

## 漫长的一笔

朱朱

石至莹的绘画唤起了我对莱布尼茨 (Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz) “单子论”的联想，在那位德国哲学家的概念中，是无限的、不相重复的单子构成了世界。引发这一联想的直接原因在于，石至莹对物象的主要选取：海纹、草丛、沙地、石堆、万佛壁、玻璃球，几乎都可以视为单子（也许她更习惯于称之为现代物理学上的“原子”）被放大成具体可见的物质形态之后在画面上的叠加呈现，不过，石至莹并非要以绘画去探讨宇宙起源论，而是藉此进行一种视觉化的精神练习。

这些微观的物象看似均质地、无中心地分布在画面上，不构成一瞥之下的冲击力和刺激感，甚至你可以说，作为图像，它们是弱视觉化的。有些时候，单调得近乎枯燥，类似面对沙漠或者在一间实验室里观察机械的反复运动。也许，她受《帕洛马尔》<sup>1</sup>启发而创作的水彩系列是一个例外，其中携带了一丝活泼的叙事氛围，以及各种物象处在并置语境里的丰富感，然而，与卡尔维诺的方式一样，这种描述倾向于从叙事脱逸，进入观察、冥想，让感知处在临界状态。

由这样的物象建构的主题性，显然不针对地域性的意识形态与现实的重负发言，它在本质上是轻逸的，至于它起飞的跑道，正如在1985年的诺顿讲座演说稿里卡尔维诺所谈及的：“即使是阅读最技术性的科学著作或最抽象的哲学著作，我们也会遇到若干突如其来地刺激视觉想象力的语句……由此可能会引发一个想象过程，它可能契合该文本的精神，也可能沿着自己的方向走。”<sup>2</sup>可以设想，是这种类似的刺激催生了石至莹，无论那些文本或语句来自爱因斯坦、霍金，还是卡尔维诺、黑塞，她运用感性物象来转译自己对于自然科学或文学的阅读和思考，反过来说，从艺术史的框架内去辨析，她又因为怀有对实体的眷念而不允诺抽象，今天，人们更倾向于视抽象画为超验状态的载体，譬如，杰出的艾格尼斯·马丁 (Agnes Martin) 通过在水平长方形上密集重复的图案，将观众引向了无限的空间感并且体验一种时间的永恒。

对于石至莹，经由相对单纯的物象和实体，去完成对未知能量的捕捉，是自我挑战的重心。在《关于绘画》这篇自述中，她引用过这样一段话：“（诸如粒子的波动）以能量展现时，我们能感受到，并意识到它在改变我们，但我们看不到。以物质形态展现时，它是静止的，并具有外形，我们可以看见并碰触。”<sup>3</sup>同样，警惕着先验性的知识体系会妨碍自我充分获取面对客体世界的原初体验，她也体认着《石涛画语录·尊受章》中的主张：“受与识，先受之而后识之。识然后受，非受也。”这些提示出她的个人意愿：通过可见性转换出不可见性——能量是神秘莫测的，但它有可能被感召，降临到物象编织成的感性

## A Long Stroke

Zhu Zhu

Shi Zhiying's paintings remind me of the German philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz's theory of monads, defined as an indivisible entity or single unit such as an atom or a person. According to Leibniz, the world is substantiated by innumerable individual monads. This association is made because of Shi's choice of objects: waves, grass, sand, rocks, murals of myriad identical Buddhas, and glass marbles. They can almost all be seen as monads (or atoms of modern physics, as Shi would be more accustomed of saying), appearing repeatedly on the canvas as enlarged, specific objects. Yet Shi does not intend to discuss the origin of universe with her paintings; instead, her paintings are a visual form of her spiritual practice.

At first glance, those objects seem to be evenly distributed across the canvas with no discernible center or focus, bringing no impact or excitement. You can almost say that the imagery of her paintings weaken rather than heighten the audience's visual focus. Sometimes the repetition borders on tediousness, as boring as facing a desert or watching the mechanical workings of lab equipment. The only exception may be her Mr. Palomar<sup>i</sup>-inspired watercolor series in which a lively storytelling milieu and a richness brought by the juxtaposition of a number of objects can be found. But, like in Calvino's book, Shi's storytelling tends to go beyond mere narration and becomes observation and meditation, leaving perception at a critical point.

