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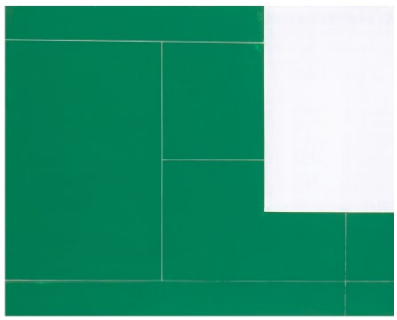
刁德谦
DAVID DIAO



美籍华裔艺术家刁德谦1943年出生于成都，1949年和祖父母离开中国，12岁与父亲在纽约团聚。1969年，他在Paula Cooper画廊举办个展，受到业界关注。1978年，他的作品就已经登上《Artforum》封面，但到1980年，刁德谦的整体创作，特别是作为画家的创作遭遇瓶颈，并中断了一段时间。当（曼哈顿）艺术界开始转向关注拓展艺术实践的多种形式时，1984年，刁德谦决定回归绘画，用他自己的话说，要在“余烬中继续工作”。而刁德谦近期的回顾展展出的就是这一模式下以来的二十多年的创作，一共收录了他自1986年以来创作的十二独立幅画作以及“至上主义小监狱”系列里的若干片段，该系列以冷静的几何构图把构成主义的种种元素隐藏在从马瑟韦尔《西班牙小监狱》（1941–1944）借鉴来的黄色竖条的背后。在严谨的单色画面上的一系列标志和图表中，我们发现罗德钦科、马列维奇、马蒂斯、菲利普 约翰逊和MoMA一一跃入，发现了艺术家如何思维缜密地通过作品指涉艺术史及其不满。无论是《五年计划》（1991）对罗德钦科以及艺术家自身成长经历温和但又准确的指涉，还是《董事会》（1994）伪造的MoMA刁德谦回顾展邀请函，从中我们都可以看出一种对历史和机构的巧妙批判，更可贵的是，火候恰到好处。黄底黄字的《垂危》（2000）则显示了他“有关绘画的绘画”如何同时触及政治身份和形式语言的。

展览依照视觉和符号的节奏排列作品，但如果根据年代仔细观看作品，就会发现刁德谦逐渐增加个人经历在画面中的比重。在《开放／投降》（2010）中，艺术家将目光对准早已被拆除的童年居住的老宅，关于老房子的一切信息均已佚失，只剩网球场成为这段记忆唯一具体可知的部分。（对家园的重新想象是2008年刁德谦北京个展的主题。）《开放／投降》的绿色画面上用线条勾勒出网球场的轮廓，同时覆盖一块白色，让人联想到表示投降的白旗和马瑟韦尔后期的作品“开放”系列。又因为刁德谦的父亲是在一个网球场去世的，使这幅已经充满各种意义回响的画作就更显沉重。

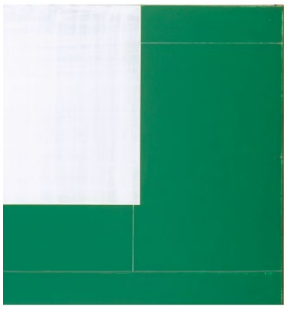
展览展现出的刁德谦坚持绘画的那份诚恳，而这份诚恳的核心是人类欢愉的真理。从这些画面中可以感觉到某种对颜色在物体表面黏着覆盖的沉溺。比如《为了尺度》（2010）就将观念的抽象与一片可任你徜徉的愉悦之蓝结合在一起。这幅画左下角丝网印刷的椅子是对马瑟韦尔的又一次致敬，后者的绘画作品展出时旁边经常放着一把椅子，以便在作品规格与真人比例之间建立联系。而刁德谦因为在幽默、愉悦和个人经历中的各种偶然因素加入了人的尺度，也使得他的创作保持了在绘画领域内部的批判性。”

