

The Symbol Lao Sheng

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In our class, we consider Sheng Tianhong as the symbol of our student times. And one of his foreign alumni said: "He is hot tempered, autocratic, all because you boosted him so much."

In fact, we had misunderstood him before. And we considered him as a symbol subsequently filled with emotion.

Actually, hot temper, autocratic style cannot be boosted out. He already has. After two decades of time, having a variety of trying, I discovered those are virtue.

When I first met Lao Sheng in 1989, some teachers were talking about the genius in our class who was full of aptitude. He comes from Hang Zhou. But not like a southern people, in the crowd, Lao Sheng was always showing a kind of status of lonely people in wild grassland.

He should be from further north place.

We should be the last generation growing in big family? Parents don't very care child's inner hearts. We always educated among each other. We grew among cousins, neighbors or classmates, and not a spoiled kid anymore after our age of four. We were precocious with adult self-awareness.

A four or five year's old child goes to the house of neighbor or classmate first time. It's not imaginable how decent and thoughtful he is. That's because we are not going to play but "being a guest" in our consciousness.

Lao Sheng clearly doesn't belong to this system. He came to the capital, and survived from his junior middle school miraculously. But the capital is over experienced, so that Lao Sheng was striving with power but in low-key.

I once gave him a sketch of himself in our first grade in middle school. I got his praise. At that time, both of us like Cézanne. I think what I got were all from the experience of learning Cézanne. But Lao Sheng immediately fell out: "I don't agree!"

Then he analyzed the different between Cézanne and me for a long time.

I can remember until now. It's no hard to imagine how strong that thing stimulated me!

His words hurt many people at that time. He always sang "the ground beneath my feet, the world under my control, who would dare to talk more?"

He had another song "The Orphan of Asia Crying in the Wind", which was also brought from South. After these songs activated everyone's protection awareness, he sang less, and seemed lose the interest of learning new songs in North.

Then, he went to Germany for further study. That is a solemn place!

He was a serious person originally – I never thought about that, cause of the busy times.

Just because he is serious, there were many things. In my class, almost everyone had a deep-seated memory with Lao Sheng. Just like shepherd walking in wild grass, Lao Sheng also has his own wild world.

After he came from Germany, his language is logic, with lower voice and aging eyesight. But in our reunion of classmates, he suddenly showed a kind of childlike state of happiness, very closed. I got touched: He likes our class so much, which we didn't understand him.

I cut ties with art for a long time, and have no idea with how to criticize an artwork. Seeing Lao Sheng's work, is actually viewing my old self. The advantage of in forty's is that we can see back to the things in our youth. Which is already left? Which is growing up?

The teacher of our class in grade one said that his feeling of art is good. That feeling is gift. When we draw western sketches, the ones with good mind always have space or hardness in the paintings, while the ones with good feeling have confidence in colors. Lao Sheng treats the shape as the fox treats the winter food. He always retains some original feelings intentionally so that we can find a little humble taste when it finished.

Painting plaster model as landscape must have some thoughts besides the target. I still remember his plaster images which got high score. And an artistic prematurity girl used "sad" to described his work. I was surprised. There is an art world with totally upside down concepts outside our own circle.

It is not easy to enter the second world, and is often violated by the first world.

Lao Sheng's "Random", in my opinion, is his most wonderful things. We cannot learn, only just see. This quality is just like blood, existing in his works. Pure, humble but light. Sometimes with strength like a child, sometimes with carefulness like holding breath --- difficult to practice.

The deeper level of vision appreciation is tactile appreciation. When we see his unchanged brush strokes in his paintings, what we should apperceive is the strength of his wrist when he is painting. The brushwork is flying.

When we study art, brushstrokes is the one what we define a good work. But now, the point is concept. What we look at is not a work, but the idea.

Unfortunately, Lao Sheng broke his right hand. Yan Peng and I took Sheng to the hospital and suture. Soon later, I also scratched my fingers. But the intern nurse was so anxious that she pour the anesthetic to my wound directly. To apologize, she gave me two tickets of Forbidden City.

Several classmates hurt the hands, which foreshadowed the their future of art.

There is another thing between Lao Sheng and I. Lao Sheng studies Shi Tao. He is always painting plaster model while reading some criticism of Shi Tao. There are variety types of Shi Tao, real or fake, in different status, young or elder. I cannot stand the frivolity in some bad works of Shi Tao. For those good ones, they always recall Lao Sheng to me. Some years later, I saw Shi Tao's work in National Palace Museum in Taipei. It has a special talent.

The other name of Shi Tao is "Da Di Zi". One day, Lao Sheng suddenly explained the meaning of "Di" to me. And then I know that the life can be cleaned. I am very lucky to have a friend who enlighten early.

I cannot learn Shi Tao because of the talent limited. The other day, Lao Sheng took a magazine. There are four oil paintings images of Wu Dayu who died in 1988. They are really good.

This is the best friendship Lao Sheng gave me. When I was in other parts of country in 2006, I bought Wu Dayu's first catalogue accidentally. I read it almost for four hours, and everything is balanced.

Lao Sheng's paintings contain the spirit of Wu Dayu, which is never gone.