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## Huang Yuxing: Painting is an intuition

Interviewer / Writer - Shu Wen



Huang Yuxing, *The Fringe of Atmosphere* (《大气的边缘》), 2021 - Acrylic on Canvas - 100 x 200 cm

© Huang Yuxing - Courtesy of the Artist and Almine Rech

Huang Yuxing's painting style is distinctive and unique, it leaves a lasting visual impression. For him, the coordination, superimposition and combination of colors and shapes are based on intuition and perception. This intuition did not come out of thin air, it is a unique personal experience that Huang Yuxing has developed over the years through his continuous contemplation and practice in the art field.

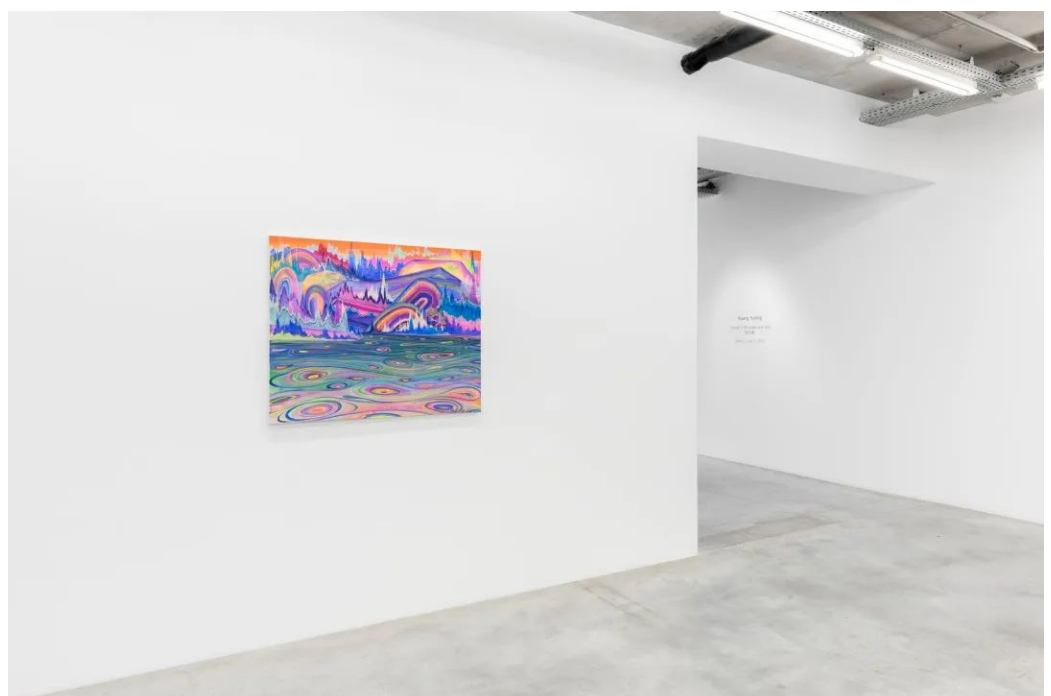
In the middle of last year, Huang Yuxing's latest solo exhibition *Heaps of Brocade and Ash* opened at the Almine Rech Brussels, this is the first collaboration between the gallery and Huang. Huang Yuxing has shown strong momentum in recent years, both academically and in the marketplace, also gaining his international recognition. This exhibition presented 21 works created by Huang Yuxing between 2015 and 2021, taking the relationship between human beings and nature as one of the starting points, with fantastical, abstract, and colorful nature and urban landscapes, which are the main themes of the artist's visual language in recent years.

