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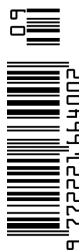
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廊指南

Elliat Albrecht on

Tai Kwun 大館

Catherine Opie, Sarah Morris,
Gert & Uwe Tobias,
Chris Huen Sin Kan, Jane Lee,
Mark Bradford, Cary Kwok,
and more...



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As a painter and in person, **Chris Huen Sin Kan** is far beyond his years. His intuitive paintings look less like those of a 27-year-old and more like those of an artist who's had several decades to hone his visual language, arriving at a mature and idiosyncratic style of painting. Born and raised in Hong Kong, Huen has been drawing since he was a small child, and earned a BA from The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK). Made with fluid and sometimes staccato brushstrokes, his paintings are characterised by their quotidian content and sketch-like quality; Huen achieves this aesthetic in part by thinning down his oils with turpentine until they appear almost like watercolours. The bare canvas shows through in many places on his paintings; the viewer is left to fill in the blanks of negative space like a word game. These gaps in perception are fundamental to Huen's philosophy: rather than painting direct representations or his memories, he is concerned with exploring the fragmented experience of looking. With a restrained palette and vegetation sprouting all over his domestic scenes, his paintings sometimes include his wife Haze and young son Joel, but more often feature his three dogs, which he renders with a minimal number of brushstrokes.



1

無論是作為一個畫家抑或是外貌上，**禰善勤**都比他本身27歲之年齡成熟。他的直覺畫作技巧熟練、風格另類，看起來不像出自年輕藝術家的手，像是由一個雕琢了視覺語言十幾年的藝術家所畫。禰善勤於香港土生土長，從小習畫，於香港中文大學畢業。他的作品由流動和斷續的筆觸繪成，以日常主題和速寫似的特質著稱。禰善勤用松節油稀釋顏料，令它們看起來如水彩畫一樣，從而實現他的美學。在他的作品中經常會出現空白的部分，觀賞者可以為這些空間填充。根據藝術家的哲學思想來說，這些感觀的空白是必需的。比起直接陳述或基於他的記憶而繪畫，他更喜歡探索零碎的視覺經驗。他的作品用色低調，屋內場景滿佈發芽的植物。作品有時會畫上他的妻子Haze和兒子Joel，更常出現的是他三隻以簡單筆觸描繪的狗。

可以跟我們分享一些在香港中文大學唸書的經歷嗎？

在香港中文大學，我有機會接觸到很多不同種類的藝術，其中我最有興趣的是裝置藝術，因為我在唸大學前對其認識不多。那學習經驗非常寶貴，不過後來我沒有機會再深入研究裝置藝術，所以就重新投入研究由始至終啟發我最多的繪畫。我想大部分小朋友都是因為小時候畫畫而對藝術產生興趣，我就是其中一個例子。

那時我在學校開始學習西方和中國繪畫的基本技巧，同時要處理兩種不同的描繪方法。西方繪畫透過平面把我們看過的事物重現，而中國繪畫則透過重新連結筆劃而成。這兩種不同令我開始思考一道關於繪畫重要而基本問題：

我們到底是如何意識到所描繪的事物？我亦開始對繪畫的意義產生疑問。自那時起，我就一直研究繪畫這個媒介。

學習中國繪畫如何影響你現時的創作？

中國繪畫多數都源自中國學術文化，根據中國書法技巧畫成。所以中國書法從來都不是為了要表達我們在現實世界裡所看到的事物，而是要表現學者應該在自然界中尋找的品質。學術文化對我的啟發不是特別大，但中國繪畫讓我了解現今繪畫的可能性，對我來說是一個很好的參考。

我研究的重點是我們如何從繪畫的圖像中意識到我們認識的生活。我的作品在某種程度上表達了我

對事物的理解，以及他人對其看法。我常常會把我的畫作當成寫作，與中國傳統覺得繪畫與寫作相對應的想法類似。我喜歡可以表現出視覺經驗的圖畫，所以我大部分作品都不是因為某種素材和概念而畫的。我的作品包含了一種理解事物的想法，而不是處理事物的系統。

有沒有某個決定性時刻改變了你的創作？

有的。唸大學的時候我曾兼職教小朋友畫畫。那時候我叫一個小男孩臨摹我給他的一幅藍色大象圖片，他畫好後我叫他隨意畫其他東西，於是他畫了一個黑色的球。我問他那是什麼，他竟然說那是一隻貓，那一刻我頓時得到了一些靈感。這件事令我想起雷內·

Elliat Albrecht: Can you tell me about your experience studying at CUHK?

