

PEKING ART ASSOCIATES
BEIJING





Photograph of Fang Kai (R) and Mao Yan (L)
Mao Yan's Studio
Nanjing, 2013
方凯（右）与毛焰（左）合照
毛焰工作室
南京，2013

Fang Kai 方凯
Woody (opposite)
Woody 肖像练习1（对面）：
Oil on Canvas
布面油画
2013
40 x 30 cm

PEKING ART ASSOCIATES



- B E C O M I N G -

M A O Y A N & F A N G K A I

WITH ESSAY & INTERVIEWS BY MICHELLE HO

COMPILED & EDITED BY E.S. DE WOLFE PETTIT



Mao Yan 毛焰
David Miele - Oval Portrait
椭圆形肖像
Oil on Canvas
布面油画
2010.9
53.7 x 72.6 cm

CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	6
<i>Emily de Wolfe Pettit</i>	
Musings on Two	8
<i>Wang Yitong</i>	
Essay	10
<i>Michelle Ho</i>	
Further Catalogue of Works	24
In Conversation with the Artists	34
<i>Michelle Ho</i>	
Artists' Biographies	50

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Emily de Wolfe Pettit

With the arrival of spring 2013, intrepid art collector Cees Hendrikse presented Mao Yan's works in an exhibition named *Face2Face*, alongside two of my favourite Dutch portrait painters, Jan Worst and Philip Akkerman, at Beijing's Today Art Museum. In a catalogue piece titled *A Strange Constellation*, co-featured Chinese artist and respected scholar Chen Danqing observed of Mao Yan:-

"At the very start of his career, he [Mao Yan] already proved to be a sensitive, almost neurotic talent. Some of his portraits of the early 1990s indeed gave me the impression of neuroticism spread across the canvas... He is one of the very few Chinese painters who disdain political correctness, and as far as I know, Mao Yan has kept his youthful impetuosity; when he paints, he only cares about himself".

In a case of life not imitating art, as a professor at the Nanjing Art Academy and a generous, convivial character his guests invariably enjoy getting to know over earthy pu'er and metaphysical musings, Mao Yan would seem to care intensely for the well-being of his coterie, whom he not only holds dear but keeps physically close. He may disdain political correctness and standing on ceremony, yet Mao Yan has nonetheless constructed a framework of great formality. As he observed in his interview with Michelle Ho:-

"If you set out to change reality, you must simply create for yourself an atmosphere, a refuge, a utopia even. And not just yourself but your surroundings, your friends and so forth. A place where everything is light, natural, free and unfettered. Then you can immerse yourself in the things you love. It's a basic ideal... Here I'm free to say yes or no to invitations. It's not a place where people can just come and go. I control this space".



Mao Yan 毛焰
Thomas No.3
托马斯肖像 No. 3
Oil on Canvas
布面油画
2006-2007
110 x 75 cm



Fang Kai 方凯
A Small Portrait
 小幅肖像
 Oil on Canvas
 布面油画
 2012
 25 x 20 cm
Private Collection, Switzerland
 私人收藏, 瑞士

Within this serene, 'solemn' artists' community with Mao Yan at its helm, and far from the international art circuit of which he is increasingly a part, the work of another, highly sensitive artist, popular with his peers, stands out. While Mao Yan may give the surface aura of bubbly, 'youthful impetuosity' as Chen Danqing put it, his former student, Fang Kai, exudes a near-unsettling calm. Yet, beyond winding encounters and spirited discourse, the clearest revealer of character is naturally the artist's body of work. Like the man, still waters too the pools of grey, green and aqua Fang Kai conjures for his subjects. In the stillness, over and over again, this artist lets off life's flashbulb, removing artifice while simultaneously creating a web of psychological layers, capturing his subject when their guard has just been laid down. Fang Kai's works frequently bring me back to Virginia Woolf's great quote from *Orlando*:- "*By the truth we are undone. Life is a dream. 'Tis the waking that kills us...*" Yet Fang Kai's dream is not undone by the truth of the light; and if life is a dream, then he manages to preserve his subjects in a hypnotized state, not to be numb to the world, but conceivably in order to create an unfiltered stream of consciousness.

A delicate strength, the receding of colours and contours to intensify the non-referential are the denominators of Mao Yan and Fang Kai; the truth, no matter how convoluted, holds traditional beauty and innocence for both. Yet, where Mao Yan found Thomas, the exotic foreigner who provided him with, as Michelle Ho has observed, his "*mysterious no-man, or everyman... [culminating in]... a triumph of the portrait over temporality and human will*", Fang Kai focuses on subjects closest to him, removes all markers, even of ethnicity, and let's "*intuition... [be] my guide*". We see this in, for instance, *Unbroken Gaze* (page 21) and elsewhere, he skips art history's chapters with occasional cheeky references to the 'greats', such as Munch's 1913-1914 *Weeping Nude* in his *Female Nude* (pages 28-29). Fang Kai has clearly taken inspiration from Mao Yan when his former professor asserts:- "*I think the great is unattainable but the good is easily won. As long as you are dedicated you can be good... Greatness traverses time, it penetrates time.*"

To our team who worked on this project, I would like to express my sincere gratitude. There is one person without whom this project would not have been half so enjoyable, Li Li. Thank you Li Li for your generous hospitality, opening up your beautiful hotel to our team, and your warm reception on our arrivals in Nanjing on the coldest of evenings and hottest of days. Thank you Yitong for your careful engagement with artists Mao Yan and Fang Kai and patient translation throughout; we wish her all the best as she pursues further studies at the University of Chicago under Professor Wu Hung. Special thanks to Michelle, who tirelessly distills every idea discussed and gracefully makes collaboration such a joy. We wish her every happiness as she enters the most significant of life's partnerships in Switzerland this summer. And a thousand thanks to Mao Yan and Fang Kai - our new best excuses to linger in the old 'southern capital'.

MUSINGS ON TWO

Wang Yitong

"In art, progress lies not in an extension, but in a knowledge of limitations." - Georges Braque



"For me, to paint is not to master one advanced or transcendent style of painting, but to achieve sustained expressions within self limitations." - Fang Kai

Fang Kai and Mao Yan are two portraiture artists of the same artists' haven, and share much the same philosophy of life, yet are two radically different characters. While a conversation with Fang Kai may be light-hearted and concise, an exchange with Mao Yan often involves great intensity and loquaciousness. However, an essential feeling emerges from communication with both artists, where one finds oneself to have fallen completely in love with the creative process for the first time - or indeed all over again; moreover, in the pleasant if perplexing realisation that art, as George Braque once suggested, has its very source of infinite possibilities at the core of our own limitations.

Fang Kai 方凯
Portrait of ZJ V
ZJ 肖像练习 5
Oil on Canvas
布面油画
2012
28 x 26 cm



Fang Kai's works, Peking Art Associates, Beijing
方凯作品一览, 北京艺术咨询
2013

No matter light-hearted or intense, concise or verbose, these are just some of the aspects to the distinct personalities of Fang Kai and Mao Yan. Fang Kai's directness draws an image of unyielding attitudes, yet he would never force his opinions upon his audience, such is his softly spoken manner. Mao Yan shares his younger neighbour's clarity of opinion, however rather than reserve, with Mao Yan one senses a gentle affection for his own ethics as an artist. Discussing more in-depth or sharing just a brief few words, clear and honest fundamentals emerge from both artists.

One of the refreshing aspects to both Mao Yan and Fang Kai is that neither is too fond of talking about themselves, nor praising their own creations. Yet both could continue endlessly when it comes to the practice of art, when concerning great artists, music, philosophers, and directors. Perhaps their effective power is precisely due to their sincere enthusiasm for, and selfless humility towards, the faults of the mortal world and ideals that point to a kind of divinity. Such power re lights the flame of belief in me, belief in the creative process, and in the creators. Thus we turn to the works of Fang Kai and Mao Yan, keeping in mind the Chinese saying: *'to read the picture is to see the person'*.



B E C O M I N G

M A O Y A N & F A N G K A I

Michelle Ho

A MAN PERFORMS THE SEEMINGLY ABSURD TASK OF CARRYING A LIT CANDLE ACROSS A MINERAL spring in the closing scene of Tarkovski's *Nostalgia*, creating one of the most disturbing images in cinematic history of man's struggle to keep the spiritual or artistic light alive. Like the flame, Fang Kai's portraits, just as his guide Mao Yan before him, haunt like flickering souls on the brink of becoming extinguished at any moment. In the works of this master-protégé duo, one senses not only a mystery, but a discoverable mystery, lying beyond the narrow chambers of the "I". For the widely-feted, Hunan-born Mao Yan, that outer realm is home to all the things that matter – works of genius by the greatest artists and philosophers, timeless standards of the good, and the beauty and potency of all genuine emotions and deeds. For Fang Kai, grappling with an inner realm of sublimating technique to place pure experience to the fore, the growing pain that artistic freedom only comes with a fair dose of withdrawal is all too familiar. This mantra of self-restraint perhaps goes some way to explaining the characteristic close-toned palette of grisaille, its in-between state favoured by both artists as the closest version of reality. It may also explain Fang Kai's preoccupation with a veiled layering and unseen source of elucidating light; likewise Mao Yan's desire to purge all individuality and sentimentality from the human portrait for the 21st century. As Mao Yan keenly instills in his students from the start, in order to explore this immutable kingdom, one must keep a little distance from the world. "*Painting,*" Mao Yan has said, "*will always have this multifarious, intricate relationship with life and reality. But in the process you discover the rhythm and emotions of the universe inside you.*"

Such is the paradox of engaging by detaching, Mao Yan's premise for a philosophy of teaching is as much an exercise in self-extrapolation. The best teacher in his view, is the invisible messenger – one who carries the timeless truths from one soul to another with as little contamination as possible along the way. Pointed thus towards a place of permanent ideals, what began as a means of escape for the young Fang Kai became a means of attaining. Moving from his native western Anhui province to pursue his studies in Nanjing in 2007, he embarked in search of that instinctive, intuitive consciousness that lies behind all great works of art. That he had access to everything from Chinese folk paper-cutting art to Pop Art during his formal training did little to stir passion. Crammed with head- knowledge, all that Fang Kai had to go by was an inextinguishable instinct to paint. It was Mao Yan's canvases that opened the door to a new way of understanding art. Beneath the formal roughness of Mao Yan's early works, Fang Kai felt the stirrings of

Fang Kai 方凯
Night Light Man (inset, opposite)
夜灯人 (对面)
Oil on Canvas 布面油画
2011
50 x 60 cm



Fang Kai 方凯
Portrait
夜灯人
Oil on Canvas 布面油画
2013
50 x 40 cm
Collection of Madame Xu Xiao, Beijing
徐晓女士收藏, 北京



Michelle Ho: *Tarkovsky once said art would be useless if the world were perfect, as men wouldn't look for harmony, but just live in it. He said art exists because of an ill-designed world.*

Mao Yan: *I agree... Art concerns human morality and consciousness as well as the ideals and aspirations of the world... Tarkovsky put it quite elegantly [but] reality could in fact be much uglier... The imperfections of the world may very well be the artist's responsibility. Art is not a career, not a craft, not a plaything... Every individual artist is distinct, but to go beyond this personal imprint, beyond even the imprint of time, that's another level. This is the biggest challenge for a serious artist. It's very difficult.*

- In Conversation, January 2013



Clockwise from opposite (all Oil on Canvas 布面油画):

Mao Yan 毛焰 *Posie Musgrau No.2 Oval portrait* 椭圆形肖像 2010 53.7 x 72.6 cm;

Mao Yan 毛焰 *Thomas 托马斯肖像 -- 纪念之三* 2008 75 x 54.8 cm;

Fang Kai 方凯 *X Portrait III X 肖像练习 3* 2011 40 x 30 cm

an instinctive consciousness, affirming that all the technical qualities of a painting did not add up to its soul. Mao Yan's portraits had the power of a cleared passage to the soul, prompting the student to embark on his own journey into intuitive knowledge, searching for timeless forms innate or inherited from the old masters. Fang Kai's figure in *Seated Man* (overleaf) indeed appears as if he were on the threshold of newborn knowledge, and another birth. The artist's choice of a closed-toned palette, reminiscent of grisaille, is a further embrace of the vicissitudes of surface reality. Once widely-used by the old masters as an exercise, or as a stepping stone towards a finished oil painting after adding glazes,



grisaille is in many ways a gateway method. Mao Yan, who has shifted from more colourful palettes to grey over time, has said, "*grey is exquisite, ambiguous and full of possibilities.*" For Fang Kai, captivated by grisaille early on, it marks a similar abnegation of self, leaving a gateway for intuitive knowledge to play its part. The delicate gradations of grey, infused with warm or cool tones, renders each of the artist's canvas like a film negative caught in its developing process, approaching its true and vivid image. If art is indeed but a thin and sensitive skin between the heart of the world and us, then Mao Yan and Fang Kai's choice to present it through grey and amorphous portraits may be the conduit offering the most direct path. In some ways, Fang Kai is the personification of grisaille and its spirit, a gentle keeper of hovering characters and conjurer of in-between states.

Mao Yan 毛焰
Side Portrait of Xiao Shan
 侧面小山
 Oil on Canvas 布面油画
 1997
 61 x 50 cm



Fang Kai 方凯
Portrait of a Young Woman
女青年半身
Oil on Canvas 布面油画
2013
100 x 80 cm



Michelle Ho: *Tarkovsky once said art would be useless if the world were perfect, as men wouldn't look for harmony, but just live in it. He said art exists because of an ill-designed world.*

Mao Yan: *I agree. Art concerns human morality and consciousness as well as the ideals and aspirations of the world... Tarkovsky put it quite elegantly [but] reality could in fact be much uglier... The imperfections of the world may very well be the artist's responsibility. Art is not a career, not a craft, not a play thing... Every individual artist is distinct, but to go beyond this personal imprint, beyond even the imprint of time, that's another level. This is the biggest challenge for a serious artist. It's very difficult.*

- In Conversation, January 2013



From Opposite (对面):

Fang Kai 方凯
Seated Man 坐着的人
Oil on Canvas 布面油画
2012
170 x 120 cm

Fang Kai 方凯
My Friend 我的朋友
Oil on Canvas Panel 布面油画
2013
24 x 18 cm
Private Collection, Brussels / Seoul
私人收藏, 布鲁塞尔 / 首尔

To the viewer standing before one of Fang Kai's paintings, it is as if witnessing a spirit hovering, most especially through his recent body of work that catches that hallucinatory, almost unearthly frontier of awakening. Fang Kai does not focus on the dark, a silent agent of restitution and recompense for the loss of enigma through the light. Nor does he focus on that icy, tingling light, which always seems just beyond reach. Instead, he looks into the eyes of the dreamer. Some have surrendered to waiting (*Portrait of MK*), while some gaze in awe of what is to come, as in *Night Light Man*, where a youth gazes from his desk into an orb of light as if expecting a swirl of noumenon to form within. Literally "light-dark" as defined by the Italian Renaissance masters, *chiaroscuro* was favoured by portrait painters of bygone epochs, notably the Dutch. But whereas the old masters often painted religious scenes lit by candle or the divine light



