

## *The Latent Enlighten Series*

Niu An, 2017

Studying oil painting as a child, then modern industrial design in college, I am significantly influenced by western aesthetics and theories on art. Moreover, I have always been quite partial to western post-expressionism. As a result, most of my works created in the past ten years explore personal emotions through topics such as human life, life and death, femininity, etc. Although western ideologies inspired these themes, they were manifested through techniques of Chinese calligraphy. It is because I grew up studying Chinese calligraphy, and I would sometimes naturally apply lines in paintings the same way as I do in calligraphic works. The thick lines and thin lines stand for the yin and yang of human emotions. Influenced by Chinese painting master Huang Binhong and his idea that "rough brushwork could build beautiful landscapes," I let lines run spontaneously in a picture and let the subject emerge from the interweaved lines. I think this resonates with the idea of "reclusion". When I was rereading some books on the history of traditional Chinese painting, I spent a lot of time thinking about the concept of "reclusion." Noticing that this idea is present throughout Chinese art history, I started to understand more deeply the sources of traditional Asian art rooted in the personality of Asian people. Gradually, my work started to focus more on Asian philosophy and aesthetics. A few years ago, I came to realize that "the essence of Tao (the way) is never fully shown"<sup>1</sup> while painting the Buddha Guanyin, thus creating a few related series. Since I have had some new thoughts on the meaning of "reclusion", I decided to explore more on this topic in my recent works.

Most of the motifs for the Latent Enlighten series come from famous traditional Chinese paintings or auspicious images in Chinese folk art — they are either human figures or

animals. Chinese Spring and Autumn Dolls is one of the works in the Latent Enlighten series. The ancient Chinese artists generally had two methods to express the concept of "reclusion." The first one is to paint with rapid and spontaneous brushwork, which is similar to the "Da Xieyi" (sketching ideas) style and the "Po-mo landscapes" ("splash ink") style. Other artists employ the literary concept of metonymy — by depicting a vast landscape and tiny human figures, the artists display the existing state of a recluse. I decided to combine these two methods. Nevertheless, the Latent Enlighten series is also inspired by Shi Tao's idea that "the ink is given by God, yet we paint by following our heart." Thus, the figure of the subject is hidden, but the spirit is shown. To display the formless yet eternal spirit and aura is the reason why I started to paint the Latent Enlighten series.

**Selected Image:**



Niu An (b.1968), *Latent Enlighten*, 2017, Acrylic on canvas, 79 x 79 inches (200 x 200 cm)

The first chapter of *Tao Te Ching* states "the Tao that can be told is not the eternal Tao". Tao, which literally means a "way" or "path" in Chinese, refers to the primary principle underlying all being. (Stephen Mitchell, *Tao Te Ching: A New English Version*, Harper Perennial, New York, 1991)

## 《隱之系列》

牛安，2017

我少年時學的是油畫，在大學時學的是現代工業設計，接受的都是西方美學和西方審美思想。另外，我自身又偏愛西方的後表現主義，因此，前十年我的畫的主題基本上是以人生，生與死，女人等等來表現個人情感。雖然這些主題是受西方思潮影響，但在繪畫表現上卻應用了中國書法的技巧，那多半是因為從小練習書法的緣故，因此不自覺地就以書法的韻筆線條來表達畫面。其中不同的粗細線條代表情緒的陰陽，把各種各樣的粗細不勻的線條放在一個畫面裏，那是受中國近代書畫大師黃賓虹的“爛筆頭裏秀山水”思想影響，在紛雜錯落的線條中讓畫中的內容自己顯現出來倒也有一番“隱逸”的境地。“隱逸”是近來重讀中國傳統繪畫史書籍時，特別有感悟的字眼，覺得這個“隱逸”情節幾乎貫穿了整個中國繪畫歷史，也因此明白了東方美學及東方人格含蓄的出處。逐漸，我繪畫的內容轉向表達東方哲理和審美。幾年前因畫“觀音”悟出了“大道若隱”，以此為主題創作一些系列，近來因對“隱逸”的含義有了新的理解，“隱”的思想在近來的作品裏也就無法躲避了。

這個“隱之系列”中運用的motif基本上來自中國古代經典繪畫或民間流傳的各種吉祥圖案，它們或人物、或動物。這組“春秋童子”便是其中一例。對表達“隱逸”思想古人有兩種畫法，一種是用快速的筆法隨心所欲畫出隱逸之氣，即像現在的大寫意和潑墨山水；還有一種是用文學中的“借喻”，通過對宏偉山水的描繪加上寥寥幾筆對渺小人物的勾勒來展現隱居隱士的生活境界。我的這個“隱之系列”結合了這兩種表達方法，同時還受石濤先生

“墨受於天，畫可從心”的啟發。即，讓主角“無形而神”地隱起來，這就是力圖把無形的永恒的精神和氣韻表達出來，這便是我畫“隱之系列”的一個願望。

作品節選：



牛安 (b.1968)，隱之系列-胡璇舞者，2017，丙烯畫布，79 x 79 英尺 (200 x 200 釐米)