

神话衍行者的文化坐标

文：宋振熙

我们的惯性爱好决定着人们习惯用创造力来评价一个艺术家的艺术天赋和水准。然而在艺术发展的脉络中，要想将创造力展现的更加“结实可感”，为学者们所信服，则不得不去挑战所谓的“传统”。绘画被看作“传统”的艺术形式，此时它已很难激发人们对“创造力”的苛刻诉求，满足人们对经验感知的多样刺激。在传统中坚持挑战“传统”，确实对于一个艺术家来说，来的有些疯狂。可是，既然选择了这个创作脉络，则必然有可能性存在其中。

看过龚旭作品的人，相当一部分会同意我上文中对其“疯狂”的形容，相比较那些避重就轻，回避绘画历史性的艺术家来说，他显得有些勇敢，有些执着。从学院走出，到今天的展览，龚旭的绘画脉络相当清晰，这归功于他找寻到了对绘画理解的准确坐标，以及更加长远的艺术诉求。沿着其创作的作品一路看来，龚旭的作品中强调文本解构和改造，其对象就是中外传统文化经典的叙述。在这里，我们看到的是一个具有野心的艺术家，如何在潜意识下展现中西方文化矛盾冲击下成长的一代人之文化身份和境遇。很多时候，他的绘画叙事中强调被物化的文化符号，他们被解构、改造和并置在一起，形成更加具有文化爆破感的图像面貌，那些希腊神话、山海经、西湖传说、日本动漫、明治维新文化等，全都揉合在其作品之中。仅在本次展出中的《十二生肖系列》中，我们就能看到那些任何被创造出来的图式都有其文化脉络的渊源以及基于此的想象与缔造。这种叙事上的重组和想象，将绘画的图像直面文本性的文化传承，让文化坐标建立在对神话的“反向”推衍之上，这让我们想到，如果对于人们来说，进化论的存在是科学领域合法的论证成果，那么时代的叠演应当给予那些貌似经久不变的神话寓言以进化的可能。任何知识体系的文本都将随着历史的延续而重新焕发它的魅力，那么这需要有艺术家用个体的经验感知承载当代性的问题，去对传统文本给予新的活力。从这一点上，龚旭的“偏执”给我们了很好的路径演练。

仅从创作文本上追寻对传统的改造，对中西文化的交合来断定龚旭艺术创作的丰富性，未免有些单薄。在我们认真研究起绘画语言的前提下，不难发现，他在绘画本体上也走上了改造“历史”，演推“中西”的道路。从早期《断塔记》系列、《爆破公司》系列，到《鸟人》系列、《正直家》系列，再到如今的《十二生肖系列》，在对绘画语言的呈现上，我们看到了艺术家对传统绘画经验程式上的尊重和研习。这里有古希腊雕塑的造型，文艺复兴时期绘画的形式语言，中国文人画的山水处理、日本浮世绘的程式感、中国画人物造型的方法等等，这些并不是一个“善绘者”对自我绘画技法语言的空洞炫耀，而是结合其对传统文本叙事结构改造之余对传统绘画语言的一次致敬。这也客观而真实的展现了一位对绘画能力有着强有力把控的艺术家，同时为我们消解了传统绘画语言和我们之间的时空距离感，或许这就是绘画当下的某种意义。我们需要的不是生硬的技法临摹，更多时候，绘画者需要帮我们找寻如何存储传统技艺于时代文化的“社会银行”中。在这个过程中，一些带有创新方式的综合材料技法，也参与到了对传统绘画技艺的改造中来，展现出非传统束缚的创造性面貌。龚旭在这个层面上逐步清晰的建立了艺术坐标向。

从文本还是绘画本体上对传统的态度仅是理解龚旭绘画面貌的一个基础。在2015年，龚旭参加了策展人付晓东女士在UCCA的“后传统之起源”展览，这次展览准确的将其作品的历史情境梳理的相当清晰。在我看来，当文化同一性不断抹去差异化的时候，作为“起源”于这个抹平时代边界的80后艺术家，龚旭有着自己的艺术诉求。所谓文化同一性，在某个角度的表征上

