

李山生物藝術的實證性及其玄學起源

高名路 / 策展人

我從八〇年代中就認識了李山，並且始終關注著他的創作實踐。其間李山的藝術經過了幾次激進的轉折。1989年他從抽象繪畫轉到通常被指為政治波普風格的《胭脂》系列。1995年從《胭脂》轉為生物藝術的《閱讀》系列，人體和昆蟲合成的數位圖片以及繪製的大量草圖。他的生物藝術方案已經清晰呈現。此後十幾年至今，李山堅持從事改變生物基因的實驗。這些創作都展示在2012年台北當代藝術館舉辦的【粉紅微笑之後：閱讀・李山】展覽之中。人們熟知李山，因為他是中國最重要的當代藝術家之一。然而生物藝術的激進轉折恐怕給我們帶來不少疑惑和茫然。我們應該從哪方面去理解李山的生物藝術呢？李山的生物藝術帶給當代藝術何種啟示？

我們不能把李山的生物藝術與他八〇年代和九〇年代的藝術截然分開，從而把生物藝術看作和前者不相干的觀念藝術。李山的生物藝術不是觀念藝術。不是一個只給人們解構性啟示的，沒有建樹性的觀念藝術。生物藝術的核心是生命基因修飾，而李山前期的繪畫的核心也是一種大生命意識。李山早期的生命意識被融合在人文理念之中。所以，它所呈現的生命意識是在表現生物性的同時，把生物性玄學化，其效果即是「去生物性」。而1998年以來的生物藝術則是僅僅「回歸生物性」，和生物科學聯姻。表面上看，後期的生物藝術是「去玄學化」，但是基因重組後的生物形象提供了更充分和更難以置信的聯想餘地，遂使玄學因素與科學形象融為一體。

讓我們來檢驗分析李山這兩個階段的生命意識的關聯和發展。這樣我們就可以理解李山近二十年來生物藝術的來源和邏輯。

早期繪畫：神秘的生物性

這裡的關鍵字是「生物性」。李山搞生物藝術並非始自今日。在李山早期繪畫中，生物性就已經是藝術表現的形象因素。這說明李山關注生命的基本元素。但是由於這個時期，李山主要想探討生命的神秘性，也就是生命繪畫的玄學因素，因此生物性的物理性因素（或者科學因素）即讓位於繪畫性。在李山早期的《擴延》和《秩序》等系列繪畫作品中，生物因素已經存在。

生命意識是八〇年代中期中國前衛藝術所表現的重要主題之一。比如，西南地區的張曉剛和毛旭輝等人的藝術追求表現生命的內在靈魂。他們的作品就像顯微鏡，試圖透視人的靈魂與肉體。所以，他們的藝術被稱之為「生命之流」（current of life）。他們關注為靈魂寫像，所

The Empiricism of Li Shan's Bio-Art and its Origins in Mysticism

Gao Minglu / Curator

I first took notice of Li Shan's work in the nineteen-eighties, and have ever since followed the trajectory of his creative practice. His art has undergone radical shifts in this time. In 1989, he turned from abstract painting toward what has been referred to as political pop in his *Rouge* series. In 1995, *Rouge* transitioned into the bio-art of his *Reading* series, in which human and insect forms merged in digital photographs and large-format sketches. By then his bio-art project had clearly emerged, and in the decade or so since, Li Shan has continued to be engaged in experiments transforming animal genes. These latter works were all shown in the 2012 Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei's exhibition *Reading Li Shan*. Li Shan is widely recognized as one of the most significant contemporary Chinese artists. But his radical shift toward bio-art may have aroused misgivings and left us at a loss: in what way are we to understand this bio-art? What sort of illumination is it supposed to cast on contemporary art?

It would be a mistake to make a distinct separation of Li Shan's bio-art from the art of the eighties and nineties, and regard it as conceptual art totally unrelated to the artworks that came before. Li Shan's bio-art is not conceptual art. It is not meant merely to give people flash of deconstructive illumination, nor is it a kind of foundationalist conceptual art. The nucleus of this bio-art is the adornment of biological genes, and the core of his earlier painting also lay in a grand consciousness of life, which in this early period is melded to a philosophical humanism. This life-consciousness that he displays is at the same time biological, making biology metaphysical, with a resultant "extirpation of biology." However, since 1998, the works of bio-art have merely represented a "return to biology," wedded to the life sciences. Looked at superficially, the later works of bio-art are an "extirpation of biology," but the biological forms that result from recombinant genetics open up a space for imaginative combinations that is even more capacious and incredible, uniting elements of mysticism and the morphologies of the sciences.

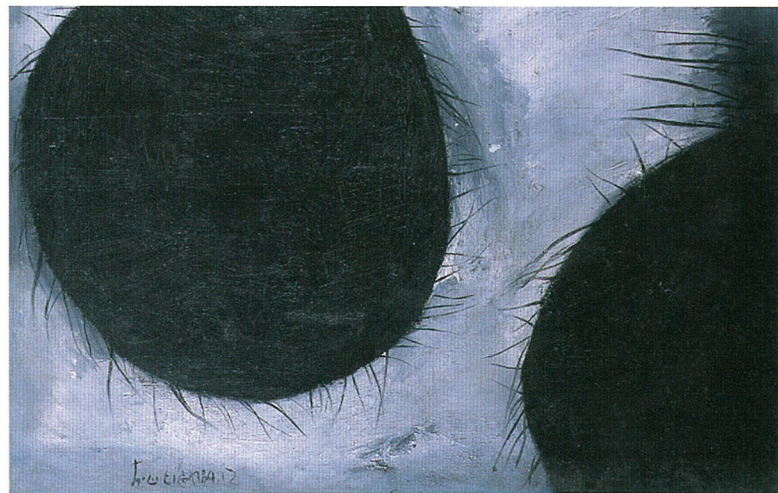
A closer examination and analysis of the two stages of Li Shan's life-consciousness, their development and the relations between them, can allow us to better understand the sources and logic behind Li Shan's bio-art over the past twenty years.

以，他們稱自己的繪畫為「新具象」。

然而，早在七〇年代末，李山已經把生物因素帶入作品形象之中。但是，他通常關注生命的結構性和生物感，所以，李山的生命繪畫不是內觀性的對生命靈魂的反省，而是對生命基本結構的描述，儘管這個結構是概括的、主觀的，並非建立在準確的科學知識之上的生命體。比如，李山八〇年代早期繪畫，《初始》和《擴延》系列中常常出現各種「圓」，單獨的圓或者幾個圓形形象^[圖一]，但是，這些圓形不是幾何圖形的邏輯或者硬邊形式，就像西方現代抽象繪畫中的圖式那樣，而是毛茸茸的、柔軟的、不規則形的圓形，它讓我們聯想到生命體。線上勾勒的圓形之內，李山非常認真地鋪墊顏色，不是平塗，而是放鬆地層層塗寫，留下非常微妙的筆觸，筆觸留下的肌理則留下生命肉體的質感。

此外，還有一些圓的表面加上幾根線，暗示它們可能是一個面具。這種形象讓我們想到 5000 年前仰韶彩陶人面魚紋的圖騰圖案^[圖二、圖三]，我不認為，而且也沒有證據說明李山的早期繪畫和仰韶文化有什麼關係，我要強調的是，李山的繪畫注重生物性和神秘性，這多少和人類早期對生命的神話性理解有相似之處。但是，在這個階段，李山把生物性玄學化了，就像遠古的圖騰把動物的生命神秘化了一樣。李山作品中的生物性可能與八〇年代知識份子對文化身份的理解有關。換句話說，藝術家和知識份子願意把自己看作超越現實的大生命或者形而上學的生命體。生物性被賦予了超生物的文化、宗教或者宇宙意識。

所以，在李山早期的繪畫中，生物性是玄學的、神秘性的符號。所以，李山的《擴延》所表現



圖一，李山，《擴延》之一，油畫，75x59cm，1984 年
Figure 1. Li Shan, *Propagation-1*, Oil on Canvas, 75x59cm, 1984

The Early Painting: Biologized Mysticism

The keyword here is “biological.” The concept of biology that Li Shan takes up is not that of the present day. In Li Shan’s early painting, the biological was already a formal element of his aesthetic performance. This explains Li Shan’s attention to the basic constituents of life. Because in this early period Li Shan was mainly probing the mysteriousness of life and thus the mystical factors in painting life, the physical (or scientific) factors of biology gave place to painterly ones. The biological elements were already present in Li Shan’s early series of paintings *Propagation* and *Order*.

“Life-consciousness” was one of the central preoccupations of avant-garde art in China in the mid-eighties. Zhang Xiaogang and Mao Xuhui, both from southwest China, sought to represent the inner spirit of the biological. Their works were like microscopes attempting to examine the human soul and flesh. Their works have come to be labeled “Current of Life,” and with their concern with representing the spiritual through figural description, they denominated their own painting “New Figuralism.”

However, at the end of the 1970s, Li Shan had already started incorporating biological elements into his figural works. He frequently emphasized structuralism and organic feeling, so his life-painting was not a kind of meditative self-reflection on the spirit of life, but was rather concerned with structure and description. Even though this structure was generalizing and objective, it did not posit a living body as an object of accurate scientific knowledge. For example, in *Genesis* and *Propagation*, Li Shan’s early painting series from the eighties, there are frequent iterations of the “circular,” single circles or several circular forms [Figure 1]. But these circular forms are not the geometrical forms of logic, or clear-edged circular forms, the kind found in Western abstract painting, but are shaggy, soft, irregular circles. They remind us of living bodies. Within the contours of the outline Li Shan extremely conscientiously spreads color, not with flat strokes but applies it gently, layer upon layer, leaving extremely subtle calligraphic strokes, fleshing out the form like the tissues of a living body, giving an almost tactile sense of embodied flesh.

