

## 从书法到抽象——评张大我的书写抽象艺术

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在水墨领域进行的抽象实验，在我看来大多已经陷入窘境。原因是抽象水墨画的学术主张倾向于“去笔墨中心主义”就是“革掉中锋线之命”，转向对形体，面域的拓展与运用——即抽离掉笔法系统以便与传统拉开距离，发挥墨晕效果以便建立现代视觉体系。对于水墨创作的艺术家的确是一种佳音，就是可以不必“戴着镣铐跳舞”，他们完全可以自由创作，而不必受到传统技术层面和评价标准的束缚。抽象水墨的实验一时风生水起。

从古文达，刘国松到刘子健，他们都秉持着新水墨的观念，实践着从“笔墨”到“水墨”的转变，并且运用泼洒等方式去解构掉笔线。以偶然出现的肌理效果来对应中国古典哲学的鸿蒙宇宙观念，这似乎已经成为抽象水墨的一种创作模式。以此为创作基点的水墨通常就称为“抽象水墨”，但我们会发现，这样的水墨画并不具有抽象性。如果运用抽象艺术的形式法则进行考量，那么这些水墨画对于空间分割，形状分布，还有画面结构的理解远远没有到位。正是由于对视觉语言和视觉心理的乎略而使抽象水墨远离了抽象。

其实中国艺术家创作的所谓抽象水墨还是停滞在中国传统思维的意象模式上面——在画面上即使要表现一种不可言说的宇宙意识，却也无法抛弃物象，进行一种完全逻辑和抽象性的思考，在这些水墨画中他们不时的让那些宇宙山川或者太空景观出现，对于物象的留恋，使这些中国水墨实验者无法进入到一种纯粹的抽象状态，而对于“笔”的放弃，而使墨变得瘫软无力。虽然现代水墨追求巨大的画幅，追求视觉的张力，但失去笔的墨所营造的画面感恰恰是无力和漫散感，加之制作成分的加入，都大大削弱了画面的气势和表现力。即使画幅巨大也不能产生震慑魂魄的力量。而这种力量，我以为是支撑起一幅表现性抽象作品的最为重要的部分。

“去笔墨中心主义”的提法从表面上看似乎具有一种颠覆传统的革命性质，使现代水墨从形式上与传统有了区别，其所遵循的逻辑是：创新首先要不同——现代要与传统完全不同——传统注重用笔，现代注重用墨。这样一种推理是非常简单和模式化的，完全受着一种教条的二元论的影响，把传统和现代如此清晰的分割开来，并且把传统作为现代的对立面，进行全面的否弃，这无疑是文革思想的一种延续。“去笔墨中心主义”虽然找到了现代水墨与传统的区别，但仅仅是区别，并且是不高级的区别。相对于传统“笔墨”的现代“水墨”恰恰是一种倒退。我想中国的古典哲学是注重整体性和系统性的，之所以称为“笔墨”是古人发现“笔”和“墨”是无法分割的一个整体。“笔”是支撑起“墨”的气力与骨骼，“墨”是使“笔”产生千变万化的基体。在西方的现代主义绘画中其实也贯穿着同样的规律，在西画中表现为对笔触的运用，而笔触的形成恰恰是颜料依托于笔，而笔则与心手相合一。

对于现代水墨的批评并非意味着现代水墨就没有意义，问题是在急于建立现代水墨语言状态下而真正远离了现代主义的本质。并且对于传统的断然否決也使现代水墨缺少了一种深层的支点，而无法承担起中国艺术现代性的使命。在这其中，也不乏坚持笔墨传统的艺术家。

在这里我要着重讨论张大我的抽象艺术。他往往是在现代书法领域被讨论，而我恰恰认为他是一位重要的中国抽象艺术家，作为与西方表现性抽象的区分，张大我的抽象可称为“书写性抽象”因为他的抽象是从书写中演化而来的。

