

Abstract Style in the Paintings by Victor Lai (2004)

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The tendency to simplify or abstract images from what we see in reality has been evident in the art of many cultures throughout history. It was not until the early years of the twentieth century, however, that an abstract art with no apparent connection to the external world began to emerge. This new, non-representational mode provided a thorough going challenge to the depictive tradition since the Renaissance, and, during the course of the twentieth century, it was refined and developed in a variety of ways.

The evolution towards this kind of abstract art did not occur in isolation but was one aspect of the social, intellectual and technological upheaval that took place at the turn of the twentieth century. From the discovery of X-ray to the development of the motorcar, science helped to create a very different perception of the world. Most importantly, the advent of photography in the 1840s initiated a critical re-examination of the artist's adequacy in creating a convincing depiction of reality. Eventually freed from the need to re-create external appearances, many artists turned to the depiction of more subjective, interior realities and emotions.

Among these artists, there was a group marked by a tendency to exploit the expressive possibilities of colors and lines, and art historians called their style 'Abstract Expressionism'. Besides the US, this style also prevailed in Europe after the end of the World War II. No matter where it is prevalent, Abstract Expressionism typically emphasizes strong colours and lines, and Victor Lai's painting style has been strongly influenced by this movement.

Colours have specific ways of functioning in Lai's works. They can have contrasting properties such as melancholy and happiness, serenity and vitality. They can also produce visual effects and simulate movement. Therefore, visual and perceptual effects of colours themselves have become the focus of most of his works. For instance, in 'Red Towel after Caravaggio', which he worked on from 2001 to 2003, Lai used contrastive colours such as red and blue to create an impressive visual effect.

In 'Inscape V' and 'Inscape VII', the color of black seems to create black holes in the paintings; in contrast to it, the bright yellow, glowing like a light source, seems to push out from the surface through the holes. In addition to this in and out pulsation, the white color between the black and the yellow further enhances the visual vigor of these two paintings. If audience looks at different parts of 'Inscape VII' for a whole, one may start to feel some vibrating energy in concentrated form coming out from the painting.

Besides excellent application of colours, movement of line was equally emphasized in Lai's works. After studying of Chinese ink painting in his early years, he has been influenced by the brush stroke of Chinese calligraphy,

especially in depicting the contour of outline. In the 'Fortune Teller' series (1999-2001), his mastery of the contour line is reminiscent both of the art of calligraphy of the East, and abstract style of Western Expressionism, which is a blending of East and West visual elements.

In spite of the range and variety of types of abstraction, there are two loose but fundamental categories of abstract art: geometric and organic (or lyric). Geometric abstraction employs regular or irregular geometric forms in its composition; while organic abstraction derives its visual language from the living environment, employing elements of which suggest growth and metamorphosis. In this exhibition, Lai artistically combines these two categories to convey his wishes and passion for the two cities in which he has lived.

Finally, I want to emphasize that, to Lai, 'abstraction' is not just a style, but also an attitude. It refers to a process of analyzing and simplifying reality and can take many forms: from extreme simplicity to great complexity; from forms which make absolutely no allusions to nature, to shapes and signs of which derive mainly from familiar reality. When I look at Lai's works, they remind me of what Zao Wou-ki, a renowned contemporary Chinese artist talked about his own works:

"Sometimes when I gaze at a completed work of mine, I am astonished to discover that it has expressed my anger, my tranquility, or the return to quietness after excitement. My paintings become an indication of emotions, since I have revealed my true feelings and state of mind without the least concealment. Neither do I need to find other subject matter nor am I obliged to use certain colours, as it is not any one particular colour which can appropriately express my fury, but the interrelationship between colours: the way how they blend with each other, how they are placed against each other, how they love and repel each other. I no longer have a preference for certain colours because all colours are equally good. Their goodness depend on how I combine them. I have also discovered that it is not necessary for me to paint objects and symbols which are confined by space as before, and there is no need to have boundaries between symbols and colours. I have also found out topics of representing space and depth through different combination of hues."

Extracted from Zao Wou-ki, 'Self-Portrait of Zao Wou-ki'

It is hoped that the audience will be able to wander within the realm of Lai's creativity and to feel his unique abstract style at the same time.