There are also several circular forms to which several lengths of string have been affixed, hinting that they may form a mask. This form prompts one to think of the human-fish totem designs of 5,000-year old Yangshao colored pottery [Figures 2, 3]. I do not think that Li Shan’s early paintings have any connection to the Yangshao sculpture, nor is there evidence of it, but I would like to emphasize that Li Shan’s paintings, in their emphasis on the biological and the mystical, share some common traits with early humans’ mythic understanding of life of early



圖二·李山·《初始》，油畫，64x53.5cm，1982年
Figure 2. Li Shan, *Genesis*, Oil on Canvas, 64x53.5cm, 1982



圖三·仰韶彩陶人面魚紋的圖案
Figure 3. The Human-Fish Totem Designs of Yangshao Colored Pottery

的生物性，相對西南地區的「生命之流」繪畫中的生物性，顯得更加「科學」或者「理性」一些。比如，我們大概可以把李山的「圓」和生命細胞看作同物。當然，這個「科學」性只能在想像層面上成立。它們其實並不是後來李山所關注的生物基因。這些早期的「圓」，這些生物因素其實是哲學冥想的產物，它們被設想為宇宙的代言，就像古老東方的天圓地方。生物性於是與天地宇宙同構。這讓我們聯想到漢代董仲舒的天人感應學說。所以，李山早期繪畫的生物性是哲學和玄學。

李山的生物圖式，比如他的那些「圓」是超邏輯的。它們不是幾何邏輯的，因此也不是科學分析性的。特別是他那黑色的格子 and 粗黑的線條，黑色是直覺，直覺可以讓我們直達生命的神秘、宇宙的神秘。

1986年，李山在八〇年代解釋他的《秩序》系列的繪畫時，說他試圖在黑色中發現宇宙和生命的神秘性。作品中的粗黑線條和那些隨意畫的圓都是黑白的。它們共同組成了無窮盡的神秘性^{[圖四]、[圖五]}。¹ 李山說「我為什麼要採用這樣的（格子）符號和運用這樣的一個黑顏色？我認為這種符號本身既簡單又含混，既明確又模糊，這本身就有神秘的意味在裡面。那麼黑顏色呢也是這樣的，有人在黑顏色中體會到的是壓抑的東西，恐怖的東西，嚴厲的東西等等，而我呢，在黑顏色當中所體會到的只有神秘。」這種神秘性由兩方面的矛盾因素組成。一個

humans. But at this stage in his development, Li Shan has taken the biological and mystified it, in the same way that the archaic totem takes the life of the animal and mythologizes it. The biological in Li Shan's work may be related to how culture was conceived by intellectuals in the eighties. In other words, artists and intellectuals wanted to see themselves as transcendent embodiments of the primitive vitality, or as embodied metaphysics. The biological is granted a cultural, religious or universal consciousness that transcends the animal.

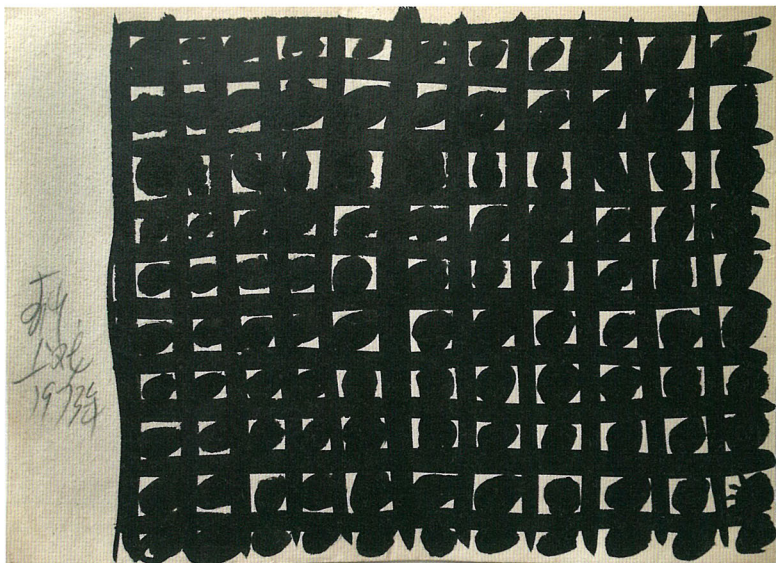
In Li Shan's early painting, therefore, the biological is a sign of the mystical and the mysterious. The biological that is enacted in *Propagation* corresponds to that in the painting of the "Current of Life" painting of the southwest, superadding something that is "scientific" or "rational": we can, for example, take Li Shan's "circles" as biological cells. This scientificity, of course, is enacted on an imaginative level. The circles, in fact, are not at all what Li Shan is concerned with in his biological genes. These early-period circles, these biological elements, are actually the products of an occult philosophy and are imagined as messengers of the universal, in manner parallel to the way circles represented heaven in the Asia of ancient times. The biological is formally the same as the cosmos. One thinks here of the doctrine of heavenly-earthly interactions of the Han philosopher Dong Zhongshu. The biologism of Li Shan's early paintings is thus philosophical and mystical.

The circular forms in Li Shan's work, like these "circles," are beyond logic: they are not geometrically logical, and are not scientifically analytical. Particularly so in this respect are those black lattice forms and rough black lines; the blackness is intuitive, an intuition allowing us direct access to a mysticism of life, a mysticism of the universe.

In 1986, Li Shan, explaining his *Order* series of paintings, said that his use of black was an attempt to discover a universal and biological mysticism. The rough black lines and freely painted circles are all black and white, and together they form a limitless mysticism [Figure 4, 5].¹ Li Shan said, "Why do I adopt this kind of 'lattice' symbol and use these kinds of colors? I think this kind of symbol is essentially both simple and ambiguous, both definite and indistinct, and there is an essential mystical tone in it. For some people, the things that they experience in the color black are things that are repressed, frightening things, severe things, etc. But what I experience in it is only mystical." This mysticism is composed of two contradictory aspects. One is logicity, the logic of lattices and dots; the other is individual experientiality:

1. 這是在李山接受《新潮美術》電視攝製組採訪時的談話，1986年。發表在高名露主編《85美術運動：歷史資料彙編》，廣西師範大學出版社，2008年622頁。

1 From a TV interview on the "New Wave in Art" in 1986. Published in Gao Minglu, ed. *The '85 Art Movement: A Collection of Historical Materials*, Guangxi Normal University Press, 2008, p.622.

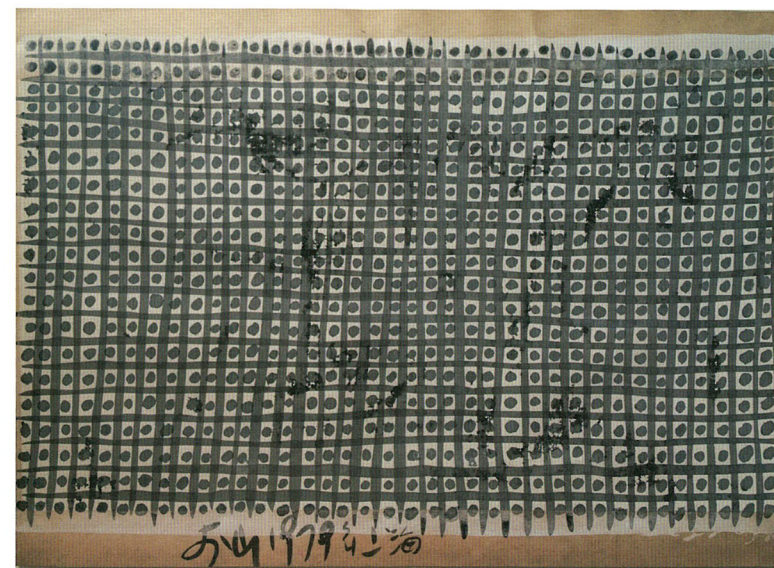


圖四，李山，《秩序》之一，紙上墨水，26x18cm，1973 年

Figure 4. Li Shan, *Order-1*, Ink on Paper, 26x18cm, 1973

是邏輯性，格子 and 圓點組成的邏輯；另一個是個人經驗性，這些線和圓點是不規則的、即興完成的，它們具有自我表現性。所以，小宇宙和大宇宙之間在對話，所以，宇宙的微觀和宏觀被一方小紙囊括其中。

李山指出他作品中的線條和圓形，黑白顏色的衝突所造成的神秘性正是他所要表現的。生命是不可知的。有人或許願意把這種神秘歸結為東方神秘主義。然而，李山的黑色神秘（細胞）或許與俄國早期現代主義的黑色直覺的象徵性連在一起。比如，馬列維奇的。據馬列維奇講，他的《黑方塊》作品中的黑色代表未來的世界。十月革命時代俄國的至上主義和構成主義等現代藝術家們相信那些未來的知覺、語言和視覺都將超越我們現在的邏輯和分析的侷限性。黑色代表著直覺和超越，是人的意識的擴張解放，同時也反映了他們對自然法則的本質性的理解。馬列維奇為俄國立體主義和未來主義藝術家參與創作的戲劇《戰勝太陽》設計的第二幕的幕布，把幕布的方塊沿對角線分割成黑白兩個三角形，這就是他的至上主義的誕生。幕布的黑色部分被解釋為正在戰勝代表舊世界的太陽。黑暗侵蝕了太陽，伴隨而來的是完全的黑色，一個黑色方塊，這是一個沒有光的未來宇宙圖景。²



圖五，李山，《秩序》之二，紙上墨水，74x51cm，1979 年

Figure 5. Li Shan, *Order-2*, Ink on Paper, 74x51cm, 1979

these lines and circles are irregular, improvisatory, possessing a self-performativity. There is a dialogue between the microcosm and the macrocosm, and in one small plane the universe's micro- and macro-levels are brought together.

