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## Qin Feng: A Vision of Art East/West

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## 秦風——藝術東·西之我見

克提斯·卡特：國際資深策展人、藝評家；國際美學協會主席

對於那些已經具有一定藝術理論並且在世界範圍內進行實踐的中國當代藝術家來說，其身上的中國性作為一個很重要的問題日益彰顯，或者說他們的作品是如何與中國文化藝術的傳統以及當代的發展聯繫起來。如果說在 17 世紀八大山人以及更早的中國畫家的水墨畫中所發現的魚石鳥獸，却在深受八大山人影響的秦風的畫裏不見踪影，且其作品也不屬於“中國社會主義現實主義”，那麼，什麼才是了解其作品與中國傳統藝術之間聯系的關鍵呢？或者說，當代藝術家是如何去傳承那些中國藝術前輩作品中所表現的藝術傳統的呢？

中國當代藝術家秦風在其水墨畫實驗中所發現的與八大山人所共有的驚人的自由度可算做一種解答。如研究的著作《八大山人》所闡釋的，八大山人的作品沿着創新的思路將書法及對自然的表達方式延伸至抽象的範圍內。在秦風的作品中，可以很明顯的看到他與他的 17 世紀導師精神上的相似和契合。秦風堂吉訶德式的筆觸，無論是用水墨還是丙烯，以在紙和畫布上動態的視覺形式，都應和了相似的好奇心和冒險精神。無論是在 2008 年“欲望”系列中的單張畫面，還是在 2006 年“文明風景”上展出的風琴般延展的裝置作品，或者是 2011 年的“欲望風景”立軸形式的作品，圖像都傳達了象徵性的意圖以及強烈的視覺效果。如果說它們的象徵意義是對人類普世價值的一種探索，比如和諧，它既能弱化也能傳達出人類生活的衝突和矛盾；那麼這個象徵性意味將留給觀眾更大的空間和可能來進行探索和解讀。

除了哲學暗示之外，秦風的作品中的意象沒有試圖解讀任何外在于畫面本身所表達的意義，盡管它們有時有意無意地激發起觀眾在此方面的想象力。因此，他的作品幾乎與在 20 世紀中期建立在現實主義基礎上的中國社會主義現實主義藝術沒有什麼聯系。然而，如秦風自己所言，“我的筆觸是用來反映對生命的深刻體驗，”這些作品都是來源於生活經歷和對人性深刻理解的基礎上。傳統中國書法繪畫可被用來表達人性和生活經驗，而秦風的作品也是如此，這也許是他所言說的意義所在。





1985-1989 年

在他的藝術創作生涯中，對中國水墨畫進行多種形式的嘗試仍然是秦風的工作重心。加大作品的幅面，嘗試除黑墨以外的其他顏色作畫，甚至使用現代的丙烯顏料，他不懈追求筆墨語言的無限可能性。雖然創作形式不斷地在變化，秦風在 2007-2008 年的作品系列“西風東水”中還是延續了一定的傳統。沿襲着人們熟知的黑色的抽象形式，在此系列中又出現了朦朧的中國山水畫的痕迹。與中國傳統繪畫中的山水一樣，這些意象是藝術家想象力的產物，而并非對外在世界的直接描繪。2011 年，該系列的最新作品“憤怒的天使”又為大家提供了水墨畫的一種新的形式：其運用簡化，垂直方向的形式，用筆更為開放和扁平。作為筆墨畫形式的開拓者，秦風的作品已經在紐約大都會博物館，波士頓美術博物館展出。

秦風作品中的中國元素祇是其藝術根源的一個方面。從最早在山東的時候，他就開始接受來自西方的藝術家作品的影響。盡管思想先鋒，但他的作品却盡量避開了早期現代主義未來主義和立體主義，達達主義，超現實主義以及波普藝術的影響。90 年代中後期在德國生活的秦風受到了德國抽象表現主義哲學的影響，並且間接改變了其作品的發展方向，尤其是他在 90 年代的作品。德國抽象表現主義的影響在一定程度上代表了秦風對於西方文化的接受；與此同時，秦風也在堅定地探索如何把其生活和藝術作品中的中國文化根基與不斷變化的世界相融合。

