

Improvisational Writing in an Anti-Graphic Style

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Shen Qin's ink and wash painting resembles a kind of calligraphic abstraction energy field. Ink lines splash around like orchids, forming a type of improvisational calligraphy that moves between abstract expressionism and amorphousness.

This approach may be regarded as a continuation of the modernist exploration of abstract expressionism and calligraphy in ink and wash. The combination of these two approaches stems from the New York School of the 1950s and 1960s, when Pollock, Motherwell, and Klein assimilated Chinese calligraphy and reconstructed linear abstract expressionism. Then came Joan Mitchell, Lewis, and Twombly's presentation of the "amorphous" as a linear expression of anti-graphics, which separated abstraction from formalism and incorporated a linear energy of improvisational mechanism.

In some ways, Shen Qin's creation can be viewed as a dialogue with the "amorphous." From abstract expressionism to the "amorphous," the postwar abstraction of the last century was based on two starting points: first, it broke away from formalism with geometricism as its core and moved toward a kind of "modernist/orientalist" inter-formality. It absorbed Asian calligraphy in form, including the improvisational mechanism of calligraphic randomness, the heart-natured texture of the stroke, and the linear structure of writing itself. While removing formalism, it also stripped away the dominant control of conceptualism and graphic consciousness over the image.

Secondly, Qin's work takes the "amorphous" as a starting point to engage in a kind of "post-abstraction" that is anti-graphic. The concept of "abstraction" originated from the formalism of the "figurative/abstract" duality of objects before and after World War I. Abstract expressionism absorbed the linear figures of calligraphy and avoided letting the picture mirror the tendencies of graphic creation after the "amorphous." While not

abandoning the lowest limit of graphicality, it typically strives to minimize graphic expression and allow language to focus on the expression of color, line, and texture.

Painting after World War II is unlikely to be akin to Kandisky's era in producing a new model of graphics from figurative to abstract, but rather can only explore a visual graphicality between genre painting and express an elemental experiment of personal mechanism underneath graphic interconnectedness. Shen Qin's ink and wash painting attempts to employ a single calligraphic brushstroke as its formative element, with the brushstrokes reflecting the ontological form of language. This is accompanied by the implementation of the improvisational mechanism of randomness in writing.

The nature of calligraphy is therefore a central mechanism of painting, which leads to a kind of "amorphous" calligraphic linear structure. This is a kind of sporadic, anti-graphical figure. That is, it is not a deliberate attempt to create a structure that imitates calligraphy's stroke structure, nor is it the construction of an abstract figure under the idea. The image generally reduces the graphic nature of a concept or the meaning of Chinese characters, and excludes the creation of stroke structures, similar to the work of Motherwell and Klein in formalism, attempting to concentrate on the sporadic and improvisational energy of the flowing brush flow and free ink strokes.

Unlike the statically created calligraphic structure of Motherwell and Klein, Shen Qin's ink and wash painting is determined primarily by the improvisational writing mechanism that is in fact an improvisational mechanism of calligraphy's contingency. Improvisational writing in calligraphy is the cross-sensing mechanism of mind-based idea association. It combines multiple mechanisms into one, such as improvisational mood and the rhythm of writing, the monitoring of Chinese character structures, the energy guidance of gesture and body, and the association of ideas of brush flow.

Besides the exclusion of calligraphy's font orientation, almost all other mechanisms

contribute to the imaging of writing. Shen Qin's ink and wash is a kind of energetic brush flow and reflects the random strokes of the unconscious mind. Its language is centered on the kinetic forms attached to brushstrokes and their contact points. The graphicality is thus solely an unconscious trace of the kinetic mechanism of writing. This is not a graphic creation based on the concept of graphics, as graphics are a by-product of calligraphy's improvisational mechanism. Although it no longer aims at the graphic structure of Chinese characters, there is no doubt that it is an anti-graphic figure. Calligraphy's writing mechanism still remains a part of the unconscious association of ideas. In the moment of improvised writing, there will be image flashes in the mind that impact the final visualization of the brush flow. This enables Shen Qin's ink and wash to go beyond purely abstract form, and to demonstrate an image approximate to that of orchids or chrysanthemums, with multiple brushstroke structures and textures. Shen Qin's work presents a figurative suggestion of the anti-graphic, which can be named as a kind of inter-image between abstraction and imagery.

In a writing of the kineticism of the anti-graphic, the picture becomes a formal energy field, and the form resembles a spontaneous vision of remaining energy. In this way, Shen Qin creates the "virtual space" of planarity. Through paper and ink, different areas are segregated in a flat surface as a smoothing brushstroke moves freely through different sections, resulting in the multiplicity of virtual space on a single plane.

Differing from traditional ink that uses calligraphy as a meta-form, Shen Qin's ink and wash uses calligraphy's improvisational writing mechanism to generate forms and produce a complicit inter-imagery of the anti-graphic and the imaginative unconscious. This method is grounded in one of the most traditional core mechanisms, while at the same time displacing its modern definition.

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