薇薇安·齐赫尔

为了尺度
2010
布面丙烯
213 x 274.5 cm

For Scale Sake
2010
Acrylic on canvas
213 x 274.5 cm

安特卫普巴洛克办公室画廊 Office Baroque Gallery, Antwerp
2010.10.24~2010.12.04



开放/投降
2009
布面丙烯
91.5 x 198 cm

Open/Surrender
2009
Acrylic on canvas
91.5 x 198 cm

At once meticulous and good-humored, David Diao's twelve boldly colored canvases on view in Antwerp presented a succinct mid-career synopsis, bookended by references to the American painter Robert Motherwell. The works on view date from 1986 through 2010, beginning with two excerpts from Diao's mid-1980s "Little Suprematist Prisons" series, whose hard-edged geometric compositions stage an entrapment of Constructivist elements behind vertical yellow bands lifted from Motherwell's *Little Spanish Prison* (1941-44). Performing a confrontation of art-historical trajectories, these paintings marked a period of release for Diao from his own acute impasse behind the constraints of end-game formalism.

Born in Chengdu, Sichuan province in 1943, David Diao fled China with his paternal grandparents in 1949, later joining his father in New York at the age of twelve. In 1969 he first gained visibility as an artist with an exhibition of plaster-joined sheet-rock panels at the Paula Cooper gallery. By 1978 a detail of his work had appeared on the cover of *Artforum*, and yet in 1980 Diao temporarily ceased production due to a crisis in his practice as an artist in general, and as a painter in particular. While the (Manhattan) art-world spotlight trundled on towards various forms of expanded practice, Diao returned to the painted plane in 1984, undertaking to "work among the remnants," as he has put it.

The elegantly choreographed showing of over two decades' worth of work within this mode reveals an artist busy with rigorous reference to art history and its discontents. Alexander Rodchenko, Kasimir Malevich, Henri Matisse, Philip Johnson and MoMA all come up for comment, rendered as a palimpsest of glyphs and diagrammatics dancing across fastidiously prepared monochromes. The good-natured if incisive humor within the references to both Rodchenko and the artist's own biography in the upward-slanting graph line of *Five Year Plan* (1991), or the faux MoMA invitation card depicted in *The Board of Trustees* (1994) bespeak a savvy for historical and institutional critique that falls delightfully short of cloying. The white text of *Imperiled* (2000) floated in a field of yellow—a punning reference to an earlier moment of China paranoia, the nineteenth-century "Yellow Peril"—demonstrates how his particular brand of painting-about-painting can touch simultaneously on questions of racial identity and formal language.

Hung according to visual and symbolic rhythm rather than chronology, a study of the canvases by date reveals the increasingly personal presence of David Diao within the frame. One of the most recent works on show, *Open/Surrender* (2010) extends the artist's investigations into the demolished family compound of his childhood, of which a tennis court provides the only concretely knowable dimensions. (This reimagined home was the subject of his "Da Hen Li House Cycle" shown in Beijing in 2008.) As a green monochrome marked with the lines of a tennis-court and overlaid with a white rectangle, *Open/Surrender* simultaneously calls to bear the white flag of submission and the late-career "Open" paintings of Motherwell. The dense resonance within this painting is made all the more poignant by the fact of Diao's father's death on the site of a Long Island tennis court.

The broad view provided by the exhibition makes apparent a certain honesty in David Diao's adherence to painting, at the core of which lies the human truth of pleasure. Common among the canvases is a delight in the viscous application of color to surface. A work such as *For Scale Sake* (2010) conflates conceptual abstraction with the downright scopophilic, luxuriating in the exuberance of a blue within which one can swim. In another nod to Motherwell, the screen-printed seat in the bottom-left corner of the canvas references the manner in which the American artist's paintings were exhibited in close proximity to a chair, placing them in relation to human proportions. It is similarly through the insertion of the human scale in the guises of humor, pleasure and the contingency of biography, that Diao's paintings maintain a critical project from within the practice of painting. **Vivian Ziherl**