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# The Bottomless Pit

**The narrative painting of Zhao Yang and his personal fairy tales** *Author: LiaoLiao Translator: Christina.Y.Z 2013*

Here is unpredictable, here is veiled and hard to express, weird, distorted and ambiguous..... This is a fairy tale that Zhao Yang painted with his brushes, it is exaggerated but it is rich of fantasies.

But don't expect comfort in his fairy tales, neither expect joy, even not to hope the perfect happy ending in his fairy tales. Andersen once said that life is a fairy tale, which is full of hardship of wanderings and the twists and turns of persistent pursuit. Been different from Andersen whom made life many beautiful fairy tales, Zhao Yang chose to use the Magic way cruelly presented the life fairy tale before us.

If we say that Zhao Yang's painting is obscured and is hard to interpret we would rather comment on the curiosity of his work which is irrecoverable, as we anticipated that nature should be very sophisticated, Zhao Yang's work shows a more complex human nature. He is more of a bad child, to damage the painting, his purpose was not only to be different from what he was trying to sabotage but he also wanted to get something more powerful than the sabotage itself. His paintings are full of such scattered fragments and parts, and they are totally impossible to be repaired. He puts stratagems everywhere in his painting, they obstruct our judgment, we'll never get an answer. Here, we feel that he is more like demanding an unconditional freedom from the painting. We were entrapped unconsciously into this peculiar, unrepeatable time, and misreading is the eternal theme he cares about.

1.

"I need to be alone for my writing"---Franz Kafka

"Zhao Yang was born in 1970 in Jilin, a province in between mountains and waters, since his early age he started to show the exceptional talents of painting. Inspired and cultivated by his father, he developed and enjoyed the habit of painting in imagination and memory since his childhood. Graduated from the middle school of China Academy of Fine Art in 1990, graduated from the Traditional Chinese Painting Department of China Academy of Fine Art in 1995. Attached the high school years and college years in China Academy of Fine Art, and working years in the Publication House, Zhaoyang lived in Hangzhou for more than 20 years. Study of the Chinese painting, work in the Publishing House seem to be a strange combination, but as Zhao Yang himself says: "Life has no right or wrong, the different

stages of the past constituted the current me."

With his specific experience we wondered while was he facing the canvas, what would happen to him? In the case of him, his "idiom" comes from his Chinese painting learning background. From the "application of color according to categories", his use of color and the his use of freely leisurely lines, we could clearly see that he is constantly in the habit of using a calligraphy brush and his art features of Chinese painting. Meanwhile, publishers work experience gave him a kind of "Narrative" ability. It should be said that the diverting made Zhao Yang's painting is with a broad range of freshness and more possibilities, his mature and sophisticated techniques made him had no sense of strangeness while he was facing the large canvas, the picture is open and exuberant, more freedom than most of the professional oil painters.

In his blood, a strong desire of freedom, urged him to face the strange world, alone. In 2009, Zhao Yang resigned, came to live in Beijing, it may be described as a pursuit of artistic dream. But I think he did so was because of the more desolate and remote winter of Beijing, even the lingering haze, they are more suitable for his current mood and ideas, they are better for his creation, so he chose to stay in Beijing. We can see his obsession for art from his twists and turns life, he has believed: "The hardship is the possibility in creation, smoothness equals compromise."

2.

"Through white wash I will dig up a hell." -- Baudelaire ①

At first glance of ZhaoYang's work, lovely with a little bit ridiculous, though without Prince Frog who was magically sealed in Frog Prince, but he has the cranky frog which enjoyed its time with the green pepper in Frog and the Green Pepper; though without Princess Ariel whom was melted into bubbles for love in Mermaid, but he presented a lonesome Mermaid which was flaked in Tears of Mermaid ; though without the lovely fairies which made Cinderella a Princess, but he has the fuzzy goddess in Glorious Alternative Dreams; though without the luxurious palace which belongs to the fatuous king from The Emperor's New Clothes, but he has the incomplete desolated city in King Ruins . Slowly, Zhao Yang's fairy tale seems be caught in a pessimistic atmosphere from its original adorable theme. Here existed only the "obscured memories and lost spacetime"②, the sun is faded, the air is solidified. In Zhao's fairy tale that without magic witch, without the mermaid that fall in love at the first sight, without the fairies which made Cinderella a princess, instead there were fearsome cobra, weird peacock, scary cat, dull stones, mysterious fog garden..... he's all those odd and whimsically "supporting role " left in the tales. But the leading role is mystically absent, the brave majestic prince has gone, the sweet kind Elf has not yet shown its face, left only the outlines of obscured faces, blurred silhouettes. The admiring plot belongs to all fairy tales, in the tales of Zhao Yang is brutally staled. "He overlays and combines the images of ancient and modern, reveals us the harmony in absurdity and the