黎明海繪畫中的抽象風格 (2004)

林雪虹

有史以來，把現實生活中所見的事物抽象化的趨向在各種文化藝術中歷歷可數。然而，直到二十世紀初才開始出現與外在世界事物沒有明顯直接關連的抽象藝術。這種嶄新而非敘述性的模式徹底地挑戰自文藝復興時期以來的繪畫傳統，並在二十世紀當中得以更趨精練和多元化發展。

抽象藝術的產生並不是獨立出現的事件，而是在二十世紀轉變期中由社會、知識及科技巨變共同帶動而來的。從 X 光的發現以至摩托車的發展，科學使我們對世界有新的理解。其中最重要的首推 1840 年代出現的照相術，它使藝術家描繪現實的準確性重新受到評估。許多藝術家最終脫離了重視外在真實物象的需要而轉向描繪更主觀、內在的真實世界及情感。

這些藝術家中，有一類趨向於探索色彩和線條的表達能力，藝術史家稱他們的風格為「抽象表現主義」。除了美國之外，這種藝術風格亦在戰後的歐洲大行其道。無論抽象表現主義盛行於何方，這運動基本上都是強調色彩與線條，而黎明海的繪畫風格便深受其影響。

色彩在黎氏的作品中有特定的功能。它們可以含有對比的特質例如憂鬱和快樂、寧靄和活力，亦可以產生視覺效果及速激動態。因此，色彩本身的視覺及感官效果便成為他大部分作品的焦點。2001-2003 年的作品「卡拉瓦喬後的紅布巾」中的紅色與藍色便運用了色彩的對比特質達致強烈的視覺效果。

2002 年的作品「內景五」及「內景七」中的黑色好像在畫面上製造黑洞，而像火光般閃耀的黃色彷彿要穿過那些洞，從畫面上擠壓出來。除了這一出一入的躍動外，在黑與黃中間的白色亦進一步加強了這兩件作品的視覺效果。再仔細在「內景七」的各部份上看一會兒，觀眾或許會開始感受到一些濃烈而震盪的能量從畫面中併發出來。

除了精於色彩的運用外，黎氏的作品亦強調線條的流動。他早年曾專注於中國水墨畫的創作，對於線條的運用，尤其是輪廓的勾勒，頗受中國書法的影響。在 1999-2001 年的「占卜者」系列中，他的筆法精湛，既表現東方書法的神韻，亦演繹了西方表現主義的抽象風格，可以說是中西合璧。

儘管抽象藝術有不同的範圍並且種類繁多，它大致上可分為兩種基本類別：幾何及有機（或抒情性）。幾何抽象採用規則或不規則的幾何造型作為構圖，而有機抽象則從生活環境中獲取它的視覺語言，所包含的元素具有生長及蛻變的意義。在這展覽中，黎氏巧妙地把兩者合而為一，以抒發他對兩地的情懷與個人的祈盼。

最後，我必須強調「抽象」於黎明海來說並不單是一種風格，而是一種態度。它是分析及簡化真實的過程，並且以多種形式出現：由極端的簡化，至極度複雜的狀態；由不含任何與自然有關聯的形式，至主要源於大家熟悉的真實世界中的形狀及符號。欣賞黎氏作品的時候，勾起了近代著名畫家趙無極的一番話：

有時在凝視一幅已完成的作品時，我會吃驚地發現，它表現了我的憤怒、我的平靜、或是激動之後，再趨平靜。我的畫成為情感的指標，因

為我毫不隱諱的流露了我的感情和心境。我不需要去找其他的題材，也不必一定要用某種顏色。能適當表現我的憤怒的，並非是某一種色彩，而是色彩間的關係：它們如何混合、如何對立、如何相愛、如何相斥。我不再偏愛某些顏色，它們都一樣好，它們的好處是看我們如何去組合它。我也發現，不必像以前那樣，在空間中畫物體、畫符號，符號與色彩不必有界限，我也從不同色調的結合中，發覺空間深度的問題。

趙無極，《趙無極自畫像》

期望觀眾在欣賞黎氏作品之餘，亦同時漫遊於他的創作意念中，感受藝術家獨特的抽象風格。

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