

SHEN CHEN: Two-Sided Story

Shen Chen is a China born artist who lives and works in New York. Accordingly, his attitude as an artist combines aspects of Western and Chinese art in ways that do justice to both traditions, although his current series of acrylic abstractions enable him to connect with the headier moments of the New York School, which has provided him with an outlet that does justice to his extended period of time spent in America.

It is of course interesting to note that Shen's art also reflects the well-known abstract effects of Chinese art, but what Shen has done is to isolate certain kinds of gestures that connect him not only to the brilliant sublime of a painter like Agnes Martin, but also to those Chinese paintings in which the gesture reveals itself to be a prototype of abstract art, so extraordinary is Chinese art's mastery of all kinds of effects in its ink painting.

The question increasingly facing contemporary artists such as Shen is, Can styles be acknowledged in such a way that ways of painting build on each other, rather than become weakened by the contact of another culture making inroads into a visual language that is primarily historical instead of being utterly new? Shen's blurred, misty effects are deeply poetic in their intent; His brushwork, leaving traces of color on carefully prepared canvases, communicates a love of subtle reasoning that seduces his audience into a contemplative reverie, the abstractions serving as a kind of matrix enabling the extended study of the effect of Shen's hand on the surface of his paintings. The work may seem neat at first, but the artist endeavors to create an atmosphere that stands up to the recent history of painting and is seen as a way of communicating fundamental values about art. Shen is first and foremost a painter, someone intent of balancing color and form in a way that is thoroughly practiced but metaphorically new. We have, then, Shen to thank when we give ourselves over to his visionary, acutely elegant system.

Jonathan Goodman
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Jonathan Goodman, a poet and critic, writes regularly for several magazines, including *Art in America* and *Sculpture*. He is a senior editor for the quarterly *Art Asia Pacific*, which is devoted to contemporary Asian art.

沈忱的画

Jonathan Goodman

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作为一位出生于中国，生活和创作在纽约的艺术家，沈忱的艺术创作兼容并蓄着西方和中国两种不同文化艺术的精神。他近期的抽象画系列，描述了他在新约的生活经历的特殊感受。从他的绘画风格的演变，让我们联想到登峰造极时期的纽约画派。更值得令人关注的是，沈忱把中国水墨画的“用笔”和“用墨”这一形式和技巧本身，从传统绘画的概念中独立出来，使之成为他的抽象画的基本观念和视觉语汇。这不仅使他的作品有着诸如 Agnes Martin 那种极限主义绘画的智慧性，更渗透出中国艺术神秘感在水墨画这一形式中的杰出体现。

一种作品的风格的形成，能否建立在不同绘画的基础上，而不至于因另一种文化的左右，减其艺术之魅力？是否执著追求一种绘画语言的原创性而不去盲目追随新潮？这是如沈忱这样的当代艺术家越来越面临的问题。沈忱作品中流露出的那种朦胧迷离感，内含着诗般的意境，催人进入一种沉思般的幻想。墨与色彩的痕迹留在精心制作的画布上，体现出他用笔过程的情感和理性，充分显示出他以抽象的手段在画面处理上所具有的能力。透过这些看似井然有序的作品，艺术家在极力创造一种能经得起现代绘画史检验的个人风格，并强调艺术语言本身的价值。沈忱，作为一个画家，全力运筹于色彩和形式之间的关系，不仅从一种技巧上，更注重在喻意上的创新。从这个意义上来说，我们要感谢他呈现给我们的那既有理想色彩又具唯美风格的画作。

(王坪译)