

The Art of “Silence” Expression of Season Lao ‘s Photography

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From ancient times, the concept of Silence has played an important role in the East. To find the musical significance of the Silence after the trailing note has faded out, was an important part of composing Ink Wash Paintings, Haikus or music. Heavily influenced by Western society while in the process of modernization, Japan became overflowed with new objects and information. Take for example television programs: Silence is only allowed for a few seconds and even then it is experienced as a mood turned sour, as something to be filled with meaningless and uncomfortable laughter.

The tendency to avoid the Silence may be a reflection of people’s inability to come to terms with reality. However, even so, the world’s dirt and corruption that have accumulated inside the heart become gradually too much to bear, and the urge to break free from one’s bonds and purify oneself grows stronger. When this happens, humans unknowingly start yearning for the pure white snowy fields of the North and some choose to set out on a journey. It is part of human nature; it is a yearning that will remain no matter how far civilization progresses.

Season Lao’s photographs do not merely capture the snowscape of the North; the pure white space-time of his creation overflows with quiet tranquility that offers a break from the muddiness of daily life. Instead of simply turning his camera to the passing landscape, he moved to Hokkaido in order to express his own vision. It may be evident from the spiritual attitude with which he intently captures the snowscape that he has a critical mind, one that holds critical insights for many of modern society’s phenomena. However, these insights, when expressed in an explanatory manner, will only remind of the dualism of good and evil, and when pushed too far, will merely be mistaken as an act of hostile fundamentalism. In his works, Season Lao directs his eye not to the outside, but to what is inside the heart. He knows that external change is no indication of what the future holds; rather, it is the seed inside each person’s mind that will nurture days to come. While his snowscapes objectively speaking are located somewhere in time and space, they need no explaining;

their significance can be felt by anyone. This is something that all great art shares, and though it is a quality often lacking in photography, it is of great importance.

From the time of its invention, photography has demonstrated great potential for showing the extraordinary and otherworldly. Photography's strength lies not in capturing the universal, but rather the specific as its subject. One place where photography can showcase its power is in advertisements, and it has played a significant role in the development of consumer society. Inevitably, in such a society, many skilled photographers also sought their success in this business.

The flood of commercialized, high-impact pictures that followed led to an unparalleled increase of anxiety. This anxiety's, which is a mixture of uncertainty, impatience, isolation, true root lies in the discrepancy between reality and expectation. Consumer society rests upon this gap, and profits from the anxiety and impatience felt from it; a gap which is marketed and masked by the word "dream". Unsurprisingly, if one wants to make it as a photographer, the easier path is to serve consumer society.

When I looked at Season Lao's artworks for the first time, I felt the young man's resistance to this trend. While he uses the modern tools like the camera, his eyes, like those of Haiku poets and Nanga artists, are aimed at universality; that which remains unchanged through the test of time.

Furthermore, he deals with the past without promoting antiquarianism; from his snowy landscapes, he extracts the essence that bridges the present and past. The world created by Season Lao is an unknown, yet nostalgic world; although there is no one and nothing in it, it does not cause anxiety, but instead gratifies. This Silence is not the same as the Silence of the television. It is pregnant with emotion; if you pay attention, the sound of the wind, of living creatures breathing, all sounds being handed down from the past to the future can be heard.

Everyone and everybody dies. However, during life the breath of any human leaves a lasting mark on the world they interact with. This mark, this energy, which is not restricted to just human beings, convey not the form that is visible to the eye, but rather the essence

of the thing. What characterizes Season Lao's works is exactly this energy; through it people are connected to many things in life, and no one is ever truly isolated.

If you are never lonely, if you avoid Silence and keep it at a distance, you will not get a feel for this energy, and the anxiety that this detachment causes will only grow. The Art of Silence; embracing Silence will not make loneliness grow more violent and become unbearable. On the contrary: it ties us to things bigger than ourselves and ensures that we do not become victims to the anxiety of reality. Season Lao is one of the few photographers who can be said to embody such a vision.