

艺田如耕作 --- 吕振光的绘画世界

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艺术史家往往以距离当代太近看不清为由，回避对正在进行的当代艺术进行价值判断。然而，一位艺术家能否在历史上留下美名，却不是一个艺术家所能完全决定的。真正的艺术家关心的基本问题应当是：通过作品来说话、打动别人，他会把自己的生命融进艺术作品中，真诚地呈现出来。在此，香港艺术家吕振光先生就是 I 认识中的一位。

吕先生最为大家所熟知的作品系列，是条纹状的抽象绘画，即“一流山水”，这个系列的作品，很容易让大家联想到最近几年在全球范围内所流行的抽象艺术的标志性图式。批评家杰瑞·萨尔茨（Jerry Saltz）把那些迎合市场的投机抽象作品讽称为“抽象垃圾”，但吕先生这个系列作品显然跟这个潮流毫无关系，他并不是为了市场而去走这个捷径，相反地是为了避开“市场”而去追问和面对一个真实而质朴的自己，自1993年他就义无反顾地耕耘着这块田地：

就抽象艺术来说，我一九九三年底在伦敦期间才开始。从一开始就没想过要踏入抽象这条路，我只是对自己之前的作品很不满，加上身边所接触的东西对我不但没有刺激，反而是干扰！我觉得一切都太泛滥了，很想回到最基本、最朴实的状态，包括创作与生活。一九九四年自伦敦回港后至今，一直在走抽象简约风格。这个阶段的转变时我已年近四十，感觉与西方文化有距离。察觉到世间确有很多美好的事物，但不一定属于自己，只宜观赏，不能拥有，亦不必拥有！这阶段我不太看重观念，我比较重视信念；一种长年累月累积出来的信念。它可以一直支撑着你，使你可以不厌其烦、不计时间及不计精神地去做好一件事，好像信仰一般……在这阶段的初期，我会想象一些广阔的空间，如一片土地和海洋，感到这种感染力比任何图象大得多。生活中，创作上，我是想象自己在耕田，我的画由开始到完成，和耕作的过程是颇相似。我曾渴求想做到在画上呈现精神性和哲理，这就是很典型的形式所呈现出来的内容及给予别人的观感，但渐渐又觉得自己没有如此高深，我单纯地只想技巧上能运用得更加熟练，更心旷神怡。我想在绘画这个过程中令

我可以很平静、专心和解决其他令我感到困扰的问题。其实绘画本身既能令我专注也同时令我困扰，但我却愿意接受它给我的困扰，所以我又再投入，慢慢形成了一个规律，绘画就像我的一般正常生活行为。

（节录 杨棵：《香港艺术家吕振光：我不太看重观念，我比较重视信念》。九九艺术网上海站，2012-07-13。）

吕先生的这种重视“信念”，把创作想象为“耕作”的创作状态，让他的作品具有东方古老农耕文化的朴素生命力，跟格哈德·里希特（Gerhard Richter）的“条纹”绘画，丁乙的“十”字绘画，王光乐的“寿漆”系列等在本质上区别开来，放在中国的当代艺术中跟这片土地贴的最近。如果按照林风眠对于艺术的价值判断，即“个性，民族性和时代性”，吕先生的作品显然在民族性方面为中国当代艺术做出了极有意义的尝试。虽然他没有很明确的要朝这个方向努力，但“感觉与西方文化有距离”，这种本能的生活和文化体验，将他的艺术带入一个新的探索领域。

早在1984年初，吕先生前赴美国，抵步不到两个月便申请移民，想进入西方艺术创作的中心纽约去闯荡一片天地。六个月后，当他返港办理移民手续的最后阶段，就在这个关键的时期，其在香港中文大学艺术系任教的学长刘国松劝解他：“中国人应该做自己的艺术，中国人去画油画，很难有成果。中国的水墨非常具有魅力，应该做水墨”。吕先生并没有因此转画水墨，却被刘国松游说进入中大学艺术系任教，亦因此取消了移民计划。虽然没有去投入水墨画的创作，但10年后，当他远赴英国进修期间，深入伦敦这个当代艺术中心之后，他终于在感知层面上深深体验到了这种东方基因跟西方文化之间的差异性，作品虽然还是西画材料，但在精神层面上寻找到了归依。吕先生于1997年自己对这个系列作品这样说道：

