

Chaos and Order

21/10/2017 by Le Thiet Cuong

From October 14 to November 12, at the Vincom Center for Contemporary Art (VCCA), artist Le Kinh Tai presented his second exhibition in Hanoi. Unlike the previous one, this exhibition is like a 'Retrospective' - also the name of the exhibition - of the last ten years of creating. Before talking more carefully about Tai's painting, I want to review the general context of Vietnamese fine arts today, because, just by that way can we view objectively the position of an artist and about what he has done for art.



LE KINH TAI, *Very fresh meat*, 200x300cm

After the generation of artists of Doi Moi period, Vietnamese fine arts witnessed the emergence of another wave, half of them pursuing arts such as performance, installation..., half still maintaining easel painting but in a very different way, completely different. It is more thoughtful, more reflective, and seems to delve deeper into the inner world, as opposed to the Doi Moi period's painting, focusing on finding the form of expression which generations of artists of the subsidized period and wartime dared not do (at that time, only one form of art approved, ordered, sponsored and exhibited was the realism). As mentioned, during the Doi Moi period, the renovation of forms was focused and expanded, leading to the birth of a series of names such as Dang Xuan Hoa, Hong Viet Dung, Dao Hai Phong, Pham Luan, Thanh Son, Hoang Phuong Vy or Nguyen Thanh Binh... Their paintings of landscapes, still lifes or young girls wearing 'Ao dai' are new but don not necessarily convey a story. After the Doi Moi's generation, such names as Le Kinh Tai, Ly Tran Quynh Giang, Tham Poong, Le Quy Tong, etc. create another wave, each of them has their own path. So what is the path of Le Kinh Tai in the context as I mentioned above?

Le Kinh Tai studied at Ho Chi Minh City University of Fine Arts and having worked as a graphic designer for a long time before becoming an artist. Le Kinh Tai's painting expresses an aesthetic concept different from previous painters and contemporaries, which is a mixture of street art (including graffiti, mural), pop art, concept painting, and advertising paintings (poster). All of these factors make Tai's works stand out in a separate corner, not the type of painting that serves tourists who want to go through painting to learn about the country's landscape, Vietnamese people or pure decoration. Tai's painting has rejected the 'traditionality' of the temple and countryside aesthetic style..., even the poetic, the beautiful is removed. It seems that Le Kinh Tai aspires to find another aesthetic style which comes from and is associated with modern urban life. The modern urban life in Tai's paintings does not necessarily refer to tangible things like cars, new motorcycles, fashion boutiques, air-conditioned restaurants or high-rise buildings, but probably the feeling of strong and fast pace of life, vibrant lifestyle, stifling, cramped and noisy atmosphere... Le Kinh Tai expresses all the good and bad aspects of urban life but does not copy that reality, he uses his images and colors to describe that atmosphere, that lifestyle, that rhythm. Tai's paintings are filled with the sound of car horns, the sound of credit card-swallowing machines, cracks, advertising speakers, etc.



*LE KINH TAI, 'To he' * sculptures, fiber glass, acrylic, and oil paint*

Le Kinh Tai has used the method of thinking to make the shapes/figures based on the dominant motif that is a bi-bodied or multi-bodied animal that is difficult to name, may be a human's head but carrying the body of a gibbon, a lizard, a bird; or the human's body with animal's head and wings. This bizarre creature conveys a not-so-new motif, as the author once said, a motif of human-creature/creature-human/human-animal/animal-human. Nearly 40 artworks (including paintings and 'To he' sculptures) at this exhibition are also the result of that thinking.

In addition, there are many words written directly on the surface of the paintings which makes me think of the blending of poster art in Tai's paintings - as an auxiliary visual element with that strange creature - all in English, suggesting the problems of current life, for example Citizen, Must go, Know me, Flying ...

His brush style is strong, generous, free, soaring to the end, with full-paint brushes, overlapping even if the bottom layer is not dry yet. Not just oil paint, sometimes acrylic; not only oil tube but also oil bar; not just a brush but sometimes a peel.

Le Kinh Tai possesses an extremely strong color palette, in the sense that the colors are sharply contrasted, hot and cold, dazzling, and harmonious in the light colors, which make the figures in his paintings look weird but vivid, exciting, fun and more or less paradoxical to create humor.

Tai prefers to create large size paintings, which proves that he has the ability to manage space and layout in paintings firmly. The quick-strong drawing manipulation, continuously direct drawing method, and the use of original colors without mixing, mean that he has to be very good at restraint, because, there is any chaos without order in it, isn't there?!

Explaining:

* *"To-he": a handmade folk toy, is made from rice flour mixed with color, it is very vivid, eye-catching by shape and color;*

Source: <https://tiasang.com.vn/-doi-moi-sang-tao/Hon-don-va-trat-tu-10987>

Translated by Vietnam Art House