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# Li Song: The Decay of the Sublime

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## Li Song “The Decay of the Sublime”

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Coming from Heilong Jiang Province in North East China with brief training in the art school in Harbin, the Chinese painter Li Song (1965-...) began his career as a mainly self-taught artist. His paintings thus have little in common with the formal elements of either traditional Chinese painting or much of the avant-garde developments in Chinese art after the 1980s.

In some respects his art bears resemblance in its clarity and freshness of renderings of its subjects to the Northern European tradition of oil painting such as is found in the Dutch painter Johannes Vermeer. For example, In Vermeer's "Woman Holding a Balance," (c.1664) the figure is placed in proximity to a Painting of "The Last Supper." On the table are objects of gold and pearls. These two symbolic in Vermeer's picture symbolize the two main forces of religion and commercial prosperity at work in the Delft of Vermeer's time.<sup>1</sup>

In contrast to Vermeer, Li Song's paintings exhibit a fertile grounding in key symbols that help define Chinese culture: the tiger, the horse, the pomegranate, for example. The tiger, known as the "King of the Mountain," is one of the most powerful symbols of ancient Chinese culture as it exemplifies brute strength, even violence. The horse, a natural companion in war, agriculture and human mobility, is a symbol of energy, power, and beauty. And the pomegranate represents fertility. Li Song invokes these symbols, along with others, as one means of establishing his identity in the context of Chinese art. With these symbols he references important cultural meanings apropos of both traditional and contemporary Chinese culture. The references are often subtle, and the resonances set into play in his paintings echo traditional meanings while expressing symbolically the changes and turmoil of contemporary

<sup>1</sup> Arthur Wheelock, *Vermeer and the Art of Painting* (New Haven and London, 1995)

Chinese life. Both artists share an interest in bright colors to enliven their respective canvases.

Where then to locate Li Song's art in the pantheon of art historical or contemporary art contexts? Realism surely is a consideration as it points to the artist's impeccable ability to create images that connect with the real, as we might imagine it exists. His work does not fit the period style associated with the term Realism in the European art of the 1850s to 1880s with its positivist concern with scientific objectivity. With an eye that challenges the best of camera lenses, and a hand that renders even the subtlest minutiae of materiality in his subjects with the greatest of technical achievement and clarity, Li Song brings to his art a level of technical virtuosity that in itself is less appreciated in the art of today than in past generations of art history. This talent, while admirable would not be sufficient to command critical attention in the complex global art world of today. As the works shown in this exhibition, and the artist's past creations demonstrate, there is no need for concern. Li' Song's gifts extend their critical and aesthetic powers of observation to include a full range of expressiveness and conceptual depth that warrants our appreciation and respect.

Hence, his creations are not content with remaining within in the boundaries of any Realism that relies mainly on mimesis and is confined to merely visual representations based on observing the physical appearance of his subjects. Indeed, his imagination knows few limits as he paints a tiger or a horse poised on the edge of a lit candlestick. And who (perhaps other than René Magritte) would have thought of a flaming matchstick fed by its own materials as the subject for a painting?

Arguably Li Song's art bears resemblances to Surrealism as well. Beginning in the 1920s, as represented in the manifestos of André Breton, (1924, 1930 and 1934), Surrealism developed in two distinct directions, autonomistic and veristic, with many variations among the artists who chose to work under the label, or were so designated in art history and criticism. The autonomist group mainly followed Surrealism as defended in the Manifestos of Breton. Breton understood Surrealism as favoring the anti-rational unconscious over consciousness as a source for imagery over connections to the external world. The veristic surrealists (Salvador Dali, René Magritte, and Max Ernst) opted to produce images of meticulous realistic detail intended to establish a link between the world of dreams and the external world of objects and people.<sup>1</sup>

Li Song's affinities to Surrealism would be more with the veristic than the autonomist Surrealists. His images mainly reflect direct engagement with the material objects of the external world and attention to the minute details of the real. However, the attention given to the external world in Li Song's paintings does not necessarily rely on their being linked to matching images discovered in dreams. At least, in my mind, the manner of treatment of the external world depicted in Li Song's paintings is mainly based on the engagement of a keenly observant rational mind with the materiality of the objects rendered.

