

## Self-stabilization—Yu Linhan's Painting

By Yang Jian

As an outstanding student directly admitted by China Central Academy of Fine Arts from its affiliated High School, unexpectedly Yu Linhan doubted about the whole academic system of art in China as early as he started his undergraduate study, and the suspicion motivated the consciousness of painting. Therefore, he began planning and preparing a series of complicated procedure for overseas study in the first year of college, in rational rather than radical actions to get rid of the self-sufficient ecosystem that could have given him pride in that period. As a result, Yu Linhan has also become one of the few Chinese students who have been accepted directly after graduation by the graduate program in German education system. The behaviors pattern with clear plan and definite procedure on the one hand helped him better adapt to the study in Hochschule für Künste Bremen influenced by Bauhaus teaching system, in the northwest of Germany, on the other hand could also manifest how his personal character contributes to his current highly procedural working pattern and painting logic.

Recent years, as a large number of artists studying abroad return to China, Western cutting-edge exhibition information spreads rapidly and Western contemporary artists frequently appear in China, latest visual achievements widely spread in China. Then many Chinese young artists' practices tend to become poorly pan-formalized—completely ignoring the context of formalism and conceptual art in China and the West, but directly borrowing fashionable formal language and trendy space approach from the Western world to have achieved visual results of top quality forms and of high integrity. Quite a few works can even be traced to a reference system of fairly high quality in Western contemporary art. However, if you try to understand them seriously, many of them are full of far-fetched grafts and tactics of mirroring specific references. The premature approach not only fails to make real contribution in cultural production, but also might mislead more artists to be strapped vainly in such kind of empty and meaningless practice and expand the damage. By contrast, Yu Linhan's paintings are not “fashionable” or “trendy” at all, but he has established in his practice a set of highly personalized painting logic and working pattern, which is very precious nowadays. He extends his own body experience and behavioral logic and then forms his personal working pattern. Such kind of personalized approach not only paints and produces images, but also establishes a set of painting methods and mechanism on the basis of personal experience and sets up a painting program that can fill his own emotional gap and maintain a stable development, making the works reveal uneasy moods and charming flaws in the seemingly stable and rational state.

Work procedure is what Yu Linhan emphasizes, and the process often involves repeated switches

between several techniques of significantly different properties, such as photo-taking and line-sketching, printing and hand-drawing. When creating different series, the artist sets up a working procedure like a programmer and then strictly follows the procedure for production. The original objects depicted are also dismembered like in a medical surgery by the artist with explicit purposes and sequences. However, even the strictest painting procedure can't avoid errors and accidental marks in the whole process, and the marks and impurities that swing between the controllable and the uncontrollable are the eyes of each work. Taking "Minor Obstruction" series as an example, to make the works, firstly the artist takes photos of the branches selected as the subject; secondly, he draws lines of painting skills on the paper with pencils by referring to the photos; thirdly, he cuts the hand-painted images and makes silk screen plates separately, and prints on the linen one after another; last, he makes minimum concealing and supplement for the image with simple and unmixed black and white paints. After the whole procedure is completed, the original objects depicted have been almost forgotten, and only the images with a little mechanical texture, as well as the flaws and marks left by the artist in every procedure, are remained. Besides, space approach is what Yu Linhan tries frequently in recent period. He uses wall painting in different space to enhance the instability of the works and seek for special painting textures. The huge wall provides the viewers a detailed viewing experience and flexible viewing area, and the original objects depicted are deconstructed once again. Meanwhile the artist further weakens the adhesion between each details of the painting by dividing parts, and triggers more accidental possibilities. For Yu Linhan, the uncontrollable and uncertain factors are most precious and provide chances, such as the focusing choices in the shooting process, erasing signs in the hand-drawing process, image losses in the printmaking process, cracks remained in the assembling process, and differences in various spaces. The artist controls the controllable range that is out of control, and defines the indefinable, which is full of exceptionality. It is just like the state existing in painting depicted by Alain Badiou in virtue of *Hamlet* that it is not a clear choice between existence and non-existence but a dim and contradictory combination between them, and herein hidden is the aura. It is worth noting that the logic that links Yu Linhan's painting procedures is that each painting depicts the previous one, which is not as same as copying, but reproducing a form. For art, the form has important inner values, so reproducing the form seems to reproduce the idea related to the object depicted and to mark, imprint and realize some emotions of the artist at the same time. Such a depicting process is not only to record the previous step by translating its technical language, but more to annotate the previous, with the concepts about the known and well-arranged objects as fixed and identifiable information, to achieve a sort of openness. It inclines to an extra meaning beyond the meaning, and seems to further invent, discover and awaken itself. Such kind of process can be regarded as an event produced by the form, which enables the form to be produced and the artist's perceptual ability to be recorded.

The sense of resistance to cultural shock experienced in his overseas days and the distrust in

medical treatment and technology resulted from his medical history of early life pushes Yu Linhan to express in a more internalized and implicit form, which is also reflected in the abstinent sense in his works. His moderate expressing form is manifested in his restriction with the pleasure of painting. As this article mentioned in the opening, years of systematic painting training makes Yu Linhan believe that the direct depiction of painting impulse is a frank expression and undoubtedly will bring the artist a sort of pleasure, somehow the pleasure is what Yu Linhan tries hard to avoid. For Yu Linhan, the excessively inertial and degenerated pleasure satisfies unduly one's own purpose for "pleasure", and then the deeper sensibility will be difficult to be touched, which, in another way also responds to what Gilles Deleuze demonstrated in his own way that indulgence in pleasure will interrupt the affirmation of true desires.

Therefore, Yu Linhan's expressing desire cannot be satisfied through a clear and direct grasp of an object, and he turns to satisfy himself by letting another subject beyond the object create surprise beyond the experience, hence a moderate, infiltrated and spiritual expressing form. "Faint Murmur" the title of his series, like all names for his works, is a medical term for a symptom, and the symptom is usually psychological, difficult to be diagnosed and completely cured, which like a sort of mental impurity hard to removed stimulates the sensitive nerve at the most inadvertent and private moment.

To interrupt itself, start again, create forms in constant resistances and deconstructions, and build one's own language of painting. The procedural sense and logic in Yu Linhan's painting practice are unique and experimentally significant in contemporary painting experiment. The abstinent expression and quiet and solemn visual results are also revealing attractive "flaws". The artist compares his works to "a temporary experience after coughing", like a brief relief from an illness and a slow psychological release.