
On Yiqiang Wu's Pursuit of Freedom in His Recent Art Works

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This study centers on how the contemporary Chinese artist Yiqiang Wu has represented “freedom” in his recent art works, that is, his series of “Readers” and “Lines, Phenomena, and Expressions”. For the artist, in addition to its political connotations, “freedom” is also spiritual, moral, and aesthetic, concerning one’s independence in exploring the unknown. In attuned to his concept of “freedom”, Yiqiang Wu constantly makes changes and innovations in his artistic styles. In the series of “Readers”, Yiqiang Wu adapted what Jean Baudrillard calls “simulacra” in deconstructing the delusive world of regulations and orderliness, which has been represented in print media. By reshaping the print media into artworks that looked like sculptures of books, the artist built up the world of equality, changes, and diversity. For this purpose, he made these parts (diverse colors, fragmentary strokes in Chinese calligraphy, and forceful lines) interact with one another. Similarly, in his series of “Lines, Phenomena, and Expressions”, beneath the seemingly careless “scribbles”, he managed to make a balance between passion and rationality. In doing so, he presented his sincerity to his true feelings in the time of uncertainty. Moreover, he also represented spiritual transcendence, authentic truth, and eternity. Taken together, Yiqiang Wu rendered “freedom” related to truth, beauty, and goodness in these works. As he states, “The function of art is to change the crude parts of life previously existed into a refined or beautiful one”.

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