

## Epitome of Wang Zhigang's World 王志刚的世界一角

Written by Chen Hailan 文 陈海蓝

Once an important scholar wrote an article about Dunhuang art. In his opinion, if Buddhism art and literature were not studied, half of the art history would not exist. He was sincere, and proved himself a visionary. I can't agree with him more. The Mogao Grottoes at Dunhuang gather together the resplendent essence of Buddhist mural painting. As an important component of Chinese art, its root mingled with the Western art due to such interrelations.

曾有一位重要学者撰文谈到敦煌艺术，按他的观点，如果不对佛教艺术及其文献进行研究，就等于丧失了半部艺术史的资料。他说得非常中肯，目光非常开阔，深表赞同。敦煌莫高石窟的形成，集合了佛教壁画艺术的璀璨光华。作为中国的艺术，其根源中最早与西方艺术交融的点，是包含这部分因果的。

Wang Zhigang discovers modern experience within the forms of Buddhism art. It reflects the influence of traditional Chinese art as well as the impact of Western art. It also shows the impact of living overseas for many years. In essence, the core may be less mysterious and abstruse. The artist, however, with a unique artistic point of view told us that he chose the Buddhist imagers which were obviously not from the rigorous record of Buddha statues. He further explained that he sought to show China's "public figures" in this series, still under completion. The concept of "under completion," he said, refers to more than 2000 paintings of Buddha head statues he has painted from 2008 on. The number is continuously increasing, with a connotative meaning of endlessness and everlasting.

王志刚从佛教艺术的造型发掘的现代观想体验，既包含了前述对传统中国艺术的濡染，也包含了对西洋艺术及自己多年海外生活经历的反思。其中或许并无几多玄妙、神秘，画家反而以一种独特的艺术立场告诉我们：虽然他选择了一种佛教的图式，但显然并非来自严谨的佛像造像底本；这里，他解释为是完成中的“公众人物”。他之所以说“完成中”，是指他一组已经画了2千多幅的佛头像。它们的数量仍然在增加，并且有延绵不绝之意。

The mention of "public figures" recollects Andy Warhol's "iconic images". Such historical background cannot be ignored, since it is inseparable with some important moments in history before 1986 when the artist moved to the U.S. In fact, what Wang Zhigang couldn't truly avoid was the artistic trend happened during 1982-1985 in China and two important figures instead of his own artistic practice.

关于“公众人物”的界定提法，令人想起安迪·沃霍尔的“公众人物”。这重背景，我们无法省略。这关系到艺术家1986年出国到美国之前的一些绕不开的历史段落。事实上王志刚没法真正绕开的不是自己的艺术实践，而是发生在1982—1985中国大地上的艺术风潮，以及，两个人物。

### The back of Buddha 佛背



In 1982, Robert Rauschenberg went to Anhui with his “ROCI” plan, trying to find his ideal Chinese Xuan paper. Like a pilgrim, he also wanted to testify what he believed in, treating Chinese Zen as the attitude of “noble wise men”. This trip was actually a cultural comparison and a planned exploration and rectification, with material seeking as a disguise. It could also be regarded as an echo to Andy Warhol’s show on the Great Wall. Andy was fond of China, just as Christopher Makos, his personal photographer noted. He took numerous photographs of the Great Wall, Tiananmen Square, rural towns and villages in Beijing. And after that he drew a huge portrait of Chairman Mao Zedong to express his worship and admiration. As for ideology, Andy had always used “iconic images” as eclecticism. In the meantime, he researched and self-developed American POP art, from which the audience sensed rebellion and novelty of

fashion.

1982年，罗伯特·劳申伯格带着他的“ROCI”计划草图去到安徽，寻求他心目中的中国宣纸，包括印证他朝圣者般将中国禅宗奉为“高贵的智者”的态度；这是材料名义掩盖下的一次文化比较与计划设计的探险和矫正，也可看成是同年安迪·沃霍在中国长城秀场的呼应。安迪是热爱中国的，相信如其御摄影师克里斯托弗·马可斯所言；他在天安门与长城和北京城镇乡村，留下大量影像，并在之后表达了对毛泽东的崇敬之情：绘制巨幅毛泽东画像。关于意识形态，安迪一贯地以“公众人物”予以折衷，同时他对自主研发的美式POP，掺入了一种在观者看来属于叛逆与时尚的新鲜。



Public figures 公众人物

In 1985, an international exhibition of Rauschenberg's work opened to the public under the name of "ROCI" at the National Art Museum of China and it had attracted more 300,000 viewers. What on earth did Rauschenberg intend to express? The exhibition even went to Tibet. As a cultural transmission plan customized by "ROCI" project, both Andy and Rauschenberg held the same purpose and expectation of exploring, inputting and retrieving in China.

