



回藝 reframing

writings on
the art of michael cherney
秋麥藝術作品評述

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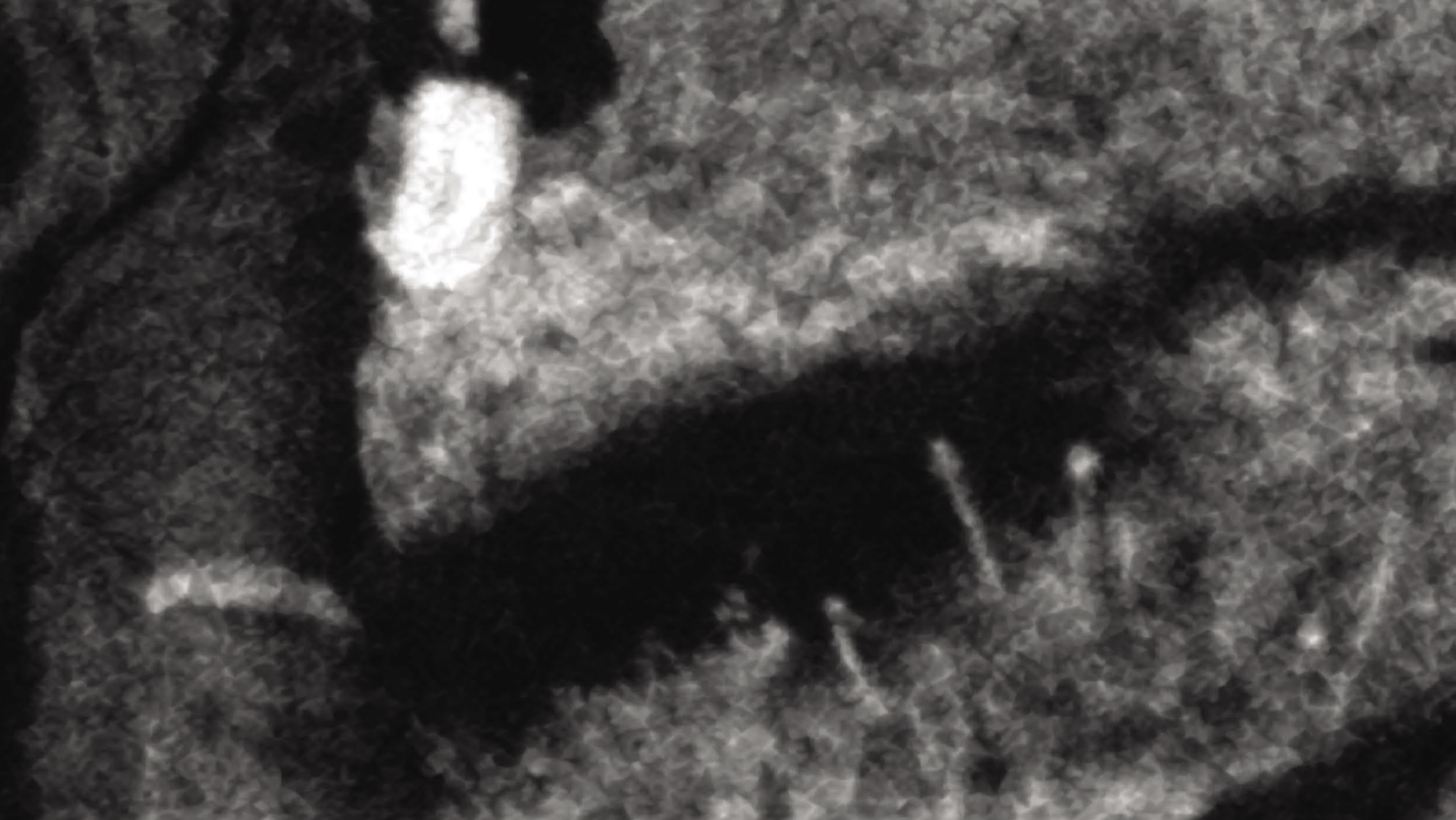
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秋麥個展輯錄
百年印象畫廊

Curator: Britta Erickson
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Beijing, China
中國・北京





When I first encountered Michael Cherney's art I felt both surprise and pride. What surprised me was that Michael, an artist who has grown up in the United States, could penetrate to the essence of traditional Chinese art to the point where he has been able to blend its spirit and materials with new ideas and sentiments to create a new artistic form that is both at variance and in harmony with Chinese tradition. My feelings of pride stemmed from the vitality of Chinese art, which possesses such an extraordinary ability to adapt and regenerate over countless generations; the key is to have artists who understand the value of this vitality, and who both dare to and have the talent to utilize it. Michael is steeped in the Chinese artistic tradition, yet he is not constrained by set rules. His acute sense of discernment enables him to choose elements from traditional Chinese art that are suitable for his ideas and combine various media and methods to form bold experiments that express his impressions of life. Michael's art is a fusion of both traditional and modern, Eastern and Western; nonetheless, the work is in essence a manifestation of traditional Chinese art. He is a truly imaginative and creative artist; these skills should serve him well during future exploration.

Michael's achievements thus far are impressive; we wish him even greater success down the road.

Shao Dazhen

Professor, Central Academy of Art; Director, Chinese Artist Association Theory Committee

面對秋麥的作品，我感到吃驚，也感到自豪。吃驚的是，秋麥，一位生長在美國的藝術家，能如此深入到中國傳統藝術的精髓，用其精神，用其材料，注入新的思考和新的感情，創造出源于中國傳統又異于中國傳統的新的藝術樣式。自豪的是，中華民族的文化精神和藝術成就，確實有非同尋常的活力，它在現代社會和遙遠的未來，都會有適應和再生的能力，關鍵在于有懂得它的價值和敢于及善于運用它的人。秋麥沉緬于古老的中國藝術傳統，但他不泥古不化。他有很好的眼光，有很好的判斷力，從中國傳統藝術中選擇適合自己創造的資源和元素，結合各種新的媒材和手段，做大膽的試驗和實踐，來表達自己在現實生活中的感受。他的藝術是傳統和現代、東方和西方的嫁接和融合，而主體則是中國傳統藝術的彰現。這充分說明他是一位非常有想象力和創造性的藝術家，而他身上所具有的這種最可貴的品質，將會推動他勇往直前，探求未來之路。

秋麥已經取得了可喜的成就，我們祝他未來更大的成功！

邵大箴

中央美術學院教授，中國美術家協會理論委員會主任

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Foreword

by Britta Erickson

We live in an age of short attention spans and rushed days. Sound bites replace news; fast food replaces leisurely meals; e-mail replaces letter-writing and telephone conversations. Frenetic activity seems an end in itself, ironically resulting in less time and patience for the new, unless it be sensational or bombastic or readily accessible. The artist Michael Cherney has turned away from this mind-set. He examines minutiae for meaning, and expresses that meaning in labor-intensive works of art that require the audience to stop, look, and think.

In searching for meaning in minutiae, Cherney is following a practice described by the British poet and artist William Blake (1757-1827):

*To see a world in a grain of sand
And a heaven in a wild flower,
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand
And eternity in an hour.¹*

While Blake drew a sense of the vast universe from an examination of nature's smallest components, Cherney looks at cultural fragments to extrapolate larger cultural meaning. For his *Passages of Bronze and Stone*, Cherney pored over rubbings of inscriptions on Shang and Zhou period vessels and stelae to extract details expressive of an aesthetic wholeness. He then translated these details into seals, to be reproduced as a book of seal imprints, so that others can readily appreciate the form and beauty of the selected details. In a way, we can think of the selected details as an unorthodox kind of *objet trouvé* — while not a physical object, nevertheless a found form to be employed in a work of art.

A second work by Cherney, *Shadows of Ancient Peng*, shows the extreme to which an appreciation of detail can be taken, featuring very small details of rubbings of ancient carvings enlarged to the point of abstraction. The resulting images are reminiscent of splashed ink landscape paintings, and also call to mind the eleventh century master Guo Xi's "shadow walls." Guo Xi is said to have based landscape paintings on the irregular convexities and concavities of a roughly plastered wall:² there is a history in Chinese art of basing a work of art on chance-created forms. *Shadows of Ancient Peng* belongs to this tradition, as does *Passages of Bronze and Stone*, albeit in a less obvious fashion.

All the works in this exhibition involve fresh visions of the familiar. While some look to detail for meaning, others create meaning from a novel vantage: works in the *Bounded by Mountains* series each are based on a narrow slice of a photograph. *The Northern Song Spirit Road*, from this series, depicts a set of statues lining a road from two distinct perspectives.

The kinds of words we can use to describe the mechanisms of meaning in Cherney's works remind of us of the close ties between seeing, thinking, and connecting to the larger world; and they relate also to the processes of photography: The *focus* of the work, a fresh *vision* of the world, the *perception* of a grand aesthetic, and so on. Through his camera, Michael Cherney shares with us an alternative window on the world, hinting at the rewards resulting from close and thoughtful scrutiny of the visual realm.

¹ "Auguries of Innocence."

² Deng Qun, *Huaji* ["Painting" Continued], Book 9 (ca. 1167), in *Early Chinese Texts on Painting*, Susan Bush and Hsio-yen Shih (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985), p. 122.

前言

林似竹

我們生活在一個注意力不能夠持久的匆匆忙忙的時代。三言兩語的提述取代了新聞，快餐取代了悠閒的飯食，電子郵件取代了書信和電話。忙亂似乎成了目的之本身，對新鮮的事物反倒缺乏時間與耐心，除非它們是轟動一時的、誇大其詞的、或者唾手可得的。藝術家秋麥卻從這樣的心態中擺脫出來。他從微小中找出涵義，再通過精工細作的藝術作品來表達這個涵義。他的作品使得觀者停步、注視、思考。

在微小中尋找涵義，秋麥正實踐著英國詩人、藝術家威廉·布雷克（1757-1827）所描述的：

一粒沙裡見世界
一朵花裡見天國
手掌裡盛住無限
一剎那便是永劫¹

通過對大自然中最微小顆粒的觀察，布雷克體會到了廣大宇宙的意義；秋麥則從文化碎片中領會更廣博的文化內涵。在他的作品《金石窺》中，秋麥細心研究商周碑鼎文拓片，選出富於表現整體美學的局部，把這些局部轉化成印章，使它們重新以印譜的形式出現，使觀者對被甄選細節的形態與美感一目瞭然。在某種程度上，我們可以把這些被甄選的細節看作一種非正統的拾得物——儘管它們不是有形的物件，但仍然以一種被拾得的形象被用於一個藝術作品當中。

秋麥的另一件作品，《古彭城影》把古代碑刻拓片的微小細節放大至抽象，從而展示了對一個細節的欣賞可以達到的極至。最終的影像使人聯想起潑墨山水畫，也令人想到十一世紀大師郭熙的“影壁”：據記載，郭熙在泥牆凹凸不平的陰影上以墨隨其形跡畫山水。²在中國藝術中向來就有利用偶發的形象進行創作的傳統。《古彭城影》便屬於這個傳統，《金石窺》也是，只不過沒有那麼明顯。

這個展覽中所有的作品都是對熟悉事物的新鮮視覺展現。有的審視細節的意義，有的則從新穎的視角創造意義：《山重集》系列裏的每一本冊頁都是一張照片中狹窄的一條切片。其中，《北宋神道》表現了從兩個相反的角度所看到的一條有石像守候的道路。

用來描述秋麥作品涵義結構的語言使我們想到：觀察、思考、以及與外在世界的連接這三个方面是緊密相關的；同時也讓我們想到攝影的過程：作品的焦點，對世界的新鮮視覺展現，對宏大美學的感受，等等。通過他的相機，秋麥與我們分享一個另樣的看世界的窗口，暗示我們近距離地、深思地審視視覺世界所帶來的竊喜與收穫。

¹ 《天真的預言》，豐子愷譯本。

² 據鄧椿《畫繼》所記：郭熙“令圻者不用泥掌，止以手槍泥於壁，或凹或凸，俱所不問。乾則以墨隨其形跡，暈成峰巒林壑，加之樓閣人物之屬，宛然天成，謂之影壁”。鄧椿：《畫繼》（約1167年），卷九，見 *Early Chinese Texts on Painting* [中國早期繪畫史文集]，Susan Bush 與 Hsio-yen Shih 合著（哈佛大學出版社，1985），頁122。

Replicas of Replicas, Games about Games

by Yin Jinan

Michael Cherney's work serves as a kind of art specimen: an integration of the external mounting form of a traditional Chinese book or calligraphy and painting album with an internal language of art that lies between the concrete and the abstract. Actually, breathing within the work is also a kind of subjective art approach that flows between clarity and elusiveness; this is what I consider to be of greater importance.

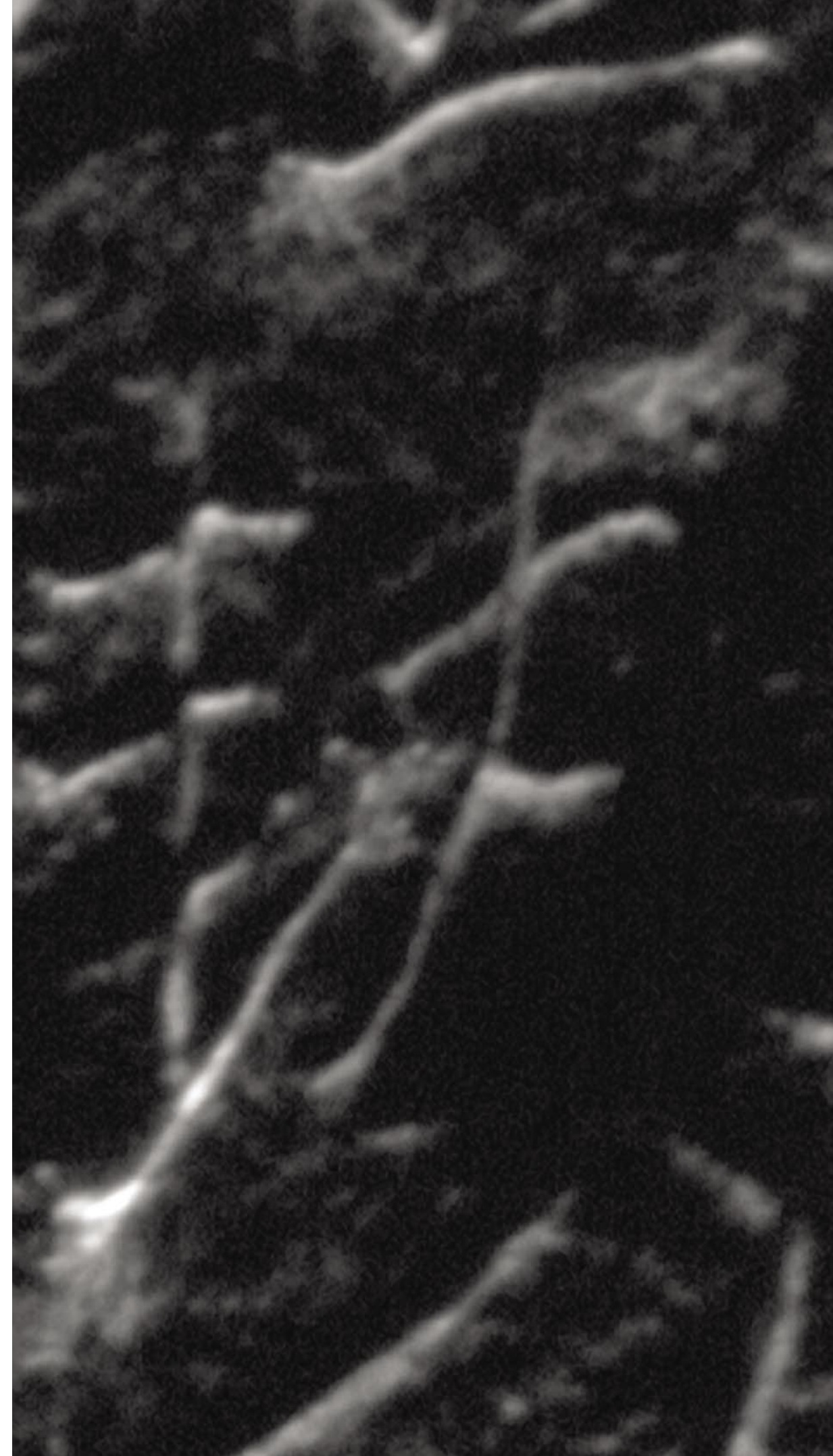
Michael's approach to art is a bit complicated, situated in a conceptual tension. I do not want to merely state whether or not he respects or betrays Chinese cultural tradition; this type of discussion sidesteps the core issue. His affinity for and appreciation of Chinese traditional mounting form is as exquisite as his affinity for and appreciation of China's classic steles, historic sites, sacred mountains, painting and calligraphy; both are quite obvious. To imitate, to portray, to make rubbings of traditional classic images and relics, are all means of showing respect; even today these actions are still considered very traditional. However, this is only one tendency in Michael's approach to art.

Whether past or present, paintings, rubbings or photographs, in contrast to nature, are not "genuine items." They are in a sense only "replicas;" the truth they portray is the spirit of the artist. To continuously enlarge or abstract the so-called replica leads to the emergence of a "replica of a replica." In the process, "losing the original," as opposed to "imitating the original," is effectively utilized and emphasized. Highlighting the artist's individual subjectivity and creativity through the process of "losing the original" is referred to as "free copy" (*yi lin* 意臨) in Ming and Qing dynasty literati painting; a playful approach (literati ink-play) that is given free reign to reach its full potential via the artist's unrestrained actions.

Michael's specific characteristics lie in his taking the playful approach of the traditional Chinese literati and the rules of these games that they play, along with classic images and relics, and entering into a new round of games with them. I call this "games about games of classic culture," within which elements of pastiche and deconstruction can be found. This clearly is no longer the traditional model of "I make commentary on the six classics in search of their true meaning, I use the six classics as commentary on my own views;" rather, it is the contemporary model of "the classics play with me and I play with the classics."

Therefore, Michael Cherney's works of art are replicas of replicas of Chinese classic culture, and games about games.

Yin Jinan (1958-), Professor of Art History, Dean of the Department of Art History, and



Dean of the College of Humanities at China's Central Academy of Fine Art. Professor of graduate studies in Authentication of Calligraphy and Painting, China State Cultural Relics Bureau. Regular columnist for Dushu magazine. Scholar of Chinese classical art history, authentication of calligraphy and painting, and critical studies of contemporary art. Major publications: Duzi koumen – jinguan zhongguo dangdai zhuliu yishu [Knocking on the Door Alone – a Close Look at Chinese Contemporary Mainstream Art] (Beijing: Sanlian, 1993); Houniang zhuyi – jinguan zhongguo dangdai wenhua he meishu [Post-Motherism / Stepmotherism – a Close Look at Contemporary Chinese Culture and Art] (Beijing: Sanlian, 2002).

