

# The Artistical World of LiQin Tan

## 譚力勤的世界

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Art is continuous change instead of evolution —Picasso

A hurricane-like art trend swept over the art field of China. Artworks of Rationalism, Intuitionism and Mysticism, Conceptual and Performance Art, which represent this art trend, shook people in and out of the current Chinese art field, requiring appreciation with completely new eyes. Batches of art creation groups emerged one after another: North Art Group, Zhejiang New Space Painting Association, Zhongyuan Art Group, Zhejiang “Red 75%, Black 25%, White 5%” Group, Guangzhou 105 Studio, South Artist Salon, Hunan O-Art Group, Hunan Artists Group... converged to be the backbone of the art trend. The hurricane began in 1985 and therefore is called “85 Art Movement!”

A famous Chinese artist cried: “Don’t underestimate their existence!”

An authority in the art field alleged: “85 Art Movement with its glorious achievements will be recorded in Chinese fine arts history!”

A group of unknown pioneers of the art movement emerged among these outstanding young artists! LiQin Tan is one of them.

The artist who has just passed the age of 30 outstood with his real object work Origin and became one of the representative artists in the genre of “Conceptual and Performance Art”. Qin Xiao, an internationally famous artist, commented on Origin that, “the artwork is one of the most excellent works in contemporary Chinese art trend!”

The art history should not ignore their existence! Look, He is coming towards us!

He is a handsome youngster, who recalls me of dainty boys in movies. However, his behavior indicates his internal charm, which is quite different from his abstruse and philosophical style of works.

藝術不是進化，而是不斷變化  
——畢加索

一場如同狂飆般的美術思潮，席卷了中國的畫壇。體現這次美術思潮的理性主義、直接與神秘主義、觀念與行為藝術三大類的美術作品，震撼了當今中國畫壇圈內圈外的人物，令世人刮目相看。一批美術創作群體接二連三的出現：北方藝術群體、浙江新空間畫會、中原藝術集團、浙江“紅75%、黑25%、白5%、”集團、廣州105畫室、南方藝術家沙龍、湖南O藝術集團。湖南《畫家》群體……匯聚成美術思潮的主要中堅力量。

這次狂飆源於1985年，又曰“85美術運動！”

一位國內知名畫家疾呼：“不要低估了他們的存在！”

一位美壇權威人士斷言：“‘85美術運動’將以其輝煌的成就載入中國美術史冊！”

在這群杰出的青年畫家之中，涌現了一批鮮為人知的美術運動先鋒者！譚力勤便是其中的一個！

這位剛過“而立之年”的畫家，以其實物作品《萬物化生》脫穎而出，成為“觀念與行為藝術”派別的代表畫家之一。一位國際著名畫家蕭勤評價《萬物化生》時說：“這件作品在當代中國的美術思潮中可以算是頂出色的作品之一！”

美術史上不應該忘記他們的存在！你看，他朝我們走來了！

I habitually shake his right hand. Jesus? I feel an infant palm.

"My right hand doesn't work well," he smiles without a qualm, his left hand scorches my hand like a charcoal fire, "when I was a child, my mother said that I had stricken Bodhisattva in the South Mountain with the right hand, consequently, blasphemy and disobedience brought sequelae of poliomyelitis."

LiQin Tan laughs frankly, it is a sardonic guffaw! What a hearty laughter! I think of his original works, which always raise dissenters' arguments in the art field. In some articles of New Arts he was severely scolded as a "rebel" in fine arts circle. However, in the shouts of "rebel", his article "Future Features of Chinese Art Concept" published in Art Trend won the Best Paper Award. Yet he remained calm and composed as if nothing happened! Hey, in fact, "indomitability" has grown in his little heart!

"I will not give up my principles of art creation!" Hey, how uncompromising! Then why did you used to major in traditional Chinese painting and worship Chinese classical masters?

"It is a matter of updating aesthetic consciousness." Probably it was all for a living then. LiQin Tan's spirited and effusive face dims. A shadow of miserable bygones sweeps across his face! His bright and brooding eyes immerse in the sea of agony!

