

抽象中國

China, in the Abstract

艾瑞克·夏納 Eric C. Shiner

華人藝術家楊識宏長年來探索尋覓繪畫最原始的本質。15歲的時候，楊識宏讀到厄文·史東的經典著作《梵谷傳》，真正受到啟發，從而開啟他踏入藝術奇幻魔境的旅程。楊識宏極其複雜的抽象是由於他尋找繪畫的存在起源，企圖快速讓時間倒轉，捕捉藝術大師和遠古洞穴畫家的筆觸和顏色，但是透過他的手產生。在閱覽楊識宏大器的筆觸，令人神昏顛倒的色調，觀眾進入一個藝術史組成的宇宙，但又凌駕在中國傳統的短暫無常之下，所謂的浮雲流水。沒錯，站在楊識宏的作品前，宇宙似乎靜止不動，他畫布上的浮雲流水像是被凍結的時間，但每每又好似隨時在一眨眼間又會開始波動。楊識宏在畫布上運用顏料的觸感，進而成為一個魔法師，或者是一個擁有暫停動作超能力的現代文人。

以抽象畫來看，楊識宏的作品可以與歷史上許多大師相提並論，無論是西方還是中國。最需要注意的是，他最初的靈感不在於中國前輩的畫作或是傳統水墨畫，這些大大激發西方抽象表現主義的模式；

Chinese artist Chihung Yang has been on a decades-long search for the primal essence of painting. At the age of 15, Yang read Irving Stone's classic biography on Vincent van Gogh, *Lust for Life*, and duly inspired, thus set out on his own journey into the magical realm of art. Yang's deeply complex abstractions are the result of his search for the existential origins of painting, an attempt to rapidly backtrack through time, capturing the strokes and colors of both master artists and early cave painters alike, yet in his own hand. In reading Yang's sweeping brushwork and engaging color palette, the viewer is able to escape into a universe informed by art history, yet ruled by the Chinese tradition of the ephemeral, historically defined through the notion of "floating clouds and flowing waters." Indeed, in standing before Yang's work, it seems as if the universe has come to a standstill, that his clouds and rivulets of paint have been frozen in time, yet always, seemingly, ready to undulate at a moment's notice. Chihung Yang hence becomes a magician of sorts, or perhaps a modern day literati granted the impossible ability to halt motion through the tactile application of paint to canvas.

As abstract painting, Yang's oeuvre stands its own in comparison with the great names of the tradition, whether Western or Chinese. Here, it is important to note that his initial inspiration lies not in the work of his Chinese forebears and their strong tradition of ink painting, a mode of expression that vastly inspired the Abstract Expressionists in the West, but in Impressionism, namely the work of van Gogh. All too often, those writings on contemporary Chinese art fail to mention the fact that Western art history was both known and enthusiastically studied in art academies across Asia for much of the 20th-century. Many schools set up a division in their pedagogical methods, one focused on traditional ink painting, and the other on oil painting, deeply rooted as it was in the West. As a result, students in China and Japan (to name just a few places) who embarked down the road of working in oils were fully tuned into the history of the medium as it played out abroad, and were equally familiar with how their own predecessors used it to new ends. It is therefore correct to posit that a new and distinctively Asian mode of oil painting developed that was equally swayed by the tide of European and American art history, just as it found inspiration in the centuries-old methods of ink painting at home. Yang is a prime example of these two



抽象 #3 Abstraction #3 2012 Ink on paper 90 x 90 cm



奇峰 Magic Mountain 2007 Acrylic on canvas 70.5 × 160.5 cm

traditions seamlessly coalescing into one, and as such, stands as one of China's most successful abstract masters.

Over and above the historical and theoretical underpinnings of Yang's inspiration, the artist's technical application of paint is exceedingly skillful. The dialectic marks he leaves behind combine together into perfectly balanced compositions that hint at the grandeur of nature, or perhaps chaos unleashed and then reigned in. As a colorist, Yang mixes subtle monochromatic hues with bright bursts of paint used to accentuate. This fleeting appearance of color results in a feeling of life breaking through soil, or of rays of sun peeking through clouds. And in fact, certain organic structures do emerge from the otherwise abstract nature of Yang's painting: floral imagery in the form of buds, roots and veins seem to break through his otherwise lyric brushwork, life once again yearning to shoot forth. Although these traces of flora are by no means figurative, one must view them as the natural progression of Yang's project to capture the intrinsic nature of painting: he gives life to painterly form, just as Mother Nature gives birth to life. And in basing his abstractions in the vocabulary of nature, Yang thus creates paintings that seem to stand in for the birth of painting itself. Each picture thus become an allegory for the existential nature, indeed the very origins, of the medium of paint, and Yang in his own way becomes Creator, ruling over his own universe of line, form and color imploded into the abstraction of nothingness.

而是印象派，亦即梵谷的作品。很多時候，中國當代藝術的著作中忘記提到一個事實，即 20 世紀有許多亞洲各地藝術學院早已對西方藝術史有所認識，也積極研究，許多學校給學生分組，一組專精於傳統水墨畫，一個專精於油畫，如同在西方一樣根深蒂固。因此，走向油畫的道路的中國和日本學生（舉兩個國家來說），對於這個介質的歷史很熟悉，與西方其他學生一樣，對於前人將油畫賦予新意也同樣熟悉。因此可以正確斷定，一種新興獨特的亞洲模式油畫，其發展同樣受歐洲和美國藝術歷史的潮流所左右，同時也從千百年傳承下來的水墨畫中找到了靈感。楊識宏是這兩個傳統完美結合的最好例子，正因為如此，可謂最成功的中國抽象大師之一。

