

## *Geometry Rules All Phenomena: Wang Yi*

Zhao Xiaodan

Wang Yi is self-disciplined and critical of his creative process as an artist. This is not only reflected in his continuous experimentation with different forms of work, but also in his relentlessness in seeking references from art history, philosophy, and many other disciplines. There are two distinct veins in Wang Yi's artistic narrative. One is the inheritance of abstract painting styles such as hard-edge and color field, and the other is in close connection to the domestic abstraction art movement in Shanghai. Regarding the sense of light and color in Wang Yi's work, the former could be considered a response to the Light and Space Movement, a movement in abstract art history that originated in Southern California in the 1960s. James Turrell, a signature artist of this movement, also held a large retrospective in Shanghai last year. In this school, light and color are associated with energy, and space is designed in an attempt to create a religious immersion like Gothic architecture. As for the latter, as the sound field of Chinese abstraction art, the two predecessors Yu Youhan and Ding Yi exerted prominent influence and guidance on Wang Yi; this is indicated in Wang's repeated attention to the form of his works, that is, the relationship between vertical and horizontal lines and space.

*Geometry Rules All Phenomena* derives from Wang Yi's reflection on himself and the surrounding social structure while studying Plato's cosmology. The meaning of phenomenon appears though it has evolved to a kind of methodology that is directly recognizable in Husserl's phenomenological research. In this sense, geometry aims at people's pursuit of rationality and order. This pursuit is a kind of visual stimulation based on *gestalt*. It could be controlled and be achieved directly related to neural perception after rejecting between monotony and complexity. This proposition is highlighted in the essential large-scale canvas works of this exhibition and further revealed in Wang Yi's perpetual exploration of abstract patterns in *the Array* (2017) series. What needs to be explained is that Wang is not reiterating his original intentions, but provoking perceptions of intentionality.

Before exploring Wang Yi's more diverse tendencies, it is necessary to retrospect, at least in concern of his artistic spectrum. Previous to the revelation of his present works, there was already a distinct clue about Wang Yi's progress. It could even be said that the evolution of Wang Yi's creation could be considered as a reference to the development of abstract art to some extent: from *Dilemma* in 2010 to *Place* series a year later, his gaze at a corner of space emerged to the elimination of concrete objects in the frame, revealing the strengthening of architectural spatial structure. The flattening of light and shadow levels in the painting transforms the pauses in physical space into the medium of light and shadow, brightness and color. Essentially, Wang Yi finally completed the twist and replacement of the physical space structure to the two-dimensional plane in his practice from 2011 to 2012. Under the dual factors of self-discipline and habit, with experience paved by his predecessors in modern times, Wang Yi has been moving forward steadily in a frame of reference.

For Wang Yi, his attention to light and color along with attempts at multi-media works have revealed a new scope in his practice that directly connects to a Western dialogue. This scope is parallel to the structure inside the frame and is echoed with his LED lighting works from 2011. Although the background of these works also contains social metaphors, they are a continuation of events, rather than consequences of assumptions under an abstract system. Wang Yi focused on the mirrors in art history during his graduate school years. The horizontal surface that reflects an image of a self-appreciating man in Caravaggio's *Narcissus* inspired Wang Yi and introduced his work into a delicate field. Although the rationalized linework, similar to an outlaw territory, has given the artist and audience freedom of imagination. In his *Diffusion* and *Overlapping* series, transparent resin layers laminate on mirror aluminum plates. Wang Yi believes that this is a way of reviving the glazing technique in classical painting. In subsequent practice, he completed the materialization of light and color in his works. This solo exhibition presents his *Panorama* series after the deconstruction of *Overlapping* series which is also made on aluminum plates. It is a realization of Wang's materialization. The smooth surface rendered by the overlying resin and

paint and dripping formed by a flat surface flowing over the edge grant painting a peculiar feeling from the relationship between the fixed and the amorphous. Although the underlying structure is the result of hard work, a sense of order hides within. On this level, the temporality of practice appeals to the artist's satisfaction instead of attempting to manifest itself into a confrontation with tender façades.