Unfortunate history resulted in a miserable life. The disaster of the Cultural Revolution drove LiQin Tan's family to a remote countryside. He was merely 15 years old and just graduated from senior high school at that time. "I can work!" For 6 full years, LiQin Tan had been striving for a living in hardship with anguished cries! However, the men in power sneered coldly: "who bore you, who feed you."

A handicapped hand and a broken heart are his company in the tormenting tribulation. The only relief is his beloved little drawing board. LiQin Tan painted landscape, portrayed people and copied masterpieces at all times and in all countries. Drawing comforted his hurt psyche! He painted and wrote with the left hand. It took him 2 months copying the textbook Body Structure for Art Use! No pains, no gains. A collective factory of the county town did a "favor" to employ Tan as a painter. While a director's son who was also handicapped and stayed in town at the same time became a worker of an enterprise owned by the whole people! He was indignant and wanted to change his living environment! From time to time, he knocked at the doors of universities, which seemed always closed to him. "Your hand denies your chance of admission!" The admission office replied coldly and ruthlessly without consultation! He felt desperate at the

這是一位相貌堂堂的青年人，使人聯想起電影裏的奶油小生。但一舉一動無不顯示他的內在吸引力，與他那深邃富有哲理的作品風格迥異。

我習慣性的向他右手握去！噫？我感覺到如同握住幼兒的手掌。

"右手不好使，"他毫不忌諱地笑笑，左手掌如同炭火烤住了我的手，"小時候，媽說我用右手打過南岳菩薩，大逆不道，犯上作亂，才落下這小兒麻痺癱後遺癱。"

譚力勤爽朗地笑了，一種嘲諷般的豪笑！痛快！我想到他創作的那些富有創造精神的作品，常常在美術界引起一些持不同藝術觀者的爭論。《新美術》有人撰文，無不痛愛地罵他為美術界的"叛逆者"。然而，他發表在《美術思潮》雜誌上的《中國藝術觀念的未來特徵》一文，在"叛逆者"的呼聲中竟得了最佳論文獎。他卻處之泰然，毫不動色！啊，原來，他幼小的心靈裏便孕育了"不屈"的本性！

"藝術創作的原則立場，我是不讓步的！"啊，倒有幾分硬性！那你以前卻為何專攻傳統國畫，拜倒在中國古典大師腳下？

"這屬於審美意識更新問題。"當時他可能是生活所迫，談及舊事，譚力勤神采飛溢的面孔暗淡了。往昔不幸生活的陰影掠上面頰！一雙明亮深邃的眼睛沉入痛苦的海河！

不幸的歷史曾釀就了不幸的生活。文化大革命的狂飆，將譚力勤一家卷入了偏僻的農村。那年他祇有15歲，高中剛畢業。"我可以工作，我可以做事！"整整6年，譚力勤在痛苦的吶喊聲裏，奔波着，尋求自己生存的一席之地！然而，手握實權的人卻冷冰冰地譏諷他："你是哪個爹娘養的，哪個爹娘負責養活你。"

一雙殘疾的手，一顆倍受創傷的心，伴隨他度過難熬的困苦生活。唯一得到解脫的是心愛的小畫板。譚力勤畫山水，描人物，臨摹古今中外名師大作，用繪畫安慰遭受創傷的心靈！他用左手畫，用左手寫。一本《藝術人體結構》教材整整抄了二個月！苦練終于得

failure: "I am also a true man!"

The tortures also nurtured his brand new creation consciousness, leading him to a new way of creation!

This makes me recall his artistic creations, which dare to breach through the inhibitions and taboos in Chinese traditional fine arts. An artist once commented that "the use of materials (real objects) such as brushes, Chinese ink blocks and ink stones in constituting the picture of Origin, which appears to be the elaboration of traditional art, is in essence an incisive ridicule and satire which not only destroys and denies the established criteria of value, but also extremely ridicules the traditional perception habits of people." I expressed the perspective to LiQin Tan.

However, he evaded my question and subtly answered: "I'm always trying to do something different from others..."

"Then why did you create Origin?"

