

Art|Basel

Isabel Parkes

'Who is the master?'

On Evelyn Taocheng Wang's process of observation, error, and transformation

ANTENNA SPACE

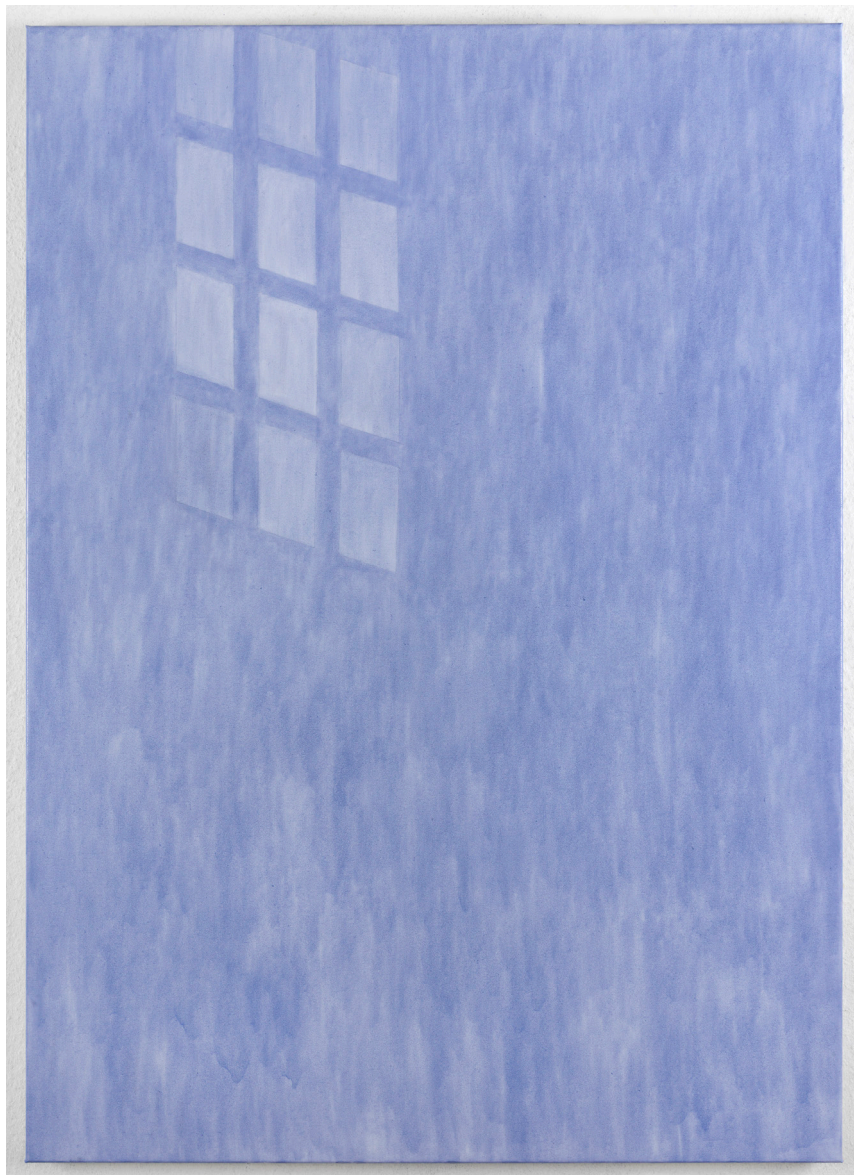
‘I need to follow natural light to make a fake shadow,’ recounts **Evelyn Taocheng Wang** in reference to her ongoing series of paintings, ‘Dutch Window,’ begun in 2020. Dutch windows are characterized by a lack of curtains and strong, stately, grid-based forms. Wang, who is based in Rotterdam clarifies: ‘I don’t paint these to be realistic.’ Describing the process behind the primarily monochromatic, multi-layered works, she adds: ‘I make them from memory, which means I have no research phase, but rather rely on an impression.’

First impressions offer Wang an important alternative when observing the world around her – a world she describes as currently existing in a state of hyper-consumption and visibility, defined by an obsessive, continual kind of looking and a desire to be seen. Her ‘Dutch Windows’ rely on a single impression yet result in complex evocations of light, architecture, and tradition. Like their real-life counterparts, they offer the possibility of revealing a great deal, but often, in the end, show relatively little.