There are other features of his art which Li Song holds in common with the Surrealists. For example, he does not spare the viewers images that might be disturbing or shocking. Even when attending closely to details of the external world, he does not hesitate to alter the contexts for

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<sup>1</sup> See for example, André Breton, *Manifeste du surréalisme*, (Paris, éditions du Sagittaire, 1924). Also Breton, *La situation du surréalisme entre les deux guerres*, (Paris, Editions de la Revue Fontaine, 1945).

experiencing ordinary objects, or create unexpected juxtapositions.

In this process the literal significance of the chosen objects is transformed so as to create compelling metaphors. For example, his treatment of the pomegranate passes through renderings that appear as elegant and perfect visual forms rendered in shades of color modulating from bright reds to gold and greens. Delicately formed drops of condensed moisture suspended on the curved surface of the pomegranate fruit literally hold the viewer's perception in suspension captured by the sheer beauty of the moment. Other of Li's paintings show us the inner fruits of the pomegranate, discarded and ripped open, as it is exposed to alternate forces of nature. At once, the exposed pomegranate appears vulnerable to appetites of the attending creatures of the sea. On another occasion Li Song positions the opened pomegranate fruit shell in proximity to a sleeping tiger who rests suspended across the space also occupied by the pomegranate fruit. In another painting the pomegranate is ravished by the tiger's aggressive invasion into its ripped open interior. The intersection of these two pregnant symbols, the pomegranate representing fertility and the tiger standing for power, invites imaginative speculation without attributing any particular meaning to its conceptual content.

Moving on to other possible theoretical frameworks for understanding Li Song's art, there is Magic Realism, a term introduced in 1925 by Franz Roh to refer to Post-expressionist art changes in Western art of the early twentieth century. <sup>1</sup>According to Roh, Magic Realism restored the objects into painting that had been lost to abstraction. At various moments, Magic

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<sup>1</sup> Franz Roh, "Magical Realism: Post Expressionism," Trans. Wendy B. Faris (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1995). See also Dorothy Miller and Alfred Barr, *American Realists and Magic Realism* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1943).

Realism has embraced such diverse stylistic developments as Neue Sachlichkeit art in Germany (Otto Dix and George Gross) as well as the works of such artists as the Italian Giorgio de Chirico and the French Henri Rousseau. But a concept with so much range allowing for such a broad inclusiveness where important stylistic differences are evident gives us at best a very broad, if interesting set of parameters.

Broadly speaking since art making has always been a conceptual practice for artists, it useful to ask, in what sense is the artist's practice conceptual? The philosopher Ernst Cassirer proposes a distinction between conceptual in the sense of what is discovered by science consisting of understanding the reasons for things, and a second sense of conceptual consisting in seeing the forms of things. The latter is the conceptual domain of the artist according to Cassirer.<sup>1</sup>

Simply stated, Conceptual Realism understands realistic painting as a means of communicating thought in the contemporary art world. It values craftsmanship and the ability to draw and paint without the benefit of photography or computer. Hence it remains to consider briefly what understanding might be offered by this critical label of Conceptual Realism to Li Song's paintings. Magic Realism refers to representational art mixed with elements of fantasy and executed with attention to detail and sharp focus. It focuses on the unexpected, laced with mystery and ambiguity. To this extent, this concept seems to address important aspects of Li Song's paintings.

On another level, Magic Realism in reference to Li Song's paintings is useful in distinguishing his contributions to contemporary art from those

<sup>1</sup> Ernst Cassirer, *An Essay on Man, Chapter 9*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1944, 1962)

more closely connected to modern avant garde and post-modern art of recent times. In these respects, he appears to abandon modern abstraction and much of the conceptual art legacies, introduced by Marcel Duchamp, Nam June Paik's new media art, and digital art of the late Twentieth century. Although literate in the concepts of modern and contemporary art, Li Song and others who identify with Conceptual Realism choose realist drawing and painting as a contemporary medium. Perhaps Conceptual Realism can be understood as a response to the increasingly technological world of digitalized imagery that has led artists such as the Chinese media artist Feng Meng Bo to turn off his computer and turn to mastery of Chinese ink paintings.