张大我早年接受过系统的书法训练，并且曾以研究传统书法作为己任，直到不惑之年才转向现代书法。那正好是八五美术思潮时期，他走出了自成体系的传统书法修炼而投向与整个时代相呼应的新的创作——现代书法。80年代的中国现代书法无疑受到了日本现代派书法的启示，并以此作为参照。中国现代书法更像日本现代派书法的一种余絮，并没有超越少字派，墨象派的影响。虽然中国现代书法没有象日本现代派书法那样具有划时代的创造性——把书法由传统推向了现代，并且是在整个西方抽象表现主义兴起的背景下，而与世界艺术进行对话。由于历史的种种原因，中国的现代书法比较日本迟到了20年。然而对于中国本土，现代书法是具有重要意义的，是必经的和无法回避的道路。作为对现代书法的完善和发展，依旧是不可或缺的。

在张大我早期的以“大我妙墨”为名的现代书法作品中，他完全破除了汉字的可读性，消解了文字的实用功能，而将中国艺术最接近于抽象性的墨线抽取出来，倾注全部身心的精神与力量，完成一次性的书写过程。在宣纸上展现的是不可复制的，质感丰富的，且具有一种内在张力的墨迹，尤其在其系列作品《华彩》中表现的至为明显。只这一笔线，就可令人叹为观止，有一种震慑人心的气魄从纸面上崩发。自古以来中国书法讲究功力，而深厚的功力乃至学养均来自一根线的品质。历代书家穷其一生都在锤炼其线质，原因是线乃是书法的本质。一笔的优劣也就决定书法的优劣。对于笔线的理解，是数千年中国人经验的结果，而并非一种表面的形式。相对于西方艺术，中国的艺术更加注重运用线。或许是因为书法与文人画多用单色的墨，所以也就更加注重线的变化和细微感受。在那一根墨线中，体现了所有东方的智慧和能量。

我想张大我是真正理解了书写性与表现性的。这也正是西方表现性绘画的特质。日本现代派书法的兴起与美国抽象表现主义有着内在的关联性。或者说日本现代派书法崛起的时代乃是抽象表现主义盛行的时代。墨象派书法其实已经是抽象表现主义绘画。西方的表现主义传统在抽象表现主义那里达到了一个极致，东方式的书写性也在现代派书法那里发挥到一种极致。而表现性与书写性在某种程度上是具有同质性的。也在此处，中西才有了真正的对话与阅读。张大我的创作恰恰是建立在这样一个背景下的。他的坚实的传统书写基底在他转向现代书法创作时起到了至关重要的作用。当他下笔的时候就站在了一个高度，这是没有过严格的书写训练的人所无法企及的。并且在张大我一开始进入到现代书法创作的时候就直抵笔墨书写的抽象领域，而没有出现文字的痕迹。这也就是他与许多现代水墨画家所区别的地方，张大我在开始创作就是一种抽象思维。他脱去了众多艺术家所难以割舍的物影情结。而实现了从书写到抽象的跨越。他的画面是变化多端的，时而似石破天惊，时而轻歌曼舞，皆来自于心境。

90年代之后，张大我便移居澳大利亚。也因此具有了一种国际的视野来审视中国的艺术。他的创作也更接近于国际化。在坚持纸上作品的创作之外，他也运用影像等综合媒介对书写进行演绎。若干年过去，他始终保持着旺盛的创造力。近来他又创作了《触感》系列作品。在一个偶然的时机，他得到一种大号的超长锋毛笔。笔毛松软的垂下，似拂尘。在铺展开的巨大的宣纸上面，他伴随着音乐舞动着毛笔。他游走在画面上，笔毛在纸面上有节奏地摇摆，抖动，

