

Ease in Expression: Guan Pu Xue & Li Jiangfeng's Xieyi Oil Duo

Wen Jiale^{1, a, *}, Jing Yu^{1, b},

¹Beijing Renzhong Culture Development Co., Ltd. Courtyard 18, North Gucheng, Houshayu, Shunyi District, Beijing 101318, China

a.wenjiale_030501@126.com, b.jing_yu_851109@gmail.com

*Corresponding Author

Abstract: The exhibition “Ease in Expression” brings together more than a hundred recent works by Guan Puxue and Li Jiangfeng. Marrying Western chromatic intensity with Chinese xieyi calligraphic spirit, their “expressive + xieyi” idiom ranges from monumental landscapes to intimate still-lives, revealing both robust structure and nuanced feminine dialogue with life—an informed, cultural response to the question “What is Chinese oil painting today?”

Keywords: Chinese oil painting, expressiveness, xieyi spirit, Sino-Western synthesis, female perspective, Guan Puxue, Li Jiangfeng

1. Introduction

Guan Puxue and Li Jiangfeng—two outstanding women painters—are jointly presenting their works at the National Art Museum of China in what can be called a distinctive academic event within the oil-painting world. Brought together in one space, their pictures illuminate each other, revealing parallel explorations and inner journeys; yet each artist occupies her own “solo zone,” allowing visitors to experience two fully rounded universes that range from monumental canvases to intimate cabinet pieces. The result delights the eye and wins immediate admiration.

2. Dual-Solos· lights shining in the same hall

Above all, the art of Guan and Li attests to an abiding love for oil painting—one might say, an unwavering vocation. At a moment when Chinese society is changing at break-neck speed, the contemporary evolution of Chinese oil painting has become a pressing scholarly topic. A century has passed since the medium arrived from the West; successive generations have cleared thorny paths and opened new ground, so that today oil painting enjoys wide popularity across the country.

Having grown up during the Reform and Opening era, the two artists are acutely aware of the weight carried by the term “Chinese oil painting.” They remain steadfast in their belief in the spiritual and cultural value of the discipline, and this conviction is evident in two ways:

On the one hand, they treat the study of oil painting as life-long homework. They carefully trace the course of Western oil painting from the classical to the modern, deepening their understanding of its masterpieces both intuitively and intellectually. Attaching great importance to the intrinsic worth of the language of oil, they constantly refine their powers of pictorial construction, while at the same time learning from senior Chinese oil painters. Holding fast to academically sound methodology, they keep exploring the dynamic between tradition and life, thereby infusing their own work with an authentic breath.

On the other hand, amid the bewildering cross-currents of contemporary art, they maintain a clear head. While keeping themselves informed about current trends at home and abroad and retaining an open artistic mind, they resist the seductions of ever-shifting fashions and slogans. This ability to preserve the purity of the artistic self and an inner equilibrium—this powerful self-discipline—is the most essential foundation for serious art in the contemporary climate.

Year after year they have worked steadily, accumulating experience through sustained practice until hand and heart move as one. Consistency between conceptual height and technical control has yielded a rich

harvest of works. They persistently walk into life and into nature, bringing back pictures fragrant with living energy, and through a substantial body of work they reveal their attitude toward life and their artistic state of mind. Their exhibition is therefore the natural outcome of a long spring-time of growth now bearing autumn fruit.



Figure 1 Guan Puxue Mid-August No. 2 Oil on canvas, 200 × 200 cm 2015

3. Expression + Xieyi: Coordinates of language, magnetism of the times

The two artists share a stylistic DNA that fuses “expressionism” with the Chinese concept of xieyi (free-hand writing). In today’s rapidly shifting cultural climate, expressive language has become a dominant force on the Chinese art scene; the velocity of external change acts like a giant magnetic field, compelling artists to release inner tension through expressive means and to rebalance self and world. Within the broader evolution of oil painting from classical to modern, “expressiveness” functions as a crucial pivot.

