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A Brief Analysis of "Painting Has No East or West" from the Perspective of No-Image

Li Ziwen

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By; Li Ziwen

If we cross over various countries, ethnicities, and genders, and simply look at people and art from the perspective of human beings, viewing art from the standpoint of no-image, then we are looking at art from the perspective of life. This is a real, transparent, and simple path. It should also be a path that clearly reveals the 优劣 *youlie* (relative merits), quantity, and changes of life energy. Artworks are, in this journey, an unexpected gift to individuals and society.

Everyone's life is extremely precious and has its own radiance. All sentient beings possess Buddha-nature. If one stops learning and cultivating, one cannot grow and become full; learning and cultivation are lifelong. Knowing no-image, and that the Dao follows nature, is the best foundation and method for learning, and can avoid many errors caused by obstinacy and misunderstanding. "The Buddha is at Vulture Peak, do not seek far away; Vulture Peak is only in your heart. Everyone has a Vulture Peak pagoda, so cultivate well beneath the Vulture Peak pagoda" [*Wumen Guan · Ordinary Mind is the Way*, by the Song dynasty Chan Master Wumen Huikai]. The poem clearly explains where Buddha-nature is and points out the place of practice. "The Buddha is at Vulture Peak, do not seek far away" can be used to interpret the source of art, namely life itself. From the perspective of life as essence, Eastern painting and Western painting are the same. They are the blooming of vitality, displaying and guarding life energy in different postures.

"Everyone has a Vulture Peak pagoda, so cultivate well beneath the Vulture Peak pagoda" points out the path of artistic growth and cultivation and the essential place. This process of cultivation should be without image; because of no-image there is image, and this image flows naturally, unobstructed and naturally changing and circulating, and therefore ceaselessly generative. In China's earliest Daoist concepts, more than two centuries earlier than the Buddhist theory of "no-mark" (*wuxiang* 无相), it was first written as "no-image" (*wuxiang* 无象), referring to having no traces, no specific form or concept. In Buddhism it is opposed to "having-mark," and is the essence that transcends all specific forms and phenomena, a true state beyond all appearances of the material world; the nature of things is like illusion, colorless and formless, without appearance.

In artistic practice, for example, Huang Binhong's 黄宾虹 view of "spirit resonance" (*qiyun* 气韵) is deeply rooted in the Chinese classical philosophical system. He believed that only the "people's learning" (*minxue* 民学) that values spirit can achieve Chinese cultural history. For example, his "spirit resonance and life-vitality (*qiyun shengdong* 气韵生动) emerging from heavenly completion (*tiancheng* 天成)" is a condensed expression of the "theory of spirit resonance" in traditional Chinese aesthetics, and is an artistic view of the Dao following nature. In his view, *qi* is the source of cosmic life, penetrating heaven, earth, and all things; *yun* is the rhythmic manifestation of the flow of *qi*; together they constitute the inner driving force of "life-vitality" [*Introduction to Art Studies* 《艺术学概论》, Peng Jixiang]. And "heavenly completion" refers to the Daoist thought of "non-action" (*wuwei* 无为). It is not passive accident, but the subject's alignment with the original state of nature after "cleansing the heart and contemplating the Dao," that is, the ultimate return of "humans follow earth, earth follows heaven, heaven follows Dao, Dao follows nature."

In Huang Binhong's late years, the "chaotic and dripping" (*hundun linli* 混沌淋漓) of the "accumulated ink method" (*jimo fa* 积墨法) in his theory of "five brushes and seven inks" is precisely the original appearance of the world, and is also where the expression of brush and ink lies. Through

the layered accumulation of brush and ink, and the different uses of brush methods, with rich brush and ink, between intention and non-intention, it presents the inner and outer, seamlessly natural vitality of mountains and waters. It presents the mountains and waters as immovable. It presents the interaction and natural circulation between human life energy and the life energy of the natural world.

The Western artist Giacometti: his signature elongated, thin human figures are the characteristic of his mature works, and can be seen as a psychological state of a person: full but suppressed love, fear, alienation, and anxiety tearing at each other, turning from the inner heart into a real image in the mind, breaking traditional realistic proportions with extreme proportions and forms of figures, with rough and uneven surfaces. The sense of motion and gravity within stillness, and static images, also suggest a tension of being dragged by gravity yet trying to move forward through the body's forward lean and unstable center of gravity. Conflicting emotions entangle and struggle with each other, fully expressed in his figures.