盡管很多西方評論家傾向于把秦風的作品與美國 50 和 60 年代的抽象表現主意相聯系（例如他所尊敬的弗朗茨·克萊恩，羅伯特·瑪瑟韋爾，馬克·羅斯科，以及威廉·德庫寧），然而秦風本人却援引其對德國抽象表現主義者的關注來否認此種聯系。之所以西方評論家會將秦風和美國抽象表現主義相聯系，恐怕是由于在秦風和美國藝術家作品當中所突顯的中國書法和筆墨畫的影響；亦或是兩者



所共有的人乘佛教和道教的哲學本源，其為秦風作品提供了哲學基礎，同時在一定意義上也是二戰後 50 年代以羅伯特·瑪瑟韋爾和弗朗茨·克萊恩為代表的美國抽象表現主義的精神核心。雖然美國人不太願意承認他們對中國美學和哲學傳統的傳承性，但是此種傳承性作為美國抽象表現主義非常重要的一環却是不爭的事實。西方評論者所提出的秦風和美國抽象表現主義的關聯性并未因秦風本人的否認而消失。

在抽象表現主義當中，秦風發現了一種“純粹的視覺語言”，其非常適合在簡化媒介當中來表現戰後西方社會的人文精神。在一定的時期內，抽象表現主義幫助藝術家暫時脫離對戰時和戰後社會危機的關注，并把焦點放在重鑄當代藝術的方向上來。如同秦風所發現的，抽象表現主義借助繪畫美學提供了種種方法以消解感性和抽象理性之間的對立。因此，在圖像語言中，繪畫從單一再現事物的功能中解放出來，從而給藝術家們留有更大的自由空間來捕捉人類情感的力量（通過顏色和形狀），完成了對西方單一透視和幾何形式的超越。用藝術理論家哈羅德·羅森博格的話來說，藝術家的畫布是用來演藝的舞臺，而不是對事物進行簡單復制的場所。無論對於德國還是美國的抽象表現主義，此觀點同樣適用。

秦風對於連結東西方文化藝術的探索引起了一些列關於在當今不斷變化的藝術領域裏藝術家和藝術本身的文化身份認同問題。當今在不斷變化的藝術氛圍中，秦風在中國、歐洲和美國之間旅居本身不失為是其在個人領域對文化連結的一種嘗試。對於東西方文化藝術融合的種種努力，無論是在國家還是在地方層面的認同，甚至藝術家個人的風格認同都無法避免地受到挑戰。霸權殖民主義和霸權全球化都無法對此進行解答。藝術家自身也無法擺脫東西方文化中主導藝術的影響來進行個人藝術風格的塑造。此種挑戰對於類似秦風的中國藝術家們尤為明顯，他們渴望在保留中國性的同時能夠逃出國家和地方文化的種種限制。有了秦風發展道路的借鑒，似乎國家和地方層面的身份認同已經不再像以前所認為的那樣重要，也許現在是時候發出這樣的疑問，對於藝術創作來說，文化身份認同是否還是一個重要的關注點呢？

不同于 20 世紀早期的藝術家，秦風沒有在藝術和政治交匯的政治美學中尋求對於藝術在人類經驗中所扮演角色的解答。他拒絕將藝術與短期的政治目標相結合，而是在連結藝術和哲學

的過程中把焦點放在對於人類存在的更深層次的表達。他對於藝術與政治結合的失語延伸到了全球化的政治話語中。世界藝術作為參與到世界範圍內的藝術交流和貿易過程中的一種藝術形式，在此定義下，秦風的藝術可被看做是世界藝術。然而另一方面，秦風拒絕任何全球化當中的霸權主義目的，反對強勢文化將自己的藝術文化強加在其他發展層面的文化身份上。相反，他倡導對於文化多樣性的貢獻，建立新式的藝術類型，保護并發展傳統文化的積澱。秦風依舊專注于把藝術作為闡釋人類存在的深層意義的傳播者這一重要角色。