除了楊識宏靈感來源的歷史和理論基礎，他的技術應用極為純熟。他留下的對話標誌與平衡的構圖完美結合，訴說著大自然的壯麗，又或是混亂之後的沉澱。作為調色師，楊識宏利用微妙的單色色調，搭配明亮的顏色脈衝，營造突顯效果。這些稍縱即逝的色彩效果，好似生命力穿透土壤，或是陽光透過雲層灑落。而事實上，某些有機結構確實從楊識宏的繪畫抽象本質中浮現：用芽、根、葉脈的形式營造出花卉意象，似乎要突破他抒情筆觸，生命再一次渴望成長。雖然這些植物的痕跡絕非比喻而已，觀者必須將其視為楊識宏用來捕捉繪畫內在本質的自然進程：他為繪畫賦予生命，如同大自然孕育生命。把他的抽象性放入自然的語彙，楊識宏的畫作似乎

是繪畫本身的誕生。因此，每幅畫成為比喻的存在本質，顏料的媒介起源，楊識宏搖身成為造物主，操控他自己宇宙的線條、形式和色彩，勾勒出虛無的抽象。

將楊識宏的畫比擬當代中國藝術的現狀，人們第一眼看到他的作品可能會以為不合時宜，與現今備受追捧的社會現實主義，以及佔市場主導地位的毛澤東思想普普藝術截然不同。然而，在任何國家都一樣，任何特定時間點的典型或流行藝術模式，不過只是真正多元藝術生態中的其中一個面向，仍舊有許多其他具代表性的風格和方法。楊識宏之所以脫穎而出，跳出其他上述同時代的風格，因為他全然不追求風格這件事。楊識宏指出他很努力用「無風格的風格」來創作，以超越定義媒介的那些靜態術語和作畫模式。誠如上述所提，他似乎把繪畫史重新攪和一遍，產生一種全新格局，觸及媒介的起源點：美國抽象表現主義德·庫寧和洞穴畫家都被重新編輯成想法、觸感和線條，這些元素透過楊識宏的筆觸介入賦予新意。

若要將楊識宏的作品與同時代的藝術家相比，他的創作路線與藝術大師蔡國強有異曲同工之妙。蔡國強以火藥畫、爆炸藝術和大規模裝置藝術著稱，因為實驗用火藥作為藝術媒介，譽為煉金師藝術家。把火藥鋪設在紙上，並切割輪廓製作各式主題，然後點燃引信，特意選擇的形式就燒到底下的紙，蔡國強將很大一部分「創作」交給偶然的機會。圖像從火而生，宇宙四個基本元素之一。在同一條思考路線上，楊識宏一直都想將繪畫極簡，回到最原始存在的根源，與蔡國強渴望將當代藝術回歸到最起初的共同點，兩者雷同。雖然一個是用火來創作，另一個用顏料創作，兩人都期盼創造出普世的作品，或者更重要的是迫使觀者去探索創世神話、藝術史和生命本質等思索。有鑑於此，兩位藝術家可謂現代聖賢，指引歷史和生活的能量，將其轉化為視覺饗宴，散發著存在和崇高不朽的光彩。

關於作者

艾瑞克·夏納是安迪·沃霍爾藝術館策展人，擁有兩個藝術史碩士學位，分別於耶魯大學和日本大阪大學取得。2001年擔任橫濱三年展的助理策展人，他同時是活躍的作家和譯者，為 *ArtAsiaPacific* 特約編輯，也於紐約佩斯大學兼任，教授亞洲藝術史。

Relating Yang's paintings to the current state of contemporary Chinese art, one might at first look assume that his work is an anachronism to the much sought after Social Realism and Mao-infused Pop Art that so dominates the market today. However, as with all nations, the stereotypical or popular mode of art production at any given time is just one facet of a truly diverse art system in which all styles and methods are vastly represented. Yang stands out from the pack of his contemporaries working in the above-mentioned styles simply because he aims to negate style first and foremost. Yang notes that he endeavors to work in a "styleless style" so as to move beyond the static terminology and modes of painting that have come to define the medium. As mentioned above, he seems to swirl the history of painting into a wholly new composition that touches on the point of the medium's origins: de Kooning and cave painter alike redacted into ideas, touch and line, these elements themselves then reformulated via Yang's tactile intervention.

If one were to compare Yang's work to any of his contemporaries, it might be most fruitful to speak of him as working along similar lines as master artist Cai Guo-Qiang. Cai, best known for his gunpowder drawings, explosion events and massive installation art, has been called an alchemist cum artist thanks to his experiments with gunpowder as artistic medium. By laying down gunpowder on paper and using cut-out forms to achieve a given motif, then igniting the gunpowder so that the chosen forms literally burn into the paper below, Cai leaves a great amount of the actual "making" of his work to chance. Imagery is thus born of fire, one of the four primary elements of the universe. Thinking along these lines, and thanks to his stated desire to reduce painting to its primary and existential origins, Chihung Yang shares Cai Guo-Qiang's desire to boil contemporary art production down to its lowest common denominators. Although one works in fire, and the other in paint, both of them yearn to create works that are universal, and perhaps more importantly, that compel the viewer to think about such diverse subjects as creation myths, art history and life itself. In this light, both artists may be considered as modern day sages who channel the energy of history and life into visual compositions radiating in the existential and the sublime.

About the Author

Eric C. Shiner is Director of The Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh. He holds two Masters degrees in the History of Art, one from Yale University and the other from Osaka University. An assistant curator of the Yokohama Triennale in 2001, Shiner is an active writer and translator, a contributing editor for *ArtAsiaPacific* magazine, and adjunct professor of Asian art history at Pace University in New York City.