clearness in chaos; and the lonesome and a drop of irony in human nature. The original fairy tale with a lighthearted beginning, had become an existence as "bottomless pit". As Zhao Yang thought that he was "interpreting an uninterpretable story, timeless, endless, truth absent, a lot of deceptive existence, lots of real illusions, and the events are like so, strangeness made the processing theme at the end, ridiculous and distortions made the senior bottleneck, the private metaphors, the familiar mysticism, the context seem to be mastered, and it had spread in the muttered and hesitated sobs"<sup>③</sup>, all had become the endlessness.

Eventually, when you chose bravely and directly looked at the "fairy tale", would you suddenly realized that the so-called "dreadfulness" was defeated by something we called it "the realistic"? If you wanted to ask the truth from Zhao Yang's vagueness, but you were going to find out "vagueness" is the original authentic. We have indeed forgotten the "Him" that side by side with ourself in Sunny Skies, we have indeed forgotten the "Him" hand in hand in the Night Journey with ourself, we have indeed forgotten to pursuit the "selfhood" in The Other Shore. In a fairy tale called life, someone was like the wicked queen in the tale, and caught us into the dilemma; someones were like the brave chevaliers who appeared and saved us from the muddy troubles, and there were someones just as optional as trees and flowers in a tale, appeared but would have nothing left. These elements in the tale might made us to resent, or to be grateful, or to feel senselessness. As the characters in the work of Zhao Yang, their outlines were getting more obscured in our memories, and memories about them, like the background in his work is becoming even more mottled. Zhao Yang admitted that "I am intoxicated with the beautiful distortion. Blustering bluff changed into uninterpretable interpretation"<sup>④</sup>. In the work of Zhao Yang, art is no longer the salvation path of Vincent Van Gogh. Instead, it attached more importance on the worse part of life. Here, Zhao Yang tells us from his work, life, it is not a fairy tale that princess and the prince hence lived happily ever after, it's even not about the brave knights defeated the terrible demons. Life is the maturity along with thinking on and forgetting of, being stronger before the tough scenes and finally overcome them, and it is a gesture of farewell between fantasies and realities.

3.

In the beginning / Black was the whole tone of darkness / penetrating only the flowing fluorescent trace / remote mountain abandoned forest / deserted with little sign of life / but it always has a secret Path / interspersed with winding / broken or presented / hard to find its trace / Only forester and men of understanding can glimpse on it / Checking its details / calculating its marks / as an eye of path / / It is definitely out of the reach of life / as a secrete without ending/ Left only the pursuit--- The Seemingly exist.

Zhao Yang's poetic lines are like his paintings wiped out all glorious and ideals, and kept only the ruthless reality. After broke the stationary interpretation of darkness, he revealed the truthfulness endlessly unpredictable in pondering and absurdity. While was I chatting with him, he kept referring to the "depth of Soul" might be

unconsciousness. In the midst of the unconsciousness, "all established behaviors became chaos.....all the established concept became contradictions..... intertwined extremely with the facts". It included the abilities and concepts of a special order that is totally different from the world belongs to us. He revealed his art, his thoughts and his philosophy of life in a mystic style. He did not require you to understand his mind either to instill his ideas, instead he built a spirit field with his paintings. "The lightning pierced the darkness" in the painting, those symbols as spells broke the magic, it seemed had given the viewers the hope. Zhao Yang might be willing to draw those which were unable to draw of, set out from his heart, the spiritual "pure land" was waiting for you to reach at. With his art, a painting of him, he gave you a chance to read a work with your own perspective and a chance to use your own life experience to analyze on an art work. In the combination as a series of disordered paintings, set the missing, destructive hints. The artist's vision has always been concerned about the spirituality which confused us and the peculiar crisis hidden in. There were a sort of primitive and mystic information had been revealed in the paintings, aroused the visual wonders of viewer. In the way, the outer world is examined by the eye of the artist's heart, and the artist is increasingly alienated from the external reality, which makes his paintings becoming more and more unfamiliar.