In some respects then, Li Song's paintings exhibit salient features of Conceptual Realism. He values craftsmanship and exemplifies realism as the grounding of his paintings and as a means of communicating his ideas. As we have noted previously, Li Song also references European old master tradition and Twentieth Century Surrealism. At the same time, his vision is "unconventional, personalized, and idiosyncratic."<sup>1</sup> Both his choices of subjects and their execution are to be acknowledged first, for their own particular features and intrinsic merit based on the quality of experiences that they offer to the viewers.

In order to consider some of these qualities I will turn briefly to a closer examination of a selection of the paintings. First, a return to the tiger images. These images occupy a large body of paintings in the current exhibition. Hence I take it that the tiger images have a special meaning for Li Song. The tiger is shown in a variety of natural poses in prowl

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<sup>1</sup> Meredith McNeal, Commenting on an exhibition of Conceptual Realism at the BRIC Rotunda Gallery, Brooklyn, N. Y., 2004.

mode, reclining with a mate, and also in some not so natural. The latter represent especially interesting forays of the artist's imagination. For example, a tiger is poised with all four paws standing on glass balls. Other of his paintings show the tiger balanced in mid-air on a trapeze bar that glows with florescent light, or perched on the edge of a lit candle. Approaching the human domain, we find the tiger intertwined with women's clothes. On another occasion, the tiger ponders a seated human baby, while disembodied human genitals occupy the ground below the standing tiger. Given the visual clues available to the viewer, the scene benefits from a certain ambiguity. The narrative possibilities of the scene engage our attention beyond the immediate visual experience revealed in the painting. The same applies to imagining a tiger shown climbing an electric light pole.

Also of special interest in this exhibition is a continuation of the artist's fascination with painting recycled bricks. Shades of red and orange with textural variations imposed by cracked bricks and mortar that clings to the surface of the brick are transformed visually so as to command our attention as they become beautiful images worthy of our aesthetic contemplation. The bricks, evidently from demolished structures, are treated as worthy subjects for a painting, indeed numerous paintings. Here the topics turn from the surreal to the real in the sense that the bricks become metaphors referencing the massive construction demolition that urban Chinese cities are undergoing today. As suspended in the pictorial spaces orchestrated in Li Song's paintings, the bricks assume an elegant, sometimes disturbing reminder of the losses and the transformations of civilization that they reference. The brick paintings carry a mixed message both marking the passing of an era and portending the future. The presence of a snake in one of the brick paintings foreshadows

both good fortune and possible ill fate as the meaning of the snake is ambiguous in Chinese mythology.

Finally, a note on the title given to the exhibition: "Decay of the Sublime." This topic opens a wide range of possibilities of interpretation, as the sublime has factored into the understanding of art since the Eighteenth century writings of Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant. Since the mid-twentieth century, the sublime has figured prominently in art's production. Essential features of the sublime are concerned with the human responses of terror, awe, and unrepresentable transcendence.<sup>1</sup> Initially viewed as a property of nature, the emphasis has shifted since Barnett Newman's 1948 essay on the sublime to a form of Post-Romantic subjective experience focused on powerful emotional states of consciousness (for Newman) associated with the creation and experiencing of large-scale abstract paintings. From this point on, the concept of the sublime has evolved thru various formations in the Post-modern writings of Jean François Lyotard, Julia Kristeva, and others.<sup>2</sup>

What then can the title of our exhibition of Li Song's paintings here. "Decay of the Sublime," means in reference to the development of the sublime in contemporary art? One immediate and seemingly obvious answer would be to presume that Li Song's art, with its representation of very concrete particulars of his subjects, might signal a move away from the search for transcendence associated with the sublime. Or perhaps this art reinforces a tendency to search for the sacred in the world of the

