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曾浩作品

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WORKS BY ZENG HAO

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内在的时空

巫鸿

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曾浩差不多和喻虹同时在中央美院学油画，但毕业后，两位艺术家所走的路却不尽相同。在上一篇文章中也提到过，喻虹坚持现实主义的风格，并成为现实主义“新生活”的一员，而曾浩却一直在挑战不只是对老的学院派，而且是现实主义的格调。这一概念，与喻虹的“新生活”画派相似，但曾浩却将其称之为“新形象”画派。

“新形象”绘画和“新生活”绘画明显不一样，他们之间主要的区分在于后者对现实主义表现手法的传统概念的继承和与学术界紧密的联系，而“新形象”画派却将传统现实主义表现手法作为一种禁锢，甚至是对现实的扭曲，他们所画的“新形象”通常看起来陌生而原始，他们的用色纯粹而粗犷，他们的笔触粗犷而随意，他们的构图荒唐或可爱。

尽管在这张画里主要以虚无主义的角度来界定“新形象”画派，但这一流派的总的特征可能来源于它打着消逝主义的旗号而实际上是作为积极重组的一种战略外衣。这个前提有助于我们理解曾浩在这个展览品中的一幅为“下午5点”的作品，画里描绘了两个人物——一个穿着黄色衬衫的男子和一个穿着蓝色裙子的年轻女子——一个陌生在散开的物品之中，包括一个红色的皮沙发、一个落地灯，一张床头柜，一个墙上的挂钟和一个衣柜，所有的这些物品都属于一个内部的空间。这个空间似乎是私人的一种，也许是在一座现代楼房里的一个公寓，但这个空间不仅被暗示，而且被表现出来。画中没有建筑的形状，没有墙和没有窗户，这些物品和东西似乎被悬挂在一片空白的表面上，一个淡绿色的朦胧的空白中。

同样令人不解的是这两个人物和他们周围的生活的关系，每一件家具和装饰的，都不自然，既散漫而孤立。他们的一个轻快地在整体里的碎片，却形成一种新的生活模式。他们的生活方式发育着城市年青的成功人士。而且即使是“雅皮”，在家里如此打扮也是很出乎意料的。他们看起来也不是一次性的幽默和准备。画面提供了一些线索，他们在重新塑造他们的活动。沙发上打开的书似乎属于男子的，而女子似乎一直在擦鞋，但出于某种原因，他们都同时放下手中的事情，走到画面的前方，可能这是因为一一对情侣，他们分开而站，彼此不注意对方，反而各自都沉浸在为外界投来的光线而摆弄。

画中的人物和物品的相对比例被严重地歪曲了，但观众最不舒服的是形象和背景的比例失调，画家有意地在形象的周围留下大量空白，从而达到微缩的视觉效果。换言之，观众之所以觉得人物和物品是“微型”的不是因为这些形象相对与他自己的身体来说体量小（通常这是微型的概念所暗示的），而是因为画面中形象和背景之间特殊的关系。据说“自然界没有微型的生物，微型是一个文化产品，是眼睛执行特定的功能，进行巧妙地处理，用特定的方式看物理世界后而产生的结果。”在曾浩的绘画里，“微型”同时在一个纯化的形象化的表现中和一系列的形象化表现之间产生的。

正如我已提到的，在作品“下午5点”中，人物的微型化是他们空间关系在一个令人窒息的空的环境中被扭曲的结果。在曾浩从1995 年至1997 年之间创作的一系列作品中，我们发现这种扭曲关系的逐渐加强，相对于背景而言形象变得越来越小。1995 年创作的绘画“星期四下午”（图19.1）可以被当成是“下午5点”的前身。这两幅作品使用了类似的形象，但前一幅作品中的空间更大，也更有个性，并且家具的组合暗示了一个三维空间的产生，从一幅作品到一幅作品的发展本身就是一个“微型化”的过程——形象的缩小和背景的扩充。

这一切变化又进一步延续到他的画“1997年11月12日”（图19.2），其中人物和物品不仅进一步缩小，而且变得完全孤立和片段化。艺术家把所有的形象分布在多个平面上，不透明的背景里，仅付出最少的努力来为他们创造任何可理解的统一的关系。

微型化和客观化的过程是相关的。当形象被微型化时，我们超越性的观点使我们把它们——人物和事物——当成纯粹的物品。在现实生活中，将这个微型化/客观化的过程比成玩偶的房子最具代表性。家具和人物组成儿童的微型世界。”曾浩的玩具家具和玩具人物不是为儿童创作的，然而，他们是为展示而做的，不是为了被玩，它们的绘画所展示的是童年在当代中国变得越来越独特的内省世界，这个内省世界的基本特点。首先这是一个独立于外部空间的内部空间，其次是以物品代替内部空间，这些特又同时和一个新的内部时间感有关。

