

## 楊識宏：現在、永遠

### Chihung Yang: Now and Forever

唐納德·庫斯比 Donald Kuspit

片刻是單一孤立的，在茫茫冷漠時間中流逝的一角；然而在抒情上它是永恆的，至少藝術所提供的記憶是如此：楊識宏便是這樣在創作繪畫，通常以小樹枝或花朵的形式，既脆弱又完美的成長，記載這段在大自然中最重要又短暫的時刻。

藝術家和觀者鍛接在一起，嚮往一些經驗的恩典，而兩者共同面臨的問題在於走出現代主義，擺脫這個為了獲得而摧毀的思維，而且獲得的東西不管有多好，似乎不停在縮減。收穫是抽象的，具有多種面向：抽象方法涉及藝術家與作品的自我揭露，但也在一定的意義上有偏離現實的感覺，合理化成為智慧迷思，一種思想的諷刺必要性。藝術的自我分析在現代主義中自我宣告失敗而告終，失去藝術自身的現實；藝術的衰變成為想法的虛無美化，超越邏輯和感受而淨化（如同極簡主義和概念主義）。現在的問題是如何跨越結束：如何重新開始。

楊識宏告訴我們方法，一種古老的方法：慶祝現實誕生時刻的經驗。這種時刻世界看似異常真實，一些細節滲透、烙印不可磨滅的印記在我們腦海中，當一些陳舊的外觀變得出乎意料地直接靠近，因而崇高和精確超越其現實性。這樣頓悟的經驗實為少見，只是我們不願意承認罷了。這些頓悟在日常生活出現，在終將結束的人生中解救我們，也是自我價值感以及現實感的終極來源。他們讓人生看似值得，即使他們早已超越人生。藝術的任務，是在那些鮮少、不可預測的時候，不是臣服於某些意識形態，無論是世俗的還是神聖的，或於此相信自己從前的性格，<sup>1</sup>盡力為未來維護這種頓悟。藝術是讓他們繼續保持新鮮和完美的琥珀，保護他們不會因為分析以及時間流逝而造成衰弱。透過藝術獲得免疫，他們以一種自然絕對性，天真、莫測高深地延續下去。藝術再次透過真實體驗，不再感覺是合成或人工製造出來。

楊識宏的圖像是自然的頓悟，或更確切地說花的頓悟，那些大自然的特別勝利時刻。1994-95年的《花神殿》將這點發揮到淋漓盡致：多種開花植物圍繞畫布的四周，如幽靈般的葉子抑或是消逝的花瓣則在中心，暗示著空洞。但是楊識宏的空洞一點也不令人畏懼：充滿著異常的光亮，花的生命泉源。事實也是如此，每朵花都有光環

A moment – singular, isolated, a bit of passing time in the vast indifference – and yet, lyrically, it lasts forever, at least in the memory which art is: this is what Chihung Yang draws and paints, usually in the form of a sprig or flower, that fragile yet consummate growth, nature at its most vital yet transient.

The problem we – the artist and audience, welded together in their longing for some saving grace of experience – now face is to come out of modernism, which has destroyed so much for gains, that, however great, seem diminishing. The gains are abstract, in more senses than one: an abstract method involving the work's and artists' self-disclosure, but also a certain sense of remoteness from the real, which has been rationalized away into an intellectual myth, an ironical necessity of thought. Art's self-analysis in modernism ended in self-defeat, the loss of art's own reality – art's decay into the glorified nothingness of an idea, purified beyond reason as well as feeling (as in minimalism and conceptualism) – and the question now is how to get beyond the end: how to begin again.

Chihung Yang shows us the way, and it is an age-old way: the celebration of the moment of experience in which the real is born. It is the moment when the world seems real beyond its means, when some detail of the world invades and indelibly imprints itself upon us, when some stale appearance becomes unexpectedly immediate, and thus exalted and precise beyond its actuality. Such epiphanies of experience are more rare than we care to admit. They deliver us from the everydayness into which life inevitability dwindles. They are the ultimate source of our sense of value as well as reality. They make life seem to be worth the trouble, even as they seem to transcend it. Art's task, at those rare, and unpredictable times when it is not serving some ideology, be it secular or sacred, or for that matter its believe in its own a prior character<sup>1</sup>, is to preserve such epiphanies for posterity. Art is an amber in which they continue to be fresh and consummate, protected from the decay inflicted by analysis as well as time. Immunized by art, they endure innocently and inscrutably, with an unselfconscious absoluteness of being. And art, once again of use to real experience, no longer seems synthetic or tastes manufactured.