贗品的贗品 遊戲的遊戲

尹吉男

秋麥的作品提供了一種藝術樣本：中國傳統書籍和書畫冊頁的裝裱形式和介於具象和抽象之間的藝術語言的內外結合。實際上，還有一種若隱若現的主觀藝術態度在其中呼吸，這是我更重視的。

秋麥的藝術態度有些複雜，處在精神的張力之中。我不想簡單地說他尊重中國文化傳統還是背叛傳統文化，這樣的討論方式很難切中要害。他對中國傳統的裝裱形式的精微的欣賞傾向一如他對中國經典碑帖、古跡、名山、書畫的精微的欣賞傾向，同樣讓人一目瞭然。模仿、寫真、拓印，都是對傳統經典圖像和痕跡的尊重，這種行為即便在今天仍然會被視為很傳統。但這僅僅是秋麥藝術態度中的一種傾向。

不論過去還是現在，繪畫、拓片或照片相對於大自然來說它們並非“真品”，而是真正意義上的“贗品”，是具有精神真實性的“贗品”而已。而將這類所謂的贗品再繼續放大或抽象，從而又形成了“贗品之贗品”。在上述過程中，“失真”而非“逼真”被有效地利用和強調。中國明清時代的文人畫的“意臨”方式就是在“失真”的過程中凸顯了藝術家個人的主觀性和創造性，遊戲態度（文人墨戲）在自由自在中發揮到極致。

秋麥的特殊性在於：他對傳統的中國文人的遊戲態度和遊戲方式連同經典圖像和痕跡又進行了一次新的遊戲。我稱之為“關於經典文化的遊戲的遊戲”，這其中含有戲仿和解構因素。這顯然不是“我注六經，六經注我”的傳統模式，而是“經典戲我，我戲經典”的當代模式。

因此，秋麥的藝術是關於中國經典文化的贗品之贗品，遊戲的遊戲。

尹吉男（1958-），中央美術學院中國美術史教授，中央美術學院人文學院院長，兼美術史系主任。國家文物局中國書畫鑒定專業碩士研究生導師。《讀書》雜誌專欄作家。長期從事中國古代藝術史、書畫鑒定研究和當代藝術批評。主要著作：《獨自叩門—近觀中國當代主流藝術》三聯書店，1993；《后娘主義—近觀中國當代文化和美術》三聯書店，2002。

Thin Slices: Michael Cherney's Images of China

by Hui-shu Lee

"... the truth is ... thin slicing often delivers a better answer than more deliberate and exhaustive ways of thinking ..."

"When our unconscious engages in thin-slicing, what we are doing is an automated, accelerated unconscious version of ..."

The above quotations on "the theory of thin slices" by New York Times best-selling author Malcolm Gladwell are excerpts from his book *Blink: the Power of Thinking without Thinking*, which explores the human mind through modern science and social psychology. Gladwell's explication of "the theory of thin slices" precisely describes the essence of Michael Cherney's creation, the *Bounded by Mountains* series; it also reflects the Chinese aesthetics of "seeing the grand within the small."¹

Memories of my first meeting with Michael Cherney are still quite vivid. It was as if he were a reflection of the subject matter in his long, narrow *Bounded by Mountains* album that he first shared with me: the footsteps and outline of a solitary walker, seen from behind, opening up into our chance encounter (album V7).

It was an autumn afternoon in sunny Los Angeles several years ago. I had only recently begun my teaching work at UCLA when this young man made an appointment to visit me in my office and share his work. My first suspicion was that this would be yet another distraction coming through the door of a professor of art history at a renowned university. I grudgingly prepared to receive the guest, to give a cursory glance. Who would have imagined that the fascination that began on that day continues still.

Just like the solitary walker captured in his V7 album, Michael also carried a green, Chinese canvas bag. From within it this slender and gentle man carefully removed a traditional Chinese accordion-fold album, and calmly began page by page to reveal the contents before me. My eyes lit up with the rhythm of the unfolding imagery and I thought: "This Westerner has got something here." I made a call to invite my colleague in ancient Chinese art and archaeology, Professor Lothar van Falkenhausen, to come over to look at his work together. Immediately upon seeing the work Lothar began to praise it profusely, describing it as "extraordinary."

I recall that the initial reason for Michael's visit was to ask my advice on whether or not and how he might incorporate calligraphy in his work. He delighted in talking about his studies in calligraphy and seal carving. At that time the album he showed was not yet in the final form it would take in the *Bounded by Mountains* series, but one could



already see its fundamental potential; I therefore advised that although it was certainly helpful to learn calligraphy and seal carving, it was not necessary to add calligraphy to the work, let alone to add seals. Given that the work already possessed tremendous evoking richness, calligraphy or seals would be superfluous. More importantly, the work possessed a modern sense of abstraction and elusiveness which should not be violated. At the time I was not sure if he took these frank suggestions to heart. However in visits to follow, Michael's surprisingly quick progress earned my newfound respect; his work evolved piece by piece, each living up to the promise offered by the first "blink."

Album V7 still remains fresh in my memory for a couple of reasons. First is the autobiographical nature of the subject matter, deeply reflecting the artist's heart and mind. In particular is his experience of "rebirth," having overcome a life-threatening struggle with cancer at a young age. The solitary young man striding confidently forward is perhaps an unintentional metaphor, yet one that is uncontrived and valid nonetheless. Second is the creative format of Michael's work and the aesthetic experience that it evokes. As an example, allow me to return to my first experience with album V7. When the work was revealed page by page before me, my eyes immediately focused on the long, narrow composition; as the image rhythmically emerged like an animated picture, my pupils drifted about, zooming in and out of focus. At first it seemed hard to find a focal point; grayness and mottled imagery dominated my vision. Then objects began to take shape; upon discerning the walking feet I understood the gray to be the ground. I then made out a package, a canvas bag, a back and a head, eventually revealing the entire rear view of a figure and buildings in the mid-ground, with the scene fading out in to the high trees and electric lines above, gradually disappearing in to the endless void behind the branches. These sequentially superimposed images give the viewer an extraordinary three- and four-dimensional viewing experience. There is both expectation and surprise. One cannot help but linger over the enchanting and thought-provoking imagery.

The subject matter for album V7 as well as for all of the other albums that make up Michael's *Bounded by Mountains* series is drawn from the photographs he has taken during his travels in China. However, what separates them from other, more common photographic work is that each album contains only one thin slice of one single photograph. After digital conversion, extreme enlargement and compositional slicing, the images are printed page by page on to *xuan* paper and mounted to form a traditional Chinese accordion style album. Michael clearly describes this in his own introduction to the *Bounded by Mountains* series:

Each album describes one enlarged slice of a single 35mm frame of film. The individual pages bring distinctiveness to various aspects of the panorama. When traveling among the mountain pages, one can get lost in detail. Rising above the peaks hints at something larger.²

These methods of production and mounting remind me of the *Book from the Sky* and its creator, Xu Bing.³ Michael is an acquaintance of Xu Bing, and admires him greatly; thus

Michael's use of an arcane album form to "make new wine using an old method" might have been inspired in part by Xu Bing's work. Both artists also share a common trait: the meticulousness and deliberation that they apply to the creative process and to the overall presentation of their work can be likened to the concentrated rigor of the ascetic monk. Xu Bing's *Book from the Sky* was meticulously carved and printed block by block; Michael Cherney's *Bounded by Mountains* collection was edited strip by strip and printed page by page with painstaking effort. Although this kind of creation and workmanship show the inventiveness of the artist, the actual theory and process are not all that complicated. The key is having that special eye for composing and editing those strips of images which, whether vertical or horizontal, will look simple and spontaneous yet also alluring. I think this trait might be attributed in part to the deep influence of his family, inherited from Michael's renowned grandfather whose creative spirit made an impact on the history of photography. More importantly are the experiences that have come about through Michael's years as a "son-in-law of China," receptively immersed in Chinese sensibilities, surroundings and culture!⁴

Michael's works travel horizontally and vertically through Chinese time and space, from the rivers, monks and nomads of the Tibetan plateau (H2, H4, H5, and H8) to a woodcutter crossing a rope bridge in Sichuan (V9) to the grandeur of Mt. Hua in Shaanxi (T1 through T5); from the "Buried Crane Inscription" of ancient times (Y1) to the tender Buddha faces of the medieval grottoes of Dazu (H3) to the solemn Northern Song Spirit Road (S1 and S2) to the ephemeral images of a transforming contemporary China. He is like a pilgrim, paying homage time and again, absorbing, extracting, and creating sporadic blinks and fragmentary truths in the kaleidoscopic space-time of China.

For a Chinese art historian, both the distinctive "sliced imagery" and format of Michael Cherney's art are classical and modern at the same time. The imagery (or segments, or excerpts) resulting from the enlargement of slices shifts between the abstract and the concrete. The work thus possesses breathtaking charm, and offers limitless imaginary space for the viewer. Especially the field of vision, alternately expanding and congealing as if seen through lenses of shifting focal lengths, becomes at once micro- and macrocosmic. This is what I refer to as the aesthetic experience derived from "the power of thin slicing," as well as the essence of "seeing grandeur within the small" in traditional Chinese aesthetics. The only difference is that whereas traditionally in China "seeing the grand within the small" was associated with landscape painting, the subject matter of Michael Cherney's work is all encompassing, including figures and objects as well as scenery. Furthermore, the presentation of the work either horizontally or vertically via an accordion-fold evokes a sense of combination and integration of the three basic forms of presentation and appreciation in traditional Chinese art: the horizontal hanging scroll, the vertical hanging scroll and the album. A particular work, the *Buried Crane Inscription*, is presented as a pair of vertical albums, and is thus a wonderful variation on the traditional calligraphy couplet. The three albums V4, V5, and V6 can be considered as three distinct albums or as a series: the long braid, the devotion in prayer, the burning red sticks of incense – each stirring on their own, yet which together form an exquisite triptych. Upon opening the



horizontal *Spirit Road* and *Mt. Hua* albums, one realizes that the temporal and spatial structure as well as the aesthetic experience derived from the work is similar to that which one encounters with the classical landscape scroll. Yet Michael's ingenious editing skills allow the interplay of the varying levels of imagery – from extreme detail to full frame to full panorama – to shift between tangibility and elusiveness, and thus bring in a modern sensibility. Let us consider album S2, the imperial tomb statuary of the *Northern Song Spirit Road* of Gong county in Henan province, as an example. Stone figures and animals standing

ancient watch over a wild field share alternating distances with the surrounding trees and landscape. While scanning through this album one's eyes must constantly adjust their focus, sometimes drawn in close to individual stone statues, sometimes fading out to the fields and distant wood, intersecting and elusive, ebbing and flowing from page to page – the epitome of montage in film and surrealism in painting. In complete tranquility and harmony, all of the elements play together in a symphony of silent poetry. It rises here and falls there: melodious sound and meaning. Suddenly, near the end of the album, a

modern motorcyclist bursts on to the scene, breaking the silence, and bringing a dynamic crescendo to the piece. In this flash of a moment, a dialogue occurs between tradition and modernity in which they clash, overlap and integrate in front of the eyes of the viewer.

Lastly, let us turn to the captivating images of contemporary China that pass through Michael's lens. Perhaps it is because he is a foreign voyager that he naturally poses a detached and unique aesthetic sense towards China. Or maybe, like the phoenix of Chinese lore reborn from the ashes with the heavenly eye of enlightenment, Michael's bout with cancer and confrontation with his own mortality has led to a keen sense of observation which allows him to not only roam freely in the Chinese landscape and in the time and space of history, but also to excel at capturing fascinating images of present-day China. From an old bicycle rider surrounded by vibrant wild flowers in the countryside (H6) to innocent village boys in a grassy field (H1), from smiling Bodhisattvas (H3), carefree, red-robed monks (H4), a long-braided peasant woman's pious offering of incense (V4, V5, V6), to the striking wide-angle line of Tibetan faces inside a tent (H8); in the interplay of shadow and light there is a sense of loss as well as a sense of worldliness. In the flash of a moment each slice of imagery is a vivid portrait of China's boundless diversity. And this colorful range of humanity, along with the actual mountains and rivers that flow within his lens, compose the movements of *Bounded by Mountains*.

And where does the true essence of *Bounded by Mountains* lie? It can be summed up by the words of Montaigne that led Michael to the title of *Bounded by Mountains*:

What of a truth that is bounded by these mountains and is falsehood to the world that lives beyond?

Michel Eyquem de Montaigne, *Essays* 2-12

As I write these words I am awakened to the meaning of the poetic lines of Jia Dao (793-865), who describes the whereabouts of the Daoist master picking herbs: "He is in these mountains, but the clouds are so thick, who knows where?"⁵ Reaching that moment where words must come to an end, Wang Wei (701-761)'s equally famous lines flash through my mind:

The river flows out beyond Heaven and Earth,
The color of the mountains, half there, half not there.⁶

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1 Malcolm Gladwell, *Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking* (New York: Little, Brown & Company, 2005) p. 23, p. 34. See Chapter 1 (pp. 18-47), "The Theory of Thin Slices." For the explication of the theory of "seeing the grand within the small," see Susan Bush, *The Chinese Literati on Painting: Su Shih (1037-1101) to Tung Ch'i-ch'ang (1555-1636)* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1971).

2 See Michael Cherney's web site: <http://www.qiumai.net/scj/indexe.html>

3 For Xu Bing's *Book from the Sky*, see Britta Erickson, *Words Without Meaning, Meaning Without Words: The Art of Xu Bing* (Washington, D.C. and Seattle: A. M. Sackler Gallery and University of Washington Press, 2001).

4 Michael Cherney's grandfather, Charles Hoff, was a renowned photographer for the *New York Daily News* newspaper. Hoff's legacy is comprised primarily of sports photography, the most striking of which are his photographs of boxers. The invention of stroboscopic and flash lighting by Hoff and his colleagues allowed Hoff to transform portraits of athletes into radical figure studies. Hoff's most famous photograph was of the explosion of the zeppelin *Hindenburg* at Lakehurst, New Jersey in 1937. Michael Cherney majored in East Asian studies at university, and over the years has continued intensive study of Chinese language and culture; his marriage to Chinese-born Dong Huang Cherney makes him a true son-in-law of China.

5 Jia Dao (793-865), "Searching for, and Not Finding, the Hermit." See *Yu Ding Quan Tang Shi*, Volume 574, p. 22. (Full poem: Beneath the pines I asked the boy, the master's gone in search of medicine, he is in these mountains, but the clouds are so thick, who knows where?)

6 Wang Wei (701-761), "Upon Sailing the Han River." See Stephen Owen, *Traditional Chinese Poetry and Poetics: Omen of the World* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), p. 75.

小中現大 —— 秋麥《山重集》中的大千中國

李慧淑

瞬間片段所傳達的真理，往往勝過於刻意地全面窮搜 …

渾然無意間領略的片段，在不知不覺中，一切自然而然地加速凝聚 …

以上是紐約時報，暢銷排行榜作家 Malcolm Gladwell 在其名著《瞬息之間》一書中，對“觀微知著”的“切片”理論，通過現代科學與社會心理學的方法，探討人類思維的革命性論著。其中對所謂“以片概全”真理的精闢闡發，實在是再貼切不過地道出秋麥《山重集》創作的神髓，同時也映合了中國“小中現大”的美學哲思。¹

結識秋麥的前後總總，至今印象明晰。一如他《山重集》中，那一細直長條的〈背影〉（V7）一作，²隨著主題中那蹣跚獨行者的步伐與身影，劃開了這一段交錯的序曲。

那是千禧年初，一個秋日的午後，陽光亮麗的洛城。我剛到加州大學洛城校區（UCLA）上任不久。有個年青人約了來辦公室給我看他的作品。本以為這又是忝居名校美術史教席之累，因有慕名求訪者。嘀咕之餘，勉強接待。心想著：姑且一看吧！怎知，那一看，至今未已。

一如〈背影〉中那揹書包的獨行者，初次過訪的秋麥也揹了隻草綠色的中國帆布包。清癯謙和的他，從容敬慎地，從布包中取出一套折疊成中國傳統經折裝式的連續冊頁，一折折地，展了開來。隨著開合律動盪開來的影像，我的眼睛不禁油然而亮。暗想著：這個洋人葫蘆裏是有點東西。因之，隨手撥了電話，請我中國古代美術考古專業的同事羅泰教授過來，共同觀賞評論。他一看，也讚不絕口地說：“了不得”。

記得秋麥叩訪的初衷，原本祇在於求教“是否”以及“如何”在其作品上添加書題而已。他津津樂道自己如何沈詠於中國書法與篆刻之研習等等，而當時〈背影〉一作，形式上也尚未完成最後的裝裱。然而但見雛形，卻已具規模。因此規諫再三，一方面鼓勵他書法篆刻之於創作無可厚非的助益，但未必要一五一十地題字在作品上，更遑論鈐章蓋印。尤其是他的作品本身已經涵蘊無窮，完全不需要書題、印章來畫蛇添足。而且更重要的是，他的作品所具有的一種迷離抽象的“現代感”，更是不容侵犯。一番諍言，當時也不知道他是否聽了進去。沒想到，士別三日，刮目相看。之後，幾次過訪，他的作品，一件件迅速地搏化而出，完全不負當初那“瞬息際遇”所預期的承諾。

〈背影〉之所以令我記憶猶新，於今想來，原因有二。其一是取材上的自傳式意味，深刻反映了創作者的“心象”。尤其是他抗癌、起死回生的年輕人生際遇。

一如主題中那個邁步前行的男子，有種義無反顧的氣概。也許無心，然卻稚樸，真實。再者是他獨創性的藝術形式與引發的美感經驗。現在仍然回到個人最初觀賞〈背影〉的歷程為例。當作品在我眼前，一折折地開動時，我的視焦頓然凝聚在狹長的構圖中，隨著動畫一般，律動浮現的影像，瞳孔漸入淡出。剛開始好像找不到焦距，僅見灰白斑駁的畫面，漸漸地物象浮現，看到了行者的腳步而瞭然那一片灰原是地面。接著是包裹、書袋與行者的腰背、頭部，乃至整個背影以及中景的建築物；然後鏡頭淡出到高處的樹枝及電綫上。終了，凝然隱沒于樹梢後無垠的虛空之中。這些依次疊映的影像，奇妙地予人一種第三度與第四度、空間與時間的觀看體驗。其中大有柳暗花明的期待與驚奇，而流連忘返之餘，則又趣味雋永。