在今天的中国，一个普遍的现象就是私人内部空间和公共的外在空间之间的巨大的差异，这个内部空间有一个最基本的定义——公寓的门。在门外，即使是在学校或机构里的一个新楼（比如王府井附近中央美院职工宿舍楼），家具很少是干净的，墙壁脏乱，划痕多多，楼道里充斥着煤气，灯
泡不翼而飞，不堪入目的程度和芝加哥的楼房相差无几。一旦进入公寓里却发现另外一种世界，空间虽小却安排装饰得当。有些公寓设备齐全。昂贵的家具。高科技的电器。和国外来的纪念品。内在空间的差距近年来由于多种因素而拉大。直到近期，中国人还不能购买房产，但由于房产所有权的改变，自己拥有的一套公寓已成为一个人的社会地位和经济实力的最终证明。一个快速壮大的城市中产阶级正在为室内装修而狂热，以显示其富足的生活水平和精致的品位。另一个因素是一种对公共空间（包括无止境的城市拆迁和建设）的普遍的不安全感，从而使人们转向更小的、私密的空间。最后，对公共财产缺乏缺乏秩序。一方面政府为了节省开支而缩减这方面的市政服务。而一个由居民自发的维护共同空间的新体系尚未形成。

与这些因素相关的就是室内装修业。最近已成为中国最赢利的行业之一。出售式家具。现代家庭设备和高档灯饰的新商店在中国城市里如雨后春笋般出现。在书店里可以找到形形色色的室内装饰的指南。室内装饰的中心仍然保留着“件”的概念，以“大件”意味着一件具有传统社会意义的家具或设备。不仅仅满足便利或舒适的需求，也体现拥有者的品位。社会关系和经济实力。一套装修上的房子基本上是这些“大件”的组合。非常受欢迎而且价格高昂得对普通家庭来说已经超出其购买能力。这些“件”的堆积和组合因此建立了一种独特的室内性和主观性--在公私的空间里，男女之间由他们的家具和其他物品所连接和识别。

这种内部性和主观性是曾浩绘画的内容。在一次访谈中，艺术家把他节目中孤独的主题--时而的家具和音响来像设备--与他在广州的经历联系起来。每天所看到的就只是一个家中，每个人都在家中聚会的高档的东西，在这样的环境里觉得异样，但他的绘画并没有真实地反映这些家庭的面貌。相反，他们突出了一种和家有关的不安全感，这种不安全感产生于这种内部没有个性。私密感和秘密的空间。事实上，这只是一个空洞，着装整齐的年轻男女在令人震撼的物品中，面无表情地注视着前方，因此这个空间并不是真正的“内部”空间。因为其中的任何东西都代表着社会普遍共有的认知。正如曾浩的绘画中所表现的一样，这个空间没有边界，只有公式化的形象。它既封闭又开放，既个人又集体，既微观又宏现，既现实又虚构。

这个内部空间是短暂的，人物和事物的微型化产生了一个压缩的“私人空间”和一种外在的“集体时间”是分离的。苏珊。斯图瓦特说：“微小的物体不附属于被经历的历史时间。和现实主义的转喻世界不一样。因为它总是企图通过把日常生活的时间和叙事的时间完美地重叠起来而抹杀两者之间的界线。微型的隐喻性世界使生活绝对地超前和外在于其本身，微型化的表现榜上比例的缩小扭曲了日常生活中的种种关系，而且作为被消费的物品，微型的“实用价值”被转为成为幻觉的无限时间。”

斯图瓦特的讨论有助于解释曾浩为他的微型图像所取的题目，他的每幅画都是时间的题目，如“12月31号”、“星期四下午”、“昨天”、“星期五5点”、“7月11号1705”。这些时间之间没有连续性，我们甚至不知道哪个时间早，哪个时间晚，因为没有给出年份，这些题目的只有作为片断式的征兆。无法把各个情景连接成一个连贯的序列。结果，他的内部空间，包括孤立的人物和物品，总是在一个永恒的现时中。

本文出自：《"Transience"二十一世纪中国实验艺术展》

5. 出自《曾浩》书中九个文章的“平庸而真诚的日常景观：曾浩作品及其相关话题。”(北京，中央美术学院，1996)
6. 这里和前面的一段是出自我的文章“底稿：一个中国现代和后现代”并稍有修改，本文在著名出版商的《Inside Out：华人新艺术》一书中(东京：旧金山现代美术馆和纽约亚洲协会画廊，1996)，64-65页
7. 苏珊。斯图瓦特，《关于图像》，65页。
8. 其它说明，见《曾浩》一书。
Zeng Hao studied oil painting at the Central Academy of Fine Arts around the same time as Yu Hong. But the two artists have followed quite different routes since their graduation. Yu Hong, as discussed in the previous essay, has insisted on following a realist style and is identified with the New Generation of realists. Zeng Hao, on the other hand, has been challenging not only orthodox academic art, but also the very notion of realist representation. The art critic Lu Hong has thus distinguished him, as well as some other painters showing similar tendencies, from new realists and labeled them “New Imagist” (Xin Xingxiang) artists.