Left: Evelyn Taocheng Wang, Dutch Window No.7 / 4 Layers, 2020. Right: Evelyn Taocheng Wang, Dutch Window No.6 / 5 Layers, 2020. Courtesy of the artist and Antenna Space, Shanghai.

‘This is part of why I love **Agnes Martin**,’ Wang continues. ‘Her work reminds me that a painting can be created with different layers and illuminate each of them, which in turn reminds me of my early training with watercolor. Martin’s work inspires me to mix my oil thinly, almost in a way that makes me think of make-up, and that has a feminine quality.’ She pauses before returning to her own work: ‘Each layer of a Dutch Window represents a layer of light. Often, there are six or seven, and together, they convey how the light changes.’ Wang’s prismatic approach to capturing change – in this case, to rendering windows – extends into many areas of her richly associative practice, which ranges from ink drawings to installation and video. In conversation, she is as poetic as she is direct, particularly when asked about her inspiration, her process, and how she employs language.



Evelyn Taocheng Wang, Dutch Window No.2 / 7 Layers, 2020.

Indeed, Wang speaks many languages. Born in Chengdu, the capital of China's southwestern Sichuan province, she studied art, literature, and graphic design at Nanjing Normal University, before completing postgraduate studies at the Städelschule in Frankfurt am Main, Germany and attending De Ateliers in Amsterdam. Wang describes her formal training as beginning with historic Chinese landscape painting but notes that early on she sought alternative ways of looking. 'As students, we visited museums and copied paintings, but I struggled with the fact that everyone could interpret artworks differently.' She adds: 'My suspicion was personal. There was no standard. Where was the master? I felt I was teaching myself, and already at a young age, I enjoyed thinking about who is the amateur and who is the master.'



Evelyn Taocheng Wang at her studio. Courtesy of the artist.

Germany offered a fertile environment in which to explore such questions. When asked further about her references, Wang enumerates a variety of art historical styles and genres, including history painting, expressionism, and romanticism, alongside conceptual questions, for

example, what art requires to exist at all. She also lands quickly on **Martin Kippenberger**, who, she notes, ‘dealt with identity and the image in a way that was immediately interesting to me.’ Moving from east to west also exerted a deep influence on the artist. At the academies in Germany and the Netherlands – where, in both instances, classes were conducted primarily in English – Wang points out that terms like ‘national identity’ and ‘body culture’ were new to her, even if their meanings were something she had already long considered.



Evelyn Taocheng Wang, Clinic Sis, 2020

When asked, for example, about how she works with different media, Wang responds with the observation that this too has to do with the body: ‘A medium is something every artist needs to deal with in order to find their space, their container for ideas. In this sense, it is a body, an organ, a womb.’ With every medium she selects, Wang seems to experiment with a different identity – and to challenge each of them. Her work is neither strictly autobiographical nor auto-fictive, but rather gleaned from a mixture of experiences and temperaments. In commenting on how to select one medium over another, Wang

enthusiastically talks about errors and misinterpretation as sites of shifting power and potential transformation. What does it look or feel like, Wang asks, to copy passages of a canonical piece of literature in a foreign language and observe the mistakes one makes alongside the words one acquires?



Evelyn Taocheng Wang, Glasses, 2021.

Language enters our conversation here, as she explains how, when speaking Dutch to locals in Rotterdam, she is frequently answered in English. 'I think body culture is about how you feel comfortable with yourself, and language is key in this regard. When you speak a new language, you feel nervous and insecure. Language is a force, and in these moments, it's as if someone is forcing or pushing me to be perfect.' Language has a significant place in Wang's drawings

and scrolls, as well as in her titles, in which words are often cut up or dissected, quoted, or juxtaposed with homonyms.



Evelyn Taocheng Wang, *Were you there too?*, 2020.

Wang is a rule bender. A commitment to fusing right with wrong, quotidian with institutional, and high with low courses through her practice. She inures herself to familiar formats in order to better interrupt her process of making and interpreting those formats. This Trojan horse approach cultivates an active experience of looking that carefully conflates fantasy with melancholy, introspection with pop culture, and history with a version of the future that feels uncannily, at times unnervingly, familiar. 'As an artist, I have lots of work to do to simply mix my two different elements: classical ones with new forms, new words, new body cultures, new national identities.' Yet, as she adds, 'All different elements can exist.' Perhaps this is something to keep in mind when looking at Wang's work: that the splintering or questioning it provokes, the natural light and the fake shadows, might together be signs of a new and fluid, if more dissonant, kind of coexistence.