〈背影〉以及秋麥系列《山重集》的作品，都是取材於他自己的中國旅行攝影。然而不同於其它一般的攝影作品的，在於這祇是從他每件攝影作品中擷取出來的一小長條“切片”。經過數位化處理，超倍放大，組構切割之後，再一一印製在宣紙上，最後裝幀成一套套中國傳統經折裝式的連續摺頁來呈現。秋麥自己在《山重集》的序文中，無滯無礙地描述道：

每套冊頁是從三十五毫米底片的長條切片放大出來的。每一頁呈現全景中的某個片斷。遊走在一頁頁的山巒之間，觀者往往迷失在細節之中；要待調焦對距山巔之上，才能領略那山外之境。³

這樣的製作方式與成品裝幀，使我聯想到《天書》及其創作者徐冰。⁴徐冰也是秋麥的舊識。他對徐冰的欽慕自不在話下。因之，秋麥這種古書籍、冊頁，老酒新釀的裝幀靈感，或許多少從徐冰處得到一些啟發。此外，兩者還有一個共通點，那便是他們對於創作歷程與整體呈現的縝密構思，有一種近乎苦行僧的執著，以斬斷紅塵的嚴謹做工來完成。徐冰的《天書》是日積月累刻、印出來的，而秋麥的《山重集》也是嘔心瀝血地，一條條剪輯，一頁頁放印而成。這樣的創作與製作，雖說匠心獨運，但過程與理論其實並不複雜。問題在於如何能隻眼獨具地營構、剪裁出那一條條或橫或直，看似單純、隨意，但卻引人入勝的意象。我想這一方面可能是來自他的家學淵源，承襲自他攝影名家的外祖父，在攝影史上留名的創造精神；而更重要的是他這位中國女婿，長久以來，虛心地沈潛於中國的人情、山川與文化所使然吧！⁵

但看他作品中上下縱橫的中國時空，從青藏高原上的長河、喇嘛、牧羊人（H2、H4、H5、H8），巴蜀懸橋上的樵姑（V9）到北方華嶽雄風（T1至T5）；從遠古傳說中的金焦《瘞鶴銘》（Y1）、中古石壁上的大足觀音慈顏（H3）與肅穆的北宋神道（S1、S2），到當代蛻變中的中國幻影。他像香客一般，一一朝拜，而後吸納、粹取、搏化出大千中國時空中，點點滴滴的瞬息與片斷真理。

對於中國美術史工作者而言，秋麥作品獨特的“切片意象”與“呈現方式”是既古典又現代。切片收放之後映現出來的視覺意象，或片斷、或局部，總是游離於抽象與具象之間；因之，蘊含著無比懾人的魅力，而且引發觀者無窮無盡的想像空間。尤其是在變換焦距的鏡頭下，收納、凝聚的視野，既宏觀又微觀。這就是我所謂的“以片概全”的審美經驗，亦即中國傳統美學中“小中現大”的藝術



精髓。祇不過傳統小中現大的理論，往往祇見諸於山水畫的踐習中，而秋麥在題材上則無所不包，涵蓋了人情、事物與景物。此外，在橫直連頁的裝裱“呈現方式”上，雖說具體上是一種經折裝的冊頁形式，然而事實上他那可橫觀，也可縱覽的長卷開展，是將中國傳統冊頁、手卷與立軸的三種基本展現方式與趣味渾融為一。其中《瘞鶴銘》一對直長的組構，與傳統書法對聯，有異曲同工之妙。而〈朝山香客〉（V₄、V₅、V₆）可分可合的一組三件，從一把長辮子的衷心膜拜者到炷炷燒燃的熾紅薰香，不但件件意象懾人眼魄；合置並列，亦彷彿有尊貴聖像

三尊遷想妙成之趣。而若《華嶽》與《神道》的橫式冊頁開展，與古典山水手卷的時空構成、審美經驗亦不謀而合。此外，連頁式長卷的單元冊頁組合，在秋麥巧奪天工的剪裁切割之下，細節片斷、局部物象與全體認知變成若即若離，因此現代感十足。以河南鞏縣攝製的北宋皇陵《神道》為例（S₂）。一尊尊亙古矗立於荒野中的石人、石象生，遠遠近近地與周遭的林木景致交映，瀏覽展玩時，吾人目光必須不斷地對焦運鏡：忽而拉近到個個單獨的石雕像，忽而淡出到自然山林平野之間，迷離交錯，象隨頁轉；有影片蒙太奇、繪畫超寫實之致。靜謐中渾然

一契地合奏著無聲詩般的交響樂曲，此起彼落，意韻悠揚。而突然間，在臨近卷尾處，迎面駛入一個現代機車騎士，劃破了靜寂，而將樂音終結前，帶到了最具爆破力的高潮。於是，在那一剎那間，一場古典與現代的對話，在觀者眼前，瞬間衝撞、疊映而圓融為一。

末了，略談一下秋麥鏡頭下的中國當代衆生群相。或許是他身為異國行者對中國有一種自然的特殊距離美感，也或許是他搏癌後，像神話中的火鳥，在火燎灰燼中重生，而徹悟了隻天眼，使他不但能自由無礙地遨遊於中國的山川與歷史時空中，同時也善於捕捉此時此刻光怪陸離的現代影像。從油菜花郊的單車老人（H6）到原野中的純稚村童（H1），從拈花微笑的菩薩（H3）、自足自在的紅衣喇嘛（H4）到披一把長辮子、拈一炷清香虔誠膜拜的村婦信徒（V4、V5、V6），乃至廣角鏡下張張懾人的臉龐、眼神（H8）；在光影交錯之中，幾分茫然，幾分世故，芸芸衆生瞬息間的“切片”剪影，在在都是大千中國最真切的寫照。而這些形形色色的“人山”幻象，隨著他鏡頭底下的真水真山，也一一譜入《山重集》的樂章之中。

或問《山重集》的真諦何在？一如秋麥引蒙田語思命《山重集》名之緣起：

欲求那埋藏山間、虛實蒙蔽世人的真理，但在山外之山中。

蒙田《散文集》 2-12

行筆至此，吾人因悟“只在此山中，雲深不知處”之理。⁶忘言之際，眼界中豁然浮現王維詩句：

江流天地外，山色有無中。⁷

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1 Malcolm Gladwell, *Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking* (New York: Little, Brown & Company, 2005) 頁23, 頁34。其中關於“切片”理論，見第一章，“The Theory of Thin Slices,” 頁18 - 47。“小中現大”理論，參見 Susan Bush, *The Chinese Literati on Painting: Su Shih (1037-1101) to Tung Ch'i-ch'ang (1555-1636)* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1971)。

2 〈背影〉及文中論及的作品，是作者敘事性的指稱，而未必是秋麥標題命名的系統。

3 見秋麥網址：<http://www.qiumai.net/scj/indexz.html>

4 徐冰《天書》，參見 Britta Erickson, *Words Without Meaning, Meaning Without Words: The Art of Xu Bing* (Washington, D.C. and Seattle: A. M. Sackler Gallery and University of Washington Press, 2001)。

5 秋麥的外祖父Charles Hoff 是當年《紐約日報》的知名攝影家。Hoff 以體育攝影為主，其拳擊照片尤其令人震撼。他和報社的同事發明的頻閃閃光燈，允許他在拍照時，將運動員的動作瞬間靜止，從而把運動肖像變成激進的人體藝術。Hoff最著名的作品是他拍下的1937年德國飛艇“興登堡”（Hindenburg）降落美國新澤西州時爆炸的悲劇時刻。而秋麥原來主修東亞研究，長年來研習中國的語言與文化，再加上他與黃冬的中美姻緣，可以說是個不折不扣的中國女婿。

6 賈島（793-865），〈尋隱者不遇〉，“松下問童子，言師採藥去。只在此山中，雲深不知處”。見《御定全唐詩》，卷574，頁22下。

7 王維（701-761），〈漢江臨汎〉，見《御定全唐詩錄》，卷十三，頁26下，27上。



Double Aperture: Reframing and Returning

by Leo C. Chen

My first encounter with Michael Cherney's *Bounded by Mountains* evokes a sense of *déjà-vu* about a bygone era. Although I have never seen Cherney's artwork before, it is like waking to a recurring dream; a feeling akin to familiar lovers reuniting after a long separation. I am carried away by the unfolding images, peripatetically, leaf by leaf, across the *xuan* paper photographs; scenes so distant yet so close, figures at once clear and indistinguishable. Folded layers of Mount Hua's peaks clad in emerald shades both conceal and reflect each other. The desolate, Song dynasty spirit road to another world, interspersed with a series of bending visions and unexpectedly arresting revisions. The scenes change focus seamlessly, like peeking and walking through mountain views; visions coming into sight, now appearing behind, now reappearing in front, something else always ready to take hold of your gaze. From within this so very familiar yet still unacquainted imagery from a categorical visual journey in China, it is as if being drawn into poetic scenes of an ancient era and ages past: whether populated by ancient paths, herds of horses standing hunched in the snow, or an eternal sun perched on the river bank, flanked by the trees of the Yangtze.

Just when one is considering how these lines and blocks of color constitute meaningful imagery, wandering and wondering between the figural and the abstract, suddenly one is seized by a feeling of loss, a pang of melancholy. This feeling, although difficult to articulate or express, can not be relinquished. It is neither nostalgia nor remembering the past, but rather a resumption of memory after a long absence.

Looking back again, anew: sprouting yellow vegetable flowers bloom across fields, covering ditches and patches in every direction; *pothi* books of Sanskrit scripture wrapped by an intertwining haze of wish-filled incense and rising smoke; a lone woodcutting woman treads upon the steps of a plank bridge, heading skyward; wide open eyes and smiles dimple across the ruddy sun-baked faces of Tibetans of the high plateau; traces of wind blown strings of pitch-dark hair that slowly band into an undulating braid; the archaic smiles of gargantuan, stone-cliff Bodhisattvas shatter the space with silence; one pilgrim, two hands in air, three kneelings to earth, four limbs prostrated on the ground; ashes to ashes, earth to earth, the brilliantly faded *thankga* slowly swallowed by the flames of faith; bodies and earth, all shapes disappear into a chaotic blur, yet crystallize memories of what is to come.

Looking out from behind the viewfinder, a very thin cut into the world, the vision expands and stretches out exponentially beyond the frame: herds of sheep and cattle line the horizontal plain under Sky Mountain, with the shepherd standing perpendicularly to his flock against the wind of the freezing northern grasslands beyond the Great Wall. As the ancient poem so vividly describes, "The wind lowers the grass thus revealing cow and

sheep." Does not this album reveal precisely such a scene? *Ut pictura poesis*, a perfect match between poetry and picture, even to the lingering fragrance of the *xuan* paper's photographic "hay."

And lest we forget the legendary *Buried Crane Inscription* of the Six Dynasties, exuding magnificence from the lingering strokes of dripping stone ink. So intimately close; such enchanting beauty. To move oneself along with the calligraphy and within the strokes is to observe the carvings while held in detail, to travel with those stele into history. Cherney's artworks are difficult to put down. His imagery resurfaces over and again, blending his landscapes within my mindscape. It has been many years since I have experienced such feelings of losing oneself in a work of art, returning to a "degree zero" of graphing, writing and emoting. From this void many complex emotions – and riddles – arise; thoughts are rekindled and reconvene; I have set my first eyes upon Cherney's *Bounded by Mountains*; here and now, an old acquaintance with a new friend.

Buried Crane Singing: from the Representation of Words in the *Buried Crane Inscription* to the Entrapment and Limitation of Words and Writing

Let's begin with an initial clarification: *Bounded by Mountains* is a series of handmade books of photographs. Each book differs from the others in terms of its graphic images, size and materiality, as well as the variety of the content it contains. Each book has its own character, a particularly remarkable treasure in an age of mechanical reproduction defined by a commercialized culture of rampant copy and multiplication. Of special interest is the traditional sutra-binding mounting technique. It takes us immediately back to an age when both the content of scripture and the form of *pothi* palm leaves in Buddhist texts were translated from Sanskrit and integrated into Chinese culture.

Yet *Bounded by Mountains* is also a *photo album* within the context of modernization, a formal genre and textual category of cultural imperialism: one of the representative objects of Western modernization which bears witness to the traumatic, ruinous images of the Western gaze upon China, and which bears the collective mentality of the Western hunters' persistent acts of unquenchable thirst for exotica that was and still is "the Oriental" (i.e. the photos by British photographer Felix Beato – the only surviving record of the *Yuan Ming Yuan*, which was destroyed in 1860 during the second Opium War – and John Thomson's travelogue photographs documenting the scenery and landscape as well as the flora and fauna of pre-modern China).

In an age of disappearing boundaries between nations and cultures, one might argue that Cherney's art reworks and subverts Orientalism from both within and without via a further integration of artistry, aesthetics and above all, instrumentality. Cherney first photographs the everyday lives of people and nature in China, and then selectively "re-photographs" his photographs. These selections are then converted from film to digital form for enlargement; the resulting graphics are then printed via the semi-mechanical

process of computer printer cooperating with *xuan* paper. As a final touch, traditional Chinese *chin collé* mounting has been added. The end result achieves a sense of harmonious equilibrium which combines anachronistic traditions and practices in time with differing medium specificity in space.

One of the possible explanations for the perplexing enchantment of *Bounded by Mountains* is the holistic sense of transformation brought about through the work, encompassing both the past and the present, East and West. For readers immersed in Chinese culture, *Bounded by Mountains* strikes a special chord due to its shared aesthetic with the traditional Chinese art forms of book and landscape painting. Aside from this, the Chinese obsession with words (a crucial point further discussed below), interest in history, and fetishism with objects all manifest in Cherney's "renovative" art as well.

Of the works in the *Bounded by Mountains* series, the reframing and enlargement of the *Buried Crane Inscription* stands out as one of the most captivating. The imagined mimetic journey in the calligraphic landscape follows the gentle brush lines of soft animal hair as they carve through coarse rock like oars through water, leaving graphic patterns without traces, or leaving traces without revealing the process of writing. The enhanced proximity through this re-envisioning of Chinese writing fulfills an "en-scripting" desire for the enactment and embodiment of literacy that is enormously satisfying.

The various representations of words, as well as the endless transformation of writing, has always been a fundamental concern within Chinese culture. As noted by Qian Cunxun in "Written on Bamboo and Silk," the history of inscription is an important subject in the study of the development of Chinese books.¹ Ancient classics were often inscribed onto objects of metal and stone; the inscriptions were then transcribed and referred to in later literature and books. The perplexing enchantment of the *Buried Crane Inscription* can also be traced back to the philosophical attitude and cosmic conception towards words, the relationship between human subjectivity and Nature, and the roles played by words in mediating between the human world with the natural world: words are the keys to Chinese cosmology. Ever since the Shang dynasty, when inscriptions were made on shell and bone, words have been designated the role of serving as a channel through which the Chinese people communicate with the natural world. Later development of the same attitude can be seen in countless cliff carvings, stele and monuments as a means of achieving immortality through writing, as well as in the belief that words in the writing of history have a permanent and supernatural effect not unlike cosmological forces (e.g. Confucius' *Spring and Autumn Annals* "stirring the gods and spirits," or Li Bai's famous quotation, "Nature provides me with literary expression."²) Not only does Nature provide inspiration, but the sky, earth, mountains and rivers can all be considered as paper, as a medium for writing.

The Chinese people's conception of the use of words as an agent for communicating with nature (bridging human subjectivity and nature's subjectivity) is embedded in the system of thought and philosophy. It is precisely because of the immense power of the

written word that there have been many historical incidents owing to the entrapment and limitation of words. The imprisonment of writers due to a distorted, exaggerated, or misdirected interpretation of the written or spoken word is a common phenomenon throughout Chinese history. At its worst, there has been what might be called the "lust for words," expressed through hieroglyph-mania, over-interpretation, farcical writings and pedantic investment in the abstraction of words. Most common is the misuse of exegesis to re-interpret historical documents in various disciplines and discourses for assorted political purposes.

It is by no means a small number of people who are obsessed with words, either admittedly or subconsciously; those who enjoy a spiritual belonging to the China of old find themselves easily (and happily) entranced. Starting in the mid-1980s, a generation of contemporary Chinese artists who had endured the purgatory of words exemplified by the Cultural Revolution developed a unique sensibility and teratogenic reaction towards the written word. Adding fuel to the fire, art critics, exhibition curators and art professionals joined forces to celebrate such a re-treatment of words with almost clinical interest. It has been quite interesting to observe the "word fever" in which any contemporary Chinese artworks seem to attract more attention from both Western as well as Chinese art circles as long as they share a connection with Chinese words or writing. Notable examples include Xu Bing and Gu Wenda. The invested interest in words from both Eastern and Western perspectives reconfirmed an accumulated engagement with words stemming from a long historical tradition. Even the father of deconstruction, Jacques Derrida, showed great interest in the works of Xu Bing. Their different subversions shared concerns towards the sovereignty of logocentrism. Their admiration for each other was not only mutual but also quite contagious, and further indicates the impasse we have reached due to the obsession with words.³

Bounded By Mountains logically led Cherney to further contemplate the graphic dimension of words as well as explore the extension of written text into visual art; the result is *Passages of Bronze and Stone*. A book which consists of a series of impressions of seals, *Passages of Bronze and Stone* evokes the aesthetic pleasure of the culture of *yin* (seals), in which the structural graphic connection between words in their various forms and contextual materiality present a new pattern of visual thinking. In so doing, thought is revealed through the random combination of style and script among the seals, and the random assemblage of seal inscriptions and rubbings. However, Cherney's pursuit of written forms and the integration or transformation present in his art clearly differs from many other contemporary Chinese artists.

In terms of the reworking of words, the strong sense of "purposeful meaninglessness" in Xu Bing's "unintelligible words" can be taken as a subversion of Chinese words, as a reflection on the limitation and entrapment of words. Historical contextualization can relate certain extra-textual information and inner motivation within the art of Xu Bing, but the most obvious reading reveals Xu Bing's nonsense words as a challenge to a tradition of writing and the authoritative culture behind it. Xu Bing's work is also a statement of an

anti-hermeneutic and anti-exegetic nature, against the tyranny of meaning and authority of interpretation; but Xu Bing's anti-text appeals predominantly through our intellectual rather than aesthetic faculties. His subversion of aesthetics not only resonates with Derrida's logocentrism, but also reverberates with Kant's aesthetics of purposeful purposelessness. While this cross-cultural and diachronically shared aesthetic concept is a pleasant example of an ironically "meaningful" communication between East and West, it also provoked a series of bemusements (i.e. why does Western interest seem to have surpassed local reaction in China?). More importantly, "word fever" should prompt a reexamination of the current state of contemporary art practice and criticism, where aesthetics have been cast aside and "concept" reigns supreme.

