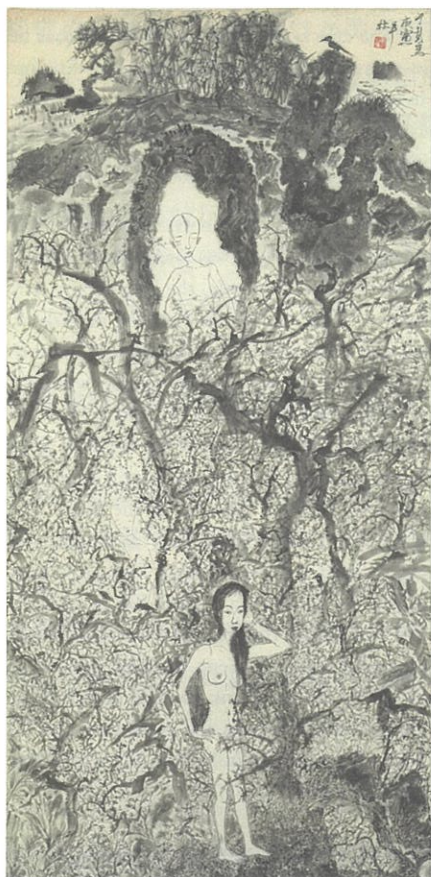


## 裸女的修行：于彭山水畫初探

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《奇香薰人欲醉》，2010，墨、紙，133×64.5cm，財團法人立青文教基金會之于彭文獻庫提供  
*Intoxicating Whiffs of an Exotic Fragrance*, 2010, Ink on paper, 133×64.5cm, Photo provided by The Yu Peng Archives at The Li-ching Foundation

于彭家讓人感到驚奇的是，在臺北的都會叢林，一進入他家宛如時空錯置，透過一道不起眼的木門，便從現代都市穿越到文人的山水家園。那時第一次看到「慾望山水」系列的作品，感到震撼和驚奇：欲望與山水是什麼關係？該如何看待欲望與修行的關係？文人美學如此容納現代欲望的刺激意味著什麼？「慾望山水」顯然吸收了西方的影響，特別是裸體藝術的傳統。于彭作品中的裸女姿態經常令人想起西方油畫，甚至是裸體素描的範本。但為何要將裸體容納到山水畫？有何寓意？意味著何種轉化？或說，欲望融入山水引起反向的質問：水墨藝術在面臨長久的西化衝擊，為何仍然存在對「山水」的「欲望」？

### 一幅畫兩個世界

我們習以為常將欲望與精神切割開來。這種看法基本上是将欲望視為肉體性欲。這顯然已經對「欲」的思考有所偏頗，忽略了對精神生活或道德價值的欲求也是一種「欲」。于彭的畫經常透顯出有別於二元對立的思考：「有欲」

和「無欲」的弔詭關係穿越身體與精神。在身體世界中，可以「有欲」，在精神世界中亦可「有欲」；在身體世界中，可以「無欲」，在精神世界中亦可「無欲」。「慾望山水」穿越兩者。

### 欲望叢林

《奇香薰人欲醉》女子的凝視似乎有雙重性。一方面直接看觀者，另一方面觀者和她的

# Naked in the Garden of Cultivation

## Philosophical Remarks on Yu Peng's

### "Landscapes of Desire"

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An unexpected feeling of spatial and temporal displacement greets visitors entering Yu Peng's residence. Through a modest wooden door, leading into a home situated in the middle of urban Taipei, we are transported from a modern city into the garden landscape of a literatus' dwelling. Seeing one of his *Landscapes of Desire* there for the first time was no less bewildering: How can "landscapes" (mountain-water painting) and "desire" coexist in a series title, in the same painting? What is the relation between desire and cultivation? What does this incorporation of modern desire into Chinese literati aesthetics mean? With evident Western influences, especially from the tradition of nudity in art, Yu's female nudes often evoke associations of Western oil painting or even of models posing for nude sketches. But how does nudity fit into his landscapes and what kind of transformation does this entail and inspire? Or perhaps the question should be reversed: Why does the "desire" for "landscape" still exist despite the prolonged challenge of Westernization to the art of ink painting in general and literati painting in particular?