Li Shan has indicated that the mysticism arising from the conflict between lines and dots, white and black, is exactly what he is trying to accomplish. Life is unknowable. Some might want to conclude that this is a kind of eastern mysticism, but Li Shan's black mysticism (cellular) may have more to do with early Russian modernism's symbolist intuition of blackness; Malevich, for example. According to Malevich, his *Black Square* represents the world of the future. During the October Revolution, the Russian Futurists, Constructivists and other modernist artists believed that in the future, intuition, language and perception will transcend our present logical and analytical limitations. Black represents direct intuition and transcendence, the liberation and extension of human consciousness, and reflects an understanding of the materialist principles of nature. For the opera *Victory Over the Sun*, Malevich worked with Cubists and Futurists to create the backdrop for the second act, consisting of a square diagonally divided into two triangles, one black and one white. This was the birth of Suprematism. The black portion of the backdrop was explained as the victory over the sun of the old world. The darkness eroding the sun, gradually becoming one totally black square: this is an image of the

2. 相反，在俄國現代藝術家看來，太陽象徵著這個世界舊的、落後的能量，它正在被現代人撕裂；而現代人至高無上的力量能自動生產出新的能量。這個理念和行為一起被編織進了《戰勝太陽》戲劇。戲劇中的語言是非邏輯性的、用詩歌語言組成的臺詞。見 Lissitzky, "The Plastic Form of the Electromechanical Peepshow 'Victory Over the Sun'," in El Lissitzky: Life, Letters, Texts, p.347-348. 另見高名潞《李西斯基的抽象作品〈現代人〉》發表在《美術研究》（中央美術學院學報），2009 年，第 2 期，124-128 頁。

當然，與馬列維奇不同，李山的《秩序》沒有現代主義的主觀構圖意志以及強烈的中心感和完整性。構圖自然隨意地延展。因此延伸到畫面之外，形成一種極多無限的內涵。李山在七〇年代運用的這種形式以及基本思想在二十年後的九〇年代中國再次出現，並形成了一個分散的群體性潮流，這就是「極多主義」的藝術實踐。³

這是一種特定年代裡的形而上學或者玄學衝動，一種烏托邦理想。⁴ 李山在他的藝術中追問什麼呢？那就是生命的神秘性，生命的存在意義。這個玄學命題是八〇年代藝術家的普遍題材。但是，和其他藝術家愛用圖像暗喻的方式不同，李山的理性繪畫則直接把生物結構作為繪畫的基本形象。這些毛茸茸的圓和臉譜或許是李山潛意識中的生命細胞——它們以單細胞的形式出現，卻是生命的總合。我們在少年時代就知道生命是從單細胞——草履蟲演變來的。新的科學成果證明，單細胞的生命體比多細胞的生命體更具有吸收、包容和更新的能力。這或許既是一種生命的神秘性，也是一種生命的本能。而李山在七〇年代和八〇年代體悟生命的神秘性的時候，恰恰抓住了生命的最簡單形式。

生物因素作為關注物件在李山過去三十多年的藝術中貫穿始終。只不過，在早期，李山從生物想像的角度表現生命本體。從 1995 年以後，李山轉到更加分析性的、科學性的生物性（或者生物基因）之上了。正是這個生物性表現的轉折區別了李山前期和後期藝術的特點。

所以，李山的這個生物藝術其實不是哪一天忽然心血來潮。李山從二十年前就開始思考生命問題。八〇年代，李山也參與和創作一些行為藝術。人們往往看到李山行為藝術的集體性和社會性，看不到李山的個性和具體性。其實李山的行為藝術是一種體驗性的詢問，對生命的一種體驗。他曾經在光福寺修煉，穿著一個黑袍子，有點像道家或者禪師 [圖六]。

future universe without light.²

Of course, in contradistinction with Malevich, Li Shan's *Order* lacks the will to subjective composition and the strong sense of centeredness and completeness. The composition unfolds naturally and spontaneously. Extending beyond the picture, it becomes infinitely connotative. These kinds of forms and basic ideas that Li Shan employed in the 1970s appeared again in China in the 1990s, and formed a dispersed collective trend of "Maximalism" in art.³

This was a specific metaphysical or mystical impulse belonging to that decade, a kind of utopian ideal.⁴ And what was Li Shan investigating in his art but this mystery of biology, the existential significance of life? This was a common theme among the artists of the 1980s. However, whereas other artists liked to use metaphorical imagery, the fundamental imagery of Li Shan's rational painting is based directly on biological morphology. The ragged circles and masklike figures may be Li Shan's unconscious representations of biological cells: they appear as unicellular forms, but are a summation of life. When we were young, we learned that life evolved from unicellular organisms like the paramecium. Recent scientific developments have shown that unicellular organisms have greater abilities for absorption, toleration and regeneration than multicellular organisms. This is both a source of biological mystery as well as a living instinct, and when Li Shan had his illuminations regarding the mysteriousness of biology during the 1970s and 1980s, what he precisely grasped was the simplest of biological forms.

2. On the contrary, from the point of view of the Russian modernists, the sun was the emblem of the old, backward powers of this world which were in the process of being demolished by modernism, and the supreme powers of modern people would automatically produce new abilities. These concepts and attitudes are woven into the opera *Victory Over the Sun*. The language in the opera is without logic and the actors' lines are composed of poetic songs. See Lissitzky, "The Plastic Form of the Electromechanical Peepshow: 'Victory Over the Sun'", in *El Lissitzky: Life, Letters, Texts*, pp. 347-348. See also Gao Minglu, "Lissitzky," *Aesthetic Research*, 2009, No.2., p.124-128

3. Gao Minglu, *Chinese Maximalism*, Chongqing Publishing House, 2003. See also the English version, Gao Minglu, "Total Modernity and the Avant-garde in Twentieth Century Chinese Art," Chapter 11, *Maximalism* The MIT Press, 2011.

4. This ideal is seen in the "rational painters" of the mid-1980s. Rational painting has on the one hand an attachment to mysticism, the mysterious, and the pursuit of intuition, with description of an unreal world, representing an abandonment and transcendence of the immediate. At that time we called it "rational." This rationality is not instrumental rationality, but is an investigation into the world in itself and the metaphysical rationality of life. This rationalism and the painting associated with it constituted a form of "abstract" painting in China in the 1980s that combined surrealism and mysticism. See Gao Minglu, "On Rationalist Painting," *Aesthetics*, 1986 no. 8.

3. 高名路，《中國極多主義》，重慶出版社，2003年。又見英文版 Gao Minglu, Total "Modernity and the Avant-garde in Twentieth Century Chinese Art," chapter 11, *Maximalism* The MIT Press, 2011.

4. 這個理想被表現在八〇年代中期出現的「理性繪畫」之中。理性繪畫，一方面是玄學性的執著，對神秘和直覺的追求，對非現實的世界的描繪，這代表對當下世界的拋棄和超越。那個時候我們把它叫做「理性」。這個理性不是實用理性和工具理性，而是追究世界本體和生命本體的形而上學理性。這個理性和繪畫結合起來就造就了一種把現代抽象主義、超現實主義和東方神秘主義結合在一起的八〇年代中國式的「抽象」繪畫。有關這方面的討論，見高名路〈關於理性繪畫〉，《美術》1986年第八期。



圖六，八十年代初李山在光福寺

Figure 6. In the 1980s, Li Shan at the Guangfu Temple

李山用行為方式表現他對生命存在的狀態和神秘性有極大的興趣。李山把這個興趣一方面轉化為形象的形式，即繪畫平面。另一方面轉化為體驗，行為的形式。其實，更重要的是，李山他這種生命的形而上思考和他本人自在的日常行為融為一體。

古往今來，多少藝術家、詩人、哲學家描述和探討生命的存在及其意義。也有多少科學家和巫師（神仙）從不同的角度進行試圖改變生命現狀的工作。生命是個大題材。但是，把生命放到生物層面去表現，或者說直接把生物基因，即看不到的生命元素作為基本素材創作藝術作品只是最近的事情。

《胭脂系列》：作為政治寓言的生物性

在國際上，在海外，人們對李山瞭解得更多的恐怕是《胭脂系列》，其實《胭脂系列》並不是在 1989「六四」事件之後才出現的，實際上在這之前他就已經有著些想法了，其實也不僅僅李山，包括像余友涵、王廣義等，不少後來的所謂「政治波普」藝術家，實際上在八〇年代末，更準確地說在 1988 年就已經開始做這些作品了。但是大規模的風行，當然是九〇年代初。李山的《胭脂系列》被認為是典型的政治波普作品。因為，一是它有毛的形象，人們很自然地會想到他的作品對中國政治意識形態的一種挑戰。二是顏色，粉色對紅色是一種顛覆，粉色是色情和腐化的顏色，紅色是革命和正兒八經的象徵。然而李山的作品其實並不波普，也不直接，儘管，李山的《胭脂系列》無疑具有一種辛辣諷刺的政治寓意。從圖像的角度，李山的《胭脂系列》是為中國社會中的「二尾子」們畫像。本來，「二尾子」在古代指具有陰陽兩

The common thread throughout Li Shan's art over the past thirty years has been an interest in the biological element. In the early period Li Shan depicted life-in-itself from the perspective of his biological imagination, after 1995 Li Shan began to base this on a more analytical and scientific (or biogenetic) perspective. It is this shift in his depiction of the biological that marks the early artistic period from the later one.

Thus, Li Shan's bio-art did not simply emerge from a sudden impulse; he had begun considering these questions more than twenty years ago. In the 1980s, Li Shan created and participated in several works of performance art. Observers have always seen Li Shan's performance art in its collective and social aspect, and have not seen its individuality and specificity. In fact, Li Shan's performance art has been a kind of embodied inquiry, an inquiry into life. He practiced the Taoist discipline at the Guangfu Temple, wearing a black gown and resembling to some extent a Taoist or Buddhist master.[Figure 6]

Li Shan's use of performance shows his extreme interest in the modalities and mysteries of living existence. On the one hand, he has transformed this interest into visualization of form, that is, into painting on a two-dimensional surface. On the other hand, he has transformed this into a bodily experience, that is, into the form of performance. More importantly, Li Shan has melded this biological metaphysics and the performance of equanimity in everyday life into a coherent whole.

From ancient times to the present, artists, poets and philosophers have described and investigated the existence and significance of life. There have also been scientists and shamans (immortals) who have attempted to transform life as it is lived by various means. As a subject matter, life is immense. However treating life from the level of biology or directly by means of genetics, and taking the invisible elements of life as the basis for creating artistic works is only a recent development.