In essence, the deconstructive works of contemporary Chinese artists such as Xu Bing tend to emphasize the eventfulness of performance and the process of art making. The finished "artworks" are merely traces and remains of a conceptual work. For example, Gu Wenda's adding layers to his re-writing of the Big Character Poster served as a return to past events, and Xu Bing's "Book from the Sky" served as a deconstructive rearrangement of an entire writing system. The true spirit of these works resides mainly within the process of the creation, rather than the staging or display of them. While the disintegration of artworks and the complete deconstruction of the object were successful activities within modern and postmodern art practice, the capacity to construct after the deconstruction of a former generation of art is also essential within the art world. The perplexity of the language of post-structuralism and post-modernism (along with the rest of the "post" discourses) and a crisis in art creation and criticism have come about due to a neglect of the fact that any building or rebuilding of the subject also requires a rather stable and distinct object. Following the complete deconstruction of the subject throughout most of the last century, the object was also consequently deconstructed. The complete deconstruction of the object then led to the inability to reconstruct the subject across time. Hence scholars and artists are often at a loss.

Cherney's artwork clearly persists as an object, and in turn the "object-hood" retains its corresponding subjectivity. Although Cherney's artworks are still operating within the framework of contemporary art making, as evidenced by his utilization of repetition and "chance-created forms," the materiality and "object-hood" are fore-grounded in his works and the essentialization of the characteristics of the object is retained. There is a strong sense of play in Cherney's works, which helps transform them into objects for connoisseurship. That, perhaps, is one of the major reasons why his works are so appealing.

Photograph | Subject Agency | Optical Consciousness

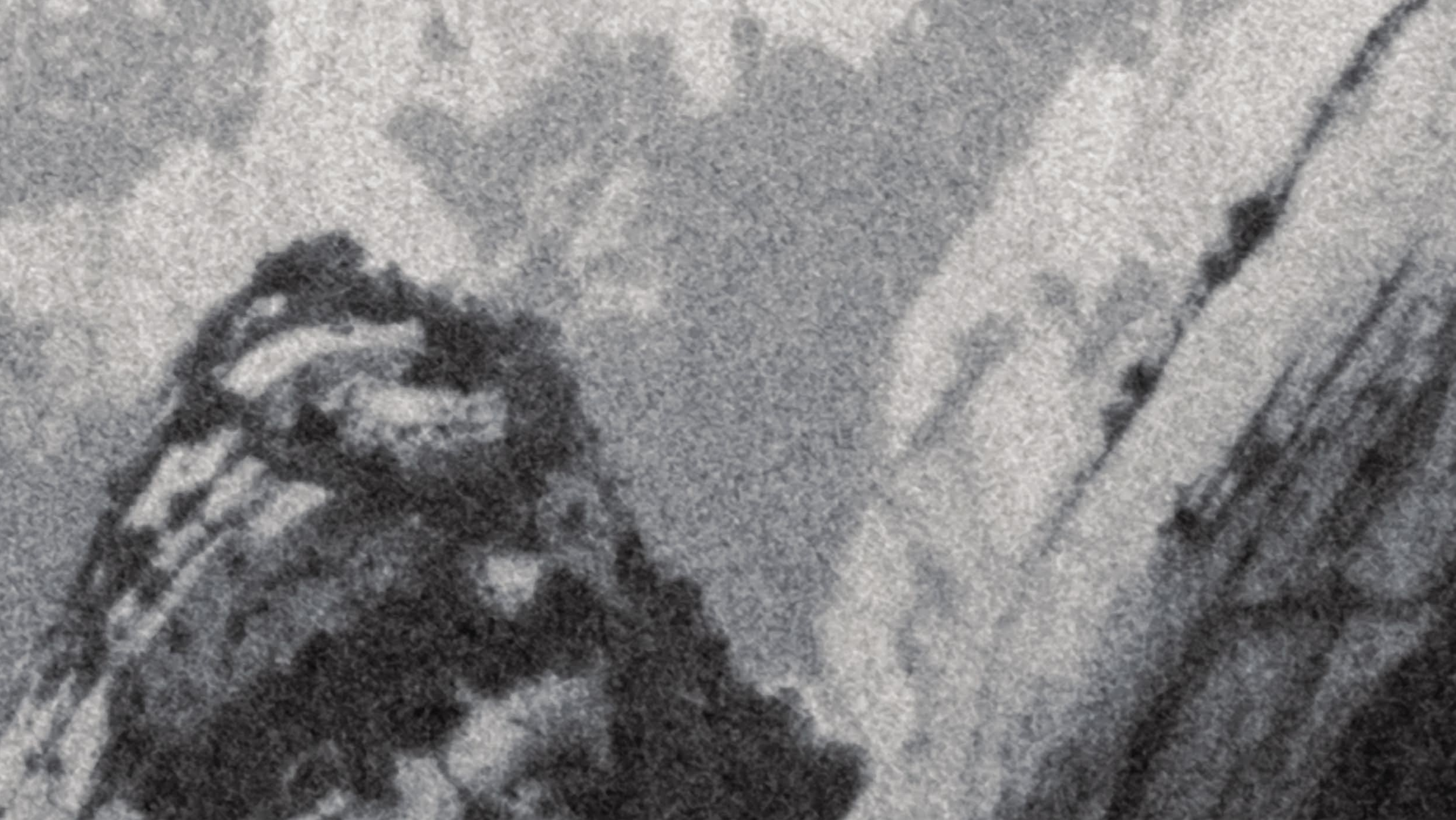
One can appreciate Cherney's inquiry into the various possible visual forms of the Chinese written word through such works as the *Buried Crane Inscription* and *Passages of Bronze and Stone*, but *Bounded by Mountains* is first and foremost a series of photographic art books. The allure of the photographic images in *Bounded by Mountains* resides in the

particular way in which they are presented visually.

Cherney began his artistic pursuits as a photographer. He is also the US manager of the Imaginechina photo agency. Photographic sensibilities run deep in his family, passed on from his renowned grandfather. Yet many years of exposure to Chinese culture have enriched this artistic aptitude and intuitive sensitivity. Just as all innovative works come from intuition resulting from accumulated practices and learning, Cherney's *Bounded by Mountains* was born from the accumulation of many years of photographing China combined with his passion for traditional Chinese art and calligraphy. Cherney's *Bounded by Mountains* is an organic assemblage of both Eastern and Western art forms. Structurally integrated, *Bounded by Mountains* not only exudes a sense of nostalgia but also forward-looking vision. Cherney's work reverses the conventional conceptions of art which regard the West as material and the East as spiritual: he uses traditional Chinese materials, such as *xuan* paper printed and mounted into pages that form a sutra-bound album; yet his creative inspiration comes from Western contemporary art. Consider, for example, his technique of recreating random selections, his utilization of repetition and replication, his emphasis on detail (seeing the grand within the small, as in synecdoche) and his exploration of the interface between the human and the machine. *Bounded by Mountains* resides where Eastern and Western art concepts become commensurable and appeal to each other.

Cherney's finely handcrafted viewfinder serves as a window through which he seeks a new aesthetic experience. Like a "double aperture," this viewfinder enables Cherney to find new vistas of stunning beauty. Originating from a thin slice of 35mm film, the enlarged images capture an aesthetic of fragmentation much akin to our visual mode of remembering: vague, uneven and residual (this is the case not only with our singular body-memories, but with collective cultural memories as well). The image first greets us with fragmented obscurity; hence we need to bestow it with extended imagination. The enlarged images are blurry and abstract; hence we must engage them with heightened concentration. As our sensory perception wanders, we seek a reference system of photographic meaning. Through the process of closely viewing and reviewing, we unconsciously move ourselves closer towards the images, letting the process of unfolding leaves take us on a search. Inexplicably, new images emerge and enlighten, causing a synesthesia in which we hear the sound of our own treading steps. We become faintly aware of ourselves walking along an ancient path at dusk: hard, blue stone slabs and a soft, yellow mud road between the carving of calligraphic strokes. Like Alice confronting the looking glass, we must squeeze our body through that thin slice to truly enter the world of Cherney's photography.

As Simon Schama eloquently articulates: "landscape is the work of the mind."⁴ Qing dramatist Li Yu also concurred: "landscape is the intellectual and emotional expression of the universe, while intellectual and emotional expression is the landscape of the human mind."⁵ As if taking an endless variety of lenses from a magic bag, Cherney's artworks guide us to look into an ever-transforming world: the viewfinder transforms into a "self-finder," the "ana-scope" (for re-viewing) turns into a "soma-scope" (to view with one's body). With the changing of lenses come the changing views of landscape and mindscape.



The ever-intermittent views continue the narrative of the world. With the change of each new lens comes a change of the state of the heart.

Dilemmas of Art: Why Does Cherney's Holistic Art Touch upon Many Core Art Issues?

First, I would like to reiterate the issue of the consideration of photography as a legitimate art form. The camera is a paradoxical tool: it faithfully records the images caught in the lens, but decisions of image selection and composition very much depend on the photographer. Recording via mechanization and capacity for reproduction are characteristics that have hindered photography from entering the “palace of

art,” and have been a source of much debate among contemporary art critics. Modernism has been deeply troubled by the possibility that the augmented realism enabled by photography's recording mechanism might replace the aesthetics of painting and drawing. Such worries, manifested in Baudelaire's anxiety and Benjamin's melancholy, continue to the present day.

Cherney's enlarged, abstract images have relieved photography of the burden of “faithful recording.” Only through liberation from the burden of *xingsi* (likeness in form) might abstract thought processes come alive, just as photography's relieving painting of the burden of *shensi* (likeness in spirit) ushered in a new era of diversity and vibrancy in the history of modern painting. Cherney reendows the medium of photography with a new territory of conflicting forces. Within the intimate ambiance of Chinese traditional art, we can accept photography as an art form without hesitation. What is interesting here is that it is usually the unrealistic forms of representation that are most effective in portraying and enhancing an ever-changing reality.

Second, I would like to address the issue of the nationalization of Chinese photography. Cherney's “Sinified” photography evokes a discussion on whether or not photography can be nationalized as Chinese. Like all attempts to merge Eastern and Western art and culture, this topic is a specter from which contemporary China cannot escape. For example, against the backdrop of the Westernization debate which resulted from China's reforms of the 1980s there was a resurgence in the promotion of the “nationalization of oil painting.” The nationalization of oil painting has already deteriorated into purely formulaic iconography tailored to a vulgar market economy; but as a failure of a lofty aspiration, it is not without its interesting aspects. Attempts at the nationalization of oil painting incorporated *cun* 皴 brushstrokes, multiple perspectives, omnidirectional lighting and other traditional Chinese painting techniques. These were flawed attempts, as the tools were incompatible with the artistic spirit. The European fascination with China during the Enlightenment (Chinoiserie) did not fare any better nor led to a successful integration. This raises the question of whether or not the artistic spirit and practice of differing cultures can communicate freely, be mutually understood, or merge. Reciprocal learning between differing national cultures has been a common historical occurrence. Although the arts of diverse cultures have followed their own paths and thus differ from each other, through analysis and comparison we can come to a better understanding of ourselves. It was Lang Jingshan⁶ who led the effort to nationalize photography in China. The aforementioned ink painting techniques used in the nationalization of oil painting are visible in the photographs of Lang Jingshan, but with very different results.

The photography of Lang Jingshan takes Chinese traditional landscape painting as a reference point for emulation. Lang created the so-called *jijinshi* (combinatory) style of photography, using the Western method of montage to repeatedly expose and join multiple film negatives; the final result is a photograph that resembles a Chinese landscape painting. Lang Jingshan's works strive to attain the realm of literati painting, the source of his aesthetic principles. Today, when the credibility of photography has been compromised

by the emergence of digital editing techniques, Lang's photographic landscape painting still remains intriguing and rich.

In order to use photographic tools to fully realize the vitality of Chinese traditional painting, Lang Jingshan applied quite a bit of reprocessing and rearrangement of photographic images, which prompts one to reconsider whether or not photography can be nationalized in China by merging with Chinese landscape painting. Lang Jingshan represents the notion in Chinese art which strives for the homogeneity of various forms of art as well as the harmonious merging of different art into a single work – a viewpoint very unlike Western aesthetics, which values the distinctiveness of individual art. In Western art history, most art criticism of the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries tended to discuss the boundaries between different art forms, such as a comparison of painting with sculpture and poetry with literature, as exemplified in Lessing's *Laocoon*.⁷ Research in art history began earlier in China than in the West, with the evaluating of the quality of painting constituting early art theory.⁸ Later, in Zhang Yanyuan's ten volume *Reports on Famous Historical Paintings* (847AD), the importance of brushstroke technique in painting began to be emphasized, leading to the inception of *shuhua tongyuan*: the art theory that argues that calligraphy and painting come from the same source. The theory of *shuhua tongyuan* demonstrated that the material history of the development of tools and the history of cultural practice and spiritual development were mutually influential and inseparable. It also stated two important points which indicate the difference between the Chinese and Western artistic spirit. Firstly, Chinese art is characterized by singular principles that can be universally applied, as evidenced by the theory of the shared origins of Chinese painting and calligraphy, and by graphology. Chinese art emphasizes the interiority, the inner being: the brush reveals what is in the mind. In the West, however, the external and the outer being is emphasized. Secondly, for centuries Western theories of representation have valued the imitation of nature (*mimesis*), while Chinese theories of representation have valued imitation of tradition.

The issue of the “Sinification” of photography through landscape painting can be more clearly addressed by comparing the works of Lang Jingshan, Wang Lü and Cherney, and the great Mount Hua happens to be the perfect place for this examination to occur.

Observing Hua Mountain: a Trio Journeys through Nature

Lang Jingshan strove to imitate traditional landscape painting through his photography, to the point where he manipulated photography's nature of “recording” by altering and combining his photographs so that they would fit his preconceived mindscapes. Many of his later works emphasize uninhabited mountains and clouds; there is much empty space in the compositions, emulating the *liubai* (utilization of blank space) of literati painting. “Cloud mountain” (1987) is one such example. He admired and was particularly influenced by the master painter Ni Zan. Lang Jingshan chose to emulate tradition, betraying photography's function of documenting the natural world. Lang's attitude to

art is opposite to that of Wang Lü, the Ming dynasty painter who in his works chose to directly imitate the natural world rather than tradition, challenging a history of subjective mental imagery in literati painting.

Chinese landscape painting is a kind of “image of the mind.” Creating a landscape in the mind suggests painting according to impressions, memory and interpretation; it is this imagery of the mind that is projected on to the work to be appreciated. As everything is held in the mind rather than in nature, it is not so important whether or not the painted imagery looks like nature. It is no wonder that Wang Lü, who followed nature rather than tradition, was viewed as an eccentric by the other painters of his era. In his attempt to break away from the constraining conventions of painting and to set himself free to follow nature, Wang Lü climbed Mount Hua to have his “eyes learn from Mount Hua, and his heart learn from his eyes.” Wang Lü painted as he climbed. After returning home he reflected upon his journey. After years of contemplation he was inspired to paint Mount Hua again from his notes and memories, leading to the dual theory of form and intention addressed in his treatise on painting which prefaces his second round of Mount Hua paintings.

Cherney's landscape photography draws on Wang Lü's *Mount Hua Album* for inspiration.⁹ His photography contains the opposing forces of Lang Jingshan's yearning for the traditional versus Wang Lü's finding direct inspiration from nature. On the one hand, Cherney's work is not burdened with tradition in the same way as Lang Jingshan's work; yet he still orients himself toward the ancient artistic ideas of landscape painting. On the other hand, Cherney's photographic lens realistically reproduces the natural world; thus he does not need to break with convention (as was required by Wang Lü) to be rid of the artificiality of literati painting, yet he can still explore new photographic frontiers to replace old perspectives with new ones.

It is indeed a challenge to integrate the mechanical photographic apparatus (which lacks human agency) with ink painting (which is executed entirely by human agency). Equally challenging is the task of merging landscape photography (with its relatively low level of subjectivity) with literati landscape painting (which is a manifestation of subjectivity itself). According to the theory of the shared origins of Chinese painting and calligraphy, the concerns of Chinese art and art criticism are more oriented towards subjectivity and inner human nature. The Western apparatus of photography distinguishes the human subjectivity of the photographer from the material objectivity of the photographed, and the concerns of Western art and art criticism are more oriented towards the material world. The process employed by Cherney in photographing Mount Hua is similar to that of Wang Lü in his painting of Mount Hua. Cherney photographed as he walked, pondered over the images after retuning home, then once again “photographed” his previous photographs of Mount Hua. This is a process of multiple image formation. The fact that Cherney used a hand-made frame to select images highlights Cherney's innovative strategy to use the photographic apparatus to create and crystallize his mindscapes. There is no optical lens in Cherney's viewfinder; his camera is not mechanical.

Cherney's *Mount Hua Album* seems particularly interesting when compared to Lang Jingshan's landscape photographs. Instrumentality and lack of human subjectivity can at times make photography a “lesser” art form. The artistic elements in Lang Jingshan's photos are his rearrangement of the photographed images and the craftsmanship in producing mindscapes that emulate traditional paintings. The craftsmanship and labor Lang employs clearly indicates human agency and subjectivity, thus qualifying his work as art. Cherney's *Mount Hua Album* displays obvious abstractions, the artistic quality of which is expressed through his use of multi-layered reframing and through the working concepts he employs. As an artist who “takes photos of photos,” Cherney's multilayered photography can be likened to the “landscape of memory” in traditional Chinese painting theory. Furthermore, the spirit of Cherney's work reveals a likeness to that of Wang Lü. The artistic endeavors of Lang Jingshan, Wang Lü and Cherney contain a certain degree of departure from nature in its raw form; this is what brings them closer to the spirit of traditional Chinese literati painting.