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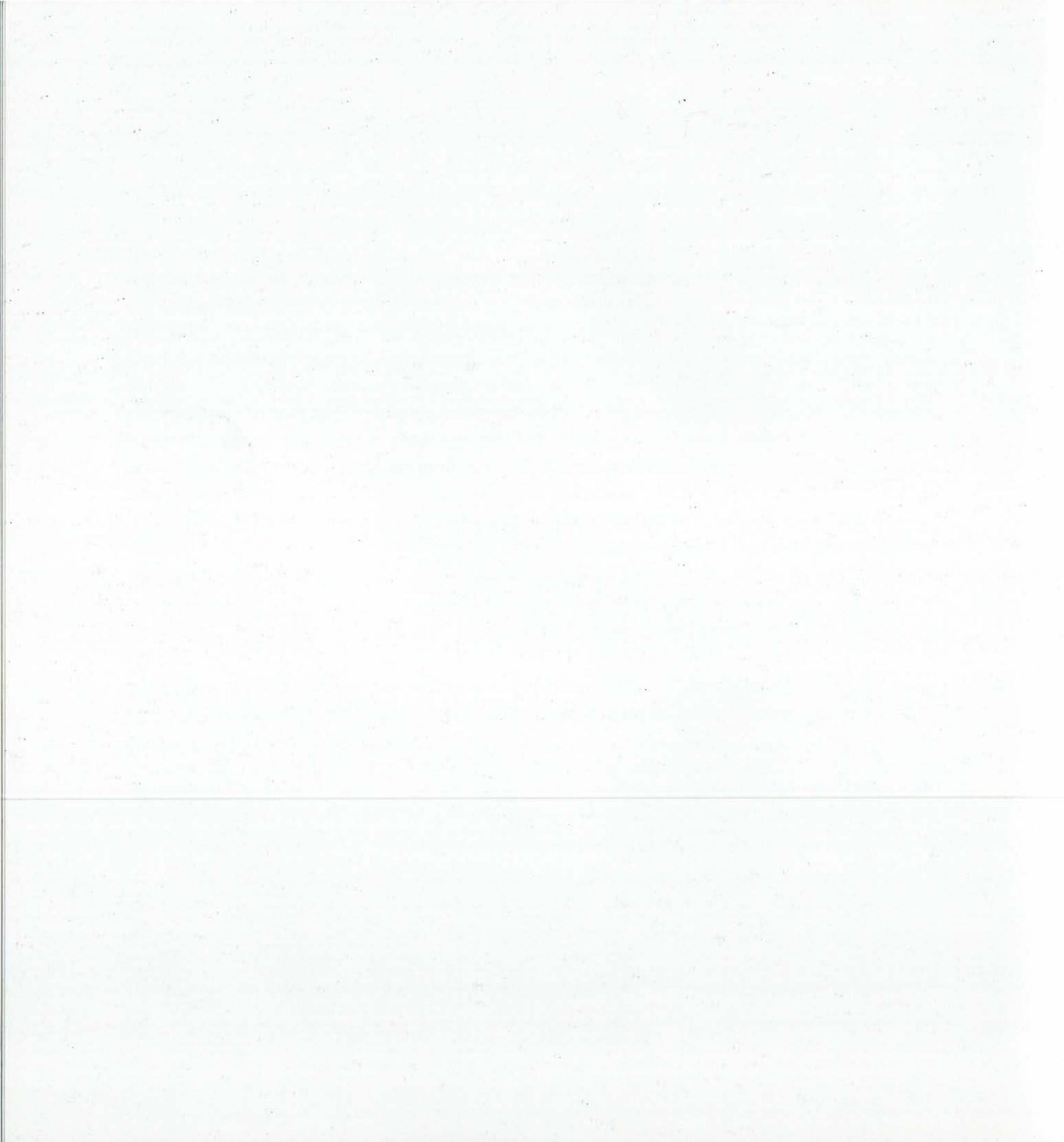
<sup>1</sup> Simon Morley, ed., *The Sublime* (White Chapel Documents of Contemporary Art), (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2010).

