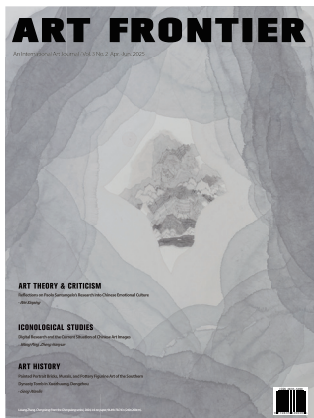




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Yuan Linan

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The construction of female subjectivity in self-portraits : The Symbolism and Feminism Expression of - Frida Caro's Paintings

Yuan Linan

Abstract

This paper takes Frida Carroll's self-portrait as the main research object, and analyzes how he uses the symbolic hand. From the perspective of law and feminism, the female subjectivity is systematically constructed. Through image analysis, sociological criticism and other research. This method explains how Carol transforms the experience of individual trauma, reproductive pain and marital violence into public meaning. The artistic expression of righteousness subverts the inherent paradigm of the patriarchal art tradition that regards women as "perfect containers". The research shows that Frida Carroll reshapes female discourse through three levels of subjectivity construction strategies: The de-gendered facial expression and the political wearing of Tewaner's clothing challenge the patriarchal gaze; by virtue of Two Fury The self-splitting image in Da'creates a pain aesthetic system; and through the invocation of Mexican national culture to strengthen this. The expression of soil identity. Its cultural practice and the transformation of traditional symbols into feminist visual images, and in the world. The artistic symbols with struggle significance are continuously generated in the field of vision.

Keywords: Frida Carroll; self-portraits; feminism; symbolism; body politics

1. Visual translation of body trauma: Symbolist practice in self-portraits

Frida Carroll's artistic creation is largely derived from the profound and lasting experience of the individual. Physical and mental trauma is transformed into a highly symbolic visual narrative that can be interpreted by the public. Her self-painting Images - especially those that directly show illness and pain - are not just records of personal pain, but more It is a series of "visual declarations" constructed by means of symbolism. In these images, Carol takes his own body .It is transformed into a "battlefield" and "text" carrying personal history, social criticism and cultural identity. She passed The unique and rich visual symbols sublimate private suffering into a general reflection on

life, gender and power structure. This chapter will focus on three key traumatic visualization strategies in its self-portrait : symbolic presentation of physical pain, the public expression of fertility dilemma and the metaphorical symbiosis of the relationship between nature and body.

1.1 Body as a battlefield : the symbolization of physiological pain

Frida Carroll's artistic practice is closely related to her physical experience of severe trauma. At the age of eighteen

The serious car accident resulted in multiple fractures of her spine, pelvis and right foot, causing lifelong disability.

It also deprived her of the ability to give birth and brought her long-term physical and psychological distress. This continuous body Suffering has become the fundamental driving force and core theme of her artistic expression. In "The Broken Spine" (as shown in Fig.1) In this striking self-portrait, Carol does not adopt a realistic re-portrait.

Rather, it is a highly symbolic and metaphorical image language to reveal the state of disintegration of the body. In the picture, she .The exposed upper body is cut longitudinally, and a fractured and precarious Ionian column symbolizes its damaged spine, cold. Indifferently supporting the incomplete body. Countless nails - different sizes, deep into her skin and muscles, all over .In almost every inch of the body surface, in an almost brutal visual way, the kind of continuous, deep into the bone marrow of the body .Pain and the ensuing mental torture are visualized as a visible picture of trauma. Her chest opens outward, one The isolated and unprotected heart is exposed, which symbolizes the full exposure of emotions and the essence of being extremely vulnerable. However In contrast to this body that is subjected to open anatomy and torture, it is Carol's face : she Outside the front gaze, the eyes are calm, firm, and even with a provocation that cannot be ignored. Tears are coming from her Falling cheeks, but not delivering a signal of collapse or crying ; they form some kind of echo with the wounds of the body. Her uncompromising expression conveys dignity and willpower that transcends physical pain. This suffering and The binary coexistence of perseverance constitutes a highly recognizable visual rhetoric strategy in Carol's art.



Figure 1. Frida Kahlo, *The Broken Column*, 1944, oil on masonite, 40×30.7cm, Museo Dolores Olmedo, Mexico City, Mexico. Photo credit: Collection of Museo Dolores Olmedo, Mexico City.