It is obvious that “New Imagist” paintings differ markedly from “New Generation” paintings. Their main difference lies in the latter’s preservation of traditional concept of realist representation and its strong attachment to the academic world, but “New Imagist” painters take the traditional realist representation as a taboo or even as a target of subversion. Their “images” often seem strange and abrupt, their colors restless and unrefined; their brushwork rough and sketchy; and their composition absurd or amusing.

Here Lu Hong defines New Image art primarily in nihilistic terms, but the broad character of this trend may stem from its cultivation of negativism as a strategic disguise for a program of positive restructuring. It is in this light that we can understand Zeng Hao’s 5:00 p.m. in the Afternoon (1996) in this exhibition (pl. 19). The painting portrays two figures – a young man in a yellow suit and a young woman in a blue dress – among scattered objects, including: a red leather sofa, a floor lamp, a night table, a wall clock, and a clothes tree. All these things belong to an interior space, suggesting that this is a private home, probably an apartment in a modern building. But this space is only implied, not represented. No architectural forms – neither walls nor doors nor windows – are shown. The figures and objects seem suspended on an empty surface, a murky void colored a greenish hue.

Equally confusing is the relationship between the two figures and the surrounding objects. Every piece of furniture is brand new and impersonal. Scattered and isolated, these are fragments of a hypothetical whole. The fashionable Western-style clothes identify the man and woman as successful young urban professionals; nevertheless it is strange even for a “yuppie” to be dressed up while at home. Nor do they seem to be preparing for a business meeting. The painting offers some clues to help us reconstruct their activities; the open book on the sofa seems to belong to the man, and the woman may have been shining her shoes. But for unknown reasons they have simultaneously stopped their activities and come to the foreground. Presumably a couple, they stand far apart and pay no attention to each other; instead, both are absorbed only in posing for an external gaze.

The relative size of the figures and things is seriously skewed. But what makes the viewer most uncomfortable is the disproportion between the images and the ground. The painter deliberately leaves a great deal of empty space surrounding the images and is thus able to generate the visual effect of miniaturization. In other words, the viewer feels that the figures and things are “miniatures” not because the images are physically small in relation to his own body (as often implied in the notion of miniature), but because of the particular image-ground relationship within the painting. It has been suggested that “there are no miniatures in nature; the miniature is a cultural product, the product of an eye performing certain operations, manipulating, and attending in certain ways to the physical world.” In Zeng Hao’s case, miniaturization is produced both in a single pictorial representation and between a series of pictorial representations.

In a single painting like 5:00 p.m. in the Afternoon, as I have observed, the miniaturization of images results from their skewed spatial relationship within an overwhelmingly empty environment. In a series of paintings Zeng Hao created from 1995 to 1997, we find a gradual intensification of this skewed relationship: images become increasingly smaller in relation to the ground. The painting Thursday Afternoon (fig. 19.1), which he made in 1995, can be taken as a direct predecessor of 5:00 p.m. in the Afternoon. The two paintings employ similar images, but the figures in the earlier work are bigger and are given much more individuality, and the groupings of furniture still hint at a three-dimensional space. The development from the earlier painting to the later painting is thus itself a process of miniaturization - the reduction of images and the expansion of the proud. This development further leads to his 1997 September 12th (fig. 19.2), in which the figures and objects have not only shrunk further, but have become completely isolated and fragmentary. The artist has scattered all the images on a flat, opaque field, making only a minimal effort to associate them into any conceivable homogeneous relationship.

Miniaturization is linked to the phenomenon of objectification: when images are made miniature, our transcendent viewpoint makes us perceive them - both the figures and their material belongings - as pure objects. In real life, this miniaturization / objectification process is best exemplified by a dollhouse, in which furniture and figures make up the diminutive world of childhood. Zeng Hao’s toy furniture and toy figures are not made for children, however, and they are made for display, not play. What his paintings display is a distinct interiority that has become increasingly typical in contemporary China. Two essen-
tial characteristics of this interiority are, first, the independence of an interior space from the external space, and second, the substitution of things for and interior space. These features are again related to a fragmented inner sense of time.