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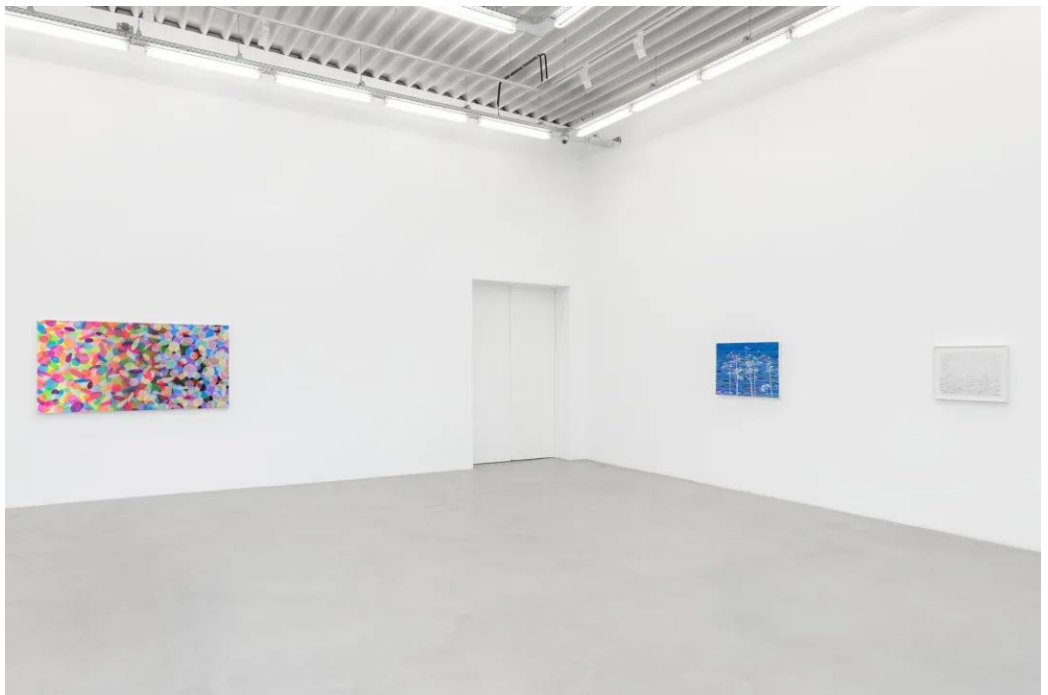
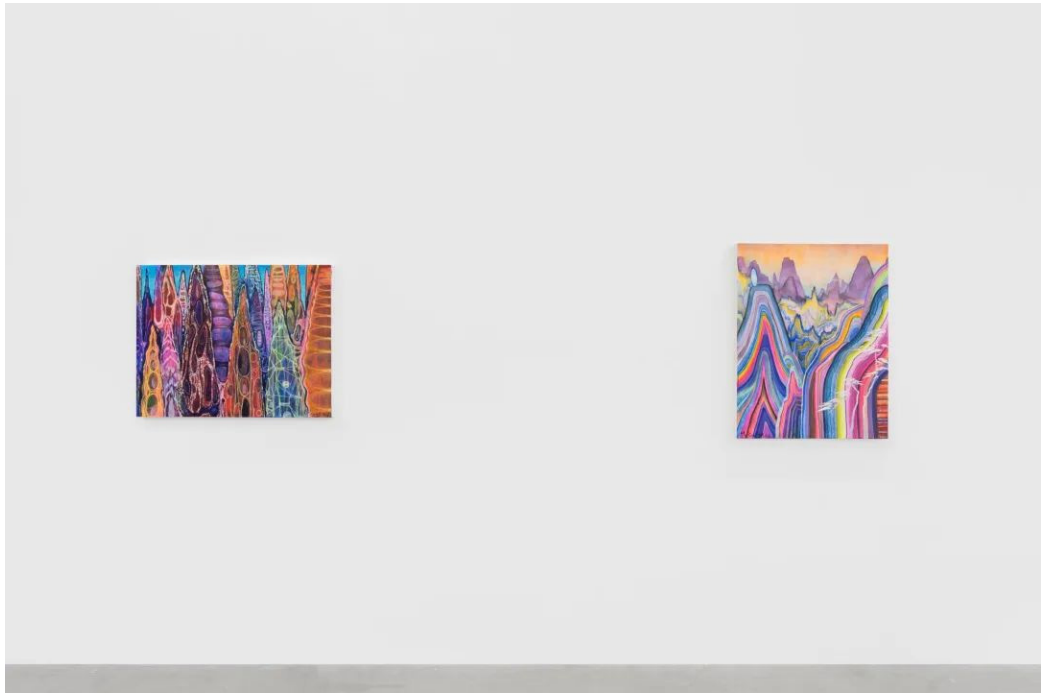


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Huang Yuxing, *Heaps of Brocade and Ash* (《锦灰堆》), Almine Rech Brussels, June 03 - July 31, 2021  
© Huang Yuxing - Courtesy of the Artist and Almine Rech - Photo: Hugard & Vanoverschelde

From the exhibition, it is easy to see that brilliant colors are one of Huang Yuxing's most representative visual characteristics in recent years. However, the artist's early works were mostly in gray and black tones. Although he showed his talent for color early on. However, he intentionally erased the aspects he was good at in his art creation, letting color recede to an irrelevant position in the picture, and instead focused on sketching, which he was not good at, to work on his shortcomings. "At that time, I was in a rebellious state of adolescence, and I thought that in the course of painting at that time, I could better reflect my rebellious spirit by using black and white without color, so I gave up the part I was good at."

