

XIE FAN: THE ETERNAL BACKGROUND 谢帆：永恒的“背景”

谢帆在绢上绘画所强调的视觉性基础，既有生理性的一面，也有文化性的一面。如果只就文化性的一面而言，谢帆所说的最本质的“传统”实际上是指人类与自然之间的未被异化的关系。

Xie Fan's silk paintings place a heavy emphasis on their visual foundations; while they do have a physiological aspect, there are also cultural aspects involved. If we confine our discussions to the cultural aspect, what Xie Fan refers to as the most intrinsically “traditional” is in fact a relationship between humanity and nature that has not yet been eroded.

一般来说，绘画的三维空间实际上是在二维平面上的一个假象，它没有真正的深度。但我发现如果在半透明的材料上绘画，比如我画一片黑色的山，它实际上是平面的，但因为材料的透光性，光会从底部反射到画面的背面，逾越了以往的图底关系，山看上去会有强烈的立体感。又比如颜色，我画中的蓝色，从绘画传统的角度来看是一种很深的色调，但假如在一张白纸上画蓝色，你会发现它其实是一种很璀璨、很亮的颜色，如果画在半透明的材料上，蓝色就会像湖水一样接受自然的光源，形成一种很自然的湛蓝，而不是那种在画布上通过明暗对比出的蓝色。在视觉上，我希望画面能接近我想要的安静、自然的感觉，在题材的选择上也一样，而绢地的材料正好与这些相匹配。

我的绘画语言更接近于视觉化的像素。比如我画山的点，类似于噪点。我是从远山开始画，最后才到满山。开始的远山其实是在模仿一些粗糙的图像质感，是很影像感的，不管是像照片，还是像视网膜上呈现的图像，它都是平面的，都是一种基于光学的视觉，慢慢的我总结出，想画越近的山，点状的东西可能就越大。我画完这些以后，慢慢开始看一些中国传统绘画里的图像，我觉得找到了一些共同的联系。我画的这些东西，比如山、石、云、水等，古人也画过，对象从来没变过，我只是以我的视觉经验画了古人也画过的东西，就像宋人画的山，和明代人画的山有区别一样，时代的审美习惯不同，人的视觉改变了，但我觉得对于这些对象的兴趣，其实是一个最本质的“传统”。

我之前做很多尝试，经历了很多个绘画阶段，包括语言、题材，后来意识到一个问题，艺术好像变成刻意性地解决一些课题，但真正的绘画实际上是应该去掉那种表面的叙事，去掉后又应该靠什么来支撑，找不到就变得好像很无意义，但这种无意义就完成了很大的话题。当我把叙事全部去掉以后，剩下的东西好像更接近于我自己，像冥想的时候，所有的人事、所有的是非都不存在了，只有一个空空的环境。我觉得这种环境可以回应现代人的一种心理焦虑。大家每天忙着去找一些新的东西、一些话题、一些舆论的焦点，然后去吸引别人的注意，实际上在这些所有事情的背后存在的东西，往往没有人关注它。其实我就是把表面的东

西去掉了，然后认真地去观察了一下舞台的背景。

我之所以离开北京回到绵阳，一方面有家庭的原因，但更主要的是，我的绘画本来就是在强调去中心的观念，而真正的观念是一种新的生活方式，我觉得应该远离北京这个中心，应该更接近我想要的安静、空旷的环境，我的目的只是画一张画出来，而不是在哪个地方画。在北京，你想找到这种安静，可能要付出昂贵的代价，但是在这种三线城市，它可能到处都是这种环境。每个地方都有它永恒不变的东西，绵阳是我的原点、出发点，所以我看这里就更有感情。我可以去欧洲拍几个山来画，但对我而言，这样的自然环境是一个陌生的、新鲜的东西，从物质的本性上不是我想要的东西。绵阳这里的山、水、气候我都很适应，都很熟悉，这个城市也在变化，我能感觉到哪个地方在变化，感觉到这些变化以后，我才知道什么东西是最珍贵的。比如到了春天和秋天，农民扛着农具在田里面一弯腰一犁地，这种农耕从古至今都是不变的，一下就让你觉得什么政治、历史都不存在了。