A theme built from such objects is clearly not bound by regional ideologies or the burden of reality. It is essentially light. As for its runway, as Calvino said in his 1985 Norton lectures: "Even while reading the most technical book of science or the most abstract book of philosophy, one may still come across a phrase that unexpectedly stimulates the visual imagination...and from this may spring an imaginative process that might either be in the spirit of the text or go off in a direction all its own"<sup>ii</sup>. No matter who the texts or phrases are attributed to (Einstein or Hawking, Calvino or Hesse) Shi could translate her reflection on natural science or literature into perceptual objects. Conversely, analyzing in the framework of art history, her sentiment for substance does not allow for abstraction. People tend to view abstract painting as a medium of transcendence. For example, Agnes Martin with her grids and rectangles lead viewers to experience the limitlessness of space or the eternity of time.

For Shi Zhiying, capturing an unknown energy through comparatively simple images or objects lie at the heart of challenging herself. In her essay *On Painting*, Shi states, "...Take, for instance, particles' or wave movement when presented as energy can be perceived; so can the changes it brings to us. But we cannot see it. When presented in physical form it is static and substantial, which we can see and touch".<sup>iii</sup> At the same time, fully alert to the self's original experience with the objective world, Shi also recognizes what the Chinese classical painter Shi Tao (1642-1708) pointed out in his book on painting theory: "Between feelings and perception, feelings always come before perception. If one has to perceive something before one is able to feel it, then the feelings are not real." This illustrates her personal will perfectly: bringing out the unseeable through the seeable—energy is mysterious, but it can be captured by a perceptual network woven by objects, such as the deliberately empty spaces in tradi-

tional Chinese paintings, or the wind blowing through the Mani stones piled on the mountain top, a scene not unfamiliar to travelers to Tibet.

She has also elaborated clearly on her paintings' basic forms and spatial dimensions. In terms of static, spatial structure her field of vision frequently presents a wide and deep space. It is sometimes a fragmentary depiction but it seeks to go beyond the limitations of the canvas towards vastness. But, at the same time, as the artists states, "Every wave in the ocean, movement of each blade of grass, of sand and dust particle becomes nebular in reality as part of a coherent, dynamic process." In his observation of water and the ways in which to paint water, Huang Hongbin's succinct explanation describes the process perfectly: "One upward stroke followed immediately by one downward stroke is enough to present the motion of water. There are thousands of stroke combinations. Eventually they grow into a painting..."<sup>iv</sup>

For Shi, such a formative process is the depiction of time through painting. Instead of seeing painting as an end result that remains unchanging she prefers to express her creation of perception originating from objects, thus "bringing the audience back into the creative process, turning them into painters and creating a simultaneous experience that is non-simultaneous". Because her paintings direct the viewer's focus to brushwork, to the nuances and structures, they demand from the viewer an effort similar to that needed for reading a book. It could be said that she considers paintings, this traditional medium, fully capable of competing with video installations or other forms of media. Shi studies video artist Bill Viola, for example, who does not always present time as linear or logical progression in his works; rather he creates a process and space for one to experience time itself.

Shi's point of view is further confirmed by Cézanne. Each of Cézanne's repeated renditions of a still life or Montagne Saeinte-Victoire brings about something new, something not seen before. Viewers are invited to experience nature's reformation up close. But, at the same time, Shi is influenced by ancient Chinese culture. Indeed she admires Fan K'uan's *Travellers Amid Streams and Mountains* and the absolute sense of existence the painting reveals. While looking at the painting it is as if we ourselves become the almost unnoticeably small traveling merchants in the painting, trudging in through immense space and endless time. Shi is enchanted by the intense dynamism present in Dong Yuan's *Riverbank*<sup>v</sup> and in Wu Zhen's *In Central Mountains*. Nevertheless, the sense of time or dynamic conceptual appeal aside, when it comes to Shi Zhiying's personal disposition it is perhaps closer to Ma Y'uan's album of twelve *Water Scenes*. Similar subject matter alone cannot fully explain the association. It is more because her delicate, relaxed tone resonates with orthodox oriental aesthetics of 'being modest and moderate.' In other words, she is perhaps approaching Huang Gongwang's ideal of "emptying the mind of thoughts and taking up a cultivated life".