<sup>2</sup> Julian Bell, "Contemporary Art and the Sublime," in Nigel Llewellyn and Christine Riding (eds.) *The Art of the Sublime*, (London: Tate Museum Research Project, 2013).

secular, as the art historian Robert Rosenblum once proposed in his 1961 book *Modern Painting and the Northern Romantic Tradition*.<sup>1</sup> Looking beyond these possibilities, it is necessary to ask whether the concept of the sublime has important bearings on Li Song's vision and the production of his art? Or is the sublime better understood as a curator's device useful in organizing and presenting the exhibition, but more or less incidental to the artist's creation of the art? My sense is that, while useful to writers and curators for informing the viewers and relating the work to other work that is taking place in the art world, the artist is well advised to trust his own vision and execution skills as a compass for the creation of the art.

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Rosenblum, *Modern Painting and the Northern Romantic Tradition, Friedrich to Rothko*, (Harper and Row, 1961).



## 李松的“崇高之殇”

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翻译：万永婷

来自中国东北黑龙江省，曾在哈尔滨文化馆受过简短的绘画训练，中国画家李松（1965—）以自学成才为主，开创了他的艺术家职业生涯。因此在他的作品中，很少与传统国画或大部分在20世纪80年代之后发展起来的中国前卫艺术的正式元素有共同之处。

在某些方面，他的作品在主题清晰度和新鲜感的渲染上，近似于北欧传统油画，如我们在荷兰画家约翰内斯·维米尔(Johannes Vermeer)作品中发现的那样。例如，在维米尔的《称天平的女子(*Woman Holding a Balance*)》(1664)中，人物被近置于画作《最后的审判(*The Last Judgment*)》旁。桌上放着金制品与珍珠。这两个符号在维米尔的画中，象征着维米尔时代荷兰德尔夫特两个主要作用力量——宗教和商业繁荣。<sup>1</sup>

与维米尔形成对比，李松的画在有助定义中国文化的关键符号中展现了丰厚基础：比如虎，马，石榴。虎，被称为“山大王”，是最强大的中国古代文化的象征之一，因为它充分体现了兽性的强力，甚至暴力。马，战争、农业、人类流动中一位天然的同伴，是能量、力、美的象征。石榴则代表丰产。李松调遣这些符号，与其它的符号一起，作为在中国的艺术语境中建立自己身份的一种手段。通过这些符号，他指涉着关于传统文化和当代中国文化的重要意义。这些指涉相当微妙，在他的绘画中所发生的共鸣作用，呼应着传统意义，又象征性地表达了当代中国人生活的变化和动荡。李松和维米尔这两位艺术家都有着对鲜艳色彩的兴趣，使他们各自的画作都充满生机。

那么，在艺术史上和当代艺术语境的万神殿中，如何找到对应于李松的艺术作品或概念？现实主义肯定是一个考虑因素，因为它指向着艺术家的才能：能否创造出无可挑剔的、与真实相关的图像，让我们能想象它的存在。李松的作品不符合欧洲艺术19世纪50年代到80年代同现实主义这一术语相关的时代风格，这种现实主义具有对于科学客观性的实证主义关注。李松的眼睛可以挑战最好的相机镜头，他的手能够以最高的技术成就和清晰性展现绘画主题中最微妙的物质性细节，由此他的艺术

<sup>1</sup> 亚瑟·惠拉克(Arthur Wheelock), 《维米尔与绘画艺术(*Vermeer and the Art of Painting*)》, 纽黑文与伦敦出版社, 1995。

达到了精湛卓越的艺术水平，对此艺术史中过往的前辈比现在的人们更加赏识。这种才能，固然令人钦佩，在现今复杂的全球艺术世界中，却并不足以拉动批评的关注。如同这个展览上展出的作品和艺术家过去的创作所表明的，无需为此忧虑。李松的天赋延伸其批判的、审美的观察力量直至囊括了表现性与观念深度的全领域，由此确保了我们的欣赏和尊重。

