

# ZENG Fanzhi

The Information from Publications (1993-2008)



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## ZENG FANZHI

(b. 1964, Wuhan, Hebei Province)

曾凡志

Zeng Fanzhi graduated in 1991 from the Oil Painting Department of the Hubei Academy of Fine Arts. He is currently a full time professional painter.

Zeng Fanzhi utilises variations on the doctor-patient relationship to express his own view of reality. His cold-blooded and cutting Expressionist technique twists and transforms the original relationship of the scientific saviour and the saved into a sado-masochistic relationship of molestor and molested. Hidden just below the surface of these disturbing images is the artist's skepticism toward the possibility of human freedom and dignity.

"Painting is a painful process; it forces the human figures in my painting into a state of pain and anxiety. I paint images of people in tragic situations, and they express everything that I want to express.

I don't want to paint everything I see. I only want to paint what appears in the depths of my soul. I firmly believe that I can only reproduce my own image; actually, this is my only choice."

— Zeng Fanzhi





6 1992 曾梵志

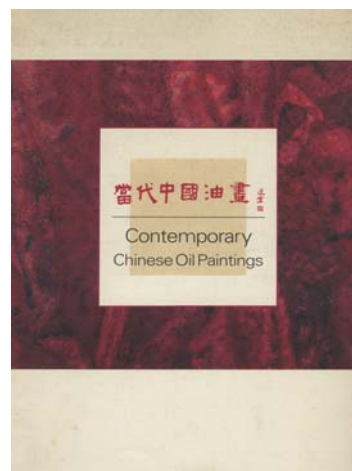


## Zeng Fanzhi

### 曾梵志

Zeng Fanzhi's idiom comes from expressionism and his choice of subject matter is hospital scenes, in which the distress of life is brought to Zeng's limelight. "Human flesh" features with a vengeance the psychological condition of man in a mise en scène that is arresting to behold.

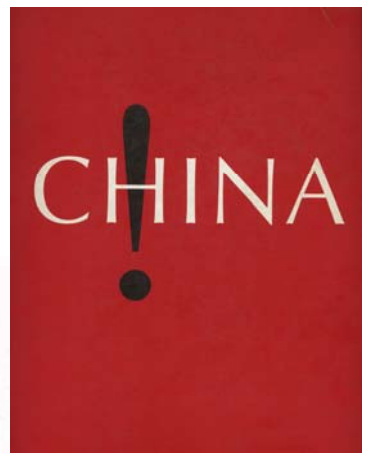
自我的生活方式與藝術氣質使曾梵志早在求學期間就輕易地接受了表現主義的繪畫風格。畢業後的生活經歷促成了曾梵志選取醫院這一瀰漫着人類苦痛、哀傷的場所作為創作的主题，以擺脫對自我生活圈子的單調描寫，同時，題材的轉換無疑更適合曾梵志風格的發展。《協和系列之一》（三聯畫，1989）中，情節的真實含義只是表述「在場」的冷漠與「局外」的焦灼。而形體、空間、色彩在畫面上的共同作用「構成了作品表現傾向中的具象特徵」，並營造一種壓抑箝制的氣氛。在1992年完成的《協和系列之二》、《協和系列之三》中，曾梵志的風格得到進一步純化。《人類與肉類》更多地捨棄先前道具性的交待和寫生感，刻意抽取場景和形體的客觀性，將人的精神狀態凸現強化。色彩也更為主觀化，空間表現被擱置於一邊，造型因素亦相應減弱，表現性的情緒得到更多的渲染。



Human flesh  
人類與肉類

1993  
200 x 180 cm





## ZENG FANZHI

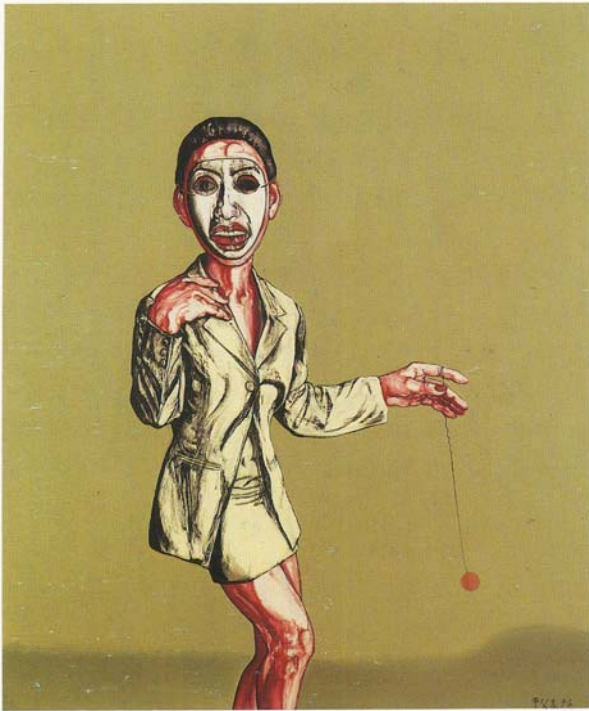
Peking

- 1964 geb. in Wuhan,  
Provinz Hubei  
1991 Abschluß an der  
Akademie für Bildende  
Kunst Hubei

**曾凡志** *Von der Serie »Harmonie« bis zur Serie »Mensch und Fleisch« drehte sich in meinem Kopf alles um die Erinnerung an eine bestimmte Zeit in Wuhan. Diese Werke drückten den physischen Schmerz und die Ungeduld eines Menschen aus. Seit der Serie der Masken ist dies anders geworden. Die Erkenntnis, daß psychische Verletzungen dem Menschen ebenso Schmerzen zufügen, hat mich zu einer Neubewertung der von der Umwelt verursachten physischen Probleme bewogen.*

*Durch die Verwendung der Maske versuche ich, einen bestimmten Abstand zu anderen Menschen zu wahren und mögliche Formen von Selbstbetrug aufzudecken. Es gibt im Leben viele verschiedene Masken. Der Mensch hat in so einer Umgebung gar keine andere Wahl, als selbst unter einer Maske zu leben. Der maskierte Mensch ist der Gegenstand meiner Malerei.*



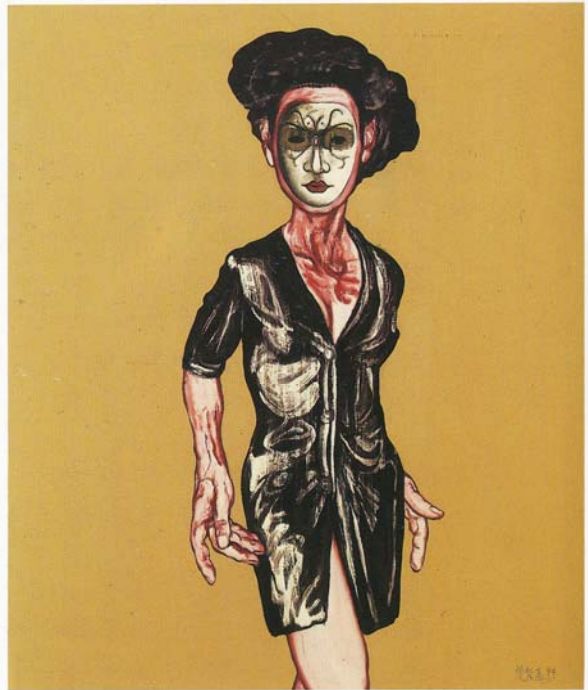


Aus der Serie »Maske«, Nr. 21, 1994. Öl auf Leinwand, 180 x 150 cm



Aus der Serie »Maske«, Nr. 12, 1994. Öl auf Leinwand, 180 x 200 cm

ZENG FANZHI  
165



Aus der Serie »Maske«, Nr. 20, 1994. Öl auf Leinwand, 150 x 130 cm



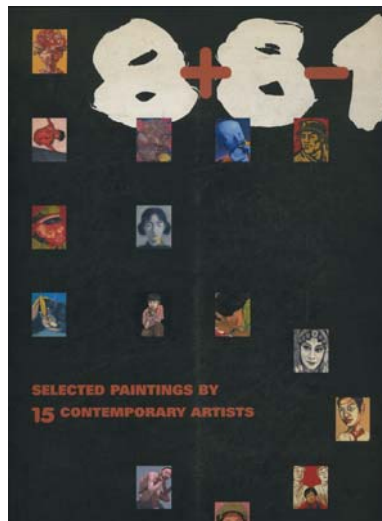
Aus der Serie »Maske«, Nr. 11, 1994. Öl auf Leinwand, 180 x 150 cm

ZENG FANZHI  
167



## 8+8-1 Selected Paintings by 15 Conporary Artists

Manfred Schoeni 1997



**T**his series of paintings tells the stories of the third year students of Class One, Tong Yi Street Primary School in the summer of 1970. The little red soldiers, Zhi Zhi, Yong Yong and Chao Chao responded to the call from the school to join in the social activities after close. Once, during a story telling meeting Zhi Zhi discovered that his classmate little Lilai's father, Jin Yinbao, was a historic counter-revolutionary who was under surveillance and that he propagandised thoughts on the exploited class to little Lilai. Zhi Zhi remembered that under no circumstances should we forget the class struggles and with the help of members of the Workers Propaganda Team, he fought the enemy tit for tat in a life or death situation until the bad person was finally arrested.

These paintings depict the heroic images of little red soldier Zhi Zhi and all the students of class one in the third year of primary school.

我的這組作品講述的是：七十年代初統一街小學三年級一班的同學們在暑假中的一些故事。紅小兵志志、勇勇、超超等積極響應學校的號召，參加校外活動。在一次故事會中志志發現同學小利來的爸爸一被管制的歷史反革命份子“金銀寶”向小利來宣傳剝削階級思想，毒害少年兒童。紅小兵志志牢記千萬不要忘記階級鬥爭，在工宣隊師傅們的幫助下，帶領紅小兵同階級敵人進行了針鋒相對、你死我活的鬥爭，終於使壞人落網了。作品主要塑造了紅小兵志志及三年級一班全體同學們的少年英雄形像。

曾梵志  
Zeng Fanzhi





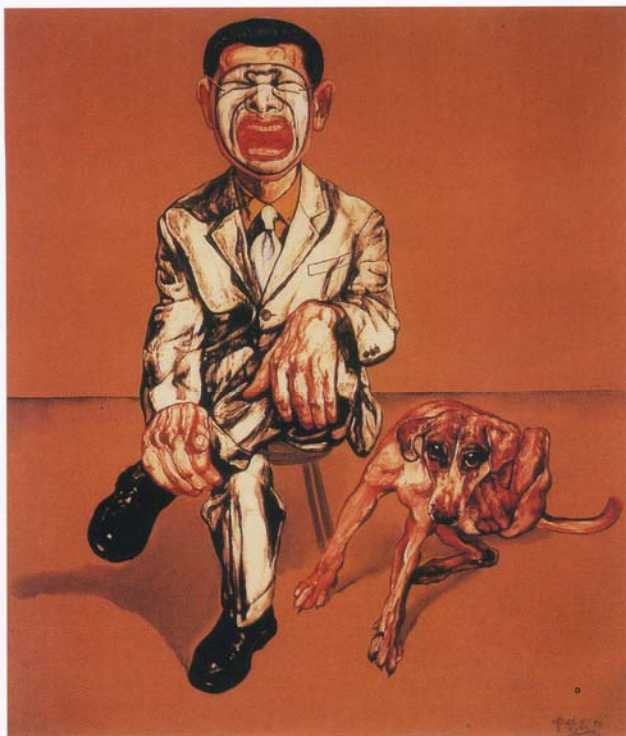


Zeng Fanzhi • **Mask 19-9A** • 1994  
 Oil on canvas • 150 x 130cm

"Painting is a painful process; it forces the human figures in my painting into a state of pain and anxiety. I paint images of people in tragic situations, and they express everything that I want to express.