"To melt the forces of Western Forms and Eastern Culture together to form an energetic source." Tan's comment is incisive. Its connotation is just like the comment of The Fine Art: Origin is made from real objects of brush, ink and ink stone. Brush and ink merely mean stationery in common context. But in this shape and color composition, they mean "Heaven and Earth" in the Eight Diagrams, which is also "Yin and Yang". It is related to its recomposition. Furthermore, Book of Changes says that "Heaven and Earth" create everything, that is to say, "Yin and Yang" are the origin of everything. Therefore, the combination of cultural symbolic meaning of brush and ink in common context with the meaning of brush, ink, "Heaven and Earth" in uncommon context is able to create a new meaning that human spiritual civilization works as a basic and fundamental power in the creation of the world. The new composition of symbols and new configuration of images result in new contexts so as to create conditions of new implications and meanings. There are many such examples in real life: the scene that a lama in a cassock wearing a pair of bright leather boots looks funny. The scene that the Union Jack and the Five-Star Red Flag fled together above Tian'an Men Square when Queen Elizabeth II visited China arouses recollection. It evokes profound emotional implications and creates many meanings, making people meditate on "past-present-future".

Thinking is painstaking. If the Chinese do not bring about leaps to their cultural quality, their rational thinking will never break the chains of the in-depth social environment! Thinking is going to go through great pains! LiQin Tan believes that it is an arduous course, and cannot be achieved in one or two years!

到了“報價”。縣鎮一家集體工廠需要油漆工，譚力勤被“照顧”上了。而同時殘疾留城的一位主任的兒子卻當上了全民職工！他感到憤悶，他要改變自我生存的環境！他三番五次地扣擊高等院校的殿堂，大學的門似乎永遠朝他關閉着。“你這手，不能錄取！”招生辦的回答冷酷無情，毫無商量的餘地！失敗使他感到絕望：“我也是人啊！”

這些受磨難，也培養了他嶄新的創作意識，使他走上了一條新的創作之路！

我想到了他創作的作品，那種敢于打破中國傳統美術禁錮的作品。一位美術家曾評價說：“《萬物化生》的畫面構成所採用的材料（實物）毛筆、墨塊、硯臺看來貌似傳統藝術的發揮，其實質卻是一種深刻的揶揄與諷刺，即對既定價值標準的破壞和否定，對人們素有的認識習慣進行過激的揶揄。”我對譚力勤談了這些看法。

他卻避而不談，巧妙地回答了我：“我總想做的和別人不一樣……”。

“那你創作《萬物化生》的意圖是什麼？”

“借助西方形式融合東方內涵，使兩種力匯合在一個源頭奔流”。譚力勤談鋒犀利。其內涵正于《美術》雜誌之評價：《萬物化生》是用實物的筆、墨、硯制作的。筆、墨在常規語境中是一種文具。但在這個形、色結構中，它卻具有八卦中‘乾’‘坤’的意思，也就是‘陰’‘陽’。這和它的重新構成有關，而且由于在《周易》的思想中，‘乾’‘坤’相生化出萬物，也就是我們常講的‘陰’‘陽’是萬物之源。因此，這裏常規語境中筆墨所具有的文化的象徵意義，與常規語境中筆、墨的‘乾’‘坤’的意義結合，可以產生更新的意義，即人類的精神文明在世界的創造中起着根本的、基礎的作用。這種符號的新構成，物象的新配置造成新的語境，從而產生新的意味和意義的情形。生活中不乏其例。身披黃袈裟的喇嘛腳踏一雙鏗亮的皮鞋就頗有滑稽的意味，英女王訪華時米字旗與五星紅旗一起在天安門廣場飄揚使人浮想聯翩，激起種種復雜的情感意味，生發多種意義，使人對‘過去——現在——未來’作一番深刻的思考。

“Well then why does the rational work like Origin in the ‘85 Youth Fine Arts Trend Large-scale Slide Show’ move people?”

“Have you ever heard the story of Mona Lisa with moustache?” LiQin Tan cross-questions.

I shake my head bewildered. He explains: Mona Lisa is an attractive lady in Da Vinci's works. Her engaging smile charms numerous hearts all over the world. It is considered one of the most monumental works. The oil painting of Mona Lisa made Da Vinci one of the most distinguished art masters of Italian Renaissance in the Nineteenth Century. However, in 1919 French painter Marcel Duchamp uniquely added a moustache to a copy of Mona Lisa, and named it L+H+O+O+O, which became the world famous Mona Lisa with Moustache.