Evelyn Taocheng Wang is represented by Antenna Space, Shanghai; Carlos/Ishikawa, London; and Fons Welters, Amsterdam.

Isabel Parkes is a writer, curator, and producer based in Berlin.

Link: <https://artbasel.com/stories/evelyn-taocheng-wang-process-of-observation--error--and-transformation>

王伊芙苓韬程：谁才是艺术大师？

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《EU-Star Sleeve Protector Poster》（局部）（2020），王伊芙苓韬程，图片由艺术家及天线空间提供

（本文由驻柏林作家、策展人及制作人Isabel Parkes撰写）

王伊芙苓韬程（Evelyn Taocheng Wang）在提到自己正在进行的绘画系列“Dutch Window”时说：“我需要追随自然光来制造虚假的影子。”该系列画作始于2020年，荷兰式窗户的特点是没有窗帘，有着坚固、庄重、网格化的形式。目前驻鹿特丹的王伊芙苓韬程解释道：“我画这些作品并不是为了写实。”在描述这些普遍单色，但层次丰富作品的创作过程时，她补充说：

“我是根据记忆创作的，这意味着我没有研究阶段，而是依赖于一种印象。”

当王伊芙苓韬程观察周围的世界时，第一印象给她提供了一个重要的选择——她描述的世界目前处于一种过度消费和追求高度透明的状态，被一种需要去看和被看到的欲望定义。她的“Dutch Window”依赖于单一的印象，但却引发了对光线、建筑和传统的多重召唤。就像现实生活中的对应之物一样，它们存在揭露大量信息的可能性，但往往最终实际呈现出来的却相对较少。



王伊芙苓韬程于工作室，图片由艺术家提供

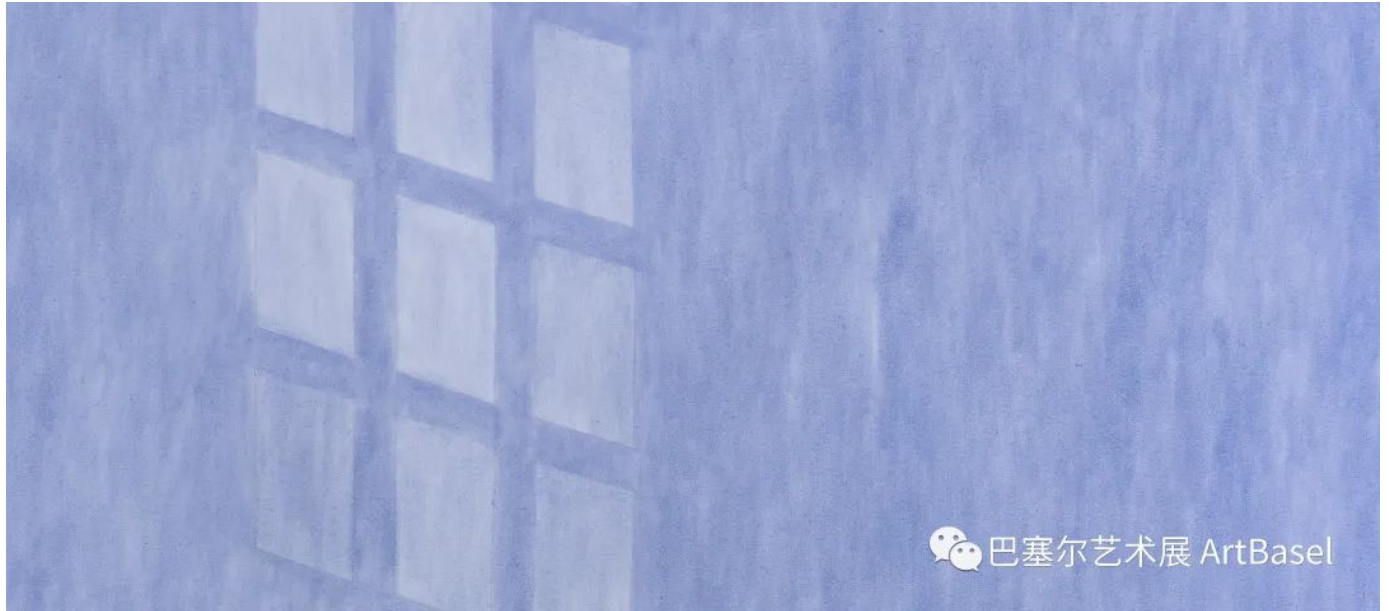
王伊芙苓韬程说：“这也是我喜欢艾格尼丝·马丁（Agnes Martin）的部分原因。她的作品启发了我，一幅画可以用不同的层次来创作，并且突显其中每一层，这也让我想起早期接受的水彩画训练。马丁的作品启发我把油调得很稀，有些让我想起化妆的方式，而这其中蕴含着一种女性特质。”她停顿了一下，然后继续谈论自己的作品：“‘Dutch Window’的每一层都代表着一层光。通常会有六七层，它们叠加在一起就能传达出光线的变化。”王伊芙苓韬程用棱镜的方式来捕捉变化——在这个系列作品中就是描绘窗户——这种方式也延伸到她丰富联想实践的诸多领域，从水墨画到装置和视频。在谈话中，她既直率又富有诗意，尤其是当被问及她的灵感、创作过程以及她如何运用语言时。



