

绿苔，尘埃与楼台

Someone Was Just Here

苑瑗
Yuan Yuan

2024.7.18 — 2024.8.25

策展人：曹峪
Curated by Cao Yu

——有人刚刚经过……

苑瑗第一次独自去香港巴塞尔博览会，完全陌生的环境和面孔，焦虑感瞬时增加。离开博览会走进维多利亚公园，里面如同脱离现实的环境让她的心情舒缓很多。再后来在香港迪士尼门口的一句话影响她至今——这里是一个属于昨天和明天的世界（Here you leave today and enter the world of yesterday, tomorrow, and fantasy）。

苑瑗的艺术创作经历过几个时期，一是她年少成名时对人物人体的色彩解读，平面绘画对她而言是一个可塑的躯体，她信马由缰地把这个躯体变换成周围的朋友、同学、亲人等任何一个她感兴趣和被她关注的人。苑瑗在刻画这些人物主题时，常以一种极尽放松又自我自主的态度，将每一个人物注入自己独特视角的第二种灵魂，平时的呆板与僵硬有了愉悦灵动，欢快与嬉戏则笼罩了淡淡情绪。那时苑瑗不知疲倦地描画了太多太多的人，这些现实中的人物被艺术家独具个人风格的色彩和笔触，鲜活跃然在纸张、画布和传统材料以外的多种独创艺术媒介之上。“现代主义”是从艺术实践及对艺术家的创作理论中概括而来的；而“后现代主义”更多的产生于理论家们对文化艺术现象的解读，所以后现代主义话语则更多来自学院派知识的生产。苑瑗早期创作的人物主题的艺术语言，因其根深蒂固的学院背景，从画面本身中能够轻松读取出浓郁且完整的后现代主义。而艺术家本身的叛逆与自由，又让她将现代主义流派的波谱艺术浸含在作品的展览展示中。她描绘的人物是以群像的大型矩阵形式排列展出的共体，但每个人物又都是单独完整耸立的闪亮个体。苑瑗这个时期的多件大型绘画装置作品都直白地将个体与共体的辩证关系，以捕捉瞬间定格的绘画特色和重复蔓延铺展的陈列形式二者合璧而出。整件大型作品以视觉抢夺的态度展开序曲，再以探究单体作品的细致传达出逐一章节。

这个时期的苑瑗收获到了同龄艺术家难以企及的太多光环，叠加的展览数量和积极的市场反馈让未满30岁的她提前感受到了真实的快意人生。但苑瑗作为艺术家本身保持住了超越同龄人的成熟与冷静，并果断配置和延续自己的艺术信仰与理性诉求。作为职业艺术家，全身心信仰“艺术”本身自然贯穿始终，但既然生而为人都会渴求持续性的“成功”。所以苑瑗的态度秉持着黑格尔所坚定的理性与信仰并不是分裂和对立，理性是把信仰作为自身的内在环节包含于自身中，而信仰则是灌注着理性思辨的唯一信仰。因此，苑瑗选择“理性”的急流勇退并时间管理大师般得完成了属于自己的三件套：央美读研、出国访问、结婚生子。“理性”之后，就是艺术家本我厚积薄发的“信仰”回归阶段。至此，艺术家本人对自己的创作也有了全新的理解与升华。成为母亲后，苑瑗的作品有了应运而生的变化，她开始重新理解更为宽广范畴的“人的成长”并开始精心和静心的打理家里的花园。这些全新的经历和体悟都浸入在她的画面里——植物的比重逐步加大，而“人”的概念以更为精巧和意象的艺术语言暗含在作品之中。同时，面对生活中琐事的重叠繁复，艺术家智者般的以更为相反的方向将情绪平和转化。苑瑗自己认为这很大原因是“向植物学习”，她说与植物相伴很哲学，和植物相处一段时间，掌握了它们的习性，你会发现植物世界的规则。这如同《植物能量》一书中提及植物能量是最接近造物（创造）意识的，当人类逐渐向植物意识靠近，便可借由植物意识带动和接近造物（创作）意识。苑瑗就此开启了“植物冥想”的全新态度，这种艺术家本人的“生活后现代启示”也浓郁展示在她后来的主流创作中。全新的对自己、艺术和生活的态度，让苑瑗有了更为平心静气的广博感知和深度规律，似以一种美玉利刃般更温润且更锐利的隐藏态度，传达着对大千世界、周遭过往的冷观与静思。