“Doesn't it sound magical that the two works with distinct connotations enjoy equal fame worldwide?”

But LiQin Tan does not think so, he continues: “It is the inevitable trend of social development to break old conventions, and breed new philosophical beings,” he explains, “Europe of the early Twentieth Century was bound by old classic principles, when the classic principles had become the heaviest burden for free will. It was the cultural targets which were no longer targets of free will that killed reason and free will cruelly. At that time, the targets that had once been yearned turned into pestilence and monsters that people tried to get rid of. When people sensed more or less such oppression, Mona Lisa with Moustache appeared and became a world famous work.”

He mentions creation of other young painters tortuously, “The appearance of new traditional Chinese paintings by Wenda Gu, a teacher from Department of Traditional Chinese Paintings of Zhejiang Academy of Art has received diverse responses. This also explains this point. China is longing brand new forms of fine arts.”

However, it was not long before LiQin Tan, living in such Chinese cultural background and proud of himself, created works that were greatly praised by the Chinese seniors one after another.

It was already summer of 1978 when LiQin Tan was kindly admitted as a student by the department of art. The breeze of reform and opening up brought fresh air. LiQin Tan was no longer satisfied with the traditional teaching methods of instilling skills and knowledge. He turned his eyes to a wider world of art. He recalls his university life as “going deep down the serious philosophical realistic life, seeking for substantiality and ideology of free spirit, surpassing elder teachers and walking on the road of future.” He realized painfully that the highest principle of beauty in art so called “between likeness and unlikeness”

思考是一件痛苦的事情，若中國人的文化素質不能來個飛躍，理性的思考永遠無法衝破深層社會環境的束縛！思考還要經過巨大的陣痛！譚力勤認為這是一個艱巨的歷程，非一年兩年所能解決！

“那麼理性作品（如《萬物化生》）在‘85青年美術思潮大型幻燈展’中引起觸動，個中緣由何在？”

“你聽說過‘帶胡須的蒙娜麗莎’的故事嗎？”譚力勤反問道！

我困惑地搖搖頭。他解釋道：在達芬奇的筆下，蒙娜麗莎是一位迷人的女郎，她那動人的微笑風靡了世界無數觀衆的心，被公認為不朽的作品。《蒙娜麗莎》的油畫使達芬奇成為十九世紀意大利文藝復興時代杰出的藝術大師之一。然而，1919年，法國畫家馬賽爾·杜尚卻別出心裁地在《蒙娜麗莎》的復制品上加上小胡子，題為《L.H.O.O.Q》‘帶胡須的蒙娜麗莎’應運而生，也成為舉世矚目的杰作。

“兩幅內涵截然不同的作品，同享世界聲譽，那麼不可思議。”

譚力勤卻不以為然，繼續說着：“這是社會發展的必然趨勢，打破舊的成規，孕育新的、富有哲理的新生命，”他解釋道“二十世紀初的歐洲，被陳腐的古典原則捆綁着，古典原則已成為一種對自由意識最沉重的壓抑，正是在某種文化指標已不在是人們自由意識所願意企及的目標時，這一指標便成了對新事物、對理性及對自由意志最殘酷的扼殺。此時，這一人們曾向往過的目標就會變成人們極力擺脫的瘟疫和病魔。正是在人們或多或少地感受到這種壓抑的時候，‘帶胡須的蒙娜麗莎’的出現，從而成為舉世名作。”

他迂回曲折又談起其他青年畫家的創作，浙江美院國畫系教師谷文達全新國畫之產生，引起不同的反響，也可以說明這一點。中國正渴望嶄新的美術樣式出現。

然而，曾幾何時，譚力勤卻是生活在這種中國文化背景下，洋洋自得，創作了一幅又一幅深受元老們賞識的作品。

當大學敞開大門，仁慈地接受譚力勤能作為美術系學生時，已是1978年

had to be broken and discarded. Artists may seek for likeness, perfect likeness, complete unlikeness, between likeness and unlikeness of art works, or unlikeness, perfect unlikeness and complete unlikeness of art works. After he came to the editorial department of Painters of Hunan Fine Arts Publishing House and became an editor, he explored boldly to develop a new style of art creation, promoted a batch of works by "Chinese young avant-garde painters" who has so far not been understood by the society, and created a great sensation both at home and abroad. He himself also set his steps on the road of challenging the peak of fine arts.

