個主潮之中，又與主潮的一般取向大異其趣，從而豐富了新中國的現實主義版畫藝術。

吳凡水印木刻版畫最獨特之處，便是王朝聞先生曾指出的“意境”<sup>①</sup>。在新現實主義版畫甚至世界版畫中，吳凡這種取向的獨特性相當鮮明。其中最突出者為《蒲公英》（1958）。這裏有兩點需要說明。第一，吳凡的作品常被稱為小品、小情、小景、小趣味。這是表象。意境追求不計尺幅大小，也不計題材大小，朱耷的冊頁，三筆兩抹的平凡草木，其意境卻渺遠深邃、氣接寰宇。第二，情景交融不等于意境。情景交融是新中國現實主義版畫中優秀作品的一般品質，但意境追求達到《蒲公英》的程度者却并不多見。

那什麼是意境呢？

最初提出意境概念的是唐代詩人王昌齡，在《詩格》中他已經注意到了意境和情景的區別，針對詩歌品鑒，他提出了“物境”、“情境”、“意境”的“三境”概念，認為：一境“故得形似”，二境“深得其情”，三境“則得其真矣”<sup>②</sup>。由此可以看出，意是對情的提升、境是對景的提升，意境是對情景的提升。意境渾圓是比情景交融更加超然的格趣。

將王昌齡的意思引入繪畫，可用五字說《蒲公英》：簡、情、遠、靜、玄。

《蒲公英》筆法十分簡潔，畫面只描繪了一個吹蒲公英的鄉間女孩，身邊一個草籃一把鐮刀，但讓人聯想的空間卻很大。這種單純凝練而不駁雜的意象，是吸引觀者入境的前提條件。意境體驗較之情景體驗，需要更加單純凝練意象。當然，簡不是指風格上的簡體或繁體，繁需萬取一收，簡需一以總萬。吳凡傾向于一以總萬的簡體。

情，就是情景交融，它是意境的基礎要素。《蒲公英》中女孩的



動態和細節描繪，甚至飄向天空的小小蒲絨，都十分自然、恰到好處，充滿了藝術家對田園生活和純真天性真摯的眷戀之情，可以說是情真景愜。正如王國維所說：“昔人論詩詞，有景語、情語之別。不知一切景語，皆情語也。”<sup>③</sup>

與新現實主義繪畫激情燃燒的一般狀態不同，與當時大躍進年代的浮誇風更不同，《蒲公英》傾向于寧靜淡遠，這，恰是《蒲公英》意境創造的關鍵。在繪畫中，情景提升為意境的入口處在空間境象，在主體對境象的縱向空間高度投入的精神體驗，有空、虛、遠、深才有意境。意境中空間體驗的基本心理特徵是凝神寂照，有靜、幽、穆、寂才有意境。意境體驗，是由近及遠的進入、由實及虛的觀照、由有及空的忘對。談意境不談空間永遠摸不到邊際。吳凡水印木刻版畫創作大都有着婉約的詩意，《蒲公英》進而為詩情畫意賦予了空意、遠意、虛意、靜意，故以意境勝出一籌。

《蒲公英》以濃、淡、無三重色調描繪了近、中、遠三層空間。濃色少而精，愈遠愈淡愈虛，背景大面積的空白不着一筆，成功轉換了中國畫水情墨韻和計白當黑的傳統。描繪女孩和蒲絨的刀、水、形、色渾然一體，充分發揮了水印木刻特有的溫潤，正是這種微妙而又淡雅的水印韻致，使人物和背景銜接為一個整體，使白紙轉化為空間氣韻。女孩的“吹”和蒲絨的“飄”是動的，這種動類似“鳥鳴山更幽”，反襯了整個空間的靜。那空間或是薄雲、或是曉霧、或是草地、或是水塘、或是慢坡、或是平川、或是暮靄、或是晨曦、或是徐徐風、或是濛濛雨……那是曠遠清潤的淨土。

玄，是意境的核心要素，它指超世俗的、形而上的精神寄托，也就是宗炳所謂的“澄懷觀道”<sup>④</sup>。當清靜曠遠的情景被超逸高遠的精神所統攝時，意境才愈加深邃。