The sense of distance from nature in its raw form in Chinese art has evolved as a result of humanism. For a long time, the interest of the Chinese people in Chinese painting has focused on visual tradition rather than on nature in its raw form. Hence, self-referentiality was developed to the utmost degree, which led to the formation of an enclosed system of artistic practice, and thus to the potential for implosion of form in Chinese painting and art. Yet let us reconsider the phenomenon of the omnipresent cliff carvings scattered throughout the Chinese landscape: do not the self-referential marks carved on to nature in its raw form (either as commentary, or as an attempt to “tame” nature) become nature themselves? Have not sculptures that have rested on mountainsides or stood among fields for a millennium become part of the natural landscape? Any journey away from nature in its raw form is a detour for an inevitable return, and the farther one travels, the more intimate the return. In the end, the nature returned to is one that is no longer in opposition to the human spirit; it is a humanized nature, arrived at by way of art.

“Object-hood” and a Sense of Epiphany: an Arsenal of Skills

The concept of “object-hood” in Western material culture has always been at the core of modernism; in China, however, it can be considered as just one weapon in an arsenal. In traditional China, in order to become a master of one discipline one had to be a jack of all trades as well. For example, an expert of literature would also be required to be familiar with Chinese philosophy and history; a great painter was also usually a master of the three principal arts of calligraphy, painting and poetry. Hence the comparison to an arsenal: like a Renaissance man equipped with a variety of skills and knowledge. To create holistic art, Cherney uses photography to run the gamut of China's traditional arts. Using photographs as a point of departure, Cherney's artworks combine digital printing on *xuan* paper, *chin collé* mounting and sutra-fold album binding. The whole process is like an apprenticeship for (re)learning and (re)establishing connections with each weapon in the arsenal of traditional art. Everything must be attended to, but the rewards are plentiful.



In the process of combining art forms, Cherney gives new significance and new life to each. The essence and potentiality of the materials have been elevated to a higher degree, such that they exalt each other. I will now use an “arsenal” to illustrate three key points of “object-hood” (paper, instrument and book) and each corresponding “epiphany” in Cherney’s artworks.

1) Paper: on Seeing Tactility

Firstly, Cherney’s photographs are printed on *xuan* paper rather than the more commonly used glossy or matte photographic paper. The use of distinctive paper heightens and calls attention to the texture and tactility of the print, a very important component of the viewing experience. Sometimes the tactility of the paper can affect a deeper reaction in our viewing of photographs

than the actual object depicted. The “object-hood” of the photograph evokes a heightened sense of separation from reality, which in turn facilitates a transference of emotion on to the people or objects in the photo. Like Wittgenstein’s language-game, our looking at a photograph and reception therewith has been internalized, not unlike our interaction with paintings on display.

The charm of old photos can be found in the ephemeral materiality and fragility shared by all paper objects. With the passage of time they turn yellow, are lost or are copied. When collected in albums, or printed in newspapers and books, photographs have the power to arrest our vision, to enchant and to enlighten. The fascination with old photographs is not limited to the “punctum,” as Roland Barthes put it; it also exudes beyond the photographed objects, to olfactory bewilderment, a sense of loss in fading color, a mottled stain. In this digital age, where projections of images are omnipresent, photographic utensils of all kinds are prolific and digital screens can reproduce any object at any time, the fragile nature of xuan paper photographs seems more precious. Most significant, however, is the uniquely trans-modal visual experience that Cherney’s art evokes, in which we transcend boundaries between various media and materials. As we ponder how the images of cliff-top trees and temple-cauldron rice grains might return and join with the bark fiber and rice husks within the *xuan* paper, we have already transcended the yellowed and outdated concepts of photography.

2) Instrumentality: *Forma Formans* and the Serene Beauty of Things Small

Be it an animal bone or tortoise shell, or the bamboo slips or silk pages from which the earliest books took form, these materials are vehicles and instruments of thought. In the present day they are categorized as tools of expression; in ancient times they were known as *qi*: “instruments” or “ware.” Words are ware that can contain thoughts. Paper and brushes are instruments with which to convey words. Printers are instruments that can convey paper. The camera is ware that can contain the intuitive engagement between the photographer and his objects. Cherney crosses freely between these various instruments, yet is not limited by them. In so doing he has achieved the Confucian ideal of the accomplished scholar who uses instruments but is not confined by them, echoing the Platonic metaphysical concept of *forma formans*: forms in continuous becoming.

The instrumentality and utilitarian aspects of photography have hindered it from joining the pantheon of pure art, as dictated by Kant’s aesthetic principle of distinguishing art from instrument – a principle which has dominated Western thought for centuries. Among the instruments utilized by Cherney, photography is the one most often deemed to be purely a tool; this makes Cherney’s art photography even more distinctive. In recent years, most domestic and international Chinese photographic exhibitions have focused on documenting social change. Photography

is, for the most part, only categorized or discussed as either commercial or documentary (or both). There is very little art for art’s sake in photography. The painter turned photographer Wang Qingsong has also expressed that that he can not imagine a state of art that does not reflect social phenomena. The transparency and the directness of photography continue to lead to criticism that photography is not art. However, in traditional China, the distinction between utilitarian instruments and the objects of art was not so clearly defined. Facing this dilemma, we must be content with photography’s designation as a small and semi-instrument until the day when it is finally accepted unanimously in to the pantheon of art.

Interestingly, amidst the inundation of spectacle in contemporary art, where self-referential works reign pompously, Cherney’s works have the serene composure and quiet beauty of a small object – a small instrument – unassumingly beholding the world, content and enlightened. Contained and suggested within Cherney’s long-slice views is a desire to extend (and reconnect with) the world. The waving treetops of Mount Hua seen through Cherney’s slices echo Walter Benjamin’s indefatigable search for that aura among the tree branches on the mountain afar, as well as Ni Zan’s shivering boughs leaning against the wind along the river bank¹⁰.

“The legendary jade of Mount Kun appeals less to people than their own little gems.”¹¹ The vast world can be seen with small eyes, and grand lessons can be learned through small objects. Cherney goes against the penchant for spectacle in contemporary art. The forward-looking vision of Cherney’s works resides in his self-limitation, which in turn suggests transcendence: self-correction which garners self-knowledge for further embarkation. Immersed in detail, Cherney fuses large with small; his works are the embodiment of *chicun qianli*: the art of inscribing the world in small measures and views, or the art of viewing the entire world in a grain of sand.

3) Book: the Aura of Books Unbound

The singularity of Cherney’s photographic book art structurally resists the impulse for reproduction in a mechanical age. As a handmade photographic book, Cherney’s work also echoes postmodernism’s criticism against the assumed separation between subject and object propagated by the rapid development of the printing industry. His works leap across a myriad cultural and artistic borders, refusing to endorse any single format or power of interpretation. They are a textual enactment of the process of accelerating the transcendence of cultural and political borders. With ever accelerating capitalist globalization, the rapid growth of the world wide web and the digitization of books and library information systems, a day will soon come of “infinite books without borders” or, as many may hurry to claim, the day of the “demise of libraries.” When and if that day does come, the aura of Cherney’s photographic art books will serve as an inspiration for re-comprehending the world

through photography and non-virtual materiality.

Journeys Afar and Eternal Return

Photography is a means of understanding the world, but the truth of the world can by no means be embodied within a singular photographic image; rather, it can only be experienced through day to day life. Before the world can be realized through *augenblick* – in the blink of an eye – it must first revolve in *la durée* – the flowing stream of time. A fundamental understanding of the world requires the dimension of time. Cherney's photographic bookwork affords such a process of transformation: the sutra-bound album that integrates a variety of traditional crafts undoubtedly incorporates the dimension of time. *Bounded by Mountains* unfolds in the flowing stream of time, inviting viewers to plunge into a world that is not merely representational, but also a world that is increasingly knowable through the narration of time. This process of seriality is just the opposite of the one through which we learn to understand the world, because a clear understanding of the world usually begins by denying a full acceptance of the representations of the world. Cherney's photographic book art does not deny representation entirely; rather, it uses representation to draw us from a two dimensional surface into the depths of time.

Cherney's images of the spirit road of the *Yongtai* tomb of the Northern Song dynasty are "time images." Inspired by the dimensions of time and space implied in the binary imagery carved on to Han and Wei dynasty outer coffins, Cherney's arrangement of the relics of the spirit road consists of a dualistically opposed visual display. Every gaze that follows the gaze of the stone figures towards the distant horizon is drawn back by the peripheral sight of a corresponding gaze. Thus a flat surface of stone figures begets the depth of time. The relics of the spirit road become the intersection of the horizontal axis of space and the vertical depth of time. Yet, the relic itself has always been an image of time, an image that records the passage of time. Time has carved itself on to the spirit road inch by inch, deeper and deeper into the landscape of the earth, and the road has merged with nature. Thus, just like the circling vision of the ruins of the spirit road, those who venture on distant journeys will inexorably return. Are not those stone generals who have been sent off by their loved ones still longing for a return?

Cherney's own continuous journeying and returning is not only geographic but also spiritual and cultural. His conceptual works express the combined experiences of his cultural voyages; he is grounded in principles, yet free to wander between art forms. Both calligraphy and photography enhance Cherney's quest to define humanity through his engagement with art. Immersed over the years in the realms of both Eastern and Western thinking, Cherney's renewed interpretation of China's inherited traditions is perhaps more distinctive than that of many Chinese artists who are "somewhere in the mountain, lost in the clouds."¹² His experiential understanding of life is perhaps also more direct. When all the sound and fury quiets down, everything returns to the realm of aesthetic appreciation. It is the moment of epiphany through observation, the moment of "reciprocal gaze between the mountain and self,"¹³ echoing Nietzsche's aphorism that "if you gaze long into the abyss, the abyss gazes back at you."¹⁴ From his journeys afar Cherney returns to a China not only of the arts, but also of a nature harmoniously integrated with human subjectivity. It is an eternal return to art via Nature; it is also an eternal return to Nature via the art of reframing.

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- 1 Tsuen-hsuei Tsien, *Written on Bamboo and Silk: The Beginnings of Chinese Books and Inscriptions* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1962).
- 2 Li Bai (701-762), “A Banquet in Spring.”
- 3 “In 2000, the Albany Public Library organized an exhibition called ‘Book-Ends: Imagin’ing the Book — The Work of Xu Bing’ and arranged for Derrida and I to lecture together, an event that attracted quite a large audience. People said that they found it interesting to have Xu Bing and Derrida ‘installed’ in the same space. I remember saying to Derrida: ‘Although so many people have used your theories to interpret *Book from the Sky*, I had never read any of your books at the time I was working on it. If I had read them, maybe I wouldn’t have bothered to continue. It would have been clear that there was no point in making anything ever again.” See Glenn Harper, “Exterior Form - Interior Substance: A Conversation with Xu Bing,” *Sculpture*, Jan/Feb 2003, Vol. 22, No. 1.
- 4 See Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (New York, 1995), pp. 6-7.
- 5 Li Yu (1611-1680), “Liang ye mei ming fu ‘xihu chuidiao tu’ zan” [An ode to “Fishing at West Lake”].
- 6 Chen Baozhen, “Extension of the Literati Painting: the Photographic Arts of Lang Jingshan,” *National Palace Museum Monthly*, Volume 20, Issue 10, No. 238, January 2003.
- 7 Since Johann J. Winckelmann introduced the concept of *zeitgeist* in his 1764 *History of Ancient Arts*, it has been a common practice in art history to use art objects as evidence to distinguish the stylistic differences between eras and regions.
- 8 Examples of such treatises on painting include: Jin dynasty painter Gu Kaizhi’s *Commentary on the Great Paintings of Wei and Jin* (380 AD); Southern Qi painter and critic Xie He’s *Evaluations of Ancient Paintings* (500 AD), which first put forth the six principles of painting and further ranked painters into six categories; Tang dynasty painter Zhu Jingxuan’s *Catalog of the Celebrated Painters of the Tang Dynasty* (760AD), which ranked painters according to the four standards of “spirit,” “craftsmanship,” “mastery,” and “inventiveness.”
- 9 See Michael Cherney’s web site: <http://www.qiumai.net/scj/huashane.html>
- 10 Ni Zan, *Wind Among the Trees on the Streambank* (1363), Metropolitan Museum.
- 11 See “Zhongji,” *The Annals of Lü Buwei*.
- 12 Jia Dao (793-865), “Searching for, and Not Finding, the Hermit.”
- 13 Li Bai, “Sitting Alone on Jingting Mountain.”
- 14 “He who fights with monsters might take care lest he thereby becomes a monster. And if you gaze for long into an abyss, the abyss gazes also into you.” Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Aphorism 146.

回藝錄

陳昌仁

睹物

第一次見到秋麥的《山重集》，有一種久違了的感覺。明明未曾謀面，可卻好像重逢多年不見，朝朝暮暮魂縈夢繫的老情人。隨著緩緩舒展的經折冊頁裏，宣紙裱背的放大影像中，風景或遠或近，人物若即若離。那華山巔的層巒疊翠掩影相映，那宋神道的荒人守祭迭宕錯落。驀然轉化的連續影像，遊山景般地變換著焦距，瞻之在前，忽焉在後。從既熟悉又陌生的中國行旅攝影中，引領著我們望穿古道西風瘦馬，看盡漢陽晴川歷歷。但是往往在琢磨色塊與線條如何構成意象時，或是收放游移于具象與抽象間的當下，一不小心，就會掉入一陣惆悵惘然。一種莫名的情愫哽咽喉頭，說不上來，又放不下去。既不全是懷舊鄉愁，毋寧是對當時邂逅的一種繼憶。再回望眼，那阡陌縱橫裏的蛇黃菜花自開，那梵煙裊繞裏的炷炷心香自散。偶偶獨行的樵姑緣陞而升上那通天獨橋。高原近日而膚微焦的藏民睜著偌大的眼，漾開一張張過氧微粉的笑臉。溯著飄不完的髮梢，青絲兀自成辮。巨石群佛古拙的微笑，靜徹穹廬。灰飛煙滅中，色相皆褪的狂焰吞噬著五彩唐卡。二掌擎天三跪久叩四體匍匐的香客，模糊了形廓，卻凝聚了記（寄）憶。從細細長長的觀景窗櫺往外望去，那橫互塞北草原的牛羊，那挺立風中的牧馬人，“風吹草低見牛羊”，不就該是這份光景，這等風情？還有那神化般的六朝《瘞鶴銘》，如此貼近如此多嬌。勾勒間，檣櫓灰滅江東去，令人愛不釋手，卻又不知其所以然。揣摩再三，嗟吁終日，仍不能釋懷。這一種面對作品茫然的境地，已經多年不曾領略。諸多不解，種種情結，都在會見《山重集》這位未來故人的當下，一股腦兒湧了上來。

瘞鶴鳴：從《瘞鶴銘》文字的再現，到文字的在陷與載限

首先正本清源，《山重集》是一系列手工打造定作的攝影書。每一本不僅影像不同，質感尺寸也不盡相同，每一本都具有獨特性，在機械大量複製的時代裡顯得格外可喜，彌足珍貴。尤其是那傳統經折連續冊頁的裝裱立刻將我們帶回梵文佛經葉頁在形式與內容同時被漢譯的年代，但它又屬於現代意義的攝影集，一種文化帝國主義的文體、西方現代化的代表，中國被視為獵奇對象的見證與回憶（如英人畢佗 Felix Beato 拍攝圓明園於1860被焚毀前的孤本攝影，及湯姆遜 John Thomson 拍的中國山川行旅）。在多種國際逐漸泯滅的意義上，秋麥的作品乃是經由器的整合進一步深入顛覆傳統東方主義。中國風土人情的攝影，經由秋麥的選擇性“再攝製”後二度曝光，重複取象，再經由電腦打印機與宣紙的半機械化嚙合，加上中國傳統裝裱後，呈現出在風格製式上，時空錯亂倒置下的一種和諧。於是《山重集》之所以迷人乃因其為一綜合轉化、涵蓋古今中外、上下四方的藝術作品。對浸潤於中國文化的讀者而言，之所以對《山重集》這樣一本本外形神似古籍、但內容盡皆不同

的攝影藝術書一直念茲在茲不能相忘的原因，除了文字之外，可能還是來自那濃重的化不開的中國藝味，以及對中國書史的興味。但在諸多著相中，對秋麥用攝影機重新微拍放大《瘞鶴銘》的迷惘尤其顯著：在石紋與鑿痕間摩挲，領會著書法上“折釵股”的力道，想像比百煉鋼還要堅硬的繞指柔毛深深的刷著糙硬的磐石，如劃水留痕，有迹無痕；對中國文字的想像在此一貼近中得到一種莫大的滿足。

文字的各種再現可能，無論如何轉化，一直都是中國文化關注的重點。即如錢存訓在《中國古代書史》所言，研究中國書籍藝術演變必離不開銘文，因為典籍常刻於金石，銘文亦常轉錄於書籍中。¹對《瘞鶴銘》的迷惘，亦來自中國藝術思想裡，對人與自然的看法，以及文字在其中扮演的角色所進行的審視與省思。從殷商甲骨始，文字即為中國人對天地自然之言說，由摩崖刻石到立碑碣文字以求不朽，從春秋筆鬼神驚到李白的“大塊假我以文章”²之以天地山川為紙，盡書（抒）胸中感懷於千古，中國人對文字溝通人與自然的作用，以及文字再現各種主體性或精神力的功能，早已深入思想體系。正因文字之法力無邊，因為文字而招限致陷者亦所在多有，淺者如文字獄，古今多見，深者如文字慾，則鬻文煮字，天地鳥獸，冬烘處處。無如訓詁之為各色不同泛政治化言說所濫用者，亦不勝枚舉。歷來對文字著魔者伙眾，大凡愈是魂牽古老中國的人，愈是容易入蠱。傳統藝術先不說，八零年中葉以降，當代中國藝術工作者在經歷“文革”諸多文字煉獄洗禮後，對文字特別有感覺，加上藝評界策展業者也感同身受大夥一起興高采烈，一時間好像祇要跟中國字扯上關係，就彷彿可以立刻搏扶搖而上青（西）天，大受青睞。名大如徐冰、谷文達，中西雙方都對中國當代藝術裡傳統文字的改造及大作文章表示莫大的興趣，在在顯示中國人字障之深，乃非數千年之寒可砌。連尊文解字的西方解構主義祭酒德希達（Jacque Derrida）也樂與徐冰互相唱和，望文生藝，互相為文祝禱，字障之漪歟其盛，人焉瘦哉？³

對文字作圖像性思考，以探求文字延伸於視覺藝術的向度，這種進一步深度發展也順理成章地反印於秋麥繼《山重集》後續作的《金石窺》作品裡。作為一部探討視覺趣味的印譜，《金石窺》呈現另一種嶄新之視覺思考結構與經驗，體現在對金文之款式與款識，印章與拓印間的隨機組合，以及對古文字形體美感的探索。但秋麥對文字的探求及其藝術作品的綜合性與轉化性有別於許多中國當代藝術工作者。