我的作品既非观念的探究，亦非情绪的表现。对我来说，两者只是创作活动的片断。从某方面看，我的创作可形容为关于站立、饮食、行走和耕作，它仅是一种基本的态度或行为而已。

立：察觉位置；事物所见，思想能成。

饮：察觉物质；媒介所用，感觉能动。

行：察觉方向；处境所随，问题能解。

耕：无意识空间；无上无下，无左无右，无高无低，劳作而已！

立如鹤，饮如猫，行如驼，耕如牛，我对这些姿态甚感兴趣，牠们周而复始的动作，但结果如一。立一点，饮四方，行一线，耕一地；从一点，通四方，往一线，成一地。我的作品大概就是这样。

(香港中文大学艺术系四十周年系庆教师作品展 1997年1月初版 ISBN 962-7101-37-0)

吕先生作品的价值并不在于对“图式”的发明，而在于把中国古老的生活方式和生命的体验输入到作品里面，形成一种强大的生命力，这就如乔治·莫兰迪(Giorgio Morandi)画笔下的瓶瓶罐罐，朴素而感人，超越国界和种族，是人类最基本最真诚的一种生命态度。“清空杯子”，明心见性，面对内心深处最真实的自己，寻找自己真正想要的，然后让自己的作品重新生长，重新启程。在这个艺术商业活跃的当代，他的作品以“静”面对“动”。

从吕先生的整个创作历程看，可见早期在写实绘画上所取得的成就。而1984至1994年的十年中，就每件作品的品质来看，非常地精彩，也有他个人的风貌；如果按照这个方向一直做下去，会很安全的“成功”。不过好的艺术家并不是以“成功”为目标的，而是忠于自己的“信念”和“内心”，关于这个系列背后的“田野情结”，艺术家如是说：

五十年代在广东的童年穷乡生活，加上七十年代的台湾求学经验，似乎形成了我的“田野情结”，至今在香港也居于乡郊近三十年，生活俭朴，平常极少夜生活，日常爱种植及自制家具，晚上九点半已经准备睡觉了，因为爱早上，四五点便起床工作，颇似农民生活，本质上对我近二十年来的创作影响颇大……我心中不再太在乎什么是艺术。我与受过严格训练的跳水运动员差不多，不断重复站上跳台，专注片刻，一跃而下，力求动作完美。我更像是一名爱劳动的人，没有目的，做出来的东西是“劳作”，不是创作！这信念使我近二零年的绘画既无拘无束又坚定不移……。

(节录 杨裸：《香港艺术家吕振光：我不太看重观念，我比较重视信念》。九九艺术网上海站，2012-07-13。)

当然一位艺术家的贡献，除了他自己的艺术之外，对之后艺术家的影响力也非常重要。例如，马塞尔·杜尚(Marcel Duchamp)

和安迪·沃霍尔(Andy Warhol)。杜尚为之后的艺术家提供了用现成品来做作品的方法，沃霍尔的商业流行艺术思路也成了近代许多艺术大家遵循的策略。吕先生对年轻一代艺术家的影响力跟以上两位都不同，他是以“师友”的身份，影响了一大批香港的艺术家。他在25年的时间里，为香港培育出了多位优秀的艺术家。他所采取的方式却往往充满了艺术家的色彩，如2010年在吕先生辞去香港中文大学的教职之后，他邀请了他以前的数十名学生，做了一个展览项目，来对自己的这段教学及创作历程做一个总结。他把自己过去十多年所完成的50件作品，分发给这些学生，让每个学生根据自己的作品再创作，展览的名字叫“有你·无我”，可见吕先生在教职期间以“无我”的境界来成全学生的“大我”，从中吕先生对待年轻一辈的关怀可见一斑。