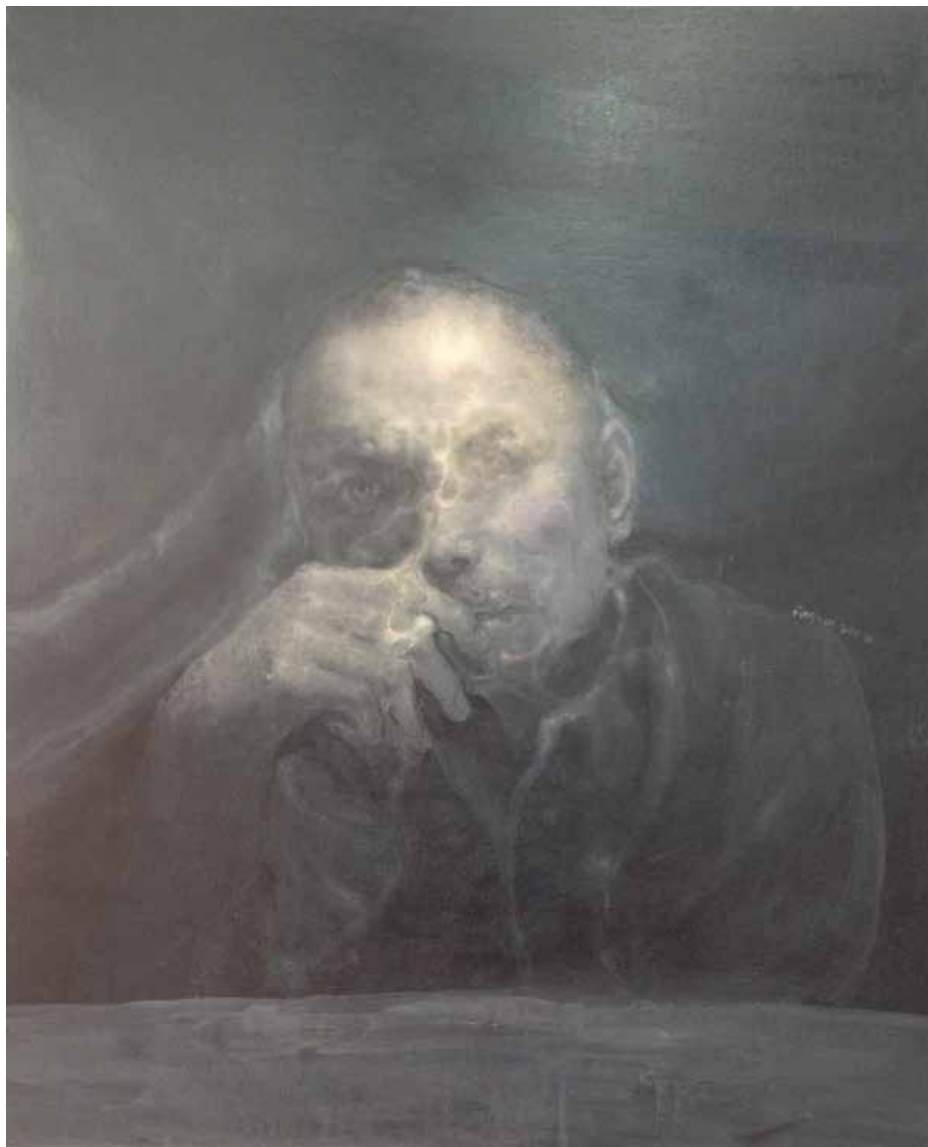
Fang Kai 方凯
Portrait with a Spider
 带蜘蛛的肖像
 Oil on Canvas 布面油画
 2011
 60 x 50 cm

from the infant Christ, in the hands of Fang Kai the method evokes a sense of modern man's gaze turned-inward but seeing only darkness, longs for restoration. In *Smoker* (overleaf), the longing has turned into defiance, while in *Seated Man I*, the figure, perhaps having waited too long, turns hostile, a little impetuous even at the silence of their watcher. Modern man may have grown very suspicious of anything existing outside his own mind, let alone a divine light. But by drawing the solitary figures out of their vast shadows such as *Unbroken Gaze* with a lucid, almost crystalline light (page 21), Fang Kai seems to be teasing not only the soul out of its shell, but modern man out of his subjective cave. Experimenting with the position of the light source in relation to the figure, Fang Kai seems to be questioning the different postures that man takes towards his spiritual vacuum. In part, it marks the artist's response to a contemporary China of abandoned ideals and spiritual bankruptcy. Graduating from Nanjing Art Academy in 2007, Fang Kai watched his friends abandon the path of art one by one. Unemployment was a reality, some wound up working in office jobs and thinking themselves too good for it, or self-glorious because of it. Discontent, materialism, internet syndrome, social anxiety disorders, and a host of other social illnesses debilitated much of Fang Kai's generation. For a young man searching for authenticity, it was a troubling period.

Fang Kai may belong to a generation of graduates from one of China's finest art academies who had all the privileges of free choice as well as all its burdens. Whereas those of the earlier generation lost friends who fought for their ideals, as Mao Yan himself all too acutely experienced, Fang Kai lost those who abandoned their ideals. A generation which desired happiness without pain, success without burden, achievement without cost wound up with a sense of facetious living, a host of social illnesses and a gaping spiritual void. Fang Kai's earlier works were expressive of the desolation felt as the sheer number of students deserted the art world as quickly as they had entered. Reprimanded by their professors as an ungrateful lot, today's Chinese art graduates in turn bemoan that all the world's theory and technical know-how has done little in the way of enlightenment or vision.



Mao Yan 毛焰
My Poet
我的诗人
Oil on Canvas 布面油画
1997
61 x 50 cm



Fang Kai 方凯
Smoker
吸烟者
Oil on Canvas 布面油画
2012
50 x 40 cm
Collection of Professor Mao Yan, Nanjing
毛焰教授收藏，南京



Fang Kai 方凯
Unbroken Gaze
正面

Oil on Canvas 布面油画
2013

63 x 40 cm

Collection of Mr and Mrs Ivan Cvetic, Beijing
Cvetic 夫妇收藏, 北京



Just over a quarter of a century is a long time when counted in Chinese chapters. When the nation's elite youth rushed together under the banner of art for the first time since the Cultural Revolution, Mao Yan was one of them as a student of the Central Academy of Fine Art (CAFA, Beijing). They were, as one Academy professor remarked in hindsight, *"afflicted with schizophrenic tendencies, torn between urges to return to the past and progress towards the future"*. Cool in the face of artistic fashions, Mao Yan packed his bags and set off for in search of timeless ideals in the quieter quarters of Nanjing. Nonchalant about artistic fashions and the art world's growing fascination with him, Mao Yan set about his mission of getting rid of that troublesome "I". His early portraits such as *My Poet* and *Black Rose*, though icy with their angularity and rough, blue washes of shadow, still bore the imprints of individuality and time. But in 1999 a chance meeting with Thomas, a foreigner from Luxembourg studying in China, granted the artist the model that would allow him to purge all tell-tale signs of individuality, such as gestures, expressions, contextual objects and clothes, as well his own judgment and sentimentality from the portrait. Mao Yan took countless photos of Thomas, sometimes directing his poses very precisely, sometimes allowing him to try different things out, but always settling on those which rendered Thomas most serene and remote. As the colours and contours receded further, Thomas at last became the mysterious no-man, or everyman, that Mao Yan had been looking for. For Mao Yan who believes that it is an artist's job to discern, rather than impose oneself upon, the natural laws in art, Thomas was a triumph of the portrait over temporality and human will and a triumph of the human portrait.

Today, in Mufu Hills on the outskirts of Nanjing, art is sacred but also a lifestyle. Like one who heeds the call of the great unknown and pitches his tent where he can see the stars, Mao Yan, after discovering that it was good, invited his friends to join. An invitation to "come see for yourself" has become this artist's way of guidance. After all, it is much better to light a lamp than to try and describe a room full of shadows to another person. It's an invitation which Mao Yan extends to only his most treasured students. Dedication, a genuine heart and hunger for the ideals are signs of readiness, all of which he found in Fang Kai. Here in the Nanjing art colony, Mao Yan, Fang Kai and a dozen fellow artists go about their daily work, painting and chatting over tea rituals, enjoying a hearty meal and receiving friends from afar. The famous grey, floating faces, mostly from the Thomas series, hover in Mao Yan's studio like distilled spiritual essences, rising from piles of heavy books, neatly stacked jars of paint brushes as well as a sizeable glass hill of Scottish whisky. There is, without doubt, a kind of qi maintained in here, a lightness and composure, a freedom and coherence, which suggests that precisely because something is sacred, it must be living. As to what exactly the true image is, the professor and his followers don't seem too concerned for now. Eschewing grand declarations about life and art, Fang Kai continues to draw on reflection, shared experience, and his artistic inheritance from the old masters, putting his faith in a natural unfolding. It's an approach shared by mentor and protégé which, for all they have accomplished for Chinese contemporary portraiture, for all the enlarging shadows around man's true image or destination, is a conviction about the way.

Mao Yan 毛焰
Thomas (opposite, 对面)
 Oil on Canvas 布面油画
 1997
 65 x 54 cm



Fang Kai 方凯
Lovers 恋人
 Oil on Canvas 布面油画
 2013
 24 x 18 cm
 Private Collection, Beijing
 私人收藏, 北京

FURTHER
CATALOGUE
OF
- WORKS -



Fang Kai 方凯
Portrait II
肖像练习2
Oil on Canvas 布面油画
2013
40 x 30 cm



Fang Kai 方凯
Self Portrait I
自画像 1
Oil on Canvas 布面油画
2011
30 x 20 cm



Fang Kai 方凯
Reclining
斜倚

Oil on Canvas 布面油画
2013

120 x 170 cm
Private Collection, The Netherlands
私人收藏，荷兰







Fang Kai 方凯
Female Nude
女裸体
Oil on Canvas 布面油画
2013
120 x 170 cm



Fang Kai 方凯

Portrait of MK

MK 肖像

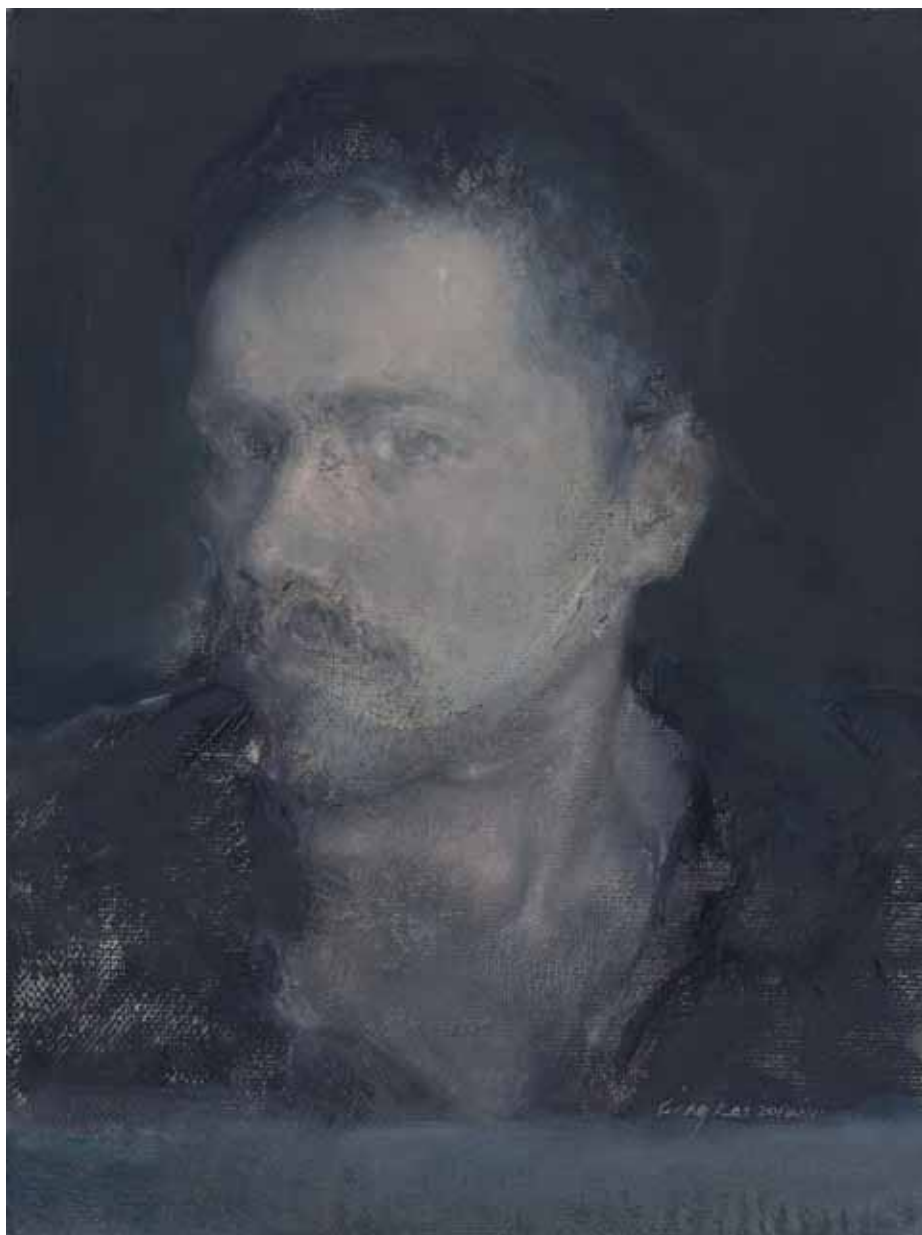
Oil on Canvas 布面油画

2012

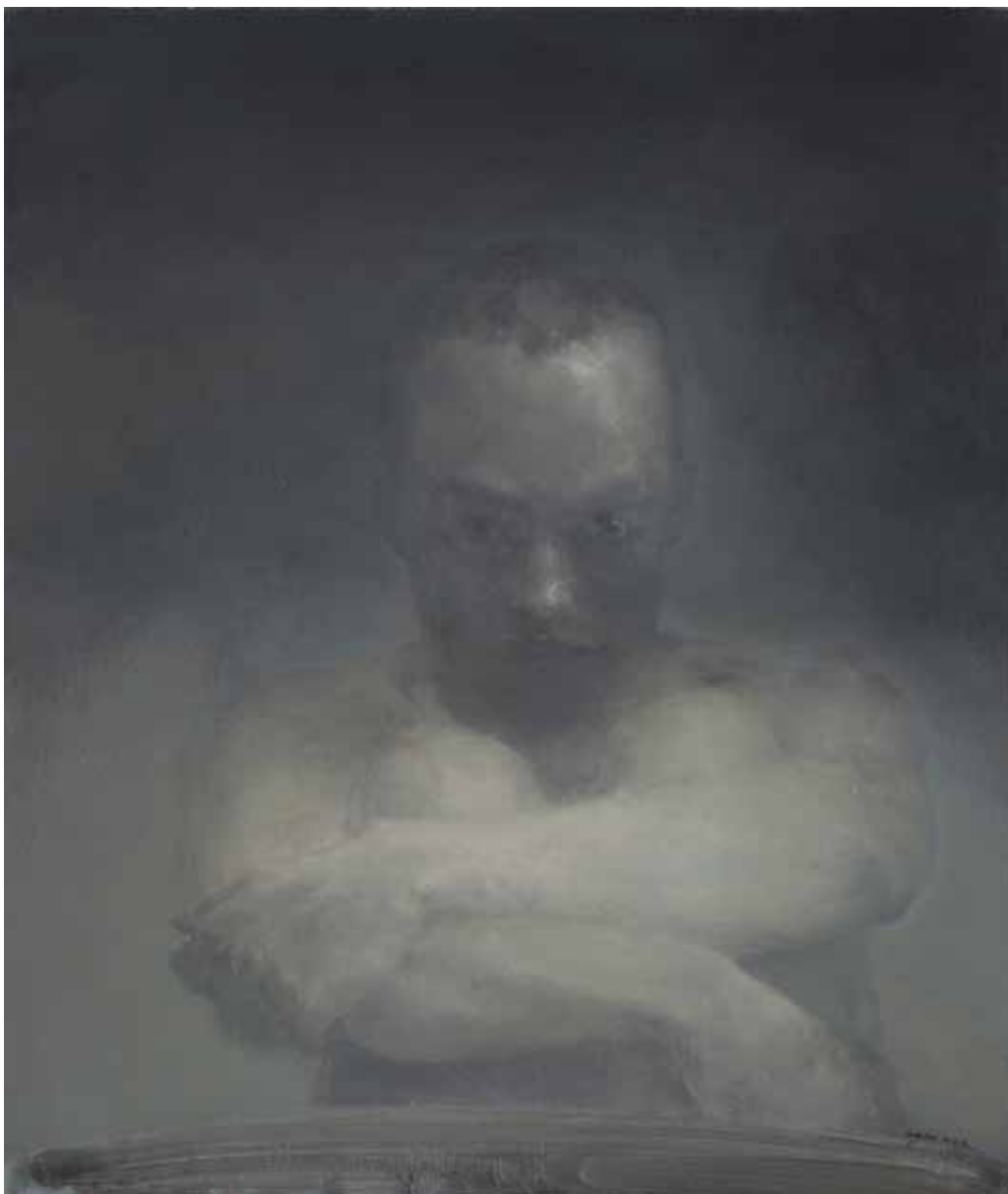
38 x 51 cm

Private Collection, Brussels / Seoul

私人收藏，布鲁塞尔 / 首尔



Fang Kai 方凯
Self Portrait II
自画像 2
Oil on Canvas 布面油画
2012
50 x 40 cm
Private Collection, Nanjing
私人收藏，南京



Fang Kai 方凯
Bust of a Seated Man
坐着的人之胸像

Oil on Canvas 布面油画
2012

60 x 50 cm

Private Collection, Brussels / Seoul
私人收藏，布鲁塞尔 / 首尔



Mao Yan 毛焰
Thomas 2
托马斯肖像 -- 纪念之二
Oil on Canvas 布面油画
2008
75 x 54.8 cm



IN CONVERSATION WITH THE ARTISTS

Michelle Ho
Nanjing, Winter 2013



Fang Kai (top) and Mao Yan
In their Studios, Nanjing
Summer, 2013
方凯（上）和毛焰在他们的工作室，于2013年，夏日南京



Mao Yan 毛焰
Xiao Shan's Portrait
小山的肖像
Oil on Canvas 布面油画
1992
170 x 100 cm

IN CONVERSATION WITH FANG KAI

Michelle Ho

Michelle Ho (MH): Art colonies and communities across China are considered loosely knit and in a constant state of flux. What was life like for you in Beijing? Nanjing? And how much does the environment affect your art?