More importantly, Carol's naked and cruel "anatomy" and symbolic treatment of the body has Subversive significance of art history. She completely broke the tradition of Western art (especially in the male perspective) in general women. The sexual body is shaped as a smooth, complete, passive, "perfect container" or desire object that serves "gaze".

Aesthetic paradigm. She volunteered to display mutilations, bruises, medical devices (such as later plaster or steel corsets), and the pain that emanates from the inside out transforms the individual 's sickly body into an open, accusatory memorial. The monument. This monument is not only inscribed with her personal suffering, but also for all the neglected and suppressed physical pain. Public testimony of suffering (especially women's physical experience). By visualizing and symbolizing private trauma. Carol not only achieves a certain degree of self-healing, but more importantly,

she transforms the “incomplete” itself into a The active attitude of resistance challenges the society’s stereotyped imagination of the “ought to be” state of the female body, which is marginalized. The physical experience has gained visibility and discourse power. The body under her pen is no longer a passive object. It is the main battlefield carrying history and shouting.

1.2 Public expression of fertility dilemma

Fertility and its related trauma constitute another core pain in Frida Carroll’s female experience. Bitter dimension, and in its art has been a profound and unique expression. A miscarriage in Detroit in 1932. It caused a huge physical and mental blow to her, and directly gave birth to “Henry Ford Hospital”. This very influential work. This painting completely abandons any conventional depiction of the hospital environment. Instead, it brings the viewer directly into Carol’s most private and painful moment : she lies naked in a impregnated sheet. On a bloody hospital bed, floating on an empty, desolate, industrialized (Detroit background) landscape, camp Create an extreme sense of loneliness and alienation.



Figure 2. Frida Kahlo, *Henry Ford Hospital* (also known as *The Flying Bed*), 1932, oil on metal, 30.5×38cm, Museo Dolores Olmedo, Mexico City, Mexico. Photo credit: Collection of Museo Dolores Olmedo, Mexico City

The core tension of this work comes from its surrealist symbolic system. From Carol’s bleeding abdomen extends

Stretch out six bright red, similar to the umbilical cord or blood vessels of the “red line” ; they are connected to six respectively suspended in the air, rich Metaphorical objects : male foetuses, snails, pelvises, orchids, discarded mechanical parts and female

torso models Type. This kind of unrealistic image juxtaposition is the core strategy of Carol to transform private experience into public political discourse. She not only reproduces the abortion event itself, but also proposes multiple structural oppressions through highly dense symbolic symbols. Sharp doubts : the intervention and alienation of medical technology on women's bodies, and the society's compression of female values into reproductive functions. The narrow definition, the social stigma and self-shame caused by infertility, and the self-concept of female body under patriarchy. Systematic deprivation of sovereignty.

Making abortion - a traumatic experience that is usually confined to the private sphere and even blamed on women's "defects" - public in such a straightforward and symbolic visual form constitutes a firm feminist action. Through this work, Carol questions the tradition of simplifying the female body as a fertility tool, reveals the power structure and gender oppression hidden behind fertility, and shows women's pain and silence in the process.

1.3 Symbiotic metaphor of nature and body

Frida Carroll's construction of female subjectivity is not only through the direct description and fertility of the traumatic body. The realization of the public statement of the dilemma is also reflected in a kind of independence that closely connects the female body with the natural vitality.

Special symbol system. This connection stems from her understanding of Mexican native culture, especially the pre-Columbian Azte. Ke myth-the strong recognition and creative transformation. In the work "root", Carol presents this metaphor in a poetic visual language. She lay on her back in poverty.



Figure 3. Frida Kahlo, *The Roots*, 1943, oil on metal, 30.5×49cm. Private collection. Photo credit: Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

This image is by no means a simple decoration or beautification, but contains a deep cultural symbol and philosophical thinking : “Mother of the Earth” echo of Koyatlikue : Aztec myth of the creation of the goddess Koyatlikue, the image is usually worn by the broken hand and heart of the necklace, wearing a snake skirt goddess, a symbol of life, death. And rebirth. She is both a giver of abundance and a destroyer of everything. Carol on vines from the chest (raw).

In this painting, an isomorphic relationship between body and nature is deeply constructed. The female body is no longer presented as an isolated object, but interwoven with the land and plants, forming an inseparable organic whole. The trauma of the body - the open gap - becomes the source of the vigorous growth of the life vine ; the blood flowing in the body symbolizes vitality and actually nourishes the dry land. This image system implies that women’s creativity, whether it is artistic creativity or physiological fertility, is essentially the same as the life energy of nature.