就是对流行文化的高度认同。许多80后艺术家一面难以抵挡对消费文化背后的流行统治，另一方面也很难自我抹去对文化传统的深切记忆。一代人的文化矛盾在社会的各个层面会迸发出不同的形态。艺术创作也是一个方面。利用流行符号和时尚图式做艺术的艺术家人层出不穷。然而，能够恰到好处的秉持传统文化和流行符号的艺术家可以说并不是太多。“后传统”在某个角度上说，正是一次“即时文化”对传统文化的重新激活。如何把“墓碑化”的传统文化变成当代人的“手伴”式文脉，确实给龚旭的创作提供了新的坐标。他一直认为，在传统的历史文本里，神话和语言，亦或者是传说和传记等，这些在历史的特殊时刻都曾以流行时尚的姿态存活过。正是这样的理解，一切被去时间化的图像得以在同一个符号脉络里重组并被同一化，在没有历史性的束缚下，我们能够很好的找到继承传统又链接当代的方式。

消费时代的游戏规则常常压制着尊重传统文化脉络的梳理者，作为一手维系传统，一手游艺世俗流行文化的龚旭来说，必须借助一个时代的规则去放大传统文化的影响力。在这样的艺术创作中，龚旭的作品给我们带来了两种策略方式。其一是形式的跨界。我们可以在这次展览中看到，一个所谓传统的绘画者如何和时尚的服装品牌合作，用跨领域的方式诠释那些称作“神话”的时尚符号如何与自身的绘画语言发生关联。同时，从他的绘画中提炼出来的符号图式，如何成为一个“手办”雕塑，让艺术作品的元素转换艺术形式和语境走入大众生活，从招财猫进化成为招财虎，让新的一代人有了自己的流行符号，这个符号滋生于传统的田野中。龚旭相信自己的作品是一个完美的摆渡者，将传统文化的经验隔阂，在当代的流行文化下被处理的更为平滑、立体。龚旭变换创作领域、手段和方式，更像是从一个衍行者走向布道者，选择更为有效的方式去填补信仰缺失之下的当代文化行为，为更多人找到文化归属感。第二个方式则是选择一种创作内容的模式，即带有破坏性和冲击力的矛盾事件。在他的作品中，打斗、冲突和暴力或许成为了一种普遍的“标准配置”。视觉的冲击力随之而来的给了观者以强有力的知觉经验。这一方面是前文所提到的所谓文化冲突背后的显性表征，而另一方面看，这或许更像是一代人对意识形态的转移表达。比起后89崛起一代的艺术家，80后的艺术家些许少了一些意识形态上的强烈诉求。而这样的规避，带来的是艺术家在某种图式和题材上释放。龚旭是这一代艺术家的代表，其作品的题材也得到了这个时代境遇下青年们的极度认同和关注。当我们对所谓“重口味”保持好奇和尴尬之余，我们同时也对龚旭的作品表达了向传统文化敬畏和欣赏的情感。

前些日子，我常看一些讨论我们何以追忆青春的研究书籍。突然发现，在这个提高运转周期和效率的社会机制中，我们个体的历史性已经被击碎和剥离。在我们的经验中，难以在合理的周期中找寻个人文化经验的归属。于是，在这个年代中，我们更加需求的是建立相应的文化坐标用以给每个人以文化身份的参照。龚旭的艺术作品正是所谓的将传统文化改造并衍行后，树立起的文化坐标。它找到了文化脉络下的当代合法性，重新获得来给予“本土”文化脉络背后的“潮”叙述。找寻到这个后，我们在观看他的作品时，总会找到某种文化的熟识记忆，寻找到那份文化的安全感。从另一个角度来说，龚旭的艺术作品提示着当下艺术家的个案研究领域。当学术界总是会规避所谓传统和当代、东方和西方的陈旧话题时，龚旭的艺术个案给艺术学者们以一个踏实的落脚点，向他们告知对于一个所谓空泛的话题下，如何依托这个“实处”研究出一些问题。在艺术的研学界，众所周知的课题，研究的人多了则被悬置和回避了起来，正是如此，我们常常会失去证明这个时代存活方式的机会。比起如龚旭一般的艺术家，我们这些带着厚重学识经验的学者们，更应该建立起一个清晰的文化坐标，用以真切的照亮如今混沌迷离的艺术现象。

Cultural Coordinates of a Myth Promoter

Written by Song Zhenxi

Our inertial preference decides that people are used to evaluating an artist's talent and standard by his or her creativity.