因此，他的作品不满足于停留在任何这样一种现实主义的边界之内：这种现实主义主要依赖于模仿，并且局限于在观察绘画题材的物理外观基础上所做的纯粹视觉再现。的确，当他画虎或马，将它们悬置于点燃的蜡烛边缘时，他的想象力没有任何限制。还有谁（或许除了勒内·马格里特[René Magritte]）会想到以一根燃烧的火柴作为画的题材材料呢？

可以说李松的艺术与超现实主义有相似之处。自20世纪20年代起，超现实主义，如同安德烈·布勒东(André Breton)的宣言(1924, 1930和1934)中所表述的，在自动主义(automatistic)和写真主义(veristic)两个不同的方向中发展，同时，那些选择在此标签下工作的艺术家或在艺术史和批评中被归入此标签下的艺术家，他们当中有很多变种。自动主义主要遵循如布勒东宣言中所捍卫的超现实主义。布勒东将超现实主义理解为支持反理性的无意识高于意识，作为意象的源泉，它高于同外部世界的关联。写真主义的超现实主义者（萨尔瓦多·达利[Salvador Dalí]、勒内·马格里特和马克斯·恩斯特[Max Ernst]），选择制造细致逼真的细节图像，旨在建立梦的世界同人与物的外部世界二者之间的联系。<sup>1</sup>

与自动主义超现实主义者相比较，李松与写真主义超现实主义的关系更密切。他的画面主要反映出对外部世界物质对象的直接介入，和对真实事物的微小细节的关注。不过，李松作品中对外部世界的关注，不一定仰仗它们与那些在梦中发现的图像是否存在着关连或匹配。至少在我心中，李松的画描绘外部世界的处理方式，主

<sup>1</sup> 参见安德烈·布勒东(André Breton)，《超现实主义宣言(Manifeste du surréalisme)》，巴黎：editions du Sagittaire, 1924。以及布勒东，《两次大战间的超现实主义状况(La situation du surréalisme entre les deux guerres)》，巴黎：Editions de la Revue Fontaine, 1945。

要是基于敏锐观察的理性精神同客体所呈现的物质性之间的啮合。

李松的艺术和那些超现实主义者们还存在着其他一些相同特征。例如，他并不为观众免除令人不安或震惊的图像。即便他聚精会神于外部世界的细节，他也会毫不犹豫地改变我们体验寻常物体的语境，或创造出意想不到的并置。

在这个过程中，被选择物体的原始意义被改变，以便建立扣人心弦的隐喻。例如，他对石榴的处理，通过渲染优雅且完美的视觉形式，呈现在颜色的渐变上，从艳红色转变到金黄和翠绿。形态精妙的凝露悬停于石榴的曲面上，观众为这一瞬间的洁净之美所俘获的感知，也毫不夸张地被置于悬停状态。李松其他的画作让我们看到石榴的内部被丢弃并撕开，如同被暴露于大自然轮换的力量之中。同时，暴露的石榴似乎极易伤于在场的海洋生物的胃口。另一次，李松将被剥开的石榴近置于一只横跨于空间中悬卧的睡虎，而这个空间亦同时被石榴占据。在另一幅画中，老虎攻击性地侵入石榴被撕裂的开敞内部，石榴被强暴了。石榴象征丰育，虎代表权力，这两个意味深长的符号的相交，召请着各种富有想象力的推测，而勿需将任何特定的涵义赋予作品的观念内容当中。

让我们转移至其他可能理解李松艺术的理论框架，比如魔幻现实主义(Magic Realism)。这是由弗朗兹·罗(Franz Roh)在1925年引入的一个术语，指二十世纪初西方艺术中后表现主义艺术的变化。<sup>1</sup>据弗朗兹·罗，魔幻现实主义将物体归还给已迷失于抽象主义的绘画。在不同的时刻，魔幻现实主义包含了多种多样的风格发展，既有德国的新客观现实主义(Neue Sachlichkeit)艺术(奥托·迪克斯[Otto Dix]和乔治·格罗斯[George Gross])，又有象意大利人乔治·德·基里科(Giorgio de Chirico)和法国人亨利·卢梭(Henri Rousseau)这样的艺术家的作品。但一个范围如此广大的概念，有如此广泛的包容性，其中重要的风格差异显而易见，它为我们提供的，至多只是一个极宽泛的参照系，即便它有趣也罢。