Brushwork, or what Shi prefers to call the calligraphic, becomes the basic element in building a dynamic process on a seemingly static canvas. She continuously reduces exterior significance from the objects themselves. Thus, brushwork becomes enlarged, almost the subject itself. And in this process, a gentle, sophisticated Baroque movement, or an oriental-style unwinds, becoming a kind of fold or series of folds. The fold is Deleuze's expansion of Leibniz's concept of the monad. Folds are smaller elements that move infinitely through time and space; they exist and travel though the physical and the spiritual. "The whole universe," Deleuze asserts, "is made up of a

continuum of mazes.”<sup>vi</sup>

Indeed perhaps we can view Shi’s objects as monads and her brushwork as folds. Her canvas is like a surface that stays always the same but is also constantly changing, like a dune being shaped by the wind. In them objects and energy, like the glass beads she recently painted, attract and repel each other at the same time. To achieve this she patiently writes and hunts, like Penelope<sup>vii</sup> a Zen chanter. Each of Shi’s works—or should I say all of her works—make up a constantly evolving book. True appreciation requires attentive reading, immersion, rather than simply pursuing the climax and ending.

Borges once described in his novel *The Book of Sand*<sup>viii</sup> how a book is infinite: as you turn the pages more seems to emerge page by page, as infinite as the universe. Out of fear the narrator in Borges’ story hides it on a basement bookshelf in a public library. But for Shi Zhiying the reverse is true. She has embedded herself in the book and becomes a long stroke in it.

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i Mr. Palomir is a novel published in 1983 by Italo Calvino (1923—1985).

ii Six Memos for the Next Millennium/the Charles Eliot Norton Lectures 1985.

iii Stanley-Baker, Joan. *Old Masters Repainted: Wu Zhen (1280-1354), Prime Objects and Accretions*. Guangxi Normal University Press, 2012.

iv Zhiying Shi, *Two Exhibitions: “About Perception” “I Don’t Pretend to Understand the Universe”* (2015).

v Debate over Riverbank’s authenticity is still ongoing.

vi See Foucault *Le pli - Leibniz et Le Baroque*, Gilles Deleuze, translated by Yu Qizhi, Yang Jie, Hunan Wenyi Chubanshe, 2001

vii In Greek mythology, Penelope is the wife of Odysseus. To put off choosing a husband among the suitors each day she weaves and each night she unravels her day’s work.

viii *The Book of Sand* is a short story by Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borge, which is included in a collection of the same title published in 1975. For Chinese translation, see *The Book of Sand*, Jorge Luis Borge, translated by Wang Yongnian, Chen Quan. Zhenjiang Wenyi Chubanshe, 1999

网络里，像中国画的留白，像我们去西藏旅行时目睹吹拂着山顶玛尼堆的风。

关于画面的基本形式及时空维度，她自己阐述得也很清楚，在静态的空间结构方面，她的视阈只是一个局部的选择，以平铺加延展的方式，通过视线的远去景深，来呈现一个有广度和深度的场景空间。这是片段性的书写，但意在越过画布的边界，衔接那份浩瀚。而在另一个方面：

海水的每个波动，每根草的形态，每行沙的轨迹，星云的这个尘埃组成其实都是一个连贯的动态过程，这个过程落实到画面上就像黄宾虹所描述的对水的观察和画法：“用一仰一俯的连贯两笔即能表现出水的运动规律”，每一笔和笔笔间的相互作用都可以千变万化，直到生长成最后一幅画面……<sup>iv</sup>

在她看来，这样的成形过程“是对时间的绘画性表述”，相对于将绘画作为一种静态的结果，她更倾向讲述自己源自客体的感知生成，从而“把观众带回到整个创作过程中，让观者同时成为创作者，制造了一种非同时性的同时性体验”。通过将观众的视线牵引到笔触的变化及结构关系里，她的作品像一本书要求了阅读性；在这个意义上，她视绘画这种传统媒介为仍然可以与录像、装置等进行竞争的手段，她思考了比尔·维奥拉（Bill Viola），后者在视屏里展现的时间性并非线性的逻辑，而是创立了那个体验性的过程与空间。