The artist is good at removing unwanted impurities from the picture, presented the peculiar artistic spiritual characters, released highly concentrated information symbols called out at life. He did not salute to the so-called happy ending, not even him to honor the so-called good triumphs over evil, not salute to the so-called hard to forget, he didn't even pay tribute to the so-called good. He, had just sent the tribute to an unknown future, greeted hail to the unknown cruel, set a tribute to the cruel of an uncertain future which always belongs to himself. He, then even sent the tribute to nihility.....

4.

I felt free ..... I have nothing, so I have no tie. Everything is temporary, I muddled through in the most magical trick. --  
- Jean.Paul.Sartre

In the image world of Zhao Yang, the graphic that crossed spacetime and the bizarre fictions combined together, but they showed the inconsistent ideas, strengthened the contradictions and doubled the visual appealing. Contradictory, with a hint element of drama they unified in a flat spacetime. Zhao Yang's painting wandered between the ordinary real life and the Eastern and Western fairy tales, fables, constituted an enigmatic interpretation and symbols of metaphors, embodied the images after "chaos" and "hybrid ". With the surrealistic way, and personal narrative style, he slid back and forth in the "story" and "current" social life, showed a strong dramatic appealing. Zhao Yang's models were without the specific spacetime background, and some were even a sort of hyperbole and we called as unbelievable, like a monument stood in the image which was with the romantic atmosphere and the color of nihilism.

The diversity and identity of the paintings, were controlled in a region of conflict and anxiety by the painter. Sometimes he felt the despair within himself, "I'm more concerned about the nearest land between the conflicts and coordinations, and I am more sentimental attached to the expression of failures, seems it is a more complex issue. The expression of twittering, the method of misreading, the wonderfulness of language, plot, themes, the maximum complex. "Collapse is just a clue, altered before the additional electricity.No settings, no premise, all possibilities might be possible. Various elements, blockage of turbidity, stuck, continual in paradox."<sup>⑤</sup> These approximately crazy soliloquizes, like whispers in between say or not, unsmooth statements all showed the contradicts of the artist and his own dilemma.

The images of Zhao Yang usually are the daily trifle things, rather than focused them on the heart, he gave the images a different understanding and interpretation. As a painter, Zhao Yang is more like a director, organically tied up the memories and the narrations with his individual language, image of various types as the different actors, were playing with the various posing, in a Zhao style's play. All these experiences, emotions, history, stories and feelings were expressing out smoothly with plain painting language.

In short, the charm of the painting which is the line, the colored blocks, it is about the writings and the coverings, it is about form and also of content. Zhao Yang returns the painting to painting in his work, like all the great artists have been torn and troubled the same, Zhao Yang resolved the group consciousness of Chinese Contemporary Painting, and made the individual to become far more strong.

Who else can say that it is not a fairy tale without a happy ending? At least he narrated the intrigues, at least he taught us to be courageous through ruthlessness, at least he made us to learn to be grateful through sadness. The work allowed us to obtain a pair of calmer, courageous and deeper insights, and not to be covered by the hypocritical appearance. Here, the reality and unreality were mixed, and secretly revealed the absurd details and the mist of mysterious bizarres, but pity is Zhao Yang - made the story without an ending, or we may say his story has the ending only belongs to himself. He threw the practical problem before us, it's a sheer unexpectedness.

But meanwhile, that us had wore a smile to enjoy the works, were caught in the roundabout thinking. Human's desire is endless, and their feelings won't be filled either won't be emptied, they were trying to give it up and again trying to obtain, and the heart of people is what we call a bottomless pit. While in this "fairy tale" wrote for the adults, we won't laugh at the fantasy of fairy tale; in the "fairy tale" for adults, we won't distinct characters good from wrong ; in this "fairy tale" for us, endlessness replaced the boresome of happy ending. There is still that vague person, and that repeatedly appeared horse, or the weird geometry, and still there is still a gloomy image, all the time we lingered in the tale of Zhao Yang, did you find an ending from this cyclical bottomless pit?

Translated by Christina.Y.Z

Note:

①Charles Baudelaire , Florist of Evil

②Jiangzhenggen, Continue the Group Consciousness

③Zhangyang, The Daybreak--Just sits on the central of the Wound

④Zhaoyang, The Daybreak--just sits on the central of the Wound

⑤Zhaoyang, The Eye of Path

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上海香格纳文化艺术品有限公司  
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