Fang Kai (FK): I went to Beijing with a very simple mindset. I'd just graduated and was curious about everything that was strange and unfamiliar. Life back then was very instinctual. I painted and had to make a living. At times I thought, forget it, I'll just paint. But very soon I'd come around and try to earn money again. I was confused and tempted to give up many times. With hindsight I now realise that had I stayed in Beijing, I might have given up on painting altogether or drifted away from my ideals. Reality was very oppressive. That's why I decided to go back to Nanjing, a familiar place, a place where I had friends and teachers. I set up my studio in Nanjing about a year ago. Life these days is painting, drinking, chatting and having a good time with my teachers and friends. It's much simpler now.

MH: What was it like growing up?

FK: My upbringing was really ordinary. I grew up in China's countryside and as a child my parents were never around. I was mischievous and didn't like to study. Then I learned to paint and got into the art academy. There was nothing special. But one incident I remember very clearly was when I was swimming in the river below our primary school and someone rescued me from drowning. I woke up to find lots of people staring and pointing at me from above with every kind of expression, like a huddle of monsters. I was so terrified I ran away. I only found out later that the man who rescued me had been sent to hospital.

MH: Solemnity and loneliness are a feature of your early works. What occupies you now, or what issues are you challenging?

FK: I painted those early works between 2008 and 2011 when I was in Beijing, about one year after I graduated. My entire state of mind and emotions were all very raw at the time. I simply needed to express. Everyday new doubts and struggles came up, but I had no answers. I questioned why I painted, why the people around me were the way they were, I questioned my own nature and what exactly I was pursuing in painting. Everyday I grappled with these questions. So I thought, well, I'm just going to paint. But at the time, I didn't think of it this way. Retrospection brings a different experience. I didn't understand loneliness then. Loneliness is an emotion, a very restrictive one. In my mind, a good work of art should not be defined by my emotions but by its own nature and qualities.

MH: There's a problem in China these days of graduate numbers rising, but jobs failing to keep up. I guess for art students, dropping your ideals to face reality, is always an option. What kept you faithful, when, as you mentioned, many in your "student brotherhood" abandoned the path of art?

FK: I figured that if I give up painting, I'd have to do something I have no interest in. Of course I could, but it'd be painful. So I just decided to paint. At least I enjoy it. I guess my friends found their pleasure outside painting, and painting in turn became their pain. In that sense, we're all the same. So it's not about loyalty, it's about what's natural.

MH: Professor Mao considers the borders vague between fine art, literature and film. For one of your paintings, you mentioned you were captivated by the Italian film *Malena*. There's a theme of atonement running through those characters. Is that close to home for you?

FK: It's not my intention to capture a particular concept in my painting. I don't want my art to be so restrictive and narrow. So there's no analogy to be made between my life and any particular film such as *Malena*. A film can only have limited influence. I watched *Malena* in my twenties while I was still studying, so I experienced similar emotions as the young boy. I thought I was the boy. So his *Malena* is my *Malena*, and the local villagers are my local villages. When the film ended, I felt as if something had happened in my life, so subtle yet important.

MH: What is the process of creation like for you, from inspiration to completion?

FK: In the *Bust of a Seated Man*, I painted a friend I met in school who worked in Nanjing. We lived quite close to each other, so we hung out together a lot. He could play computer games for days without moving. At last he vomited blood and was sent to the hospital. We all told him off but in the end he continued playing computer games just the same. I felt compelled to paint him because we're both part of the same world, sharing the same isolation. There was nothing more specific I wanted to convey. In *Seated Man* I used the same model in the same pose with only minor variations. I think bust portraits and full-figure portraits conjure up such a different kind of power. So I came up with the idea to capture these differences by retaining the same model and pose.



Fang Kai outside his Studio,
方凯于工作室外，
Nanjing 南京
2013

Another portrait *Unbroken Gaze* I began to paint in December 2012. I used a model at first but the painting didn't go smoothly, so I put it aside for a while. When I came back to it, I began painting without the model. I imagined all the details and the whole picture relying on my intuition. Intuition was my guide and as I painted, I felt uncertainty evolving into certainty. In the end, intuition completed the painting.

MH: Your generation is often chided for being dislocated from its own history and culture. What do you think?

FK: That's not a question for me to answer. It's too big, too complicated.

MH: One thing which Professor Mao and yourself share in common is a respect for the timeless standards shaped by the old masters. It's like an artistic inheritance. And like an inheritance, I guess it comes with baggage. In the case of Balthus, what draws you to him? And does it affect what you learn from him, given he's often been seen as a self-mythologiser?

FK: Balthus painted figures at a time when most artists were following the major modernist trends of the 20th Century. But he said that what matters is not individual character but a common spirit. Which explains why he was fond of oriental art and was never a radical. True, many of his paintings depict young girls, but sex and eroticism form only the

veneer. Behind this we sense the movement of instinctive human emotions and consciousness, which we often find in the works of the old masters. My favourite Balthus works are *Alice dans le miroir* (1933) and the *Cat in the Mirror* series, painted in his later years. Balthus painted in the way he reflected upon himself, which is also the way I paint. Very few people still paint this way now. I understand him from my own perspective. So even criticisms of Balthus as a self-mythologiser don't matter. I see him as I see him.

MH: As part of your formal art training in China, you have the entire tradition of Western painting at your fingertips. What about Chinese art? How much has the canon of Chinese art influenced you?

FK: I read very little, so I haven't been too influenced. But growing up in China means that inevitably I've come to internalise certain standards. Painting is just a tool so you can't really brand me as a Chinese artist or that I paint in a Chinese way. It doesn't explain anything. In any case, I'm planning to read more and I hope everything will fall into its natural place.

MH: You mentioned that in terms of artistic skill, it's been a steady growth path but at some point, you were frustrated with a kind of "technical anxiety". What's going on?

FK: When I was at school, I thought of painting as a technique. Two years after graduation I was still obsessed with the complexities and technicalities of painting. I bought dozens of types of paints, and since I didn't understand anything, I experimented with everything. But slowly I began to discover that these things had no real relationship with painting. In fact, they could detract me from painting. Things are much better now. I think I'll continue to focus on painting the people I know. But I can't be sure. I don't want to make plans. I think there are still many things I want to do.

MH: What kind of student are you?

FK: As a student, I love learning. I accept what teachers tell me. And I'll think about the same question for a very long time, from different angles.

MH: Your professor talks about differences within a uniting ethos. What do you think?



Fang Kai 方凯
Chen 陈
Oil on Canvas 布面油画
2013
24 x 18 cm
Private Collection, United Kingdom
私人收藏, 英国

FK: There are indeed many differences. We grew up in very different environments and we have our own personalities and stories. For example, Professor Mao started painting at a very early age and was influenced by the sights and sounds around him. In his youth, he experienced turbulence and moved from place to place. His life permeates his paintings. On the other hand, we experienced nothing. Life is boring, which makes us boring, myself included. I always think that these differences don't matter much though. What matters is your ideal. Once we shed these generational shells and get inside ourselves, we are no different. I just want to immerse myself in painting and stay passionate.

MH: Most valuable lesson in art from Professor Mao?

FK: I remember several years ago, while we were in Professor Mao's studio, after painting for a while he stopped and asked the person beside him what he thought of the painting. The guy said it wasn't perfect, because the right hand wasn't good enough. Professor Mao added some strokes, lit a cigarette and said: "Done. A little regret doesn't make things imperfect." I'm only beginning to understand his meaning now. He wasn't just talking about painting but ourselves. Painting is just painting. Everything has its own time and place. So every lesson is valuable in its own way. And lessons in life are sometimes just like lessons in art.

MH: Which of his paintings made the strongest impression on you?

FK: When I was a student, I saw one of Professor Mao's undergraduate paintings at an exhibition in Shanghai. It was powerful. It showed a man against a silk screen, strong and uncompromising. At the time I was still trying to understand a painting through its technical qualities. But with this piece, roughly painted and yet so intimate, I began to understand something different.

I was also very drawn to Professor Mao's *My Poet*, which I first saw in his studio. The man's expression is cold and indifferent, but when you look closer, every little detail draws you into the painting. You can experience every thought and emotion that passed through Professor Mao as he was painting, as if you were painting it all over again yourself and retracing his consciousness through every variation of colour and stroke. I think a good painting never reveals its secret, which is why I like them.

MH: Do you listen to music when you're in the studio?

FK: I listen to a bit of everything and anything. Lately it's Damien Rice and Sinead O'Connor. Listening to their music makes me feel like I don't exist.

MH: How would you characterise painters of your generation?

FK: Our generation is around 30 years old so it's too early to identify its characteristics. Or at least, what we are now doesn't count yet. We are still accumulating.

MH: If you could paint anyone you wanted to, who would you paint?

FK: I want to paint someone who doesn't exist in reality, who has no emotions. If there's such a person in this world, I'd find him and ask him to be my model.

MH: What will be the first thing you tell your first student?

FK: To get to the heart of painting, you must search with all your heart, from the very beginning.

IN CONVERSATION WITH MAO YAN

Michelle Ho

Michelle Ho (MH): Tea or coffee?

Mao Yan (MY): Coffee before, but now tea. Tea everyday.

MH: Your work in an artist's sanctuary in Nanjing. What is the value of solitude compared to the energy of a big city?

MY: It's to do with artistic ideals. If you set out to change reality, you must simply create for yourself an atmosphere, a refuge, a utopia even. And not just yourself but your surroundings, your friends and so forth. A place where everything is light, natural, free and unfettered. Then you can immerse yourself in the things you love. It's a basic ideal.

I spend most of my time here face-to-face with myself, society and reality. Part of painting will always be a solitary act. Painting will always have this multifarious, intricate relationship with reality but you find the world's rhythm and emotions inside you. Here I'm free to say yes or no to invitations. It's not a place where people can just come and go. I can control this space.

MH: What's a day in the life like for you and your circle of artist friends?

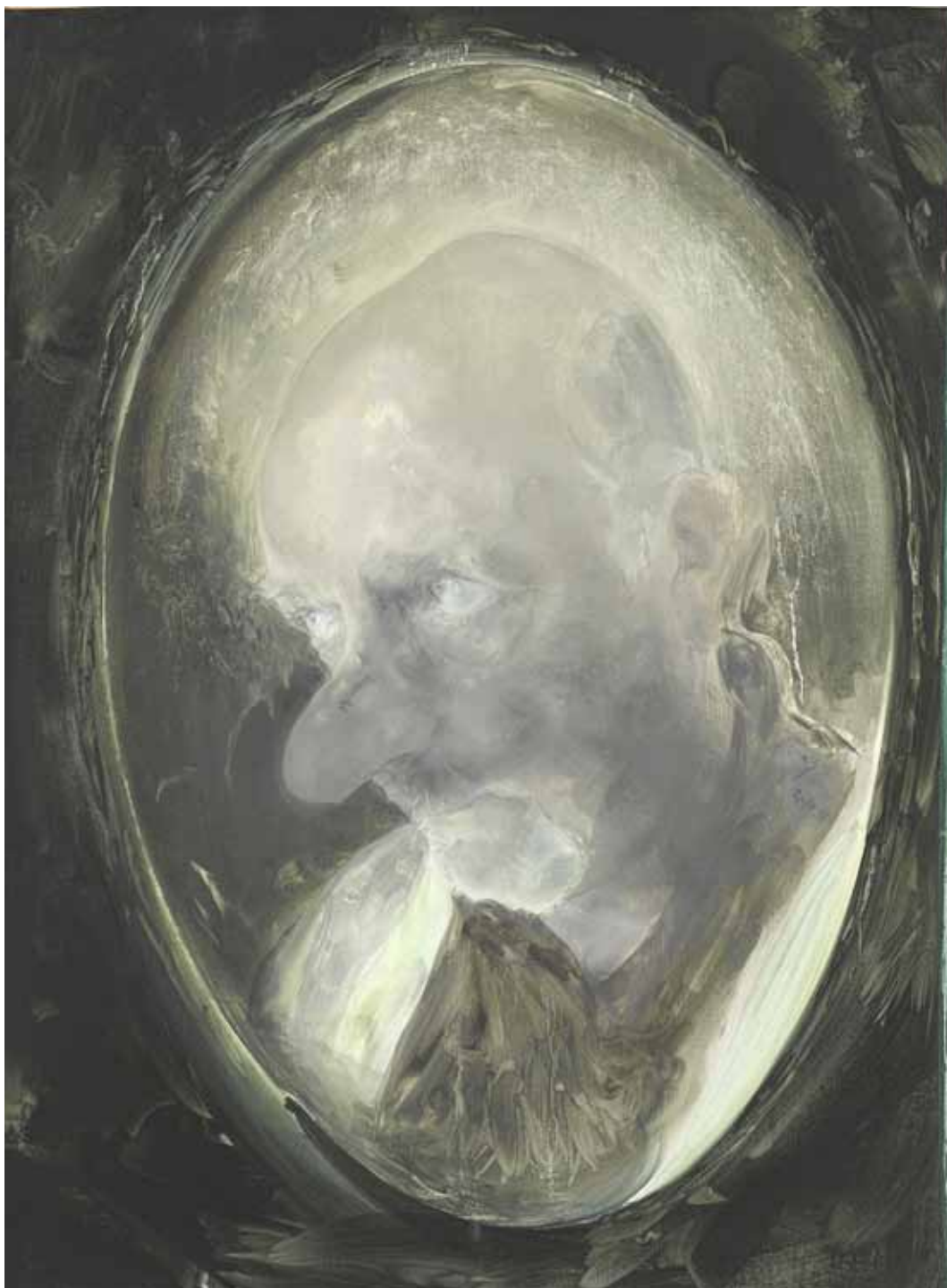
MY: China's social fabric is rich and complex and Chinese people by nature love crowds and gathering friends. On a typical day I'll have friends visiting from afar. Today I had an artist friend from Paris in town looking for a studio. I provided a place for him and we just talked. At night I'll have another group of friends with me to eat, drink and be merry. Probably later on, another friend will call and ask, are you around, let's go for a drink! Well, there's no typical day actually. They look different on the surface but they're more or less the same.