谢帆，《远山》，2012年，绢上油画，90 × 160 厘米
Xie Fan, *Distant Mountain*, 2012, oil on silk, 90 x 160 cm

GENERALLY SPEAKING, ANY sense of 3D in a painting is a 2D facade that lacks genuine depth. But I have discovered that if, for example, I paint a black mountain on translucent material, it may still be on a flat surface, but the transparent nature of the material will allow light to leach through the back of the painting, allowing the painting's reverse to transcend its original function and making the mountain seem intensely 3D. To take the blue in my paintings as another example: according to painting tradition, blue is a very deep hue, but if one uses paints it on a piece of white paper, one discovers it is actually extremely bright and resplendent. When that same blue is painted on translucent material, it seems to soak up natural light sources just as the water in a lake does, creating a beautifully natural azure that is worlds away from the contrast of light and dark of a blue painted on canvas. I aim for the visual effect of all my paintings to approach a sense of peace and nature; my choice of subject matter is the same, and the use of silk complements this perfectly.

My painting language, however, is rather pixelated. For example: when I paint a mountain, it looks like noise. I start painting from the most distant mountain, and continue until the silk is filled with mountains. But beginning



with the most distant mountains can in fact be seen as a rather rough graphic imitation; it has a filmic sense. Whether like a photo or an image that appears on the retina, the mountains will always be flat, because they will always rely on optics. I gradually came to the conclusion that the closer I wanted the mountains to be, the larger the dots would have to be. I slowly began to find a common connection with the images in traditional Chinese painting. I painted objects that the ancients had painted: stones, clouds, water, and so on. Such objects never change; I am simply drawing on my own visual experience to paint them. The mountains people painted in the Song are different to the mountains of the Ming; each era has a different aesthetic. People's visual habits change, but I believe that an interest in objects such as these is still an intrinsic tradition.

In the past, I have tried many different things and gone through many different artistic phases, making changes to everything from language to subject matter. After a while, however, I became aware of a problem: it seemed my art had become a way to painstakingly resolve different problems, even though real painting should seek to eliminate such superficial narrative. With narrative eliminated, something else must support the work; if nothing can be found, then

the work will appear to be without meaning—though in fact such meaninglessness has already solved a very big problem. But after I completely dispensed with narrative, what remained seemed much closer to me. It is like meditating; everything around me disappears, and I find myself in the void. I believe this sort of environment can respond to the psychological anxiety of people today. Every day, we busy ourselves with finding new things, new topics, the freshest gossip, all so we can attract the attention of others—but what lies behind these things goes almost completely unnoticed. What I strive to do is eliminate what is on the surface, in order to focus on what is in the background.

I left Beijing and returned to Mianyang partly for family reasons, but mainly because my painting originally emphasized the concept of centrality, and genuinely embracing concept entails embracing a new way of life. I felt I should move away from the center that is Beijing and get closer to the peace and empty surroundings I craved. My only goal is to paint a painting; I am not concerned with where I paint. Finding the peace I want in Beijing would come at a great cost—but in this third-tier city, peaceful environments can be found everywhere. Every place has its own things that never change. Mianyang is my place of origin, my starting point. I feel more emotionally connected to this place. I could go to Europe and take photos of a few mountains to paint, but that environment is strange and unfamiliar to me, by its very nature not the environment I want. I am used to the mountains, the water, the atmosphere of Mianyang. I am familiar with these. When the city changes, I can feel where it is changing, and after I have felt it change, I know at last what is most precious to me. The peasants carry their farm tools to the fields in spring and fall, they stoop and they plow, an action that has existed, unchanged, ever since ancient times. When you realize that, politics and history no longer exist. 🍷