The Rouge Series: The Biologism of a Political Fable

Li Shan's *Rouge* series has garnered the most attention internationally, but this was not just work that only appeared after the 1989 Tiananmen Square incident; he had actually been pursuing these ideas before. and not just Li Shan: Yu Youhan, Wang Guangyi and many of the later "political pop" artists from the end of the 1980s—to be exact, from 1988 onward, had begun to create these kinds of artworks, which became widely popular in the early 1990s. The *Rouge* Series was regarded as a classic example of political pop art. Firstly, because they carried

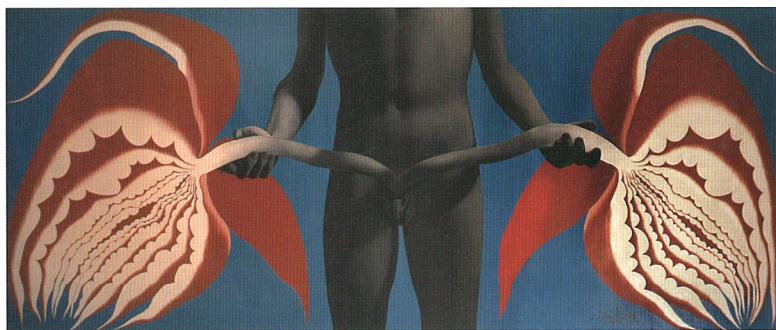
性器官的人。也就是北方人所說的「不男不女」的人。從政治的層面，「二尾子」也是對官僚階層和腐化的混混階層的一種喻指。

但是，我們容易忽略李山《胭脂系列》的另一面。《胭脂系列》裡面包括了植物的符號、生命的符號、人的組織器官的符號和政治的符號，它們實際上都是交混在一起的。也就是說，那個特定的社會時代，佔據李山大腦空間的，不僅僅是某種政治社會符號，同時還有對生命意味的深入思考，對超越了單純政治話題的大生命的思考。這個生命思考無疑擺脫了八〇年代的玄學，但是，並沒有脫離他一貫追求的神秘性。

我們看到，《胭脂系列》中的植物花瓣是人的肉體組成的。這其實是《胭脂系列》的核心符號。我們還看到在 1989 年的《胭脂系列》中出現了兩種人像——「毛」和「普通人」。普通人的生殖器官是分裂的。這暗示了「二尾子」的基因身份，所以，政治人物可能是這類文化身份的代表。換句話說，李山的《胭脂系列》所隱喻的是政治文化的基因本質。儘管這裡的基因（二尾子）其實也是一個隱喻修辭。但是，我們如果看到李山 1994 年創作的《亞胭脂系列》，我們就會明白《胭脂系列》和後來的生物藝術之間的聯繫。到了《亞胭脂系列》中已經變成動物、昆蟲或者人的一部分了。〔圖七、八、九〕

生物藝術：告別人文歷史，回到生物基因

其實李山的《胭脂系列》並非僅僅傳達一個政治笑話或者權力諺語，而是一個對生物基因的政治性分析。畫面中的胭脂顯然帶有生物性或者性的暗示，這決定了李山的《胭脂系列》的語彙



圖七·李山，《胭脂》系列之一，油彩，亞麻，369x155cm，1989 年
Figure 7. Li Shan, *Rouge Series-I*, Oil on Canvas, 369x155cm, 1989

the image of Mao, people quite naturally assumed that his works challenged Chinese political ideology. Secondly, with regard to color, pink was regarded as subversive of red, with pink as the color of the erotic and of corruption, and red as the emblem of revolution and earnestness. But Li Shan's work is not at all political pop, nor is it straightforward, even if the *Rouge* series does doubtless contain a biting satirical political message. The images in the *Rouge* series are of hermaphroditic figures in Chinese society. Originally, "hermaphrodite" referred to a person who had both male and female genitalia. Among people from northern China it also referred to people who were "neither male nor female". On a political level, it is a metaphor for aimless corruption in the class of government bureaucrats.

But it is easy to neglect another aspect of Li Shan's *Rouge* series with its symbology of plants, animals, human tissues and organs, as well as its political symbolism, things that are actually all confounded in the work. That unique social epoch had occupied the space of Li Shan's brain, and had not simply produced a sociopolitical symbolism of one kind or another, but also had deep implications for his concerns with life and the biological that transcended merely political concerns. No doubt these considerations prompted a break from the mysticism of the eighties, but as for his relentless pursuit of the mysterious, there would be no break at all.

We can see that the botanical flower petals in the *Rouge* series are composed of human tissue, and this is a central symbol in the work. We also see that two types of figures emerge in the 1989 work: "Mao" and the "common people." The reproductive organs of the common people are divided, suggesting a genetic "hermaphroditic" status. The political figures may thus be representative of this cultural status, and the work figures a genetic essence of political culture. While the gene here (hermaphrodite) is real, it is also metaphorical. If we look at Li Shan's 1994 *Asia Rouge* series we will see the connection between the *Rouge* series and the bio-art: in the *Asia Rouge* series, this thematic has already turned into animals, insects or parts of people. [Figure 7, 8, 9]

Bio-Art: A Farewell to History and a Return to Biogenetics

Li Shan's *Rouge* series is not merely a work of political humor, nor is it a parable about rights, but is a political analysis of biogenetics. The rouge colorations in the paintings hint at the biological or the sexual, making the vocabulary of Li Shan's *Rouge* series independent of and in a different category from what goes by the name of "political pop," whatever other metaphorical implications it may have. In any case, Li Shan quickly abandoned this kind of emblematic or metaphorical style, and began to proceed in a biologically "realist" direction. When he came back to Shanghai from Venice in 1993, he was not impressed. Instead, he was disappointed,



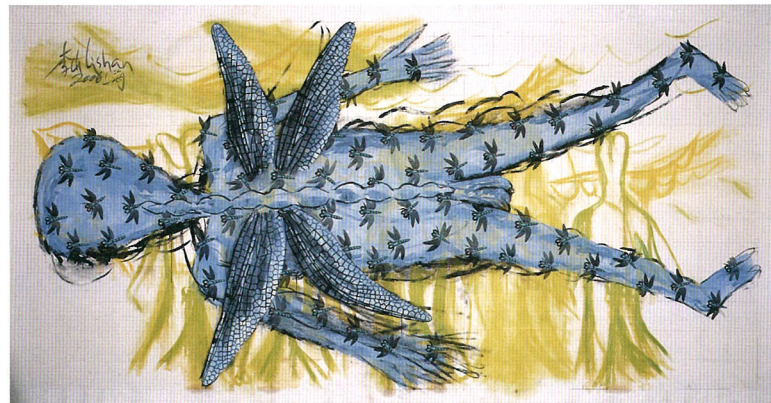
圖八，李山，《胭脂》系列之二，油色、亞麻，178x117cm，1989年
Figure 8. Li Shan, *Rouge Series-2*, Oil on Canvas, 178x117cm, 1989

在所謂的政治波普作品中是獨特的和另類的，儘管它仍然具有寓意功能。但是，這種象徵或者寓意的手法很快被李山拋棄，並在藝術創作中開始走向「實證」的生物性。1993年，李山從威尼斯回到上海，他沒有帶回任何驚喜。相反，失望之餘，只有馬修·巴尼的作品在他頭腦中揮之不去。他開始思考他的《閱讀》，即一種生物藝術的可能性。他回憶起大學時代和一位同學討論如何製造活人的往事。李山意識到一種新的藝術形式即將出現。⁵

李山所指的這種新形式就是「鮮活的、具有生物性狀的藝術品」。⁶ 李山反思了當代藝術，意識到藝術必須和生命科學發生緊密關係。自從二十世紀五〇年代，生命科學進入了分子生物學層面，它的標誌便是人類發現了DNA大分子，即基因。發現了DNA結構，發現了DNA如何儲存與傳遞遺傳信息以及細胞如何使用這些資訊，這也導致了複製技術的出現。這是對人類乃至宇宙生物存在的挑戰。因此，任何與生命思索有關的藝術，必須面對這個未來生命不可回避的問題。否則，藝術作品中的那些生命形象，就要麼是心血來潮，好像「頭腦中突然顯現的一個怪物」，要麼就是人類自我迷戀、自我中心侷限中的某種詩意聯想。

5. 李山《陳述》。

6. 李山《閱讀》。



圖九，李山《閱讀》系列之一，丙烯、棉布，352x175cm，2006年
Figure 9. Li Shan, *Reading Series-I*, Propylene, 352x175cm, 2006

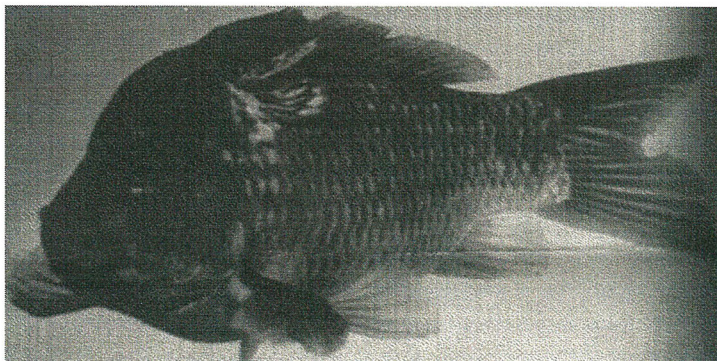
and the only thing that stayed with him was the work of Matthew Barney. It was then that he began to conceive of the *Reading* series, the possibility of a bio-art. He remembered the discussions he had in his university years with a student named Yuan about how to manufacture a human being. On the threshold of Li Shan's consciousness, a new form of art was about to appear.⁵

This new form of art was "a work of art that is alive, possessing biological attributes."⁶ Thinking about contemporary art, he realized that it had to have an intimate connection with the life sciences. Molecular biology came to be an important part of the life sciences in the 1950s, and its symbol was humankind's discovery of the macromolecule DNA, or the gene. Discovery of the structure of DNA, how it stores and transmits genetic information, and how the cell utilizes this information, all of these factors led to the discovery of reproductive technologies. This was a challenge to humanity, and even to all of the living creatures of the universe. Because of this, any art that seeks to seriously consider life must face this unavoidable problem of the biological future. Otherwise, representations of life in works of art will be either arbitrary whims like "freaks spontaneously appearing in the mind," or poetic associations limited by a self-indulgent humanism and self-centeredness.

5. Li Shan, *Narration*

6. Li Shan, *Reading*

在《閱讀》這件方案中，李山設想只要將蝴蝶的精子與魚的卵子的 DNA 進行修飾後再重組，就可以培育出一種非魚非蝶的怪物。^[圖十]這是一件石破天驚的作品。因為迄今為止還沒有任何人以這種方式去想像創作藝術作品。這個非魚非蝶的形象超出了任何過往藝術形象，因為它是活的！馬修·巴尼用自己的手做出了半人半獸的形象，但它仍然是傳統雕塑作品，我們可以說，在藝術史上，馬修·巴尼只不過賦予這件雕塑另一個平庸的奇想而已。而李山的方案則把這個奇想交給了轉基因的自然程式。這個不同或許看來微不足道，但是，它卻告別了人類作為萬物靈長的自傲，轉向了「齊物論」和「世界大同」的境界。



李山生物藝術方案《閱讀》，1998年2月於紐約 / Li Shan's Bio-Art Project *Reading*, February 1998 in New York

製作方案

只要給核糖體在閱讀 mRNA 信息時設置一個小小的障礙，將需要的氨基酸插到不是 mRNA 相對應的密碼子上，迫使信息失效。1998年初我分別將魚和蝴蝶的性細胞按照上述方法操作之後，再放回原處，過了六天，我取出魚的卵和蝴蝶的精子打開它們的細胞核，各取出一段 DNA，由於它們的遺傳密碼失效，就有可能將魚的密碼子按偶數，蝴蝶的密碼子按奇數的順序連接起來，核糖體跟往常一樣沿著 mRNA 鍵移動，一種攜帶人類文化意圖的蛋白質就被合成了。

蛋白質被置於盛滿培養液的器皿中，十八天後，一個並不像我想像中的那麼怪模怪樣的生物誕生了，它更像魚，而不像蝴蝶。因為蝴蝶翅膀的形象只占這個生物整體形象的一小部分。

Production Procedure

The approach involved placing a small hindrance in the ribosome while it was reading the mRNA message, and the desired amino acid was then injected into the corresponding mRNA codon to force the message to become invalid. In 1998, I treated fish and butterfly sex cells according to the aforementioned method, and then placed them back. Six days later, I opened the nuclei of the fish egg and the butterfly sperm and took out segments of DNA from them. If their genetic codes had expired, it would then be possible to link the fish codon at the even number and the butterfly codon at the odd number. The ribosome would move along the mRNA as usual, and thus a protein with human cultural intent was thereby synthesized.