2001年的七月，吕先生于火炭工业区设立了个人工作室“一流画厂”，并联同数名当年的中大艺术系应届毕业生白双全、李杰与林东鹏等，于同年十月举办了首次的工作室开放活动，揭开了火炭艺术工作室开放计划的序幕。火炭现已成为香港重要的艺术村，进驻的艺术家近二百名，每年的一月份均举办大型工作室开放活动，对香港艺术生态影响深远。现在，我们提到吕振光，往往会让人自然地联想到香港艺术界，这表明了他对香港当代艺术的生态建设所起到的作用。

吕先生离开教职已超过四年，曾经历了忙碌后的“空荡”，来适应“职业艺术家”的身份，这次展览我们看到的便是吕先生2014年于上海名企艺术园区工作室驻场创作的最新作品，而未来吕先生在这块田野里将耕耘出什么样的果实，我们充满期待。

Art as Ploughing—the Art World of Lui Chun Kwong

Written by Qiao Wei, Art Director, the Mingqi Art Zone

Art historians avoid making judgments to the processing contemporary art with the reason that it is too contemporary to be readable. However, it is not determined by an artist whether he or she can be memorized by the time. The most basic question an artist should concern about is how to articulate himself and touch others through his artworks. The artist should merge himself into his artwork and represent it sincerely. The Hong Kong artist Lui Chun Kwong is one of the artists I know of this like.

Mr. Lui is known for his striature abstract paintings named as “Yi Liu Shan Shui”. This series easily reminds people of the symbolic abstract art which takes the trend globally recently. Art critic Jerry Saltz criticized those opportunistic artworks which were made for the market as Abstract Rubbish. Apparently Mr. Lui’s series has no relation to it. He does not paint for the market but to avoid it and to examine and confront a true self. Ever since 1993, he has been cultivating his land of art without hesitation:

I started creating abstract art in London at the end of 1993. I have never thought of this from the very beginning. I felt discontent with my previous work and everything I approached became interference. I wanted to return to the most basic status to work and live my life. Ever since 1994 after I came back to Hong Kong till now, I continued creating abstract art. I was around forty during this transition. I sensed I started creating abstract art in London at the end of

1993. I have never thought of this from the very beginning. I felt discontent with my previous work and everything I approached became interference. I wanted to return to the most basic status to work and live my life. Ever since 1994 after I came back to Hong Kong till now, I continued creating abstract art. I was around forty during this transition. I sensed I am distant from the western culture; I noticed that many beautiful things in the world did not belong to me and they were made for appreciation. At that moment, I didn't regard concept as important; I valued Faith accumulated by time. Faith could support you to achieve something wholeheartedly as belief does. At the beginning of the transition, some images of capacious space such as a stretch of land and ocean often occurred in my mind. These images revealed an influence stronger than any other images could do. I imagined myself ploughing creating and my life as the process is quite similar. I once wished my paintings could achieve spiritual and philosophical level, which impress people with what they can see. However I find myself more keen to work on the skills rather than being profound. The process of creating works makes me feel peaceful, calm and focused. It releases me from things bothers me. At the same time it traps me in art again which I enjoy. So painting becomes my routine.

[Extracted from “Hong Kong Artist Lui Chun Kwong: I value faith more than concept”, 99ys.com, 2012.7.13.]

The creating status of faith-valued and imagining creating as cultivating stimulates the vitality of Lui's artworks which origin from the ancient oriental agricultural civilization. Distinctive from Gerhard Richter's structure painting, Ding Yi's Cross painting, Wang Guangle's Coffin paint series, Lui's works are closer to the Chineseness of contemporary Chinese art. If we make judgment to the value of art — individuality, nationalism and contemporaneity — according to Lin Fengmian's theory, Lui obviously has made significant attempt to explore contemporary Chinese art on the aspect of its nationalism. He did not specify the direction but the experience of feeling distant from western culture has brought his art into a new research area.

As early as the beginning of 1984, Lui went to America and planned to apply for immigration within two months. He wanted to venture at the centre of western art world—New York. Six months later, at the last but key time when he returned to Hong Kong for the immigration procedure, his senior fellow alumni Liu Kuo-sung who taught at the Department of Fine Arts, the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) persuaded him that Chinese should create art of our own; it is hard to make achievement to create oil painting as Chinese; however Chinese ink painting is very enchanting and he suggested Lui to work on it. Lui did not follow this suggestion but agreed to teach in CUHK and thus cancelled his plan of immigration to America. A decade later, he went to the UK for study and got to know more about London as a contemporary art centre, he perceptually understood the differences between oriental and western culture. He still employed western painting material but he found a sense of belonging spiritually for his art. In 1997, when he talked about his art, he put:

My work is neither conceptual explorations nor emotional expressions. For me, both are only the fragments of creativity. In a certain respect, my work is dealing with standing, drinking, walking and Ploughing: It is merely a basic attitude or behavior.