Chihung Yang's pictures are epiphanies of nature, more exactly, of flowers, those particularly triumphant moments of nature. "Temple of Flora," 1994-95 makes the point gloriously: a variety of flowering plants are arranged around the perimeter of the canvas, with a ghost-like leaf – a fading petal? – in the center, suggesting a void. No horror of the vacuum for Yang: it is filled with a remarkable luminosity, the source of the flower's life. Indeed, each flower is surrounded - outlines - by an aura of inordinately intense light, making it a mysterious revelation. At the same time, a subtle gloom suffuses the painting, fought off by the center's luminosity - but then it infects the leaf or petal that floats there, enhancing its givenness as much as the light. The interplay of light and darkness is a constant of Yang's imagery. Sometimes they form a startling, epic contrast, as in "Hymns to the Night," 1994-95, and "Requiem" and "Eclipsed Dream," both 1995, where they seem at odds, indeed, at war. At other times each lyrically blends into the other, creating a sensually rich yet delicate atmosphere, as in "Ascension" and "Tundra," both 1995. Yang's light and dark are not entirely natural, and, for all their immateriality, seem to have a certain density and weight. Yang's dynamics of light and dark may set the stage for his flowers, but it does far more than serve as local atmosphere. It is the abstract basis of the picture - a drama in which the flowers are caught up, but which has a mystical life of its own. They too become mystical surfaces - half material, half immaterial.

Yang's chiaroscuro surface shows the heightened awareness of the medium typical of modernist painting. But the medium is now a means to an experiential end - a perceptual and emotional epiphany - rather than an end in itself. Similarly, Supremacist geometry appears in Yang's pictures - "Interplay," 1995 and "Aurora," already mentioned, as well as "Four Pages," 1994-95, are prominent examples - but no longer as self-sufficient, pure, altogether definite form, as its atmospheric character suggests. Rather, geometrical form serves, as it did in traditional art, as an emblem of eternity, that is, of art's process of immortalization of life. In a sense, the process of embedding an epiphany in esthetic amber concludes in a sense of unchanging "geometrical" perfection. Thus Yang redeems the best features of modernist abstraction, giving them a new eloquence - esthetic and emotional significance - by subsuming them in a traditional rationale for art, a somewhat less involuted idea of art than the modernist emphasis on purity offered.

Yang is not naively traditional - unwittingly regressive. Rather in his determination to make art once again relevant not simply to experience but to the deepest experience of being, he consciously takes an Oriental attitude to experience. Modern Western artists, from the time of French Japonisme to John Cage's dependence on Zen, have used Oriental ideas, however generalized to counteract their own society's positivistic



枝桠 Branches 1996 Charcoal and acrylic on paper 76 x 56 cm

包圍著，非比尋常的光暈輪廓，貌似神秘的啟示。同時，一股細微的陰鬱瀰漫著整幅畫，由中央的光亮擊退了，但後來感染了漂浮在那裡葉子或花瓣，強化其已知性，不亞於光線。光明與黑暗之間的交互作用是楊識宏圖像中必備元素。時而，他們形成了意想不到、史詩般的對比，如《夜讚美詩》(1994-95)和《安魂曲》和《蝕夢》(1995)，似乎有分歧相左，或是像是在交戰。有時候，兩者抒情融為一體，創造感官豐富的微妙氣氛，如1995年的作品《升》和《苔原》。楊識宏的光暗並非完全自然，而且所有的非物質性似乎有一定的密度和重量。他利用光明與黑暗的互動關係，為他的花打造舞台，但遠遠超過營造氣氛的功能，而是圖像的抽象基礎，花所參與的一場戲，有著自己的神秘生活。同時也蒙上神秘的面紗，半物質、半非物質。