The philosophical content of his works is regarded as a model of existentialist art. Through his association with philosophers such as Jean-Paul Sartre, his sculptures have been interpreted as a profound expression of the individual's isolation in a vast society, the absurdity of existence, and the fragility of life. I rather believe that his works achieve a state of contradictory symbiosis and an unsolvable situation formed in the expression of contradictions suppressing each other, a certain emotional helplessness and isolation and the incomprehension and confinement of the inner and outer worlds. Giacometti eternalized conflict in a new appearance on his figures. Huang Binhong was different: no-image had already helped him complete the recognition, acceptance, and resolution of contradiction. The "accumulated ink method," chaotic and dripping, expresses the chaotic and dripping face of the world, and this is also the transparent path given by no-image from the beginning. Looking at the works, Giacometti evidently had not yet reached the stage of no-image; he was fixed in struggle, and the world began to appreciate his pain and struggle, and applaud. For the painter himself, this should be the cruelest. Paint quietly; in understanding this part one is lonely, in saving this part one is solitary; Van Gogh probably stopped at this node.

Now let us look at the important role of environment. Take the artist Yayoi Kusama as an example: the living environment is crucial to the artist's influence. Or rather, at different psychological stages of the artist, the choice of environment is very important. The culture and customs of the living region will affect the artist's life experience and works. Kusama's creation and environment are very typical. Her mother country is rigorous and full of rules, and evidently was not suitable for the early Kusama, who needed to pour out her inner repression. From an Eastern country to a Western country, she chose an environment more suitable and more able to cooperate with her spiritual growth and repair, and with a suitable rhythm and a suitable country reshaped her own life. Her works are also deeply rooted in personal spiritual experience, completing personal salvation.

As for the recognition, acceptance, application, and resolution of no-image: as the *Diamond Sutra* says, "no self-mark, no human-mark, no sentient-being-mark, no life-span-mark." It is not that they do not exist, but that one does not cling to all things before the eyes; the thing itself holds no image or attribute; marks arise from the mind, and things themselves have nothing to do with the mind. The mind views all things freely, and object and self are seamlessly one, spirit unobstructed and mutually known: "I see the green mountains as so charming, and expect the green mountains see me likewise." [Xin Qiji 辛弃疾 *He Xinlang · Shen Yi Wu Shu Yi* 《贺新郎 • 甚矣吾衰矣》] Therefore, my hand paints my heart, and my heart also understands the spirit of the green mountains, painting the spirit and energy of heaven, earth, and hu-

manity and the immense life energy, and unknowingly completing interaction and exchange with natural energy. This is also what Eastern and Western art share and have in common.

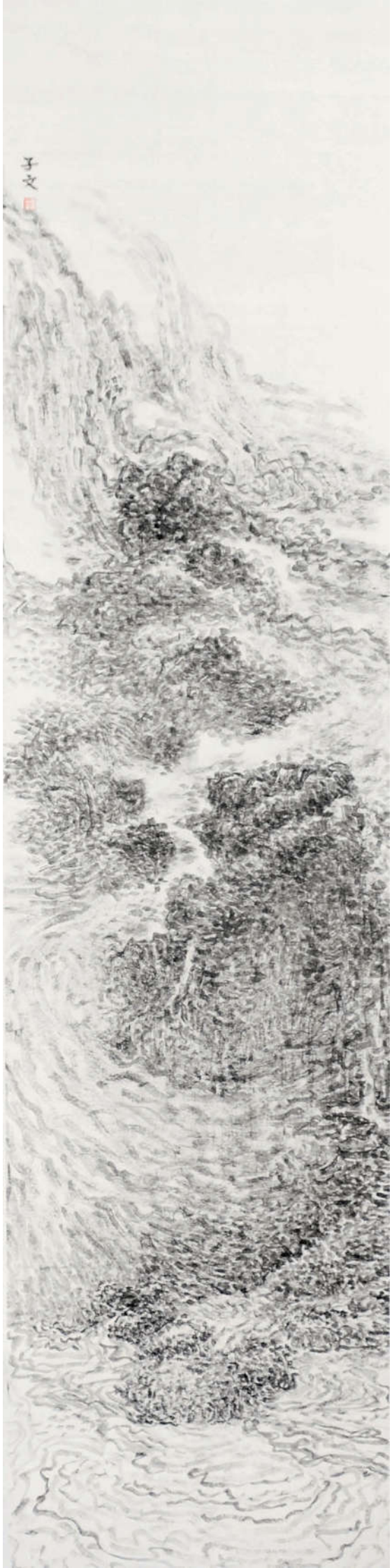
Cherish vitality, guard life energy. Use no-image to depict the various states of living beings, namely joy, anger, sorrow, and happiness. Recognize and use no-image to think about problems. As with the painters Yayoi Kusama and Huang Binhong mentioned above. Therefore, from life focused on art, from repairing life itself, and then returning to art. Such repetition and circulation is the simultaneous cultivation and sublimation of art and life. But no matter which art form, it is the presentation of vitality, the interaction of life energy with others, with nature, and with society. If any work lacks the infusion and sincerity of the subject's life experience, it will be difficult to truly reach the realm of "spirit resonance and life-motion"; the false cannot replace the true. The circulation of *qi* takes truth as its foundation; knowing no-image, one is ceaselessly generative. As the person approaches perfection, the work approaches perfection. When the person approaches the extreme and approaches perfection, and then reaches plainness and natural innocence, a round of growth of life and art is completed. Another way of saying it is from "seeing mountains as mountains, seeing mountains as not mountains, to seeing mountains as mountains" [Qingyuan Weixin 青原惟信 *Five Lantern Festival Record* 《五灯会元》] only then can one avoid nihilism and produce the most vigorous roots, the most luxuriant leaves, and the most beautiful fruits of vitality and art. This is also where Eastern and Western art can be the same; the true goal is consistent. However, artists themselves are on a path of constant growth; not all artists can complete the full process of seeing the green mountains, for example Van Gogh, Giacometti, Mu Xin 木心, and Zhang Ailing 张爱玲.

