

司徒強

SZETO Keung

1948–2011

司徒強 1948 年生於中國廣東開平，後遷居香港，早期學自中國嶺南四家之一的楊善深、呂壽琨。隨後來臺就讀，受教於黃君璧、林玉山，水墨表現突出，擅於氣韻掌握，1973 年畢業於臺灣師大美術系。1975 年司徒強前往美國紐約就讀普拉特藝術與設計學院研究所，從此在紐約蘇荷區定居，走上以寫實技法為本的創作之路。

1970 年代晚期，司徒強已經高度掌握文學意境的視覺化技巧，逐漸樹立個人風格；運用相機攝影、模型製作比對的方式構圖，再以畫筆、噴槍創作。他將日常用品中的紙條、膠帶、圖釘、信封、帳單等貼於紙板或木板，再以照相寫實技法，於真實與虛幻相互交錯，建構獨特的視覺幻象。

從真實幻境到花瓣飄零，隨著年歲漸增，司徒強的創作轉向內心的探索，猶如緬懷前朝的華麗、掙扎新生的開端。進入新世紀，司徒強多以黑洞、銀河、星雲等畫面烘托出帶有時間感的漂浮，作品直探記憶和靈魂的深處。

玫瑰是司徒強重要的美學符號，擁有司徒玫瑰美名的他醉心於花朵凋落的姿態，歌頌繁華落盡仍豔麗的淒美。猶如李商隱、溫庭筠將傷懷託付於花草，司徒強的玫瑰則是對青春、理想與生命失落破敗的不甘。他將面對時間流逝時的束手無策，對於萬物無可逃避榮枯循環的傷感注入作品中，畫面物件大量減少，構圖傾向抽象式表現，以東方式的浪漫歌詠落花，藉以寄寓惆悵的情感，擁抱頹廢中無盡的孤寂。

〈憂鬱 無題-1〉作於 1999–2000 年，司徒強併用現成物拼貼、錯置、超寫實及抽象表現等多重手法。半圓形的畫布上布滿畫漬般的肌理，枝葉攀上了古典氣息的金屬條，歷史感的衰敗與華美油然而生。右方一枝刻劃入微的黃色玫瑰花，點綴幾片散落的花瓣，漂浮在一片混沌浩瀚的孤寂中，彷彿懸在飄零的現實世界和永恆之間，既帶有哀悼的氣息，又傾吐著華麗喟嘆。司徒強式的懷想與追逝像是不合時宜的作風，因此更顯得超越了時空。

凋零是新生的開端，擁抱黎明前的黑暗是一種浪漫。對司徒強而言，作品是一封封寄不出的情書，生活的挫敗、無以實現的情感，唯能化為藝術。本作結合了他最雅愛的玫瑰，以及隱喻日常的畫面形式，恰如其分詮釋了他自述的藝術觀：「死亡是任何有情生命的必然輪迴，繁花殞落，繽紛又淒哀，臨終纏綿回首，以豔無盡悲哀，尤有熾烈執著的熱情。」（郭姿瑩）

Born in Kaiping, Guangdong Province, China, in 1948, Szeto Keung went to Hong Kong to study with Yang Shan-Sum, master of the Lingnan school of painting, and Lui Shou-Kwan, founder of the Hong Kong New Ink Painting Movement. He later traveled to Taiwan to study with Huang Jun-Bi and Lin Yu-Shan. Szeto's talent for ink painting was evident, and he was especially skilled at imbuing his brushwork with essence and flow. He graduated from the Department of Fine Arts at National Taiwan Normal University in 1973, and then studied at Pratt Institute's graduate program in art and design in New York in 1975. Szeto settled in New York's Soho neighborhood, where he pursued realism in his artwork.

By the late 1970s, Szeto had mastered literary concepts in his visual art and gradually established his own individual style. At the time, he was composing his works by juxtaposing photographs and models, and then using brushes and airbrushing techniques to complete the works with paint. He would paste slips of paper, tape, thumbtacks, envelopes, bills, and other items found in his daily life onto cardboard or wooden boards, and then use photorealistic techniques to interweave real objects with illusion and construct his unique visual vocabulary.

From juxtaposing actual objects with representations to focusing on the images of drifting flower petals, Szeto turned to inner exploration as he matured. As if remembering the glory of the past or the struggle of being born, at the turn of the century, Szeto was mostly using images of black holes, galaxies, and nebulae to create a sense of floating time in works exploring the depths of memory and the soul.

The rose was an important aesthetic symbol for Szeto, as he was also known as Szeto Rose, and was infatuated with the beauty of withering flowers, and he praised their poignant allure that remained vibrant even as they faded away. Just like the Tang poets Li Shangyin and Wen Tingyun, who expressed their sadness with flowers and plants, Szeto expressed his unwillingness to part with youth, ideals and life through roses. He injected the helplessness that he felt in the face of passing time and the sadness of the inescapable cycle of prosperity and decline into his works. His use of objects in this work was greatly reduced, and his compositions became more abstract. And with those romantic Eastern sentiments about falling flowers, he expressed his melancholy and embraced the inexhaustible loneliness in decadence.

Made from 1999 to 2000, Szeto's *Melancholy, Untitled-1* includes collage of ready-made objects juxtaposed with surreal and abstract painting. The work's semicircular canvas is covered with a sludge-like texture and plant vines climbing upwards toward a classically fashioned metal wire, giving the work a sense of history and decadent beauty. On the right, there rests a delicately rendered yellow rose, and the entire work is dotted with a few scattered flower petals floating in chaotic and vast loneliness, as if they are drifting between a forsaken real world and eternity, and creating an atmosphere of both mourning and sighing magnificence. Szeto's style of longing and recalling the past seems to be from another time, and therefore transcends time and space.

Withering away is the starting point of new life, and embracing the darkness before the dawn is romantic. Szeto's artwork is a love letter that cannot be sent; his frustrations of life and unrealized emotions can only be turned into art. This work combines his most elegant and beloved roses with a metaphorical everyday painting form, which appropriately explains his self-described artistic concept: "Death is the inevitable reincarnation of any sentient life. Flowers fall, colorful and sad, and when they die, they linger, showing endless beauty and sorrow, with an especially fierce and persistent passion." (Kuo Tzu-Ying)

憂鬱 無題 -1 Melancholy, Untitled-1

1999-2000

壓克力顏料、蕾絲、黑白照片、金屬條、塑膠花、麻布 Acrylic paint, lace, black and white photo, wire and plastic flower on linen

102 x 236 x 7 cm

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