The protein was placed in a Petri dish filled with culture medium, and eighteen days later, an organism, not as grotesque as I had expected, was born. It looked more like a fish than a butterfly, because the butterfly wing impression only composed a small part of the entire creature.

At the beginning of 1998, Li Shan completed his first bio-art project, entitled *Reading*. Bio-art, Li Shan believed, should present complete works by means of genetic engineering, and thought that its difference from previous art that concerned itself with life lay in the fact that it was based on genetics and the tissues that arose from genes as the guide for artistic creation. Bio-art should therefore be biological and be a visual art of living form.

In the *Reading* project, Li Shan posited that recombination of the DNA of the sperm of a butterfly with the DNA of the ovum of a fish, a chimera that was neither butterfly nor fish could be raised. [Figure 10] This is an ground-breaking work, because up to that point nobody had conceived of creating an artwork produced in such a manner. This non-fish, non-butterfly form exceeded any previous artistic form because it was alive! Matthew Barney had created half-man, half-animal forms, but he was still within the tradition of the plastic arts. It could be said that the art-historical impact of Matthew Barney's plastic forms is merely one of indifferent novelty. But Li Shan's project is to confer genetic alteration by natural engineering. This difference may seem insignificant, but it moved away from the humanistic arrogance of humankind over all of nature, turning toward a world in which there is a "leveling of all things" and a "universal community".

This is a theoretical problem that humanity today needs to face, and it is also a philosophical problem. Modern science constantly challenges nature; the Copernican revolution and Newtonian physics started the process of constant development in the sciences. But science is limited by the scope of its rational tools, and the practical limitations placed on it by capitalistic pragmatism; moreover, scientific technology has become a means of human alienation by this pragmatism. Science and technology also cannot overcome the limitations of anthropocentrism. The basic use of human technology has been a tool to master nature and the other. And the development of biological sciences has not been able to throw off this limitation. Li Shan has raised an ethical challenge to the life sciences and to anthropocentrism, audaciously asserting that humankind's biological revolution is in genetic hybridization, or genetic recombination. Li Shan's aspiration to elevate his work to this high level is not at all sensationalist. As this critique and self-reflection on the Enlightenment's anthropocentrism and instrumentalization has already been underway, in the field of aesthetics, Li Shan's audacious move was definitely transgressive. His bio-art is inseparable from scientific experimentation, but in this field he has encountered unprecedented difficulties and obstacles. Some of his projects and plans may be destined to be abortive, and the creativity of some of his discoveries may acquire the element of an unavoidable "birth of tragedy."

這是今天的人類必須面對的一個倫理問題，同時也是一個哲學問題。現代科學不斷地挑戰自然，哥白尼天體革命和牛頓的力學開啓了現代科學日新月異的發展，但是，現代科學一方面被侷限在工具理性的範圍，也就是科學被資本實用所侷限，科學技術反而成爲人類被資本異化的推力。另一方面科學技術不能突破人類自我中心的界限。人類發明的科技根本上仍然是用來征服自然和他者的工具。生物科學的發展也擺脫不了這個侷限。所以，李山提出了生命科學必須挑戰倫理、挑戰人類中心主義。李山大膽地指出，人類的生物性革命在於基因雜交，也就是基因重組。李山把自己的藝術創作放到了這個高度之上，這個雄心並非聳人聽聞，因爲在哲學領域已經有學者向啓蒙奠定的人類中心和工具理性進行批判和反省，但是，在文化藝術領域，李山的雄心絕對是超前的。他的生物藝術離不開生物科學實驗室，但是，在這個領域，李山將遇到前所未有的困難和阻力。他的某些方案和計畫可能註定流產，他的一些創造性的發明或許變爲不可避免的「悲劇的誕生」。

在李山的《閱讀》方案之後，2000年，美國藝術家愛德華·卡茨在實驗室用轉基因技術培育出他的阿爾巴(Alba)，即綠色螢光兔的作品。之前他想像的是一隻綠色的狼。這是歷史上第一個在實驗室裡培育出的生物藝術作品。倘若李山有自己的實驗室，他的「蝴蝶魚」在卡茨之前就已經誕生了。

生物基因重組：實證性和浪漫性

因此，基因重組和基因組的人工製造，成爲九〇年代至今李山生物藝術創作的核心工作。李山從三個方面實行這個工作，首先，繪畫作品，包括一些人和動物形象合成的作品。我在2000年準備【牆】展的時候，在上海李山的寓所看到一幅巨大的作品，畫面中一個躺著的人，身上肢體上都是魚，我看了很是震驚。首先，李山丟棄了任何「繪畫性」。風格出奇地直率。再有，橫躺著的人讓我想到了大佛涅槃。可是這個「大佛」的身上佈滿了魚。所以，在我策劃的2005年開幕的【牆】展中我展出了李山這件屬於《閱讀》系列的作品。1996年開始，李山用數位合成技術作了一批人的器官和動物昆蟲合成的圖片，^{〔圖十一—十四〕}，還有很多魚組成的人或者動物的肢體，而頭則像蝴蝶。他用電腦合成方法製作了一批昆蟲，如蜘蛛、蝴蝶、蒼蠅等，但局部卻是人的身體部位，如嘴、耳朵、手指或生殖器等。這些方案也曾在【牆】展中展出。展覽期間，李山的方案作品引起了爭議，很多人不理解，有人撰文質疑，認爲李山這些方案作品似乎和展覽主題無關。其實，我要展示的恰恰是李山這些新的方案作品的「不是之是」的價值。它們的科技和生物性形象似乎遠離人們對當代藝術的定義。人們可能仍然用圖像的眼光看李山，好像李山在玩一種圖像遊戲。其實，他們沒有看到李山的溫和含蓄的圖像和繪畫其實不再是以往的那種對傳統藝術邊界的挑戰。相反重要的是對「人」的生物邊界的挑戰，也是對人的倫理邊界的質問。

《轉譯的錯誤》是李山多年建立在基因重組和人造基因的可能性基礎上想像完成的生物合成

After Li Shan's *Reading* project in 2000, the American artist Eduardo Kac used transgenic technology to produce Alba, a green fluorescent rabbit. What he had originally imagined was a green wolf. This was the first work of bio-art ever produced in a laboratory. If Li Shan had had his own laboratory, his "butterfly fish" would have most certainly been born before Kac's creature.

Recombinant Genetics: Empiricism and Romanticism

The core of Li Shan's artistic work from the 1990s to the present had therefore become human-engineered recombination of genes and genomes. He approached this from three aspects. First, in painted works, including works featuring hybridized images of humans and animals. In 2000, when I was preparing the *Wall* show in Shanghai, I encountered an immense work in Li Shan's home featuring a recumbent person whose extremities were all fish, and was astonished: he had abandoned any kind of "painterly" values, and the style was exceptionally frank. Moreover, the person depicted lying flat resembled someone who had attained Buddhist nirvana, but the body of this "Buddha" was covered with fish. This was why I included the works belonging to the *Reading* series in the *Wall* exhibition, which opened in 2005. In 1996 Li Shan began to use digital composition technology to produce pictures depicting human bodies hybridized with animals and insects, as well as many human or animal bodies hybridized with fish, but with heads that resembled butterflies.[Figure 11 to 14] With a computer he composed spiders, butterflies, and houseflies, having human body parts located where they would be on a human, such as mouths, ears, fingers or genitals. These projects were exhibited in the *Wall* show, and during that show they generated a lot of controversy. Many people did not understand them; some wrote articles questioning their legitimacy, saying they had little to do with the theme of the show. But in the exhibition, these works of Li Shan had value precisely as a kind of "foil" to what I wanted to show. Their images of the technological and biological were far from people's definition of contemporary art. It may be that people could still see Li Shan in terms of the image, as if he was playing a kind of game with the image. But these people do not actually perceive the challenge behind Li Shan's gentle, veiled images and paintings that are no longer a part of this kind of traditional art. On the contrary, it is the challenge to the biological boundary of the "human," and the examination of the borders of human ethics.

