

## Yan Li and Li Yan – Two Sides of a Mirror

By Libor Sečka

“Are you nervous?”, a blue nurse asked me when I was lying down on a surgical bed at one Beijing clinic, awaiting a doctor who was supposed to undertake a small surgical procedure on my right eye. I imagined that, because of a congenital defect in my other eye, I will not be able to see at all for a while. I will be useless. “Everyone is nervous here”, she answered her own question and decided to dilute the silent tension with music. She turned a button on the radio and a traditional Chinese instrumental composition started to fill the air. Suddenly, the room was full of a lazily-winding river whose surface was combed by a soft, warm evening breeze. I think that even a sunset was not missing. “The only thing that I am missing now to be happy is your dance”, I said with exaggeration. “So I will try the butterfly”, she reacted readily and in a slow rhythm she started to make circles with her hands and arms. We laughed. And so I entered my temporarily blurry world of light and shade much more content.

Strengthened by this recent experience, I thought about contrasts. I thought about the paintings of my two friends – Li Yan and Yan Li, whose names are a mirror image of one another when using pinyin. Drama and calmness, pain and joy, crudeness and playfulness, hopelessness and levity, death in many different variations and a celebration of life, ruin and new hope. You can differentiate them but not divide/separate them. Contrasts of our life connected together just like night and day. At that moment, I realized that their paintings can be heard more than those of others. Sharp sounds of sirens, dusty noise of a landing helicopter, wails of the injured as well as silent sobs of those left behind that are mixing together with the echo of light footsteps disappearing in the heat of a Sunday afternoon, the sweet melody of a guitar and the nostalgic tones of black vinyl records. Once again I became convinced that if such a thing as an overarching harmony, consonance is to exist, then it necessarily needs to contain, at least, the consciousness of this broadest scale of sounds.

Li Yan is a reporter, chronicler, catcher, who mercilessly inscribes into his paintings all that is unusual, unexpected, destructive and cruel. All that got out of the traditional order and control. All that in one second changed the lives not only of individuals, but of hundreds and thousands in misfortune and disaster. He is not only interested in the dynamics and internal tension of a moment, but also in the silence that follows. He gives testimony about the human suffering of today, as well as about places where events took place and about their atmosphere, one would even want to say mood. Yan Li is a poet, visionary, explorer. He also tears apart the shackles of the ordinary, the usual. Looking at his paintings brings out in me a feeling of an unstoppable ascent of a rising balloon. If you get on, it will take you into the endless space of fantasy and imagination that is springing out of a poetic perception of things around us. You can feel the sun which gives sharpness and brightness to colors, you can hear music into which colors seep in, your soul is touched by a kind voice reciting poems somewhere far away. You want to stay, to rest, to not go back, to fall asleep in this painting. Both reflect our world. However, they shine light on it from different angles. And also thanks to them, we can come to understand it better.

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## 严力和李演 - 镜像的双方

“你紧张吗？”穿蓝衣服的护士问我。当时我躺在北京一家诊所的手术台上，等待医生为我的右眼实施一项小型外科手术。我当时在想，由于另一只眼睛的先天疾患，我将面临着暂时失明。我将一无所用。“每个来此的人都会感到紧张”，她像是自问自答，并决定用音乐来缓和手术前沉默不安的气氛。她打开收音机，耳边响起传统中式乐曲的旋律。一时间，手术室内仿佛溪水潺潺，蜿蜒不息，微风习来，水面泛起阵阵涟漪…甚至连夕阳也不曾或缺。“现在唯一缺少的，恐怕只有你的舞蹈了。”我打趣地说道。“那我就跳一支蝴蝶舞吧”，她欣然应允。随之踏着舒缓的节奏，点步转圈，挥袖轻舞。我们同时都笑了。接下来我得以放松地进入那个短暂而光影朦胧的世界。

受此次经历启发，我开始思考“对比”的概念。我由此想到我的两位朋友-李岩和严力，正如他们的名字在拼音写法中呈现镜像对称的效果，他们的绘画作品亦对比般展现着夸张与平和，痛苦与欢乐，粗放与意趣，绝望与善变，各种形态的死亡与生命的礼赞，毁灭与重生…所有这些看似对立的层面，可由观者轻易加以区分，但却无法被解构分离。生活中的反差紧密相连，如同昼夜交替般自然。那一刻我意识到，他们的作品缘何受到更多关注。尖利刺耳的警笛声，直升机降落时的喧闹，伤痛引发的哀号和遗忘角落传来的悲泣，种种情境，随着礼拜天午后渐远的脚步声，连同轻柔迂回的吉他韵律，交织潜藏于黑胶唱片所承载的怀旧与哀愁之中。由此，我再一次确信，若要成就世间所谓的协调与共鸣，海纳百川的意识不可或缺。

李岩化身为一名称录者，编载者，事件捕捉者，他以冷峻的目光，记录下那些无从预料的事态、破坏性力量和残酷的景象。他关注脱离传统秩序和常规的事件，那些在一秒钟内改变个体生活，并将群体命运推向不幸和灾难的瞬间。他不仅着眼于事发时的点滴动态和内在张力，亦对静默本身进行阐释。他见证当今人类正在经历的磨难，着力呈现事发场景及其氛围，也可解释为对情绪本身的还原。严力，他是一位诗人、梦想家、探险家。他拥有打破常规、破除禁锢的力量。观察他的作品，犹如乘坐一艘不断上升的汽艇，你被带进无边无际的意识流空间，那里饱含着对世事的诗意解读和理性思辨。你将体验到无与伦比的色彩和光线，感受斑斓之中蕴藏的悦动音符，你的灵魂因聆听辽远的诗歌而倍受触动，你希求停留在此，在画意之中绵绵睡去。两位艺术家的作品同时反映出我们生存的世界。然而，二者从不同角度耀射出光芒。感谢他们，让我们可以更好的理解这个世界。

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