This "stubbornness" and "maverick" in art creation was also reflected in his choice of subjects at that time. At the end of the 1990s, Huang Yuxing studied mural painting at the Central Academy of Fine Arts, and during his studies he went to Tibet, where the local culture had a great impact on his spiritual world, but this influence did not show up in his early creative themes. Huang Yuxing's thinking is that he does not want to show the impact of Tibetan culture to himself in a lopsided representation, "Some painters will choose to paint figures with Tibetan themes or cultural garments, but what I want is to reflect my understanding of Tibetan culture in the spiritual level, such as the feeling of Buddhist life including death and time, I do not want to do something very superficial, I will consciously avoid all kinds of superficial embodiment."

At that time, Huang Yuxing had created a work titled *Carnivora: Pandidae* (《食肉目：熊猫科》). It was a black-and-white work. While many painters like to anthropomorphize and symbolize the panda, Huang did the opposite. He found an illustration of a panda in a textbook and enlarged it to a size of nearly three meters. By appropriating and altering the ready-made image and using the panda's order and family of the animal taxonomy to name to express the central idea: Don't over-interpret the animals by giving them too many humanistic things, which is a concept and task they cannot bear.

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Huang Yuxing, *Wave*, 2016-2021, Acrylic on canvas, 65 × 100 cm / 25 5/8 × 39 3/8 in  
Yuxing - Courtesy of the Artist and Almine Rech - Photo: Huang Yuxing

Huang Yuxing's visual language gradually changed around 2008. In 2008, his life took an unexpected turn, and he went through a very dark time as a result. However, in the exhibition *Life History in Change* (《改变中的革命史》) in the same year, we find that color has entered his works little by little, or this state of change or fusion has started earlier. In a series of works such as *Light* (《光芒》) and *Habitat* (《栖息地》) from 2009 to 2010, the colors became brighter and showed a sense of power to break through the obstacles. "That gray period gave me a more practical understanding of the concepts of light, life and hope, and this resolution became more real and deeper from abstraction, which made me begin to re-examine myself and slowly release the repressed desire for color into the picture. Once this repressed desire and understanding of color is unleashed, it was even more intense and gorgeous than before."

Thinking about life and time also led to the conception of the subsequent series *River* (《河流》) and *Bubbles* (《气泡》). For Huang Yuxing, rivers are like the history of human beings, grand and flowing forward constantly; the splendid bubbles are often associated with a feeling of instant annihilation, appearing, and disappearing, with a relatively short existence in the long river of time. "This has a similarity with the Buddhist understanding of life. The long river of history keeps flowing forward, people or other creatures live a short life and are swiftly extinguished, too many things are full of variables, and it all depends on what perspective you look at it from." Four representative works from the *River* series are on view at the same time in this exhibition at Almine Rech, including *Rain* (《雨》) and *Wave* (《松波》), which use translucent oil and acrylic paint layers to create a strong sense of color and flow; and the three distinctive works in the *Bubbles* series depict an eruption and imminent bursting, which creates a layer of fragility and unease. In addition to rivers, mountains and trees in nature often appear in Huang Yuxing's works, and they are also represented in this solo exhibition. Some of these works are related to real life scenes, such as the famous Chinese mountain Huangshan, while others, such

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Huang Yuxing, *Pine by the pink sea* (《粉海边的松树》), 2021 - Acrylic on canvas - 90 x 70 cm / © Huang Yuxing - Courtesy of the Artist and Almine Rech - Photo: Huang Yuxing

as Penglai, are based on folklore. These are all related to the artist's understanding of oriental cultural symbols. As the artist says, he wants to address the issue of the discourse of Chinese artists in contemporary art. Although many Chinese art forms, such as the language of Chinese painting, represent the spirit of the East. It's not easy to enter the global context, so Huang Yuxing wants to establish a unique art language symbol that can be articulated with the world from the perspective of oriental aesthetics such as mountains and trees, with the writing of oriental elements in the picture. In his works, you can see traces of traditional Chinese brushwork techniques, but in works such as *Pine by the Pink Sea* (《粉海边的松树》), you can clearly feel the artist's unique contemporary interpretation of such brushwork and techniques.

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Finally, we talked about the title of the exhibition, *Heaps of Brocade and Ash*. “Ash pile is a form of expression about topography in ancient times, there are many broken topographies in the hands of the ancients, but each piece does not constitute a complete monument topography, the ancients put them together and called it “ash pile.” This exhibition involves many themes conceived by Huang Yuxing in recent years, and they are like each of the topographies in the pile of ashes, which are combined to form a unified work, a huge theme, but each of them is a glimpse of the whole. However, even if we cannot collage the whole picture of Huang Yuxing’s art world with these “topographies”, the sparkle of thought in them can make us find some distant similarity, and thus create a deeper desire to explore them.