分开的笔锋在纸上留下奇特的笔触。这种笔触感是独特的，因其并非来自传统书写过程。也并非完全脱离开用笔。

作为抽象表现主义的代表人物波洛克创造了滴撒的方法，他将画布铺在地上，来回走动，将油漆等颜料通过甩动画笔滴撒在画布上。因为身体的动作和甩动时所具有的方向性，使那些色点具有了一种动力和形态。虽然波洛克没有运用笔触，却具有了笔触的所有要素。波洛克绘画中强烈的表现性，也从这里来。中国的吴冠中的抽象画与波洛克有异曲同工之处，在画面构成上都倾向于不间断的连续性，让画面可以延伸到画外。所不同的是吴冠中是用漏斗来实现一次性不间断的线的“书写”，在这里依旧没有笔与纸的接触，但其连续性呼应了书写的过程。波洛克和吴冠中的书写性是抽调了用笔实现的。张大我的《触感》则运用了笔，使笔和纸保持了若即若离的关系，在身心得到了真正的放松和自由的状态下的自由书写——牧歌式书写。或许从表面上我们能够看到张大我，吴冠中以及波洛克的相似之处。但张大我的创作似乎更加接近东方意蕴。他没有完全否弃用笔书写，而是在书写的领域寻找到一种别样的方式。对于他自己的艺术之路来说，这也是一种超越，就是不再以追求线质作为主要的目的，而是做到身心的彻底解放——自然而然，以此契合于超脱于世俗之外的另一种体验。

在某种程度上，《触感》是对现代派书法的一种超越，相比较波洛克滴撒，张大我将书写注入更多的精神感悟——那更接近于庄子“逍遥游”的境界。虽然张大我的抽象艺术接近于抽象表现主义的某些特征，但其中所蕴含的却是一种浓郁的东方精神。并且他的这些创作使人们能够寻回一种中国文化历史的承继——发轫于传统却又具有国际性。张大我的抽象艺术恰恰是对传统怀疑论者的一种回应——不是排除了“笔”就可以建构一个“墨”的现代的水墨绘画系统。水墨抽象所最为需要的乃笔法系统的支撑。而 20 年水墨实验的教训也正在于此。

在张大我的《触感》作品中，虽然是无意之间的书写——那散开的笔锋在纸上的轻轻触碰，但那些痕迹却依旧是深刻的，可以留下另观者细细品味的，充满意味的痕迹，那应该是浸淫中国书法多年的一种内蓄力量的外现，那些似断似续的短线交织在展开的长卷上，似春的气息回到大地，那些笔触于是有了一种生命感，许多事物在那些笔触间萌动，并且焕发着生机。这正是书写的真意。

中国抽象艺术是以西方抽象艺术作为参照系的。但如何建立起中国独立的抽象艺术，并非一件易事。从 2010 年奥利瓦来中国策划了“大象无形”的中国抽象艺术的展览后，中国艺术界忽然兴起了抽象艺术的热潮。各种关于抽象艺术的讨论和展览层出不穷。固然这对于曾经以政治波普为主宰的中国当代艺术的现状是一种有益的矫正，即艺术需要一种多元性。但同时也暴露了许多问题：一位西方的策展人是否对中国的文化和艺术能够做到真正的理解？在不完全理解的情况下，势必对中国的抽象进行一种误读。直接的结果可能是真正优秀的中国抽象艺术可能会被遗漏掉，而那些拙劣的抽象艺术反而代表了中国的抽象艺术。并且在一个抽象艺术是作为边缘艺术形式的国际艺术语境里，过度渲染中国的抽象艺术，是否会另中国的当代艺术作为个例而被排斥在世界当代艺术的门外，而使真正的具有当下探索性的艺术被遏止？一切都有待思考和提问。作为本土艺术，在当代，抽象艺术自然是艺术批评所不可回避的课题，但如何

解读中国的抽象艺术就成为一个课题。还有就是如何判定什么是优秀的中国抽象艺术。我想：张大我提供给我们的正好是一个经典的个案。

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# From Calligraphy to Abstract——Comment on Zhang Dawo's *Shuxie* Abstract Art

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In my opinion, most of the abstract art experiments conducted in the field of *Shuimo* (水墨 ink and wash) have fallen into a dilemma. The reason is that the academic proposition of abstract ink painting tends to "marginalize harsh and hard calligraphy principle" is to "revolt against the line of center point" (of the brush pen), and turn to the expansion and use of the form and the area—that is, to pull away from the brushwork system in order to distance itself from the tradition. Use the ink halo effect to establish a modern visual system. This is indeed a good news for *Shuimo* artists, that is, they do not have to "dance in shackles", they can create freely without being restricted by traditional technical aspects and evaluation standards. The experiment of abstract *Shuimo* art suddenly became popular.