And you can't exactly call these things a joy of life. Sometimes, it's just a habit of life. Everything has two opposing sides. My studio is my workplace so I try to protect its peace and quiet. It's where I work everyday and I don't want to disturb that atmosphere. So all these years I've never thrown a party or an event in the studio, never anything too rowdy. The studio should be a solemn and strict space, almost cold, not entirely pleasant. It houses all your anxieties, your thoughts and all your artistic materials with a coherence to every corner, accumulating in a way that cannot be lightly altered or tampered with. It has to be solemn.

MH: What keeps you up at night? What about when you were starting out as an artist?

MY: Anxiety. Thinking. No matter how well the painting is going, after a while, the anxiety comes back. When you set about a task, new demands will constantly crop up. And you cannot satisfy all of them. It keeps going back and forth like this so if you're not serious about what you're doing, no matter how talented you are, things can slip out of your hands any moment. If you don't treat it seriously, it can always abandon you. I think it's a Buddhist concept. It can belong to you, or not to you.

My father didn't achieve his ideal so he was determined to nurture me as an artist. I knew I wanted to become a painter since I was a child. So painting for me is really innate, a belief that has only grown stronger over time.



Mao Yan 毛焰
Jim Grant
Oval Portrait
椭圆形肖像
Oil on Canvas 布面油画
2010.11
53.7 x 72.6 cm

MH: You have a contagious joie de vivre! But we're convinced all artists are tormented on the inside. And Tarkovsky once said art would be useless if the world were perfect, as men wouldn't look for harmony, but just live in it. He said art exists because of an ill-designed world. What do you think?

MY: I agree. Tarkovsky is my favourite director. I read his diary *Sculpting in Time*. Of course, every artist of maturity and wisdom has his own perspective on reality and art. Tarkovsky is entirely on the spot. Art concerns human morality and consciousness as well as the ideals and aspirations of the world. Precisely because the world is imperfect, we have infinite hope and longing which gives value to the things we pursue. The sky may be full of holes, so we fill it with genuine ideals, beliefs and love to give the world its sense of harmony and continued possibility. Tarkovsky already put it quite elegantly. Reality could in fact be much uglier.

The imperfections of the world may very well be the artist's responsibility. Art is not a career, not a craft, not a plaything. Without a genuine heart, how can you create vivid and powerful images that resonant with people? Every individual artist is distinct but to go beyond this personal imprint, beyond even the imprint of time, that's another level. This is the biggest challenge for a serious artist. It's very difficult.

MH: What's the difference between good and great?

MY: I think the great is unattainable but the good is easily won. As long as you are dedicated you can be good. But greatness traverses time, penetrates time. Everything else only conforms to the laws of time. Our sense of self-preservation, for instance, may be innately good but only god is great.

The human body can contain a spark of divinity and there are figures in the course of history who have shaped themselves to attain some form of divinity. Wittgenstein, for instance, tirelessly pursued the meaning and value of existence, ignoring the vanities of the world and devoted only to what is real.

We are far too vain, too material, with too little knowledge of ourselves and our times. Even the ancients couldn't achieve this. What else can we say, except that the distance is too great.

MH: You mentioned that, very often, true genius must first be founded on a deep understanding of the relationship between man and his time (or history), then perfected through a relationship with something universal, more mysterious.

MY: I personally have no mystic tendencies whatsoever. But at my age now, I recognise that human beings will only ever belong to a part of history and time, which is our greatest predicament. Our concept of time and history can be continuous or not. Our best partner in life is time. Nothing else leaves you with that infinite nostalgia. The concept of time is too mysterious and elusive, something you can only connect with through "doing," for instance, as you paint, you experience the vague confirmation of time.

If you've spent a long time on a painting, and perhaps you've reached a point when you can perfect it no further, you may obtain a vague sense of this act in time, a sense of your coordinates in this life and in history falling into place. Or perhaps it's just the nature of human hope that we need to affirm our own value and the reality of our existence. Without a concept of time, what I do may have no value.

MH: We've heard that you get into moments of intense, creative rapture when you are trying to capture the perfect image. What's going on in those moments?

MY: It's an experience of intense happiness, a brief instance of absolute fulfillment, of having struggled and at last created a thing and affirmed your own being. It's miraculous to think that so many difficult things can be achieved through human effort. It's a state of joy to be totally self-immersed in this process. It's the great joy of painting. Sometimes the

sense of fulfillment is imagined, sometimes exaggerated, but in that moment it's very real, very concrete. Later perhaps, you may realise it's also ephemeral, passing into nothingness.

MH: After a fascination with the West, you returned to Chinese art and culture a decade ago. How different are the two sensibilities?

MY: It's all a matter of time. When I was young, I was exposed to China, later to the West. Several years ago, perhaps for personal reasons, I turned my eyes to China more closely. The East and West have their differences of course, but I don't think these are fundamental. To me things are more or less similar.

Ancient Chinese thinking emphasises the inner-outer, where the inner and outer are not so distinct, but merged, in natural union, in some areas. The idea is particularly important to the past few generations in China, who've had to step into this China-meets-West stream, absorb the West, then jump out again and reshape themselves. I guess it's been a dilemma for China in the past few centuries. But I personally think it's not that serious. It's natural. There's no need to emphasise the differences between China and the West. It's basic, inherent. You must pass freely between the inner and outer, nothing more, nothing less.

MH: You mentioned that one must have "gods" in our lives, the ancient masters who guide us, who check our path and with whom we have a dialogue. Who are your gods?

MY: Since a child I've loved the old masters. Delacroix is my god of painting, Goya and Dürer are also the gods of my heart. I've admired their works from a very young age and they defined my life path as an artist. They make a powerful appeal to the spirit and even today I need to know and read everything about them, even if I've read it many times already. Their presence confirms that my choice to be a painter is very substantial, very real. I keep their books in the most prominent position in my studio, right beside me. Even if for a period I don't open them, they are always by my side, like an anchor.

Of course, as we mentioned, there's Tarkovsky and Wittgenstein too. Many masters restore a sacred sense to my heart. Modern men are so full of insatiable ambitions but the old masters make you aware of something greater than us, which fills us with awe for art and life.

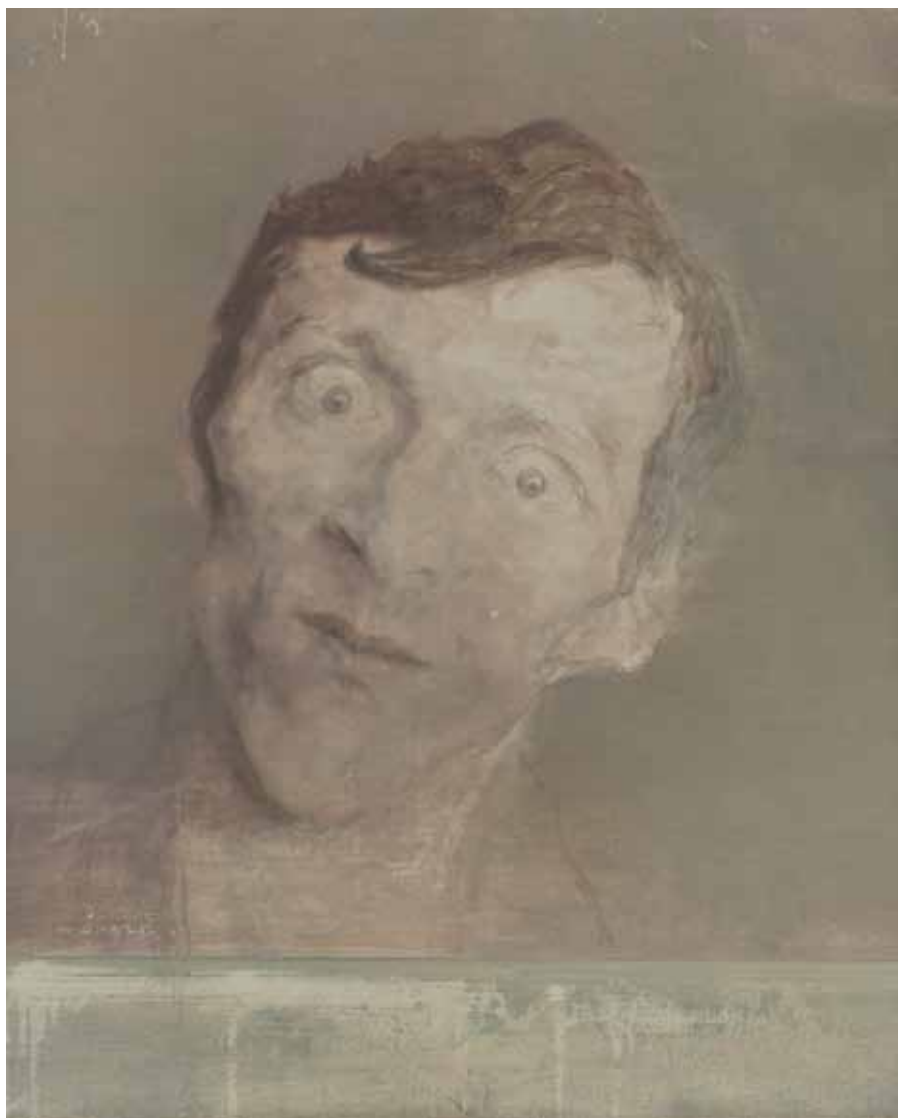
MH: And if you have gods, any demons?

MY: It's not a relative concept. I personally have no demons. I know some people who have their demons, people who've gone through a particular experience. Life's setbacks contain demons. But I believe if you have god in your heart, you won't have demons and if you have demons, you don't have god.

MH: Critics of your work often say that you capture a kind of spiritual essence, stripped of personhood. And since Plato, people have believed that art exists to help man mature spiritually. What is spirituality to you?

MY: Actually, everything comes from the longings of my own heart. Inside there is deprivation, emptiness, nothingness, fragmentation, a lack of passion, drive. Art originally comes from this place of hunger in the artist, his spiritual state of being. It comes into existence in the first place to answer a question, a personal problem for the artist, and through his work, bodied forth by his experience, his knowledge, his unique method, someone else may also find consolation. If someone can experience that peace or longing fulfilled through your work, then art also serves its function. An artist's work is extremely subtle, rich and intricate, and through its ebb and flow, you experience self-discovery or perhaps, experience the world.

As we mentioned, an artist must have a genuine heart. Then his body can become a filter, consciously and subconsciously refining little by little what may be, or is indeed, a product of the spirit.



Mao Yan 毛焰
Thomas
Oil on Canvas 布面油画
1997
65 x 54 cm



Fang Kai 方凯
Man lying
躺着的人
Oil on Canvas 布面油画
2013
60 x 50 cm

MH: When I last came to your studio, you were working on a large canvas of a woman. Your earlier works focused on close friends, then Thomas, and now the female nude. How has your engagement with subjects changed over time?

MY: There's some continuity between these phases, between the Thomas series works and these female nudes. But until I've completed the latter, it's hard to say exactly.

MH: I heard there was a breakthrough moment for you, when the ideas and images just simply overflowed because you had mastered your technique.

MY: Well, not exactly a breakthrough. But after years of learning, only now can I say that I understand what painting is all about. Perhaps this is as much as there is to understand. So much time was spent learning, exploring. Only when you feel that you've more or less found the form of your art, can you think to yourself, "I get it now." If you just imitate, you only scratch the surface.

Cézanne for instance was said to be the father of painting, but it's not just his works but his way of doing things, his person, that makes him so exceptional. He had clarity. He lived in seclusion for a long time, depicting the same thing over and over. That was his belief and in the end he achieved his ideal. That was his approach to time, to history and life.

MH: You encourage fellow artists and apprentices to pursue and discern the good works, the good masters. How does one go about cultivating a taste for the good?

MY: Fortunately, timeless works of art and standards of the good exist. They have always existed. They're not difficult to discover but you have to pay attention. Otherwise, even when the good is right before your eyes, it might pass you by because you don't recognise it. Of course, you also need guidance.

We should constantly keep our eyes on these timeless standards, consolidating them in our minds. And as you develop your own ideas, insights and judgment, you can share it with others. It's like religion. Transmitting and spreading religion and spiritual knowledge is exciting in itself, it fulfills and enriches you in turn. So to me, sharing my experience with students and friends and fellow artists, proliferating knowledge, is itself such an exciting process.

MH: Tarkovsky says we can never pass on our experience to others. We must live our own experience, we can never inherit it. Confucius says by three methods we may learn wisdom: first by reflection, which is noblest; second, by imitation, which is easiest; and third by experience, which is the most bitter. What's your take?

MY: Of course I'd be inclined towards Confucius and his two methods of reflection and experience. You can't simply imitate. Imitation may be necessary in the early stages, but nothing can replace personal experience. You must process everything you receive and learn with your own physical being, judgment and cognition in order for some kind of chemical reaction to take place. It doesn't matter what that chemical reaction produces, because whatever it is, it is real and can lead you to more discovery, more knowledge. And even if you don't really harvest anything in particular, by entering into that experience you naturally gain so much more than you'd imagined.

MH: So do you encourage your students to consume all sorts of culture and art?

MY: To be honest, I save this advice for my favourite students. And I save this advice even from them, until they I think they need it. Otherwise, it falls on deaf ears. When they are seeking, but don't know where to seek, that's when I come in. That's when I can use my experience to tell them where to find what they're looking for.

I once had this student and from his paintings and his figures, you could tell his heart was trapped in its own struggles. I bought a set of Ingmar Bergman films and said to him, each frame, each question and each story in these films can speak to you. The same can be said of many other works of cinema, literature, and music. When one is confused or lost, sometimes the way out does not lie in the source but rather from a fresh angle. Then, suddenly, within those works of art, you might discover the emotion or means of expression you've been looking for. For that particular student it worked.

MH: How do you teach?

MY: To be honest, I don't have a teaching method, none at all. I'm not an educator. It's just that painting is inherently heuristic, an act of communication, illumination and inspiration. I also don't have many students at all. And of those, I've only had a strong influence on very few over all these years. I think it's less about what you teach and how you teach but more about your attitude. It's about your experience and view on doing what you do.

We're all different, so if I can sense what an artist needs, I can tell them where to find it. That doesn't count as a teaching method. It's just like a suggestion. To find out whether you like that suggestion, simply go and see for yourself.

I've never thought of myself as a good teacher, but maybe a good brother or a good friend. Someone who helps them adopt the right attitude. Then it's about how to align painting and life. If you truly ask this question, then in many ways, you've answered it already. What remains is how you go after it. If you have understood all things but done nothing, then all is in vain.

MH: What do you see as your role in the lives and career of your apprentices?

MY: I'm cautious about this since each person is in a unique place, unique in their maturity and growth. For younger students, I ask them to be fully devoted and focused. That's the most important during the early stages. Everything else is just secondary.

The relationship is fundamentally very simple. We are all on the same path. Within that, I may have much to offer them and also much to learn from them. Human relationships are just like that. We each have our own needs, and knowing the needs of each other, we can borrow from one another and offer to one another.

MH: Anything you learned from your students?

MY: Mutual influence is extremely subtle. Things you wouldn't normally notice can have the power to liberate you. A split second can spark your imagination, your understanding. Because we're unique but on the same road, there's a lot of mutual inspiration. The influence I have on students should be subconscious and natural, not intentional. There's an old saying in China, "soak without sound." An intrinsic absorption takes place, beyond your method and means. If you use all your heart, you can gather a lot about the other person. Each one of us is a vehicle, containing many elements other than our own, unlimited in how much from just one other person we can carry inside us, so subtly and delicately.

MH: How did you choose Fang Kai?

MY: It wasn't really a choice for either of us. The period right after graduation was tough for Fang Kai. He was very troubled and began presenting his works to me. I hadn't paid much attention to him while he was at school but after he came to me with these paintings, I discovered how sensitive and intricate his mind was. Perhaps part of me shares the same temperament so I appreciated in him my own sensitivities. And since he was struggling, I thought I could offer some advice.