Transcription Error is Li Shan's painterly "illustrations" that imagine a complete biological hybrid based on the possibility of genetic recombination and artificial genes. The strange images are all based on an imagined result of recombinant DNA and synthetic genes. They are not the product of a laboratory, but are actually the product of the "laboratory" in Li Shan's



圖十一，李山《閱讀》系列方案，1996-2006 年於上海
Figure 11. Li Shan, *Reading Series Project*, 1996-2006 in Shanghai

的繪畫「插圖」。畫中的奇怪的形象都是建立在基因重組和人造基因的想像結果之上。它們不是實驗室的產物，而是李山大腦「實驗室」的結果。不論將來生物（包括動物和人）的基因重組和人造基因實驗會是什麼樣的結果，我在李山的這些「雜交繪畫」中看到了他豐富的想像力。並由此想到先秦時代的《山海經》。其實古代的《山海經》是在講地理，但是它囊括了巫術、神話、宗教各方面，很多時候也是在隱喻宇宙運通和陰陽關係，插圖中配有很多怪異的靈獸，包括傳說中常見的青龍、白虎、朱雀、玄武。其實他們都是動物的合成形象。如果我們把這些異獸分類，說不定能夠對我們今天的轉基因生物科學有所啟發。儘管那些怪獸完全是那個時代的人們所極力捕捉的幻覺，通過想像捕捉到的怪異生物，最終把它們所造成一種神秘的生命體。但是，或許正是這種極度的超科學和超生物性的怪誕形象和想法才能與理性邏輯的科學基因重組的結果相匹配。玄學和巫術在某一時刻可能和科學只差半步。

這更加促使我意識到，李山早期的玄學衝動和後來的生物藝術的實證性之間的變通關係。基因重組成為李山生物藝術的基本修辭。但這不是李山的目的。李山在《隨機表達的可能性》作品標題下，附上這樣的一段文字，「將基因在轉錄和翻譯過程中的調控機制解除，讓基因隨機表達...」。隨機表達的結果是生命形態的不可知和無法預測，這才是李山所要關注的。正是這個神秘性成為驅動著他的動力。但是，李山之所以為這種神秘性和不可知性激動不已，不是為了一個明確的、實用的目的，就像生物科學首先關注人的生命延長或者驅除疾病（這無可厚非），而是李山在藝術中始終追逐不放的伊甸園。這才是生命的本質，它不僅僅是指人的



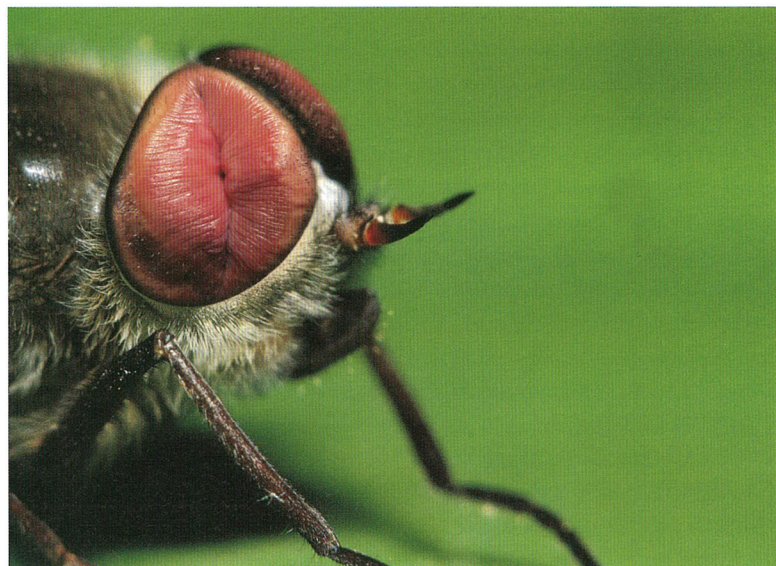
圖十二，李山《閱讀》系列方案，1996-2006 年於上海
Figure 12. Li Shan, *Reading Series Project*, 1996-2006 in Shanghai

own mind. No matter what the ultimate result will be of genetic recombination and synthetic genes, one can see in Li Shan's "hybrid paintings" a rich imaginative power. One thinks of the pre-Qin Dynasty *Classic of Mountains and Seas*, which, although an ancient work of geography, brought together shamanism, mythology and religion, and for a long time was thought to contain metaphors for hidden cosmological correspondences and Yin-Yang relations. The many images of strange beasts that often feature in legends, including the azure dragon, white tiger, and vermilion bird. The fact is, all of these creatures are hybrid images. If one analyzes these strange creatures, they might very well arouse interest in today's genetic engineers. Though the people of ancient times did their utmost to capture one of these imaginary creatures, one could say that today, if one were captured in the imagination, the creature resulting from this might indeed prove a mysterious living body. Perhaps it is precisely these images of monstrous births, arising from an extremely transgressive science and biology, which ultimately collates with the rational logic of genetic recombination. A time may come when there will be only a slight difference between science and shamanism.

More than anything else, this prompts the realization that there is a productive relationship between Li Shan's early mystical impulses and the empirical bio-art of his later period. The basic rhetoric of Li Shan's bio-art is genetic recombination, but this is not Li Shan's objective.



圖十三，李山《閱讀》系列方案，1996-2006 年於上海
Figure 13. Li Shan, *Reading Series Project*, 1996-2006 in Shanghai

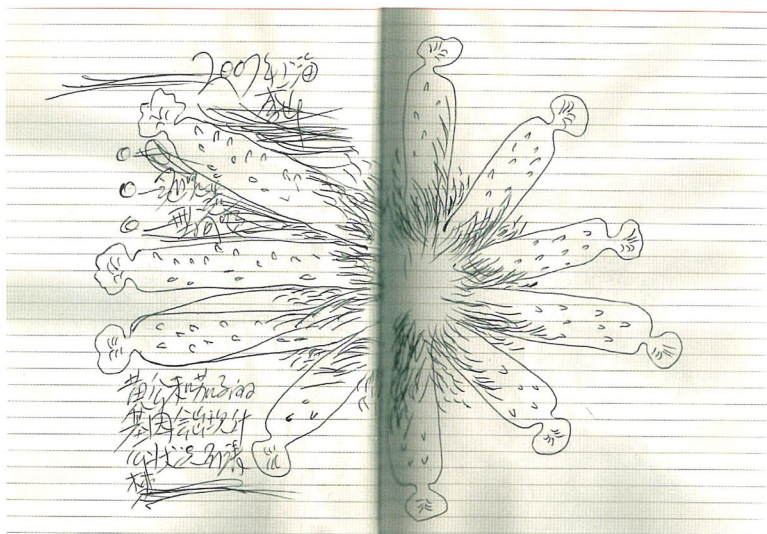


圖十四，李山《閱讀》系列方案，1996-2006 年於上海
Figure 14. Li Shan, *Reading Series Project*, 1996-2006 in Shanghai

In a work entitled *The Possibility of Random Expression* he appended a short statement: "remove the control mechanisms behind the process of transcription and translation, and allow genes to express themselves randomly." The product of random expression is a living morphology that is impossible to know or predict, and this is what Li Shan wishes to emphasize. It is this very mystery that has become his driving force. However, Li Shan's constant excitement for this mysticism and unknowability is not for the sake of something definite and practical, such as biology's interest in propagating life and eradicating disease (which is completely understandable), but rather the attainment in his art of the Garden of Eden. This alone is the essence of life, and the highest state of freedom not merely for human life, but that of other animals as well, and the great unity of the world. Were it not for the limitations of human ethics, I believe that Li Shan would create extremely vigorous works of bio-art. We can already see a glimpse of this vigor in Li Shan's *Pumpkin* series of bio-artworks. In collaboration with a scientist, he combined the genes of a pumpkin and other vegetables to create strange new fruits. In *Pumpkin*, Li Shan is just trying his hand, a project to tide him over; he can only do this kind of project as it is not subject to ethical restrictions. But its terrifying image is enough to render people speechless with fright and anxiety. [Figure 15 to 18]

Bio-art and the life sciences are divided in the fact that biology finds its ultimate end in the value of biological cloning. In other words, genetic modification and recombinant DNA lead effectively to cloning, and because the unalterable end of the life sciences is the service of human life, it has to reproduce the most optimal genes. Human life ultimately moves toward reproduction, something shown in the very fact of reproduction. Just as we live every day in the age of mechanical reproduction amid media, newspapers and images, all products are mass-produced. If the day came when humans were mass produced, the world could not bear to imagine it. It probably would be far from the simplistic depictions of robot wars seen in movies. From a conservative perspective, the value that humans will continue to have will not lie in their comparative superiority to the animals, but rather in the awareness of their ability to act as individuals, in their uniqueness. The value is in the safeguarding of subjectivity and freedom, something we have known since the Enlightenment, and defended with great effort by philosophers and thinkers.

However, the goal of bio-art is not in the reproduction of pedigrees, and it is not in preserving the uniqueness of an individual. Li Shan's bio-aesthetics goes beyond using reproduction, and transcends humanity's narcissistic uniqueness. Bio-art is a belief and a thought system relating to humanity, or a test of the ability to think. Its function does not consist in specific works, that is, it does not perform endless experiments to extend the life of humanity, nor does it try to create a superior life form. I discovered that Li Shan's bio-art is actually a painful non-



圖十五，李山，《南瓜計畫》方案草圖，2007年於上海
Figure 15. Li Shan, *The Pumpkin Project sketch*, 2007 in Shanghai

生命，這也是其他生物動物的最高自由境界，這就是世界大同。我想如果沒有受到倫理方面的很多侷限，李山可能會做出非常生猛的生物藝術作品。這種生猛，我們可以在李山的生物藝術作品《南瓜》系列中看到，他與科學家合作，通過南瓜和其它蔬菜的基因重組培育出了怪異的果實。《南瓜》系列其實只是小試牛刀，是一個退而求其次的方案，因為在現今條件下，李山也只能做這些事，它不受倫理的侷限。但是，其恐怖的形象已經足以讓人們驚愕、不安和失語。〔圖十五—十八〕。

生物藝術跟生命科學的分水嶺在於，生物科學的最終目的是找到生物性的複製價值。換句話說，轉基因和基因重組的有效結果將導致複製，因為生命科學，不可避免地最終要為人生服務，所以需要優良基因的複製。最終，人的生命可能也要走向複製。這已經被「複製」證明。就好像我們現在成天生活在一個機器複製的時代一樣，大量的媒介，報紙、影像等等，任何產品都是批量生產的。將來有一天，人一旦要批量生產的話，世界將不堪設想。那大概遠不是電影裡所描述的機器人戰爭那樣簡單。從保守的角度講，人之所以還有其可貴之處，不在於人較之其他動物多麼優越，而在於他們還能知道人作為個體而言，他的唯一性所在。我們知道，這也是啟蒙運動以來，哲學家 and 思想家們所極力維護的主體性和自由性的價值所在。

但是，生物藝術的目的既不在良種複製，也不在於保持某一個體的唯一性。李山的生物藝術觀，超越了實用的複製，和過於人類自戀的唯一性。生物藝術是一個信仰，是一個對人類的思想，或者思想能力的檢驗。它的功能不是具體的操作，即不是對人類生命延長的無休止實驗，也不是培育一個傑出的生靈。我發現，李山的生物藝術其實是對「人類的生物性品質是



圖十六，李山，《南瓜計畫》方案，2007年於上海
Figure 16. Li Shan, *The Pumpkin Project sketch*, 2007 in Shanghai

questioning inquiry into “whether the quality of humanity’s animality is in need of a basic change.” If humanity’s evolution is done, what will be the next change that it faces? Not changing is impossible, because the human environment is constantly (or perhaps acutely) changing. The universe is in constant state of flux and cannot allow any one part of it to stubbornly persist, unless it becomes fossilized. Will we say that fear of Li Shan’s concept of bio-art is not ungrounded? It may be something for later generations to deal with. But Li Shan’s attitude is that a millennium is too long, and one should make the best use of one’s time, so the problem of his bio-art being marginal to the art world may not be such a bizarre challenge. Today people are accustomed to the artworks taking any material form whatsoever. But with respect to the concept of the human and human ethics, the challenge is prescient. People have not yet become aware of this issue, and this is why Li Shan’s bio-art has hitherto been considered relatively mild and moderate.