就文字而言，徐冰之刻意或有意的無意義（purposeful meaninglessness）作為一種對中國文字的顛覆，一種對文字在陷與載限的反思，誠然有其反映時代背景的吶喊及內在驅動力所在；但進一步言之，其“非文類字”對文字在陷與載限的質疑更是一種反詮釋，反意義，反權力的宣言。其智識性遠勝於美感，或者說其美感多來自智識性運作而較少依賴感官。不僅與德希達的反字權中心主義（logocentrism）若合符節，更與康德美學中的有意之無意（purposeful purposelessness）遙通款曲。此一中西合璧固然可喜，但卻引發連串疑惑與迷失（如西方對徐冰“非文類字”的興趣似乎遠超中國），以及重新考量當代藝術中美學被置而不論的桎梏與前滯性的必要。

質言之，徐冰暨中國當代藝術工作者的解構性作品大抵皆強調一種事件性，一種過程性，展示的成品僅屬留迹餘痕。不論是對過往的重新審視，如谷文達的重刷大字報，或是對文字的解構重組，如徐冰的《天書》，真正作品精神往往存在於創作歷程中，所呈現的成品祇是留痕餘迹而已。此一對藝術品的瓦解乃至對物件客體的全面解構固然是當代藝術極為成功的操作，但破而後能立，亦屬藝術範疇中的另一要素。後結構、後現代等諸多（後庭花園中）後字號論述與言說的困擾，創作與批評的危機，正因為忽略到主體的自我建立也需要相對穩定可識判的客體。在二十世紀對主體的全面解析分離後，客體亦隨之解體，但客體之完全消解，亦意味著主體之遲不能重建。於是學界藝界戚戚皇皇之怪相亦不乏多見。秋麥的藝術相對保留了作品的物件性，在隨機與複製等當代藝術操作中，仍然執著於物的器質與本性，甚至有了濃厚的玩物的興味，興許是其惹人喜愛玩味再三的主因。

攝影 | 人 | 鏡念

除了重新微攝《瘞鶴銘》碑拓文字，秋麥對文字的興趣，從對中國文字各種再現可能的探討，如《金石窺》，到秋麥多年投入書法之鑽研，有興無減。但《山重集》的本體畢竟是一系列攝影藝書。《山重集》攝影之所以能那麼引人入勝正由於它特殊的呈現方式。

秋麥本是專業攝影出身，Imaginechina圖庫在美掌門人外，亦屬家門淵源，克紹箕裘而有乃祖之風。早期作品游刃於商業與藝術攝影之間，多年潛心學習中國文化的結果，更陶冶出深厚的藝術素養與敏銳的直覺感觸。如同大多振聲啓聵的藝術作品皆來自直覺，真積力久，而後能貫通成一家之言。《山重集》的誕生亦然。多年攝影中國的蘊累，結合對傳統書畫藝術的熱愛，秋麥《山重集》對東西方藝術形式做有機性組合，並且從結構上作整合的嘗試，既前瞻又懷舊。

就前瞻性而言，一反東西藝念傳統中，西方的物質性與東方的精神性，秋麥使用中國傳統材料如宣紙印刷裱褙經摺冊頁成書，但創作靈感精神卻來自西方現代藝術，諸如隨機選擇中的再創造，對細節局部的重視，既以小見大又以大見小（synecdoche），對人與機械介面的探索，以及重複與複製的藝術本質。而《山重集》迷人之處正在於東西藝術精神的不謀而和。

秋麥使用手製的細長觀景窗在他所拍攝的照片中重新尋找美感經驗，如同不斷重複曝光的二度快門般，反復追求那石破天驚的驚艷。經由35毫米底片全方面片斷式的細部放大，時而模糊的焦點，時而乍現的嘆奇，那殘缺不完整的美感，似乎更接近我們記憶存在的狀態，片斷而模糊，殘缺而不完整。那不僅是親身飲冰臨炙的身體記憶，更是一種共同集體的文化記憶。由於片斷所以必須視覺延伸，由於模糊所以必須聚精會神。在放大而抽象的影像中我們隨從感官的游蕩，在經由攝影延宕的具象裡我們尋找意義的座標，在細看與再看之間，不知不覺地向影像靠近。面對眼前的疏離與抽象，我們祇得讓開展冊頁的時間帶我們按圖索驥...莫名間，辨視出新象與心相而豁然開朗，



卻聽得沓沓步伐聲，依稀中，已驀然走在斜陽道，青石板，黃泥地，勾勒間。像愛麗絲徘徊在時間門外般，我們從細縫中塞入偌大的軀體，然後纔進到秋麥的攝影天地。如賽門霞瑪（Simon Schama）所說：風景地貌皆由心起（landscape is the work of the mind）。⁴刻書賣文的生活大師李漁亦言：“才情者，人心之山水；山水者，天地之才情。”⁵好像從百寶囊中掏出一塊塊西洋鏡，秋麥的攝影引領我們進入萬化合一的大千微觀世界：從觀物鏡（viewfinder）變成觀悟鏡（self-finder），從再視鏡（ana-scope）換到身歷鏡（soma-

scope），搖著鏡頭，換著片子，段斷續敘，一片片新鏡，一遍遍心境。

藝問兩難：（那麼）為何秋麥的綜合性作品觸及許多藝術問題的核心？

首先是攝影藝術合法性的議題。照像機是個弔詭的器具。它忠實地記錄下鏡頭的畫面，但是

照片題材的選擇及畫面的建構，又取決於攝影師。攝影的機械化紀實性以及其機械複製的功能性對於攝影是否能登入藝術殿堂，一直是現代藝術爭辯的重要課題。現代主義對攝影將會以真實取代繪畫的美感帶有強烈焦慮，從波特萊爾的擔憂到班雅明的憂鬱一直持續迄今。

秋麥放大後抽象化的影像脫離攝影紀實的負擔，祇有解放對形似的負擔後纔能方便進行抽象的思維；如同攝影解放繪畫求神似的負擔後，便展開現代繪畫絢爛多彩的新頁。秋麥在解放攝影紀實負擔的同時，重新賦予它新的場域，在親近古代藝術的氛圍裡我們可以毋庸忌諱，不假思索地接受攝影是一種藝術。有趣的是，對真實這一浮動概念的把握，往往得由非真的表現手段更能凸顯出來。

再則談到攝影中國民族化問題。秋麥之中國化攝影也觸及攝影是否能中國化的問題。如同所有融合中西文化藝術的意圖，這是一個現代中國揮之不斷的夢魘（specter）。例如1980年代中期針對改革開放後西化背景而再提起的“油畫民族化”，早已經淪為一種純粹形式化商品化和庸俗化的一個話題，但它是個有趣的敗筆。所謂油畫民族化的嘗試，如使用皴點筆法、分散透視、平均色彩光源等中國水墨畫常用的處理方法，之所以為敗筆，乃在物質器具與藝術精神上之格格不入。這不僅觸及不同文化藝術精神與實踐是否能互相溝通理解，以至於進一步互相融合的可能性。本來民族文化間互相借鑒學習，早為歷史常態，歐陸啟蒙時代的中國熱（Chinoiserie）也不見得高明。但他山之石可以攻錯，若從不同傳統藝術結構精神上分析比較，儘管各辟蹊徑，出入頗多，往往卻能因而更認識自己。對攝影的中國化努力最甚不懈的莫過於郎靜山⁶。前述油畫民族化所使用中國水墨畫常用的處理方法，均可見於郎氏攝影中而有著不同的效果。

郎靜山攝影以中國水墨山水畫為模擬的參考與依歸，自創所謂集錦式攝影，亦即運用西方的蒙太奇，經由多重底片重複曝光後，選擇母題與空間結構，重組為神似中國山水名畫的攝影版本。郎靜山的攝影試圖呈現並追尋文人畫的境界。不論是主題構圖或美感原理都來自傳統山水畫，作品滿溢國畫的美學精神，彷彿是幀幀以攝影為工具造景的山水畫，即便在數位影像編輯改變攝影可信度後的今天看來仍是饒富興味。

郎靜山所推崇的謝赫六法與攝影工具的融合需要做相當程度的加工令人不禁再重新思索攝影是否能中國山水畫化的問題。因為郎靜山所代表的正是中國藝術思維中求同的融合想法，與西方求異的思想大不相同。大抵西方藝術史發展求異而非求同，多數十六以至十八世紀藝術的著作傾向討論不同藝術類型的本質，將繪畫與雕刻，詩詞比較，美學探討屬於“比較藝術”如萊辛之拉奧孔（Lessing's Laocoon）。⁷傳統中國藝術史的研究起源比西方早，從早期著重高低品第之藝術評論⁸，到張彥遠集大成的《歷代名畫記》十卷（847AD）即開始強調繪畫用筆的重要，導致“書畫同源”理論的濫觴。

中國書畫同源論除了說明器具發展使用的物質歷史與文化實踐精神進展的思想史相互影響密不可分外，更揭示兩點主要藝術精神的差異。其一，中國藝

術一以貫之的通達精神，可從書畫同源以及筆跡學（graphology）看出。我手寫我心，中國藝術的再現或呈現的是主體的內在本性，模擬強調由內而外，講的是內練門道；而西方的模擬由外而內，多的是外家工夫。其二，千百年來西方的模擬是法自然（mimesis），中國的模擬是法傳統。誠然對美的鑒賞與反應中外皆然，見到美則想親近，進而模擬，是而傳移摹寫中外都有，但氣韻生動一直是評判中國畫優劣的重要標準，它也是鑒定畫作優劣的試金石。此外諸如對作品的紙張、用墨、用色、用印、印泥、印色、印文、落款、款識內容等，皆可以“氣韻生動”或其他六法審視之。諸多觀念性詞結如“臥游”、“澄懷”、“解衣盤礴”，講的都是主觀唯心的概念，既難以界定，更遑論質疑之。其他如“類感”、“寫意”等詞亦然。除了用中國書畫同源論說明中西藝術史發展的異同方向，攝影的中國山水畫化以及攝影中國民族化的問題更可藉由郎靜山、王履、以及秋麥三人不同的作品得以檢視，而西嶽華山總會是不約而同提供論劍的好地方。

華山論鏡：自然三人行

郎靜山的攝影乃為求同，在景觀攝影的組合中尋找山水畫的印象與記憶，甚至改變重組攝影記錄下真實的自然以求達到一種傳統的意境。他後期的許多作品都強調空山雲境，如〈雲山〉（1987），尤其最為師法倪瓚。郎靜山的攝影鏡頭真實紀實性在面對自然與傳統山水畫的意境時產生必然的局限與選擇：郎靜山選擇向傳統靠近一反攝影記錄自然的再現功能。而王履則相反，他選擇向自然直接取法一反文人畫精神取相的意創畫境。

因為中國山水畫是為一種心象，所謂胸中丘壑乃強調憑印象與記憶作畫，唯心是相，故而萬物皆能取象。畫的是心象，看的是心象，鑒賞的也是心象。因為一切存乎於心，而不參考於自然，像不像自然就沒那麼重要了。是以王履的畫論強調“心師目，目師華山”，不法宗師而法自然，當然就被當時的畫派視為異類。王履為求突破窠臼，不流俗以得真解脫，登華山以法自然。以是王履畫華山先邊走邊畫，走完再畫，回家思索多年後頓悟，又數畫華山，並創形意二元畫論。

秋麥的山水攝影從王履《華山圖》汲取靈感⁹，更面臨郎靜山山水攝影心向傳統與王履山水畫師法自然的雙重問題。一方面秋麥沒有郎靜山傳統的包袱，但仍然嚮往山水古意；另一方面秋麥攝影鏡頭能真實的攝取複製自然，沒有王履振弊斥俗一清耳目的使命，但出陳變貌的心依然常在。如何調適機械取代並降低人為成分的攝影與全然人為的水墨山水畫，如何使無我的自然景觀攝影與相對意義下全我的山水畫相接應與結合是為一大挑戰。進一步推而衍之，中國山水畫書畫同源，藝術的創作與評議向人的定義靠近，西方攝影將物我分離，藝術的創作與評議向物靠近。秋麥的華山山水攝影過程與王履相似。先邊走邊拍，回家思索後，又再“拍”先前所拍華山照片。是為一種複寫重拍的多重書寫。使用手工相框框象，我們可以說，秋麥的觀物鏡無鏡，攝影機無機。



直觀之，秋麥的華山攝影圖有著明顯的抽象化傾向，在比較郎靜山山水攝影後更覺有趣。攝影的工具性與紀實性使人的參與成分減低，乃至有不足為藝術之論。郎靜山加入人工安排的傳統圖像組合，其藝術成分乃在其安排之用心與操作上。秋麥的華山攝影圖顯示明顯的抽象，其藝術人為成分乃在其重拍複製的多重書寫與觀念操作上。作為一位“替照片拍照片”的藝術家，秋麥的重拍複攝一方面與胸中丘壑的畫法類似，另一方面更與王履相合，其結果都是更加遠離自然。但這個遠離可能更接近傳統中國文人畫的精神。

中國藝術的遠離自然是人本的精神與結果，長久以來中國人對中國畫感興趣的是其視覺傳統，於是極度發展的自我指涉性，發展成高度自我完足的封閉系統與中國畫的潛在內爆性。但是當金文銘刻也成為自然的一部分，當在石碑上刻文字早已名正言順地加入自然，中國文人畫的遠離自然或者藝術上的出走，竟然還是到頭來回歸自然。走得愈遠回歸得愈自然。祇不過這個自然已不再是與人相對的自然，而是與人相共存的自然，人的自然。

物性與悟性：雜貨店守則

西方物質文明的物性（object-hood）與悟性一直是現代主義的核心精神，到了中國，就往往被擺到雜貨店裏去了。在傳統中國要立一家之言，或成為某學宗師，通常都得兼治眾家學問，所謂大師多半能兼容並蓄，無論是國學大師通諸子，或國畫大師稱三絕，各個都有開雜貨店¹⁰的本領，樣樣都能來。作為一個綜合藝術，秋麥試圖用攝影貫串中國傳統藝術，由山水景觀攝影為出發，結合數位打印與宣紙印刷，再加上裝裱成經折冊頁，整個過程猶如學徒重炙傳統藝術雜貨店，樣樣都得來過。但是收獲毋寧是豐饒的，在秋麥藝術製作過程裡，每一種材質原料都被賦予新的生命及意義，物質的本性與延伸性都得到相當程度的相互啟發與提昇，姑且用雜貨店守則條列三大物性（紙、器、書）及其相對悟性。

1 紙：直紙真性，處處文章

首先秋麥作的是宣紙照片，不同於一般的平光面或布紋面照片。在紙感和質感上作文章的結果使我們更加重視紙感和質感的翻陳出新。照片之質地、觸感乃構成視覺觀影經驗極為重要的一部分，有時看照片比實物能引發更深刻的情緒反應，因為與真實的隔離，造成相對的對照片中人物更為專注的情感投射，或如維根斯坦的遊戲規則，看照片如看畫般已然成為文化教育下人們表達與接受情緒的一種內化了的方式。

君不見老照片的魅力，正因照片也帶有其他紙製品常見的缺陷，時間長了，就會發黃。照片會遺失，會被複製。它們被收入攝影集子、印在報紙上，書本中，在每一張印著照片的紙張與非紙上勾魂攝魄，文采煥然。然而對照片的迷戀不僅僅集中在某一尖點上，如羅蘭巴特所言，對被攝物的迷戀往往還在物外，那莫名的味道，那褪色的迷茫，那斑駁的痕漬。在投影處處而照片存於無形的數位熒幕的時代，不唯處處可受印，大塊皆文章；宣紙照片的易脆與薄弱更顯得珍貴了。更有甚者，秋麥的作品建議了一種跨越媒介材質的視覺經驗。當我們詫異於影像中垂崖的樹表和爐中的米粒如何會與宣紙裡的樹皮與米漿回藝合一時，我們已然跨越有關照片這一行將就木而略顯陳腐的概念。

2 器：器而不器，小器的好

無論是獸骨龜甲，竹簡帛書，或是古文字本身，都是現代叫做“工具”古代叫做“器”的東西。文字是器可以承載思想，紙筆是器可以承載文字，打印機是器可以承載紙，攝像機也是器可以承載攝影師與自然融觸的直感。秋麥遊於眾器之間，從此器到彼器，真正做到君子不器，器而不器。

但攝影之為器，卻造成其不是藝術的諸多非難，也即是說攝影的工具性，恰為其非藝性。這是康德以來西方美學奉為主臬用以判斷藝術非工具性的

標準。在所有秋麥使用的器具中，攝影是最常被當作純工具的，因而他的攝影藝術化就顯得特別突出。從近年來海內外中國攝影展內容來看，咸以紀錄社會變遷為主的攝影作品居多。攝影學會之攝影分類及討論亦以商業與記實為主創意為輔。一般而言，攝影承載的是實況紀錄，是商機，是有敘事性的內容，而少有為藝術而藝術的攝影。由畫畫轉攝影的藝術家王慶松也表示對於不反映社會狀態的藝術是無法想象的。攝影的工具性或者直言性，透明性，持續造成其不是藝術的非難。但是在傳統中國，工具的實用性與審美性並沒有分得那麼清楚。面對這樣的一種為難，在攝影晉昇藝術殿堂之前，我們祇有把攝影視為小器。

有趣的是，在一片奇觀處處，好大喜功自我好感的當代藝術狂流中，秋麥的作品自有一種小器的安好與靜謐，萬物靜觀皆自得，秋麥細長線條的管窺世界裡有一種延伸與連接世界的興味和意涵。從秋麥管窺望去的華山林表，猶如班雅明尋找靈光所玩味再三的遠山枝芽，亦不正是倪雲林筆下風中兀自迎顫的岸樹¹¹？

“人不愛昆山之玉，而愛己之一蒼壁小璣”¹²，小眼睛可見大世界，小東西的背後，往往會有大問題，大學問。秋麥一反大而無當的潮流，以及機械延伸下感官的無限膨脹擴大，前瞻性的自限以昇，自反不縮，在細節的暴力統治下，小大為尖，實乃深諳尺寸千里，一沙見世界的小器大道理。

3 書：萬書無疆，靈光乍現

此外，不僅秋麥攝影藝書作品的單一性在結構上抗拒著機械時代的複製性，作為手工攝影書，秋麥作品也回應了後現代主義批評書籍印刷業的發展鼓勵並且強化了主客體分離的假想。作為一本本跨越諸多文化藝術樊籬的攝影書，秋麥攝影藝書作品不唯拒絕印證任何舊有權力，反是一加速消解文化政治界限與範疇的文本實踐。當舊有的疆界正在繼續崩潰，秋麥的藝書作品持續質疑主客分離的假想，在跨國資本主義化劇烈，以及數位時代互聯網大量數位化圖書資料訊息的同時，萬書無疆之日似乎指日可待。那一天，秋麥的攝影藝書也會成為稍縱即逝的靈光。而那靈光可能將會是我們回過頭來透過攝影重新了解世界的一種方式。