## Artnow dialogue with Huang Yuxing

**How do you decide that a work is “finished” when your work is complex, both in terms of color and composition?**

H: A piece of work is more like some fruit. When you start, it’s like planting a seed, the process is more like leafing out and blossoming, and when a piece is about to be finished it’s the fruition stage. It gives you a lot of foreshadowing and prepares you psychologically, which sounds a bit metaphysical, but for me it is. The perception I get psychologically will tell me whether something should end or not, and every piece is different.

**Is balancing colors a difficult task for you? How do you face the selection and coordinated use of colors?**

H: The combination of bright colors is very difficult, or you must combine and superimpose them by intuition and perception, this is a personal preference gradually formed by experience.

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Studio of Huang Yuxing © Huang Yuxing - Courtesy of the Artist and Almine Rech

Fluorescent colors have been used more and more in your creations in recent years, how do you think about such colors?

H: Fluorescent colors are colors that belong to our time, just as mineral colors belong to Dunhuang, to that period, when they pursued the stability of colors and the confrontation with time. And fluorescent colors are independent color systems that stimulate the senses and are unique to our time.



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**How do you see change and immutability, instant and eternity?**

H: I am just a participant in this cycle of eternity, I don't have a definite understanding about the development of the universe and human beings, so I can only hold the posture of a spectator to figure out many things, and I haven't come to a conclusion on many things.

**Do you usually pay attention to the works of other artists, especially artists of the same generation? Is there a so-called "peer pressure"? Do the creations of other artists have any influence on you?**

H: I pay attention to other artists, but there is no pressure, at least for me, because we all have different perspectives and attitudes, and I am a relatively free spirit who is not influenced by others.

**From your own perspective and experience, is there a "generational" universality among artists of your generation? Or is it more of an individual characteristic?**

H: There are commonalities, but there are also different individual characteristics. In my generation, I think the prominence of individual characteristics probably comes from focusing more on ourselves or our own interests, which is closely related to the development of society, and there are many elements for different people to focus on, so different individual characteristics are formed, but there are also universals.

**In addition to the themes and forms of creation, I believe you must also be thinking about painting as a creative language itself. As one of the most historical mediums of art creation, how do you see the role and vitality of painting as a creative way in contemporary times?**

H: Painting is a way of creation that can be passed on, like a torch that can look back at the past and illuminate the future. It can be a dialogue with the old masters and a way to think about the unknown world.

**Are there any favorite painters / artists you can share with us?**

H: There would be some from the old masters to contemporaries, such as Picasso, Van Gogh, Wang Ximeng, Li Keran and Wu Guanzhong.

**How do you feel about the good results your works have achieved in the auction market in recent years?**

H: First I would like to thank the support of collectors who appreciate my artworks, but for me, these achievements in the auction market do not affect the whole status and thread of art creation.

**Has the pandemic in the last two years affected your work in any way? Can you talk about the rhythm of your work? How do you handle the rhythm and relationship between life and work?**

H: Life and work are mutually reinforcing relationships. Usually, I like to travel outside of work and like to go around. Now I can't run around during the pandemic, so more often I stay in the studio, and I will have a lot of time to reflect on my flaws and keep summarizing and sorting myself out, so there will be more introspection. Recently, I will be showing some works on the theme of the pandemic in my next exhibition.