I also felt he had a very strong ability to absorb. That's of course because he uses his whole heart. In our daily conversations, I feel that nothing goes to waste, because Fang Kai quickly absorbs everything and puts it to work.

Fang Kai had a breakthrough period in my view. He was suddenly liberated and because he'd suppressed so much up till then, it was powerful. He has the right attitude. The soil is almost pure, clean.

That's not to say the teacher and student must always have chemistry. I saw a temperament in Fang Kai that I respected so I didn't really have to teach him much. He absorbed and discerned a lot by himself. In fact, I haven't taught him much at all. After all, much of what I show him isn't mine to being with. It belongs to the great masters. I am only retelling, disseminating what we collectively respect of the great masters.

MH: How do you see him developing as an artist?

MY: He's just stepped into a fairly new stage. As we say, a foot has its limits and an inch goes its own mile. Each person is dealt an equal portion of shortcomings and strengths. How you grow depends on your self-knowledge, knowing your purpose, and gradually finding your own orbit and rhythm. This will be his biggest challenge. After all he is quite young. He has found his basic direction but he will be tested and he knows it.

MH: I like how you said that, amongst you and your fellow artists and students, there are differences but there is a uniting ethos, which is the ideal of painting. What is the ideal and what are the differences?

MY: In the big picture, we're not very different. We're all doing the same thing, we all recognise its power and its value to us, and that very possibly, it's what bodies forth our personal value. Fang Kai and I share the same values standpoint.

The "ideal of painting" isn't a specific ideal in reality. Painting is itself limited. Only when it fuses with life, with history, memory and consciousness does it become substantial. Painting is a vehicle, a space, within which life is rendered truthfully. If we use it honestly, art will grow in value and clarity, to reflect more faithfully the meaning of our being.

MH: Tell us about your greatest mentor.

MY: The word "great" is a bit intimidating. There are many ancient masters who are great mentors, great gods. In my life there are also many mentors. In fact a good mentor doesn't need to be extraordinary. He's just like your friend, your brother. Which is why many of my previous mentors have become my friends. And some who have never been my teachers have left a profound impression.

MH: What kind of student were you?

MY: As a student I was very serious and diligent. I was traditional, nothing special. I studied hard and whole-heartedly, and always wanted to improve. In life we always have mentors. Many people will enrich your understanding. Never stop learning and refining. Many things can be your teacher, whereas your own resources are limited.

I often tell my students there is a "way" to learning. You must understand yourself first. You can't learn everything without principles. Learning is in itself an art. You can't be purposeless. Otherwise you are just following the wind, talking about ideals but not living it out.

MH: Any memorable teacher-student moments to share?

MY: So many, but all in a whirl! I can't be specific right now. My head is already swelling!

MH: What would you like to tell young people?

MY: Nothing really. Young people have their own ideas. I only have specific words for close friends, particular words for particular people and students, no general mantras.



Mao Yan 毛焰
Thomas No.5
托马斯肖像 5
Oil on Canvas 布面油画
2004
75 x 60 cm

ARTIST'S BIOGRAPHIES



FANG KAI

Born in Liuan, Anhui Province in 1983

Graduated from The Nanjing Academy of Fine Arts in 2007, B.F.A.

Living and working in Nanjing

EXHIBITIONS

2013

Becoming, Mao Yan and Fang Kai, Peking Art Associates Beijing

Exhibition of Excellence, Nanjing Art Academy Museum, Nanjing, Group Exhibition

2012

Within Painting, Lin and Lin Gallery, Taipei

Summer Group Show, Golden Eagle Contemporary Space, Nanjing

Concentrate the Spirit – Observe in Stillness, Nanjing

Charismatic Principles, Nanjing

2011

Shanghai Now, Melbourne

Wall, Nanjing Contemporary Young Artists Exhibition

2011 Nanjing Academy of Fine Arts Graduate School Invitation Exhibition

2010

Convene, Nanjing

Yang Mo Tang China Fine Arts Contest Nomination Award, Nanjing

2008

China – Korea Contemporary Oil Painting Exhibition, Beijing

2007

Story of the Spring Silk Worm, Nanjing

MAO YAN

Born in Hunan, in 1968

Graduated from The Central Academy of Fine Art, Beijing, B.F.A. in 1991

Living and Working in Nanjing



EXHIBITIONS

2013

Becoming, Mao Yan and Fang Kai, Peking Art Associates, Beijing

Mao Yan Solo Exhibition, Pace Gallery, Beijing

2012

Ethos, Mao Yan Solo Exhibition, ART & PUBLIC, Geneva, Switzerland

The Image Behind the Image - Jorg Immendorf & Mao Yan Dual Exposition,

Art Basel Art Fair, Basel, Switzerland, Displayed by Art & Public

N Time - 2012 Chinese Oil Painting Biennale, China Arts Museum, Beijing

Face, Survey of Contemporary Chinese Portraiture, Minsheng Arts Museum, Shanghai

Within Painting, Lin & Lin Gallery, Taipei

2011

Mao Yan Works on Paper, Solo Exhibition, Hadrien de Montferrand Gallery, Beijing

Collecting history: New Art in China, Chengdu Museum of Contemporary Art, Chengdu

Growing Up, Shanghai World Financial Center, Shanghai

2010

Mao Yan in Duftown, Solo Exhibition, ShanghART Gallery, Shanghai

Thirty Years of Chinese Contemporary Art, The Official Opening of Minsheng Arts Museum, Shanghai

Re-shaping History – Chinart from 2000 to 2009, China National Center, Beijing

2009

Longing for More, Mao Yan Solo Exhibition, Shanghai Art Museum, China

Sex & Love, Hadrien de Montferrand Gallery, Beijing

Phenomena and Situation since 1985: Trends in Hubei and Hunan Chinese Contemporary Art 1985- 2009, Guangdong Art Museum, China

China Mania, Arken Museum of Modern Art, Denmark

2008

Mao Yan, Solo Exhibition, China Today Gallery, Belgium

Art Changsha, Hunan Provincial Museum, Hunan

Correspondence, Qinghe Art Museum, Njing & No. 10 Art Space Airport, Chengdu

China: Construct And Deconstruction, The National Gallery of St. Paul, Brazil

Semiosis, China Square Gallery, New York

Academy and Non-academy II, Yibo Gallery, Shanghai

The 23rd Asia International Fine Art Exhibition, Guangzhou

Artists in Art Criticism, Saint Space, Beijing

Today's China, Beivue Museum, Belgium

2007

Portrait's Zero — The Painting of Xia Xiaowan & Mao Yan, Aye Gallery, Beijing

The Form of Emotion, Danish Art Centre, Beijing

Transparent Situation, Tibet Museum, Lhasa

China's Neo-Painting – A Triumph Over Images, Shanghai Art Museum, Shanghai
Look on Somebody's Trouble with Indifference, Kassel Central Train Station, Germany

2006

Flower, Songzhuang Art Museum, Beijing

2005

The Second Triennial of Chinese Contemporary Art, Nanjing Museum, Nanjing

2004

The Painting of Mao Yan and He Duoling, Chinablue Gallery, Beijing
The Metamorphosis – The Painting of Mao Yan and Liu Ye, Diya Gallery, Taiwan
Poisonous – The Invitation Exhibition of Free Communication Book Store, Free Communication Book Store, Beijing
Portrayal, Yibo Gallery, Shanghai
Human Scenery, Anna Ning Fine Art, Hong Kong

2003

New Paintings, Yibo Gallery, Shanghai
New Generation and Post-revolution, China Blue Gallery, Beijing

2002

Group Exhibition of Contemporary Chinese Artists, Schoeni Art Gallery, Beijing
On the Edge of the Millennium – New Art From China, Goedhuis Contemporary, New York
Face to Face – Chinese Portrait Art Exhibition, Shanghai Jingwen Art Centre, Shanghai
Paris – Pekin, Espace Cardin, Paris
The Image of Idea, Shenzhen Art Museum, Shenzhen
Different Similarities, Duolun Museum of Modern Art, Shanghai

2001

Chengdu Biennale, Chengdu Modern Art Museum
ABBILD, Landes Art Museum, Austria
Poster Exhibition of Chinese Avant-garde, Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, China; Tokyo, Japan; Paris, France
The Initial Image, Yibo Gallery, Shanghai
Academy and Non-academy, Yibo Gallery, Shanghai
Towards a New Image - Twenty Years of Contemporary Chinese Painting, National Art Museum of China, Beijing; Shanghai Art Museum; Sichuan Provincial Art Museum, Guangdong Provincial Art Museum

2000

Mao Yan, Solo Exhibition, Hanart TZ Gallery, Hong Kong
Exhibition of Liu Haisu Museum's Collection, Shanghai
Mao Yan & Liu Ye, Contemporary Chinese Art Gallery, London
Chinese Oil Painting in the 20th Century, National Art Museum of China, Beijing and Shanghai Art Museum, Shanghai
Phantom, Yibo Gallery, Shanghai

1997

Mao Yan, Solo Exhibition, Nanjing Pingge Art Guild

1992

The Drawing Works of Mao Yan, Solo Exhibition, Nanjing Academy of Fine Arts



方凯 Fang Kai
肖像练习 1 *Woody*
Woody I
布面油画
Oil on Canvas
2013
40 x 30 cm

简历

方凯

1983 年生于安徽六安

2007 毕业于南京艺术学院油画专业

现生活工作于南京

展览

2013

《成为》毛焰方凯联展，艾特艾画廊，北京

2012

《绘画之中》毛焰师生展，大未来林舍画廊，台北

2012

金鹰当代空间夏季联展，金鹰当代空间，南京

2012

《凝神 -- 静观》，金鹰当代空间，南京

2012

《气质》，金鹰当代空间，南京

2011

<Shanghai now>，Ausin Tang Gallery，墨尔本

2011

“墙”南京青年当代艺术展，金陵图书馆，南京

2011

南京艺术学院研究生学术邀请展，南京艺术学院设计学院

2010

聚。离，凤凰美术馆，南京

2010

养墨堂中国美术大奖赛入围奖，南京

2008

中韩当代油画展，北京

2007

春蚕记，南京艺术学院美术学院，南京

- 2006 “花非花”，宋庄美术馆，北京
- 2005 “中国当代艺术三年展”，南京博物院
- 2004 “毛焰·何多苓作品展”，北京环碧堂画廊
“变形记—毛焰·刘野作品展”，台湾第雅画廊
“塑造”，上海艺博画廊
“人的风景”，香港 ANNA NING FINE ART
- 2003 “新绘画”，上海艺博画廊
“新生代与后革命”，北京环碧堂画廊
- 2002 “中国当代艺术家联展”，北京少励画廊
“于千年之缘—来自中国的新艺术”，纽约 GOEDHUIS ART CENTRE
“中国肖像艺术邀请展”，上海精文艺术中心
“巴黎—北京”，巴黎皮尔卡丹博物馆
“观念的图像—当代艺术家邀请展”，深圳美术馆
“不一样的一样”，上海多伦美术馆
- 2001 “新形象：中国当代绘画二十年”，北京中国美术馆 / 上海美术馆 / 四川省美术馆 / 广东省美术馆
“学院与非学院”，上海艺博画廊
“最初的形象”，上海艺博画廊
“中国当代艺术家招贴展”，北京 / 上海 / 广州 / 东京 / 巴黎
“ABBILD”，奥地利 LANDES 美术馆
“成都双年展”，成都现代艺术馆
- 2000 “毛焰—刘野作品联展”，伦敦当代中国画廊
“二十世纪中国油画展”，北京中国美术馆 / 上海美术馆
“幻象”，上海艺博画廊

简历

毛焰

湖南湘潭人，1968 年出生，1991 年毕业于中央美术学院油画系，现居南京

个展

- 2013 毛焰个展，佩斯画廊，北京
- 2012 “Ethos” 瑞士日内瓦,ART PUBLIC
- 2011 毛焰纸上作品展 北京 Hadrien de Montferrand 画廊
- 2010 “毛焰在 DUFFTOWN” ，上海香格纳画廊
- 2009 “意犹未尽—毛焰个展” ，上海美术馆
- 2008 “毛焰个展” ，比利时 CHINA TODAY 画廊
“艺术长沙” ，湖南长沙市简牍博物馆
- 2000 “毛焰作品展” ，香港汉雅轩画廊
- 1997 “毛焰作品展” ，南京品阁艺术会馆
- 1992 “毛焰作品观摩展” ，南京艺术学院

联展

- 2013 《成为》毛焰方凯联展，艾特艾画廊，北京
- 2012 “THE IMAGE BEHIND THE IMAGE——Jorg Immendorf & Maoyan ” 瑞士巴塞尔
“在当代——2012 中国油画双年展” 北京中国美术馆
“开放的肖像” 上海民生美术馆
“绘画之中” 台北大未来林舍画廊
- 2011 “在成长” 上海环球金融中心 上海
“典藏历史——中国新艺术” 成都当代美术馆
- 2010 “中国当代艺术三十年历程” 上海民生现代美术馆开馆展
“改造历史：2000-2009 年的中国新艺术” 北京国家会议中心
- 2009 “情·色” HADRIEN DE MONTFERRAND GALLERY, 北京
“两湖潮流—湖南·湖北当代艺术展 1985—2009” ，广东省美术馆
“CHINAMANIA” ，丹麦 ARKEN MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
- 2008 “对应” ，南京青和美术馆 / 成都空港 10 号艺术空间
“中国：建构与解构” ，巴西圣保罗国家美术馆
“SEMIOSIS” ，纽约中国广场画廊
“学院与非学院 II” ，上海艺博画廊
“第 23 届亚洲国际美术展” ，广州
“艺术批评中的艺术家” ，北京圣之空间
“TODAY'S CHINA” ，比利时布鲁塞尔 BEIVUE 美术馆
- 2007 “肖像的零度—夏小万与毛焰的绘画” ，北京 AYE 画廊
“情感的形式” ，北京丹麦艺术中心
“透明之局” ，西藏博物馆
“超越图像—中国新绘画” ，上海美术馆
“隔岸 + 观火” ，德国卡塞尔中心火车站



方凯 Fang Kai
黑帽子
Black Hat
布面油画 Oil on Canvas
2013
40 x 30 cm
私人收藏，北京
Private Collection, Beijing

HXL: 最近在听什么音乐？

FK: 听歌很杂，什么都听，最近在听 Damien Rice, Sinead O`connor，听起来会让自己觉得不存在现实里。

HXL: 你认为你们这一代画家有什么特点？

FK: 我们这代人30左右吧，特点还不该很容易明显看的出来，或者说这个时候的特点太脆弱，不算数，因该还是积累的阶段。

HXL: 如果你可以画世界上任何一个人，他／她会是谁？

FK: 画一个非现实中的人，没有喜怒哀乐，假如有这样一个人，我就要找他，请他做模特。

HXL: 你将教给你的第一个学生的第一件事情是什么？

FK: 要去找找到绘画里最重要的是什么的方式，一开始就要努力找。



方凯 Fang Kai
无题
Untitled
布面油画 Oil on Canvas
2012
25 x 20 cm

作和模特，稍有变化，我是觉得单独的肖像和全身像区别很大，然后动作是我感兴趣的方式，我想用一个模特相似的动作来找到两个尺寸作品的区别，所以就有了这张画，还有一张是《正面》了，起稿的时间好像在 12 年 12 月份，一开始有模特，后来画的很不好，就放了一段时间，重新塑造，这次不用模特了，我就想象着所有的局部和整体，在这张画里，直觉起了很大的作用，还有会享受到在过程当中的不确定性，最终用直觉去确定的。

HXL: 你的（也是我们的）这一代人经常被指控脱离其本身的历史和文化。你觉得呢？

FK: 我没有能力回答这个问题，对于我，这个问题现在有点大了，比较复杂吧。

HXL: 毛老师与你的一个共同点，是你们都很尊重古典大师所创立的不朽的标准。这就像是一种艺术遗产的继承，我想，既然是继承遗产，它一定有其累赘的一面。比如巴尔蒂斯，是什么吸引你走向他？这对于你学习他的艺术有怎样的影响？尤其因为他常被指控故意将自己神话化。