《蒲公英》是入世的，它所寄寓的精神與傳統山水畫寄寓的出世情懷不同，它不是不染紅塵而是眷戀生活，它不是超驗的而是經驗的。值得重視的是，吳凡對現實生活的態度既有纏綿悱惻的一面又有超曠空靈的一面，從而為入世精神罩上了一層淡泊的色彩和超邁的精神意向。正是這一層空靈，使《蒲公英》有了超脫、有了玄機、有了意境，也使《蒲公英》的內涵顯得更加不確定而難以盡

解。它最初的意義是吟咏新生活，當它走出國門時立刻顯出了和平的意義，于1959年獲第七屆世界青年和平友誼聯歡節展覽美術作品獎、德國萊比錫國際書籍藝術展覽會版畫比賽金質獎。在今天它又顯出了綠色的意義：童音、鄉音、天音，那麼讓人眷戀又那麼空濛淡遠，令人徒生對人類不斷惡化的生存環境的感懷和憂思……

齊白石主張“要寫生而後寫意，寫意而後復寫生”，以此來說明吳凡的藝術是再恰當不過了。

“文革”結束前後，吳凡創作了一些以隱喻手法揭示“文革”創傷的水印木刻版畫，如《羽》、《路邊的梅》、《早春》、《初晴》等。作品仍然散發着淡雅婉約的詩意，并以花卉、靜物、兒童生活的直觀面貌出現，從而引出了動機與效果的爭議。有的人認為作品的寓意過于晦澀，王朝聞先生則對《羽》特別是《早春》作了長篇的闡發和引申<sup>⑤</sup>。然而，寫生與寫意的融合，這些版畫與50、60年代的版畫却前後一貫。

吳凡版畫的結構方式屬西方寫生系統，包括取景方式、造型觀念、素描調子等，但卻不露痕迹地將這些西畫因素消融在了中國的水墨神韻、寫意神髓和空靈意境之中。

這種藝術特徵的形成，與吳凡的閱歷和文化素養有着密切的關係。

吳凡1923年生于重慶，祖父是前清舉人，民國時出任四川第二女子師範學校校長，父親雖轉向了商業，但家中依然有着較為豐富的書畫書籍收藏，祖父手抄本《溫李詩抄》、《遂寧吳氏族譜》，直到“文革”時期才散失，吳凡說：“那正宗趙體的書風，曾給我留下極為精工典雅的印象”<sup>⑥</sup>。高中時代，吳凡越來越多地受到了新文化的沐浴和新思想的啟蒙，抗日救亡的熱情也越來越高漲。1940年，國立藝專（由北平國立藝專和杭州國立藝專合併）內遷到重慶，1944年吳凡報名應試，為了用畫筆更直接地宣傳民主和抗日，他想學西畫，但由于缺乏素描訓練的基礎，他以優異成績考入了不考素描的國畫科，在校期間曾得到李可染、潘天壽等老師的親授。1946年學校回遷杭州後他轉學西畫，直到1948年畢業。在這種雙重文化的沐浴下，吳凡在繪畫上逐漸形成了中西融合的文化結構。

50、60年代，吳凡進入了水印木刻版畫創作的高潮期，他當時



既接受新現實主義的創作思想，又越來越迷戀傳統繪畫的詩意和意境。據吳凡回憶，1963年他參觀成渝兩地的一個繪畫聯展，展覽中陳子莊的水墨畫藝術令他十分感動，他從此開始了與陳子莊的交往。對陳子莊水墨畫的感動，正是他在版畫創作中重新發現傳統的內在需求的外部投射。陳子莊的畫很講求傳統的功力和意境，既有田園的生趣又有文人畫的淡泊和飄逸。他不但畫畫，也搞文學創作，還在一個寺廟裏學習武功，這樣的人在那個政治運動不斷升溫的年代生活際遇的窘迫是可想而知的。正像創作不為世風所動而固執己見一樣，吳凡與陳子莊的交往也是不為世風所動而固執己見，並在60年代就開始推介陳子莊的藝術。