## Two Worlds in One

Conventionally conceived, desire is at the opposite end of any notion of a spiritual life. Taking a biased perspective, we tend to identify "desire" or "wish" (yù 欲)<sup>1</sup> with sexuality, overlooking desire that can be experienced spiritually or directed to moral values. The spirit can be "with desire" or "without desire" as much as the body can, since desire exists both in the world of the body and in the spiritual world. Yu's paintings often point to a way of thinking that breaks away from such binary oppositions and reveals how the interdependence between these two moments allows the paradoxical communication of "with desire" and "without desire". *Landscapes of Desire* seem to pass and wander through and between the two, opening up the possibility of their mutual transformation.

## Jungle of Desire

*Intoxicating Whiffs of an Exotic Fragrance* instantly captures us by the ambiguity in the female figure's gaze. While directly looking at us, her relationship with her spectator seems also very indirect. She seems to be looking at herself in a mirror –the spectator merely exists as an imaginary judge of (her) beauty. Seeing and being seen are interconnected. Gazing at her spectator, she directly presents her beauty to the gaze of others. As she looks at herself in a mirror, although seemingly only looking at herself, any judgement about her looks is never only an individual matter, but also necessarily a collective one. Collective norms of beauty permeate our most intimate relation: that to ourselves. Individual bodily gestures are deeply intertwined with collective taste about what is beautiful and what is not. Through performance and self-fashioning, we often adjust the way we look, seeking to meet the beauty standards of others. It is important to remember at this point that in Asia, Western norms of beauty are still very powerful and influential (the increasing popularity of cosmetic medical intervention and the booming fitness industry, for example, are just the most obvious manifestations of this tendency).

1. Although a questionable translation, yù 欲 will be rendered as "desire" in the following.



關係是間接的，如同她看著鏡子中的自己，而觀者僅是在她看自己的品味判斷中存在，滲透女子對「美」的想像。事實上，看與被看共生共構。當女子看觀者，是為了直接呈現自己的美被看見；當女子觀看自己，表面上雖然只是自己看自己，但其中發生的品味判斷不是個體的而是集體的。集體的審美標準滲透到看似最為親密的自我關係中：自己與自己裸身的關係。個體的身體姿態涉及集體的美感。我們通常會透過表演和自我形塑，來調整自己樣貌，以讓自己符合他人目光的審美標準。尤其在亞洲，形體仍然以西化的審美標準為主要參照。如同，現在整形美容業的發達，健身中心如雨後春筍般的興盛也都只是其中的代表現象。

山水畫總是讓人想起自然、清淨、世外的無欲境界。在山水畫中，裸女及其特意雕琢的模特兒姿態不應該出現。兩者同時出現形成強烈對比，同時也形成相互轉化的可能。裸女的進入轉化了山水畫，然她在山水中的出現所構作的另類山水是否反過來也轉化裸女？轉化的可能呈現在覺者與裸女的關係。模特兒、健身活動、整形美容迎合某種標準外貌與普羅萬象，這完全是回應外在的欲望。我們所以為的修行者正好就是要擺脫這些身外的世俗之物，也教導著我們不應該依著外在面貌來肯定別人或欣賞別人。外在事物與外貌的追求不應該成為評價的主要考量。有意思的是，于彭的畫在構圖上就已經呈現企圖要跨越我們日常的理所當然。畫中的這位覺者，看似男子又似孩童。在畫的上下分別，下面這女子是立於（欲望）叢林之中，而修行者位於錯綜複雜糾結的叢林之上。覺者於山洞中，而山洞的周圍出現山水意象：石頭、竹林、河流是屬於上層。不過，覺者的下半身又坐落在（欲望）叢林之中，上半身卻又有著超越的形象。