FK: 巴尔蒂斯是 20 世纪的具象画家，那个时候现代艺术观念影响很大了，大多数艺术家都在追赶潮流，他却说艺术中个性不重要，重要的是共性，这跟他喜欢东方艺术是相应和的，所以他不激进。他以少女的题材居多，性爱，色情只是表面上的，其实背后能窥见人在性内的微妙的心里变化，激发本能的情感，这在以前大师的作品中经常出现的。最喜欢是 33 年的《爱丽丝》还有晚年的猫照镜系列，就是因为他的作品是关注自己内心的，他画画的方式其实就是他怎么看待自己内心的方式，两者合一，也是我最喜欢的方式，现在这样去画画的人很少了。我从我自己的角度理解他，即使他真的把自己神话化，也不会影响到我。

HXL: 你从学于中国的艺术学院，掌握了所有西方绘画的传统。那么中国画呢？中国艺术的准则对你有多少影响？

FK: 我看书很少，自然受影响很小，但是成长在这里，意识里还是有所谓的标准，油画也只是个工具，也不能强调我用中国人的方式去画油画，这个都好牵强，不足以说明什么问题。反正以后会多多看书，一切都希望自然而然。

HXL: 你提到，关于绘画技巧，你一直都在平稳的进步，而后来到了一个时段，你开始因为一些“与技巧相关的烦恼”而感到失望。是什么情况？

FK: 上学的时候我是把画画当成技艺，包括毕业后两年，我对复杂的作画步骤很着迷，那时我买了十几种油，反正又不懂，就瞎折腾，折腾过一阵子，慢慢的才发现这跟绘画没什么直接的关系，甚至会担心走向跟绘画相悖的方向，现在好多了。接下来我还会画我身边的人吧，也不一定，我不想去计划这些，我相信现在还有很多的东西需要时间。

HXL: 作为学生，你是怎样的？

FK: 学生的角度的话，我一定是个爱学习的学生，我愿意接受老师教给我的东西，一个问题我会想很长时间从不同的角度。

HXL: 毛老师谈到艺术家之间有种种区别，同时却有一种联合的精神。你认为呢？

FK: 太多了吧，成长的环境和经历，性格等等都不一样，比如说毛老师从小就画画，耳濡目染，青年时期就经历动乱和地域的迁徙，这些都会潜移默化的渗透在作品当中。我们经历的都是些无聊的事，所以自己也变的很无聊，我现在就很无聊。我没办法说的更具体，我总是觉得这些不太重要，重要的还是理想，去掉这些时代的躯壳，进入狭窄的自我，就没有区别了。

HXL: 毛老师教给你的最有价值的艺术课是什么？

FK: 记得几年前在毛老师工作室，他正在画一张画，过了一会停下来问旁边的一个人，怎么样？然后那人说不够完美，右手不够好，毛老师就上去动了几笔走回来点上一支烟说，结束了，留点遗憾未必不完美。其实到现在我才有一点体会。不管老师说的画面很具体的还是从人本身抽象的方面。绘画很琐碎，所以对我来说没有最有价值，每个问题都有它自己相应的位置，也可以说都是有价值的。

HXL: 毛老师的哪几副作品给你留下了最强烈的印象？

FK: 第一张是我上学时在上海的一个展览看到的，是毛老师本科时的习作，一个扶着屏风的男人像，就是觉得画的好，强硬无比，没有什么妥协的地方，因为我那时还在技术的角度理解作品，那张画不是这样的，是硬生生画出来的，可是反而亲切，然后就是在毛老师工作室里看到的《我的诗人》，表情冷漠，仔细看的时候你会被画的所有地方吸引，会有错觉，你自然的接受了他创作时的所有情感神经，好像自己把这张画重新完成一遍一样，都在色彩和笔触的微差里面。我想好作品是没有想要告诉别人画的哪里好，所以就没有为什么，这是我喜欢的原因。

方凯访谈

采访人：何晓箬（Michelle Ho）

HXL: 中国的各个艺术板块和社区之间的联系被认为是松散的、不断变动的。在北京的生活是怎样的？南京呢？环境对你的影响有多大？

FK: 其实去北京的时候想法很简单，刚毕业，有对陌生感的好奇，生活很本能，一边画画，一边挣钱，有时就想算了，就画画吧，可是很快又要想办法挣钱，很困惑，有想放弃的时候。后来想想那时候要是留在北京的话，我可能就不会画画了，或者离我理想中的状态越来越远，因为有现实生活的压迫，所以我决定回南京，毕竟是我熟悉的地方，有朋友和老师，一年多前就有了现在的工作室，现在在南京的生活就是画画，和老师朋友喝酒，玩，聊天，玩游戏，变得简单很多。

HXL: 成长经历是怎样的？

FK: 成长的环境很平常，在农村长大，小时候爸妈不在身边，调皮捣蛋不爱学习，学画画，考上南京艺术学院，没有什么特别的经历，印象最深的是小学下河游泳，被人救起那次，上岸后等到我清醒的时候，发现几十个人在居高临下盯着我看，什么表情都有，跟怪物似的，还指指点点，很恐怖，我赶紧就跑了，后来才知道救我那个人送医院了。

HXL: 你的早期作品体现肃静和孤独。现在你的思考围绕什么主题展开？又面临什么样的挑战？

FK: 那些画是 08 年到 11 年吧，毕业刚一年左右到北京，现在看我自己，那时候情绪很原始，就是需要表达，因为每天那个时候都有新的疑问和苦恼，并且根本没有办法解决，比如我会想我为什么画画，身边的人为什么是这样的，或那样的，我自己是什么样的，我到底要干嘛，整天都是这些问题，好吧，我就开始画画，现在回头看自己以前的作品才会有这样的体验，那时候不理解孤独是个什么东西。孤独感只是一种情绪，它过于狭隘，我想象的好作品不应该让自己的情绪左右，最终作品是品格决定的，而不是情绪。

HXL: 中国目前存在的问题之一，就是毕业大学生的数量不断增多，而工作岗位却不足。对于学艺术的学生来说，总是可以选择放弃梦想，面对现实。当你说，你的很多哥们最终还是抛弃了艺术之路，是什么令你保持对艺术的信仰？

FK: 我想假如我不画画了，我就要去做一些不感兴趣的事，当然可以，可是很痛苦，那就画画吧，至少有趣，我想那些朋友也一定在别的事情上找到了比艺术更多的乐趣，画画对他们来说是“痛苦”的，那就没有什么区别了，我们在这个层面的表现都一样，所以就没有忠诚这个概念，自然的画了。

HXL: 毛老师认为美术、文学和电影之间的界限往往是模糊的。在谈及你的一副作品时，你提到电影“西西里的美丽传说”打动了你。这部电影中的角色贯穿着某种“赎罪”的概念。对于你来说是这样吗？

FK: 没有，我没有想在一张作品中要表达一个概念，我前面有说，我不愿意作品看起来狭隘，我肯定没有办法将我的生活和电影类比，那种影响是很有限的，我是上学时候 20 几岁看的，至少和那个少年维利图有相似的情绪，我就觉得我是那个少年，所以维利图眼里的玛莲娜就是我的玛莲娜，他眼里的村民就是我的村民，看完电影，好像你经历了一些什么似的，这个很重要虽然很小。

HXL: 从灵感初现到完成作品，是怎样的创作过程？

FK: 是《坐着的人之胸像》，上学时认识的一个朋友，来南京工作的，我们都住的不远，所以就在一起玩，他可以坐在电脑前几天不动的玩游戏，最后吐血送医院，好了之后我们都骂他说他，结果还是玩了好长时间。我们都是在一起在经历一些事情和差别不大的生活状态，这个可能是画他的原因，没有想要表达具体的什么。这幅和另一张《坐着的人》是同一个动



方凯 Fang Kai
ZL 肖像练习 4
Portrait of ZL IV
布面油画 Oil on Canvas
2012
50 x 40 cm



方凯 Fang Kai
MKai
布面油画 Oil on Canvas
2013
25.5 x 20.5 cm

其实人生永远都有自己的导师,你会发现很多人都会告诉你更好的东西是什么,学之不尽,取之不竭,很多东西都是你的老师,个人的东西非常有限。

HXL: 我们永远都是生活的学生?

MY: 我经常会给学生讲,要知道怎么学,知道自己需要什么,学一些对自己有用的东西,而不是不找边际的东西。当然我可能针对的学生不一样。学习本身就是一门艺术,关键要知道什么是符合自身的东西,不能漫无目的,不然最多也就是个发烧友,只会纸上谈兵。

HXL: 有什么有趣的师生时刻分享吗?

MY: 很多,乱七八糟的很多,但是没办法讲,现在头已经大了。

HXL: 您想告诉年轻人什么?

MY: 没有,年轻人有自己的想法。我只能说跟我比较熟悉的朋友,才会有一些具体的想法。所有的东西都是针对具体的情况,不是笼统的,只针对最喜欢的、最欣赏的学生,除此以外,没有普遍意义。



毛焰 Mao Yan
年轻女子肖像
Portrait of a Young Woman
木板油画
Oil on Wooden Panel
1990
40 x 30 cm
私人收藏, 北京
Private Collection, Beijing

HXL: 您从学生那里学到了什么？

MY: 这个是非常微妙的，彼此之间的影响、认识、判断，不经意的东西可能会启发你、打开你。

大家都同在这个过程当中，因为人与人是不一样的，所以有很多的可能性互相影响启发。有时候非常小的一个瞬间，都可能激发一种想象力、认识，彼此是不自觉的、自然的。我对学生的影响也应该是自然的，不是刻意的。

中国有一句古话叫“润物细无声”，它是一种内在的吸收、感受，不在于方法方式。如果非常用心的话，就能够从对方身上感受到很多的东西。我们都是载体，我们的身体可能会承载很多其他的东西，所以说也有可能从一个人身上感受到无数其他的东西，它可以是无限的，在一种细腻的状态当中。

HXL: 为什么选择方凯做您的学生？您认为方凯最大的特点和力量何在？

MY: 这倒不是我的选择或者他的选择。他刚毕业的一段时间，比较艰苦、困顿，逐渐地拿一些作品给我看。他上学期间，我并没有太多的关注他，毕业以后拿作品给我看，我就发现他非常敏感、细腻，可能跟我的某些气质相似，从他身上我看到了我自己非常欣赏喜欢的东西。他有一段时间非常的苦闷，我觉得因为在某些特质上我们有相似之处，那么可以给他一些建议。另外我觉得他吸收的能力非常的好，前提是他非常用心。我们平时谈的东西，在他身上我会觉得没有白费功夫，他很快的就吸收了、去做这方面的调整。

在我看来，有一个阶段，他的状态是突飞猛进的，突然打开了自己，因为前面他憋了很久，当然憋也是有必要的，然后突然打开了，状态就非常好。另外他的态度很端正，没有杂质，他的质地本身相对来说是比较纯粹、干净的。

不是说学生和老师一定要产生化学反应，我在他身上看到了一些我喜欢欣赏的特质，那么不需要过多的教授，他自己就能感受到很多的东西，实际上我没有教他什么东西。而且我始终认为我讲的很多东西都不是我的，是大师们告诉我的，实际上我只不过是在转述，更大一点说，在传播我们内心共同尊重的大师的经验。

HXL: 您怎么看方凯的发展？

MY: 他现在进入一个比较新的阶段，刚刚开始，所谓尺有所短，寸有所长，每个人的能力、优势和劣势是相等的，怎么发展，完全基于他对自身一种认识，知道自己想做什么，并且逐渐进入到一个属于他自己的轨道，能够自主的去决定自己的方向和行进的节奏。这个才是对他最大的考验，因为他毕竟相对还是很年轻。他确定了一个基本的方向，但是我想毫无疑问会面临很多的考验，当然这个他自己才会更清楚。

HXL: 我喜欢您说在您的艺术家朋友和学生之间，有区别，也有共性，即绘画的理想。

其中的区别何在（尤其对于方凯）？

绘画的理想是什么？

MY: 我觉得大的来讲没什么区别，都在做这个事情，都知道这个事情的魅力，对于自身的价值，很有可能我们自身的价值就是通过这个来体现。从价值观来说，对于我来讲、或者对于方凯来讲，已经确定了，从这方面来讲没有什么区别。

我所说的理想不是说在现实生活当中的具体理想，绘画本身是很有限的，只有当把它跟我们的人生、历史、记忆、思想连接起来，才产生实质。绘画是一个载体、空间、平台，在这当中我们每个人生命中所有的东西真实的呈现，通过朴实的、专注的方式，也许会变得越来越有价值，越来越清晰，体现我们存在的价值和意义。

HXL: 说说对您来说最伟大的老师。

MY: 伟大这个词本身有点可怕，在我心目当中，很多古典的大师都是伟大的老师，伟大的神。现实生活中的导师也很多。其实好的老师没有任何奇特之处，他就像你的朋友、你的哥们。所以我的很多朋友都曾经是我当年的老师，即使不是老师，他们对我的影响、记忆都是非常深刻的。

HXL: 您是怎样的一位学生？

MY: 学习绘画的过程中我非常认真、刻苦、努力。基本上是很传统的那种，没有什么特别之处，认真学，比较用心，总是希望自己能做得更好。

第二部分

HXL: 您鼓励艺术家朋友和学生们追求和寻找好的东西, 好的作品, 好的大师。人们如何培养此种鉴赏好的东西之水平? (我喜欢您说的, 每一件事情都有“道”)

MY: 其实好的、经典的作品和标准从来就是存在的, 你要发现它不难, 很容易, 你得去关注它, 否则再好的东西在你眼前, 你也看不见, 当然, 你需要一个好的引导。

我们不能对这种已经存在了很长时间的标准熟视无睹, 我们得时时刻刻记住、巩固这些标准。当你从自身的学习过程得出一种结论、判断、认识, 这些是可以分享的。我的意思是说, 就像宗教一样, 你去传播它的过程本身也是很令人兴奋的、幸福的事情, 把我的经验通过一种合适的方式告诉学生、朋友、同行, 这种分享和传播本身就很令人兴奋。

HXL: 塔科夫斯基说我们永远不可能向他人传达自己的经历。我们必须生活在自己的经历中, 不可能继承它。

孔子说可以三种方式学到智慧: 一是反思, 它是最高尚的; 二是模仿, 它是最容易的; 三是经历, 它是最苦涩的。

毛老师对此怎么看? 此种看法如何影响您引导/教导您学生的方式?

MY: 我当然可能更倾向于孔子谈到的两种方法, 反思和经历。当然不能只是简单的模仿, 虽然在初期的时候, 模仿甚至也很有必要, 但是你个人的经历是非常重要的。你接受的所有东西必须经过你的身体、你的思维、思考, 它才可以产生一些化学作用, 不管是什么作用, 但是这种反应是真实的, 从这种化学反应中可以获得很多的认知。

甚至你获得与否都并不重要, 但是进入到这种过程和经历中, 它甚至比获得一些具体的东西更重要, 在这个过程和经历中, 实际上可能已经无形的获得了很多很多比你预期更多的东西, 自然而然会获得很多很多对自己有益的东西。

HXL: 所以您会鼓励您的学生去经历, 去旅行, 听各种音乐、阅读各种书籍, 尽量打开自己, 是这样的吗?

MY: 其实我真的只是对我个人特别喜爱的学生才会提出类似的建议, 才会觉得这样是有必要的。我是感觉到他们有这种需要的时候, 才会这样去建议, 否则你的建议是不起作用的, 甚至是多余的。当他们确实需要, 只不过不知道去哪里获得, 我可以凭我的经验告诉他们到哪里去获得。

比方说我有一个学生, 他绘画的感觉、人物的感觉让我感觉到他内心的需要, 他有点困惑, 又不能在短时间内打开自己, 我就去给他买了一套伯格曼的电影, 我说, 这些电影的每一个分镜头可能都会对你有很好的感觉, 包括主题, 叙事的方式。也包括很多其他的电影、文学、音乐, 有时候人所谓的困顿、方向不明确, 实际上可以打开它的方式可能不是其本身, 而是从另外一个新鲜的、陌生的角度, 突然可以获得在作品当中需要的那种情感和表达方式。我的建议对当时的那个学生起到了很好的作用。

HXL: 您怎么看中国和西方艺术学院教育系统/方式的不同? 您怎样定义自己的教学方式? 您是怎样的一位老师?