改革開放不僅是對世界的開放也是對自己傳統的開放。80年代，隨着社會的改革開放，人們突然發現了已經離世(1976)的陳子莊，同時也發現了吳凡與陳子莊的交往、吳凡對陳子莊藝術的推介。應社會之需，吳凡後來竟寫了十餘篇評介陳子莊的文章，並為臺北錦綉出版公司編著了專書《中國巨匠美術週刊·陳子莊》(1997)。

吳凡曾說過：“我喜愛八大的奇崛冷峻，石濤的淋漓自然，吳昌碩的凝重渾厚，齊白石的簡練清新，黃賓虹的樸茂華滋，潘天壽的闊大雄奇，陳子莊的靈宕天真。”<sup>①</sup> 他與陳子莊的特殊交往，便集中體現了他對中國傳統文化熱愛和理解的深度。如此，他的版畫在寫生中滲透着濃鬱的中國寫意精神就不足為怪了。

吳凡的速寫、書法和水墨畫，其風神趣韻與他的版畫一脈相承。比之水墨畫和速寫，我更喜歡他散逸、從容、自然、個性鮮明的書法，但我對書法研究不專，因此只談他的畫。

他的速寫，我最喜歡他1972年畫的一批農村人物寫生，如《在安順糧站》、《背煤的農民》、《董春娃》、《戴才娃》、《撈浮萍的孩子》等。憑我的直覺，似乎50、60年代是他的版畫高峰，70年代是他的速寫高峰，80、90年代是他的書法和水墨畫高峰。這些速寫有些像茹柯夫的戰地速寫，瀟灑、隨意、簡約、準確、傳神，但詩意、趣韻、鄉土氣息、筆法質樸靈動、大巧若拙等方面，則吳凡過之。所謂大巧若拙，在吳凡的速寫中主要表現在筆法上。茹柯夫筆法熟、率、巧，這極易引起初學者的仰慕，但中西繪畫都有一個更高的藝術境界——真。石濤講“無法而法”，水墨畫論講“熟後生”，都是在警戒對熟

練技法的迷失。倪雲林講“逸筆草草”，他不是為了“草”而是為了超越能品達到“逸”。這些說法的基本意思都指向“真”：一是指向藝術家人格境界的質樸率真，二是指向性情的真實流露。吳凡速寫的筆法看似拙、草、無法、隨意，却很確切地表達了對象形神和畫家性靈，因此使他的速寫帶上了寫意因素。

吳凡的水墨畫溫潤、恬淡、自如、空靈，明顯受了陳子莊的一些影響，其中最有個性的作品還是融合了寫生和寫意的作品，如《冬之晨》、《秋日藕田》、《落花無言》、《清明》、《此處亦有五柳宅》等。這些畫中沒有從《芥子園畫譜》中移來的造型程式，基本結構屬西畫寫生的取景方式，造型是速寫基礎上的意象化，勾皴點染的方式是速寫筆法與傳統筆墨的結合。如果說他的速寫在筆法上有寫意因素，那他的水墨畫則在各個方面都以寫意性融化了寫生性，《蒲公英》對意境、詩意、筆意墨韻的追求在吳凡的水墨畫中得到了更自由的實現。對吳凡的藝術來說，重要的不是中西融合，不是寫生和寫意融合，而是吳凡特殊的創造性的融合方式，以及意境達到的深度。

2004年7月 北京

<sup>①</sup> 王朝聞《自有我在——序〈吳凡版畫選集〉》。見王朝聞《再再探索》，世界知識出版社，第一版，1983年，第8頁。

<sup>②</sup> 王昌齡《詩格》：“詩有三境：一曰物境。欲為山水詩，則張泉石雲峰之境，極麗絕秀者，神之于心，處身于境，視境于心，瑩然掌中，然後用思，了然境象，故得形似；二曰情境。娛樂愁怨皆張于意而處于身，然後馳思，深得其情；三曰意境。亦張之于意而思之于心，則得其真矣。”見郭紹虞主編《中國歷代文論選·第二冊》，上海古籍出版社，第1版，1979年，第88頁。

