

Heterogeneous Images — About Chen Yufan's "Paintings"

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Since 2007, Chen Yufan has made a series of puzzling paintings – if those can be counted as "Paintings" - by a strange way. He calls this series "INTO ONE". There is no doubt that the most remarkable part of "INTO ONE" is just its inexplicability. Facing these non-pictorial, non-abstract works, which is made of dense dots, coming from burning incense sticks or chill wires ironing or stabbing on white clean papers or linen cloth, even those knowledgeable experts will probably ask: What hell did they draw? Why did they draw in such way?

From the visual image's point of view, Chen Yufan's "INTO ONE" series is not complicated. It's even over simple for an art topic which is lasting several years: in a long time period, "INTO ONE" are expanded around abstract lines and strange patterns which are regular, or natural, dense or sparse, parallel or crossed, like a bust, a up-side-down calyx, or a faint silhouette of certain strange objects. Some of the strange patterns are placed in a row of three or above, forming as bead curtain; some of them are placed in a group of four, gathering in a circle which is made by dense holes, forming a graceful Cross; some of them are appeared of single form, leaning on the regular bead curtains. As far as the images concerned, no matter how delicate they are, these works are like some game which is not complex. However, the sensitive viewer can feel a powerful unspeakable spirit extension and an extreme desire in self-restrain from these simple-like visual images.

The incense sticks burn out dense irregular holes on the thick papers. Around every little hole, there is some scorch ashes which is cannot be erased. This not only make the white clean paper show out a terrified scorch color, but also make the long hard period of burning process and the various imposing emotions solidify. The cold wires stab out so many dense holes on the thick papers or canvas which are covered by many layers of white acrylic. Some of these holes are regular; some are natural, without any color. The images are appeared depending on the contrast between the holes and white background. The uneven paper scraps around the hole also disclose the depressing anxious complex emotion. All these imply a strong desire of statement. However, these images which were made of traces after burning or jabbing completely are mechanical and cold, without any man-made color, without the strokes which show the humanity, even without the simplest most awkward sketch outline and depict. What those delicate images, which consist of sparse stripes and mysterious pattern, present is an air-dry mirror image, a solidified shadow, a heterogeneity world totally without human breath and heat. What the "INTO ONE" series most make people occupied are just the pure elegant visual images, strong depressed but sensitive psychological experience, the peculiar combination and intense contrast of the lacking human warmth heterogeneity sense.

There is a kind of inherent connection between Chen Yufan's paintings and his installations. Also in 2007, Chen Yufan started to work with his brother Chen Yujun to do installations. First, they built a "Mu Lan Stream", a river in their hometown Fujian. For them, this is not just a river in hometown. It is also a flowing vein containing religious ideas of "transfer" and running through "Man" and "Geography". They explained the motive of working together to do installation: "Min Zhong Chinese culture gave us many special memories of our childhood..... We were very curious to the "outsiders" and "their living environment". How big different and connection between the world consisting of scattered pieces and our real life? Those regional and cultural differences cause our psychological barriers. These are our original source of creation..... We wanted to organize the family memory pieces and some other emotional entanglement which cannot explain." To Chen Yufan, the special family memories are not only the original source of his installations, the original source of all his works, more importantly, they are original source of a unique mental experience. It gives him the unique feeling and perception to the reality in sustained collision with real life.

In the series "INTO ONE", those "psychological barriers caused by regional and cultural differences" were transformed into the barriers between the mysterious Min Zhong Chinese culture and modern society, and also a call to his warm childhood memory heterogeneity. The childhood full of Ming Zhong Chinese culture can be seen clearly in his "INTO ONE" series. No matter those sparse Mukta-hara-like stripes, the quite mysterious patterns, or the combination style of stripes and patterns, all have relation to his unique childhood memory. Chen Yufan put his sensitive inside feelings into those stripes silently by the irregular change of the lines which was made of tiny holes. The stripe is changing magically. Those decorative stripes contains the gentle breeze vaguely; contains soft floating waves; contains ancient objects' illusion, contains his imagine of the lost civilization. In his original works, Chen Yufan made his works connect with his family memories by burning incense directly. But later, as the topic is deeper, Chen Yufan more concerned about a kind of unexplainable double barriers: on the one hand, because of the cognition of this hard real world, the mysterious childhood memories were sealed in the deep heart as the private personal experience; on the other hand, the emotional memories and imagination of Ming Zhong Chinese culture made him not blend to the hard cold real world psychologically. Just because of this complex and contradictory psychological experience, the mysterious childhood memories are presented as a transcendent advanced-interest language feel which is embodying the lack-humanity real world, and shows a heterogeneous pale shadow.

The "Model Room" and "Chuang-Tzu" Series which started in 2008 can be seen as the expansion of "INTO ONE" Series. They are Chen Yufan's interpretation to contemporary living condition by his unique feelings. In <Model Room No.1>, he used simplest geometries to construct a monotone, even daunting maze-like interior space. <Model Room No.2> used more natural lines to simulate a same monotone and maze-like city blue print. Same with "INTO ONE" series, "Model Room" series is also

presenting solidified lifeless heterogeneous images. But the difference is that “INTO ONE” series is a kind of complex review to the more natural and mysterious lost culture while the “Model Room” series is the psychological experience to contemporary living condition. “Chuang-Tzu” series is Chen Yufan’s personal explanation to the book <Chuang-Tzu>. The result of interpretation is the Braille-like paints: on the clean papers, he jabs out rows of holes, like rows of letters. Chen Yufan’s “Chuang-Tzu” is like a sealed book. Nobody can work out the connection between the Braille-like holes and the book <Chuang-Tzu>. However, this is just his interpretation. What he wants to tell people is not the book itself, but the situation of this book. It was constantly interpreted, deformed and distorted during the process, and lost its original lively purpose. In fact, Chen Yufan’s interpretation is anti-interpretation. And the one hiding behind this extreme interpretation method is the think of contemporary cultural dilemma: the traditional culture is turning into dead specimen in over-interpretation while we are living in a cultural environment which is constituted by reckless interpretation of classic with ulterior motives. “Model Room” series is the description of the growing physical life by human today. “Chuang-Tzu” is faced to the spirit scene in society today. They, with “INTO ONE” series, from different perspectives, show out the unique feelings and complex unspeakable mind experiences to the disappearing past and the real world, of a contemporary people who is full of family memories and childhood imagination.