On this basis, by introducing the Aztec myth, a deep resource of Mexican national culture, Carol anchored and sublimated the suffering of individuals due to physical disability and reproductive setbacks into a cultural gene. A more universal “female experience”. Her personal traumatic experience, through the transfer of local cultural symbols. The translation, which has gained historical thickness and collective resonance, has become the vision connecting the living conditions of Mexican women

in different times.

2. Triple construction of female subjectivity : resistance, remodeling and declaration

Frida Carroll's self-portrait transcends the scope of personal life records and becomes a profound and systematic construction practice of female subjectivity. With the help of visual language, she opens up three interwoven paths in the gap between patriarchal art tradition and social discipline : actively subverting the passive gaze structure to regain the subject identity, transforming the violent experience in the private sphere into a political declaration in the public sphere, and creating a pain aesthetics that faces physical and mental trauma. This chapter aims to explain how Carol uses art as a method to achieve the "gazed guest".

2.1 Subversion of Patriarchal Gaze : Reconstructing the Politics of Watching

In the history of Western art, the female body has long existed as an object to be watched and desired. From the idealized goddess flesh in Botticelli's "The Birth of Venus" to the submissive oriental sentiment in Angell's "The Grand Palace Girl," the female image serves the aesthetic and desire production from the male perspective. Carol's self-portrait completely subverts this power structure. She uses "active gaze" as a strategy to transform the canvas into a battleground for subjectivity : the playful deconstruction of gender symbols : in "short-haired self-portrait" (Figure 4), Carol is dressed in a large male suit, with scissors in hand, and scattered black hair spread across the ground - a direct response to her husband Rivera's infidelity and a declaration of war on gender norms.

The most subversive is her "de-gendering" treatment of her own face : thick as a bird's eyebrow, clearly visible lips mustache. These characteristics, which are regarded as "female defects" by mainstream aesthetics, are deliberately amplified and transformed into personal symbols by Carol. She refuses to modify to cater to the "gentle" paradigm, but instead deconstructs the gender binary opposition by strengthening these "masculine" characteristics. This face becomes an "anti-mask", declaring its rejection of male aesthetic hegemony, forcing viewers to face a female subject that is not disciplined by desire and defined by gender labels. Its gaze is calm,

direct, and even provocative, reversing the passive position of the traditional “being seen” and realizing the subjective declaration of “I am what I see.”

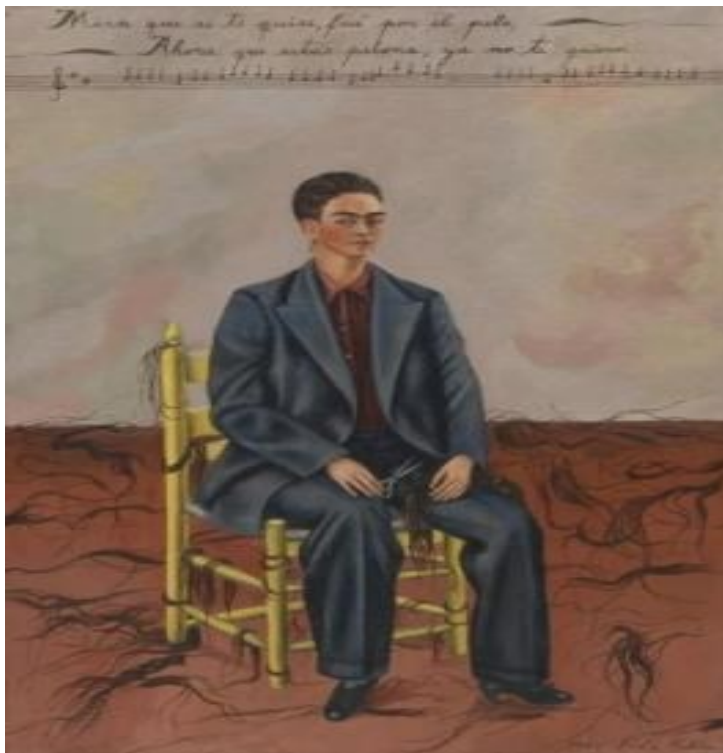


Figure 4. Frida Kahlo, *Self-Portrait with Cropped Hair*, 1940, oil on canvas, 40×27.9cm. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, United States. Photo credit: Digital image ©The Museum of Modern Art.