<sup>③</sup> 王國維《人間詞語》。見《蕙風詞語·人間詞語》，人民文學出版社，第1版第4次印刷，1982年，第225頁。

<sup>④</sup> 見張彥遠《歷代名畫記》，人民美術出版社，第1版，1963年，第130頁。

<sup>⑤</sup> 見王朝聞《再再探索》第1—26頁。

<sup>⑥</sup> 吳凡《美術雜談》，天地出版社，第1版，1963年，第130頁。

<sup>⑦</sup> 引自王朝聞《再再探索》第2頁。



## Painting from Life, Freehand Brushwork and Artistic Realm: On Wu Fan's Art

● Liu Xiao-chun



雨渡 (套色木刻)  
Ferry in the Rain, 1957, colored block print, 22.5 × 15.5cm



羽 (水印套色木刻)  
Feathers, 1976, water-color block print, 35.4 × 46cm



山雨欲来 (套色木刻)  
Mountain Rain is Coming, 1956, colored block print, 28.5 × 47cm

Wu Fan is one of the representatives of realistic graphic art since 1949.

The mainstream of realistic graphic art after 1949 is to denounce the seamy sides of the old society and to praise the life of the new in ways that are popular among the masses, and to serve the politics by education in enjoyment. Yet there are some excellent works that enjoy lasting values, for the artists do abide by the laws of art and do not give up their responsibility as artists. A number of water-color block prints Wu Fan created in the 50's and 60's in the 20th century, such as *Dandelion*, *Coach Station*, *A Girl Cook*, and *A Village Post Woman*, are within and yet deviate from the mainstream, enriching the Chinese realistic graphic art.

The unique feature of Wu Fan's watercolor block prints is, as Mr. Wang Chaowen once pointed out, his "artistic realm,"<sup>①</sup> which is conspicuous among the neo-realistic graphic art in China and even in the graphic art of the world. *Dandelion* (1958) is the outstanding example.

Two points need to be mentioned. First, Wu Fan's works are frequently regarded as kind of sketches, feelings, scenes or interest of common people. This impression is, however, superficial. The pursuit of artistic realm is confined neither by the sizes of the paintings nor by the topics of the work. The paintings by Zhu Da, though of trees and grasses delineated with freehand brushwork and in bold outlines, were profound in artistic conceptions. Second, harmoniously fusing of feelings and settings, the main qualities of the fine works of neo-realistic graphic art, does not necessarily lead to lofty artistic realm. Very few neo-realistic works could match *Dandelion* in this respect.

Then, what is artistic realm.

The term was first put forward by Wang Changling, a poet in Tang Dynasty. In his writing *On Poetry Realm*, he noted the distinction between realm and inscape. In appreciation of poetry, he put forth the three concepts: landscape (wu jing), inscape (qing jing) and realm (yi jing), maintaining the poetry of the lower order was a vivid description of nature, that of the second order was a vivid description of the emotion, and that of the highest order was to reveal the truth.<sup>②</sup> Therefore, emotion evolves from the scene, while the realm is superior to, and evolves from the vivid description of emotion.



Applying Wang's notion to painting, we could summarize the unique features of *Dandelion* by five Chinese characters: simplification, emotion, remoteness, tranquility and transcendence.

*Dandelion* is simple in contents and style. A country girl is blowing a dandelion, with only a basket and a sickle by her side; yet it could stimulate unconfinable imaginations. The simple and concise image is the pre-condition of attracting the audience. The experience of the artistic realm demands a simpler and more concise image than the experience of mood. Of course, simplification is not the matter of style. Multiplicity needs many to explain one; simplification needs one to represent many. Wu Fan is inclined for simplification.