自 1985 年來，先後在中國、德國和美國的畫廊和博物館中舉辦了 40 餘次個人展覽，50 歲的秦風享有着崇高的國際聲譽。此外，他的作品還出現在其他 50 個群展中，例如 1994 年在香港藝術中心，2010 年在波士頓藝術博物館，2009 年在新加坡國家藝術博物館，2008 年在耶路撒冷的以色列博物館，2006 和 2007 年在紐約大都會博物館。秦風逐漸成為當代中國藝術家的領軍人物，而且他並沒有停下創作的腳步，他的新作品展即將在中國，美國和歐洲先後亮相。



波士頓美術館展覽現場 The exhibition site in Boston Museum



## **“Qin Feng —— A Vision for Art East · West”**

Curtis L. Carter, International curator and Critic.

One important question that has emerged with respect to Chinese contemporary artists who now have access to art theories and practices from across the world is the question of Chineseness, or how their work relates to the past traditions and present developments of Chinese art and culture. If images of fishes, birds, and rocks found in the brush and ink paintings of Qin Feng's seventeenth century Chinese mentor, Bada Shanren (1626–1705) and other more traditional Chinese painters, are not to be found in the paintings of Qin Feng, and the art does not belong to Chinese Socialist Realism, what then is the key to understanding its link to Chinese traditions in art? Or, how then does a contemporary artist propose to maintain continuity with the artistic traditions represented in the works of Chinese predecessors?

A possible answer for contemporary Chinese artist Qin Feng comes in his discovering the amazing liberties taken by Bada Shanren in his experiments with brush and ink paintings. Bada Shanren's paintings as illustrated in Yanjiu's book, Bada Shanren, and elsewhere stretch the forms of both calligraphy and nature in remarkably innovative directions often toward abstraction. In Qin Feng's approach to paintings, one finds a kindred spirit to that of his seventeenth century mentor. Qin Feng's quixotic brush strokes, whether discharged in ink or acrylic, echo a similar spirit of curiosity and adventure, as they inhabit the paper or canvas surface with dynamic visual forms. Whether in single frame images as in the “Desire Series” 2008, or as installations consisting of erect, accordion-like screens extending in actual space, as in “Civilization Landscape” 2006, or in the “Desire Landscapes” of 2011 which take the form of hanging scrolls. In all of these variations, the images convey both symbolic intent and patterns of striking visual energy. If their symbolic meaning invites a search for universal ideas such as harmony that might soften or inform the conflicts and the contradictions of human life, this symbolic intent leaves open possibilities not fully articulated for the viewer to explore and interpret.

Apart from their philosophical intimations, the images in Qin Feng's paintings answer to nothing outside the paintings themselves by way of representation, although they on occasion might playfully tease the viewer's imagination in this direction. Hence, they bear no relation to the Socialist Realist works of mid twentieth century Chinese art that depend on realism. Yet, as the artist states in his own words, “My brush strokes reflect a deep experience of life,” as they are based on lived experience and a deep understanding of human nature. Perhaps the meaning of Qin Feng's statement here lies in part in his understanding of the link between his own art and traditional Chinese calligraphic/brush and ink paintings also used



to express lived experience and human nature.

Throughout his career, Qin Feng's own variations on Chinese ink painting have remained at the center of his work. Expanding their scale to include large format works, presenting the images in varying shapes and colors other than black ink, and using modern acrylic paints, he pursues relentlessly the endless possibilities of the brush and ink medium. Although the forms continue to undergo significant changes, the references to this tradition continue in the later series of "West Wind-East Water" beginning in 2007–2008. Traces of shadowy Chinese landscapes appear in the pictorial spaces of these later works, alongside the familiar black abstract forms. Like the landscapes familiar in traditional Chinese paintings, these images are a product of the artist's imagination. They are not representations of the external world. The most recent works in the series, "Angry Angels" begun in 2011 offer yet another variation on ink paintings by choosing simplified, vertically oriented forms moving in the direction of a more painterly flatness in their brush work. . As a leading contributor of new forms of brush and ink paintings, Qin Feng has been represented in exhibitions at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Boston Museum of Fine Art.