MY: 其实我真的没有所谓的教学方式, 完全没有。我真的不是一个教育家, 而且绘画这个东西是互通的, 是点拨的、启发式的。并且我真的没有很多的学生, 真正受到我很强的影响的可能恰恰只是几个少数的学生, 这么多年来。

其实更多的不是教学方式和内容, 而是你做这件事情的态度、经验、看法。每个人是不一样的, 如果我知道他们需要什么, 我可以告诉他们被需要的东西在哪里, 这不是一种教学方式, 很简单, 其实就是一种建议, 你对这个建议的感觉好不好, 自己看看再说。

我从来不认为我是一个很好的老师, 但是可能是一个很好的兄长、朋友。就是给他们提供一个好的态度, 然后就是怎样将绘画和人生联系在一起。

真的要谈透的话, 那个问题本身已经解决了, 很自然的就OK了, 当然剩下的就是每个人努力的状态。如果所有东西你都明白, 但是不去做, 也是徒劳。

HXL: 您怎样看自己的身份, 在您学生的生活和创作中?

MY: 我对这个还是有点小心, 每个人都有自己成长的状况、特点。通常我对待更年轻的学生, 会有一个阶段对他们有所要求, 首先最根本的, 他们应该非常投入、专注, 才可以获得很多东西, 其他的不重要。

其实没有那么多的关系, 就是同道中人, 我们都在做这个事情, 在其中, 我可能有很多可以提供给他们, 也有可能从他们身上获得很多东西。可以笼统到一种人与之间的关系, 各有所需, 知道对方需要什么, 就可以互相提供、借鉴。

MY: 没有那么夸张，但是确实是这种感觉，他们的画册在我画室里最主要的位置，堆在我身边，可能我一段时间不去翻看，但是他们一直都在我的身边，给予我一种信念。

当然现在已经不仅仅是这些绘画的大师，比如我们刚才谈到的塔科夫斯基，比如维特根斯坦，有很多大师给我的心中带来一种神圣感。

当代社会，有太多的无限的自我膨胀和欲望，但是这些大师让我感到，在我们之外还有一种遥不可及的高度，这种高度让你对绘画、艺术、人生充满敬畏之心。

HXL: (如果您有神，那么有魔吗? ! ?)

MY: 两者不是相对的概念。我个人的感觉是，我心里确实没有魔，没有心魔。我认识一些人，我认为他们有心魔，他们因为某种经历、生活挫折有心魔，但是我认为心里有神的话，就没有魔，心里有魔的话，就没有神。

HXL: 对您作品的批判常说您捕捉到某种精神的本质，去除“人”的元素，尤其在托马斯系列中。从柏拉图开始，有些人相信艺术的存在帮助人成就更成熟的精神，对于您来说“精神”是什么？

MY: 实际上所有的这一切是基于我自己本身内心的一种需要。我本身的内心觉得匮乏、虚无、空虚、琐碎、缺乏热情、激情。艺术当然首先是基于艺术家自身的缺失、所需要的精神状态，艺术当然不是说有治疗功效，首先是艺术家解决他自身的问题，在这个基础之上，由于他的认识、经历，通过他特定的方式，有可能对某些人具有慰藉的作用，这都已经不得了了。当有一些人从你的作品当中能够体会到宁静致远，淡泊明志，那么可以说艺术的作用多少是有一点的。所以实际上，艺术家的作品是非常细腻、丰富、复杂的程序，在每一个阶段所经历的起伏，自我的反复认定，感受到世界所发生的事情。前提是艺术家要有坦诚之心，然后再经过他自身，他就是过滤器，有意无意的，去提炼那么一点点东西，这可能就是一种自然的精神的产物，就是精神。

HXL: 当我首次到您的画室，您正在绘制一副大幅女性为主题的作品。我注意到您的早期作品主题多为朋友，然后是托马斯系列。您与创作主题间的关系和变化是如何？

MY: 有一些关系，托马斯系列一定是跟我接下来的作品、包括女性裸体作品都是有关联的，但是在这些作品没有完成之前，关系还是有些模糊。

HXL: 我听说（从托马斯）您有过一次突破的瞬间，当概念和图像爆发／溢出，因为您彻底掌握您的绘画技巧。告诉我们更多（包括您的绘画技巧如何随时间成熟）。

MY: 可能夸张了一点，可能不是突破，到了今天我才感觉到，学习了那么长时间，现在才真正的懂有关绘画的这一切，基本上可能了解的大差不差。意味着前面确实花了很长的时间去学习探索。当你觉得自己的东西形成得差不多的时候，才会认为自己搞懂了。如果只是模仿，那也就是皮毛而已。

比如塞尚，说他是艺术之父、绘画之父，不简单的在说他的作品，而往往忽视了他人的方式，做事的方式，其实也同样非常了不起，很鲜明，长年隐居，描绘同样的东西，这就是他的信念，而最终他达到了。这也是他对时间、历史、生命的观念。

HXL: 毛老师接下来做什么？

MY: 具体的我认为目前还不要谈到，因为我还没有开始，在没有出来之前，我希望不要包括它，在文字中间。

所以需要各个方面的理想、信念、热爱、至诚的情感，人始终保有这种信念，才能让世界保有平衡和一种可能性。塔科夫斯基说得已经很优雅了，实际上可能比这更糟糕。

世界的不完美可能正好是艺术家的一种责任。艺术不是职业、技巧，不是玩意儿。如果人没有至诚之心，怎么可以去创造鲜活生动的、有感染力的、让人具有共鸣的视觉形象？艺术家当然是鲜明的个体，但是更需要去逾越这种个人的烙印，甚至时代的烙印，确实要达到一个高度。这也是作为一个认真的艺术家所面临的最大的难题，非常的艰难。

HXL: 好与伟大之间的区别？

MY: 我觉得“伟大”遥不可及，“好”随手可得。尽心尽力做一个东西，“好”可以得到。最重要的是，“伟大”是完全穿越时间的，是唯一能够穿透时间的，而其他所有的东西只能顺应时间的规律。比如我们自生自灭，本来就是一种好，而“伟大”可能就是神了。

人的身上是可以具备某种神性的，因为历史上有这样的人，通过对自己的要求、对自我的塑造去达到某种神性。比如维特根斯坦，始终考虑存在的意义和价值，不会去做虚妄的事情，只做实在的事情。

HXL: 实在是一个理性的概念，对吗？

MY: 对，实际上我们就都是太不实在了，生活得太虚妄了，对自身和时代的认识远远不够，所以连古人都达不到，还谈什么，差得太远了。

HXL: 您说天才往往需要首先深刻理解人与时间／历史或某一历史时刻间的关系，此理解通过建立与宇宙或某种神秘宇宙元素的关系而得到完美，请进一步解释并举例。

MY: 我个人一丁点神秘主义的倾向都没有。但是到了这个年龄，我认为人永远只是时间和历史的一部分，时间和历史，是人所面对的最大的困境。时间和历史的概念，可以结合，也可以分离。

人生最好的伴侣其实就是时间，没有比它让你更无限留恋的了。时间的概念太神奇了，不可捉摸，往往只能通过你现在能做的事情，比如完成一幅作品，在这个过程中，隐隐约约感到可以有时间的确认感。比如，我们通过很长的时间做一件事情，可能做到一个程度，可能没完没了的继续，也许隐约可以感到你做的事情存在于历史当中，确定你的人生坐标，历史坐标。这可能也是人的一种希望，通过自我判断和时间历史的坐标，去判断自己的价值，提供存在的可能。如果没有时间历史的概念，你做的事情可能没有意义。

HXL: 听说您会进入强烈的疯狂／狂喜创作状态，比如，当你试图捕捉完美瞬间（托马斯告诉我）；那些时刻是什么情况？

MY: 感受到非常的快乐和愉悦，在很短的一刻当中，会很满足，经过挣扎，终于塑造出来一个东西的一种满足，对自己的肯定。会觉得很神奇，觉得很多事情那么的难，但是通过努力，非常的投入，可以达到，会有非常欣喜的状态，会自我陶醉、自得其乐，在某个过程中会沉浸在里面。感到绘画巨大的乐趣。有时这种满足感建立在自己的想象力中，有时可能会想得很没边，但是在那一瞬间，它变的很实在，很清晰具体，但有可能过后，发现还是很虚无缥缈。

HXL: 您好像酷爱西方和中国文化，对此两种文化的敏感性有何区别？它们如何影响您的生活／艺术？

MY: 实际上是一个时间上的区别，很小的时候是接触中国的东西，然后接触到西方的作品，到了几年以前，可能因为个人的原因，又开始兼顾的看一些中国的东西。我认为它们之间的差异等等都是存在的，但都不是根本，根本来说，我认为都差不多。中国传统文化讲究内外兼修，也就是说，内和外没有太大的差别，是可以融会贯通的，前提是它非常自然的可以在某些方面融在一起。对于我们这几代人更突出一点，必须经历这么一个中西方的过程，怎样学习西方经验，完了跳出来又要去塑造自己，这可能是我们中国近几百年的一个问题。但是我个人觉得没有那么严重，很自然的就行了，不需要去说东西方的区别。我认为这是基础的，根本的，你必须里外都通，不然就不够。

HXL: 您说我们的生活中必须有“神”，引导我们的古大师们，我们与他们对话，以他们为基底检查我们的路线。告诉我们您最喜欢的一个或几个“神”的故事（从年轻到现在）以及您与“神”的旅途。

MY: 在绘画里，从小最热爱的大师，德拉克洛瓦，我心目中的绘画之神，戈雅、丢勒，都是我心中的神。在我很小的时候就热爱他们的作品，这几乎决定了我绘画的一生，因为它始终具有强大的精神感染力，以至于到今天，我仍然不能离开他们的画册，需要看所有关于他们的信息，虽然已经看了很多遍，但是他们的存在会让我觉得，我的绘画的选择很充实、很实在。

HXL: 比如说基督徒会把圣经待在身边，睡前会读一两页，是这样的一种感觉吗？

毛焰访谈

采访人：何晓箬 (Michelle Ho)

第一部分

何晓箬 (HXL): 喜欢喝茶还是咖啡?

毛焰 (MY): 茶。咖啡现在喝得很少了。以前特别喜欢喝浓咖啡。但是自从喜欢喝茶以后, 就开始减少咖啡。每天要喝茶。

HXL: 您在艺术家庇护所中! 与闹市生活相比, 此种独处有何价值?

MY: 这关乎一个艺术家的基本理想, 通过一些努力去改变在现实世界中的属性, 可以简单的给自己营造一个氛围, 类似庇护所, 甚至理想的乌托邦。不光是自己, 还有所处的环境, 朋友等, 非常轻松、自然、自由、无拘无束。能够沉浸在自己所热爱的事情当中。所以说这是一种基本的理想。

HXL: 这个空间本身是让这个理想成为可能的重要因素, 对吗?

MY: 对, 因为大部分时间要在这个空间里呆着, 面对自己, 社会, 现实。因为绘画有一些特定的要素, 必须独自完成。但它总归跟现实世界有千丝万缕的关系, 但是相对而言, 可以自主的去掌握它的感觉、节奏。有时可以回绝朋友的邀请, 有时可以融入现实世界的空气。不是说什么人都可以来来往往, 是我自己可以控制的。

HXL: 您和您的艺术家/诗人圈中典型的一天是怎样度过的?

MY: 因为中国社会环境的原因, 社会结构比较丰富、复杂, 中国人天性爱热闹、接待朋友。典型的一天可能会有几个远道而来的朋友前来拜访。比如今天, 有一个朋友从法国巴黎来, 艺术家, 需要找一个工作室, 我帮他提供地方, 我们聊聊各自的想法。晚上要跟另外一些朋友一起喝酒、吃饭、聊天。再晚点, 可能又有朋友问, 在不在, 在的话过来喝一杯。其实没有典型的一天, 表面上不同, 其实性质都差不多。

HXL: 也很享受这样的过程?

MY: 也谈不上是享受, 谈不上, 有时候是种习惯。任何事情都是双面的、相对的, 作为工作室, 我始终要保持它所谓的清静, 不能太喧闹, 是我每天安心工作的地方, 性质上不能改变。所以多年来从没有在工作室搞 party、搞活动, 不能有太热闹的东西。工作室应该还是比较冷峻的、认真严肃的地方, 不完全是一个惬意的地方。里面平时有你的焦虑、思考、关于艺术的所有东西, 在各个角落凝聚、积累, 不能轻易被改变、篡改, 应该是冷峻的。

HXL: 什么让您夜间迟迟不睡? 年轻时呢? 成长过程是什么样的? 开始成为艺术家时是怎样?

MY: 可能会焦虑、思考。时间长了, 无论画得多么顺畅, 焦虑总是存在, 在做一件事情的时候, 会不断对自己产生新的要求, 也有可能达不到, 就是这样反反复复, 如果你不认真的对待这件事情, 它随时可以弃你而去, 无论多么有才能、有能力, 如果不严肃的对待它, 它随时可能抛弃你。我认为这是一个佛学的观念, 它可以是你的, 也可以不是你的。我父亲因为没有达到他的理想, 就立志培养我成为画家, 我从小就知道自己想成为画家, 所以说绘画对我来说, 真的是与生俱来, 而且一直在延续, 不断的在加强这种信念。

HXL: 您活力异常, 但我们相信每一位艺术家都有内心的折磨。塔科夫斯基说, 若世界完美, 艺术将无用, 因为人类将不再寻找平衡, 而是居于其中。他说艺术因世间是一种错误的安排而存在, 您看呢?