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## Zeng Fanzhi

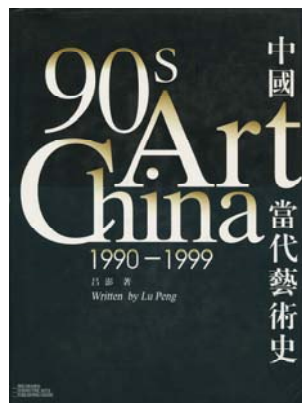


Zeng Fanzhi • **Self portrait with dog** • 1994  
 Oil on canvas • 165 x 180cm

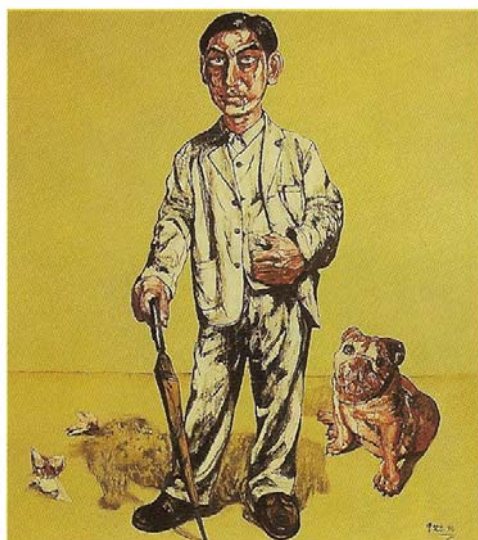


Zeng Fanzhi • **Couple (Mask 1996-1)** • 1996 • Oil on canvas • 200 x 180cm

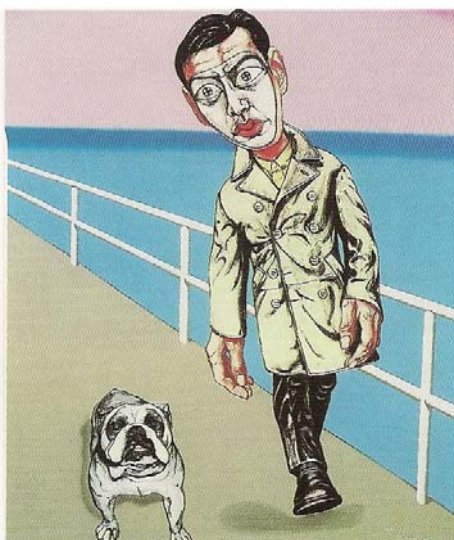




曾凡志最初的风格属于表现主义的，叙述性的特征使得他的作品具有震撼力。像《协和》(1991) 和《肉》(1992) 这样的作品，画家试图将他理解的痛苦与焦灼表现出来。画家认定现实中的人无疑病入膏肓，医治是必然的了。可是，那些病人问题的严重性不在于肉体，因为仅仅将肉剔除是没有解决问题的，画中的人物即便是医生也与病人无别。在表现性的作品中，曾凡志隐隐感觉到了一种图式的格式，即画中的人物眼睛总是瞪得大大的，而表情是没有变化的惊诧。大约在1994年，曾凡志将灵魂的痛苦情形隐藏起来，而代之以“假面”。这种变化一方面是画家对问题的认识的转变：生活的真实性即便揭示出来也没有任何意义，事实上没有人真正愿意面对真实；另一方面是画家清晰地认识到独特的图式的重要性，那些焦灼或者痛苦的面容完全可以以面具的方式给予替代，因为生活中的真实情况是“面具”。这样的结果，曾凡志事实上以一种固定不变的风格化模式表达了新生代的观念：无奈。



曾梵志  
自画像  
1994  
200cm × 180cm  
油画



曾梵志  
面具系列  
1997 No.2  
170 × 145cm  
油画



曾梵志  
面具系列  
1996 No.8  
170 × 140cm  
油画

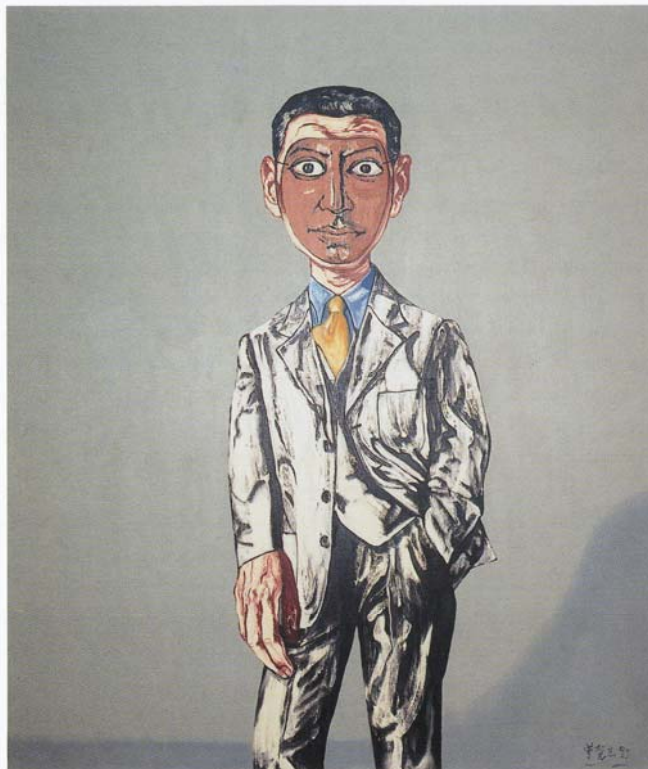


**Chinese Walls | 鸿沟**  
 Gasunie, The Netherlands 2000



鸿沟

面具之四(男人) Zeng Fanzhi, Mask no. 4 (man), 1995, oil on canvas, 150 x 130 cm



24 二四

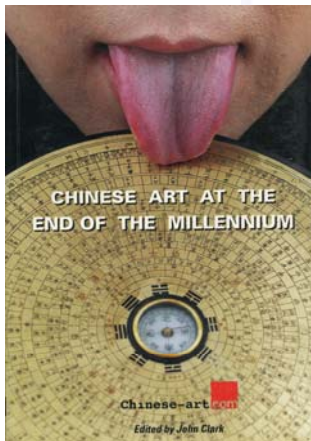
Zeng Fanzhi, Mask no. 8 (woman), 1995, oil on canvas, 150 x 130 cm 面具之八(女人)

鸿沟



二五 25





**Nine Chinese Artists (Wang Guangyi, Yu Youhan, Li Shan, Yue Minjun, Yang Shaobin, Liu Wei, Qi Zhilong, Zeng Fanzhi, Guo Jin)**

*Leng Lin*

*vol. 1, no. 5*

As we look back over the last hundred years as China has moved into the modern era, it is clear the 1990s marks a period of particularly momentous change. This change can be seen in two respects.

Firstly, whereas modern art in China over the last fifty years has struggled to "catch up" with Western modern art, reflecting a certain time dimension in its thinking about that relationship, recent art seeks to establish a dialogue, if not a co-existence, with Western modern art, reflecting more of a spatial dimension with regard to this relationship.

Within this spatial dimension, Chinese modern art has stepped out from its self-debasing position of "catching up with the West" into a spatial dimension that resulted in a self that was fundamentally altered. From this self-differentiated position, Chinese modern art began to conscientiously undergo a period of large-scale introspection (self-reflection or self-identification). This kind of introspection was not simply, as in the past, a re-presentation of its history, rather, it is based on the needs of an increasingly global existence, an identification and differentiation of "the self" and "the other" in the increasingly intertwined relationship with the West.



25. Wang Guangyi, "Coca Cola," 1990-1994,  
200 x 200 cm, oil on canvas

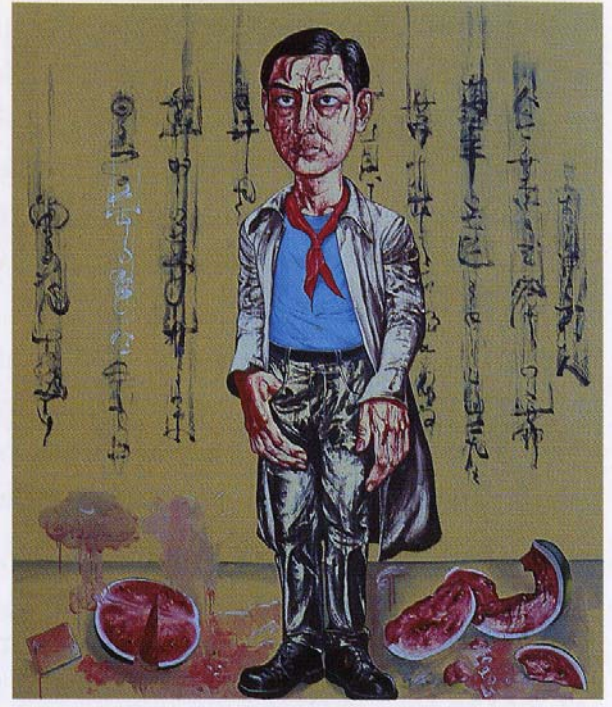


26. Li Shan, "Mao and the Artist No. 2 (Rouge No. 69)," 1994,  
150 x 180 cm, oil on canvas





31. Qi Zhilong, Untitled, 1998, 65 x 44 cm, oil on canvas



32. Zeng Fanzhi, "Self Portrait," 1996, 180 x 200 cm, oil on canvas

tion (flattening) of objective history. Contemporary life re-establishes itself based on the principle of necessity. In this sense, Yue Minjun's paintings clearly reflect the individual, as well as the practicality of China's new generation of artists.

Yang Shaobin has gone even further down the road of individualism. He employs a kind of self-destructive technique to express his individuality. In Yang Shaobin's works, self-portrait busts combine with expressive brushwork. This combination takes the desire for self salvation and almost resignedly places it in a precarious position in which the image of the self constantly seems on the verge of collapsing or going to pieces. Searching for balance in the chaos, searching for peace in the violence, it is this search that connects Yang Shaobin's art to the angst-ridden outer world of everyday contemporary life.