Nevertheless, during the period of art development, if you want to present your creativity more "material" and convince scholars of it, you have to challenge the so-called "tradition".

Painting is regarded as a "traditional" form of art. Nowadays it can hardly motivate people's severe aspiration towards creativity, as well as satisfy them in perceiving various experience. To an artist, it really sounds a little crazy to stick to challenging the "tradition" as a part of the tradition. However, since one has chosen this creating path, there must exist possibility inside.

Most of the people who have appreciated Gong Xu's works will agree me with my description towards his crazy above. In contrast to those artists who take an easy way and avoid the historicity of painting, he seems some kind of brave and persistent. From graduation to today's exhibition, Gong Xu has a quite clear painting path. This should be attributed to his accurate understanding of painting and long-term aspiration to art. If we analyze along all the works he has created, they emphasize on the deconstruction and transformation of text, whose object is the narrative of traditional cultural classics home and abroad. Here we see how an artist with great ambition subconsciously presents the cultural identity and situation of the generation growing under the contradiction and conflict of Chinese and Western culture. Most often, his painting narrative emphasizes materialized cultural symbols. They are deconstructed, transformed and integrated together, thus forming a picture with stronger sense of cultural explosion. Those Greek myths, Shan Hai Jing, West Lake legends, Japanese animations, Meiji Restoration culture, are all integrated in his works. Just from the Chinese Zodiac Series in the exhibition, we can see that any created pattern has its origin of cultural development, as well as imagination and creation based on this. This kind of recombination and imagination in narrative makes the picture directly face the textual cultural heritage, at the same time build the cultural coordinates on the reverse derivation from myth. It reminds us that, if the existence of evolution is the argumental result of the legitimacy of science, the changing times should give those seemingly everlasting myths and fables a chance to evolve. Texts in any knowledge hierarchy will glow with their charm again along with the extension of history, so artists need to carry the contemporary problems by personal experience and perception, in order to revitalize the traditional texts. On this point, Gong Xu's persistence shows us a good practical path.

It is not enough to judge the richness of Gong Xu's artistic creation only in aspects of seeking transformation of tradition and integration of Chinese and Western culture from texts. Based on our study on painting language, it won't be hard to find that he is on the way of changing "history" and developing "Chinese-Western culture" on painting itself. From Broken Tower Series, Demolition Company Series on early stage, to Birdman Series, Master of Integrity Series, then to today's Chinese Zodiac Series, we can see his respect and study on the experience of traditional painting as an artist in presenting painting language. Here is

the modelling of Ancient Greek sculpture, the formal language of painting in the Renaissance, the way of painting landscape of Chinese Literati paintings, the sense of formulation of Japanese Ukiyo-e, the Chinese method of drawing figures and so on. Those are not an excellent painter's hollow showing off his painting skill and language, but a salute towards the traditional painting language after his transformation of the traditional text's narrative structure. It also objectively and actually shows an artist who takes strong control of his painting ability, in the meantime erases the distance between us and traditional painting language. Maybe this is some kind of meaning for painting nowadays. What we need is not stiff technique imitation, but many a time, painters should help us find how to store traditional skills into the "society bank" of contemporary culture. During this process, some innovative techniques with comprehensive materials also take part in the transformation of traditional painting skills, and shows the creative facet unbounded by tradition. On this level, Gong Xu gradually establishes his artistic coordinates clearly.

