

Zhou Song's Biomorph Art of Cyberg

By Eugene Wang, Harvard University

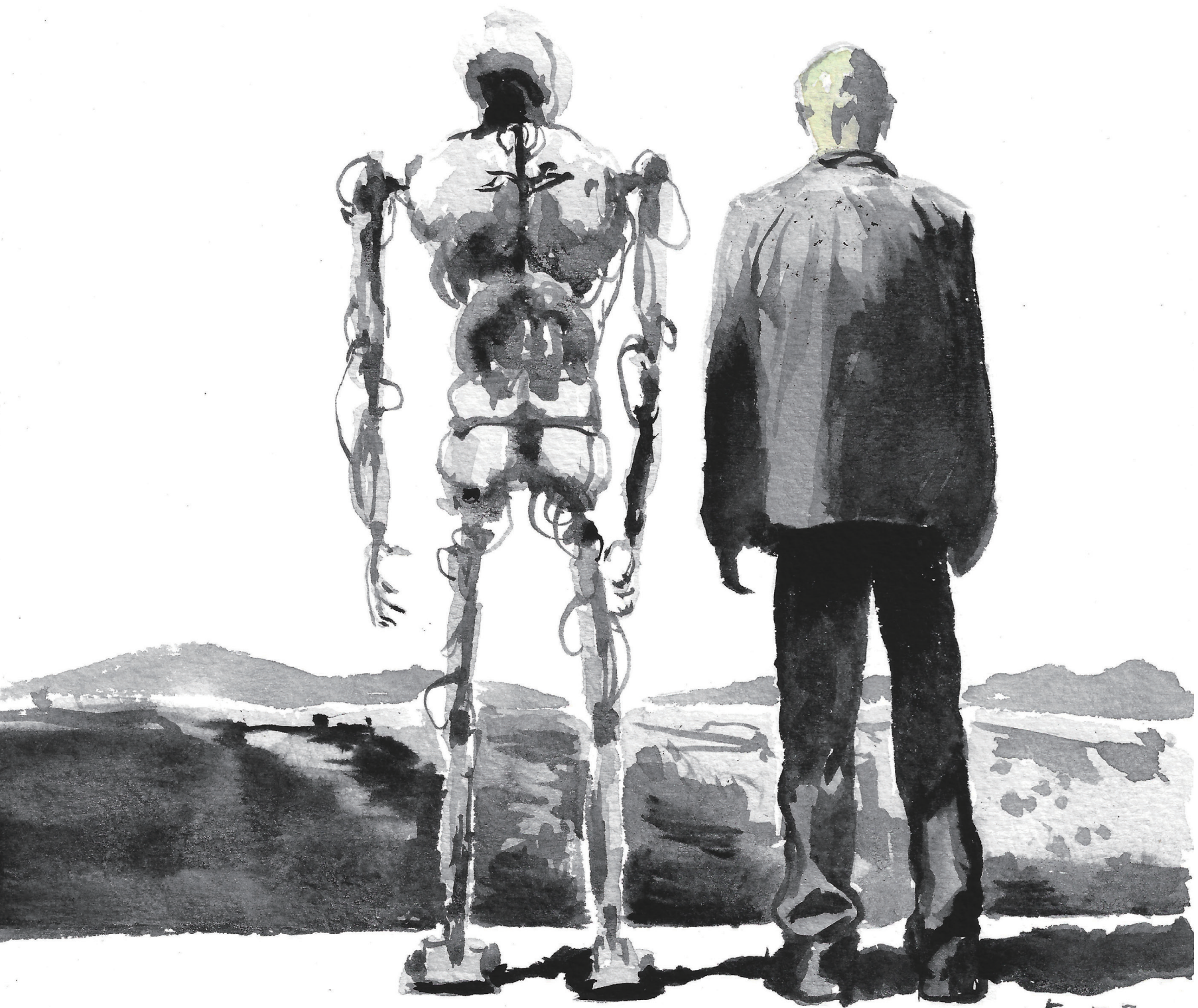
The art of 21st century paintings opens up a new horizon. It is ready to move on from the captivity of the previous century's master narratives—the teleology of flat surfaces, the self-delusion of spontaneity of self expression, medium specificity, conceptual art, and intermediality, and so on. All these have receded in the rear window mirror, having either been internalized or simply made irrelevant, as we are close to the first quarter mark of the 21st century. New horizons loom large and new possibilities beckon. Just as Bauhaus had served as a catalytic agent in jump-starting modern art in the 20th century, so a new impulse—what might be called New Bauhaus—is gaining traction. Design, or the integration of design into the painterly medium, is having its second coming, with a vengeance. Unlike the old Bauhaus that was driven by the mechanist and functionalist impulse, 21st century artists like Zhou Song marry machinist aesthetics with biomorphism. In its origin, art had aspired toward the condition of biomorphic design. Over time, art has undergone stages internalizing biological forms through various means: extrapolating forms from nature or generating nature-inspired abstract or fractal patterns. Zhou Song's art takes up a more complex set of conditions. Rather than operating within the parameters of lush organicism vs. austere machine aesthetics, he explores the nexus and entanglement of the two. Mechanic schema provides the framework for biomorphic substance; artificiality colludes with bodily texture. These works aptly capture the posthuman dynamic of cyberg, at once a body of mechanism and a mechanics of the body.

Meanwhile, an emotional line runs through the seemingly cold mechanism of cyborg. Body parts and biological texture come into a creative tension with schematic designs, thereby breaking out of the formal shackles that hold them in captivity. Palpable animation impulse powers the stillness of the painting medium. What would have been the machine "cool" is turned on its head. It is the very ground to stage animus. The visual facts thus created give rise to further play: optics (light and shad-

ows) readily morph into the gestalt of sculpted silhouettes. This is how the medium of painting performs animation. It derives its vitalism from the visual medium of animation and freezes it on the canvas.