Liu Wei, by comparison seems more intent on focusing on the non rational animal inside man. He uses short, palsied, strokes along with vivid colors in imaginary settings. In this respect, Liu Wei is a prototypical realist painter. It's just that his reality is always mixed with a relaxed joke of sorts. This is perhaps how many Chinese approach reality. He deals with difficulties and danger in a contrary manner almost randomly changing it into something it's not. Liu Wei likes to employ nudity and sex as well as nauseating or revolting images, basically anything scatological that can have a powerful psychological effect. Even so, his paintings are executed in such a way that the overall look can be strikingly vivid, colorful, bright, even engagingly beautiful. In his works, he employs a highly individualized technique in an effort to deal with, in his own uniquely Chinese manner, many of the new challenges born out of the complexity of contemporary Chinese culture.



Secondly, Chinese modern art's search for a contemporary Chinese art in the West has led to a re-evaluation of its own views of history and those of the West. This new view attempts to integrate history and the West into a socialist economic framework based on new market theories and principles in what is essentially an "inner search for a contemporary Chinese art." Art in China in the 1990's is in fact an art created jointly by China and the West. It emphasizes common issues facing both, while taking an almost anti-modern critical stance with regard to China's drive to economic modernization. It is full of angst and has lost any clearly defined goals. Yet, it contains a complex, sensitive, if not a somewhat neurotic and enthusiastic response to the interaction of inseparable societies caught up in the process of globalization. We can see these responses clearly in the works of Wang Guangyi, Yu Youhan, Li Shan, Yue Minjun, Yang Shaobin, Liu Wei, Qi Zhilong, Zeng Fanzhi, Guo Jin, amongst others.

In Wang Guangyi's paintings we regard the utopian images of the proletariat commonly seen in the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s and 1970s, and mixed with the enormous influence of Western culture so ubiquitous today. The object of criticism in the past has now become an essential component of the contemporary social scene, a seemingly unstoppable force. Wang Guangyi attempts a kind of cultural criticism employing images of mass/popular culture from both China and the West. Without providing us with any knowledge of who or what is being criticized (the Western brand name or the proletarian images), his deconstructive compositions are critical in as much as they present us with the mere possibility that Chinese and Western cultures may in the end only cannibalize each other.

By comparison, Yu Youhan focuses his energy on interpreting the enormously symbolic image of Mao Zedong in a modern and sometimes misguided nationalistic context. He takes images of Mao which were popular from the propaganda



27. Yu Youhan, "Double Mao: Cultural Revolution," 1994, 118 x 166 cm, acrylic on canvas



28. Yue Minjun, Untitled, 1997, 120 x 100 cm, oil on canvas



art of the 1960s and 1970s (especially those meant to symbolize China's reaching out to the people of the world or leading them) and combines them with floral motifs from Chinese folk dress. From the standpoint of 1990s pluralism, he re-evaluates the relationship between such a totalitarian authority, which was at the same time nationalist and globalist, and the society that created and sustained such an authority. Yu Youhan has been said to be taking a deconstructivist stance whereas in fact it would be more accurate to describe him as seeking to reinforce certain pluralistic values.

If Wang Guangyi and Yu Youhan are artists who look at changing realities in China from a larger cultural perspective, then Li Shan is an artist who looks at modern China's development from the standpoint of his own personal spiritual experience.

In Li Shan's works, Mao is often depicted with a lotus flower in his mouth. This sexual depiction of Mao deconstructs the public persona of the outside world, the Mao icon, transforming it instead into an everyday image of Mao dwelling in his own private world of feelings and emotions. Such re-reading and deconstruction of the mythical construction of Mao was particularly common in China of the 1990s. In addition, Li Shan also painted a large number of animals and political icons. These images, often deliberately misogynist or misplaced politically, symbolize a kind of spiritual confusion in China.

The works of Yue Minjun, Yang Shaobin and Liu Wei express the individual. This re-affirming personal values, even if extreme, in a somewhat exaggerated sense of individualism. Yue Minjun repeatedly uses himself as the subject of his paintings. He employs a variety of techniques, which are self-effacing, yet still somehow narcissistic, to express the optimistic outlook of China's young and upwardly mobile generation. On his canvases, "the foolish smile" already assumes the deconstructing function of post-modernism. On the one hand, it dispels the notion of subjectivity while at the same time it deals with the simplifica-



29. Yang Shaobin, *Untitled*, 1997-1998, 260 x 360 cm, oil on canvas

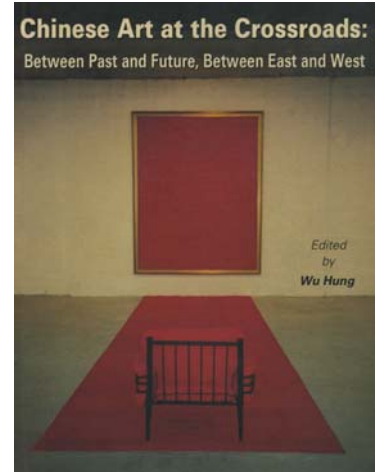


30. Liu Wei, *"Swimmers,"* 1994, 150 x 200 cm, oil on canvas



# Chinese Art at the Crossroads: Between Past and Future, Between East and West | 十字路口的中国艺术：在过去和未来之间，在东方和西方之间

New Art Media Limited 2001



2. Zeng Fanzhi  
(above)  
*Mask Series No. 16*  
1997  
150 x 130 cm  
oil on canvas

3. Wei Lin  
(below)  
*Mao Zedong Wearing a Red Scarf*  
1998  
computer  
manipulated  
photograph

explores the way in which Feng Mengbo appropriates a Cultural Revolution revolutionary opera to create a work of computer art, part of which is a shooting game.

In his "Putting On and Taking Off: How the Mao Suit Became Art," Zhu Qi examines Zhan Wang's and Sui Jianguo's use of the form of the Mao suit in their sculptures. As the essay makes clear, the Mao suit, originally worn by Sun Yat-sen (and named for him rather than Mao in Chinese), is a symbol whose implications extend through the Mao years up to the present. It is interesting to note that Zhan Wang and Sui Jianguo are teachers in the same division of the Central Academy of Fine Arts' Sculpture Department.

Martina Koepfel-Yang looks at Yang Jiechang's 1999 installation, *Remaking Dong Cunrui*, in her "Remoulding a Hero; Remolding Icons." Yang Jiechang, noting the rise of nationalism in China, built an installation around the recently reinstated hero, Dong Cunrui, to highlight some negative qualities of nationalism. He took images from a serial picture book about the hero, and clips from a film about him, emphasizing the reduction of

Dong Cunrui's life to the moment in which he held up a packet of explosives to the underside of a bridge, immediately before they (and he) exploded.

Finally, we have a translated press release—"The *Rent Collection Courtyard* Copyright Breached Overseas: Sichuan Academy of Fine Arts Sues Venice Biennale"—paired with an introduction and discussion of the situation that prompted the Sichuan Academy of Fine Arts to issue such a statement. The conceptual artist Cai Guo-Qiang's highly acclaimed copy of an iconic Cultural Revolution sculpture, the *Rent Collection Courtyard*, has catalyzed numerous reactions, ranging from the proposed lawsuit, to the production of pricey replicas of the original, to Song Dong's *Award for Winning*



without *Making an Effort*, intended for Cai Guo-Qiang—for winning at Venice "without making an effort." Song Dong's piece appeared on the *Chinese-art.com* website earlier this year.

Other examples of artists working with Cultural Revolution visual language, or art theory, or techniques abound. The paintings of Guo Jian, who was an army artist before emigrating to Australia, are executed in a crude style suitable for propaganda art. Their surfaces seem rough and unschooled, but the effect is a deliberate homage to the realities of propaganda painting. Guo Jian combines motifs from Cultural Revolution revolutionary ballets with poses and props glorifying violence. In the background geysers gush heavenward, evocative of the orgasmic thrill he and other soldiers have found in the violent acts they are trained to commit—something Guo Jian is working to exorcise from his system via his paintings.

Zeng Fanzhi's paintings, by contrast, have a smooth, perfect surface conveying a sense of emotional detachment. He paints images of himself as a child, crying because although he yearned to wear the red scarf of the Little Red Guards, he was one of only two children in his school denied the privilege. Erupting through the smooth surface of the painting, and the boy's mask, the pain Cultural Revolution policies caused children is apparent.

Image manipulation is a standard technique of Cultural Revolution visual culture. During that time, both photographs and paintings

4. Xu Bing  
(left)  
*Art for the People*  
banner  
1999

5. Liu Fenghua  
(right)  
*Studying Lei Feng*  
1998  
performance



## 曾梵志

生于湖北武汉 ◆ 毕业于湖北美术学院油画系 ◆ 现居北京 ◆ 职业画家

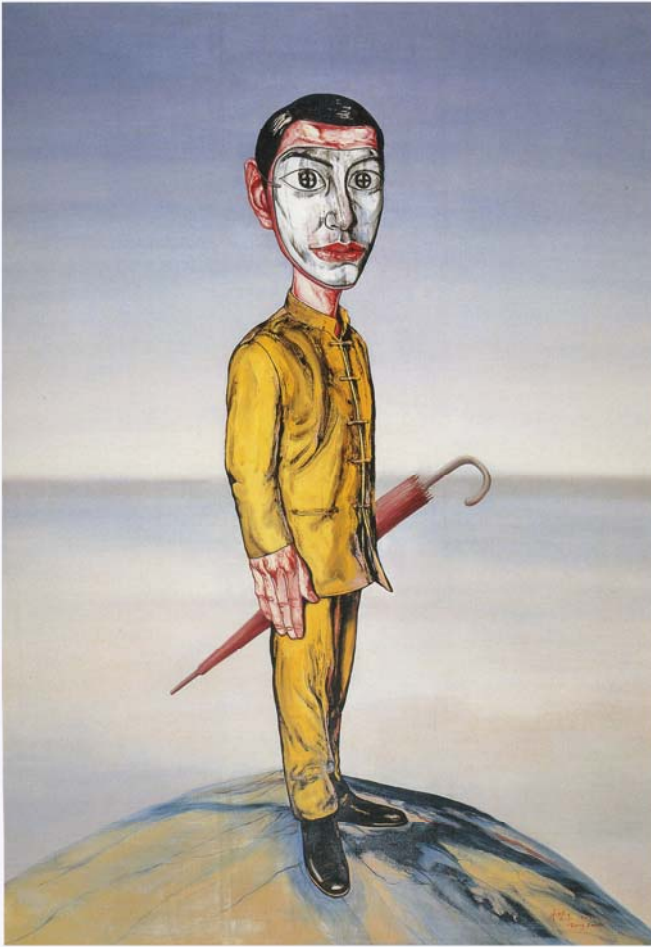
曾梵志“面具系列”中象征性的人生图景表达了当代社会中的个人生存感受。带有表现风格的作品在对优雅与暴力，温馨与残酷，爱抚与强迫的调和中把握住了具有平衡感的力度。作品的绘画语言细腻而深沉，使观者的心绪在欣赏作品时不自觉地游移往返于迷醉、放任与兴奋、惊讶之间。作为九十年代初期涌现的新生力量，曾梵志带给中国当代艺术以持久的魅力。

## ZENG FANZHI

Born in Wuhan, Hubei Province,  
Graduated from Oil Painting  
Department, Hubei Academy of  
Fine Arts, Wuhan  
Current: Lives in Beijing, China,  
Professional Artist

Zeng Fanzhi expresses individual's feelings for surviving the modern society in the symbolic views of his "Mask" series. His expressive works invoke a balanced power that combines grace and violence, sweetness and cruelty, affection and force. His painting language is delicate but reserved, taking the audience from enchantment and indulgence, to excitement and amazement. As a member of the new force in art that emerged in the early 1990s, Zeng Fanzhi has introduced an enduring charm to Chinese modern art.