左：《Dutch Window No.7 / 4 Layers》（2020），王伊芙苓韬程；右：《Dutch Window No.2 / 7 Layers》（2020），王伊芙苓韬程，图片由艺术家及天线空间提供

王伊芙苓韬程确实会说多种语言。她出生在成都，曾于南京师范大学学习艺术、文学和平面设计，然后在德国法兰克福Städelschule美术学院完成研究生课程，并作为驻地艺术家参与阿姆斯特丹的De Ateliers驻地计划。王伊芙苓韬程说，她的正规艺术训练是从中国古典山水画开始的，但她指出，她在早期就在寻求其他的观察方式。她说：

“作为学生，我们参观博物馆，临摹画作，但每个人对艺术品的解读都不同，这让我感到有些纠结。我的怀疑是非常个人的，没有固定标准。艺术大师在哪里？我觉得我是在自学，而且在我年少之时，我就喜欢思考谁只是业余爱好者，谁才是大师。”



《Dutch Window No.2 / 7 Layers》（局部）（2020），王伊芙苓韬程，图片由艺术家及天线空间提供

德国为她提供了充分的空间来探索这类问题。当王伊芙苓韬程被问及她的借鉴对象时，她列举了各种各样的艺术历史风格和流派，包括历史绘画、表现主义和浪漫主义，以及一些观念性问题——比如艺术到底需要什么来存续。她还迅速提到了马丁·基彭伯格（Martin Kippenberger）。她说：“基彭伯格处理身份和形象的方式让我立刻产生了兴趣。”从东方到西方的迁移也对这位艺术家产生了深远的影响。在德国和荷兰这样主要都是用英语进行课程的学院里，王伊芙苓韬程指出，像“国家身份”和“身体文化”这样的术语对她来说是全新的，尽管她早就思考过它们的含义。



《Glasses》(2021)，王伊芙苓韬程，图片由艺术家及天线空间提供

例如，当被问及如何使用不同的创作媒介时，王伊芙苓韬程回答道，据她观察这也与身体有关：

“媒介是每个艺术家都需要处理的东西，这是为了找到一个属于他们的界域，作为承载他们想法的容器。从这个意义上说，媒介是一个身体、一个器官、一个子宫。”

她选择的每一种媒介，似乎都在尝试和挑战一种不同的身份。她的作品既不是严格意义上的自传，也不是自我虚构的作品，而是融汇了各种经历和不同气质。在评论为何选择一种媒介而不是另一种时，王伊芙苓韬程充满热情地谈到错误和误读是权力转移和潜在转变的场所。她问道，用外语抄写经典文学作品的段落，并观察自己在掌握单词的同时又犯下了哪些错误，这会是什么样的感觉呢？





《Clinic Sis》（局部）（2020），王伊芙苓韬程，图片由艺术家及天线空间提供

语言在这里进入到我们的对话，如王伊芙苓韬程所述，当她在鹿特丹和当地人说荷兰语时，他们经常用英语回答她。

“我认为身体文化是如何感觉自在，语言在这方面是关键。当你说一门新的语言时，你会感到紧张和不安。语言是一种力量，在这些时刻，就好像有人在强迫或推动我变得完美。”