遠行與回歸

攝影是一種瞭解世界的方式，但世界的真實並不能在單一影像中體會與體現，而必須在世界運轉的過程中體認。在哲學思想中的一眼（augenblick）看盡天下尚未落實前，世界仍是在時間之流（la durée）運轉的，因此對世界的闡釋需要時間。秋麥的影書作品揭示並展現了這樣一個轉化的過程：綜合各種傳統手藝及經折冊頁的形式不可避免地加入了時間的向度；《山重集》在時間之流中開展，邀請觀者一起投入一個不祇是表象、而是經由時間敘述性使我們更加瞭解的世界。這恰好與我們學習如何認識這個世界的過程相反，

因為對世界的真切認識往往是從拒絕全然接受世界的表象開始。秋麥的影書並不全面拒絕表象，反而借由表象引領我們從平面空間進入到時間的縱深。

秋麥拍攝的北宋永泰陵神道就是這樣的一種時間的影像。由漢魏石槨上的二分圖像所隱含的空間與時間向度得到啓發，秋麥宋神道廢墟的安排包含了正反兩面的視覺陳列，每一道漸行漸遠的目送眼神都會被對稱的餘光招回。於是平面的石像有了時間縱深的時相，這一片神道廢墟就成了垂直與橫互時間軸的交點，時間的影像。然而廢墟原本即是時間的影像，光陰的面相。時光的刻痕把神道一寸寸地嵌入地表景觀，融入大地自然，於是正如神道廢墟的循環視線安排，遠行的必定會回歸，送行的眾將軍不也還在等著斯人的歸來？

秋麥個人不間斷的“遠行與回歸”不僅是地理上的，而且是精神上，文化上的。他的觀念作品表現了他的文化歷程中的綜合體驗，矢志於道，而遊於藝，書法和攝影都是秋麥從造型藝術上追求人的定義與人際的契合。長期地出入於中西思想之間，秋麥對中國固有傳統的重新闡釋可能比許多“祇在此山中，雲深不知處”¹³的中國藝術家還要更本色些，對人生的體悟更直接些。當眾聲寂滅，一切還原到審美上的境界時，也就是“靜觀自得”，更是“我見青山多嫵媚”¹⁴，“相看兩不厭，祇有敬亭山”¹⁵遙對尼采所說的“凝視注目良久後向我們頻頻回望的深淵”¹⁶。秋麥遠行後回歸的不僅是藝術中國，而且是自然中國，和人在一起的自然，以及自然的回藝。

陳昌仁，美國明尼蘇達大學比較文學與文化研究學系助理教授。研究領域主要包括比較美學，電影研究，以及視覺藝術研究。著作發表於《新左》等國際期刊。除教學研究外，並從事媒體，攝影，電影製作。曾參與亞太及美國地區許多電影拍攝製作，如《一一》（2000），《驚魂記》（1998）等片。

1 錢存訓，《中國古代書史》（香港中文大學出版社，1975），前言，頁4。

2 李白（701-762），〈春夜宴從弟桃李園序〉。

3 “2000年[紐約州首府]阿爾伯尼公共圖書館組織了《書的結束：徐冰作品展》並安排德希達與我一起講演，吸引了很多觀眾。人們說看到徐冰和德希達被‘安置’在同一个空間裏很有趣。我記得自己對德希達說，‘儘管很多人用您的理論來讀解《天書》，我在創作這件作品時從來沒有讀過您的書。如果我讀了的話，可能我不會繼續創作，因為再做任何東西都是沒有意義的’。”參見Glenn Harper, “Exterior Form - Interior Substance: A Conversation with Xu Bing” [外部形式-內部實質：徐冰訪談錄], *Sculpture*, Jan/Feb 2003, Vol. 22, No. 1。

4 參見 Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (New York, 1995), 頁6-7。

5 李漁（1611-1680），〈梁冶湄明府《西湖垂釣圖》贊〉。

6 陳葆真，“文人畫的延伸——郎靜山的攝影藝術”，《故宮文物》，第20卷，第10期，總號238，2003年1月。

7 由德國溫克曼（Johann J. Winckelmann）於1764奠定藝術品風格分析所形成“時代風格”這個藝術史觀念以降，藝術品遂成為歷史各代與地區異質的見證。

8 如晉顧愷之《魏晉勝流畫贊》（380AD），南齊謝赫《古畫品論》（500AD），提出六法論將畫家分為六品，唐朱景玄《唐朝名畫錄》（760AD），以“神妙能逸”四格分辨畫家高下。

9 參見秋麥網址：<http://www.qiumai.net/scj/huashanz.html>。

10 汪榮祖教授語。

11 倪瓚，*Wind Among the Trees on the Streambank* [風樹流岸]（1363），大都會博物館藏。

12 參見《呂氏春秋·重己》。

13 賈島（793-865），〈尋隱者不遇〉。

14 辛棄疾（1140-1207），〈賀新郎〉。

15 李白，〈獨坐敬亭山〉。

16 “He who fights with monsters might take care lest he thereby becomes a monster. And if you gaze for long into an abyss, the abyss gazes also into you.” Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Aphorism 146.



Honoring the Culture, Extending the Tradition

by Judith Hoffberg

In opening the books that Michael Cherney creates, one opens a world: a world of images, of nostalgia, as well as of new vistas into bookmaking and into bridging cultures. Immersed in Chinese history, culture and traditional forms, Michael Cherney has evolved into a consummate artist whose medium is the book – the artist book – which honors the Chinese culture yet goes beyond it, building a bridge between millennia by allowing the twenty-first century to creep in to this linear tradition and reveal a new way of bookmaking. Michael bows to tradition by using the ancient concertina (accordion) form of album, renowned paper whose materials are cured for months in the outdoors, precious wood covers, and traditional binding; but to this tradition he has also married the art of photography.

Michael's work is characterized by photographic enlargements which are possible through the use of digital tools that have only recently been developed. These enlargements are not only an evolution in photographic technique, they also result in a transformed version of the Chinese watercolor tradition: by enlarging the image to such a great degree, fixed perspective – one of the key attributes of photography – is lost, allowing for flexible perspective, a characteristic of traditional Chinese art.

The enlargements themselves depict details which so much of twenty-first century life negates, avoids, and disregards. Michael's art demands that the viewer concentrate, almost meditatively, to find their own interpretation of these details.

The images remain abstract until the unfolding of the complete album; as the eye and mind of the viewer slowly acclimate to bring the work into focus, the result is a kind of "ah-ha" experience. Subject matter that was at first hidden, secretive, almost unknown, becomes unmasked.

The feeling of purity that one senses from this bookwork comes from the authenticity of the materials; there is a respect for history. This is reflected in the choice of subject matter as well, such as landscapes, sculpture and calligraphy; even the more modern subjects feel rooted in a historical foundation. Michael's bookworks thus bridge the period of historic bookmaking to contemporary audiences, bringing tradition to a place where it can be appreciated anew.

Having experimented for several years to find the perfect blend of materials, the artist gives honor not only to the Chinese culture but also to book culture as well. It is the paper that is indeed the secret to success, allowing the image to be absorbed into the fibers and to dance across the pages. In fact viewing the work is like a dance, where one has to learn one's steps before moving across the floor. This journey has a rhythm that is much



more important than the destination. The viewer must experience this journey in order to have a consummate encounter with these profound works of art. As Umberto Eco and Marcel Duchamp have avowed, it is the reader or the viewer that completes the book or the work of art.

Judith A. Hoffberg is a librarian and archivist, editor and publisher, lecturer and curator. The founder of the Art Libraries Society of North America, she is also the curator of almost thirty artist book exhibitions and has lectured throughout the world on the subject. Judith is the publisher of The Bookmaker's Desire by Buzz Spector (1995) and Umbrella: The Anthology (2000), as well as the author of Women of the Book: Jewish Artists, Jewish Themes (Boca Raton, FAU, 2001). She is also the editor and publisher of Umbrella, a newsletter on artist books, mail art and contemporary trends in alterative art practice, which is in its twenty-eighth year.

尊重文化，發揚傳統

何扶菊

打開秋麥創作的冊頁，就打開了一個世界：一個充滿影像與懷舊的世界，一個重新展望書籍製作與文化橋樑的世界。經過對中國歷史、文化及傳統形式的不斷深思，秋麥已成為一位造詣精深的藝術家。他的創作媒介是書籍——藝術書籍——它們尊重中國文化並將其發揚光大，將二十一世紀悄悄滲入這個線性傳統並揭示新的創作方法，從而在千年文化之間構建起一座橋樑。秋麥極其尊重傳統：冊頁採用古老的風琴形式，其紙張的材料是經過了數月日曬雨淋的處理的，封面使用珍貴的木材，裝訂亦採用傳統方式。但同時，他又將攝影藝術結合到傳統之中。

秋麥作品的特徵之一是其對照片的高度放大，而這一點祇有通過新近發展的數碼工具才能實現。這種放大不僅是攝影技巧的演變，同時也成為中國水墨傳統的另類演繹：影像經過如此高倍的放大，攝影的關鍵屬性之一——固定的視點——便消失了，取而代之的是靈活的視點——中國傳統藝術的特徵之一。

放大的照片本身描述了大多二十一世紀生活否認、逃避與漠視的細節。秋麥的藝術要求觀看者集中精力，近乎冥想地尋找他們自己對於這些細節的讀解。

影像保持抽象，直至冊頁全部展開；當觀看者的眼睛與心靈漸漸地適應並領會了整個作品的意念時，得到的是一種“嘆為觀止”的體驗。起初隱晦、詭秘、未知的主题慢慢地揭去神秘的面紗。

人們從秋麥的作品中體會到的那種純淨來自於材料的純正；那是對歷史的尊重。這亦反映在題材的選擇上，例如風景、雕刻與書法；即使是更現代的題材亦彷彿來源於歷史的根基。因此，秋麥的作品在古代書籍製作與當代觀眾之間架起了一座時間之橋，將傳統帶到了一個可以重新得到鑑賞的平台。

經過多年的對不同製作材料的完美融合的追求，秋麥尊重的不僅是中國文化，也是書籍文化。紙張確實是其成功的祕密，它允許影像被纖維吸收，並使其躍然紙上。觀看他的作品其實彷彿舞蹈，舞者須在穿越舞池前先學會舞步。在這個旅程中，體會途中的韻律比到達目的地更為重要。觀看者必須親身體驗這樣的旅程纔能與這些深刻的藝術作品有一個圓滿的邂逅。正如安伯托·艾柯與馬塞爾·杜桑所說，完成書籍或藝術作品的恰恰是讀者或觀眾。

何扶菊是一位圖書館學家、檔案學家、編輯、出版人、演講者及策展人。作為北美藝術圖書館協會的創始人，她擔任過約三十場藝術書籍策展人，在全世界舉辦專題演講。曾出版《書籍製作者的渴望》（1995）、《雨傘文集》（2000），並創作了《女性書籍：猶太藝術家，猶太主題》（2001）。她還是《雨傘》的編輯與出版者，這是一個關於藝術書籍、郵件藝術與當代另類藝術實踐趨勢的期刊，現已創刊二十八年。

Interview with Michael Cherney

by Britta Erickson

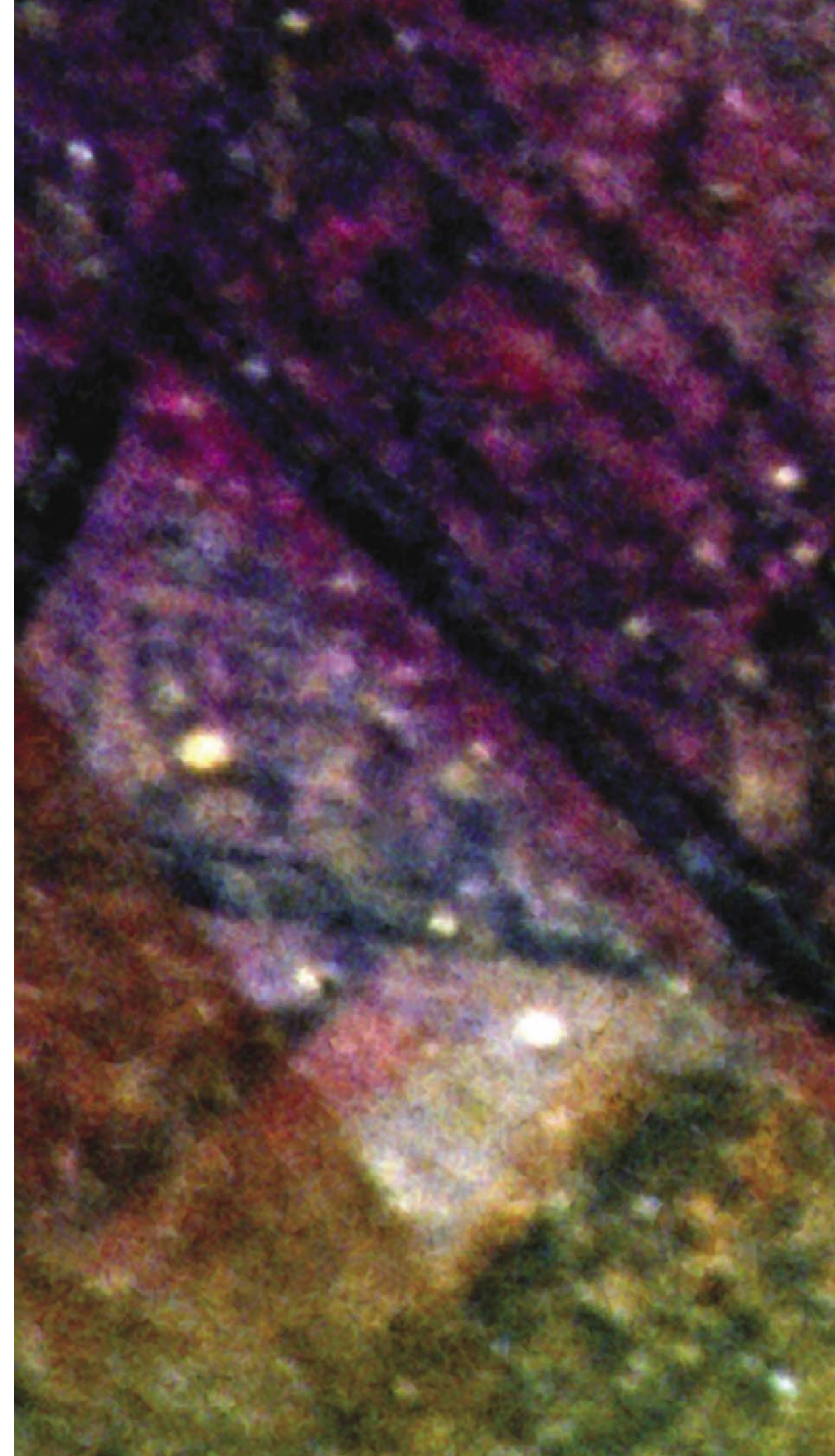
Britta Erickson: Your works relate to what many would consider arcane aspects of Chinese culture. The explanations you provide on your website (www.qiumai.net) are meticulous descriptions of the links between your works and early Chinese culture. You have told me that noted academics will be writing essays for your catalog. I propose to draw more personal discussions of your work from you through this interview. After all, to know the artist's train of thought can bring a work of art alive!

The obvious question to begin with is: Why do your works all relate to early Chinese culture? Have you previously created works of art on other subjects? If so, what catalyzed the switch?

Michael Cherney: It was indeed an evolution that led to the most recent works and their relation to Chinese art history. My initial experience with photography was with standard prints as well as photo essays. I then developed an understanding of traditional Chinese materials and mounting methods, which led to the inspiration to experiment with combining these media. The earliest albums depict more contemporary subject matter than historical subject matter; but as the work became more focused and began to move beyond the novelty of the materials, I started to explore historical subject matter in greater depth. There are both subjects and materials that have been utilized and viewed for centuries, the result being that one might feel limited by them, or even have become numb to them. So the work is intended not only as a means to contrast old and new, but also as a means of bringing the subject matter and materials forward so that they can be appreciated anew. There is an excitement that comes from portraying a familiar subject in a way that has not been seen before. My future work will explore this in even greater detail.

BE: To varying degrees, you are treating cultural artifacts as found objects. This is particularly true of The Buried Crane Inscription, where you select details from photographs of a sixth century carving. The details are so close-up that they have become abstractions to be arranged by you into a new work of art. Please comment on your thought process in creating this work.

MC: The term “found object” is truly accurate, as the final albums are impossible to plan. I can only have an intention of what to use as subject matter, as I cannot predict which photographic images will end up “working” in the album format. Thus the process becomes similar to the traditional concept of *xieyi* 寫意, free expression that only comes into being after the actual experience with the subject matter is over. Subject matter is sought out from its hiding place inside the images. These detailed excerpts cannot easily be discerned from the photograph as a whole; the rest of the photo must be masked in



order for these excerpts to come alive.

BE: *In works of Chinese calligraphy, the characters may be rendered almost unintelligible, yet the viewer knows that there is textual meaning. Do you feel that this loss of legibility in a work of art based on a legible text is similar to what you are doing with The Buried Crane Inscription?*

MC: Yes. For example, a calligrapher is taught to add a few “running” style characters to a “grass” style composition so that readers will be able to find their way through the work. Those who are familiar with *The Buried Crane Inscription* will recognize the source quite quickly, yet will still be seeing it in a new way. This work is also a play on one of the principles of Chinese painting: *chuan yi mo xie* 傳移模寫, the copying of classic masterpieces; only in this case the copying is being done with a camera rather than a brush.

BE: *Passages of Bronze and Stone is another work that treats Chinese works of art as found objects. In this work, you begin with a rubbing of an inscription and then select a portion to become a seal and another portion to be remade as a photographic print. You then present the seal and print as a page from a book of seals. You are making a kind of “fake” cultural artifact out of genuine artifacts. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say “disguised” rather than “fake.” Does this interpretation seem correct to you?*

MC: “Disguised” is the more accurate term, as the work is indeed a book of carved seals. The Chinese title for this work utilizes the word *kui* 窺, literally “to discern,” which is used in the proverb “by discerning a single spot, the whole leopard can be inferred.” This refers to the previously mentioned concept of finding hidden shapes within a greater whole. Further “disguising” these inscriptions as a book of seals is meant to be a playful way of adding another layer of tradition to be unmasked. Through the creation process, the original images make several journeys between stone and paper; thus the work consists of many layers which blur the lines between authenticity and representation.