The 6th Session of National Art Exhibition was held in Beijing in 1984. LiQin Tan's traditional Chinese painting Harvesting Family won the Excellence Award, which, however, did not interest him. In the seminar, he declared the bold and brand-new viewpoint: Chinese art is now at the turning point from centralization to decentralization. Future art trend is bound to go from bottom to up, and be diversified, miniaturized and popularized. Centralization, standardization and large-scales are against atheistic concepts." At that time, many people of the art field regarded him as a youngster who didn't know the immensity of heaven and earth but with bold assertions, while some young bloods came to his side. Soon, in the art circles there surges a hurricane—"85 Art Movement". "This is a form of revolution, a trend of thoughts, and a kind of history. It is inevitable!" said LiQin Tan. "The movement demonstrates a strong trend of converse return to the axis age of Chinese culture, presents the eastern spirit in western materialized forms. Such an artistic trend shall not create any fixed system, or seek for eternity or permanency. It ceaselessly denies others as well as itself. It is a "revolution" that shall never come to an end. There shall appear no masters in future ages as expected by the public. The age of "one mountain crest dwarfing all peaks under its feet" has gone for ever. Today ninety-nine out of one hundred artists have their own artistic pursuits."

He has no desire to be an official, let alone a leader of any kind! But the art movement has pushed him head of the tide time and time again.

This is the world created by a disabled! We may never be able to fathom his profound thoughts just as well as his works, but I must say:

LiQin Tan, you are marvelous!

Youth

Hunan Youth Magazine, v72, 6(1), p28-30, 1987.  
《年青人》湖南年青人雜誌社

夏大了。改革、開放之風吹來了陣陣清新的空氣。譚力勤已不能滿足于培訓技巧、灌輸知識的教學方法，他將視野投向了更廣闊的美術世界。他回憶大學生生活時說：“深入嚴肅的富有哲理的現實生活，尋找心靈自由的實體和思想，越過年長的先生，走在未來的路上。”他痛楚地感覺到在藝術上所謂美的最高法則“似與不似之間”必須砸碎，藝術家既可追求藝術作品的似，酷似，完全似，似與不似之間，也可以追求藝術作品的不似，一點不似，根本不似。當他來到湖南美術出版社《畫家》編輯部任編輯後，大膽地在藝術創作上獨辟蹊徑，推出了一批迄今未被社會所理解的“中國年輕前衛派畫家”的作品，在國內外引起了轟動！他自己也邁開了向美術峰巔進擊的步伐。

1984年第6屆全國美展在北京舉行。儘管譚力勤的國畫《豐盛人家》獲優秀獎，他卻提不起任何興趣！譚力勤在討論會上大放“厥詞”：“我國的藝術正處在由集體走向分散的夾縫時期，美術的未來趨勢不然自下而上，多樣化，小型化，民間化。集中化，標準化，大型化是一種落後的審美意識。”美術界一些人將他視為不知天高地厚的“毛頭青”，“不讓為道”，而一批年青的朋友卻走近了他的身邊！不久，中國的畫壇上終於掀起了一股狂飆——“85美術運動”。“這是一種變革，一種思潮，一種歷史，不可拒絕！”譚力勤說。“這場運動呈現出一股強大的向中國文化的軸心時代逆向回歸趨勢，用某些西方物化形式來體現東方精神內涵！這種藝術趨勢不會創造出什麼固定的體系，也不追求永恆和不朽，它不斷否定別人，也不斷否定自己，永遠是一場未完成的‘革命’。未來的時代並不向人們預料的那樣出現大師。‘一峰崛起，凌架群丘’的時代一去不返。而今，一百個人就有九十九個不同的藝術追求目標。”

他無意為官，更不要充當任何領頭人物！但這場美術運動將他推向一個浪頭又一個浪頭。

這是一個殘疾人開辟的天地！你我也許永遠無法剖析他深邃的思想內涵！正于他的作品！但我要說：

譚力勤，好樣的！