Mood, as feeling and setting perfectly blended, is essential to the artistic realm. In *Dandelion*, the gestures and detailed description, including the little seeds flying in the sky, are true to life, revealing the artist's longing for the pastoral life and his naiveté. The feeling is true and setting pleasant. Wang Guowei once said, "Scholars in the past, when talking about poetry, distinguished the delineation of landscape from that of the feeling; actually, the first is always the delineation of feeling as well."<sup>③</sup>

Different from the neo-realistic paintings that are generally full of radical passions, and far different from the exaggerated paintings produced during the period of so called Big Leap Forward, *Dandelion* is tranquil and detached. This is the key of Wu Fan's originality. The mood in painting evolves into artistic realm is by means of the image of space. Only the spiritual experience of the painter is the void, the empty, the remote and the profound, could the artistic realm reveal itself in the painting. The essential psychological features of the experience of realm are displayed in the meditation in tranquility. It will reveal itself in tranquility, serenity, solemnity and loneliness. Experience of the realm is from near to far, from false to true and from solid to void. It is a wrong and fruitless approach to pursuit of the realm without touching on the space. The watercolor block prints by Wu Fan are in the main graceful and restrained. *Dandelion* adds the meanings of the void, the remote, the empty and the tranquil to the poetic flavor, thus it is superior in its artistic realm.

*Dandelion* delineates the three spaces of the near, the middle and the distant by means of different shades of color and the

whiteness. The thick strokes are few; they become thinner from near to far, and the huge background is devoid of any brushwork but whiteness. It is a successful transformation of the traditional Chinese ink painting in deploying the black and white. The cutting, the shapes and the colors in delineating the little girl and the dandelion seeds are blended into a harmonious whole and bring into full play the unique gentleness of the watercolor block prints. The delicate and graceful effects turn the character and the setting into an integral whole, and the blank paper into a space of flavor. The blowing of the girl and the flying of the dandelion seeds are in motion, which strike a sharp contrast with the motionless space, just as the poem says, "Mountains and woods seem calmer still with birds' song and cicadas' trill." The space could be interpreted as thin clouds, the fog at dawn, the meadow, the pond, the inclined slope, the plain, the haze at dusk, the light at dawn, the gentle breeze or drizzling. It is a pure land fresh and moist.

Transcendence is the essential factor of the artistic realm. It is the metaphysical spirit that transcends worldly cares, or as Zong Bing said, "meditation with a clear and pure heart."<sup>④</sup> When the tranquil and remote scene is subordinated to the lofty spirit, the artistic realm gains its profundity.

Different from the traditional Chinese paintings of landscape that are above the worldly affairs, *Dandelion* displays a spirit of going into the world; it is not far from the life but longing for the life. It is not transcendental but empirical. It is worth notice that Wu Fan is both interested in and detached from the reality, which adds the flavor of indifference. It is the indifference and detachment that enable *Dandelion* to be unconventional, profound in implications and superior in artistic realm, as well as elusive and to defy any ultimate interpretation. It was regarded originally as a song in praise of a new life; however, it was interpreted as the symbol of peace right after it went abroad. It won a prize on the art exhibition at the Seventh World Youth Festival of Peace and Friendship and the Gold Medal of Graphic Art at the International Exhibition of Books and Art in Leipzig. Today, it is found to be significant in the environment protection. It is the voice of the child, the voice of the country and the voice of nature that are so attractive and yet so remote and faint. It enables people to reflect and ponder about the increasingly deteriorated conditions of human beings.



Qi Baishi maintained, "Sketch from nature before freehand brushwork, and then sketch from nature again." It is especially true for Wu Fan's Art.

About at the end of the Cultural Revolution, Wu Fan created some watercolor block prints to depict the damage and wound of the turmoil in a metaphoric way, such as *Feathers*, *Plum Blossoms by the Road*, *Early Spring* and *Just Clearing Up*. These works of art, with flowers, still life and children as the main objects and being graceful and restrained, brought about a dispute about the artists' intention and effects of the art. Some argued that the moral messages of the works were too obscure; whereas Mr. Wang Chaowen wrote extensively to expound the significance of *Feathers* and *Early Spring*.<sup>⑤</sup> What is consistent in these works and those created in the 50's and 60's is the harmonious combination of sketch from nature and freehand brushwork.

Wu Fan's graphic art is of western style in structure, including the way of finding a view, modeling and ways of sketch that are melt in the charms of Chinese ink painting, of the freehand brushwork and of the flexibility and unpredictability.