## 穿越

兩者出現在同一幅畫，使得畫面具時代性及跨文化的意義，也讓文人畫碰觸通古今東西之變的難題。女子的出現意味著迎面西方的挑戰，同時也引起在今天修行如何可能的問題。修行者到何種程度要能擺脫視覺刺激的世俗世界？在全球流行文化的衝擊下，追求智慧、成聖、成佛等，經常被看成可笑之事。因此，修行的動機、實踐方式及目的不得不重新審思。或許，畫中叢林可以解釋為，要從欲望主體的克制與放縱過渡到「有欲」與「無欲」的弔詭關係。叢林正顯示著，兩者之間的溝通交流阻礙難行，或說，從現代的情慾世界要過渡到有欲與無欲的弔詭溝通難以通達。圖中的鳥或許展現著穿越叢林而溝通兩者的可能。在此凸顯本體論的「有、無」與工夫論的「有欲、無欲」的問題。于彭透過畫面呈現出弔詭性。王弼在《老子》的解釋向來有一價值取向，也就是強調「無」的優越性，而晚明的王夫之對此素來秉持批評，認為「有無相生」意指「有」與「無」之間沒有等級秩序，「有無相生」是平等共在而非對立的關係，於是「有欲」與「無欲」也不牽涉到形而上與形而下的價值區判。在這幅畫中似乎帶出一道可通達的曙光。

在這幅畫裡，欲望與修行的關係為何？此問題迫使我们重新思考「欲」的意涵。重新轉向東方哲學或許有助於另類的想法。《老子》第一章提出「無欲」與「有欲」的關係：「常無欲，以觀其妙；常有欲，以觀其微。此兩者，同出而異名，同謂之玄，玄之又玄，眾

Landscape painting often evokes associations of a natural, pure, and otherworldly sphere of “without desire”. Female nudes and their fashion model-like gestures appear to be out of place in these landscapes. The juxtaposition of the two creates a strong contrast, but at the same time it opens up a potential for mutual transformation. Landscape painting is evidently transformed by the presence of the female nude, but her presence in this alternative landscape in turn also transforms her. In this particular painting, the possibility of this transformation becomes apparent in the relationship between the female nude and the man on the way to awakening through cultivation. Model-like aesthetics, as well as reshaping one's body through physical exercise or cosmetic surgeries, denote common efforts to adjust oneself to general norms and conventions in order to better respond to external expectations and desires. We may imagine the person engaging in self-cultivation as someone seeking to break free from those external mundane matters and as someone who teaches us not to judge or appreciate others based on their appearance. External reality and outer appearance should not be the main criterion applied when assessing something or someone. Already the very composition of Yu's painting suggests an intention to point beyond this conventional mindset. The painting is divided into an upper and a lower section. The “awakened one”, apparently a grown man, is also child-like. Positioned in the lower section, the woman is standing in the “jungle of desire”, while the self-cultivating man is higher, above the intricate entanglement of branches and leaves. He is inside a cave, surrounded by a garden-like imagery consisting of rocks (with a bird sitting on one of them), a bamboo grove, and a river at the top. While the upper part of the man's body gives an impression of transcendence, the lower part remains half-hidden in the same wilderness.

### Passing Through

Both figures appear in the same painting, giving it some transcultural significance, making literati painting touch upon the difficulty of communication between East and West, the Old and the New. Through the female nude the Western challenge to Chinese aesthetics is introduced into literati painting, evoking the question of whether and how there can be room for developing the traditional link between painting and practices of cultivation in contemporary art. To what extent is self-cultivation possible amidst the visual stimulants of the mundane world? Under the impact of global popular culture, the pursuits of wisdom, of becoming a sage (or a holy person) or attaining Buddhahood seem to be outdated, even ridiculous. This, however, only highlights the necessity to reconsider the basic structure, practices, and objectives of self-cultivation.