A common situation today in China is the dramatic contrast between a private interior space and a public exterior space. This interior space has a most concrete definition: the door of one's apartment. Outside the door, even in a new building belonging to a school or an institute (such as the faculty housing of the Central Academy of Fine Arts near Wangfujing), the staircases are rarely cleaned, the walls are dusty and scratched, the corridors are filled with coal briquettes, the lightbulbs are missing. The unsightliness is in no different from a Chicago housing project. But one enters and apartment to find another world. The space in small but carefully arranged and decorated; some apartments are equipped with expensive furniture, high-tech machines, and souvenirs from foreign countries. Such contrast between the two spaces has been intensified during recent years by various factors. Until recently the Chinese were not allowed to purchase real estate, but there has been a change in property ownership, and a privately owned apartment has become the ultimate proof of a person's social and financial status. A rapidly growing urban middle class is now passionate about interior decoration as a demonstration of an affluent lifestyle and refined taste. Another factor is a pervasive uncertainty about the public environment (including the never-ending urban destruction and construction), which forces people to turn to smaller, private spaces. Finally, there is the lack of maintenance of public properties: while the government tries to save money by reducing such services, a new system of maintaining common spaces by residents themselves has not yet been developed.

Related to all these factors is the business of "interior furnishing" (shínei zhùzhì), which has recently become one of the most profitable businesses in China. New shops selling Western-style furniture, modern kitchen and bathroom equipment, and fancy light fixtures are seen everywhere in Chinese cities, and one can find all sorts of interior decoration guides in bookstores (fig. 19.3). The common wisdom of interior furnishing, however, still centers on the notion of jian or "piece." A "big jian" means a piece of furniture of equipment that has acquired a conventional social meaning: it not only fulfills the need for convenience or comfort, but demonstrates the owner's sophistication, social connections, and financial security. A well-furnished apartment is essentially a collection of such "big pieces," which are sought after but often prohibitively expensive for an ordinary family. The accumulation and exhibition of these "pieces" thus serve to construct a particular interiority and subjectivity: a private environment in which men and women are linked with (and identified by) their collections of furniture and other objects.

This kind of interiority and subjectivity is the content of Zeng Hao's painting. In an interview the artist related the isolated objects in his works-stylistic furniture and audio-video equipment-to his experience in Guangzhou: "Everyday you see, in home after home, everyone is filling his (or her) home with fancy stuff. It feels weird in such an environment." His paintings do not portray these homes realistically, however. Rather, they heighten the sense of insecurity associated with the homes.

This insecurity is generated within this kind of interior space, which has no personality, intimacy, or even secrecy. It is, in fact, a void, in which well-dressed young men and women stand amidst their enviable collections of things while staring blankly at the space before them. This space is, therefore, not really an "interior" space after all, because everything in it represents knowledge shared by the society at large. As represented in Zeng Hao's painting, this space has no set boundaries, only stereotypical images. It is thus both closed and open, both personal and collective, both a microcosm and a macrocosm, both a fact and a fiction.

This interior space has its own temporality. The miniaturization of figures and things produces a compressed "private time" that is disconnected from an external "collective time." According to Susan Stewart:

The miniature does not attach itself to lived historical time. Unlike the metonymic world of realism, which attempts to erase the break between the time of everyday life and the time of narrative by mapping one perfectly upon the other, the metaphoric world of the miniature makes everyday life absolutely anterior and exterior to itself. The reduction in scale that the miniature presents skews the time and space relations of the everyday lifeworld, and as an object consumed, the miniature finds its "use value" transformed into the infinite time of reverie.

Stewart's discussion helps explain the titles Zeng Hao gives to his miniature imagery. Each of his paintings his a title that indicates a moment: December 31st, Thursday Afternoon, Yesterday, Friday 5:00 p.m., or 17:05, July 11th. There is no continuity between these moments, and we do not even know which moment is earlier or later because the year is never given. There titles thus function as fragmented signifiers that fail to link situations into a coherent sequence. As a result, his interior space, with its isolated figures and things, is always in a perpetual present.

From "Transience Chinese Experimental Art at the End of the Twentieth Century"

FIGURE 19.1
Oil on canvas, 71 x 59 in. (180 x 150 cm), collection of the artist.

FIGURE 19.2
Oil on canvas, 71 x 59 in. (180 x 150 cm), collection of the artist.

FIGURE 19.3
The cover of Ji ju yu huanjing (Furniture and environment) magazine (1998.3)
1. Hu Tu "Zexiang biantium hua - Zeng Hao zuoping di shenke xing di di" (Toward the superficial - the subversion of profundity in Zeng Hao's works), Hua Lang (Art Gallery), 10-11
4. Ibid., 61-64.
5. Quoted from Li Xianmin, "Pingman er shui di richu jingguan: Zeng Hao zuoping jiu xianggian huati" (Flat and detached scenes in ordinary life: Zeng Hao's work and some related topics). In Zeng Hao (Beijing: Zhongguo meishu yuyan hui, 1996).
8. For illustrations, see Zeng Hao.