<sup>1</sup> 弗朗兹·罗(Franz Roh), 《魔幻现实主义: 后表现主义(Magical Realism: Post Expressionism)》, Wendy B. Faris译, Durham, N. C.: Duke University Press, 1995。参见Dorothy Miller与Alfred Barr, 《美国现实主义者和魔幻现实主义(American Realists and Magic Realism)》, 纽约: 现代艺术博物馆, 1943。

一般说来，鉴于艺术创作一直是艺术家的观念实践，因此提出这个问题不无裨益：在何种意义上艺术家的实践是观念性的呢？哲学家恩斯特·卡西尔(Ernst Cassirer)提出一种区分：其一，在科学发现意义上是观念性的，关乎理解事物的原因，另一种意义上的观念性，则在于观看事物的形式。根据卡西尔，后者是艺术家的观念领域。<sup>1</sup>

简单地说，观念现实主义(Conceptual Realism)将写实绘画理解为在当代艺术世界中沟通思想的一种手段，它重视手工技艺，重视不借助于摄影或电脑作画的能力。由此仍需简要地考虑一下观念现实主义的批评标签能为李松的画作提供怎样的理解。魔幻现实主义参照再现性艺术，混合幻想元素，处理上重视细节和精细的聚焦。它着重于意料之外，夹杂神秘感和模糊性。基于此，魔幻现实主义概念似乎已经道出了李松作品的重要部分。

在另一个层面上，魔幻现实主义能应用于李松作品的是，从那些更密切地关联于现代先锋派和近期后现代艺术的贡献中区分出他对当代艺术的贡献。在这些方面，他似乎摒弃了现代抽象和大部分由杜尚(Marcel Duchamp)、白南准(Nam June Paik)的新媒体艺术，20世纪末的数字艺术所引入的观念艺术遗产。尽管熟谙现代和当代艺术的理念，李松与其他认同观念现实主义的艺术家的，仍然选择现实主义的素描和绘画作为当代的媒介。或许观念现实主义可以被理解为对日益技术化的数字化图像世界的回应，这已经引领艺术家，如中国媒体艺术家冯孟波，关上他的电脑，转向掌握中国水墨画。

在某些方面，李松的作品展现出观念现实主义的显著特征。他重视手工技艺，举现实主义为他绘画的基础，和他传达想法的一种手段。正如我们前面提到的，李松也参考了欧洲的老大师传统和20世纪的超现实主义。同时，他的视像是“非传统的、个性化的、特异的”。<sup>2</sup>他题材的选择和处理，因其独具的特质和内在的价值，会首

<sup>1</sup> 恩斯特·卡西尔(Ernst Cassirer)：《人论(An Essay on Man)》，第9章，New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1944, 1962.

<sup>2</sup> Meredith McNeal, Commenting on an exhibition of Conceptual Realism at the BRIC Rotunda Gallery, Brooklyn, N. Y. 2004.

先得到认可，而这种内在的价值则基于其提供给观众的审美体验的特性。

为了思考这些特性中的一部分，我将简要且仔细地考察选取的部分画作。首先我们回到虎的图像。这些图像在这次的展览上占了一大部分。因此我认为虎的图像对李松具有特殊的意义。虎表现出多种潜行状态的自然姿势，凭物斜倚，也有些不那么自然。后者尤其呈现了艺术家想象力积极多样的有效尝试。例如，一头虎正用四只爪子站上玻璃球。其他的画作中显示虎在悬空发光的日光灯上平衡着，或高踞于一支燃着的蜡烛边缘。走近人类的领域，我们发现虎与女装缠结。另一处，老虎琢磨着一个坐着的人类婴儿，同时，脱落的人类生殖器官占据着站立的虎下方的墙面。考虑到观众所能获得的视觉线索，某种程度的意义含糊对场景是有益的。场景本身叙事的可能性，超越作品中所揭示的直接视觉体验，更多地吸引了我们的注意力。同样的，也适用于想象一只虎攀在房梁上的画面。