楊識宏的明暗法展現現代主義繪畫的典型：凸顯媒介。但是介質是一個經驗結束的手段，一個感性和情感的頓悟，而不是結束本

身。同樣，至上主義的幾何形狀出現在楊識宏的圖像中，《內韻》（1995）、稍早提到的《極光》以及《四頁》（1994-95）皆為明顯的例子，但不再是自給自足、純淨、乾脆明確的形式，不像氛圍所散發的感覺。相反，幾何形式在傳統藝術一樣，是永恆的象徵，藝術將生命永恆化的過程。就某種意義上，利用藝術美感的琥珀嵌入一個頓悟的過程，最終回到亙久不變的「幾何」完美感。因此，楊識宏取用現代主義抽象的最佳特性，賦予美感和情感意義的清新感，將其歸併在傳統藝術的理性之下，相較現代主義強調純度，另一種表現較不繁雜的藝術概念。

楊識宏也不是天真地傳統，一種不知不覺中的回歸。他決心使藝術再次不只單純是去體驗，而是有深刻經歷的存在，他有意識地用東方人的態度在探究體驗。西方的現代藝術家，從法國日本主義到約翰·凱吉對禪宗的依賴，都在運用東方的思維，但是以廣義社會實踐的態度去體驗，似乎停留在表面而已。楊識宏也有類似做法：他將西方的抽象納入中國山水畫對自然的冥想。但他給我們的可以說是景觀的片段和紀念品。他冥想自然收放，其豐富顯然一去不復返了，除了花，以有限、短暫的形式留存。楊識宏不將大自然視為理所當然，而是處於危險當中，夾在光明與黑暗的勢力之間的拉鋸鬥爭。我已說過很少發生和解，對峙是有可能的，但不會和平共處。楊識宏對於自然有一種現代感：已不可能再成為完整，只能認知所有的弱點，一種近於廢墟和迫切開花的含糊狀態。因此，楊識宏的圖像中帶有強烈的憂鬱，在他所有自然之美中：彷彿自然是令人難忘的記憶，一個執著的痴迷，最終幻想勝過現實，情緒上可以觸及，但無法實際碰觸。楊識宏在《遠方》（1995）中說，自然是一種病態的渴望對象。

這正符合這樣的心情，楊識宏的處理運用矛盾的組合：作為一種內容，自然溫柔地呈現出來；作為一種形式，自然是抽象方法，有著刻意的強硬態度。我認為這在1992年《秋海棠》和《內韻》兩幅精彩畫作中尤為明顯。這些植物已成為抽象的花紋，彷彿自己在密閉扭曲。有如示意般平坦地呈現，他們在抽象空間中懸浮，像是空中星斗，不再紮根大地，他們已經升上藝術天堂。儘管如此，他們的曲線極度明確，黑如大地，打著絕妙古怪的節拍。他們還是在生命汁液中增長，《內韻》的黃花、紅花，《秋海棠》的豐滿葉子都生意盎然。花既抽象又真實，部分被壓著但仍活著。楊識宏1995年的《內韻》再度使用的出色策略，運用手法將植物擺放在紙上的空白表面，在那裡洋洋得意漂浮著，像個黑色又不失活潑的鬼魂。

在平坦的表面上，已不再定義為氛圍，所以更加無限，豐足的光照著所有的空虛，楊識宏象徵宇宙符號的花變成透明。無論是以精神

attitude to experience, which seems to stay on its surface. Yang does something similar: he infuses Western abstraction with the Chinese landscape ideal of meditation on natural plenitude. But he gives us fragments and souvenirs of landscape, as it were. He meditates on the contraction of nature, its plenitude apparently gone forever, except in the limited, transient form of a flower. Nature is not taken for granted by Yang, but at risk - caught in a mithridatic struggle between the forces of light and dark. Reconciliation rarely occurs, as I have suggested - a stand-off yes, peaceful coexistence no. Yang has a modern sense of nature: it can never again be whole, only acknowledged in all its vulnerability - its ambiguous state of near ruin and desperate flowering. Thus the strong note of melancholy in Yang's images, for all the beauty of his nature: it is as though nature was a haunting memory - a persistent obsession ultimately more fantasy than reality, more emotionally than physically tangible. Nature comes "From a Distant Place," 1995, as Yang says, where it is a morbid object of desire.