Guan and Li matured in this very context, so they feel an instinctive affinity for expressive vocabularies. From the birth of Western modernism to contemporary morphing forms, a continuous expressive thread runs through their work. Structure, colour, brushstroke and surface all become vehicles for unbridled outpouring. On large canvases especially they demonstrate masterful command of pictorial architecture, generating rhythmic motion through varied forms. Their colour is both sensitive and passionate: decisive strokes, rich impasto, and the crackling collision of dot, line and plane together spark vivid life. As they like to say, “Paint it brisk!”—this craving for immediacy is the adrenaline of their process, guaranteeing paintings that burst with vitality and generous sensuality.

4. Dance of brush and colour: Guan Puxue’s torrent of colour blocks

Yet their paths diverge in detail. Guan Puxué foregrounds chromatic construction. Vast colour masses rise and fall; tonal contrasts often push to extremes. Her brushwork is lavish and fluid—layering, scraping, flinging paint with intuitive abandon, free of tight description or cautious modelling. Driven by pure feeling, her canvases retain spatial depth while amplifying flat tension, exuding a free, exuberant life-force.

5. Form-and-brush sprites: Li Jiangfeng’s ink-black universe

Li Jiang feng, by contrast, reveals a unique flair for image-building. From foreground to distance every stroke “shows form” and “shows itself,” expanding spatial vistas through sculpted shapes. The entire surface vibrates with dancing brushwork, flickering like sprites of light. Each artist’s personal, expressive

mark-making has crystallised into a distinctive stylistic visage, demonstrating an outstanding ability to marshal formal language, to orchestrate structure and rhythm across the picture field.

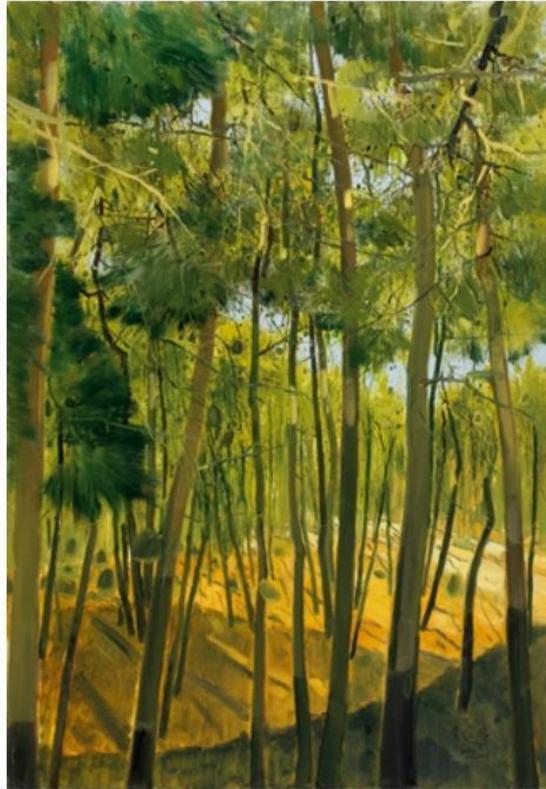


Figure 2 Li Jiang feng Transforming Image into Realm-Herald of Spring Oil on canvas, 200×140 cm 2015

6. When calligraphy meets expression: A new sino-western hybrid

Building on their expressive idiom, the two painters naturally tilt Western-oriented methods toward Chinese *xieyi*, fusing the "writability" of Chinese art with the "expressiveness" of Western painting. This embodies a contemporary Chinese ideal of East-West synthesis. In recent years Li Jiangfeng has let a Chinese-style "ink-black" dominate: trees, air and land are distilled into a monochrome world that recalls ink-wash technique. Dense woods of varied brush-forms are threaded with vaporous voids—equivalents of the "reserved white" in *shuimo*. Guan Puxue likewise loosens her palette from literal form and allows the brush to follow the pulse of the heart. Thus "expression + *xieyi*" becomes the hallmark of their quest, offering Chinese oil painting a valuable new paradigm and testifying to their cultural self-awareness.

7. Mountain verve, feminine pulse: Quiet bloom dialogue

Both artists paint with a robust, spacious grandeur, yet their womanly consciousness and delicacy are equally tangible. Whereas some female painters today foreground gender identity, Guan and Li let feminine feeling evolve naturally: an acute sensitivity that enters into psychological conversation with their motifs. Guan's indoor still-lives of flowers disclose a private realm where blossoms emerge from dim, ambiguous space, glimmering in the dark like a floral language echoing through silence. Li, when confronting plants in the wild, stresses their bond with the earth; stroke by connected stroke she nurses each tendril of life, revealing a woman's care for living things. Friends describe them as optimistic, unassuming, sincere—qualities visible first in their canvases. Ultimately, their feminine awareness resides in the inner unity between contemplation of natural life and devotion to the life of pictorial language itself.



