

On The Journey

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In Chinese contemporary painting, Wang Yabin, born in 1974, somehow seems to be special: he has been unmoved to follow the "contemporary" step, but also free of all kinds of popular contemporary fun like an outsider. Early years, Wang Yabin was very fond of expressionism masters, such as Edvard Munch, Kokoschka, but his first appearance to audience was regarded as abstract painter. In fact, from his works Travel, Red River and other works around 2000, his art is not so much "abstract" as "graffiti" - so-called "abstract", is the vigorous and delicate visual texture; but "graffiti", not only refers to those looming "graffiti images" floating on pictures, but also the unrestrained naive mind which was implied by those "graffiti images".

It is easy to be attracted by the unique language temperament of Wang Yabin's paintings: simplicity, vigorous, delicate and sensitive color atmosphere; unrestrained, forthright but charming brush strokes; and the déjà vu but indistinct imagery, and so on. Wang Yabin is undoubtedly an artist with painting language talent, from the layers of abstract "color field", to the unrestrained dripping, flowing and sketching, to the natural collaging, mottled texture, then to the wildly different writing interest and charm ... anyway, no matter which style of art languages, once by his "magic hand", immediately has a simple and deep but innocent natural unique charm.

In exploring the origins of Wang Yabin's language talent, those who are familiar with him always naturally connect antiques, foreign catalogues, and his deep-rooted "fetishism" in mind. Living in Henan, where are full of "cultural relics", Wang Yabin not only likes to visit the unfrequented "real" archaeological sites, but also began to have his own collections in very early time. His profound appreciation to the "antiquities" apparently has an internal relationship with his quaint and sensitive and vivid visual taste. Wang Yabin bought a large number of foreign original albums of paintings, not just limited to those classic painting masters, also including photography, Ukiyo-e, as well as the introduction of various indigenous cultures and ancient civilization. In the time that is absence of opportunities to see the "originals", these beautifully printed original albums, and the huge art system posed by, apparently nourish his broad artistic vision. Wang Yabin is also a famous "fetishism": old books, old photos, vinyl records, different shapes of old rings, and maybe even a pile of new buttons ... in every case his heart touched, he almost buy everything. Perhaps just such "light of things" is the source to the fresh air in his quaint deep visual charm.

But what people often ignored is, there is a spiritual line of constant self-development and evolution, which implied behind those Wang Yabin's visual charming works: the nearly abstract "color field" works Travel, Red River; the mysterious, fantastic works Boat of Flowers And Trees, Fishing, etc.; the works which recall the feelings of youth, such as Giant Ganoderma, The Phoenix; and then, The Sea of Decadent Love, Nineteen Chapters, Elephant Constellation, Unexpected Fragrance, these works interpret a quiet "youth affection" with aged but beautiful tone; and then the series works Pavilion of Memory, I Am The Landscape, which care about the "the times of vulgar lust" by desolate history vision... .. In the final analysis, his art is actually based on his own complex deep inner experience: a kind of increasingly deep, vicissitudes of the inner experience from a man who lives in such time which reality is far stranger than fantasy, and utilitarian reality disdain the innocence, but with lingering romantic feelings. It can be said that it is just such deep inner experience creates his obscure and romantic visual tone; and just because of such continuously self-evaluating, increasingly profound inner experience led his language transformation again and again.

In last two years, Wang Yabin often paints a man who rides a horse or holds a horse in his "hidden forest path". He explained that is a feeling of people on the journey. To this end, he names his new solo exhibition in Beijing in September as "Baima Avenue"(White Horse Avenue). Obviously, this show focuses on "life as a journey in adversity, I am one of pedestrians" and has an inner relationship of the same strain with the show "Guest from Afar" two years ago, focusing on "life between heaven and earth, people like suddenly traveler". Moreover, just like the relationship with the traditional Chinese culture which the exhibition title implies, the theme of the exhibition works - mainly of landscape, flowers – are all inextricably linked with the writing charm, and also the Chinese painting tradition.

About around 2011, Wang Yabin suddenly had a very strong interest on "landscape". For a time, silent ravine, ancient temple, solitary peak, double pine, etc., frequently appear on his canvas. In fact, for Wang Yabin who likes to hang around in the mountains and ancient temples, painting some nostalgic "landscape" is a matter of course. However, for a long time, he did not have that associated with his artistic creation. The reason why he suddenly fond of "landscape", more important than the language experiment, is that he found the corresponding relationship between the "landscape", "flowers" and his own complex internal experience.

At that time, after several exhibitions, such as "Unexpected Fragrance", "I Am The Landscape", "Pavilion of Memory", which explore an era of spiritual difficulties obscurely and passionately, Wang Yabin more and more understands his art "boundary": when all kinds of radical criticism concept, in the face of the strange and hard reality, has been transformed into a chatter of muttering, where the passion of continuously creation come from? At this time, he has a deep resonance with those artists, such as Ni Zan: on one hand, it is the never-faded life passion; On the other hand, it is the mature

character after hardship in his scrawled, simple but charming painting. So there are "Guest from Afar", "Baima Avenue", those landscape or flower based exhibition.

It is easy for people to link Lotus Road, Flowers in Wind and other works with the traditional Chinese landscape paintings or flowers and birds paintings. But Wang Yabin's landscape is neither the "real landscape", nor the "literati landscape", but a kind of "spiritual landscape", integrating the traditional literati's feelings and his spiritual dilemma in a spirit field which is quaint, ethereal and cross time-space.

Although having a close relationship with "Guest from Afar", after carefully comparison, it is not difficult to find the subtle and profound changes of "Baima Avenue". In terms of the language state, it is more free and unrestrained: whether White Horse, Searching in The Dark, which have more complete narrative structure, or Walking After Rain, Blooming Flowers, which are seemingly ordinary scenery, or almost abstract Summer, Flowers And Stones, are all freely style - as Wang Yabin himself said: "those years in Huangshan, what I gain is that my hands are completely free". Another change which may not be significant is: new works seem to have no intention on emphasize the kind of mysterious, misty romantic illusion. In other words, although the same is that landscape and flowers as the carrier, but to dominate the inner experience of "Guest from Afar" is the quaint and ethereal romantic image, while the lyrical subject of "White Horse Road" is the freestyle "brush strokes" itself.

Actually Wang Yabin did not deliberately study the traditional Chinese painting. Compared to Ni Zan's deep brush stroke, Wang Yabin's is maybe more like Mu Xi's style. However, different from Mu Xi's free "Zen", Wang Yabin's freestyle comes from the mutual agitation between his unrestrained nature and his deep, anxious, but no way to dispel the inner vicissitudes - as the feeling of "people on the road" which the title "Baima Avenue "(White Horse Road) implies: life as a journey in adversity, I am one of pedestrians.