From Gu Wenda, Liu Guosong to Liu Zijian, they all uphold the concept of new *Shuimo*, practice the transition from *Bimo* (笔墨 "pen and ink") to *Shuimo*, and use methods such as splashing to deconstruct the line of the brush. It seems to have become a creative mode of abstract *Shuimo* with the occasional texture effect corresponding to the concept of Hongmeng universe of Chinese classical philosophy. The ink painting based on this is usually called "abstract *Shuimo*", but we will find that such ink painting is very often cannot be considered as abstract. If you use the formal principles of abstract art to evaluate, then these ink paintings are far from adequate in understanding space allocation, shape distribution, and picture structure. It is precisely because of the roughness of visual language and visual psychology that these abstract are far away from abstraction.

In fact, the so-called abstract *Shuimo* created by Chinese artists are still stagnating on the imagery mode of traditional Chinese thinking—even if an unspeakable cosmic consciousness is to be expressed on the screen, it is impossible to abandon the image and carry out a completely logical and abstract thinking. In these ink paintings, they often let those cosmic mountains and rivers or space landscapes appear, and the nostalgia for objects, so that these Chinese *Shuimo* experimenters cannot enter a purely abstract state, and the abandonment of the "pen" makes the ink change. It feels weak. Although modern *Shuimo* pursues a huge picture frame and pursues visual tension, the sense of picture created by the ink that loses the pen is precisely the sense of weakness and diffuseness, and the addition of production components greatly weakens the momentum and expressive power of the picture. Even if the frame is huge, it cannot produce the power to shock the soul. And this power, I think it is the most important part of supporting an expressive abstract work.

On the surface, the formulation of "Marginalization" seems to have a revolutionary nature that subverts tradition, making modern *Shuimo* forms a distinction from tradition. The logic behind it is that innovation must first be

different—modern must be completely different from the tradition—the tradition pays more attention to the use of pen, the modern pays attention to the use of ink. This kind of reasoning is very simple and modular, and it is completely influenced by a dogmatic dualism, which separates tradition and modernity so clearly, and regards tradition as the opposite of modernity and completely rejects it. This is undoubtedly a continuation of the thought of the Cultural Revolution. Although "Marginalization" has found the difference between modern *Shuimo* and traditional, it is only a difference, and it is not a high-level difference. The modern "*Shuimo*" compared to the traditional "Bimo" is exactly a step backward. I think Chinese classical philosophy focuses on integrity and system. The reason why it is called "pen and ink" is that the ancients discovered that "pen" and "ink" are an inseparable whole. "Pen" is to support the strength and bones of "ink", and "ink" is the matrix that makes "pen" ever-changing. In fact, the same law runs through in Western modernist paintings. In Western paintings, it is expressed as the use of brushstrokes, and the formation of brushstrokes is precisely because the paint relies on the brush, and the brush merges with the heart and hand.

Criticism of modern *Shuimo* does not mean that modern *Shuimo* is meaningless. The problem is that they are really far away from the essence of modernism in the eagerness to establish a modern ink language. And the categorical rejection of tradition also makes modern *Shuimo* lack a kind of deep fulcrum, and cannot undertake the mission of Chinese art modernity. Among them, there are also artists who adhere to the tradition of pen and ink.

