

Void lingers in void, abundance vanishes inside abundance

—Transcend the Dilemma of Counterpoint.

By Loy Luo

I once spend over a year trying to emulate the way Gilles Deleuze interprets Francis Bacon in his book, "Logic of Sense". I applied Nietzsche's "Will of Power" to the interpretation of an artist and her art. In my judgment, the life of the artist resembles a fickle burning desire. I think that Nietzsche's philosophy is equivalent to the tenet of her art. But what about the equivalent of mine? For many years, I have been trying to watch myself with the eyes of a bystander, continually looking for an answer to and experimenting with the notion of "Who am I?", as if I had been deprived of the soul. Am I a fireball burning, as if duty-bound? I am not that strong. Am I self-cleansing water in this earthly world? I am not that calm. I agree to the transcending nature of Chinese art as expressed in Xu Fuguan's writing. However, rising to the state of nature may seem egoistic and it is becoming of me to keep striving and to adhere to the Daoist thinking of inaction when I quit this world, without regret or feeling obliged? I think that all art practices are about transcending the spiritual constraints, and ridding of the secular burdens that our physical bodies are laden with, only what happens after the transcendence and how enlightened one becomes vary case by case.

Personally, I agree more with the Christian-style contemporary transcendence practice. It acknowledges the legitimacy of idolatry rejections, i.e. the return to an imperceptible omnipresent God. Thus it ushers in the daring experiment of spirits going beyond the material world without severing its connection with the human world, where it resides in the hearts. Men are chosen by God, and are a passage from materialism to spirituality.

Thanks to Pythagoras and Plato, the barriers between western religion and philosophy, and between the secular world and paradise, had been bridged. The division came later on. Arguing vehemently, Plato revealed whether art could transcend the earthly barrier and reach the spiritual realm. Later, in subsequent debates about varied art theories, art has always striven to reveal the truth through images, until imitation art failed in revealing the truth of the world. Oriental art realized earlier than its western counterpart that you cannot judge a book by its cover. However, its realization didn't go far enough. The truth is, through the proclamation of Abstractionism, the challenge posed by Suprematism and the adventure of Conceptualism, the pure dance of free ideas has become a passion for serious artists. Malevich, Klein, Tàpies, Rothko, were soul dancers good at dancing in the sky, radiating breathtaking beauty and brilliance from within, which has energy in great abundance. Religion, philosophy, and art have not until recently made the drift towards or are moving to the glory of the Holy Trinity.

According to classical Chinese aesthetics and art ethos, all of these dilemmas will be resolved through spiritual transcendence. Nobody knows where we may go from there but the vibrant spiritual wings know where the wind blows.

"I am positive that in the center of the void, as in a human heart, there is a burning fire." Re-reading Klein's book, I am even more convinced that one's art is his religion or philosophy. What one has inside shows on the canvas, and shapes the style. An artist's character, changing or not, is something deeply engraved. In all ages, great masters have their own fantastic temperaments, which are not made. The temperament comes from within and is a barometer of how tolerant you are of the world, whether you go with or against the tide of life. It comes from your understanding of what it means to be a human being.

Perhaps my psychological traits, my being a Gemini or my AB blood type means that I will wear the shackles of contradiction throughout my life. That plus the two cultures that have nourished me --- and caught between the opposites of earth vs ocean, risk-taking vs caution, openness vs constraints, bright versus claustrophobic, calmness vs fierceness --- my life will be spent waging wars against my other self. Personality determines fate. I think that it is my fate to mitigate the seemingly impossible contradictions inside myself and integrate them into my art.

Void lingers in void; while abundance vanishes inside abundance. This poetic atmosphere is the atmosphere of painting, and the ultimate illustration of life and universe. East and West, philosophy and religion, human and the universe, the flesh and the spirit, void and abundance, existence and disappearance... like the ancient totem of Taiji, the two poles move against each other, circulate, encroach upon and permeate each other, repel and alienate each other. When art reaches such a stage, life will become indescribably expansive, fabulous and worthwhile.