Chris Huen: At CUHK I studied many different forms of art. One medium I was fascinated by in particular was installation, as I didn't know much about it before I went to college. It was a very good learning experience, but personally I couldn't find a good way to investigate the form deeply. So I turned my attention back to what inspired me to engage in art in the first place: painting. I think most kids become interested in art through drawing and painting when they're young; it was true for me.

In school, when I started to learn the basics of both western and Chinese paintings, I was dealing with two completely different systems of depicting things. Western painting reconstructs things we've seen on a surface, and Chinese painting reconnects strokes to things we've seen. This led me to think there is a very critical and fundamental question about painting: how do we recognise things that are depicted? What is more, I began to wonder about what painting as a subject really means. Since then, painting has been the

main medium that I've investigated as an artist.

EA: How, if at all, did studying traditional Chinese painting affect your current work?

CH: Chinese painting comes mainly from Chinese scholarly culture and is based on the techniques of Chinese calligraphy. So Chinese painting was never a means to represent things we had seen in the real world, but was rather a representation of qualities that scholars should look for in nature. I wasn't particularly inspired by the scholarly culture, but Chinese painting as a whole is a very good reference for me to understand what painting nowadays can be.

At the core of my investigation is how we recognise what we know from life within the images of a painting. My works are somehow about my understanding of things and how that appears to others. In this way, I always regard my paintings as writing, similar to the traditional Chinese idea that painting corresponds to writing. I care about the imagery which represents my experience of seeing. So most of my work wasn't initiated by a material or a concept. It turns out my work contains ideas of how things could be

understood, but not a system of how things could be put into order.

EA: Was there a defining moment that changed your practice?

CH: Yes. When I was in college, I worked part-time teaching drawing to very young children. I asked a little boy to copy a blue elephant from an image I had provided. After he finished, I asked him to draw whatever he liked. He drew a solid black ball and when I asked him what it was, he told me it was a cat. I was really inspired at that moment. It made me think of René Magritte's famous *The Treachery of Images* (1928-9), but the kid's drawing made the complete opposite statement from Magritte's. He drew something without any of the significant features of a cat and called it a cat. It made me question what images in paintings really represent. Perhaps the kid had once seen a curled-up, sleeping black cat and that's why he drew it as a circle, but we couldn't surmise that from the drawing. On the other hand, he had never seen a blue elephant in his life but could recognise it from a few important features of the image I showed him. This was an important moment in how I think about painting.



2

馬格利特著名的《形象的叛逆》（1928–9年），不過小男孩的畫是完全相反的版本。他畫了一樣看起來不是貓的物件但卻稱之為貓，這件事令我質疑繪畫中圖像的真實象徵。或許是因為小男孩曾見過一隻捲起睡覺的貓，他才會把貓畫成圓圈，但我們無法從畫中得知。另一方面，他從來沒有見過藍色的象，但他卻從圖中幾個重要特點認得出來，這是改變我對繪畫的想法的重要時刻。

你提到藝術的最高形式包括文學、詩歌或音樂是對不明確事物的研究，換句話說是對難以形容的物件的研究。那麼你正在探索什麼不明確的事物？正在處理什麼美學問題？

我想引用一句小說家傑茲·科辛斯基的名言：「藝術的原則不在於描繪，而是在於激發感情⁹」我一直都覺得好的藝術不只是提出事實，而是為我們清醒的腦袋喚起一些共同的經歷。現在我主要集中描繪那些我們無法自己敘述的平淡時刻，那些微小的時刻經常在我們日常生活中被遺忘，在我們嘗試了解自己的生活時候被忽略。