1985年，以“ROCI”名义举办的“劳申伯格作品国际巡回展”亮相中国美术馆，超过30万人次观看量。劳申伯格想明确的是什么呢？这个展览甚至深入到了西藏。作为其对“ROCI”项目制定的中国传播计划而言，安迪与劳申伯格都对对中国有着一种开发、输入以及回收的目的与期待。

What coincided with the emerging and popular art landscape was the exuberant art circle that influenced different fields. These two people, Andy Warhol and Robert Rauschenberg made Wang Zhigang, who was the first to have drawn three identical trinity "public figures" on the canvas, retreat.

与新兴的、流行起来艺术景观吻合的是，沸沸扬扬的艺术圈并波及多个领域。安迪·沃霍尔、罗伯特·劳申伯格，这两个名字，让王志刚这位最先在画布上画下三个相同的三位一体的“公众人物”的中国艺术家，拂袖而去。

Pure land 净土 2003 Solo show, exhibition poster

*Pure Land, oil on canvas © 2003*

*pure*

paintings by *zhi gang wang*

March 7 - April 11, 2003  
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*land*

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Public figures 公众人物

However, one can find some hints. If Wang Zhigang appreciates simplicity and an untrammled way of life, and if he has no intention of being influenced by Pop Art, deep in his bones, he is Oriental. This is manifested in his spirit. He is a gentleman, with the forthrightness, freedom, and magnanimity of the seven sages who lived in the Eastern Jin Dynasty, in the third century. How could Andy trace such Chinese characters like metaphysics and demeanor of the Wei and Jin dynasties 2000 years before he made his mark? The so-called demeanor of the Wei and Jin dynasties and Ji Kang's advocacy of "not approving of virtuous people like Shang Tang, King Wu of the Zhou Dynasty, Chou Kung and Confucius, and believing in nature, instead of rigorous doctrines" which is a rebellious concept, may lie beyond Andy's understanding.

然而，某种固定的暗示总是存在着。如果说王志刚崇尚不刻意的、漫不经心地生活，并无意被POP裹挟，那么他骨子里可能更具有的是东方民族根性，使他尤为不同地在精神表现上，倾向披着东晋率性自由、玄远旷达的大氅，尚且风度翩翩。正始之音、魏晋风度，安迪能找到早他发明近两千年的中国地气？所谓“魏晋风度”，以及假嵇康之口呼吁而出的“非汤武而薄周孔，越名教而任自然”的叛逆之音，安迪很难说是能够明白的。

It is a coincidence. Two thousand years later, the charm has changed naturally. As a result, Andy's notion of "15-minutes of fame" is found to have flaws.

巧会。晚了两千年的风韵自然是不同的，由此安迪的“十五分钟”表演规定，也显得有百密一疏之虞。

Wang Zhigang at work. 工作中的王志刚



Looking at Wang Zhigang's work, we can find natural connotations, humor and amusement, regardless of theme, whether he explore the landscape, portraits, or Buddha statues. Everything seems like a puzzle but accurately reflects reality. This is related neither to Pop Art nor to Buddhism. Perhaps, the existence he wants to prove is the only proof of nonexistence. However, existence is not in contradiction with nonexistence. They are interdependent and interactive. Of course, form and vision are not established based on analysis and words. No matter how many critics standing before the artist, they are not in the eyes of the artist. The artist is the only person in his/her own eyes, and no one else. As time goes by, even the artist himself/herself may no longer be in his/ her eyes.

现在看王志刚的作品，他的风景，人物，佛像式绘画题材，穿插其中的既有自然之物的意蕴，亦不乏诙谐嬉戏之趣；如谜语又如实呈现。这一切其实非关POP，非关佛教本身，他也许想说明的存在，是唯一的不在的证据；而存在与不在亦非对立，乃为彼此互相拥有并相互丰满的关系。当然，形式与视觉性并不依赖分析与文字而建立自己，因此，不管艺术家前面站满多少评论家，都不在艺术家眼里；艺术家眼里只有艺术家，甚至没有别人，只有自己。时间久了，甚至自己也不在眼里。