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## 专访黄宇兴: 绘画是一种直觉

采访/撰文: 舒文



黄宇兴, 大气的边缘, 2021, 布面丙烯, 100 × 200 cm / 39 3/8 × 78 3/4 in

©黄宇兴-致谢艺术家与阿尔敏·莱希

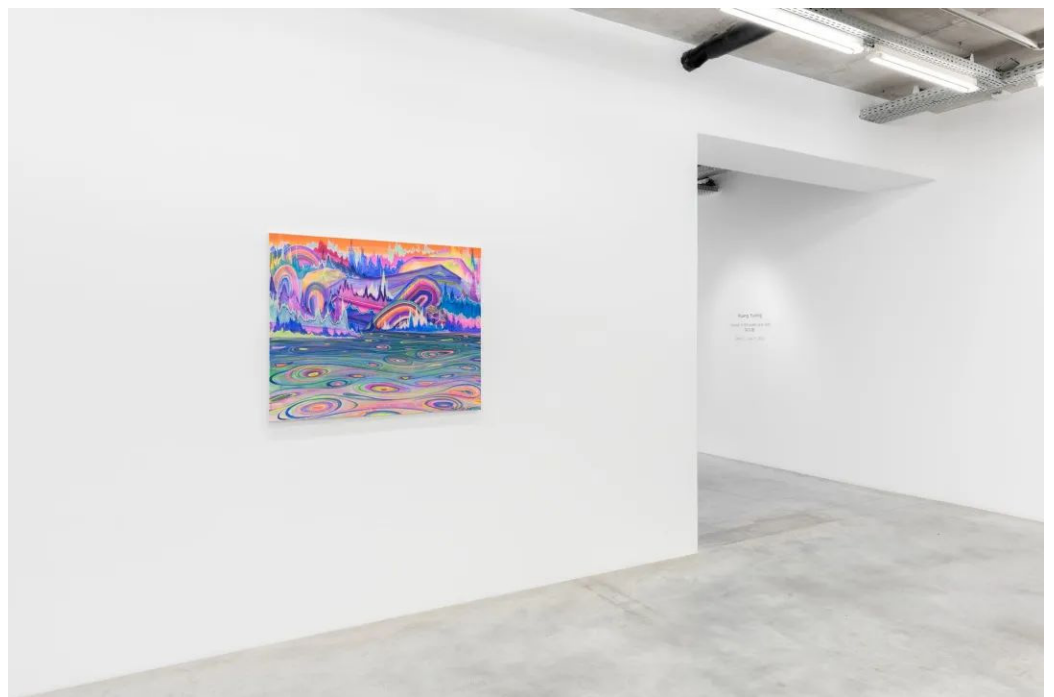
去年年中, 黄宇兴的最新个展“锦灰堆”在位于布鲁塞尔的阿尔敏莱希画廊开幕, 这是阿尔敏莱希画廊与黄宇兴的首度合作。无论是在学术还是在市场领域, 黄宇兴在近年来都表现出非常强劲的势头, 并且在国际上得到越来越广泛的认可。这次展览呈现了黄宇兴于2015年到2021年间创作的21件作品, 从人类与自然的关系为切入点之一, 以奇幻、抽象而缤纷的自然和城市景观梳理出了艺术家近年来视觉语言中具有贯穿性的主要脉络。

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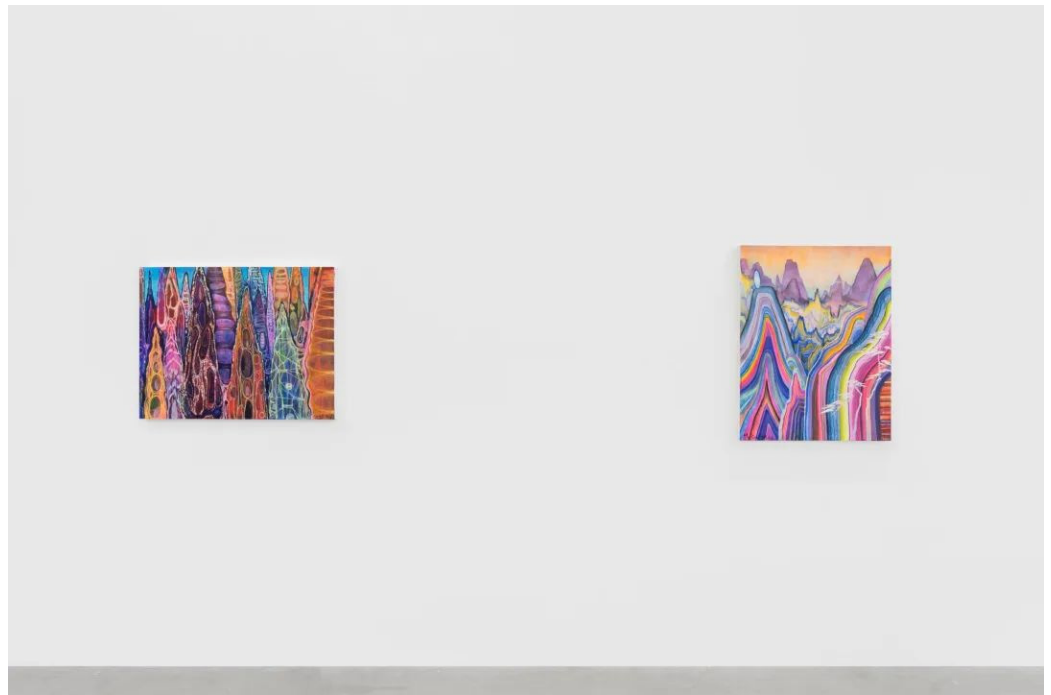


