

When I visited Xinji's studio ten years ago, he was working on a series paintings of "god and genie", which mixed the reality, history and mythology together to embody something about his free mind. Born in Shangqiu, Henan Province, Shi Xinji said that he was a big fan of swordsmen films since little boy, "chivalrous" or "brotherhood" were what he pursued. Later when he studied in printmaking department of CAFA, he stuck on Chen Laolian's in late Ming Dynasty, New Year pictures from Zhuxian town in Qing, and stories in "The Classic of Mountains and Seas" as well; thus all those "fairies, spirits, demons and monsters" live in his mind.

Same as most seniors from his department, Shi Xinji rarely created printmaking after his graduation, but turned to oil painting or new media. After a few tries, He decide on oil painting as his further creating media, one reason is his passion to planar visual, and the other one is that he is fascinated in the ease of coloring made. The persistence of oil painting now has already become his "daily practice". "Painting to him is more like a daily lesson, I can truly feel my existence only while I'm immersing in studio." Shi Xinji said.

I should say painting is certainly a "tough job" now. In the current age of Conceptual Art and New Media emerging, painting has to face the challenge from either "classic" or any kind of new art style. Well, Shi Xinji's persistence is more rooted from his inwardness; a kind of "way of practice", but it is also including his own understanding to the inner rules of art. Shi Xinji first realized that painting has its "classical quality". Its tradition is extensive and profound enough, it is the value-system for reference of contemporary art; moreover, he admires the individuation of painting, which is rare in reality: it inspires individual to "live in solitude" and "seek independence".

In fact, painting makes Shi Xinji out of the impetuous reality consciously, but thus more close to the truth of nature. Shi Xinji loves the life in "countryside" since his schooldays, however those works were more likely as academism sketches; beside, such painting frequently make him stick to what they are seeing by eyes during "sketching", at the end they could never get rid of the "rules" of reality. For now, rather than what he did in school, Shi Xinji treats "countryside" as some kind of life experience; one hand is about "feel the live deeply", and experiencing the moment of life through his emotion; other hand is to maintain the inside "purity". "The purer, the more sensible, and then deeply touches in the heart." he said. Therefore in his recent series works of "Landscape", they has no longer to present the objective regularity of nature imagery which restrict but related each other; instead, with rational emotion, he tries best to break away from various of fetter in real world, get rid of the limitation of time and space, to approach the completeness of art itself.

Just because of above, Shi Xinji's art language has a trending to abstract. Abstract, is the thinking and analyzing process of human independence consciousness, as well as an expression way of art which is towards to self-conscious and independence. In his new works, all things he depicted seem coming within natural but in fact they are more close to imagination. Abstraction also make Shi Xinji to do certain "purified" to his art, not only remains at the level of language and form, rather about the ablation of idea and concept – he seems already found the theory that "unbind thinking" will also "unlimited meaning", therefore the truth of art is to "creating" instead of "describing".

“Describing” is a kind of reappear of reality, although it is built on carefully observation to the real world, and full of artist’s emotion and hope, but it is usually superficially. “Creating” is the purification and promotion to the reality, whose purpose is to create an ideal world through imagination. And such ideal world is what we called “artistic conception”. Shi Xinji more identifies with the cultural values of Chinese tradition, and this identification is a creative “change” rather “conservatism”. For example, he pointed out a saying of “Eastern poetic origin”, which is to make a return of the creation of “conception” through individual creating.

The way of Shi Xinji is “starting from the little”. For instance, his several new works are mostly describing normal scenery, just like “Simple Landscape” by Zhao Dajian in North-Song Dynasty, or the “Scenery of corner” by Ma Yuan and Xia Kui in South-Song Dynasty; they all emphasized their subjectively cut-off, intentional blank, transition of space and the expression of color. Shi Xinji consciously keeps some kind of randomness to solving the “vitality” and “smartness” in images. Unquestioned, “delicate” is what Shi Xinji wants to create by his “starting from the little”. It is more like a lyric song, but not a symphony.

As Wang Guowei said, conceptions have never been judged by size. The difference between “Magnificent” and “Delicate” is about diversity, of both creative themes chosen by artist and expressions of Eastern concept. Shi Xinji never cares about the “large” or “small” of his artistic conception. He knows that “Higher your state, thus higher your soul.” Therefore, Shi Xinji got a higher life goal: first is treats art as “experience”, sharpen his soul and raising his heart; then Shi Xinji is willing to reach the state that could combine his selfness into the nature, namely “The Self-Transcending State”. Thus, we are hardly found “people” in his “Landscape”, because “seeing objects through objects” can finally arrive to “a combination of man and nature”. But Shi Xinji is still a painter, from his works we can clearly find how the artist expressing his feeling and dreams. Shi Xinji just becomes more practical to calm himself, then bring his generosity and relief which is experienced from his life into his pictures with peaceful silence, and finally show them to viewers.

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