# The First Guangzhou Triennial - Reinterpretation: A Decade of Experimental Chinese Art (1990-2000) | 首届广州当代艺术三年展 - 重新解读：中国实验艺术十年(1990-2000)

Macao Publishing House | 澳门出版社 2002

曾梵志

## 协和三联画

布上油画 467 × 180 cm

1990 武汉

“协和”以医院为题材，在写实的外框下突出形象的象征和意象，以及笔触的表现力。他通过医院与病人的关系，表达了一种“施虐与受虐”的生存感觉。医生露出狞笑，病人可笑地躺在床上，态度安静、呆滞，但整个画面却又洋溢着不安的气息，尤其充血般的肉色和冷白色，在表现性的笔触中，把隐藏着的血腥与危险透露出来，流露出作者对人生的悲观。(栗宪庭)



曾梵志

1964 生于湖北武汉

1991 毕业于湖北美术学院油画系

现居北京

### 个展

1989 “曾梵志作品展” 湖北美术学院美术馆 武汉

1995 “曾梵志：假面” 香港汉轩轩

1998 “曾梵志：1993-1998” 中央美术学院画廊 四合苑画廊 北京，  
香格纳画廊 上海

2001 “面具之后” 香格纳画廊 上海

### 联展

1992 “中国广州首届九十年代艺术双年展(油画部分)” 广州

1993 “后89中国新艺术” 香港艺术中心

1998 “中国批评家提名展” 中国美术馆 北京

1999 “中国前卫艺术展” 现代艺术博物馆 巴塞罗那 西班牙

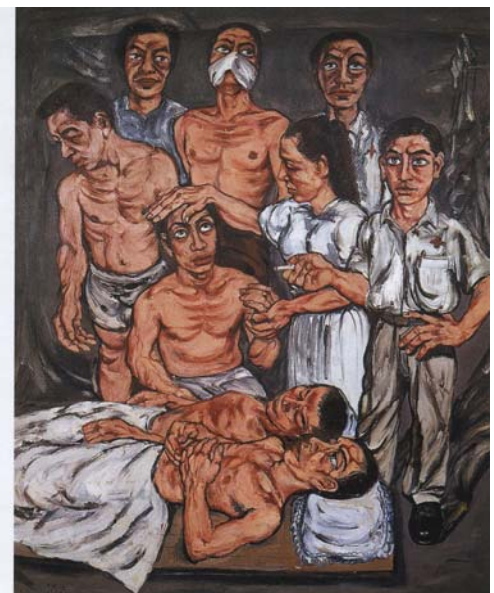
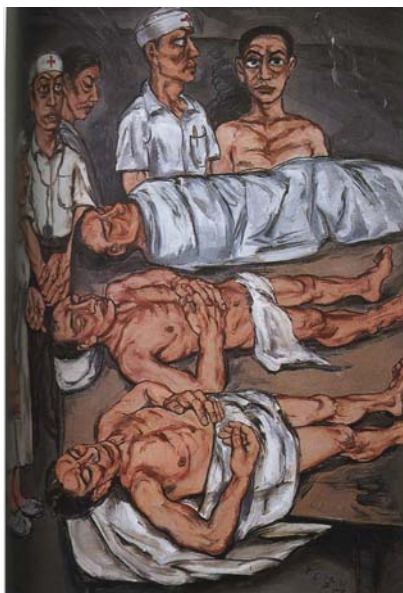
“从国家意识形态出走——中国新艺术” 汉堡国际前卫文化中心 德国

1990 “中国1” 波恩当代艺术博物馆 德国

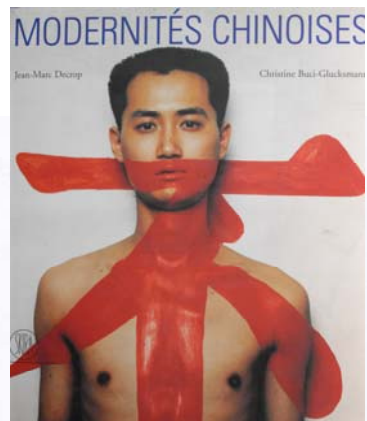
1991 “‘引号’——中国当代艺术展” 新加坡国家美术馆

1998 “中国当代艺术” 柏林 德国

2001 “新形象” 中国美术馆 北京







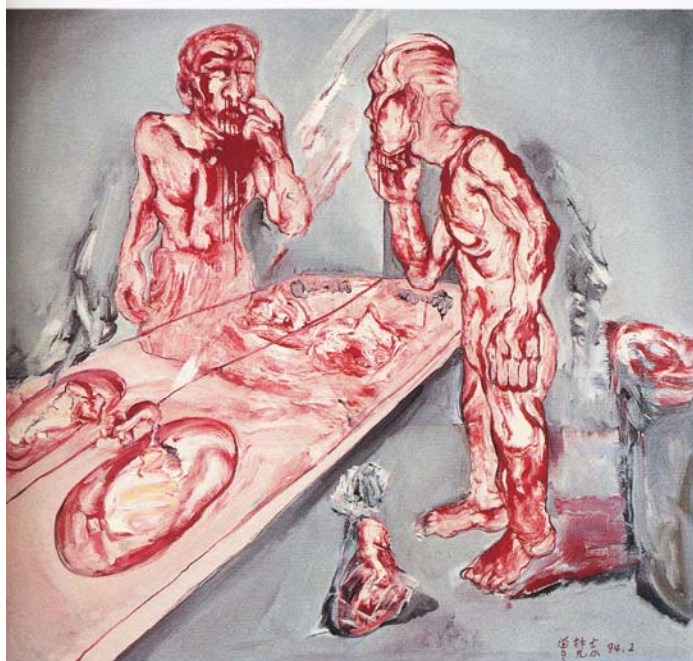
# Zeng Fanzhi

Logé près d'un hôpital dont il utilise les salles de bain, Zeng y côtoie journellement les cadavres et les écorchés. Ici se rasant en saignant devant la glace. Puis, dans sa série des masques, commencée en 1994, le corps vêtu et lisse contraste avec la force d'expression des mains et des visages masqués, témoins d'un univers intérieur qui bouillonne. Ce couple moderne, habillé tendance – elle castratrice et possessive, lui passif et timoré – crient leur difficulté à vivre ensemble.



96  
**Zheng Fanzhi**  
*Mask 1996-1 (Couple)*, 1996  
Huile sur toile, 200 x 180 cm





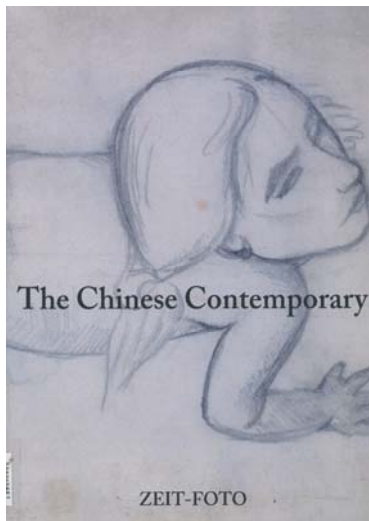
97  
**Zheng Fanzhi**  
*Autoportrait au Chien*, 1994  
 Huile sur toile, 165 × 180 cm



98  
**Zheng Fanzhi**  
*Mao*, 1993  
 Huile sur toile, 60 × 50 cm



**The Chinese Contemporary**  
Zeit-Foto Co., Ltd, Japan 2006



曾梵志  
Zeng Fanzhi



无题 No.9  
Untitled No.9  
2004 150x150cm oil on canvas



肖像 No.1  
Portrait No.1  
2004 100x100cm oil on canvas

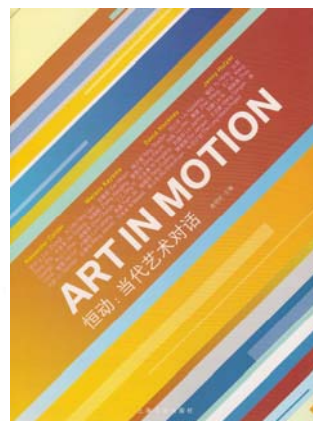


Art in motion | 恒动: 当代艺术对话

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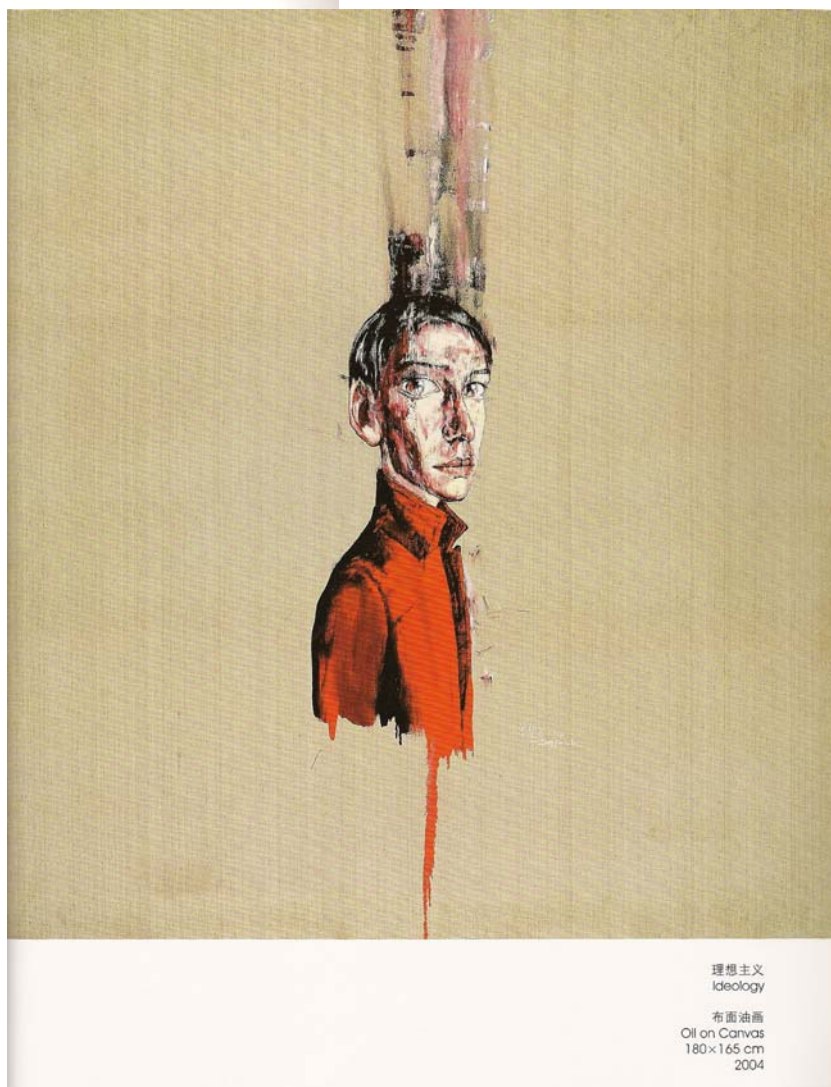
2006

