

Preface

Lu Hong

In Chinese contemporary art scene, Zhu Wei's painting is indeed a signature one: on the one hand he sticks to the traditional imperial court (fine brush) painting media and outline-and-color technique; on the other hand he boldly moves away from the traditional fine brush painting's patterns and forms, and created brand new imageries and composition that contain distinct features of the generation. Without a question, it is exactly the constant referencing between the past the present that accomplishes Zhu Wei's art. For example, from the 90s' till now, he has created *The Story of Beijing*, *Sweet Life*, *China Diary*, *The Ink and Wash Research Lectures*, and *Album of Vernal Equinox* series. Therefore, besides applying special treatment to cooked rice paper, he also successfully created bold soldier, red flag, five pointed star, lattice window, banana leaf and other artistic symbols full of personal features based on his special personal experiences. These are the new themes and emotions, from which one sees the process of "socialism experiences" that entered traditional conventions and reshaped them, which is indeed a very rare transformation. Today, people rarely talk about the conventional representation problem in Chinese painting when touching Chinese painting and contemporary ink and wash. Some even think that Chinese art has always been emphasizing the conventional representation; it is like this in painting as in opera. I remember once Mr. Jiang Zhou said in an article that "the integration of the east and the west made Chinese traditional painting gone through an almost damaging development in the 20th century, when many precious excellent elements were lost for that; the lesson we got in it need to be reflected entering the new century." He also said that "development of Chinese traditional painting is a process solving the relationship between formula and reality, rather than cancelling the basic formula to rely on because of the existence of this relationship. No formula, no Chinese traditional painting." I agree to him a lot and here I want to supplement something: the artistic representation formula of traditional fine brush painting not only showed a special aesthetic assumption, but also formed a set of special representation principle and thinking logic. Heritance and development could only be gained through good training up to a precise extent. Looking back to those outstanding painting masters in the history of China, all of them had precisely grasped the traditional formulas before they could create their personal ones. With a

profound and overall understanding of the art history of China, Zhu Wei of course knows well about this point. His brilliance lies in that he can on one hand well inherit the representation formula of traditional fine brush painting, while on the other hand well re-construct the new tradition of fine brush painting with new subjects, new ideas and new experiences, which made him feel free to do brand new artistic manifestation.

In the new era emphasizing artistic invention and personality expression, Zhu Wei kept good tension between “creation” and “reservation” which well worth learning from for other painters. The inspiration he gives us is: when seeking for the expression of contemporary life, it's important to inherit and develop the traditional expression and make something new and better. Against the background that contemporary art is going on a globalized homogenous development, this pursuit of differentiation expression is even more important.

Viewing from the artist's creative pattern, we could rightfully think that the body of works in this exhibition is a reasonable progression built upon the past. However, except only a few works that has an authority figure in Chinese tunic suit standing at the foreground, most paintings either feature the large red drapery, or symbols such as Soviet Union sculptures, lamb, Taiho rock, or a hand. According to the artist himself, the red curtain suggests some kind of power arena—an inevitable social structure, hinting the unique ideology of contemporary China. While Soviet Union sculptures are great influence in the Chinese history; and Taiho rock symbolizes distinct Chinese culture and landscape; lambs represent generations of Chinese who are tamed...due to length restriction of this preface, I won't list them all here. For Zhu: “Although people nowadays are undergoing large scale economic movement and business progress, every industry is connected and every family has mortgage and car, everyone has access to the internet through computer and cellphone, but the foundation of this society has not changed a bit or improved—this, is the contemporary China, which leaves us helpless.” To understand Zhu Wei's work through this perspective, it is not hard to see that his recent installation, the creature with head of a human and the body of an animal, actually reflects the living condition of Chinese people: they all have the ubiquitous numb and dull expression. I am sure the audience can relate to the collectiveness of these sculptures. I especially pay much attention to his recent work, which is not included in this exhibition. In these works,

Zhu no longer use cooked rice paper or silk as media, but newspaper. While the themes are still red curtain and cultural symbols, the fact that they are painted on newspaper make these works even more conceptually significant. For those who are familiar with art history, masters Pablo Picasso and Paul Klee did the same thing before. However, while the latter two aimed to explore the different representations, Zhu uses newspaper to emphasize the power of media has over public opinions in contemporary society. It would be a mistake to think that Zhu is experimenting with media and art form.

In his *Album of Vernal Equinox* series, Zhu Wei borrows splendid fruits to communicate his hope for the future. As I understand it, perhaps this is his implicit reason for displaying seemingly contradictory works in one exhibition.

As preface.

10th January, 2016, at the Shanghai Yanan Hotel

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| Exhibition Title | Zhu Wei |
| Curator | Lu Hong |
| Artist | Zhu Wei |
| Address | Asia Art Center Taipei II No.93, Lequn 2nd Rd., Taipei 104, Taiwan |
| Exhibition Period | 23 rd April – 29 th May, 2016 |

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