Yu Peng's landscape painting seems to inspire such reconsideration. The jungle appears to mark a space of transition from a “subject of desire” that restrains and indulges towards the paradoxical relationship between “with desire” and “without desire”. The wilderness of thick vegetation alludes to how such a communication is hindered and obstructed – the passage from the modern realm of emotional expressivity and sexual desire into the paradoxical wandering between “with desire” and “without desire” is very difficult. The bird, a messenger between the two worlds, could stand for the possibility to communicate through the wilderness. Perched on a rock, unmoving, waiting, observing, it is the suspended question of how to reconcile the ontological aspect of “being-with” and “being-without” (*wú* 無, emptiness or non-being) and the ethical aspect of “with desire” and “without desire”. It is this paradoxicality, a major aspect of Eastern thought, that Yu Peng seems to articulate in his painting.

Revisiting Eastern philosophy might open up a different perspective, changing certain preconceptions about desire. In his commentary to the *Laozi*, 3rd century philosopher Wang Bi offers a value-oriented answer, emphasizing the superiority of “being-without” or “withoutness”. Contesting this view, one may argue with the Ming dynasty scholar Wang Fuzhi that since “being-with and being-without generate each other”, there is no hierarchical order between the two, but rather a relationship of equal coexistence and mutual transformation.<sup>2</sup> Following this interpretation, “with desire” and “without desire” do not involve a value judgment in terms of the opposition between a meta-physical and a physical aspect.

The relationship between “with desire” and “without desire” is addressed in the very first chapter of the *Laozi*

2. All translations of passages from the classical texts belong to the authors.



妙之門」。此斷句將「無欲」與「有欲」分別為不同的「觀」，一是「觀其妙」，一是「觀其微」。另一種斷句解讀，是以「有」和「無」來分別不同的「欲」，「常無，欲以觀其妙；常有，欲以觀其微」。無論是從工夫論上強調「無欲」與「有欲」區分「觀」，或是從本體論上強調「無」與「有」區分「欲」，兩者皆「同出而異名，同謂之玄」。這裡也呈現出一種弔詭性，從工夫論區分本體的面向（「觀」），或從本體論區分工夫的面向（「欲」）。「有欲」與「無欲」的共同來源在於「玄」。「玄」是指一種不可測、不可掌握、無法確定的弔詭動能，是任何的美與不美、任何的善與不善的源泉。「眾妙」離不開「玄」的弔詭性，包含第二章所謂美惡、善不善、有無、難易、長短、高下、音聲、前後等的相生、相成、相較、相傾、相和、相隨。「玄」既是讓人恐慌的無竟深淵，又是讓人覺悟的歸屬家園。

## 遊化於有礙與無礙之間

討論「欲」與「覺」的關係時，要避免從「性欲」的角度簡化「欲」的意涵，更是要避免將性欲簡化為「性感」的視覺刺激。畫中女子搔首弄姿儘管與視覺化的審美不可分，卻也不受限於此。摒除視覺化的性欲，是否還能思考另一種「欲」，而這種「欲」在精神與肉體的關係中無法分清楚，因為對修行、對覺悟、對智慧的追求也是一種「欲」。在《老子》第一章所敞開的弔詭思想來看，「有欲」與「無欲」如同「有」與「無」，如同在其他章節所提及的「為」與「無為」或「味」與「無味」沒有等級差序。亦即，「無欲」與「有欲」不能使用簡單的價值判斷來區別上下。儘管《老子》許多的解釋傾向於有價值分判，而且似乎教人要擺脫「有欲」以進入「無欲」的境界，然這樣的觀點顯然會導致「欲」與「覺」的分裂。如果回到第一章來看，「有欲」與「無欲」如同「有」與「無」未必是價值等差的關係，反而「常無欲以觀其妙」（無限性）與「常有欲以觀其微」（邊際、有限性）是同時需要的。我們的世界需要「有欲」也需要「無欲」，需要「有邊際」也需要「無邊際」。