Standing: awareness of position; from things I see, ideas could be formed.

Drinking: awareness of materials; by media I use, sensibilities could be motivated.

Walking: awareness of direction; through circumstances I follow, problems could be overcome.

Ploughing: unconsciousness of space; no up and down, no left and right, no low and high, it is but a working practice!

Standing like a stork, drinking like a cat, walking like a camel, ploughing like a cow, these postures are what I am very much interested in. They are repeated over and over again but the result is no different. Standing on a point, drinking from a square, walking along a line, ploughing in a field; Standing from a point, leading to a square, approaching along a line, forming a field. My work is something like these.

(The Faculty Show in Commemoration of the 40th Anniversary of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1997, ISBN 962-7101-37-0)

The value of Lui's work does not lie in the invention of pattern, but importing the ancient Chinese life style and life experience into the artworks so as to form a strong vitality of life. As plain and touching as the bottles of Giorgio Morandi, which transcending the boundary of nations and races, appeals an utmost and essential sincerity toward life of human being; to empty one's heart, and clarify one's inner self in order to confront and to understand the true self deep inside one's soul; to seek what one destines for, retrieve one's art and start a new voyage. In the vibrant era of art market, Lui's art confronts its vibrancy with his tranquility.

From 1984 to 1995, every work produced was of great quality with strong personality. If he continued this way, he would land in success safely. However, a good artist does not aim at success but stay true to his faith and heart. As for the affection to the field revealed in his work, he says:

The experience of living in remote village in the 1950s and studying in Taiwan in the 1970s contributed to my affection to the field. I have lived in the countryside of Hong Kong for about 30 years till now with a simple live. I don't go out in the night and love gardening and making furniture. I love mornings so I go to bed at nine thirty and start working at four or five—living a life like farmers really affects the way I

making art. I don't concern too much about what art is. Just as well-trained divers who constantly climb the platform, concentrate and then jump with pursuit of perfection, I am more a person who love physical labor. I make things instead of creating them. This faith has kept me working freely and firmly for twenty years.

[Extracted from "Hong Kong Artist Lui Chun Kwong: I value faith more than concept", 99ys.com, 2012.7.13.]

It is important for an artist to make contribution not only to his art but also to the artists who could be influenced by him. Take Marcel Duchamp and Andy Warhol for examples, Duchamp invented the way creating works with ready-mades; while Warhol's idea combining art with commercial which became a strategy to be followed by many contemporary artists. Different from these two, Lui's influence on young artists began with his position as a teacher and a friend. During these 25 years, he trained a great lot of splendid artists for Hong Kong. He always took an artistic approach. After leaving Chinese University of Hong Kong in 2010, he invited his students to make an exhibition as a conclusion of his teaching and creating life. He distributed 50 of his works completed in the past decade to these students and asked them to make recreations based on his works. The exhibition was titled "You Are Here, I Am Not", from which we could see his caring and concern for students.

In July 2001, Lui set up his studio "Yi Liu Painting Factory" in Fotan Industrial District. In October he hosted an open studio event, in alliance with the year's graduates of CUHK PAK Sheung Chuen, Lee Kit, Lam Tung Pang, etc, which kicked off the start of Open Studio Project. Fotan has become a famous artist district with around 200 artists. Every January, they will host open studio event that has deep influence on Hong Kong art ecology. His impact on contemporary art in Hong Kong is so significant that now when we talk about Lui, we will think about the Hong Kong art scene.

Lui has left teaching position for four years and has been through a quiet time to adjust himself again as a profession-

al artist. The works exhibited were created when he took residency at Shanghai Mingqi Art District in 2014. In the meantime, we are looking forward to see juicy fruit Lui plants in his land of art in the future.