曾梵志 Zeng Fanzhi



肖像 No. 7  
Portrait No. 7

布面油画  
Oil on Canvas  
50×70 cm  
2004



理想主义  
Ideology

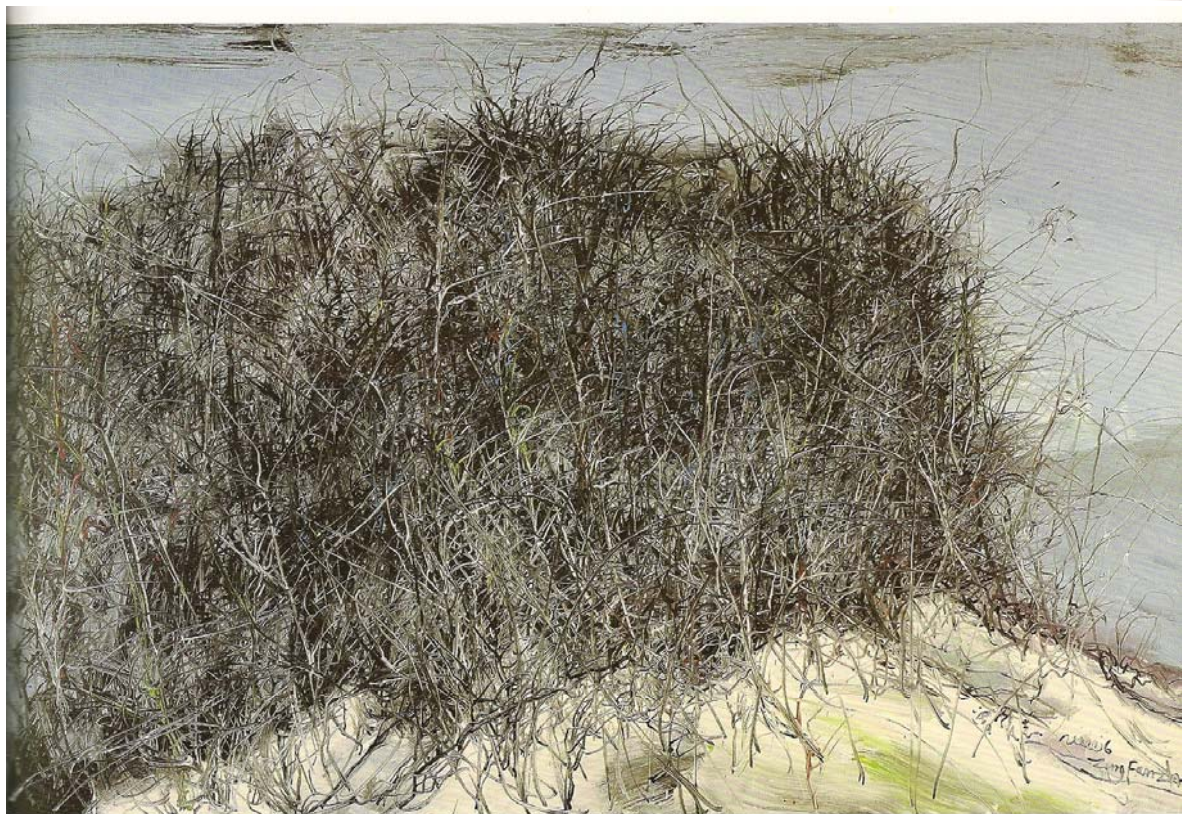
布面油画  
Oil on Canvas  
180×165 cm  
2004





游泳  
Swimming

布面油画  
Oil on Canvas  
215×330 cm  
2006

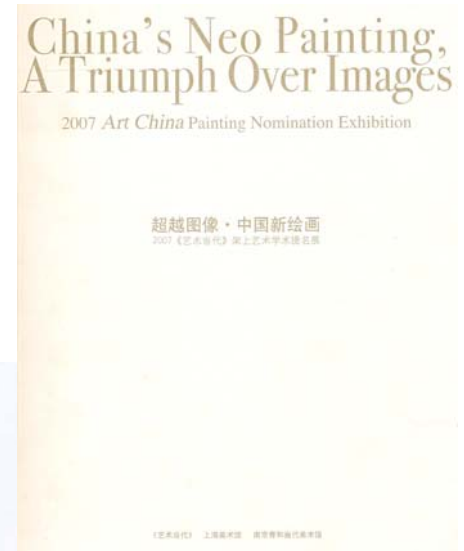


江山如此多娇之三  
This Land So Rich In Beauty No.3

布面油画  
Oil on Canvas  
215×330 cm  
2006



**China's Neo Painting, A Triumph Over Images: 2007 Art China Painting Nomination Exhibition | 超越图像•中国新绘画：2007《艺术当代》架上艺术学术提名展**  
MODERN ART/Shanghai Art Gallery/Nanjing Qing He Modern Art Museum | 《当代艺术》/上海美术馆/南京青和当代美术馆 2007



## 曾梵志的艺术叙事

Lóránd Hegyi

尽管对曾梵志的作品语言进行历史性重构无疑能够就画家作品的发展脉络、画家在艺术方面的历史偏好以及影响他的艺术流派等等写出大量正统的美学评论和观察,但此时此刻对其作品的鉴赏还有一条更有价值的路径,那就是聚焦于其作品具体而独特的视觉效果。也就是说,与其试图在中国当代艺术文化的大背景下对曾梵志个人艺术生涯的发展进行重构,倒不如尝试感知其作品中具体的视觉属性,从而对其独特而迅速的感染机制进行阐释。曾梵志的作品极富启发性、力度与激情,能够立即激发出一股无休止的进化与转变,尽管我们无法清楚预见其走向与结果。这样的作品使人兴奋,其背后隐藏的复杂故事可以在所有方向上得以延续,而这种特质又使他的作品成了一种探险:作品的表层世界构成一张地图,引导人们踏上未知的旅途。这里所谓的探险,是指其作品构成中对未知事件的幽默、生动而即兴的展开,也就是在不同的想象语境、情感和联想环境之下,作品因情绪的波动而呈现出丰富的视觉效果。通过对作品视觉结构的主要元素进行具体化,将不同的主题及多重关联内容置于前景当中,从而将注意力引向叙事手法并进而实现变化。

在这种意义上,不难理解曾梵志的作品至少开创性地为我们提供了一种丰富而振奋人心的满足,与历史、政治、情感、记忆、心理和幻想均有关联,又略带轶闻性与说教性。画家在此成了一名说故事的人,但真实的叙事隐藏在叙事文本和个人观察的背后——这是一种关于作品创作本身的叙事,它使得视觉形象的不断转型成了唯一的



真实条件、唯一的紧迫现实,在富有戏剧性的同时成了与欣赏者自身相关的事件。在这里,变化和塑造的过程本身才是真正的叙事,它在作品的多种隐含背景中宣告着自己的成形。

曾梵志绘画作品的活力是多方面的,他的一些巨幅油画结构层次丰富,具有隐蔽但极具意义的多面立体幻想性空间维度,其复杂的明暗效果为作品注入了生命和情绪。另一方面,半神话色彩的崇高题材也为作品带来了史诗叙事般的形而上学特征,促使我们在当代绘画之争的大背景下对其作品进行考察。这种崇高题材的再度发现和包括概念与方法在内的视觉语言的理性解构战略似乎构成了一对悖论,但这却恰好可以概括围绕当代绘画实践而展开的争论。新的叙事方式显然需要与激进的当代背景完成整合,尽管其进程是谨慎而略带隐蔽性的。引人注目的是,曾梵志的作品实现了解构主义手法和生动画面情节的巧妙结合,使其作品创作本身成了事实上的叙事方式。

由此,我们便可以避免过度简化的伪历史趣闻型叙事和更加无趣的心理学分析,以及那些西方艺术评论家在有关中国当代艺术的讨论中频繁出现的虽可理解却无意义的伴随现象,尽管这些能够将注意力引向西方意义上确实缺少的东西,即关于理性、哲学、历史背景、社会结构、政治文化以及各学科和文化领域发展前景的完备知识。

曾梵志的作品提供了不同的答案,它要求我们对其作品的本质进行直接的美学分析,并以此为基础建立另一种观念,而这些显然是在真实的历史状况和特定的精神状态下发展和塑造而成的。对于笔者来讲,画家创作《协和医院》系列、《面具》系列的原因和境况,心理、感情或道德约束和影响因素,哪些大师给了他结构上的启发、具体模式或特定方法论上的指导,或哪些现代大师影响了他的创作都不是那么重要,更让人兴趣盎然的反而是一个基础性的问题,那就是曾梵志在不同艺术阶段中持续表现出的创作能量,及其作品活力所具有的高度集中的强度。这才是曾梵志对当代绘画切实而特殊的贡献,同时由于他的成长经历和中国背景而显得更加别具一格。

也就是说,笔者认为最重要的问题应该与其作品的“怪诞”本质联系起来,这从一开始就或多或少概括着其作品的特征并影响着形式创作的过程,无论它们与东方传统(不可避免地概括且很可能被简化)、心理(个人)或政治(集体)感知策略是否具有关联。当然,这些“怪诞”的发展及方法论演变必须与特定的历史、政治文化环境以及相应的世界观背景进行对照,且画家的艺术路径也只能在这些学术与历史背景中得到解读,但它们并不能从这些历史环境中被完全解释或推演,就像他们在对画家的所有作品进行整体考虑时会被遗忘或忽视一样。

曾梵志的作品充满持续而无休止的变化和富有动感、激情与力量的流动性构图,同时塑造出模拟性特点和抽象韵律,或为示意性的即兴创作,或体现为明确的物理结构。这种无休止的运动自然而无拘无束,使他的任何作品都没有真正得以固定。这些作品在本质上是难以固定的,因此无论在方法论和形式,还是在叙事层面都无法定位或识别。这种叙事方式处于不断的变化和演进当中,就像油画构图的方法论所经历的过程一样。在特定的折中式方法论之下,曾梵志的绘画风格与结构战略有相似之处,



但他的作品能够呈现发人深思的情景,传递出该作品创作过程的叙事视角。绘画技巧可以在一幅画中创造空间和景深,并塑造复杂的幻想空间,而在另一幅画中创造完全不同的效果和叙事风格以讲述完全不同的故事,尽管解读的方向并不一定相互排斥。现实中总是存在探索其他路径的自由空间,我们也总可以观察到各种影响之间错综复杂的交织和令人困惑的互动。