修行需要生命的動力：為什麼要修行？而修行的理由及修行的目的又正是在修行的過程中所要擺脫的。要擺脫理由和目的，便是體現「無欲」，卻又不能缺乏「欲」（來自生命深處的幽闇力量），否則便毫無動力。如同所謂消費社會的「無欲」叫做打發時間或「無聊」，反應著現代人對生命沒有動力，找不到生命的理由和意義，也沒有目的。如此「無欲」的理想蛻變為虛無主義。

同樣都是「欲」，那麼，修行者的欲求和裸女的欲求有何差別？裸女追求天下皆肯定其美，而修行者追求體道的印證。如何在審美判斷或價值判斷中發生反轉的可能？《老子》第一章論及「有欲」與「無欲」的關係後，第二章便談論「天下皆知美之為美，斯惡已；皆知善之為善，斯不善已」。如何能在兩者之間遊化的困難，乃是覺醒的出發點，一旦體會到這問題，他／她就是覺者。有與無、有欲與無欲、美與醜之間的界限並非僵化固定不變。不能停留在膚淺的表面來「觀」。

itself: “Constantly without desire, [Constantly being-without, desires] to see their wonders; constantly with desire, [constantly being-with, desires] to see their limits. Those two have the same source but different names. Together we call them dark. Darkness and again darkness, this is the gate to the multitude of wonders.” In this passage, “with desire” and “without desire” are defined as different ways of “seeing”. Another way of reading this passage would be to use “being-with” and “being-without” to distinguish between different desires. Whether we focus on “with desire” or “without desire” from an ethical perspective or perceive desire in terms of the ontological difference between “being-with” and “being-without”, the key point here is that “with desire” and “without desire” or “being-with” and “being-without” have the same source – “Darkness” (*xuān* 玄). “Darkness” signifies a paradoxical force that is unpredictable, uncontrollable, and uncertain. It is the source of all that is beautiful and ugly and all that is good and not good. The “multitude of wonders” does not exist outside the paradoxical, as it encompasses beauty and ugliness, goodness and non-goodness, being-with and being-without, difficulty and ease, length and shortness, height and lowness etc. (see *Laozi*, Chapter 2), which generate and complete one another, contrasting and resonating with one another. “Darkness” is an uncanny depth that baffles and terrifies, but is also a home and a garden allowing for “enlightenment”.

### Wandering Transformation

The discussion of the relationship between “desire” and “awakening” or “awareness” is necessary to avoid any simplistic equation of desire with “sexuality” and any exclusive association of sexuality with visual attraction or “sex appeal”. Although the posture of the female nude in the painting is closely tied to visual effects of beauty, it is not restricted to it. Putting the strong tendency to visualize sexual desire aside, is it possible to think differently about desire? An alternative understanding of desire would make it very difficult to clearly distinguish between the spiritual and the bodily, since the pursuit of self-cultivation, enlightenment, and wisdom is also a form of desire. From the perspective of paradoxical thinking in the first chapter of the *Laozi*, “with desire” and “without desire” can be understood in correspondence to “being-with” and “being-without”, “doing” and “without doing”, or “tasting without tasting”. Evidently, “with desire” and “without desire” cannot be simply assessed in terms of a hierarchical structure. Many interpretations of the *Laozi* introduce normative distinctions that seem to recommend breaking away from having desires and entering a state of desirelessness – an approach clearly leading to a separation between “desire” and “awareness”. The similarity between “with desire” and “without desire” to “being-with” and “being-without”, however, does not necessarily imply a normative hierarchy. To be “constantly without desire” denotes a sense of the limitless and of infinity, while being “constantly with desire” implies limitation and finitude. The limitless and the limited are concurrently needed. Life needs both, being “with desire” and “without desire”, having “limits” and being “without limits”.

Self-cultivation needs to be motivated by life. But why engage in cultivation? The reason for and the *telos* of cultivation are exactly what the process of cultivation attempts to overcome. To break free from reasons and objectives is to realize being “without desire”, but there cannot be complete lack of “desire” (a dark force coming from life’s unfathomable depth), otherwise one would lack all motivation. In contemporary consumer society, “boredom” is a common expression of being “without desire”, of having lost any drive to live or of being lost in meaninglessness and a sense of futility. At this point, being “without desire” turns into Nihilism.