Clothing as a manifesto of cultural politics : Carol’s continued selection of Tewana, Mexico, has gone far beyond. More simple presentation of national style. In the cultural tradition of Sapotec, Tewana clothing carries a profound gender. Political implications – it’s independently produced by women and passed down from generation to generation, and its wide skirts and intricate headdresses are matriarchal.

The visual symbol of women’s economic autonomy and social power in the structure. When men (such as husbands) are not present, women; by wearing such clothing on behalf of the family and community affairs management. Carol is keenly aware of this symbol body.

2.2 Artistic accusation of marital violence : the publicity of private trauma

Carol and Diego Rivera’s passionate but tortured marriage is an important motif of their art. She. It refuses to bury the pain in the private domain, but sublimates it into a revelation of the structural violence in the marriage system.

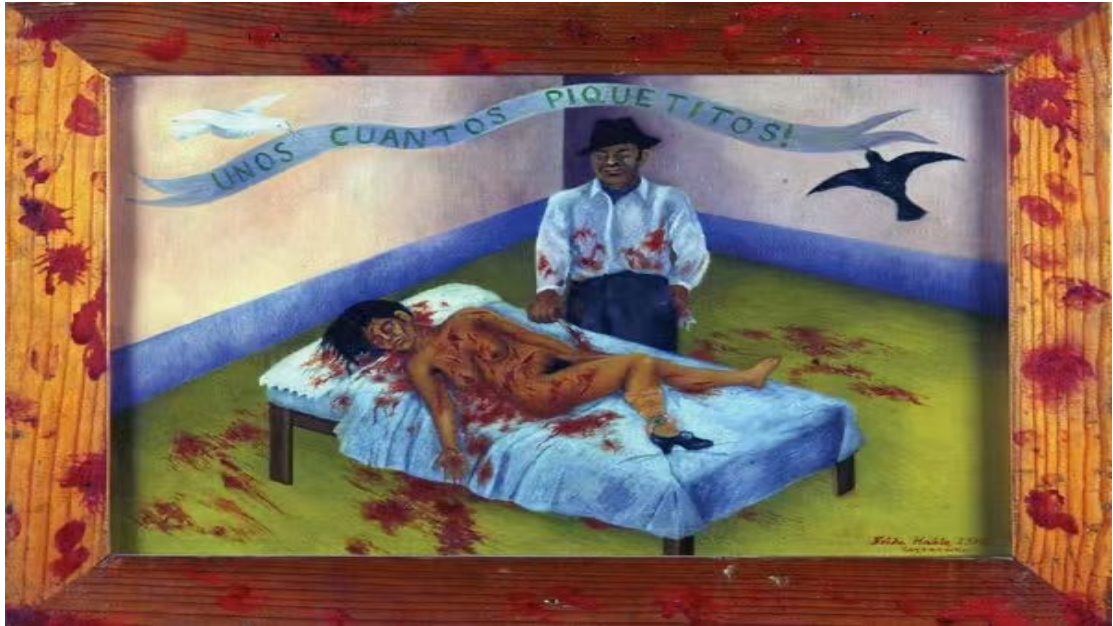


Figure 5. Frida Kahlo, *A Few Small Nips*, 1935, oil on metal, 30×40cm. Museo Dolores Olmedo, Mexico City, Mexico. Photo credit: Collection of Museo Dolores Olmedo.

The inspiration of the work comes from a social news : a man who killed his lover argued that “just a few pinches”. Carol substitutes herself into the victim’s role, depicting a female body repeatedly pierced by a sharp blade and soaked in blood. The image of the perpetrator is deliberately hidden, with only a suspended, indifferent giant hand hanging in the air - a direct reference to the betrayal of his husband Rivera (known as the “big hand”).

The power coding of the picture space is very profound : the victimized female body occupies the center of the picture, but it is weak and soft ; the perpetrators are shrouded like ghosts, suggesting the ubiquity and invisibility of male violence. The indifferent bystanders in the background, the birds on the door frame, reinforce the social connivance of gender violence.

Through the surreal bloody scenes and the misappropriation of news headlines, Carol anchored the “emotional murder” of personal encounters to the broader social reality. The blood spattered on the sheets and the understatement of the title form a sharp irony, revealing the patriarchal society’s systematic disregard and discourse resolution of women’s violence. This painting is not only personal.