在本次苑瑗个展《绿苔，尘埃与楼台》中，表面上艺术家是把视角投入到了描绘植物本身的宏大叙事中，实则展览中的全新作品内含艺术家本人的多层含义：既是在向美术史中的先贤们致敬，例如中国宋代画家刘松年巧取《周南·桃夭》：“桃之夭夭，灼灼其华”的典故，以画面中大面积描绘花卉植物映衬人物的《桃花仕女》图。再如卡米耶·柯罗因当年迟迟不能忘怀感受过孟特芳丹花园景色之美，创作出画面中布满丰茂植物花卉的旷世之作《孟特芳丹的回忆》。同时也是以植物为承托载体，在完整的画面中巧思缜密地营造出一座引人深省的“神域”，艺术家用大比例的花卉内容填满画面，并在其中隐秘地安插了“人”这一元素，试图构建出一栋植物为

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主基调并引发每一位观者冥想的茧房。艺术家无比坚定地以植物花卉为视觉基准平台，再用一种柔软缓和的松弛态度牵引出针对当下社会集体的相悖共识与反思共鸣。

至此，苑瑗已经探求从“半入花园”到去“无忧宫”，再到转身离开花园重回现实的进阶性探索和开放式讨论。本次展览上虽然依旧满目繁花，但艺术家已经开启了更为深层的“二次讨论”，从“引人入园”升级到“思考出园”，画作中营造出神域一样的“花园”，释放出让每个人开始冥想与深思的无香芳泽。如同久居都市的你我繁忙之余走进花园，在植物的无尽包裹与环绕中，暂时性忘却现实存在的哀愁与烦恼。本次《绿苔，尘埃与楼台》展览上的作品，苑瑗想要探求的则是我们每一个人离开“花园”之后的态度与心境。好似《新龙门客栈》中飞沙走石的大漠之中本不应有客栈。但这客栈就是大漠中的一座“神域”，更是大漠中每个人眼中的“花园”，所有行走在痛苦不堪又万千叵测大漠之中的人都各怀抱负与野心，谁都想赶快进到“新龙门客栈”里，求得片刻的安全与喘息。但对于他们而言最难的不是行走在在大漠之中，而是进入“新龙门客栈”后，并在短暂释怀温存休整后又该如何再有勇气的走出客栈和走回大漠：要继续未完成的征程、要解决躲不开的问题、要直面更棘手的困难，要挑战早已注定的命运，还是要面对心中或爱或恨的那个人……诚然，苑瑗个展《绿苔，尘埃与楼台》上的全新力作，更多的是希望每一位观者在周身沐浴着艺术家深厚的专业造型功底、鲜明舒展的植物主题语言和悉心营造的冥想神域氛围之外，能够继续有勇气且更加沉着冷静地思考“走出花园”后何去何从的放弃或抗争，还是随心随性的不变或万变……

苑瑗在自己前十年的艺术道路上，一直交出的都是近乎满分的答卷。当艺术家本人停下脚步选择走进自己的“花园”后，开启了最大限度的休整与思考。而此刻，她已经利落雅致地转身走出“花园”，以一种更为松弛饱满和更为纯粹的本我状态，继续昂首信眉的游吟在属于她的可期艺途。

《此刻是今日》

聂鲁达

昨天的一切逐渐消失于
光的指头和睡梦的眼中
明天会踩着绿色的脚步到来
无人能拦阻黎明之河
无人能拦阻你双手的河流
……

文 / 曹峪

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Yuan Yuan
Curated by Cao Yu

—Someone was just here...

Yuan Yuan's first visit to Art Basel Hong Kong made her instantly anxious with the utterly unfamiliar environment and faces. She walked into Victoria Park after the fair, where, inside, offered her a respite from reality that soothed her mood. Later, a remark at the entrance of Hong Kong Disneyland has impacted her to this day, "Here you leave today and enter the world of yesterday, tomorrow, and fantasy."