BE: *In some ways, we could also say that your works of art are “disguised” insofar as they look Chinese but are created by a Caucasian American. Please comment.*

MC: My work may appear to be traditionally Chinese on the surface, but it is contemporary at its core. A Chinese proverb describes having a clearer view from outside than from within (*pang guan zhe qing, dang ju zhe mi* 旁觀者清、當局者迷). As an outsider viewing the current state of traditional Chinese art, I cannot help but see a disturbing trend which has taken place in recent years: there is a level of neglect towards the materials and craftsmanship that have come out of millennia of historical development. Having survived and been perfected over this time frame means that these things have an aesthetic value that deserves to be preserved. The evolution of Chinese art should be viewed in terms of centuries rather than a single lifetime; I hope that my work will serve as an example of how traditional materials and methods can be utilized more creatively in the future.

BE: *You have told me that you consider your works to be Chinese works of art. While I don't see any reason to disagree with you, I am always interested to hear other people's reasoning regarding the definitions of “Chinese art.” How would you define that?*

MC: This is an interesting question; is an artwork's “Chineseness” defined by the work itself or by the ethnicity of its creator? There are other cases of this quandary. For example, would Xu Bing's *New English Calligraphy* be considered Chinese art? What I have come to learn about my work is that it is not very easily defined. I hope that it thus qualifies as many things: Chinese art, contemporary art, photo art, book art, and more. I feel that those who enjoy any of these types of art will be able to appreciate the work. And it is nice to not be easily defined!

BE: *Returning to you earlier comment about the demise of attention to the craftsmanship and materials of art, I find myself in complete agreement with you. You mentioned that you hope to promote and preserve the methods and materials of traditional Chinese art. I am curious how you might relate these principles to the medium of photography.*

MC: Rather than lead to the demise of photography, I believe that the transition to digital has presented us with even greater possibilities. For example, it is through digital technology that has existed only for the past several years that I am able to create my artwork in its current manifestation, as the scale of enlargement would have previously been physically impossible. Also, through the combination of the ancient and modern, I am playing with the very concept of “medium”: photo, stone, paper, etc. Just as with photography, traditional Chinese art should be allowed to evolve as well.

BE: *I am interested in your Mount Hua Album. As with The Buried Crane Inscription, you have selected details from photographs, cropping them for their value as abstract compositions. Have you thought about late Ming artists from the time of Dong Qichang (1555 - 1636) who were more interested in the abstract forms of the mountains than were their predecessors, such as Wang Lü, whose album inspired this work? Are you following in Dong Qichang's footsteps, or is your thought process completely different from what we may conjecture his to have been?*

MC: There are actually a couple of variant factors that led to *The Mount Hua Album* in its existent form. Regarding the inspiration of Wang Lü, he argued for a harmonious blend of: 1) personal engagement with the subject matter, 2) artistic representation of visual forms that have some direct tie to the way the subject matter exists in the world at large, and 3) one's personal expression of ideas. This ideal fits well with the creative use of photography, which at its core is a purely representational art but has limitless possibilities for experimentation along the lines of abstraction as characterized by Dong Qichang. The goal thus becomes to find *spontaneity within photography* (spontaneity as the equivalent of Chinese *xieyi* 寫意 and *ouranxing* 偶然性). For example, traditional Chinese painting is not tied to a fixed perspective, but photography is limited to one fixed viewpoint; by making tremendous enlargements of minute details within the image



and then further breaking these apart into individual pages, the fixed perspective is lost, and we return to a flexible perspective. This is also why each page of each album is outlined by a border: every page becomes distinct, and the albums can thus be viewed with varying degrees of abstraction.

BE: You are planning to spend a significant part of your life in China in the years to come. Do you have plans for what you will be working on there? How do you imagine your sojourn might impact your work?

MC: I already have some concepts in mind for new artwork, and extensive time in China will be essential for improving my knowledge and skills in traditional art, as well as for exploring subject matter. Also, it is important to have Western artists dedicated to the evolution of Chinese art in the same way that artists from around the globe serve a vital role in the USA by providing a variety of perspectives.

BE: Is there anything else that you would like to say or that I should have asked you about?

MC: Traditional Chinese art is characterized by the harmonious relationship between various forms of expression in a single work of art, such as that which can exist between calligraphy, painting, and seal carving, as well as the materials and tools that are used to construct them. Through my art I strive to include photography as well.

BE: *Thank you for sharing your thoughts.*

Britta Erickson is an independent scholar and curator whose work focuses on contemporary Chinese art. Her major undertaking for 2005 was On the Edge: Contemporary Chinese Artists Encounter the West, a traveling exhibition guest curated for the Cantor Center for Visual Arts, Stanford University, with ancillary projects including a catalogue, an international symposium, and a visiting artists program resulting in additional exhibitions. Other projects include contributing contemporary Chinese artists' biographies to the 2005 update of Oxford University Press's Grove Art Online, curating Word Play: Contemporary Art by Xu Bing (the first major solo exhibition for a living artist to be held at the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, 2001), and serving on the board of advisors for the Ink Society (Hong Kong), Asia Art Archive (Hong Kong), and YISHU, A Journal of Contemporary Chinese Art (Taipei).

秋麥訪談錄

林似竹

林似竹：您的作品涉及了中國文化中諸多神秘難解的方面。您在個人網站（www.qiumai.net）上就自己的作品與中國早期文化之間的聯繫提供了精細的描述。您告訴我將會有著名的學者為您的圖錄撰寫評論。我準備通過此次採訪，討論更多您本人對自己作品的看法。畢竟，祇有瞭解藝術家的思想，纔能使作品更具魅力！

開門見山：為甚麼您的所有作品都涉及中國早期文化？您早先創作過其它題材的作品嗎？如果有，是甚麼促成了這樣的轉變？

秋麥：我的作品與中國藝術史的聯繫確實存在一個演變的過程。我起初的作品是傳統攝影和影像散文。之後，我逐漸對中國傳統藝術材料及裝裱方法有了一些瞭解，這激發了我嘗試把它們與攝影結合起來的靈感。我最早的冊頁展現當代題材比歷史題材要多；但隨著作品的意念越來越清晰，作品本身漸漸超越了對材料之新奇性的迷戀，我也開始深入地探究歷史題材。中國傳統藝術的題材與材料已經被採用並觀摩了許多個世紀，結果可能使人們感到受其限制，甚至對之麻木。因此，我的作品不僅要對比新舊，而且還要把傳統的題材與材料向前推進，使它們重新得到鑑賞。以一種從未見過的手法描繪大家熟知的題材，這亦足以令人振奮。我今後的工作將對此做進一步的探究。

林：從某種程度來說，您將文物視為拾得物。這在《瘞鶴銘》中體現得尤為突出。在這部作品中，您選擇了《瘞鶴銘》（六世紀摩崖刻石）的照片局部細節，這些細節是如此的特寫甚而變為抽象影像來被您編排到一個新的藝術作品中去。請您介紹一下創作這件作品的思路。

秋：“拾得物”這個詞用得相當準確，因為最終的冊頁是不可能被計劃出來的。由於無法預測哪些影像適合冊頁的形式，我只能有大概要使用什麼題材的意圖。這個過程與傳統意義上的寫意相似，祇有與題材的經歷結束之後自由的表達才能得以成型。題材隱藏在影像內部，需要耐心挖掘。這些細節摘選不能簡單地從整張照片洞察；為了使它們突顯出來，必須遮蔽照片的其它部分。

林：在中國書法作品中，字可以寫得幾乎無法辨識，但觀者卻知道原文的意思。您認為在可讀藝術作品中這種不易讀性與您對《瘞鶴銘》的處理是否相似？

秋：是這樣的。例如，一些書法家在草書中添加一些行書元素，以便讀者能夠讀懂作品。那些熟悉《瘞鶴銘》的人很快就能識別出原文，但仍將以一種新的方式來欣賞它。這部作品也調侃了中國書畫的法則之一：傳移模寫，臨摹經典名作；祇是我用相機臨摹，而不是用毛筆。

林：《金石窺》是您將文物視為拾得物的另一個作品。在此作品中，您先選擇



碑刻拓片中的一部分製成印章，再選擇另一部分製作成攝影印刷物，然後，您將這個印章及印刷品展示在一張書頁上，讓它成為一本印章集錄中的一頁。您根據古跡真品製造了一種“贗品”文物。也許說“倣製”比“贗品”更準確，您認為這種說法正確嗎？

秋：“倣製”這個詞更為準確，因為這個作品確實是一本雕刻和印章的集錄。這件作品的中文標題使用了“窺”這個字，源於成語“窺豹一斑”。這與前面提及的在較大整體中尋找隱藏著

的局部的概念是同一個道理。進一步以印譜的形式“倣製”這些碑銘是為了在嬉戲中揭示傳統的另一個層面。通過這個創作過程，原像在石頭與紙張之間週遊數次，因此作品包含了混淆真實性與再表現性的多個層面。

林：在某些方面，我們也可以說您的藝術作品是“倣製”的，因為它們看起來是中國的，但卻由您這個白種美國人創作。請就此發表您的意見。

秋：我的作品表面上看來是傳統中國的，但它實際上是與當代同步的。中國有句成語：旁觀者清，當局者迷。作為一個旁觀中國傳統藝術現狀的局外人，我不能不注意到近年來出現的一個令人憂心的趨向：對於發展了幾千年的材料與技藝所持有的一定程度上的忽視。中國藝術的演變應該按世紀來審視，而非單個的人生。經過了如此長久的考驗與完善，傳統材料與技藝必定具有值得保存的美學價值。我希望我的作品能夠成為一個展現如何在今後更有創造性地利用傳統材料與方法的實例。

林：您告訴我您認為自己的作品是中國藝術。雖然我找不出什麼不同意您的理由，但我總是很有興趣傾聽其他人是如何定義“中國藝術”的。您是如何定義的？

秋：這是一個有趣的問題；一件藝術品的“中國性”是應該由作品本身來決定還是由其創作者的種族來決定呢？這樣的疑惑也體現在其它例子上，甚至於徐冰的《方塊字的空間》也存有該不該被視為中國藝術的疑問。我自己也慢慢地覺察到我的作品不是很容易定義的。我希望它能因此被歸納到許多領域裏：中國藝術、當代藝術、攝影藝術、書籍藝術，或許更多。我覺得那些喜歡以上任何一類藝術的人們都可能欣賞我的作品。不那麼容易地被定義也不錯！

林：回到您剛才所提到的對傳統技藝與材料忽視的問題，我本人完全同意您的觀點。您提到希望發揚並保存中國傳統藝術的方法及材料。我很好奇，您是如何將這些原則與攝影這個媒介聯繫起來的？

秋：我相信數碼科技會給我們提供更大的可能性，而不會導致攝影的消亡。例如，正是通過出世僅僅幾年的數碼技術，我的作品才得以有目前的體現，因為在以前如此高倍的放大比例是根本不可能的。同時，通過古代與現代的結合，我在把玩琢磨“媒介”這個概念本身：照片、石頭、紙張、等等。正如攝影，中國傳統藝術也應該被允許演變。

林：我對您的《華山圖》頗感興趣。與《瘞鶴銘》一樣，您從照片中選擇細節，取其抽象構圖。您可曾想到過晚明時期董其昌（1555-1636）時代的藝術家？他們對山峰的抽象形式比像王履這樣的前輩更感興趣。而正是王履的畫集賦予了您這套作品的靈感。請問您是延續了董其昌的足跡，還是您的思考過程與我們對他所作的推測完全不同？

秋：實際上，現在所看到的《華山圖》是由幾個不同的因素共同促成的。關於王履對我作品的影響，他主張以下幾個方面的和諧統一：1）與題材的親身接觸，2）與題材的存在方式有著某種直接關聯的視覺藝術再現，以及3）一個人思想的自我表達。這種理念非常適合於攝影的創造性使用——其核心為純表現派藝術，但對於如董其昌派的抽象路線的嘗試又含有著無限的可能性。從而，我的目標就是要找出攝影中的自發性（“自發性”類似於“寫意”與“偶然性”）。例如，中國傳統繪畫不依靠固定的透視，但攝影卻局限於一個固定的視點；通過高度放大影像中的微小細節，然後進一步把它們分放至單獨的頁面，固定的視點便消失了，我們回到了靈活的視角中。這也是為甚麼每本冊頁的每幅頁面都有邊

框：每幅頁面變成了獨特的，整本冊頁也因此可以由不同的抽象角度來欣賞。

林：您計劃接下來的幾年會有很多時間在中國度過。您有沒有計劃在那裡將進行的創作？您認為這段時期的逗留可能會對您的創作產生何種影響？

秋：我現在已經形成了一些新作品的概念。在中國逗留這麼長時間，將有助於我提高傳統藝術及題材探索方面的知識與技能。還有一點至關重要，正如來自世界各地的藝術家在美國的不同藝術領域擔當重要角色一樣，西方的藝術家們也應該提供多種視角，獻身於中國藝術的發展。

林：您還有甚麼補充說明或還有什麼我應該問到的嗎？

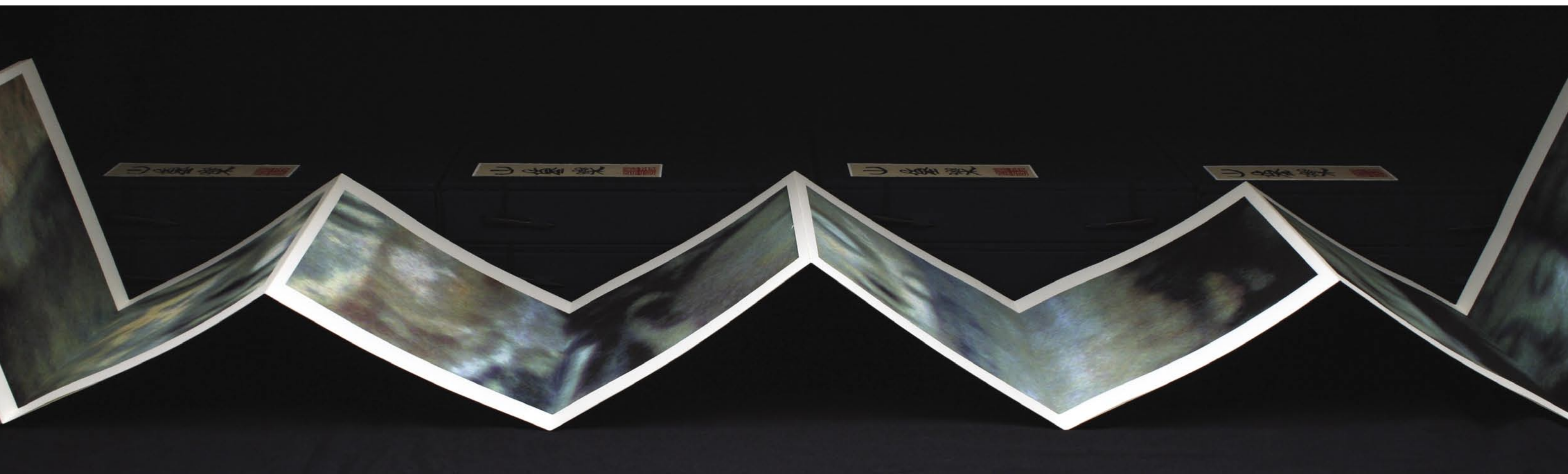
秋：中國傳統藝術最主要的特點是在單幅藝術作品中各種表達形式之間能夠達到完美的和諧，例如書法、繪畫、印章雕刻以及用於構造它們的材料與工具。通過我的藝術作品，我想努力使攝影也成為其中的一個元素。

林：感謝您與我們分享您的觀點。

林似竹是一位獨立學者與策展人，她的作品主要集中於當代中國藝術。2005年她的主要工作是客座策劃《在邊緣：中國當代藝術家遭遇西方》巡回展，該展覽在史丹佛視覺藝術中心舉辦，附屬工作項目包括圖錄、國際研討會，藝術家訪談以及相關的作品觀摩。其它工作項目包括為牛津大學出版社2005年修訂出版的《葛洛夫藝術百科全書線上版全文資料庫》撰寫當代中國藝術家傳記，策劃《遊戲文字：徐冰的藝術》（2001年在沙可樂館舉行的首次為一名尚健在的藝術家舉行的大型個展），擔任水墨會（香港）、亞洲藝術文獻庫（香港）以及《藝術,典藏國際版》（台北）委員會顧問。



Passages of Bronze and Stone 金石錄





Shadows of Ancient Peng 古彭城影

Brief Chronology

1969	Born in New York
1987 - 1991	Undergraduate study of East Asian history and Chinese language at the State University of New York at Binghamton
1991 - 1993	Graduate study of Chinese language at Beijing Language Institute
1994 - 1997	Worked as a translator/interpreter
1997	Began self-study of photography
2000 - 2003	Traveled and photographed extensively in China's Qinghai and Sichuan provinces; 2003 photo essay on the last of China's "Pony Express" riders helped Canada's <i>Outpost</i> magazine win a Magazine of the Year award
2000 - present	Serves on the board of <i>Friendship Homes and Schools</i> , a US charity that aids orphans in southwest China
2002 - present	Serves as North America manager for the Imaginechina photo agency
2002	Began work on the <i>Bounded by Mountains</i> series
2003	Began practicing calligraphy and seal carving
2006 (April)	First solo calligraphy exhibit, Rong Bao Zhai, Beijing

藝術家簡介

1969	出生於紐約
1987 - 1991	紐約州立大學 Binghamton 分校學習東亞歷史及中文
1991 - 1993	北京語言學院進修漢語
1994 - 1997	從事中英文翻譯工作
1997	開始自學攝影
2000 - 2003	多次遊歷四川、青海，拍攝了大量照片；他的影像散文，“中國最後的馬背郵差”幫助加拿大的《前哨》雜誌（ <i>Outpost</i> ）贏得了 2003 年最佳雜誌獎
2000 - 至今	擔任美國慈善組織“友誼家庭與學校”董事會員，幫助中國西南部地區孤兒
2002 - 至今	擔任中國圖片庫 Imaginechina 的北美地區主任
2002	開始《山重集》的嘗試與創作
2003	開始學習書法及圖章篆刻
2006（四月）	首次書法作品個展，榮寶齋，北京





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reframing

writings on the art of michael cherney

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