Here I want to focus on Zhang Dawo's abstract art. He is often discussed in the field of modern calligraphy, and I just think he is an **important Chinese abstract artist**. As a distinction from Western expressive abstraction, Zhang Dawo's abstraction can be called "Shuxie abstraction" because his abstraction is evolved from writing. (*Shuxie*: 书写 graphology, writing forms)

Zhang Dawo received systematic calligraphy training in his early years, and took the study of traditional calligraphy as his own mission. It was not until he was "not confused" that he turned to modern calligraphy. It happened to be the period of the 'Eighty Five-Year Art Trend'. He stepped out of his own system of traditional calligraphy and devoted himself to a new creation that echoed the entire era—modern calligraphy. The Chinese modern calligraphy in the 1980s was undoubtedly inspired by Japanese modernist calligraphy and used it as a reference. Chinese modern calligraphy is more like a remnant of Japanese modernist calligraphy, and it does not surpass the influence of the Japanese *Shaozi* school and the *Moxiang* school. Although Chinese modern calligraphy does not have the epoch-making creativity like Japanese modernist calligraphy - it pushes calligraphy from tradition to modernity, and it is in a dialogue with world art under the background of the rise of Western abstract expressionism. Due to various historical reasons, modern Chinese calligraphy is 20 years late compared to Japan. However, for the Chinese mainland, modern calligraphy is of great significance, and it is an inevitable and unavoidable road. As the improvement and development of modern calligraphy, it is still indispensable.

In Zhang Dawo's early modern calligraphy works under the name "*Dawo Miaomo*", (大我妙墨, *miao*, mysterious and stunning) he completely broke the readability of Chinese characters, eliminated the practical function of words, and extracted the ink lines that are closest to abstraction in Chinese art, pouring all the spirit and strength of body and mind to complete the one-time writing process. What is displayed on rice paper is unrepeatable, rich in texture, and ink with a kind of inherent tension, especially in his series of works "Hua Cai" 《华彩》 where the brush-strokes are breathtaking, as though shocking waves are blasting out from the paper. Since ancient times, Chinese calligraphy has emphasized skill; and mastery skill and even learning comes from the quality of *Xian* (線, lines and curves). The calligraphers of the past dynasties have been tempering the quality of their *Xian* throughout their lives, because *Xian* is the essence of calligraphy. The quality of a stroke also determines the quality of calligraphy. The understanding of pen line is the result of thousands of years of Chinese experience, not a superficial form. Compared with Western art, Chinese art pays more attention to the use of *Xian*. Perhaps it is because calligraphy and literati painting mostly use monochrome ink, so they pay more attention to *Xian* changes and subtle expressiveness. In that ink *Xian*, all the wisdom and energy of the East are embodied.

I think Zhang Dawo, really understands the writing and expressiveness, in it there is also the characteristic of Western expressive painting. The rise of Japanese modernist calligraphy is inherently related to American abstract expressionism. In other words, the era of the rise of Japanese modernist calligraphy was that when abstract expressionism prevailed. Japanese *Moxiang* calligraphy is actually an abstract expressionist painting. The Western expressionist tradition has reached its extreme in abstract expressionism, and the Eastern style of writing has also reached its extreme in modern calligraphy. And expressiveness and writing are homogenous to some extent. It is also here that China and the West have real dialogue and reading. Zhang Dawo's creation is based on this background. His solid traditional writing foundation played a vital role when he turned to modern calligraphy creation. When he wrote, he stood at a height, which is beyond the reach of people without strict writing training. And when Zhang Dawo first entered the modern calligraphy creation, he went straight to the abstract domain of pen and ink writing without any trace of writing. This is what **distinguishes** him from many modern ink painters. Zhang Dawo was an abstract thinking when he started his creation. He got rid of the complex of objects and shadows that many artists could not give up. And realized the leap from writing to abstraction. His pictures are varied, sometimes seemingly shocking, sometimes lightly singing and dancing, all come from the state of his mind.

After the 1990s, Zhang Dawo moved to Australia. Therefore, he has an international perspective to examine Chinese art. His creation is also closer to internationalization. In addition to adhering to the creation of works on paper, he also uses comprehensive media such as images to interpret writing. Over the past few years, he has always maintained a strong creativity. Recently, he has created the "*Chugan* (《触感》 sensuous touch)" series of works. By chance, he

got a large, super long and sharp brush. The brush bristles hang down softly, like a whisk. On the huge rice paper spread out, he danced with the whisk while music was on. He walked on the screen, his brush swaying and shaking rhythmically on the surface of the paper, and the separated points of the pen left strange brushstrokes on the paper. This brushstroke is unique because it does not come from the traditional writing process. It's not completely out of the pen.