The Chinese roots of Qin Feng's works represent only one aspect of his artistic groundings. Almost from the beginning at Shandong, he had access to the practices of western artists. Although avant-garde in spirit, his work mainly eschews the attractions of early modernist Futurism and Cubism, Dada, Surrealism, and Pop Art. Later on, while living in Germany between mid and late 1990s, Qin Feng felt the influences of the early work and philosophical influences of German Abstract Expressionism. This exposure to the German Abstract Expressionism may have indirectly influenced the direction of some of his work especially during the 1990s. The link to German Abstract Expressionism in part serves as grounding for the expansion of Qin Feng's art to embrace aspects of the culture of the West while remaining steadfast in the search for ways to connect the Chinese cultural roots of his life and art to the changing contemporary world.

While many western viewers tend to link Qin Feng's art with the American Abstract Expressionists of the 1950s and 1960s (Franz Kline, Robert Motherwell, Mark Rothko, and perhaps Willem de Kooning, whom he is said to have admired), the artist himself disavows this connection, citing instead his attention to the German Abstract Expressionists.



Why then do western interpreters of Qin Feng's art tend to associate his painting with American Abstract Expressionism? Perhaps it is the influence of Chinese calligraphy and brush and ink paintings in both Qin Feng's and the American artists' paintings. Or perhaps it is the shared philosophical roots of Chen Buddhism and Daoism, whose insights supply the philosophical underpinnings of Qin Feng's work, that are also to some degree a part of the mind set of Abstract Expressionists such as Robert Motherwell and Franz Kline during the Post-World War II era of the 1950s. Although the Americans were not always comfortable acknowledging their debt to the Chinese aesthetic and philosophical traditions, there seems little doubt that such a debt exists as an important factor in the work of the Abstract Expressionists. Despite the artist's disavowal of influences from the American Abstract Expressionists on his art, it is likely that for western interpreters of his works, this association seems likely to persist.

In Abstract Expressionism, Qin Feng saw "a pure visual language" suitable for portraying human concerns in a simplified medium fitting to the societal conditions of Post World War II in the West. And for a moment at least, Abstract Expressionism took the minds of the artists away from the immediate societal crises that ensued during and following World War II, allowing the artists to concentrate on refocusing the directions of contemporary art. With respect to the aesthetics of painting, Abstract Expressionism, as Qin Feng saw it, offered a means of dissolving the opposite poses of sensibility and abstract rationality. It thus freed painting from any obligation to



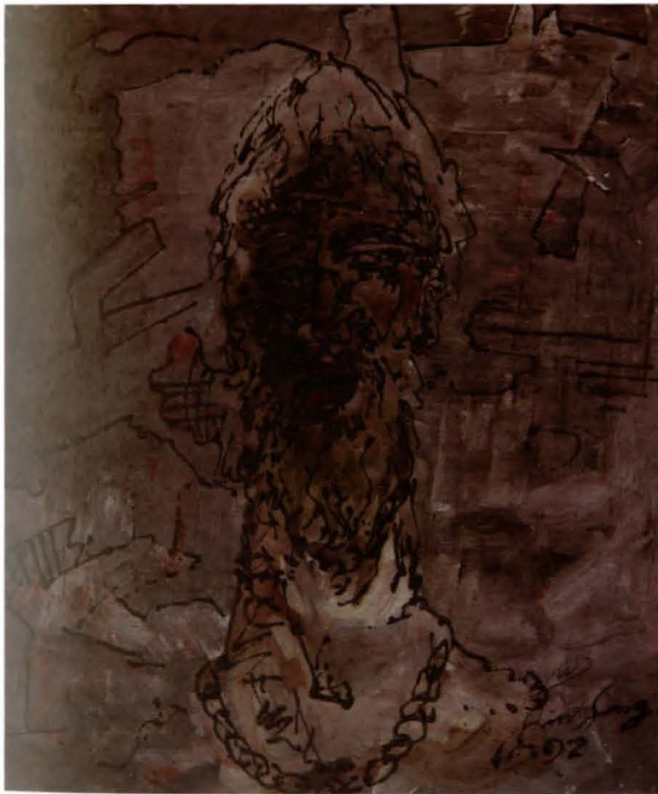
1989-1994 年

representation as the dominant element in a pictorial language. Instead, it allowed the artists the freedom to capture the forces of sensation (color and shape) in ways that go beyond the possibilities of western linear perspective and geometric forms. In the words of art theorist Harold Rosenberg, the artist's canvas is an arena in which to act rather than a space to reproduce, simply design or express. This epithet seems to apply equally to German and American Abstract Expressionists.