也许曾梵志艺术最为重要也最为独特的元素正蕴涵在这种转瞬即逝的流动与未完结状态中,就像那些纷乱的涂抹一样,通过区分与隔离,集中与扩散,以及那些隐含的却富有戏剧性的叙事型明暗效果,被一种不可阻挡而永无休止的自由驱使着,催生新形态,引进新故事,创造出超越画面本身的景观、人体或肖像,为的只是使他们消解并实现再次转化。曾梵志的绘画状态的演进也是如此,如同一幅包含多个平行分支的巨幅视觉叙事诗正不断展开,持续向核心主题中注入新的子线索,向具有涵盖性的丰富整体中融合了新的特色和细节。

这规模宏大的视觉叙事诗正向我们展示难以计数的生动细节,重复着某些主题,并持续创造着不同的绘画状态,就像一条宽广幽深的大河,在入海前流经无数平原和山地、熟悉或陌生的国家、充满异国风情的文化或是再熟悉不过的街区。曾梵志的作品为我们讲述动听的故事,揭示难以预料的情形或通报无法预见的事件,这些都在画家的作画过程中得以完成。其作品的特质即在于此:他的艺术不是在阐释画外业已存在的故事,而是在展示绘画本身所包含的所有可能,作画对于他来讲就是在复杂的绘画过程中创造一种叙事方式。因此,他所呈现的故事并没有固有的内在边界,在可变的背景下,他的绘画结构并不为其内涵规定特定的展开方向。

这种叙事方式的存在状态就是激进而不可逆转的瞬时性:这既是它的本质,也是理解那些令人惊讶的问题、无法预见的内涵以及意外转折和嬗变的关键所在;既可以使示意性构图塑造出幻想空间,也可以使富含感情的即兴创作转型为模拟型关联。这使幻想与回忆、诗意与情感的光环变得更加饱满和复杂,使绘画的范围在不同经历下的多种联想中得到无限扩大。曾梵志绘画的特点可以用瞬时性、多变性、流动性、不规则性、开放性和神秘性来概括。在这样的脉络之下,其作品的标题显得贴切而富有内涵。他的一系列作品都叫做《江山如此多娇》,这些作品有的表现出一种抽象的表现主义笔触,有的是富有动态性和爆发力的风景临摹,也有一些是对毛泽东时代的记忆。在所有这些作品当中,绘画的动态美和巨幅构图含义的不断变化都体现着内在的一致性。内涵的持续变化正是作品核心结构的存在形式。那无法抑制也无从疏导的流动性嬗变带给欣赏者对作品内容自发而直觉性的理解,同时也描述着曾梵志绘画的精华:适合任何时间与空间的合法性。

曾梵志似乎在建立并凸现着绘画的普世性特征,但他的本意也许不是去处理整个绘画创作的问题或从道德的视角探讨价值判断。他活在自己的作品里,在混乱而无秩序的现实状态和问题中阐释着自我,尽管有着富含激情与探险精神的纯真,却传达着一种存在主义的思辨、勇敢的开放和戏剧性的情绪。

这种情绪性在他的所有作品中都有体现,从早期的表现主义《协和医院》系列到极富戏剧张力的《肉》系列,从强调心理因素的肖像和自我探索的自画像到具有社会



批评色彩的《面具》系列,再到近期富含示意性的巨幅作品,其内涵指向都有开放的空间,产生一种半神秘主义维度。这些作品被一种铺天盖地的巨大漩涡所笼罩,这漩涡永不停歇,从不对自身接近极端的强度施加任何限制,也从不强制我们接受任何戏剧性或不恰当的夸张。

这意味着其作品中无休止的强有力运动不必直接与精心挑选的美学或道德有关,也不一定体现着任何人为设计的效果,它们更没有任何形式上的特定图案或标志,但却拥有持续演化的能力和一种流动多变的常态。其本质就是物质不可阻挡的转型,及其与各种美学、心理、寓言型及语义系统的关联,而其本身也在这些关联中被赋予感情。曾梵志的兴趣不在于这些语义系统,而在于使绘画创造意义的可能性本身,尽管各种语义系统对增强叙事手法的多样性起着一定作用。

曾梵志的作品提供了一种永恒而平易自然的原始反抗,其表达方式并非大声疾呼,而是在他的日常实践中平静地确立起来。其反抗对象包括过度简化或随意建立的类别系统,尤其是那些仅在自己定义的背景下才具有意义或仅概括特定艺术元素和方法论过程的形式规则、常规沟通模式,以及历史上形成的传统表达系统。富于流动感且短暂灵活的指涉性是其作品的基石。

尽管大量评论都把曾梵志的作品与抽象化和表现主义联系起来,主要基于西方的流派来解读他的作品,但其作品中庄严宏伟的宣泄却似乎与另一种可能建立在传统美学流派和西方现代性历史背景之外的艺术本质有关。这种本质就是对常新形象的持续自发创作,与此同时对其指涉性进行分解和再吸收,并对绘画的范围进行扩张并建立关联。因此,曾梵志充满戏剧性和连贯性的众多作品正处于无休无止的流动性形成过程之中,这个在画面的异国风情背后逐步展开的过程才是真正根本而重要的叙事方式。

《艺术当代》推荐文献:

《曾梵志的艺术叙事》曾刊于《艺术当代》2007年第五期。此外,关于曾梵志创作的另两篇评论文章《面具下现代人》及《曾梵志、香格纳及其他》刊于《艺术当代》2003年第三期。



# The Visual Epos of Zeng Fanzhi

*Lóránd Hegyi*

Although a historical reconstruction of the language of Zeng Fanzhi's oeuvre would certainly provide occasion for numerous legitimate comments and observations on the development of his painting, his historical preferences in art and his chosen influences, it seems to me that a more fruitful approach will be to focus on the concrete, unique phenomenon of his painting and the question of the contextualisation of the visual references employed by Zeng Fanzhi in our radical here and now. This also means that rather than attempting to reconstruct his individual development as a painter within the Chinese culture of contemporary painting, it will be preferable to try to perceive the concrete, sensual, visual actuality of a Zeng Fanzhi's painting and to describe its specific, immediate impact mechanism. Zeng Fanzhi's paintings are evocative, powerful and dynamic; they invoke a sense of constant, unending evolution and transformation without foreseeable results. This makes them exhilarating and exciting, suggestive of hidden, complex stories that could be continued in all possible directions, so that the painting becomes an adventure, its surface a map for an expedition into terra incognita. By adventure I mean the humorous, vivid, spontaneous unfolding of unforeseen events within the composition of the painting, in other words, the fertile evolution of its implicit potential, which is embodied in various imaginative contexts, in various emotional and associational environments, by the sensual structuring of the painting on the canvas. This concretisation of the primary acts of visual and plastic composition in painting puts the different thematic links and the various references in the foreground and draws attention to the narrative which thus evolves.

In this light, it is understandable that Zeng Fanzhi's painting first and foremost, at least offers us content that is rich and exciting, linked with history, politics, emotions and memories, psychology and fantasy, and somewhat anecdotal and didactic, so that the painter becomes a storyteller, a commentator. But the true narrative is to be found behind the storyteller's tales, behind the commentator's observations: it is the narrative of the painting's creation, which makes it plain that the unceasing transfiguration of the visual figure is the only true condition, the only immediate reality, the true dramatic and, for us, relevant event. The process of becoming is the actual narrative here, manifested in the various connotative contexts of the embodiment of the act of painting.

The dynamics of Zeng Fanzhi's manifold pictorial events, the rich structuring of his sometimes gigantic canvases with their hidden, yet extremely significant, multifaceted, fictively three-dimensional, imaginative, almost illusionistic spatial dimensions, the complexity of the light effects which not only animate and emotionalise his paintings but also, in another, one might almost say quasi-mythical, sublime context, give them the transcendental character of epic narratives, exhort us to contemplate his works in the context of a painting discourse that is contemporary per



se. Paradoxically, it is precisely this apparent divergence between the newly found sublime context and the intellectual strategies of deconstruction in visual language, with their connotations and methods, that characterises the discourse of contemporary painting practice, with the new narrative clearly seeking to be integrated, albeit *cautiously and somewhat covertly, into the radical contemporary context. Remarkably*, Zeng Fanzhi's paintings manifest an idiosyncratic combination of deconstructivist methods and picturesque painted stories, so that the creation of the painting, as such, becomes the actual narrative.

Thus we can avoid the danger of an oversimplified, pseudo-historical, anecdotal approach and an even less interesting psychological analysis, those frequent, comprehensible but ultimately useless attendant phenomena of discussions of Chinese contemporary art by Western art critics, which, however, do draw attention to exactly what is lacking in the Western context, namely sound knowledge of the intellectual, philosophical and historical background, social structures, politico-cultural constellations and development perspectives of various disciplines and cultural fields.

Zeng Fanzhi's oeuvre provokes a different answer; it demands another form of perception based on a direct aesthetic examination of the quiddities of his painting, which of course have been developed and moulded by real historical situations and specific mental constellations. For me, the questions of why and under what circumstances, under what psychological or emotional and moral constraints, under what influence he painted his hospital paintings, or his "Mask" series, and which European masters of expressionism provided him with formal influences, concrete models and certain methodological guidelines, or which classical modern masters had an impact on him, are less interesting than the fundamental question of the creative energy that is constantly manifest in his various artistic periods, the highly concentrated intensity of the dynamic force of his painting. This is where I see his authentic, specific contribution to contemporary painting; this is where he sets his special mark, all the more distinctive due to the path he has followed, his Chinese background and orientation.

In other words, for me the important questions pertain to the quiddities of his painting as such, which have characterised his work more or less from the beginning and have affected the process of form creation, irrespective of whether they have to do with an oriental unavoidably generalised and probably simplified tradition or a psychological/personal or political/collective perception strategy. Of course the development and the methodological evolution of these quiddities must be seen against the backdrop of specific historical, politico-cultural situations with their concomitant Weltanschauung, and of course his artistic path can only be interpreted in this intellectual and historical context, but the quiddities of his painting, as such, can no more be fully explained by or deduced from these historical conditions than they can be forgotten or ignored in presenting an overall view of his oeuvre.

Constantly changing, fluid formations filled with movement, vigour and power, evincing partly mimetic characteristics and partly critique-like, gestural, motoric improvisations or physical, tangible structuring, fill the dynamic canvases of Zeng Fanzhi



today. The elementary, unbridled intensity of this robust, unceasing movement gives none of the presented constellations the chance to become truly consolidated; this painting is essentially unconsolidated, and thus it is not localisable or identifiable, either methodologically, formally, or at the narrative level. This narrative changes and evolves as a matter of course, as does the methodology of the structuring on the canvas. In this specific eclectic methodology, Zeng Fanzhi's style of painting resembles the strategies of deconstruction, but nevertheless his paintings present provocative stories that communicate the narrative of the painting's creation. Painting techniques which in one painting create space and depth, a complex, fictive, almost illusionistic spatial stage, in another painting create totally different effects, a different narrative, letting the painting tell a different story, although the directions taken in their interpretation are not altogether mutually preclusive. There always remains free space in which to follow different courses concurrently, and there is always an intensive interweaving, a confusing reciprocal exchange of effects to be observed.