As befits such a mood, Yang's handling involves a contradictory mix: as a content, nature is tenderly represented; as a form, it is approached abstractly, with a deliberate tough mindedness. This seems to me particularly evident in two wonderful drawings, "Begonia" and "Interplay," both 1992. The plants have become abstract arabesques, as though hermetically twisted upon themselves. Schematically and flatly rendered they are suspended in abstract space, like constellations in the sky. No longer rooted in the earth, they have ascended to artistic heaven. Nonetheless, their curves are vigorously defined, black as the earth, and exquisitely erratic rhythms. They still surge with the sap of life, as the yellow and red blossoms of "Interplay" and the even fuller leaves of "Begonia" indicate. The flowers are both abstract and real, partially pressed yet alive. The economy of means - placing the plant on the empty surface of the paper, where it triumphantly floats, a black yet lively ghost - is a strategy that Yang brilliantly uses again in the 1995 painting, "Interplay."

On the flat surface, which is no longer defined as atmosphere, and so all the more infinite - a plenitude of light for all its emptiness, the emblematic, cosmic character of Yang's flower becomes transparent. They hold their own, as both spiritual symbols and abstract forms, with Mondrian's chrysanthemums, and are more dynamic, if equally isolated: Mondrian's flowers seem on the verge of wilting, while Yang's continue to grow. Nonetheless, the canvas' emptiness is the ultimate amber, and Yang, in embedding his fragments of nature in it, turns them into memorable relics. But they seem more uncannily alive isolated in the void than as part of nature. Surrounded by absence, they acquire a larger-than-life presence and spiritual potential. Without the emptiness,

they are only partial epiphanies. It is only as lonely abstractions that they can mark the origin.

I am using ideology in the sense in which Charles Hanly does in *The Problem of Truth in Psychoanalysis* (New York and London, Guilford, 1992), p. 28, where he describes "ideological thinking" as "deriving reality from a priori principles." The ideology of art for art's sake, which is at the core of modernist abstraction, derives the reality of art from supposedly a prior principles of form. Ideological thinking is typically blind to any evidence - reality - that contradicts its a priori assumptions. It is a limited outlook, that, when it becomes a dogmatic system, which it inevitably does to defend itself, compels attention, despite itself, to the facts of reality it excluded, thus unwittingly undermining itself. Its own intransigence forces the return of suppressed evidence, in the case of art, the evidence of experience.

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#### About the Author

Donald Kuspit is one of America's most important art critics. He is Professor Emeritus of Art History and Philosophy at the State University of New York at Stony Brook and has received fellowships from the Fulbright Commission, the NEA, and the Guggenheim Foundation among others. He is a contributing editor to *Artforum*, *Sculpture*, the *New Art Examiner*, and *Tema Celeste Magazines* as well as editor of *Art Criticism*. Kuspit's art writing has always been highly imbued with philosophical underpinnings. His interest in the philosophy of art historiography and the theory of perception were early works in the field.

符號或抽象形式出現，他們自成一格，與著名荷蘭抽象畫家蒙德里安的菊花一般，但均等隔離卻更具動態：蒙德里安的花朵似乎在凋謝的邊緣，而楊識宏的花則是繼續成長。雖然如此，畫布的空白才是最終的琥珀，而楊識宏在其中嵌入他的自然碎片，把它們變成令人難以忘懷的遺跡。但他們看似驚人地活在隔離的虛無中，而非自然的一部分。四周的留白，令他們擁有非凡的存在感與靈性潛力。如果沒有空白，他們不過是局部的頓悟。因為寂寞抽象，讓他們從原點出發。

我所用的思想是查爾斯·漢利在《精神分析中真相的問題》(New York and London, Guilford, 1992 年出版, 頁 28) 中, 將「意識形態思維」視為「從先天原則衍生的現實」。為了藝術的藝術意識形態, 正處現代主義抽象的核心, 藝術現實理應從先天原則的形式衍生而來。意識形態思維通常沒有任何證據可以佐證, 也就是現實, 即違背其先天原則的假設。這是一個有限的展望, 即當它成為教條式的系統, 而這是必然發生以幫自己辯護, 迫使大家注意, 儘管本身對於現實排除在外, 卻不知不覺中削弱本身。這種不妥協的力量回歸壓抑的證據, 而在藝術中, 這個證據即是經驗。

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