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黄宇兴“锦灰堆”个展现场阿尔敏·莱希-布鲁塞尔，2021年6月3日-7月31日

©黄宇兴-致谢艺术家与阿尔敏·莱希，摄影：Hugard & Vanoverschled

从展览中不难看出，绚丽的色彩是黄宇兴近年来非常有代表性的视觉特征之一。不过，艺术家早期的创作却大多都是以灰黑色调为主。虽然他很早就表现出了在色彩方面的天赋。但他却有意在艺术创作中把自己擅长的方面抹除，让色彩在画面中退居到无关紧要的位置，转而主攻自己不擅长的素描，锻炼自己的短板。“那个时期正处在青春期叛逆的状态，我觉得在当时的绘画里程中，用没有颜色的黑白的东西能把自己叛逆的精神更好地体现出来，所以放弃了自己擅长的部分。”

这份在艺术创作中的“执拗”和“特立独行”也表现在了他当时对创作题材的选择上。上世纪90年代末，黄宇兴在中央美术学院攻读壁画专业，在求学阶段他曾去往西藏，当地文化给他的精神世界带来了非常大的冲击和影响，但这种影响并没有在他早期的创作题材中表现出来。黄宇兴的思考是，他并不想把西藏文化对自己的滋养表现得很片面，“有些画家会选择画西藏题材的人物或者以表现民族服饰的方式介入西藏文化，但是我想的是把对西藏文化的理解体现在精神层面，比如对佛教生死和时间的感受，我不想做一些很表象的东西，我会有意识地躲避各种表面的体现。”

当时，黄宇兴曾创作了一幅名为《食肉目：熊猫科》的作品。这是一张黑白色调的作品。很多画家在创作中喜欢把熊猫这种动物拟人化、象征化，黄宇兴则反其道而行之。他在教科书里找到一张熊猫的配图，把它放大到将近三米的尺寸，他以对现成图像的挪用和更改、用熊猫在动物中的分支命题作品的方式表示：不要把动物赋予太多人文的东西进行过度解读，这是它们所不能承受的观念和任务。

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采访/撰文：舒文



黄宇兴, 松涛, 2016–2021, 布面丙烯, 65 × 100 cm / 25 5/8 × 39 3/8 in  
©黄宇兴-致谢艺术家与阿尔敏·莱希, 摄影: 黄宇兴

黄宇兴的视觉语言在2008年前后渐渐有了很大改变。2008年, 他的生活遭遇意外的转折, 并因此经历了一段非常灰暗的时光。但在同年的展览“改变中的生命史”中我们发现, 颜色一点点进入到了他的作品中, 或者这种改变或者融合的状态在更早的时候就开始了。而到了2009年至2010年“光芒”“栖息地”等一系列作品时, 这些色彩更加明亮, 并显现出一种冲破阻碍强势进发的力量感。“那段灰暗的时光让我对光芒、生命和希望这些概念有了更加切实的理解, 这种解决从抽象变得更加真实而深入, 这让我开始重新审视自己, 把压抑在心中的对于颜色的渴望慢慢释放到画面中。这种憋了很长时间的对颜色的渴望和理解一旦爆发出来, 就比以前更加强烈的绚烂。”

对于生命和时间的思考也同样促成了此后“河流”“气泡”等系列的诞生。对于黄宇兴来讲, 河流就像是人类的历史, 宏大而不停向前流淌; 绚烂的气泡则往往让人联想到一种瞬间被湮没的感觉, 它出现又消亡, 在时间长河中的存在相对短暂。“这与佛教徒对人生的理解有着相通性, 历史长河不停向前流动, 人或者其他生物生命短暂, 倏尔灰飞烟灭, 太多东西充满变数, 这一切都取决于你从什么角度去看待这个问题。”“河流”系列中的四件具有代表性的作品同时出现在了阿尔敏莱希画廊的这场展览中, 其中, 作品《雨》和《松波》以半透明的油画颜料和丙烯酸颜料层堆叠出强烈色彩和流动之感; 而“气泡”系列的三幅各具特色的作品描绘一种进发和即将破裂的态势, 让画面笼罩了一层易碎与不安。