MY: 我赞同, 我最喜欢这个导演, 也看了他的日记和《雕刻时光》。当然, 每一个非常成熟、有智慧的艺术家的, 对现实和艺术都有自己的角度。塔科夫斯基说的完全对。因为艺术本身是关乎人的基本道德和情感、以及对世界的理想和愿望。正因为世界如此, 所以我们有无数美好的愿望和向往, 才使我们对很多东西的追求变得有价值。生活可能确实就是千疮百孔,



毛焰 Mao Yan
Thomas
布面油画 Oil on Canvas
1997
65 x 54 cm



方凯 Fang Kai
ZJ

布面油画 Oil on Canvas
2012
20 x 25 cm

私人收藏，英国

Private Collection, United Kingdom



方凯 Fang Kai
女青年半身
Portrait of a Young Woman
布面油画 Oil on Canvas
2013
100 x 80 cm

方凯身处毕业于中国最顶级美术学院的一代人，既拥有自由选择的特权，又需要承担此种教育背景所带来的重负。毛焰的一代人或许失去过为理想所奋斗的朋友，而方凯却失去了已然摈弃理想的朋友。方凯的一代人渴望没有痛苦的快乐、没有累赘的成功、没有付出的获得，造就了其现今滑稽的生活状态、一系列社会病症和逐日递增的精神黑洞。方凯的早期作品正是表达一种被孤立的感受，因为有如此多的人轻率的踏入艺术领域，又以相同轻率的态度将其遗弃。当今中国的艺术毕业生被教授们批判为忘恩负义，与此同时，毕业生们却哀叹世界上所有的理论和技巧对他们都启迪甚微。

二十五年于中国历史来说已经可以算是相当长的章节。中国的精英青年在文革之后首次为艺术的旗帜相聚，毛焰正是他们中的一员，从学于中央美术学院。毛焰的一代人正像某位学院教授的后见之明所述，“为归返历史的敦促和朝未来前进的渴望而分裂、矛盾、挣扎”。毛焰不为艺术界的潮流所动，背起行囊搜寻永恒的理想，在南京一个安静的区域停留下来。毛焰对于所谓的时髦以及艺术界对他与日俱增的迷恋漠不关心，却为自己设下了挣脱充满问题的“我”的目标。

1999年，毛焰偶遇留学中国的卢森堡人托马斯，这次偶遇带给艺术家一位模特，通过这位模特，毛焰试图清除肖像作品中所有与个性相关的指示牌，例如手势、表情、环境摆设和衣着，甚至也包括清除艺术家自己的意见和感性。毛焰给托马斯拍过很多照片，有时确切规定其姿势，有时让托马斯自由尝试，但最终被筛选的，必然是让托马斯看起来最安宁、最冷漠的图片。随着色彩及轮廓的逐步减弱，托马斯终于幻化成毛焰一直在寻找的那个“无人”，或者说“任何人”。毛焰相信，理解是艺术家的职责和艺术的自然法则，而非将自身强加于人，他的托马斯人物肖像已然系列战胜了时间性，也战胜了人的意志。

如今，在南京郊区的幕府山，艺术既是神圣的追求，同时又是一种普通不过的生活方式。就好像跟随圣音的召唤而把帐篷搭在星空之下，毛焰一旦发现好的元素，便会邀请他的同伴们加入和参与。“自己去体会它究竟如何”是毛焰指引他人的方式。点燃一盏灯终究优于费力去解释一盏灯如何在空间产生影子。同时，毛焰只向自己最喜爱的学生们发出邀请。奉献、纯真的心灵以及对理想的追求是体现学生已经准备好求学的几条准则，在方凯身上，毛焰正是看到了这些特点。在南京的艺术聚居地，毛焰、方凯以及其他艺术家朋友们每日忙碌于创作，喝茶聊天，享受美食，招待远道而来的朋友。这里，著名的托马斯系列灰色的、漂浮的脸像某种精神核心一样悬浮在毛焰画室的上空，它从成堆的书籍、整洁排放的颜料罐、画笔和大瓶的苏格兰威士忌中悠然升起。这里必然存在一种类似“气”的能量，一种轻盈和镇静，一种自由和凝聚，这些元素的存在标志着某种神圣能量的存在。至于“真理的形象”究竟是什么样子，我们的教授和学徒们似乎并不怎么担忧。方凯避开关于生活和艺术的宏大宣言，继续自己反思和共享的艺术道路，从古典大师那里得到继承，信仰一种自然而然的揭迷过程。这是导师和学徒们共享的方式，正因为他们为中国当代人物肖像画所作的贡献，正因为他们对人类真实形象和终点的放大，这种方式是他们对“道”的信念。



方凯 Fang Kai
小幅肖像
A Small Portrait
布面油画
Oil on Canvas
2012
25 x 20 cm
私人收藏，瑞士
Private Collection, Switzerland



毛焰 Mao Yan
侧面小山
Side Portrait of Xiao Shan
布面油画 Oil on Canvas
1997
61 x 50 cm

成为

何晓箴 (Michelle Ho)

塔科夫斯基电影作品“乡愁”的末尾，是一个男人端着一支燃烧的蜡烛穿过矿泉——这项看似荒诞的任务被看作是电影史上最扰人的画面之一，表达了人类试图延续精神和艺术之光的挣扎。方凯的肖像作品与其导师毛焰的作品相呼应，恰似这支蜡烛的火焰，像明灭不定、即要消逝的灵魂一样萦绕在观众心头。我们可以感受到，此次师生二联展的作品之中包含着某种神秘——某种埋藏在“我”的狭窄密室之外的、可以被发掘的神秘。对于倍受尊重的湖南画家毛焰来说，“我”之外的空间才是一切重要元素的归属，这些重要元素包括了艺术和哲学大师的天才之作、超越时间界限的伟大标杆、以及真挚的感情和行动中所包含的美和力量。对于方凯而言，为使最纯粹的体验在作品中崭露头角而挣扎于技巧的升华，或是因为了解到艺术的自由度与人的孤独呈正比而越发痛苦，都是他早已熟稔于心的体会。这样一种自我约束的修行或许可以诠释此次展览所特有的浮雕式灰色装饰画技法——两位艺术家皆偏爱其中间地带的属性，认为其与现实最为接近。这种自我约束的修行，或许也诠释了方凯含蓄的色彩重叠和隐形光源，诠释了毛焰想要消除 21 世纪肖像作品中人物个性和情感等元素的愿望。毛焰从一开始就引导他的学生：为了探索这个横古不变的王国，艺术家必须与世界保持一定的距离。“绘画，”毛焰说，“总是与现实生活和世界有着千丝万缕的微妙关联。通过绘画的过程，你能够在自己的内心领略到宇宙的旋律和情感。”

毛焰教学生绘画的前提是一种“通过脱离出来而参与进去”的哲学悖论，作为老师，他也同样练习这种自我推断。最好的老师对于他来说，是一位隐形的信使——能够最大限度的把最纯粹的永恒真理传递给一个又一个灵魂。绘画起初于年轻的方凯是一种逃离的途径，而由于这条道路朝向永恒理想的指向，如今，绘画对方凯来说也成为了一种获得的方式。方凯 2003 年从家乡安徽赴南京求学，寻找伟大的艺术所共享的某种本能直觉意识。学院教育期间，无论中国民间剪纸或当代波普艺术，对于方凯创作热情的延续都没有产生举足轻重的影响。在接收了诸多知识之后，他仅仅需要自身不可泯灭的直觉去继续自己的艺术创作之路。

正是毛焰的画布为方凯敞开了新的艺术理念之门。方凯在毛焰早期作品粗犷的表面之下感受到某种直觉意识的萌动，从而了解到一幅作品的灵魂并非来源于多重技巧的叠加。毛焰的人物肖像有着清除一切障碍的力量，由此创造出通向灵魂的纯粹之路。这种力量同时也促使他的学生们踏上寻找自身直觉的征程，去探索古典大师作品中所固有或被传承的永恒形态。可以看到，方凯“坐着的人”作品中的主角就仿佛身处新知识和重生的分水岭。方凯选择使用与浮雕式灰色装饰画技法相似的同色调画板，进一步体现了他对作品表层现实变迁的追求。浮雕式灰色装饰画技法可以被看作是一种入门技法。这种技法曾为古典大师所广泛运用，是一种绘画练习的方式，也是上光之后完成一幅油画作品的奠基步骤。

毛焰经历了由色彩丰富逐渐过渡到偏灰色调画板的过程，他说：“灰色细腻、优美、模棱两可，所以充满了可能性。”而方凯很早就为浮雕式灰色装饰画技法所吸引，从这一点同样可以看出，他希望为直觉留出自由发展的空间，从而进行对“我”的克制。微妙的灰色渐变与各种冷暖色调相结合，使两位艺术家的画布变得好像冲洗过程中的电影胶片，无限接近其最终真实、鲜活的画面。如果艺术确是我们与世界的核心之间一层薄薄的、敏感的肌肤，那么毛焰和方凯选择灰色调的模糊肖像，或许恰巧提供了通向这层肌肤的、最直接的渠道。可以说，方凯是浮雕式灰色装饰画技法及其精神的化身，他像魔术师一样，保管和监护徘徊的人物及他们的中间状态。

站在方凯的作品面前，观众仿佛是在见证一个徘徊的精灵，尤其其他的近期作品，捕捉到了某种幻象一般神秘的觉醒边界。方凯并不将精力集中在“暗”上——“暗”在沉默中通过“明”来补偿和返还某种迷样元素的缺失。他也不把精力集中于那冰一般跃跃欲试的“明”——这种“明”似乎永远离我们一步之遥却不可及。相反，他凝视梦中人的眼睛。有的梦中人已屈服于等待，有的梦中人怀着惊异的眼神望向未来。在作品“夜灯人”中，年轻人由书桌密切注视面前的光球，像是在期盼着从中会有某种实体盘旋而出。意大利语“*chiaroscuro*（明暗对照法）”的确切字面释义即为“明—暗”，这种技法从文艺复兴时期开始为肖像画家、尤其是荷兰的画家所偏爱。古典大师们往往运用此种技法绘制宗教画面中的烛光或幼年耶稣的圣光，同样的技法在方凯的画笔下，却创造出向心灵内部窥视的摩登人类，他们看到的只有黑暗，从而热烈的渴望灵魂的修复。

作品“抽烟的人”中，这种渴望已然转化成挑战和蔑视，“坐着的人 1”中的主角或许由于等待得太久而变得充满了敌意，甚至会因为观众的沉默不语而产生某种不愉快的冲动。摩登人类怀疑一切自身之外的元素，面对神圣之光之时更甚。但方凯创造了一种清澈的、水晶般的光，欲将作品中孤独的主角引出无垠的黑影。例如作品“正面”，方凯不仅像是在用某种善意的玩笑邀请真实的灵魂踏出自我保护的躯壳，更像是要邀请摩登人类从主观制造的洞穴中走出来。艺术家试验不同光源及其与人物的关系，似乎在拷问人们向自身精神空间所摆出的不同姿势。从某种角度来看，这标志着方凯对当代中国被抛弃的理想和精神贫瘠的回应。2007 年从南京艺术学院毕业之后，方凯目睹了他的同学们一个接一个的摒弃艺术之路。失业的现实使他的同伴们不得不从事办公室职业，或是沉迷于自己可以做得比这更好的想法，或是因此以为自己获得了荣耀。不满、物欲、网络综合症、社交焦虑障碍等诸多社会病症削弱了方凯这一代人。对于一个竭力寻找本真的年轻人来说，方凯毕业之后经历了一段充满问题和挑战的时期。

两处沉思

王艺潼

“艺术中的进步并非在于延伸，而在于对局限的自知。” — 乔治·布拉克

”绘画对我来说不是掌握了先进或超验的绘画方式，而是在自我的局限中持续表达。” — 方凯

跟方凯谈话轻松、简明，同毛焰做访谈强烈、丰富，感受却是一样的，足以使人第一次或者又一次发现自己彻底爱上了创作艺术，并且甚至会发现，艺术作为一种创作形式，无限延展繁复，而其本身无限的空间原来就在我们自己的有限里——立体主义的创始人乔治布拉克就曾在笔记中这样定义艺术的延展。这么形容听来很悬，虚无缥缈，但感受很实，令人难忘。

无论轻松或强烈，简明或丰富，这些都是方凯和毛焰。方凯说话羞涩又自信，句式干脆，令人产生欲言又止但态度坚决的联想，毛焰也是这样，不过取代羞涩的或许更多是某种于自身信仰的温柔情意。谈得更深入具体，或仅是寥寥几句，中心思想总是非常明白、坦诚。

两位艺术家不爱讨论自己或自己的作品，说到艺术创作、说到伟大的艺术家、音乐、哲人、导演，又滔滔不绝，也许正是他们对外界吸收的激情和崇拜如此富有感染力，与他们交流，我信服，心中燃起火焰。那么就看作品吧，于方凯和毛焰，见画即见人。



方凯 Fang Kai
恋人 *Lovers*
布面油画
Oil on Canvas
2013
24 x 18 cm
私人收藏，北京
Private Collection, Beijing

致谢

艾美丽 (Emily de Wolfe Pettit)

2013 春日伊始，爱冒险的收藏家 Cees Hendrikse 在北京今日美术馆举办了一场主题为“面对面”的展览。毛焰的作品位列其中，一同展出的还有我最喜欢的两位荷兰画家 Jan Worst 和 Philip Akkerman 的作品。在展览手册中，有一篇由备受尊敬的艺术家暨学者陈丹青执笔的文章，叫做“奇怪的组合”。在此文中，他是这样描述毛焰的：

“刚出道，（毛焰）就证明自己是一个敏感到近乎神经质的天才。我对他九十年代初几件肖像的印象，就是弥漫全画的神经质……他是极少数不屑于政治正确的中国画家，就我所知，毛焰至今葆蓄着少年般的狂妄，画画时，只顾自己”。

作为生活不是对艺术的仿效的范例，毛焰，作为南京艺术学院的教授，在生活中同时也是一位大方又活跃的积极分子。他的客人们总是喜欢和他在一起，谈论着朴实的普洱，或者是玄学的冥思。毛焰很关心他的朋友圈子，不仅把他们挂在心上，同时和他们保持着密切地来往。他对政治正确以及在典礼上露脸甚是不屑，尽管如此，他确立了自己的一套规矩。他自己保持着一种井然有序的节奏。正如他在何晓霖的访谈里提到的：

“通过一些努力去改变在现实世界中的属性，可以简单的给自己营造一个氛围，类似庇护所，甚至理想的乌托邦。不光是自己，还有所处的环境，朋友等，非常轻松、自然、自由、无拘无束。能够沉浸在自己所热爱的事情当中。所以说这是一种基本的理想……不是说什么人都可以来来往往，是我自己可以控制的。”

在此庄重的大背景之下，“严肃派”艺术家圈子里有毛焰掌舵。而在毛焰逐渐成为其中一部分的这个国际化艺术圈之外，另一位极为敏感的艺术家的作品在他的同辈中脱颖而出。也许毛焰展现的是香槟的表面光环，而他之前的学生，方凯，用陈丹青的话来说就是“年轻的冲动”，流露出一种难以平复的安宁。何况在曲折的冲突和激烈的表达之外，艺术家的作品主干才是性格特征最清晰的反映。比如那个画中的男子，方凯运用灰色绿色浅绿色的颜料渲染来构建他的主题。一遍又一遍地，艺术家关闭了生活的镁光灯，也不曾使用任何技巧，创造出一片安宁祥和的心灵之网，当他作品中的对象警觉解除时，进而抓住他想要表现的主题。方凯的作品总是让我想起伍尔夫在《奥兰多》里的那句话，“以未成之事实，若生命如梦，梦醒则亡。”曝露在光下，方凯的梦并没有消解，但若生命是一场梦，那他引领着他的作品对象们进入一种催眠状态，那不是对世界的麻木，而是一种创造出来的自然意识流。

一种纤细的力量，渐去渐远的光线以及用轮廓强调没有定义的部分，这些都是毛焰和方凯作品的共性；事实上，无论如何曲折，二者都拥有着传统美和纯真的结合。在何晓霖的访谈中提到，毛焰发现那位富有吸引力的外国人托马斯带给他的“神秘的不存在的人，或者每一个人……[最终]……一种世俗与人的意志的胜利”方凯更关注的是周围的对象，剥去了任何时段或是种族的标签，完全“让直觉带着我走”。我们可以看到 21 页里“未破碎的目光”，或是还有其他地方，他在艺术史的篇章间跳跃，是不是大胆戏仿“杰作”，比如在“裸女”（28 至 29 页）中便可见爱德华·蒙克创作于 1913 至 1914 间的《哭泣的女人》的影子。方凯明显是从他之前的教授毛焰那儿获得了灵感，毛焰觉得，“伟大”遥不可及，“好”随手可得。尽心尽力做一个东西，“好”可以得到。最重要的是，“伟大”是完全穿越时间的，是唯一能够穿透时间的。

对所有在此项目中尽心尽力的朋友们，我要在此致以最真诚的感谢。这个项目若是没有李俐的帮助，将会变得索然无味。谢谢李俐的慷慨招待，为我们项目组提供美丽的酒店，无论炎昼寒夜都热情相迎。谢谢艺潼与毛焰、方凯的悉心联系，以及全程耐心翻译，也祝艺潼在芝加哥大学巫鸿（Wu Hung）教授的指导下更上层楼。还有要特别感谢何晓霖（Michelle Ho）对每项想法的不断提炼，让这一切都变得如此美妙。今年夏天 Michelle 在瑞士找到了人生中最重要的伴侣，让我们祝她永远幸福。最后，万分感谢毛焰和方凯，他们是我们南方古都流连忘返的最佳理由。

标题页 (背面):
Title Page (overleaf):

方凯 Fang Kai
自画像 2 Self Portrait II
布面油画 Oil on Canvas
2012
50 x 40 cm
私人收藏，南京
Private Collection, Nanjing

艾特艾画廊北京

成为

随笔与访谈
· 何晓蓀



毛焰
· 方凯

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