Li Shan’s passionate investment in genetic recombination is practically equal to belief in a weird religion. Religion starts with people but is not limited to them. Consciousness of life comes from people, but life does not belong merely to people. This sublimation of the concept of life may lead to our constituting a universal community, or what Zhuangzi termed the soul of all things and equality of all things in his *Discourse on Making All Things Equal*. But this biological self-sublimation derives precisely from Li Shan’s pure materialism with respect to life; the total acknowledgement of the essence of genetic variation: the essence of genetic variations’ materialism has not been superseded. This is decisive of the equality of all things in a universal community. Humanity has no privileged place within such a scheme.



圖十七，李山，《南瓜計畫》方案，2007 年於上海
Figure 17. Li Shan, *The Pumpkin Project*, 2007 in Shanghai

否需要根本改變」，這個似乎不是問題的問題的痛苦質詢。如果人類的進化過程已經完成，那麼人類面臨的下一個改變將會是什麼？不改變是不可能的，因為人類的環境在不斷地（或者正在激烈地）改變。宇宙必須處於整一性的變化之中，不可能允許任何局部頑靈的存在，除非他成為化石。我們會說，李山的生物藝術觀念不是杞人憂天嗎？那可能是多少輩子之後的事了。但是李山的態度是一萬年太久，只爭朝夕，所以他的生物藝術在「藝術的邊界」這個問題上，可能並沒有太離奇的挑戰，因為今天人們已經習慣了任何物質形式的藝術品。但是在人的觀念和倫理方面確實是極具前瞻性的挑戰。人們尚未意識到這一點，那是因為李山的生物藝術迄今為止還算比較溫和節制。

李山對基因重組的激情投入，幾乎等同於信奉一種另類性的宗教。宗教始於人，但不能囿於人。生命意識來自於人，但是生命不可僅僅屬於人。這種生命觀的昇華可能會導致一種我們成為世界大同，或者莊子所說的萬物有靈、萬物平等的「齊物論」境界。然而，這種生命的自我昇華恰恰來自李山對生命的純物質性—基因變異本質的徹底臣服：基因變異的生物性本質是至高無上的。這種至高無上決定了萬物平等的大同世界。人類在這一原則之上沒有任何優越性可言。

李山在台北當代藝術館的正牆面上貼上二十萬隻蜻蜓翅膀，迎風波動、粼粼閃光的透明翅膀可能多多少少地寓意了這個「大同」觀念。在【粉紅微笑之後—閱讀·李山】的展覽中，李山還展示了一部「聖經」。這是一部沒有文字內容的書。藍色封面的中央是一隻電腦合成的「昆蟲」，其中有李山身體的一部分^{〔圖十九〕}，這個作品顯然暗喻了「上帝造人」的故事在今天已經變了味道，並被賦予另一種新說法。今天的「上帝」變成了「人工合成基因」和「人造生物」。



圖十八，李山，《南瓜計畫》方案，2007 年於上海
Figure 18. Li Shan, *The Pumpkin Project*, 2007 in Shanghai

On the wall of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei Li Shan has affixed twenty thousand transparent, crystalline dragonfly wings that are stirred by the ambient air, and which may to some extent allude to this concept of “universal community.” In the exhibition *Reading Li Shan*, the artist also displays a *Bible*. It is a book with no printed letters inside of it. In the center of its blue cover is a digitally altered “insect,” part of which is made up of Li Shan’s body [Figure 11]. It is an obvious metaphor of the story of God as Creator, but in today’s changed circumstances and bestowing on it another idiom. Today, God has become the engineered gene, and artificial life. The life sciences have replaced God. This *Bible* may also be regarded as Li Shan’s bio-art manifesto: he means to create “a completely new world of life that is not created in the image of God.”

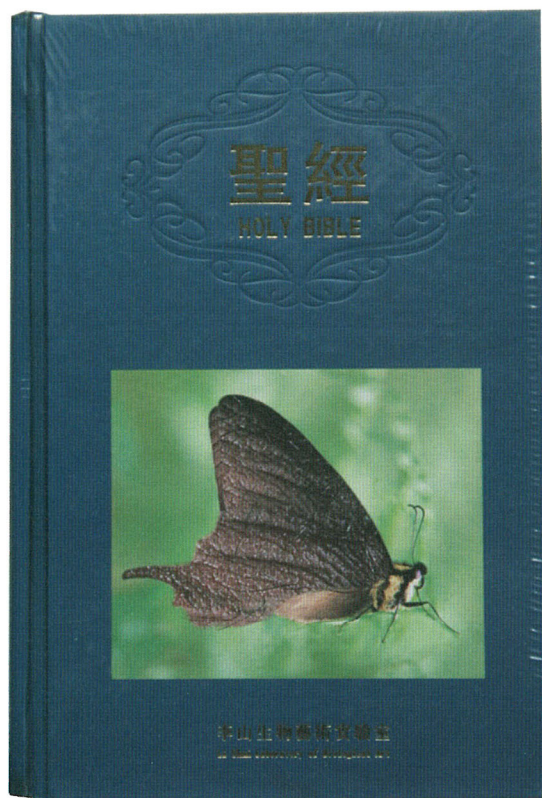
Nietzsche’s proclamation “God is dead” has already been subverted in “+”. However, since the Enlightenment, reverence for the spirit of humanity and freedom of the subject has produced a new “God” in the form of humanity as a whole, and the value of the individual. This may be the most difficult thing for the life sciences to confront and surpass an impediment to the new ethics.

In the last portion of *Reading Li Shan* is a digital image that Li Shan composed specially for this exhibition. This work constitutes not only his concluding remarks, but is also a perfect commentary on the realm of bio-art. A dragonfly made up of human bodies soars into the sky,

生命科學取代了上帝。這裡的「聖經」也可以看作李山生物藝術的宣言：他要創造「一個全新的，沒有上帝製造影子的生物世界」。

其實，《十》中的上帝的存在，在尼采宣佈「上帝死了」的時候就已經被顛覆了。但是，啟蒙以來對人類精神和主體自由的無限制的推崇，已經使人類個體和個人價值變為新的「上帝」。這可能是生物科學所面臨的最難以逾越的、新的倫理障礙。

【粉紅微笑之後—閱讀·李山】展覽的最後部份，是李山專門為展覽製作的一個數位影像作品。這件作品不僅成為展覽的結束語，也完美地詮釋了李山生物藝術的境界。一隻由人身體組成的蜻蜓在天空中翱翔，充滿想像力和詩意。觀者首先審美性地進入影像世界，看著蜻蜓在飛，一會兒落在樹葉上，然後飛向天空。我們再隨著蜻蜓，非常自在地，在藍天白雲間飛來飛去，我們忽然忘記了自己是誰，和我們從那裡來。看著那個「人蜻蜓」，不禁想到莊子的



圖十九，李山，《十》，2011
Figure 19. Li Shan, +, 2011

an image full of imaginative power and poetry. The spectator is drawn into the world, seeing the dragonfly now flying, now alighting on a leaf, and then flying into the sky. Following the dragonfly, we feel extremely at ease, flying amid the clouds in the blue sky, and we suddenly forget who we are and how we get there. Looking at this “human dragonfly,” we can’t help but thinking of Zhuangzi’s uncertainty: “whether he were the butterfly, or the butterfly were he.” This is may be precisely Li Shan’s ultimate point: the freedom for which we plan and search for. It is thus not the result of an experiment, nor will it result in a monstrous abortion—a life resembling dead matter.

Conclusion

In more than forty years of his artistic career, Li Shan lived through the experimental art of the 1970s, the “rational” art of the 1980s (a unique period of “abstraction” in China), the *Rouge* series of the 1990s, as well as the past twenty years of engagement with bio-art. Li Shan undoubtedly ranks among the few most important and influential artists in the history of contemporary art in China because he has constantly investigated the possibility of new forms of art. Li Shan is a refined and understated artist, but his art is brimming with a fierce tension, whether in the early-period paintings, installations or performance art, or the later bio-art. All of his works are challenging and critical. Li Shan’s art has always forged links with the unique developmental stages in the ecology of contemporary art; and in his works, he has been able to assert his own voice, untrammelled by the aesthetic concepts and social limitations of the time. At the end of the Cultural Revolution, when art was still awaiting a breakthrough in the range of what it could accomplish, Li Shan became a representative of the radical art scene in Shanghai, and he assiduously discovered how to use the latest and most forceful artistic forms. The art of the 1970s with its “new forms” carried with it the association with new life and new politics. In Shanghai in the 1980s, Li Shan participated in and organized influential avant-garde events and exhibitions, such as the *Aotu Exhibit*, *The Last Supper*, and others. His work became the most influential representative of “rational painting” among the new wave artists of that time. Li Shan has tirelessly investigated a kind of “mysticism” that is not at all a kind of “nothingness” but rather expresses something that intellectuals of the 1980s would endorse, namely that they are members of a greater humanity and a greater life. The mysticism in Li Shan’s “rational painting” is not expressive of an absolutist modernist primal abstraction; Li Shan’s abstraction is always linked to a philosophically informed “cellular life” and it is this very biological consciousness that has formed the unconscious foundation for his later bio-art.