语言在王伊芙苓韬程的绘画和卷轴画中占有重要地位，在她的作品标题里，文字经常被分割、剖析、引用或与同音词并列。



《Were you there too?》（局部）（2020），王伊芙苓韬程，图片由艺术家及天线空间提供

王伊芙苓韬程并不是个墨守成规的人。她致力于通过创作融合正确与错误、世俗与制度，低俗与高雅。她让自己习惯于熟悉的规制，以便更好地阻断她创作和诠释这些规制的过程。这种特洛伊木马式的方法培养了一种积极的观看体验，细致地将幻想与忧郁、内省与流行文化、历史与一个不可思议、

甚至让人不安但又熟悉的未来混为一体。王伊芙苓韬程说：“作为一名艺术家，只是为了将我的不同元素：经典与新形式、新词语、新身体文化和新民族身份相互融合，我就有很多工作要完成。”不过，她也表示：“所有不同的元素都可以存在。”或许，在观看王伊芙苓韬程的作品时，我们就应该记住这一点：它所引发的分裂或质疑，自然光线和虚假阴影，可能会共同成为一种全新的、流动的、甚至更不和谐的共存迹象。

王伊芙苓韬程由上海天线空间、伦敦卡洛斯/石川（Carlos/Ishikawa）艺廊及阿姆斯特丹Fons Welters艺廊代理。

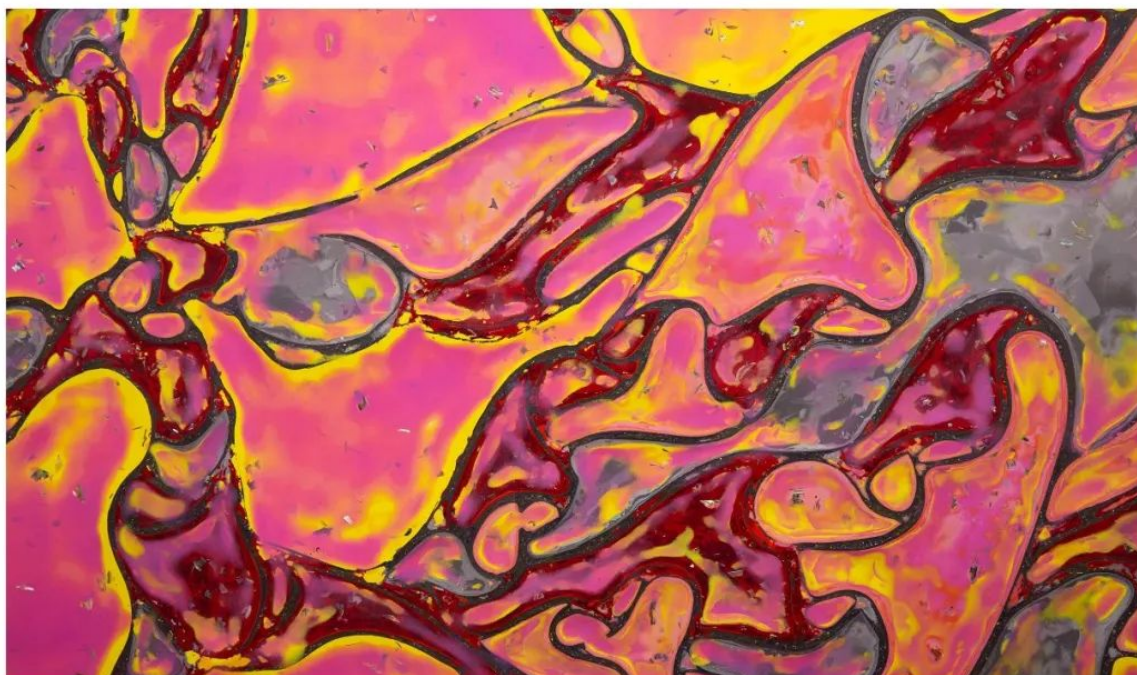
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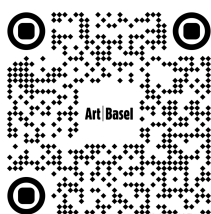


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