These artistic characteristics are closely attributive to Wu Fan's experience and artistic cultivation.

Wu Fan was born in Chongqing, 1923. His grandfather, a successful candidate in the imperial examinations at the provincial level in Qing dynasty, was once the schoolmaster of the Second Women Normal School in Sichuan. Although his father turned to do business, his family kept an abundance of collection of paintings, calligraphy and books. His grandfather's *Hand-copied Poems of Wen Tingjun and Li Shangyin* and *The Pedigree of Wu Family in Suining County* were preserved until the Cultural Revolution. Wu Fan said, "the calligraphy is of authentic writing style of Zhao Mengfu, whose delicacy and elegance left me a deep impression."<sup>⑥</sup> In high school, Wu Fan, being more and more enlightened by the new culture and new thoughts, became increasingly enthusiastic in the struggle against Japanese invasion. In 1940, the National Art Academy (merged on the basis of former Peking National Art Academy and Hangzhou National Art Academy) moved to Chongqing. Wu Fan took the entrance examination in 1944. In order to play a better role in popularizing the thought of democracy and in the struggle against Japanese invasion with his paintbrush, Wu Fan wanted to

learn Western Painting. As he lacked the basic training in sketches, he entered the Department of Traditional Chinese Painting with good grades, where he was under the direct instructions from those famous professors such as Pan Tianshou and Li Keran. After moving back to Hangzhou with the National Art Academy in 1946, Wu Fan transferred to study in the Department of Western Painting until graduation in 1948. Under the influences from both the Eastern and Western cultures, Wu Fan gradually generated his artistic belief that the Chinese tradition should be strengthened by making use of the Western one.

In the 50s and 60s, Wu Fan reached his climax of watercolor wood-block prints. He was, on the one hand, under the influence of neo-realistic thoughts on arts and became more and more fascinated by the poetic flavor and artistic realm of Chinese traditional paintings on the other hand. According to Wu Fan's memory, he was deeply touched by Chen Zizhuang's art in the painting exhibition jointly sponsored by artists in Chengdu and Chongqing in 1963, and that was the beginning of their friendship. His appreciation of Chen's art is the reflection of his inner need for Chinese tradition. Chen paid great attention to the skill and artistic realm. His works contain not only rural sentiments but also the elegance and aloofness of literati paintings. Besides painting, Chen Zizhuang was engaged in literary creation and even exercised Kongfu in a temple. It is not difficult to image the pinch brought to such a man by the disastrous political campaigns in those years. Just like the unswerving belief against philistinism in artistic creation, the friendship between Wu Fan and Chen Zizhuang was enduring before worldly prejudices. Wu Fan began to introduce and recommend Chen Zizhuang's paintings in the 60s.

Opening up to the outside world and reform brought a new perspective to our own tradition. With social development in the 80's, people came to realize the artistic treasure brought by Chen Zizhuang, who passed away in 1976. In the meantime, Wu Fan's recommendation for Chen's artistic works and their friendship also received people's attention. To meet the need of society, Wu Fan, in the following years, wrote a dozen articles commenting on Chen Zizhuang and his works, and compiled the book *Chinese Great Masters of Fine Arts Weekly: Chen Zizhuang*, which was published by Jinxiu Publishing House in Taipei, 1997.



Wu Fan once said, "I love the prominence and severity of Bada Shanren, freedom and naturalness of Shitao, dignity and honesty of Wu Changshuo, simplicity and freshness of Qi Baishi, sincerity and flourish of Huang Binhong, majesty and imposing of Pan Tianshou and elegance and innocence of Chen Zizhuang."<sup>①</sup> His intimate relation with Chen Zizhuang reveals his deep love for and profound understanding of Chinese culture. It is no wonder that his graphic art is permeated with strong Chinese spirit of vivid expression and bold outline.

The sketches, calligraphy and wash paintings of Wu Fan are in consistence with his graphic art in style and taste. Compared with his wash paintings and sketches, I love better his calligraphy, which is elegant, easy, natural and with unique characteristics. As I am no expert in calligraphy, I would only discuss his paintings.