Yu’s landscape seems to offer a way out of a nihilistic reading of “being-without”, but also moves beyond the demonization of “being-with” (desire). Awareness of the paradoxical communication between the two states is embodied no less by the female nude than by the self-cultivator. She seems to be in pursuit of being generally recognized for her beauty, while he is striving towards proofs in realizing the Way (Dao). But is she not as much “with desire” or “without desire” as her male counterpart? The difficulty of wandering and transforming between the two is a starting point for awakening, and by realizing this problem, she or he is on the way to become an “awakened one”. The line between “being-with” and “being-without”, between “with desire” and “without desire”, between beauty and ugliness, between goodness and non-goodness is neither rigid nor unchanging. Our way of “seeing” (*guān* 觀), our gaze, should go deeper, not linger on seemingly opposing aspects of reality.

Gazing at the painting, we see a naked woman in what appears to be some kind of wilderness or jungle; she is standing in the foreground, partly outside, but also deep in the forest. Her pose alludes to conventional norms of



換言之，裸女彷彿在叢林，在樹林的前面又在裡面，一方面有一標準的審美姿勢，另一方面又在自然之中呈現自由自在的態度，連接這兩者是「慾望山水」。從「慾望山水」的雙重性是否也能看到，一種身體與精神二元化過渡到「有欲」與「無欲」的弔詭溝通？所謂修行是對這弔詭溝通的「覺學」。裸女與修行者都隱含對這弔詭關係的覺悟。「覺」不再僅是在修行者身上，而是在弔詭關係之中出現。也不只有裸女代表「有欲」，修行者也是具「有欲」。「覺」是在兩者的有礙與無礙之間遊化、來回往復、飛翔穿越的體悟與體現。

## 等待飛鳥

于彭的作品讓山水畫不再停留於出世超然的念頭，也不只是停留在欲望叢林中，反而讓兩者在「有欲」與「無欲」之間來回往復。這或許也暗示著某一種新智慧的可能。智慧不再只是追求扁平單向的「無欲」狀態，相反地，對無欲的追求，恰好不能停留在形而上的渴望，而更要凸顯「有欲」與「無欲」的「形而上下」關係。這同時也意味著向上與向下修養的雙向可能：「覺」貫通形而下的感覺與形而上的覺悟。從這樣的角度來說，修行人（覺者）與裸女的關係不是截然二分，而是相互隱含的關係。于彭將西式的裸體藝術融入山水園林，但在裸體與覺者的共在中，似乎開啟轉化「欲望」的可能。根據我們的解讀，「慾望山水」不接受欲望的罪惡化，更是暗示著有欲與無欲、從欲與修行的弔詭溝通。裸女與覺者進入「欲無欲」。

「慾望山水」帶我們到重新思索「（有）欲」與「無欲」的弔詭：「欲無欲」。一旦執著於「無欲」就仍然是「（有）欲」。就此，固定不變的「欲」是不可能的，同樣地也不可能一直保持「無欲」。換言之，若無法「欲無」，也就是透過我們的身心欲求這種無所欲求，也不知道什麼是「無欲」；唯有知道如何欲求「無」才知道什麼是「無欲」。「無欲」離不開「欲」，「欲」也離不開「無欲」。

或許，在欲求體道、成聖、成賢、成佛等的同時，不得不學習一種特殊的「覺」：不得不藉由遺忘所欲，來通達所欲，不得不在無欲中體欲，在體欲中無欲。這類弔詭尤其在道、佛的思想中獲得豐富的表達，而《論語》所謂「七十而從心所欲不踰矩」也觸及相關難題（不過，孔子似乎削弱覺行弔詭的難度，因為暗示在某個年齡，我們變得如此「無欲」，以至於可以明智而自然地順從所欲）。「覺」的關鍵在覺行「（有）欲」與「無欲」的弔詭關係，在覺行「欲無欲」。