2.3Paradigm Innovation of Pain Aesthetics : Self Fission and Identity

Reconstruction

Carol's ultimate breakthrough lies in the creation of a "pain aesthetics" that faces trauma and rejects redemption. She abandons romanticism's sublimation of pain and reveals its tearing and complexity. "Two Frida" (see Fig.6) is the core declaration of its aesthetic paradigm. The picture juxtaposes the twin self : the left side wears a white Victorian lace dress (symbolizing its European descent and failed first marriage), and the right side wears a bright Twana dress (symbolizing the connection between the Mexican foundation and Rivera). The hearts of the two were exposed, connected by a blood vessel, but were brutally cut off by surgical forceps, and blood dripped.



Figure 6. Frida Kahlo, *The Two Fridas*, 1939, oil on canvas, 173.5×173cm. Museo de Arte Moderno, Mexico City, Mexico. Photo credit: Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

This image contains multiple deconstructions. The tearing of colonial identity : the juxtaposition of the Victorian dress and the Twana dress, pointing to the colonial scars of the Mexican mixed-race culture and the conflict of Carol's own European / Indian ancestry ; marriage; the end of her marital dependence : The connected blood vessels symbolise her emotional bond with Rivera, while the forceps cut is the right one .

The active cutting off of morbid attachment declares the pain and necessity of emotional independence ; the internal dialogue of subjectivity : “Two; Frieda” is not a simple binary opposition, but a process of mobility and negotiation within the subject. On the right side. Frida holds Rivera 's childhood portrait, suggesting the continuation of memory ; left Frieda holding a hemostatic forceps, trying to control. The stream of life.

3.The interaction between cultural context and art movement : local position and global game

Frida Carroll's artistic achievements cannot be separated from the collision between its complex cultural soil and international art trends. She does not passively accept the influence, but selectively absorbs, critically transforms and strategies with a high degree of cultural consciousness. A slight breakthrough. This chapter analyzes how it uses the wave of Mexican nationalism to empower women to express themselves in a surreal way. It maintains an independent position in the Yi movement and the political significance of its image being reinterpreted in the era of global consumption.

3.1 Empowering Mexican Nationalism : Constructing Native Feminist Discourse.

The “Cultural Revival Movement” after the Mexican Revolution in the 1920s-1940s provided a crucial expression framework for Frida. Under the impetus of the government, the former Columbus cultural heritage and folk art were promoted to the height of national spiritual symbol. Frida keenly transforms this cultural resource into a unique weapon for the expression of female subjectivity : the hybrid coding of symbols.

In “Wearing a thorn necklace and a self-portrait of a hummingbird” (Figure 7), she creatively juxtaposes multiple cultural symbols. For example, the Aztec symbol : the neck of the thorn necklace and the bloody heart echo the sacrifice ceremony, the hummingbird (the symbol of the soul of the deceased in the Aztec culture) hangs like a pendant, giving the pain sacred ; catholic images : Butterflies on the head (symbol of resurrection), black cats on the shoulders (bad luck) and monkeys (desire), misappropriating the common iconic symbol system, but stripping its religious domestication function ; natural metaphor : the dense jungle leaves in the background

imply vitality, and form tension with the death hint of thorns. This “Native Surrealism” is not a style label, but a cultural strategy that interbred Indian myths, colonial religious symbols with personal traumatic experiences. Carol constructs a set of visual language that is deeply rooted in the roots of national culture and can carry its feminist appeal.



Figure 7. Frida Kahlo, *Self-Portrait with Thorn Necklace and Hummingbird*, 1940, oil on canvas, 63.5×49.5cm.

Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin, United States. Photo credit: Collection of Harry Ransom Center.

The political potential of national costumes and the continuous use of Tewana costumes have been given a new dimension in the context of nationalism. When muralists such as Diego Rivera depicted mixed-race people with grand narratives, Carol focused on the political nature of individual women's bodies. Dressed in self-portraits (such as “roots”) in Tewana costumes, she shapes herself as a “living cultural monument” - both a resistance to European colonial aesthetics and a contemporary call to the power of maternal deities (such as Koyatlikoue) in native culture. The national cultural revival movement gave it the official legitimacy, and she injected the gender dimension in reverse to reveal the core position of the female subject in the national construction.