As a representative of abstract expressionism, Pollock created the method of dripping. He spread the canvas on the ground and walked back and forth, dripping paint and other paints on the canvas by throwing animation pens. Because of the directionality of the body's movements and swings, those colored dots have a kind of power and form. Although Pollock did not use brushstrokes, he had all the elements of brushstrokes. The strong expressiveness in Pollock's painting also comes from here. China's Wu Guanzhong's abstract paintings are similar to those of Pollock. They tend to have uninterrupted continuity in the composition of the picture, allowing the picture to extend beyond the painting. The difference is that Wu Guanzhong uses a funnel to achieve one-time uninterrupted line "writing". There is still no contact between pen and paper, but its continuity echoes the writing process. The writing ability of Pollock and Wu Guanzhong was achieved by using a pen. Zhang Dawo's "*Chugan*" uses the pen to maintain the relationship between pen and paper, free writing in a state of real relaxation and freedom of mind and body-pastoral writing. Perhaps on the surface we can see the similarities between Zhang Dawo, Wu Guanzhong and Pollock. But Zhang Dawo's creation seems to be closer to the oriental meaning. He did not completely abandon writing with pen, but found a different way in the field of writing. For his own artistic path, this is also a kind of transcendence, which is to no longer take the pursuit of linear quality as the main purpose, but to achieve the complete liberation of the body and mind-naturally, in order to fit into the detachment of the world - another experience.

To a certain extent, "*Chugan*" is a kind of transcendence of modernist calligraphy. Compared with Pollock Diza, Zhang Dawo injects more spiritual insight into writing-it is closer to the realm of Zhuangzi's "Xiaoyaoyou" (庄子“逍遥游” Chinese philosopher on being free and unfettered) . Although Zhang Dawo's abstract art is close to some characteristics of abstract expressionism, it contains a strong oriental spirit. And his creations enable people to find a kind of inheritance of Chinese culture and history-originated in tradition but international in nature. Zhang Dawo's abstract art is precisely a response to traditional skeptics-it is not possible to construct a modern ink painting system of "ink" without excluding "pen". The support of the brushwork system is what is most needed for *Shuimo* abstraction. The lessons of his 20 years of *Shuimo* experiments are just for this.

In Zhang Dawo's "*Chugan*", although it is inadvertent writing - the scattered brush tip is gently touched on the paper, the traces are still profound and can leave other viewers with details. Tasteful and full of meaning, it should be the appearance of a kind of internal power that has been immersed in Chinese calligraphy for many years. Those short and intermittent lines are intertwined on the unfolding long scroll, and the breath of spring returns to the earth, those



brushstrokes. So there is a sense of life, many things sprout in those brush strokes, and glow with vitality. This is the true meaning of *Shuxie*.

Chinese abstract art uses Western abstract art as a frame of reference. But how to establish China's independent abstract art is not an easy task. Since Oliva came to China to conduct an exhibition of "*Daxiang Wuxin*" Chinese abstract art in 2010, there was a sudden upsurge of abstract art in the Chinese art world. Various discussions and exhibitions about abstract art emerged. Of course, this is a useful correction to the current situation of Chinese contemporary art that was once dominated by political pop, that is, art needs a kind of diversity. But at the same time, many questions have been exposed: Can a Western curator have a true understanding of Chinese culture and art? Without a complete understanding, it is bound to make a misunderstanding of Chinese abstraction. The direct result may be that the truly outstanding Chinese abstract art may be missed, and those botched abstract art represent Chinese abstract art. And in an international art context where abstract art is a fringe art form, over-rendering Chinese abstract art will make Chinese contemporary art a case of being excluded from the world's contemporary art, and make it truly possible is the current exploratory art being rejected. Everything needs to be weighed and considered. As a local art, abstract art is naturally an unavoidable subject of art criticism in contemporary times, but how to interpret Chinese abstract art has become a contentious issue. There is also how to determine what is excellent Chinese abstract art. I think: Zhang Dawo, **provided** us with such a classic case.

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