My mentor Mr. Cheng Dali 程大利 once said: "Art has no East or West. Eastern and Western art are at different points on the same circle."

Eastern and Western art likewise guard and nourish vitality; this vitality is like the roots of a tree, rooted in the earth. Branches and leaves grow toward the sky in their own ways, thriving, and bearing different fruits of East and West. Eastern and Western art are different yet the same; they are the same in observing and accepting the naturally completed world through no-image, and in viewing life with a free and at-ease mind. Ultimately they arrive at plainness and natural innocence.

Li Ziwen, *Confluence*, 138 × 77 cm 李子文 《汇》，138×77 cm





Cloud Stream of Pangu, 166 × 47 cm 《盘古云溪》，166×47 cm

从无象角度浅析画无东西方

文：李子文

如果越过各种国家、民族、性别，单纯从人的角度，以无象来看待人和艺术，就是从生命的角度看待艺术了。这是一条真实、通透、单纯的路。也应该是清晰展现出生命能量优劣、多少、变化的路。艺术作品则是在这个路途过程中，对于个人和社会的意外馈赠。

每个人的生命都是极其珍贵的，有着自己的光芒。众生皆有佛性。如果停止学习和修炼则无法成长和丰盈，学习和修炼是终身的。知无象，道法自然是最好的学习基础和方法，可以避免许多执拗和误解带来的错误。“佛在灵山莫远求，灵山只在汝心头。人人有个灵山塔，好向灵山塔下修”《无门关•平常是道》宋代道慧开禅师 在诗中说明白了佛性所在，指明了修行道场。“佛在灵山莫远求”可以用来诠释艺术的来源，即生命本身。从生命这个本质上说，东方绘画和西方绘画是相同的。是生命力的绽放，是以不同的姿态展示和守护着生命能量。

“人人有个灵山塔，好向灵山塔下修。”指出了艺术成长和修炼的道路和本质场所。这个修炼过程应该是无象的，因无象而有象，此象是自然流动的，通畅而自然变化和流转，因此生生不息。在中国最早的道教理念中，远比佛教 “无相”之说早两个多世纪，最早写作“无象”，指没有形迹、没有具体形象和概念。在佛教里与 “有相” 相对，是超越一切具体形式和现象的本质，是一种超越物质世界所有相状的真实状态，事物本性如虚如幻，无色无形，无有相状。

在艺术实践中，如黄宾虹先生的“气韵”观就深植于中国古典哲学体系。他认为重精神的民学才能成就中国文化史。例如他的气韵生动出于天成是中国传统美学中“气韵论”的凝练表达，是道法自然的艺术观，在他看来，“气”是宇宙生命的本源，贯通天地万物；“韵”则是气之流动的节奏化显现，二者共同构成“生动”的内在动力（《艺术学概论》，彭吉象）。而“天成”指道家“无为”思想。非被动偶然，而是主体“澄怀观道”后对自然本真状态的契合，即“人法地，地法天，天法道，道法自然”的终极回归。
宾翁晚年“五笔七墨”理论中“积墨法”的混沌淋漓正是世界本来面貌的，也是笔墨的表达所在。通过笔墨的层层叠加，笔法的不同使用。以丰富的笔墨，在有意无意之间呈现山水内在和外在浑然天成的生命力。呈现山水岿然不动。呈现了人的生命能量与自然界生命能量的互动和自然