As a member of the avant-garde in China, Li Shan organized and participated in significant avant-garde artistic events in the 1980s, including the 1986 Zhuhai Conference and the

「不是我為蝴蝶，蝴蝶為我」的說法。這可能正是李山在生物藝術最終想為我們尋找和設計的自由。它既不是一種實驗結果，也不是要給我們一個怪胎—像死物一樣的生命。

結論

在長達四十餘年的藝術生涯中，李山經歷了七〇年代的實驗藝術階段，八〇年代的「理性繪畫」（中國特定時期的「抽象」藝術）階段，九〇年代的「胭脂系列」階段，以及過去近二十年的生物藝術階段。李山無疑是中國當代藝術史中少數幾位最重要的、有影響的藝術家之一，因為他總是在探索新藝術出現的可能性。李山是一個儒雅低調的藝術家，但是，他的藝術總是充滿激烈的張力，不論是早期繪畫、裝置和行為藝術作品，還是後來的生物藝術，總是在挑戰和質問。李山的藝術總是和當代藝術發展特定階段的生態發生關係，總能夠在藝術作品中，對時代藝術觀念及其被制約的社會條件發出自己的聲音。當中國文革結束，藝術範圍期待突破擴展之時，李山成為上海激進藝術的代表成員之一。他努力發現運用最新和最具衝擊力的藝術形式。因為，七〇年代藝術的「新形式」本身就意味著那個時代的新生命和新政治。八〇年代，李山在上海參與組織了一些有影響的前衛活動和展覽，比如【凹凸】展、【最後的晚餐】等，他的作品也成為新潮美術中影響最大的「理性繪畫」的代表人物。李山在繪畫中極力探討的「神秘性」並非一種虛無，它實際上表達了八〇年代知識份子的文化身份認同，即他們是大人類和大生命的一員。而李山的「理性繪畫」玄學，也並非現代主義的絕對性原理抽象表述；李山的抽象形象總是與「生命細胞」的哲學聯想有關，正是這種生命意識奠定了之後李山生物藝術的潛意識基礎。

作為上海以及中國前衛的領軍人物之一，李山多次組織或者參與了八〇年代的重要前衛藝術活動，包括 1986 年的「珠海會議」，以及 1989 年的【中國現代藝術展】。九十年代初，李山創作了極具影響的政治波普作品《胭脂系列》。但是，正當政治波普在國際上非常走紅，波普藝術家正在享受著市場和聲譽的雙重機遇之時，李山突然急流勇退，從 1993 年就開始思考準備他的生物藝術。

是什麼原因促使李山突然離群索居，轉而默默地探討和從事他的生物藝術長達 20 年之久？除了他的低調性格之外，是什麼樣的美學和社會學動力促使李山選擇這樣不可思議的激進轉變呢？或許，我們今天還無法判斷李山的生物藝術在藝術史上具有的超前意義。但是，我們至少可以嘗試去理解他的發生原因。

首先，可能李山很早就看到了當代藝術的危機。1993 年參加了威尼斯雙年展後，沒有絲毫興奮，反而充滿失望，這可能是出自對當代藝術的危機意識。藝術成為產品，藝術家把肯定這個產品生產，和否定這個產品作為他們的立場前提。這個立場前提導致現代主義和後現代主義的斷裂。現代主義主張藝術的高端產品化（或尖端「作品性」materialization），其代表就是各種抽象形式主義的出現。後現代主義主張去產品化（或者「去作品性」dematerialization），

1989 *China Contemporary Art Exhibition*. At the beginning of the 1990s, Li Shan created an extremely influential work of political pop art called the *Rouge Series*. However, just as political pop became an international success, and the artists of that movement began to enjoy the twin opportunities of market success and fame, Li Shan suddenly and courageously turned against the current and from 1993 onward, and began to meditate on his own bio-art.

What prompted Li Shan to suddenly turn inward away from the crowd, and spend twenty years pursuing in solitude his investigations into bio-art? His mild temperament aside, what kind of aesthetic and sociological impulse impelled him to choose this incredibly radical change? We may not be able to judge whether Li Shan's bio-art has a transcendent significance in the context of art history. But at least we can try to understand the reasons it came about.

First, Li Shan may have seen at an early period the crisis in contemporary art. In 1993 he participated in the Venice Biennale, but when it was over he felt not the slightest bit of excitement, but was rather disappointed in what he had seen, which may have come from a sense of crisis in contemporary art. Art became commodified, and it became a prerequisite for artists to either approve of it or deny it when they make art. These preconditions have led to a rupture between modernism and postmodernism. Modernism advocates that art remain above commodification (or elevate materialization), and this is represented by the emergence of abstraction in its various forms. Postmodernism advocates de-commodification (or dematerialization), with the result that finished goods, installations and bodily performances can directly become “materialized” themselves. This is the antithesis and the subversion of the classic and modernist conception of “materialization”.

However, from the standpoint of a materialist aesthetics, whether or not the work is materialized or dematerialized has no bearing on the artwork's status as object. Even so, people want to bestow aesthetic uniqueness for the sake of revolutionary significance, based on aesthetic or social agendas. For example, modernism would bestow laurels on abstract works for directly recapitulating a high-level “theory.” Postmodernism on the other hand would award its laurels to ready-mades that revealed “social context” or “social sculpture.” However, all emphasize merely one aspect of a material object (the physicality of the artistic work). Another result of postmodernism's de-commodification has been the critique of capital markets. But contemporary art has never broken away from the marketplace and has never been independent or free of it. Jeff Koons and Hertz ultimately had no choice but to use the market to play at art. This is what constitutes the crisis in contemporary art in the mind of the public.

Even if Li Shan has never cited specific things in contemporary art that has made him lose

其結果就是各種現成品、裝置乃至行為身體直接成為「作品性」本身。這是對現代主義以及古典的「作品性」的逆反和顛覆。

但是，從物質美學的角度，無論是作品性還是去作品性都沒有逃離藝術的客體性（Object）性質。儘管，人們願意從美學和社會學分裂的角度，去賦予藝術客體性以某種革命意義。比如，現代主義會賦予抽象作品一個高級的直接再現「理念」的桂冠。後現代主義則賦予現成品以「社會上下文」或者「社會雕塑」的桂冠。但是，他們不過都是在強調一個物質客體（藝術作品的物理性）的某一個極端側面而已。後現代主義去產品化的另一個結果是對資本市場體制的批判。但是，當代藝術從來沒有脫離過市場，也從來沒有獨立和自由過。昆斯和赫茲最終不得不利用市場去玩藝術。這些都是人們普遍意識到的當代藝術的危機所在。

儘管李山沒有具體說過當代藝術中的什麼東西讓他失望，但是，李山過去二十年的特立獨行確實開拓了一個屬於他的新領域，這很讓我們羨慕。他不再去思考，一幅畫表現了什麼意義。不用再考慮西方或者東方的傳統參照系。正像李山所說，他所做的「與人們通常理解的藝術人文已經沒有太多的關係。生物藝術展示了一個全新的系統，一個活的、有生命的、與人類交互呼應、共同生存的系統」。⁸ 生物藝術不再承擔刻意「表現」人的思想的功能，沒有再現真理的負擔，它回到了人自身。李山感到他的藝術得到了解放。

但是這個「回到人自身」卻可能建立在反人類中心的立場之上。人類中心是十八世紀啟蒙運動宣導人類主體自由的結果，其直接結果是形而上學代替了神學，工具理性帶來人性異化和資源危機。所以，法蘭克福學派的霍克海默和阿多諾在他們的《啟蒙辯證法》中批判了啟蒙建立的人類中心論。但是，這個批判仍然是在人類歷史內部找原因。或許，人類的危機必須要在人和人之外的關係中解決。這可能是李山做生物藝術的另一個思考。

李山很犀利並且不無幽默地指出，「人類這個物種在與其他物種相提並論時顯得不太協調，那種書寫時的武斷態度，行走時的直立姿態，都是生物界不能容忍的。」⁹ 李山站在大多數動物的角度上與人對話，揭示了人類的自傲和不平等。他認為人類的出路在於基因雜交，人必須越過這一邊界。所以，他將人畫成躺的姿勢，身上是魚的「基因」。

李山四十年以來的藝術實踐證明了他是一個極具反叛性格的另類藝術家，他的藝術哲學是懷疑主義。他的早期抽象藝術和《胭脂系列》，都是對「真實」的懷疑，對美學真實和現實真實的懷疑。後來的生物藝術則是對人類的道德倫理的懷疑。倫理道德的底線不再僅僅關乎人的利益，而應該關乎所有生物的利益。所以，人的倫理最大的挑戰其實來自人自身。這種懷疑主義決定了李山四十年來藝術發展的邏輯。早期的生命玄學與後期生物藝術的實證性也是李山思想的合邏輯的產物。

8. 李山《生物藝術宣言》，2008年。

9. 李山給高名路的信，2003年。

hope, over the past twenty years of unconventional practice, he has opened up a new area belonging uniquely to him, inciting the admiration of us all. He no longer considers what significance a work of art manifests. He no longer relies on a traditional Western or Eastern frame of reference. As Li Shan has said, “arts and humanities often do not have much to do with people’s usual understanding. Bio-art is a completely new system, a living, vital one, that can echo humanity, a system of common existence.”⁸ Bio-art no longer takes on the burden of “displaying” the capacities of human thought, and is not concerned with reconstructing truths. It returns to the biological. Li Shan feels that his art has been liberated.

But this “return” can be founded on an anti-anthropocentric point of new. Anthropocentrism is a result of the Enlightenment’s focus on human liberation, and its direct result was that metaphysics replaced theology, and utilitarianism incurred human alienation and a crisis in resources. For this reason, the Frankfurt School, and Horkheimer and Adorno’s Dialectic of Enlightenment in particular, criticized the Enlightenment’s anthropocentrism, but this criticism still sought the causes within human history. Perhaps the solution to the crisis should be found outside of the social bond. And this may be another consideration when Li Shan started making bio-art.

Li Shan has incisively pointed out, not without a certain humor, that “the human species, when placed on a par with other species, seems rather incongruous. That dogmatic attitude in which we write books, that upright stance when walking, none of these things are tolerated in the natural world.”⁹ Li Shan speaks from the standpoint of the majority of animals when conversing with the human, and exposes human’s arrogance and inequality. The way out for him is genetic hybridization, for humanity needs to rise above this juncture. This is why he paints the person in a lying posture, with fish “genes” in his body.

Over the past forty years, Li Shan has proven in his artistic practice that he is a unique artist with an extremely rebellious nature. His aesthetic philosophy is skeptical. From his early abstract works to the *Rouge* series, all are suspicious of the “true” and the “real” and skeptical with regard to aesthetic realism. His later bio-art is skeptical of human morality and ethics. The bottom line of ethics and morality are really concerned with self-interest, whereas they should be concerned with the welfare of all living beings. The greatest challenge to ethics will come from people themselves. This skepticism has been the logic of Li Shan’s artistic development for the past forty years. His early mysticism to the empiricism of his later bio-art, have all been the logical product of his thinking.

8. Li Shan, *Bio-Art Manifesto*, 2008

9. Li Shan, letter to Gao Minglu, 2003