Figure 3 Guan Puxue Warm Mountain Oil on canvas, 200 × 160 cm 2015



Figure 4 Guan Puxue Silent Mountain Oil on canvas, 160 × 160 cm 2015

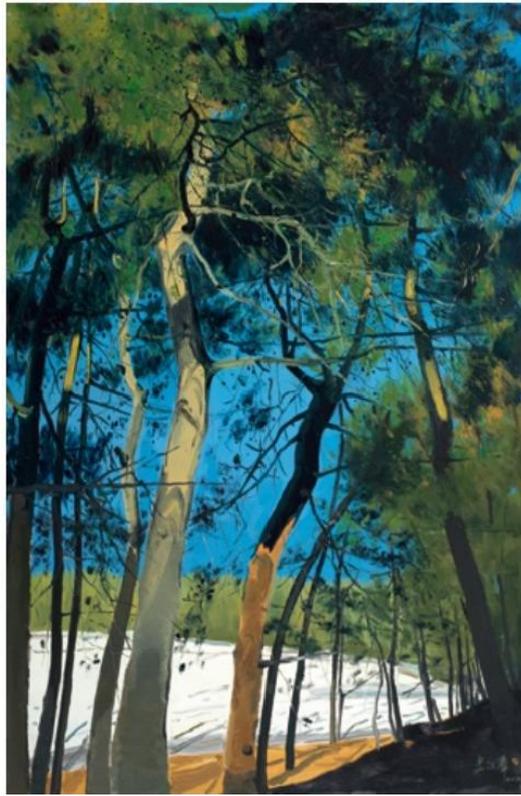


Figure 5 Li Jiangfeng Transforming Image into Realm – Blue Oil on canvas, 200 × 140 cm 2015

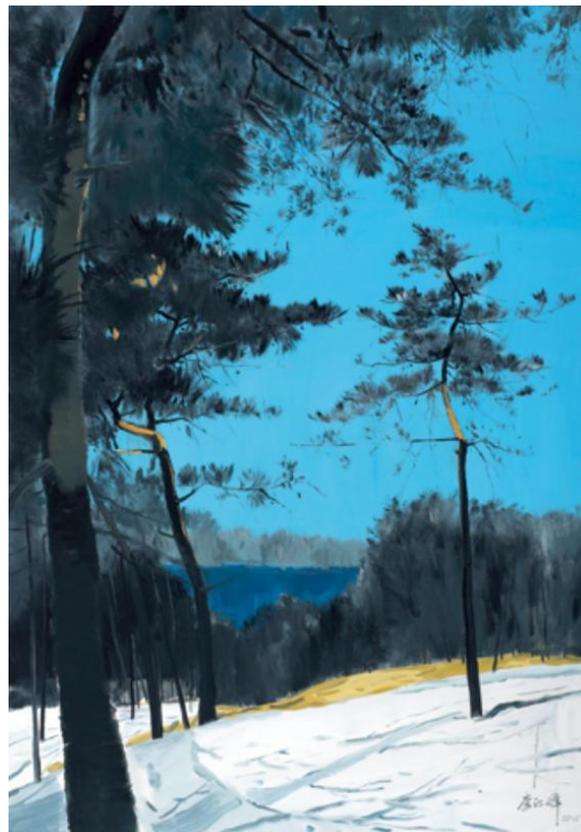


Figure 6 Li Jiang feng Transforming Image into Realm – Silence Oil on canvas, 200 × 140 cm 2015

8. Conclusion

With spontaneous yet pure brushwork, Guan Puxue and Li Jiangfeng demonstrate that true tradition is not locked in dusty museums; it lives in the instant of facing nature and in the moment of conversing with one's own heart. When the song of colour fades, what remains on the canvas is their deep affection for mountains, rivers, plants and trees—and their faith in the future of Chinese oil painting: uphold the essence, dare to innovate, and let xieyi remain evergreen.