流转。

西方艺术家贾科梅蒂，他的标志性的细长、瘦削人物造型，是他成熟期作品的特点，视为人的一种心理状态：饱满而被抑制的爱，恐惧、疏离、焦虑相互撕扯，从内心变成脑海中真实图像，以人物极端的比例与形态打破了传统的写实比例，粗糙不平的表面。静态中的动感与重力，静止的形象，也通过身体的前倾、重心的不稳定等方式，暗示出一种被重力拖拽又试图前进的张力。对立的情绪冲突互相纠缠、挣扎，在他的人物形象中充分表达出来。

他作品的哲学内涵被视为存在主义艺术的典范。通过与哲学家让-保罗•萨特等人的交往，他的雕塑被解读为对个体在庞大社会中的孤立、生存荒诞性以及生命脆弱性的深刻表达。我更认为，他的作品做到了在表达矛盾相互压制中形成一种矛盾的共生状态和无解情景，某种情绪的孤立无援与内外世界的不解和禁锢。贾科梅蒂把冲突以一种新的模样在他的人物形象上永恒了。黄宾虹不同，无象已经帮助他完成了对于矛盾的认识、认可和解决方法。“积墨法”混沌淋漓地表达着世界的混沌淋漓面貌，这也是无象从开始就给予的通透之路。看作品，贾科梅蒂显然还没有走到无象这个环节，他在挣扎中定格，世界开始欣赏他的痛苦和挣扎，并且鼓掌。对于画家本人，这应该是最残忍的。安静地画吧，在理解这块是寂寞的，在拯救这部分是孤独的，梵高大约就是在这个节点停了下来。

再看看环境的重要作用。以艺术家草间弥生为例子，生活环境对于艺术家的影响至关重要。或者说艺术家在自己不同的心理阶段，环境的选择非常重要。生活地域的文化和习俗会影响艺术家的生命体验和作品。草间弥生的创作和环境就非常典型。她的母国是严谨而富有规矩的，显然，不适合初期需要倾泻内心压抑的草间弥生。从东方国家到西方国家，她选择了更适合、更能配合她心灵成长与修复的环境，以适合的节奏，适合的国度重塑了自己的生命。她的作品也深深植根于个人心灵的体验，完成个人救赎。

对于无象的认识、接纳、运用和解决问题。如《金刚经》讲　“无我相无人相无众生相无寿者相”，不是没有，而是不执着眼前一切，事物本体不持有任何形象、属性，相由心生，事物自身和心无关。心以自由观万物，物我浑然一体，神畅通而相知：“我看青山多妩媚，料青山见我应如是”[辛弃疾《贺新郎•甚矣吾衰矣》]，故而，我手绘我心，我心亦懂青山之神韵，绘就天地人的精气神和巨大生命能量，于不知不觉中完成与自然能量的互动和交流。这也是东西方艺术的相同相通。

珍爱生命力，守护生命能量。以无象描绘生命体的各种状态，即喜怒哀乐忧。认识和使用无象思考问题。如上面提到的画家草间弥生、黄宾虹。所以说从生活专注于艺术之上，从修整生活本身，再复归于艺术之上。如此往复循环，便是艺术和生活同步的修炼和升华。但是，无论哪种艺术形式都是生命力的呈现，是生命能量与他人，与自然，与社会的互动。任何作品若缺乏主体生命体验的灌注和真诚。便难以真正抵达“气韵生动”之境，假无法替代真。气之流转以真为底蕴，知无象而生生不息。人趋臻，作品趋臻。人趋极、趋臻，而后平淡天真，就完成了生命和艺术的一个成长回合。另外一种说法就是从看山是山，看山不是山，到看山是山[青原惟信《五灯会元》]，才能避免虚无，生出生命力和艺术最茁壮的根，最茂盛的叶，结最丰美的果实。这也是东西方艺术能够相同的地方，真正的目标是一致的。不过，艺术家本身是在不断成长的路上，不是所有艺术家都可以完成看青山的一个完整过程，比如梵高、贾科梅蒂、木心、张爱玲。

导师程大利先生曾说过：“艺无东西方。东西方艺术处在一个圆圈上的不同点位”。

东方和西方艺术同样在守护和滋养着生命力，这生命力如同树根，扎根在大地中。枝和叶向着天空各自生发，茁壮成长，结出不同的东西方不一样的硕果。东西方艺术不同而同，同在以无象观察和接纳天成的世界，以自在心看生活。最终抵达平淡天真。



At the Beginning of Chaos, 61 × 103 cm 《混沌之初？，61×103 cm



Heavenly Ladder, 138 × 77 cm 《天梯》， 138×77 cm



At the Beginning of Chaos, 103 × 61 cm 《混沌之初》，103×61 cm