这种设想在塞尚那里得以印证，在她的理解中，塞尚反复处理的静物或圣维克多山，每一次都包含着从未看过的新鲜感和发现，观众被代入其中仿佛是在感知自然在自己眼前重新生成。与此相应，在中国的传统内部，她心仪的是范宽的《溪山行旅图》所显示的那种“绝对的存在感”，我们观看这幅画时俨然变成了画中那赶着骡队的渺小的人物，跋涉在浩淼的时空之中，此外，她也迷恋着董源《溪岸图》<sup>v</sup>或吴镇《中山图》中山体所具有的强烈动态。不过，如果撇开时间性或动态的观念诉求，就石至莹对于个人气质的落实，也许她更接近马远的《水图》册页式的书写，这并非完全归之为题材性的关联，而是她细腻、松弛的语调与源自东方美学正典的“冲淡”有关，或者说，有可能她逐渐达成的是黄公望式的“平淡有致”的境界。

笔触，她更愿意称之为书法式的笔墨，是在看似静态的画面里构建起动态过程的基本元素，在她对于物象的外观意义不断进行的删减过程中，笔墨得以放大出来，成为了近乎主体的东西，并且，在相互作用之中呈现为一场柔和、繁复的巴洛克运动，一种东方式的褶子的展开。关于褶子这种说法，不妨借用德勒兹意义上的引申，因为他恰好是从莱布尼茨的单子论加以延展的，褶子是一种更小层级的元素，同时是一种具有无限广延性的运动，存在并穿越于物质与灵魂这两个层面之间，整个世界即是由此构成的“连续体的迷宫”。<sup>vi</sup>

是的，也许我们可以将她处理的物象视为单子，将她施行的笔墨视为褶子，将她的画布视为“一个被风改变的沙丘般永远相同又永远不同的表面”，在其中，实体和能量，一如她最近描绘过的两只珠子既相互吸引又彼此排斥；为此

她耐心地、一遍遍地进行着书写和狩猎，如同珀涅罗珀(Penelope)<sup>vii</sup>或禅门的诵念者。她的每一幅作品，或者说她的所有作品，似乎是在构成一本处在变化中的书，要求的是细细的、置身其中的阅读，而不是某种高潮或结局的瞬间占有。

博尔赫斯曾经描绘过一本沙之书，<sup>viii</sup>书里的页码处在无限增长之中，类似宇宙般无穷无尽。出于恐惧，博尔赫斯在小说中说他将这本书藏在了公共图书馆的某个搁架上，对石至莹而言，情况似乎是相反的，她将自己藏进这本书里，变成了其中漫长的一笔。

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<sup>i</sup> 《帕洛马尔》是卡尔维诺（Italo Calvino, 1923—1985）于1983年出版的小说，中译本见译林出版社2012年4月版。

<sup>ii</sup> 引自《新千年文学备忘录》，译林出版社2009年3月第一版。

<sup>iii</sup> 引自徐小虎《被遗忘的真迹：吴镇书画重鉴》后记“关于感知”，广西师范大学出版社2012年10月版。

<sup>iv</sup> 引自石至莹《两个展览：“关于感知”——“我并不假装理解宇宙”》（2015）。

<sup>v</sup> 《溪岸图》是否董源原作，至今仍旧存疑。

<sup>vi</sup> 参见《福柯 褶子》，吉尔·德勒兹（Gilles Deleuze, 1925-1995）著，湖南文艺出版社2001年9月第一版。

<sup>vii</sup> 珀涅罗珀(Penelope)，希腊神话中奥德修斯的妻子，为逃避求婚者们的骚扰，她将白天织完的布在夜晚拆掉。

<sup>viii</sup> 《沙之书》为博尔赫斯短篇小说，收录于他1975年与此同名的小说集中。中译本见《博尔赫斯全集》，浙江文艺出版社1999年12月第一版。