今年4月我們第一次見面時，曾討論到你是何時決定應該完成一件作品，你亦提到你是第一個見過自己作品的人。可否與我們解釋一下？

我覺得繪畫是直接與我們的視野相關的，尤其是當涉及圖片的形象化時。這個過程是由我們第一次看到

某些事物並將其與我們正在觀看的圖像相關聯時開始。當我畫畫時，我是第一個見證所描繪時刻的人。在整個過程中，我是唯一真正對這景象有反應的人。

可否詳細解釋一下你對畫視覺經驗而非記憶的興趣？你的色彩感又從何而來？

我希望我的作品能反映出整個在空間中存在和觀看事物的體驗。我們其實是用眼睛瞥見，用腦袋觀看。我們的腦袋是在感官之後才感知到信息。就如在危急情況下，我們的身體會在不過大腦作出反應。

不過通常我們都會回應我們對景象整體情況的理解。我作品中描繪的

EA: You mentioned the highest form of art, including in literature, poetry or music, is the investigation of something that is undefined – or, in other words, the ineffable. What undefined entity are you exploring? Is there an aesthetic question you're grappling with?

CH: I want to share a quote from a novelist Jerzy Kosiński: "The principles of true art is [sic] not to portray, but to evoke." I always think good art isn't just about stating the facts, but recalls a shared experience to our conscious mind. For now, I'm focusing on depicting humdrum moments in which we cannot get ourselves narrated. Such uneventfulness is being forgotten in our daily life and neglected when we try to understand our days.

EA: When we first met, in April this year, we were discussing how you know when to finish a piece, and you mentioned that you're the first person to ever see your paintings. What does this mean to you?

CH: I think painting is directly related to our vision, especially when it comes to imagery within a picture. The progress begins when we first

see something and relate it to the images we are looking at. When I'm painting, I'm the first person to witness that the moment depicted is happening. Throughout the process, I'm the only person really reacting to that scenery.

EA: Can you elaborate on your interest in painting the experience of seeing, rather than memory, and where your sense of colour comes from?

CH: I want my paintings to reflect the complete experience of being in a space and seeing things. We are actually looking with our eyes and seeing things with our mind. Our mind perceiving information is preceded by our senses. Think of how our bodies can react without going through our brains, like in dangerous situations.

But mostly we respond to our understanding of the whole situation of the scenery. The things depicted in my pictures might be something I had seen before, but when I make my works I want them to be my responses to the present. So I refuse to say it is from my memory, which would refer to something that happened in the past. The sense of colour also arises from this idea.

Rather than a scientific approach, I tend to take a sentimental approach to applying colour. I believe other senses apart from sight affect how we perceive colour.

EA: Earlier this year, you moved from working in your grandfather's old home in Kowloon to your current studio in Yuen Long. Did this have any effect on your practice?

CH: I'm still discovering what is the real difference between the two different work spaces. For now I would say maybe the way I perceive space has changed. I used to visit my grandfather every Saturday when I was a kid, so the way I perceived my old studio was always between memory and the current moment. But now I work in a new industrial flat, and all I care about is the new neighborhood and environment. Many factors changed, like my routine, that affect my practice.

EA: What's your routine in the studio?

CH: I usually work there on weekdays from 9.30am to 7.30pm and save the weekend for family. I like to listen to European pop or American folk songs from the 70s and 80s.



3

可能是一些曾見過的事物，但當我畫的時候，它們是對我的當下作出回應。所以我不會說我的作品源自記憶，因為這樣它就會被看成為以前所發生的事。我的色彩感都是源自這個想法，相比科學的方法，我傾向於採用感性的途徑去運用顏色。我認為除了視覺以外的感官都影響我們理解不同顏色。

今年年初，你從爺爺於九龍的舊居搬到現在元朗的工作室。這個改變有沒有為你現在的作品帶來影響？

我仍在探索這兩個工作空間真正的不同，暫時我會覺得我理解空間的方法不同了。小時候我每星期六都會探望爺爺，所以我理解舊工作室

的時候常常在記憶和當下之間游走。現在在新的工業單位內，我對新的鄰里和環境最感興趣。很多因素都改變了，包括我的日常習慣等，它們都影響著我的創作。

可否分享一下你在工作室的日常？

我通常會在平日早上9:30至下午7:30工作，週末則是我的家庭日。我喜歡聽歐洲的流行音樂及70和80年代的美國民歌。

1
Chris Huen Sin Kan in his studio in Yuen Long.

2,3
Inside views of Chris Huen Sin Kan's studio in Yuen Long.

Courtesy Elliot Albrecht.