Zhou Song's painting is a culmination of some previous stages contemporary Chinese art had gone through. Since the 1980s, the medium of experimental Chinese painting had experimented with incorporation of abstract design, the remediation of print and sculptural mediums, and so on. Having internalized these early phases of formal experiments, Zhou Song has taken it to a new level. A deep impulse drives his art. It comes down to the artful navigation between the distancing effect of geometric schema and the immediacy of the presence of vitalism, the palpable materiality of things and disembodied body parts. While formal attributes—such as the notable sharp angularity repeatedly staged in his paintings—contribute to the artificiality of these pictorially built or assembled forms, they also perform their vital parts. They thrust, pierce, and gesticulate, at once destructive and constructive. In the trail of some hinted narrative events or stormy actions, intimation of some tenderness rearing its head: a butterfly clinging to the side of a pair of shoes bound by prickly thorny thistles, or some roses interposed among octopus tendrils, covering the roped and clothed bodies. The visual and conceptual drama is palpable; its moral has a lasting staying power. Narrativity, at one time banished by the medium-specific purists, now comes back to the medium of painting with a vengeance. Only this round, we are learning from the morals of the last century. We—painters and critics—are better off putting medium specificity to the rest once and all. In this day and age of increased integration and domain-crossing, familiar terms such as "total art," intermediality, or what have you, appear to fade into irrelevance. They cannot even begin to capture the new dynamics on display here. With our growing ecological consciousness, we are here witnessing the birth of biomorphic art of cyberg, at once posthuman and deeply humane.

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二十一世纪的绘画艺术呈现出了一番新局面。平面目的论、自我欺骗式的自我表达、媒介特异性、观念艺术、跨媒介性等为代表的主导叙事在上个世纪盛行，但新世纪的绘画艺术已做好挣脱这些束缚的准备。二十一世纪即将过去四分之一，过往的主导叙事无不退居二线，被内化或边缘化。新的局面近在眼前，新的可能性呼之欲出。正如上个世纪包豪斯学派作为催化剂推动了现代艺术的发展，当今时代也涌现出了一股势头越来越猛的新力量，我们或可称其为新包豪斯学派。设计再次回归，或者说将设计融入绘画媒介的做法再次回归，并且来势更为汹涌。过去的包豪斯学派由机械主义与功能主义驱动，以周松为代表的二十一世纪艺术家则将机械美学和生物形态学结合到一起。艺术从诞生之初即追求生物形态设计。艺术在历史长河中经历过许多阶段，以不同的方式将生物形态内化到艺术作品当中，从自然界推导出艺术形式，或是在大自然的启发下创作出抽象或分形的图案。周松的艺术创作采取的是更为复杂的策略，他并没有被生动的有机主义与严肃的机械美学之间的对立所束缚，相反，他探索两者的连结以及交叉地带。机械的结构为具有生物形态的物质提供了框架，人造的物体就这样和肌体发生了碰撞。周松的作品恰到好处地捕捉到了赛博格的后人类特性，即赛博格既是机械装置的叠加产物，又是具有活力、有机且精神化的躯体。

与此同时，赛博格虽然貌似冰冷的机械装置，内部却有一条感情线贯穿始终。身体部位与生物纹理的结合为作品带来了创造性张力，打破了形式的枷锁，让作品得以摆脱束缚。明显的动感为静止的绘画媒介赋予了活力。本身“冰冷”的机器被颠覆，作为呈现动感的基础。如此创作出来的视觉事实进一步变形，在光学（光与影）效果下，转化成雕塑般的格式塔轮廓。绘画媒介就是这样呈现动感，从动态的视觉媒介中提取生命力，再将其冻结在画布上。

中国当代艺术历经过数个阶段，而周松的作品正是这一历程的高潮。自上世纪八十年代起，实验中国画的媒介就曾尝试融入抽象设计以及补救印刷或雕塑媒介等手段。周松将这种潮流推向了新境界。一种强大的灵感驱动着他的创作，使其自如游走于几何图式的疏离效果与生机论的直接性（可触及的物质与分散的人体结构）。作品形式上的特点，例如标志性的尖锐棱角，既贡献了图形式构建或组装的人工性，也发挥着推、刺、打手势等重要功用。这些动作既是在破坏，也是在建构。无论是作品中潜在的叙事或是狂风暴雨般的行动，都暗含某种形式的温柔。一双用荆棘绑在一起的皮鞋，但鞋跟的位置却有一只蝴蝶；章鱼覆盖着被绳子绑住的身体，腕足的间隙之间却插着几朵玫瑰。这种视觉以及概念上的戏剧性显而易见，其寓意让人品味良久。信奉媒介特殊性的纯粹派艺术家一度放逐了叙事性，但叙事性如今再次回到了绘画媒介，并且势头更猛，只不过这一次我们借鉴了上个世纪的道德观。我们艺术家和评论家最好一劳永逸地抛开媒介特殊性。在这个融合度和各领域的交叉性越来越高的时代，“总体艺术”和跨媒介性等熟悉的概念似乎都在变得无关紧要。这些概念甚至无法描述展品所体现的新动态。伴随着我们生态意识的增长，我们在这里见证了赛博格生物形态艺术的诞生，后人类且具有深厚的人性。

（汪悦进：哈佛大学洛克菲勒亚洲艺术史终身教授，哈佛大学中国艺术实验室 Harvard CAMLab 创始人）