此外，这次展览特别有趣的是艺术家对描绘旧砖的持续迷恋。红色和橙色的色调变化，开裂的砖和贴在砖面上的灰泥所施加的肌理变化，被加以视觉转换，从而支配了我们的注意力，因为它们已成为值得我们做审美观照的美丽图像。砖，显然来自拆毁了的建筑物，被处理为一个有价值的绘画主题，实际上出现于很多幅画中。这里主题从超现实转向现实，砖成为指涉中国都市今天所经历的大规模建设与摧毁的隐喻。悬浮于李松作品精心构筑的图画空间中，砖，担当了一个优雅有时又令人不安的提示物，提醒着它所指涉的文明的损失与变革。砖的画负载着混合的讯息，既标明一个时代的逝去又警示着将来。如同蛇的意义在中国神话里是含糊的，一条蛇的出现在砖画中，可能同时预兆着好运和坏运。

最后，简述展览的标题：“崇高之殇”。这个标题开拓了广泛解释的可能性，因为，自十八世纪埃德蒙·伯克(Edmund Burke)和康德(Immanuel Kant)的著作以来，崇高已成为艺术理解的要素。从20世纪中期起，崇高已经在艺术生产过程中占有突出地位。崇高的本质特征关乎人对恐惧、敬畏、不可再现的超越所产生的反应。<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Simon Morley编，《崇高 (The Sublime (White Chapel Documents of Contemporary Art))》，Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2010。

最初它被视为大自然的属性，自巴内特·纽曼(Barnett Newman) 1948年一篇有关崇高的文章起，重点已转移至后浪漫主义的主观体验，这种体验聚焦于同创作和体验大型抽象绘画相关的强大的情感性的意识状态(纽曼)。从这一点起，崇高的概念已经通过让-弗朗索瓦·利奥塔(Jean-François Lyotard)、朱丽娅·克里斯蒂娃(Julia Kristeva)和其他作者的后现代写作中多种多样的构造而演进了。<sup>1</sup>

那么，这里李松的绘画展览的标题能够怎样呢？崇高之殇，意味着同崇高在当代艺术中的发展相关吗？一个直接而且似乎显而易见的回答是，李松的艺术，精准再现了对象极具体的细节，可能标志着一种远离，远离对于超越的寻求，而这种寻求正是同崇高相关的。或者，这种艺术强化了在世俗世界中寻找神圣的趋势，如艺术史学家罗伯特·罗森布拉姆(Robert Rosenblum)在他1961的书《现代绘画与北方浪漫主义传统(*Modern Painting and the Northern Romantic Tradition*)》中所提出。<sup>2</sup>在这些可能性以外来看，有必要问一问，崇高的概念是否同李松的视像和他的艺术生产有着重要的关联？或者，崇高可被更好地理解策展人的策略，以有利于组织和呈现展览，但同艺术家的艺术创作仅或多或少附带相关？我以为，这固然有利于写作者和策展人向观众介绍作品，并将其关联于艺术世界中正在发生的其他创作，同时，艺术家亦应相信，自己的眼光和表现技能才是艺术创作的指南针。

<sup>1</sup> Julian Bell, “当代艺术与崇高(*Contemporary Art and the Sublime*)”, 在Nigel Llewellyn与Christine Riding编辑的《崇高的艺术(*The Art of the Sublime*)》中, London: Tate Museum Research Project, 2013.

<sup>2</sup> 罗伯特·罗森布拉姆(Robert Rosenblum), 《现代绘画与北方浪漫传统: 弗里德里希到罗斯科(*Modern Painting and the Northern Romantic Tradition: Friedrich to Rothko*)》, (Harper and Row, 1961).