In this state of ephemerality, of fluidity, of unconcludedness, lies, perhaps, one of the most important and most specific elements of his art. Just as the swirling brushstrokes, through their division and separation, concentration and diffusion, accompanied by dramatic-emotional, connotative-narrative light and shadow effects, freely, inexorably and unceasingly bring new formations into being, introduce new stories and create landscape visions, human bodies or portraits out of the paint he puts on the canvas, only to melt them down and transform them again, so, too, do Zeng Fanzhi's pictorial situations evolve, as if a large-scale visual epos with many parallel strands were unfolding, continually weaving new subplots into the central storyline and incorporating new particulars and new details into an opulent, all-encompassing whole.

This gigantic visual epos, unfolding in numerous picturesque details, repeating certain main motifs as leitmotifs and continually creating different pictorial situations, flows like a huge, broad, deep river that passes through flat and hilly landscapes, familiar and unknown countries, exotic cultures and well-known, familiar communities before it reaches the sea. Zeng Fanzhi's paintings tell stories, reveal unexpected situations and report unforeseen events, all of which were brought into being by the artist's act of painting on canvas. In this lies the unique quality of this artist's painting: his art does not illustrate stories that already exist outside of the painting, but rather shows the creation of all the possible stories contained in the painting, as a painting event, as the capacity to create something narrative out of complex painting processes. For this reason, his stories have no intrinsic boundaries; the structure of the painting, with its changing contexts, specifies no particular directions in which possible connotations must unfold.

Radical and irrevocable ephemerality is the state in which it exists: this is its essence and this is the key to understanding the surprising questions it poses, its unforeseen connotations, its unexpected turns and transmutations, which can suddenly let the gestural composition suggest illusionistic spaces, or transform expressive, emotional improvisations into mimetic associations. This gives rise to a rich, complex,



unlimited aura of fantasy and remembrance, of poetry and emotion, which offers all possible associations with various experiences and unlimited expansion of the scope of the painted picture.

Ephemerality, mutability, flow, irregularity, openness and mysteriousness characterise Zeng Fanzhi's paintings. In this context, the titles of his works are apposite and relevant. "This Land So Rich In Beauty" is the title of a series of paintings which evince an almost abstract expressionist, calligraphic gesticulation, then again an almost touching, dynamic, explosive, monumental landscape portrayal, here again a human figure 亼 and Mao, at that, arisen out of memory and in all this, the dynamics of the painting and the unceasing transmutation of the connotations of the massive gestural composition reveal an inner coherence. The continuous metamorphosis of connotations is the existential form of the painting's vital structures. Fluid, irrepressible, unchannelable transmutation is the quasi-biological, spontaneous, intuitive content, and at the same time describes the quintessence of Zeng Fanzhi's painting: it is the legitimation of the painting *hic et nunc*.

Zeng Fanzhi seems to cultivate and radicalise the *hic et nunc* character of painting, and yet is it probably not his intention to deal with the entire question of creation in painting and identification strategies in great depth or from an ethical perspective. He lives in his work, he articulates in the midst of a chaotic, anarchic examination of positions and questions, and in spite of his vigorous, fresh, adventurous innocence, he imparts an existential sensibility, a courageous openness, a dramatic emotionality.

This emotionality accompanies his entire oeuvre, from the early, expressive hospital paintings to the dramatic "Meat" series, from the psychologically oriented portraits and the self-portraits in search of self to the socially critical "Mask" series, and in the last monumental, almost automatic, gestural paintings, which open up in various connotative directions, it takes on a quasi-mystic dimension. These paintings are dominated by a gigantic, fundamental, universal turbulence that never comes to rest, never bridles its extreme intensity, and yet never imposes upon us any kind of dramatic, pathetic or spectacular theatricality.

This means, for example, that the unceasing, vigorous, dynamic movement in his paintings is not necessarily or directly associated with clearly calculated aesthetic or ethical objectives, nor is it exclusively bound up with specifically planned effects or stylised effect mechanisms, and even less is it interlaced with formal patterns and logos, but instead manifests a capacity for unending transmutation, a constant state of fluidity and flexibility, its substance being the inexorable transformation of materials and their association with various aesthetic, psychological, allegoric, semantic systems, which at the same time are, themselves, emotionalised and relativised. It is not these semantic systems that interest Zeng Fanzhi, but rather the possibilities for enabling pictures to emerge, even though the various semantic systems play a part in intensifying the poetic diversity of the narrative.

Zeng Fanzhi's paintings offer a permanent, pathos-less, natural, unassuming, fundamental resistance not loudly declared, but quietly asserted in the daily practice of



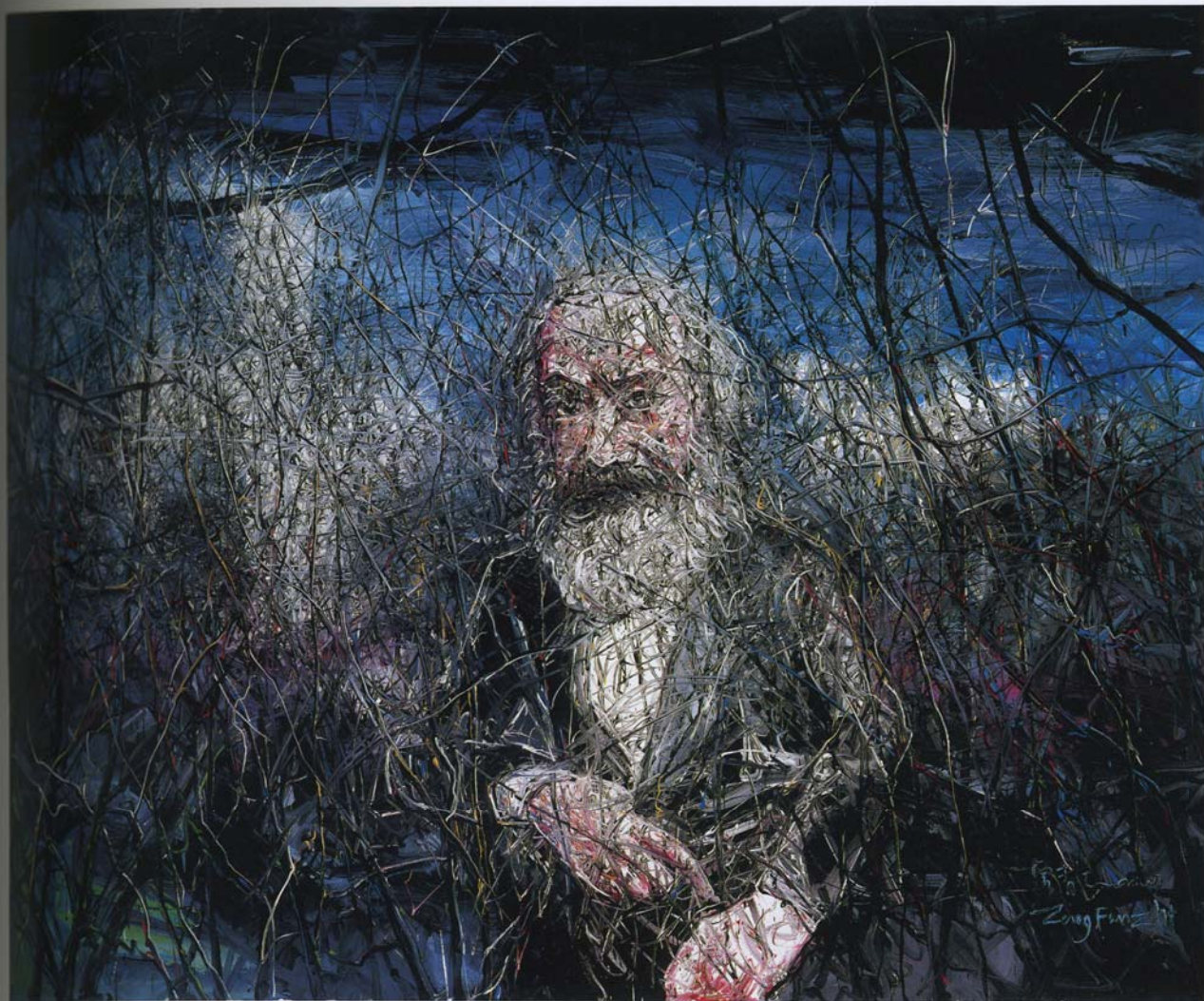
his art  against simplistic, reductive, one-sided, easily found classifications, above all against formal rules of style and conventional forms of communication, against historically formed, traditional sign systems that are irrelevant outside of their own context and which characterise certain artistic elements and methodological processes. His ephemeral, fluid, flexible referentiality is the fabric of his work.

Even though a significant number of critical commentaries on Zeng Fanzhi's work place his relation to abstraction or expressionism in the foreground, that is, explain his work solely on the basis of Western categories, the imposing, massive outpouring of his paintings seems to communicate a different artistic quiddity that lies, perhaps, outside the conventional aesthetic categories and historical contexts of Western modernism: namely, the constant, irrepressible creation of ever-new constellations of images, which at the same time diffuse and reabsorb their referentiality, simultaneously expand and relativise the scope of the painting. Thus, this dramatic, coherent, massive oeuvre lives within an unending, unlimited, fluid, unconsolidated process of becoming, which, unfolding behind the picturesque exoticism of the painting on the canvas, is the actual, underlying, essential and relevant narrative.

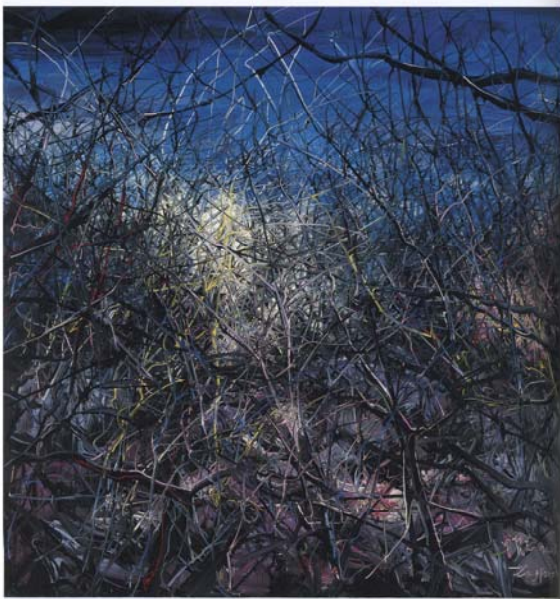
*Translation: Beverley Blaschke, Vienna*







卡尔·马克思,他来自德国 布面油画 280x360cm 2007  
Karl Marx, He is from Germany oil on canvas 280x360cm 2007

