

The Line as the Evolution of Time

Wai Pongyu's new work brings to life the evolution of lines through time.

As viewer scans the ebbs and flows of the work, he comes to see it as a series of waves in time, rather than passively observing an image that offers immediate answers. These waves reflect the slow evolution of an attempt to escape from forces of lethargy and uncertainty.

It slowly evolves from left to right, and as it begins, in long vertical striations, it is very weak, feeble even, in intensity, the lightest of greys coming slowly to existence down the left hand side of the paper. The intensity grows, but still, the line seems to have difficulty in moving forward: it retreats towards the left, even though the starting point for each line advances rightwards along the top edge of the work. Periodically, each line attempts a surge, only to fail and fall back, fall down the paper until it approaches the bottom margin. At this point, it seems to recover courage, and sets off again towards the right, though at the start of this long process of drawing, it fails to advance much further than the bottom edge of the sheet.

However, as experience grows, so it seems does courage, and gradually step by step, day by day as the work expands and the waves of apparently intermeshed lines grow out (of course, each line in a work by Wai Pongyu is separate through its whole life as it is drawn across the paper, no matter how tightly packed it may be with its neighbours) – as these new lines grow out, they acquire new energy and confidence, so that, when they make their inflection in the lower part of the work, they fly faster across the paper to leap off the far right end of the work, their intensity likewise deepening, their confidence and energy showing.

The effect is to create three 'pleats' in the visual space, which bring to mind a "Y" lying on its side, slightly suggestive of an incision carved on the stone of a Cycladic sculpture of the female form. The strokes of this "Y" evoke, respectively in the order of their creation, awareness, determination and turbulence. Awareness comes with the initial hesitant acceptance by the line of the need to exist, not to collapse, which creates a pleat that 'puts the line back in the game'. It has found a purpose. The line then moves down the page and inflects to the right to create the next pleat, expressing determination, as it realises that it needs to accelerate to meet its goal.

The final, turbulent pleat emerges from the horizontal interaction of awareness (first pleat) with the determined energy of the final dash (from the second pleat) to the right hand edge. This is highly charged, because the still slightly hesitant falling line is caught by the energy of the lines that preceded it, spinning it by 90 degrees and then more, almost 180 degrees at the end, before rushing off the edge, creating turbulence in its wake. These last lines survive their coming into existence for only a few moments before being spun round and rushed off the paper. A totally different fate from that of the hesitant, shy, unselfconfident lines that launched the work into existence.

Remarkably, Wai Pongyu has created a paradigm of life lived too much in hesitation being caught up in the acceleration that scientists tell us drives the universe, and then spun on more and more abruptly. An original, introspective life as the first line of leisure, wandering over a whole sheet, cannot protect its successors from the call to action; but the progression of time, which by human experience seems to pass faster as we age, cannot be avoided.

Thus, Wai Pongyu's lines, which are created over time and through artistic life and effort, represent, figuratively as well as literally, time - the raw material of which lives are made and without which they cannot exist.

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