Attitude towards tradition from text or painting itself is just a base to understand the painting features of Gong Xu. In 2015, Gong Xu attended curator Mrs. Fu Xiaodong's "Origin of Post-Tradition" exhibition in UCCA, which combed the historical situations of his works quite clearly. In my opinion, as an after-80s artist "originating" from the boundary of erasing age, when cultural identity continues to erase difference, Gong Xu holds his own artistic aspirations. This so-called cultural identity, is a high recognition of popular culture from a certain angle of appearance. On one hand, many artists of the after 80s generation can't resist the consumption culture behind the popular culture's governance, on the other hand, it is difficult to erase deep memories of cultural tradition themselves. Cultural contradictions of one generation will burst out in different forms at all levels of society. Artistic creation is one of these aspects. Artists who use popular symbol and fashion pattern for art abound, nevertheless, few of them can maintain the balance of traditional culture and popular symbol well. From some point of view, "post-traditional" is a reactivation of "real-time culture" to traditional culture. How to turn the "tombstoned" traditional culture into modern people's "souvenir" type of context, this problem indeed provides Gong Xu with new coordinates for his creation. He always thinks that, in the traditional historical texts, myths and language, or legends and biographies, all of these once existed in a popular style at a special moment in history. Based on this understanding, every long-lasting image can be recombined and assimilated in the same symbol vein, and without historical shackles, we can find a good way to inherit tradition and link the contemporary age.

The game rules of consumption age often suppress the combers who respect traditional cultural development. For Gong Xu, who maintains tradition and plays with the secular popular culture at the same time, he must rely on the rules of age to enlarge the influence of traditional culture. In such kind of artistic creation, Gong Xu's works bring us two strategies. One is the cross-border of form. In this exhibition, we can see how a so-called traditional painter cooperates with fashion clothing brands, and he interprets how those fashion symbols called "myth" associate with his own painting language in an interdisciplinary manner. Meanwhile, as for the symbols and patterns refined from his paintings, how to become a "souvenir" sculpture, making the elements of art works transform their forms and contexts to step into public life; how to evolve from Lucky Cat to Lucky Tiger, giving the new generation its own popular symbol: this symbol is born in traditional fields. Gong Xu believes his works are perfect ferryman, and they will deal with the experience barrier of traditional culture more smoothly and stereoscopically under the contemporary popular culture. More

like a preacher rather than a promoter, Gong Xu changes his creating fields, means and methods, chooses a more effective way to fill the contemporary cultural behaviors with absence of belief, and discover culture belonging for more people. The second is selecting a mode of created content, by contradictory events with destruction and impact. In his works, fighting, conflict and violence may have already become a general "standard configuration." Visual impact brings viewers powerful perceptual experience consequently. On one hand, it is the dominant appearance behind the so-called cultural conflict mentioned previously, and on the other hand, this is probably more like the expression of a generation's shift of ideology. Compared to the artists rising after 1989, the after-80s artists maybe lack some strong ideological aspirations. And such circumvention brings the artists' release of some patterns and themes. Gong Xu is the representative of this generation, whose themes of works are highly recognized and focused by young people under the circumstance of this age. Not only are we curious and awkward about the so-called "heavy flavor", but also we express respect and appreciation to traditional culture for Gong Xu's works.

Recently, I often read some study books discussing how we can remember our youth. Suddenly it occurs to me that, in this social mechanism of improving operation cycle and efficiency, the historicity of individual has been crushed and peeled. From our experience, it is difficult to find a belonging to personal cultural experience within a reasonable period. Thus, in this age, what we need more is to establish corresponding cultural coordinates for giving everyone a reference to his cultural identity. Gong Xu's art works are so-called cultural coordinates established after transforming and promoting traditional culture. It finds the contemporary legitimacy of culture development, that is regaining to give out the "in" narrative behind the "local" culture development. After finding this, when we appreciate his works, we will always find some kind of familiar cultural memory and the sense of security of culture. From another perspective, Gong Xu's works remind the case study field of contemporary artists. When the academia always circumvents the so-called old topic of traditional and modern, eastern and western, Gong Xu's artistic cases will give the scholars a steady foothold, which could inform them how to rely on this "practical example" to work out some problems under a so-called vague topic. In academic research of art, a well-known issue will be suspended and avoided because too many people are studying on it. That is why we often lose the chance to prove the survival way of this age. In contrast to artists like Gong Xu, we scholars with profound knowledge and experience should establish a clear cultural coordinate, in order to illuminate the current chaotic and blurred artistic phenomenon.