Among his sketches, I love best those he drew in 1972 about the country folks, such as *At the Grain Supply Center in Anshun Commune*, *A Peasant Carrying Coal*, *Boy Dong Chun*, *Boy Daicai* and *Kid Gathering the Duckweed*. By intuition, I think 50's and 60's is the climax of his graphic art, 70's his sketches and 80's and 90's his calligraphy and wash paintings. The sketches, similar to Zhukov's sketches of the battlefield, unrestrained, simple, accurate and lifelike; but Wu Fan is superior in his poetic notion, taste, local flavor, and unaffected, flexible and seemingly unskillful style. The seemingly unskillful style is reflected in his tip of drawing pencil. Zhukov is skilled, free and artful in style, which the beginners are inclined to admire. The higher realm, however, in both Chinese and Western arts is the truth. The "skill without skill" by Shitao and "Unskilled after skilled" in Chinese theory of painting both warn against blind belief in skills. Ni Yunlin, when talking about "elegantly careless", is not pursuing the careless but freedom and elegance. These art notions all emphasize the truth; first and foremost the forthright, unaffected and sincere personality of the painter and second, the overflowing of the genuine emotions. Wu Fan's sketches, appearing to be clumsy, careless, easy and without any rules to go by, truly reflect the spirits of the objects and the personality of the painter. His sketches, therefore, share the flavor of calligraphic effect.

Wu Fan's wash paintings, gentle, indifferent, easy and flexible, are obviously influenced by Chen Zizhuang. The most original are those works combining sketches from nature and freehand

brushwork, *Winter Morning*, *Lotus Field in Autumn*, *Flowers Fall in Silence*, *Qingming Festival for Mourning the Dead* and *Another House with Five Willow Trees* are the examples. The modeling is not derived from the Jieziyuan Model Paintings, but of the western way of finding a view. His modeling is crystallized in terms of images based on sketches, and his light-ink strokes and delineation are the combination of sketches and traditional brushwork. If his sketches have the calligraphic flavor of the traditional freehand brushwork, his wash paintings are, in various ways, more of freehand brushwork than sketches from nature. The artistic realm, the poetic flavor and the effect of the brushwork Wu Fan tried to pursue in *Dandelion* are achieved more at ease in his wash paintings.

The essentials of Wu Fan's art is neither the combination of the Western and the Chinese, nor the combination of sketches from nature and traditional freehand brushwork, but his original fusion and the depth of the artistic realm he has achieved in his works.

<sup>①</sup> Wang, Chaowen, "The Self in the Art: Preface to Selected Wood-block Prints by Wu Fan," in Wang, Chaowen, *Keep on Questing* (Beijing: World Knowledge Press, 1983), p.8.

<sup>②</sup> Wang, Changling said in *Realm of Poetry*, "There are three order of poetry. The basic order is the objects. When writing a poem of mountains and rivers, you have to go among the lofty mountains, watch them, enjoy them, thinking of them and learn them by heart before you could achieve resemblance of the objects. The second order is the mood. You have to experience in depth the pleasure, happiness, sadness and resentment before you turn them into a poem and achieve resemblance of the mood. The highest order is artistic realm. The resemblance of the objects and the resemblance of the mood, with your artistic cultivation, will evolve into the truth." Guo Shaoyu, ed., *Selected Literary Theories in History*, Second Volume (Shanghai: Shanghai Ancient Books Publishing House, 1979), p.88.

<sup>③</sup> Wang, Guowei, *The Poetry of This World* (Beijing: People's Literature Press, 1982), p.225.

<sup>④</sup> Zhang, Yanyuan, *Famous Paintings of Different Ages* (Beijing: People's Press of Fine Arts, 1963), p. 130.

<sup>⑤</sup> Wang Chaowen, *Keep on Questing*, pp.1-26.

<sup>⑥</sup> Wu Fan, *Random Comments on Paintings* (Beijing: Tiandi Press, 2001), p.60.

<sup>⑦</sup> Wang, Chaowen, *Keep on Questing*, p.2.