Qin Feng's approach to bridging the cultures of art east and West raises important questions concerning the cultural identity of both the artist and the art in the changing world of art today. His personal migrations between China, Europe, and the United States in the ever-changing artistic climate of today is an attempt to address the bridging of cultures on a personal level.



With such efforts to merge the artistic cultures of East and West, the respective roles of national and local identities, and perhaps even the personal stylistic identity of the individual artist, are inevitably challenged. Neither hegemonic colonialism nor hegemonic globalization can provide the answer. Nor is the individual artist entirely free to pursue an individualistic style without taking account of the prevailing artistic currents of both East and West. The challenge is especially poignant for a Chinese artist such as Qin Feng, who desires to retain Chineseness in some meaningful form without submitting to the constraints of national or local cultures. Perhaps it is also time to ask the question, is cultural identity any longer a major concern with respect to the creation of art? Given the direction that Qin Feng is moving, it seems that national and local identities may not be as important as they once were thought to be. Unlike some earlier Chinese artists of the twentieth century, Qin Feng does not see the solution to art's role in human experience in the politics of aesthetics where art and politics join forces. Rather, he posits a link between art and philosophy where his art's focus is on expressing the deeper meanings of human existence, instead of linking art to more immediate political objectives. His reticence to link art and politics extends as well to the politics of globalization. His art can be considered global art in the sense that



1981-1985 年

global art refers to art that is a part of, or participates in worldwide cultural exchange or commerce. On the other hand, he would resist any hegemonic aims of globalization that allows for dominant cultures to impose their art or culture on other cultures in a different state of development. Rather, Qin Feng welcomes the contributions of diversity as a means of building new artistic models as well as sustaining the treasures of past cultural achievements. His focus remains on the meaningful role of art as a purveyor of the deeper meanings of human existence.

Currently at age 50, Qin Feng enjoys notable international recognition supported by an impressive record of some 40 solo gallery and museum exhibitions since 1985 in various sites in China, Germany, and the United States. In addition his work has been represented in some 50 group exhibitions, for example, at The Hong Kong Art Centre (1994); The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (2010); Singapore National Museum of Art (2009); the Israel Museum, Jerusalem (2008); the Metropolitan Museum of New York (2006,

2007) to mention a few. The momentum that has driven his rise to prominence as a leading contemporary Chinese artist shows no sign of slowing as a review of his plans for upcoming exhibitions in China, the United States and Europe will show.

Zhu, Liangzhi, *Research on Badashanren* (Hefei: Anughi Education Publishing House, 2008).

Prija Malbotra, *Asian Art News*, Nov–Dec., 2003.

Works by Qin Feng are included in the exhibitions, “Brush and Ink: The Chinese Art of Writing,” Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York 2006–2007. Reviewed by Holland Cotter, “Pictorial Delights Beyond Words,” *New York Times*, September 8, 2006. And “FreshInk: Ten Takes on Chinese Tradition,” Boston Museum of Fine Art, 2010–2011. Reviewed by Lee Lawerence, *Wall Street Journal*, January 27, 2011.

Alexandra Munroe, *The Third Mind: American Artists Contemplate Asia, 1860–1989* (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 2009), 145–195.

“Zeng Yulan, Interview with Qin Feng,” July 18, 2008, Zhang Pingjie, Editor, *Contemporary Ink Art Evolution* (Beijing: The Art State Press and Beijing Museum of Contemporary Art, 2008), 196, 197.





佩斯展覽現場 Pace gallery exhibition site