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采访/撰文：舒文



黄宇兴, 粉海边的松树, 2021, 布面丙烯, 90 × 70 cm / 35 3/8 × 27 1/2 in

©黄宇兴-致谢艺术家与阿尔敏·莱希, 摄影: 黄宇兴

除了河流, 自然中的山和树木也经常出现在黄宇兴的创作中, 它们也同时体现在了这次个展中。其中有些作品与现实中的某个场景相关, 比如中国的名山黄山, 还有些诸如蓬莱这类的景观则来源于民间传说。这些都与艺术家对于东方文化符号的理解有关。如艺术家所言, 他想解决中国艺术家在当代艺术中的话语权的问题。虽然很多中国艺术形式, 比如说国画的语言代表了东方精神, 但其不容易进入到全球的语境中, 所以黄宇兴希望从山和树等东方符合的角度, 以东方元素在画面中的书写建立起一种独特的可以与世界衔接的艺术语言符号。在他的创作中, 你能窥见中国传统工笔技法的痕迹, 但在诸如《粉海边的松树》这样的作品中, 你又能清晰地感觉到艺术家对这种笔法和技巧独到的当代解读。

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最后，我们聊到了“锦灰堆”这一展览的名称。“锦灰堆是古代关于拓片的一种表现形式，古人手有很多残损的拓片，但每一块都不能构成完整的碑拓，古人把它们集中在一起，称其为锦灰堆。”这次展览涉及到黄宇兴近年来创作的众多题材，它们就像锦灰堆中每一个拓片，在此组合成一个统一的作品，一个庞大主题，但其中每一个作品对于整体来讲都是管中窥豹。不过，即便我们无法以这些“拓片”拼贴出黄宇兴艺术世界的全貌，其中闪烁的思维火花也能让我们找到某种遥远的相似性，进而对其产生更深的探索欲。

## Artnow对话黄宇兴起

**不论是色彩还是构图，你的作品都比较复杂，你如何决定一件作品“完成了”？**

黄宇兴：一件作品，更像是一颗果实。开始时，就像是种下了一颗种子，过程更像是出叶与开花，当一件作品即将完成时就是结果了。他会给你带来许多前兆，会让你有一些心理上的准备，这听上去有一些玄幻，但对于我来说事实就是这样的。心理上得到的感知会告诉我一件事是否应该结束，每一件作品都不一样。

**平衡色彩之间的关系对你来讲是一个难点吗？你如何面对色彩的选择和协调运用？**

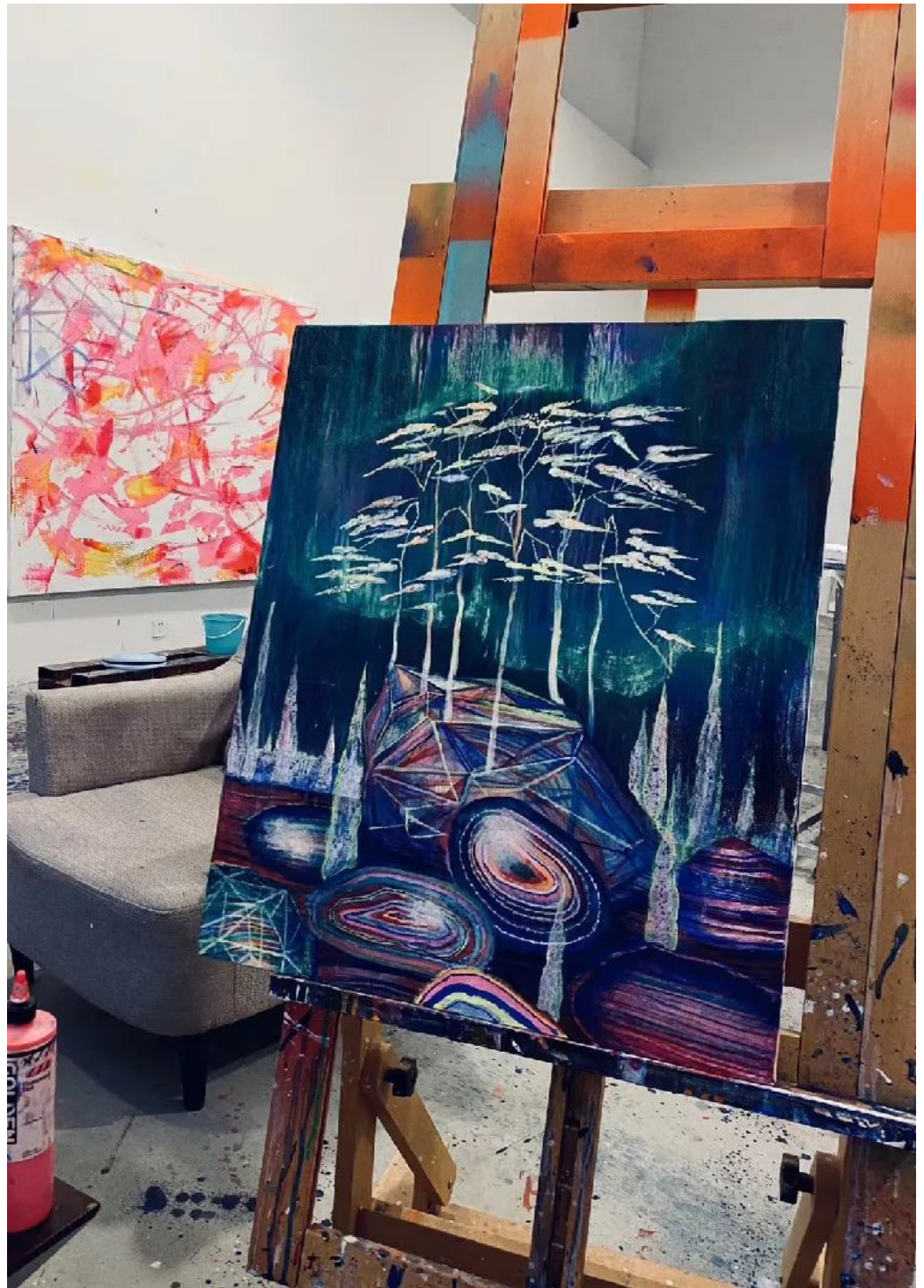
黄宇兴：鲜艳颜色的搭配组合很有难度，还是要凭借直觉和悟性去组合和叠加，这个是因经验而逐渐形成的个人偏好。