3.2 Paradoxical participation in surrealist movements : using platforms to reject definitions

Although Andre Breton praised him as a “born surrealist” and planned the 1938 New

York solo exhibition for him, Carol always kept a vigilant distance from him. Its famous declaration “I don’t paint dreams, I paint my reality” points to the fundamental differences between the two.

The first is the aesthetic isomorphism and philosophical heterogeneity. In Carol’s works, the broken body, the floating object and the strange object are broken. The juxtaposition (such as “Henry Ford Hospital”), in form, coincides with the “surprise” pursued by surrealism. He.

However, surrealism regards the subconscious as a utopia that escapes from the shackles of reason, but Carol anchors it to the. The social and political reality of the body-female body pain, birth trauma, colonial heritage, class oppression. Breton. Trying to incorporate her “blood and pain” into the “magic” aesthetic framework of surrealism is actually an artistic politics.

The digestion of the core. The second is the strategic alliance and the persistence of subjectivity. Carol uses surrealism to provide pragmatic attitude.

3.3 Reinterpretation of the global “Friedamania” : the symbol of resistance in the era of consumption

After the 1980 s, Carol rose from a figure in art history to a global pop culture icon. Its image has been widely commercialized (fashion brand printing, dolls, coffee cups), triggering a dispute over whether “political nature is incorporated by consumerism”. However, in-depth analysis shows that the resistance of its symbols has not disappeared, but is dynamic in the new context.

Regeneration. This is manifested in the dialectics of commercialization and resistance, which is often simplified by the mainstream media as “painful legend” or “different”. There is indeed a risk of de-politicization. But the complex core of Carol’s image (pain aesthetics, gender subversion) Overlapping, cultural hybridization) make it difficult to be completely tamed.

When Madonna collects its “My Birth” and declares “Foe. Rida taught me that pain can be power” when she accurately captures the core of Carol’s art - will trauma. Transform into initiative. Although this misappropriation is a personal interpretation, it proves that Carlo symbols can still be stimulated in the context of consumption.

Discussion on women's survival experience.

The symbol translation in the post-feminist era, "Frida fever" coincides with the rise of post-feminism. A new generation of female artists and activists (such as Judy Chicago) see her as a pioneer who continues to challenge standards of beauty, reproductive rights and gender-based violence based on her "body is the battlefield" manifesto. Latin American artists emphasize their "hybrid" deconstruction of cultural essentialism and provide identity reference for immigrants and discrete groups. The image of commercialization. In order to enter the "entrance" of his political heritage, consumers may know Frida through a printed dress, and then come into contact with the thorns, nails and cracks in his paintings, and finally understand his double criticism of patriarchy and colonial heritage.

As the eternal struggle of cultural capital. Carol's global popularity confirms the multiple interpretability and continuous relevance of its symbols. In the era of social media, its eyebrows and flower headdresses have become visual labels for "self-definition" and "declaration of difference". Her image has been continuously activated by queer groups, disability rights advocates, and post-colonial theorists, proving that her body-based political expression has the ability to cross time and space. Frida Carroll eventually transcends the identity of the artist and becomes an eternal cultural metaphor about survival, resistance and subjectivity, which continues to cast a critical shadow in the wave of consumerism.

4. Conclusion

Frida Carroll's self-portrait creation is a female master with body as the battlefield and culture as the weapon. Physical revolution. Through the visual translation of symbolism, she sublimates physiological trauma and fertility dilemma into patriarchy. Public complaints; construct a strategy with triple subjectivity - subvert gaze, expose marital violence, and create pain beauty. Learning, completely reverse the traditional positioning of women as objects; in the dialectical interaction between the local and the global, leverage ink. Sico nationalism empowers expression, critical use of the surrealist platform, and makes its symbol in contemporary consumer literature. Continuous release of resistance energy in ization.

Carol's art transcends personal healing and creates a female aesthetic paradigm of "pain as beauty" : pain is not a fragile symbol, but a prism that exposes the power structure ; the incomplete is not a passive branding, but a medal of the subject's struggle. She proves that female experience - especially the veiled trauma and desire - is enough to form the core of subversive artistic language. Its legacy lies not only in the challenge to the narrative monopoly of male masters such as Picasso, but also in providing a practical template for global marginalized groups to transform individual suffering into public discourse. Frida Carroll thus became an inescapable coordinate in the history of art: an eternal subject manifesto who drew freedom with blood and engraved integrity with cracks.

Henan University

YUAN LINAN is a Master of Fine Arts candidate from the School of Fine Arts at Henan University

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