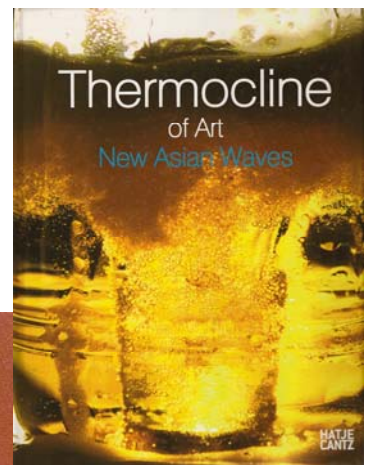


风景 07-8 布面油画 200x200cm 2007  
Landscape 07-8 oil on canvas 200x200cm 2007



风景 07-12 布面油画 215x330cm 2007  
Landscape 07-12 oil on canvas 215x330cm 2007





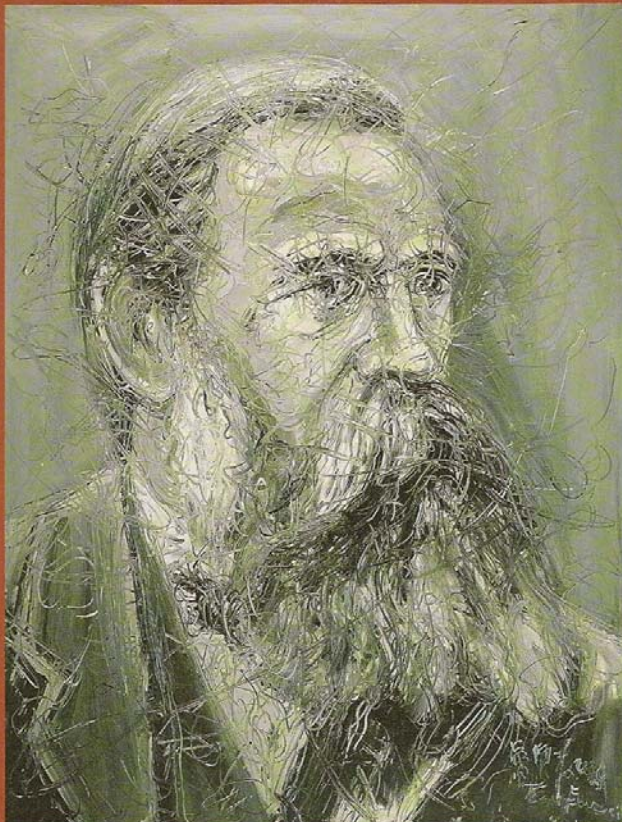
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## ZENG Fanzhi

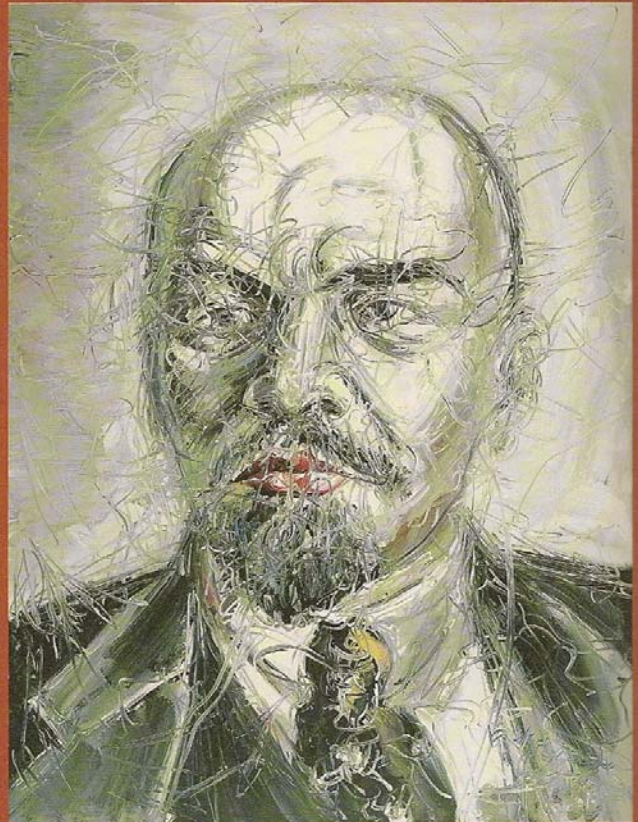
China

Zeng Fanzhi, as an artist of China, insists that socialistic ideological education is not only embodied in life, but also deeply influences an artist's creation. These artists are the new generation who grew up under the socialistic ideological education. The socialistic realistic article method is the very beginning of their self-expression, and also the beginning of their expectations of the future of art. But more importantly is that these artists experienced a reform and opening-up and great changes in political thinking over the past twenty years. Now they live in a period of transformation in China, they are experiencing a great social reform which is not understandable by outsiders. It is these circumstances in which they live and the objects around them which they want to express in art. If the artists say that there is some energy and vigor in their art, then the real essential cause comes from the above-mentioned.

In the historic changes and article representations, the artists choose the reality facing the society and the feelings endowed them by the reality. It is the education foundation they have ever taken and the weapon with which they can exceed such education. It is the unique social background of China and its ideology which have enriched the creation of the artists. While many artists apply themselves, or are concerned, with society and its political problems, others care more about the day to day survival in a harsh world. Maybe the first one can give more clues to the reality of 'China', or of 'the contemporary art of China', but Zeng says that he is more inclined to the latter one; he pays more attention to the survival experience. Perhaps, in his creations, the natural outpouring of the thoughts and feelings of the contemporary person is more important than the symbols and methods of China, as a whole, which are intentionally used.

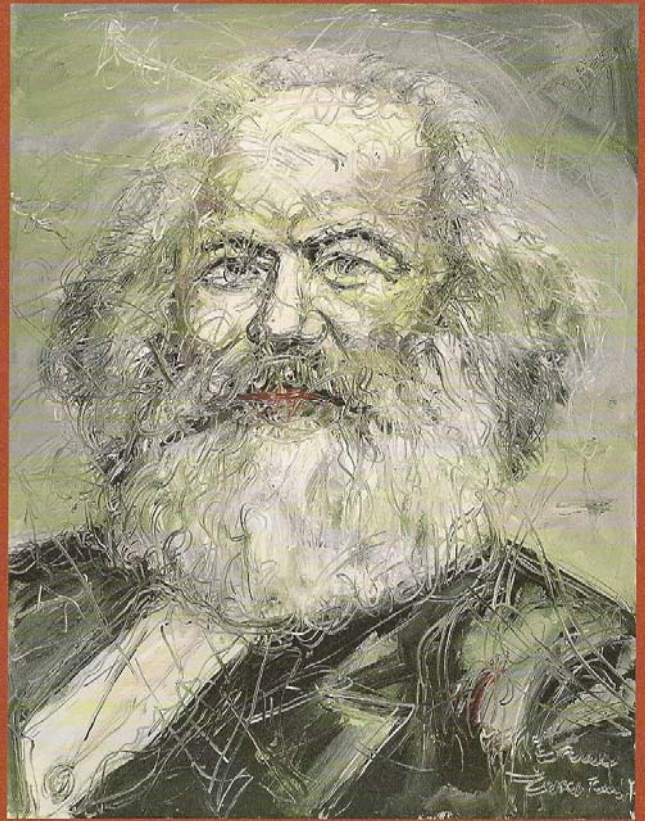


<Great Man No. 2> 2004  
Oil on Canvas  
170 x 220 cm  
Copyright: The Artist

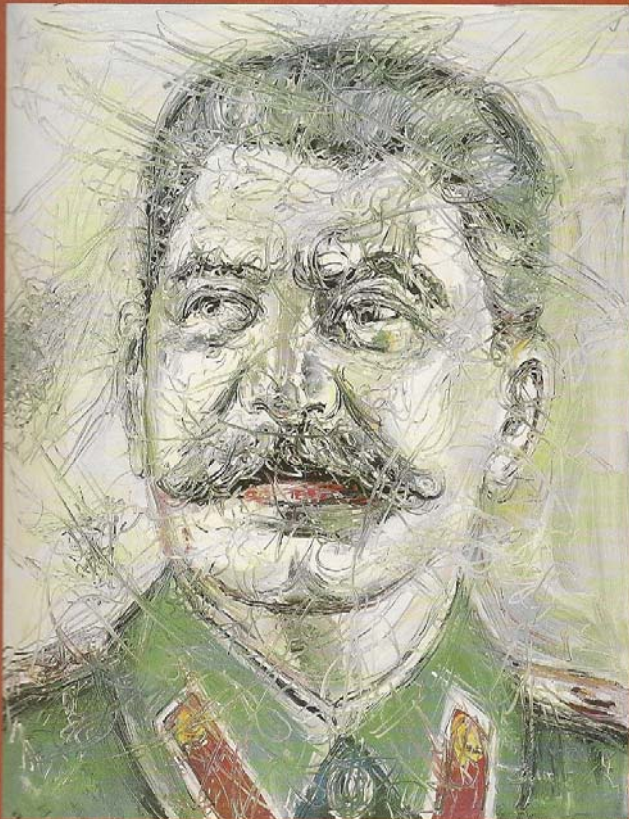


<Great Man No. 3> 2004  
Oil on Canvas  
170 x 220 cm  
Copyright: The Artist

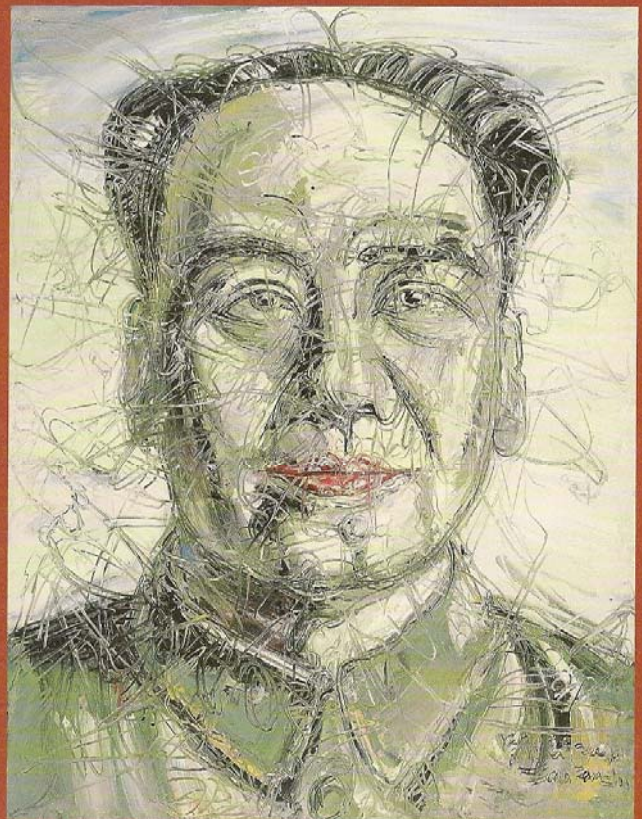




<Great Man No. 1>, 2004  
Oil on Canvas  
170 x 220 cm  
Copyright: The Artist



<Great Man No. 4>, 2004  
Oil on Canvas  
170 x 220 cm  
Copyright: The Artist



<Great Man No. 5>, 2004  
Oil on Canvas  
170 x 220 cm  
Copyright: The Artist



**Cine XXI Secolo: Arte fra identità e trasformazione**  
Giunti, Italia 2008



**Cine 07-11**, 2007, olio su tela, tre elementi, dimensioni complessive cm 280x540. Collezione privata



**Cine 07-11**, 2007, olio su tela, tre elementi, dimensioni complessive cm 280x540. Collezione privata