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黄宇兴工作室

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荧光色被越来越多地运用到你近年来的创作中，你如何看待这样的色彩？

黄宇兴：荧光色是属于我们这个时代的颜色，就如同矿物质颜色是属于敦煌、属于那个时期的颜色一样，那时候他们追求颜色的稳定性和与时间的对抗性。而荧光色是刺激感官的独立的颜色体系，是我们时代所特有的。

你如何看待变与不变，瞬间与永恒？

黄宇兴：我只是这个循环或者这场永恒中的参与者，关于宇宙、人类的发展很多东西我自己也

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想不清楚，所以只能抱着观看者的姿态去摸索，很多东西并没有参透。

**平时会关注留意其他艺术家，尤其是同代艺术家的创作吗？存在所谓的“同龄人压力”吗？其他艺术家的创作会对你有影响吗？**

黄宇兴：会关注其他的艺术家，但至少对于我来说不存在什么压力，因为大家的视角与态度都不尽相同，我是一个相对洒脱一些的人，不太会受其他人的影响。

**从你自己的角度和经验来看，你们这一代艺术家存在“代际”上的普遍性吗？还是其实已经更多的是个体特征了呢？**

黄宇兴：是有共性的，也会有不同的个体特征。我们这一代人，个体特征的突出我想可能源于更多的去关注到自身或者是自身所感兴趣的点，与社会的发展息息相关，也有了许多元素供不同的人去关注，所以形成了不同的个体特种，但却也有普遍性。

**除了创作的主题和形式外，相信你一定也在思考绘画这种创作语言本身。作为一种最有历史的艺术创作媒介，你如何看待绘画这种创作方式在当代的角色和生命力？**

黄宇兴：绘画是一种可以传承的创作方式，它像火炬一样，可以回看过去，也可以照亮未来。可以与古人对话，也可以畅想未知的世界。

**有没有特别喜欢的画家/艺术家可以和我们分享。**

黄宇兴：古今中外都会有一些，比如毕加索、梵高、王希孟、李可染和吴冠中。

**你如何看待近年来你的作品在拍卖市场中取得的佳绩？**

黄宇兴：首先要感谢欣赏我艺术作品的藏家的支持，不过对我来讲，在拍卖市场上的这些成绩并不能影响艺术创作的整个面貌和线索。

**近两年来的疫情是否对你的创作产生怎样的影响？能谈谈你的工作节奏吗？你如何处理生活与工作之间的节奏和关系？**

黄宇兴：生活和工作是相辅相成的关系。平时我在工作之余喜欢旅游，喜欢到处去走走看看。现在因为疫情期间不能到处跑，所以更多时候我是在画室里呆着，会有很多时间反思自己在创作上的疏漏，不断总结和梳理自己，所以内省的东西会更多。最近会有一些关于疫情主题的作品出现在下一个展览中。