于彭山水畫經常出現裸女與覺者兩種角色，似乎真能表達出欲望與山水的跨界溝通，至少能指向溝通的可能。那隻鳥尚未起飛，它還在等待，起飛的時機仍未到來，然已在醞釀之中。

beauty, but, immersed in nature, she also exudes a sense of freedom and ease. Does the ambiguity of this landscape of desire lead us from the duality of bodily and spiritual existence to a paradoxical communication between “with desire” and “without desire”? Is self-cultivation the aesthetic and ethic process of learning and practicing this paradoxical communication? Awareness of this paradoxical relationship is embodied by both the female nude and the self-cultivator. “Awakening” is not only valid with him, but manifests in the paradoxical relationship between the two figures, the two worlds. The woman is not the only one “with desire” –the spiritual self-cultivator is “with desire” as well. This sense of “awakening” wanders between the two, sometimes at ease, sometimes hampered and blocked, soaring and passing through the experience of “enlightenment”.

### Waiting for the Bird to Fly

Yu Peng’s artwork neither fits into the conventional idea of lofty otherworldliness, nor is it meant to just linger in the jungle of desire. The coexistence of nudity and awakening in his landscapes seems to call commonplace conceptions about art and reality into question. Intent on blurring boundaries, Yu’s brushstrokes integrate Western nude art into Eastern landscape painting, allowing a paradoxical world of otherworldly worldliness and being “without desire” and “with desire” to silently unfold. This is art hinting at the possibility of no less than a new form of wisdom, as no longer the pursuit of a dull and one-sided state of being “without desire”. Instead of a metaphysical quest, Yu seems to propose cultivating the relationship between “with desire” and “without desire” as both physical and metaphysical communication. “Awakening” or “awareness” now emerges out of the possibility of a twofold interdependence: between spiritual and bodily cultivation, between meta-physical enlightenment and physical sensuality. Any sharp division between the self-cultivator (on the way to awakening) and the female nude seems to vanish –the two imply one another, entering into a state of “desire without desire”. Far from demonizing desire, Yu seems to suggest a paradoxical communication between “with desire” and “without desire”, between following one’s desires and cultivating the Way.

Inspired to reflect on the paradox, we are faced with the question of whether and how “desire without desire” is possible. Any attachment to the aim of being without desire, obviously, still binds us to desire. Staying within fixed and unchanging “desire” seems no less an impossibility than remaining “without desire”. In other words, if we are not able to “desire being without”, that is, to desire being without bodily and spiritual desires, we will not be able to experience what “without desire” is. It follows then that the only way to comprehend “without desire” is to desire “being-without” itself, “withoutness”. To be “without desire” is inseparable from “desire”, and “desire” is inseparable from “without desire”.

When desiring to realize the Way, to become a wise or even a “holy” person, one needs to learn “awakening” and “awareness”. In this state, the fulfillment of desire is only possible through forgetting what one desires, and thus in desiring to be without desire and experiencing “without desire” whilst fulfilling desire. In the *Analects* we find Confucius stating “At seventy I follow the desires of my heart, without transgressing the norms”, suggesting that, at a certain age, we may become “without desire”, and thus be able to follow desire wisely and naturally. Evidently, Confucian thought in this case seems to avoid the difficulty of paradoxical thinking and doing. In Daoism and Buddhism, however, becoming aware of and practicing the paradoxical relationship between “(with) desire” and “without desire” and entering the cultivation of “desire without desire” is crucial for the process of awakening. In Yu’s landscapes we are invited to explore and celebrate such a possibility.

Embodying the paradoxical communication between desire and landscape, nudity and cultivation, naked women and ascetic persons in Yu Peng’s ink works achieve or at least suggest the possibility of communication between worlds which are conventionally understood in opposition. As a messenger between those worlds, we find the bird –it seems to be waiting; preparing itself for the right moment to take off in flight. That moment is yet to come.



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