Yuan Yuan's artistic practice has undergone several phases. One is her color interpretation of the human body when she first emerged in the scene. The work on canvas was a malleable body where she could transform her friends, classmates, relatives, or anyone around her that she was interested in and concerned about. When Yuan portrays these characters, she provides them with a second soul through unique perspectives and a relaxed and subjective manner, so the usual dullness and rigidity are given a pleasant spirit, shifting to a cheerful, playful, and lighter mood. At that time, Yuan tirelessly depicted many people, and these real-life characters were animated by the artist's unique personal style, colors, and brushstrokes on various painted media, including paper, canvas, and non-traditional materials. "Modernism" is generalized from art practices and theories of artists' practices, while "Post-modernism" is derived from the theorists' interpretation of cultural and artistic phenomena. In this sense, Post-modernist discourse is a production of knowledge by academics. The artistic language of Yuan Yuan's early figurative paintings, indebted to her deep-rooted academic training, allows viewers to easily retrieve their rich and complete post-modernist features. The artist's inherent rebelliousness and freedom will enable her to immerse pop art, part of the modernist tradition, into the presentation of her works. The figures she depicts are arranged in large group portraits, while each figure stands individually with towering radiance. Yuan Yuan's many large-scale painting installations from this period literally integrate the dialectical relationship between the individual and the collective, bringing together the momentary freeze frame and the repetitively extending display. The entire work unfolds with a visually captivating attitude and then conveys specific chapters through meticulous explorations in each single work.

During this period, Yuan gained accolades far beyond her peers, and countless exhibition invites and art market feedback provided the absolute pleasure of life before she turned 30. However, Yuan, as an artist, maintained a maturity and calm exceeding her contemporaries and continued to discover her artistic beliefs and pursuits. As a professional artist, she wholeheartedly believes in "art," while being an ordinary human being, one's desire for sustained "success" contends. Therefore, Yuan Yuan's attitude on belief, like the Hegelian proposition that rationality and faith are not dichotomous and antagonistic but one that circulates within reasons of the self, is replete of speculations. For this reason, Yuan chose to "rational" retreat, whose masterful time management allowed her to establish the basis for future practice—completing her graduate studies at the Central Academy of Fine Arts, traveling abroad, and getting married and having a child. Having accomplished these "reasonable" goals, Yuan returns to her "belief" in painting full throttle. At this point, the artist has gained a new understanding and sublimation of her practice. After becoming a mother, Yuan's work changed accordingly, as she began to understand the broader scope of "growing up" anew while taking care of her home garden with dedicated attention. These new experiences and realizations permeate her images – the scale of flora and fauna has gradually increased. At the same time, the concept of "personhood" is implied through her use of sophisticated and imaginative artistic language. At the same time, in the face of compounded and complex life's trivialities, the artist wisely transforms her emotions in the opposite direction. Yuan believes that much of this is due to "learning from plants." she says that being with plants can be philosophical, and after spending time with them and mastering their habits, one would discover the pattern of the plant world. As it's suggested in Plant Energy, the energy exuded from plants is the closest to creative consciousness. When humans gradually get closer to plant consciousness, they could adopt the plant's consciousness to drive and approach their creative impetus. Yuan thus initiated a new attitude of "plant meditation," and her "post-modern revelation" about life is reflected in her later painting practice. This new attitude

towards herself, art, and life has given Yuan a calmer and broader perception of the law of nature, allowing her to convey her observation and contemplation about the world at large and those around her with a sharp and discrete attitude.

Yuan Yuan's solo exhibition "Someone Was Just Here" may ostensibly focus on investigating the general narrative of plants. Still, her latest works comprise multilayered meanings, ranging from paying tribute to the masters in art history. Such as the Song dynasty painter Liu Songnian, who skillfully adopted the words from "Odes of Zhou Nan and The South – Tao Yao" from the Book of Songs, "The peach tree is young and elegant, brilliant are its flowers," which rendered a large portion of flora against a figure that exemplifies the imagery of peach blossom and courtesan woman. Another example is Camille Corot, who could not forget the beauty of the gardens of Mortefontaine and painted *Souvenir de Mortefontaine*, a world-class artwork filled with lush plants and flowers. At the same time, plants are carriers that allow Yuan Yuan to create an intriguingly "divine realm" on the tableau that appeals to her viewers for profound contemplation. She fills the picture with a large proportion of flowers and discretely inserts the "figure," setting the tone for a meditative cocoon for the viewer. The artist is committed to using plants and flowers as a platform of visual reference that gently guides the viewer to discover the consensus and contradiction of collective consciousness in the current society.

Yuan Yuan's recent exploration and open discussions expanded from "Half-entering the Garden" to "No Worry Garden" and then returned to reality. Although this exhibition still centers on the subject of flowers, the artist initiates a "secondary discussion" that "appeals to people to the garden" and "reflects on leaving the garden," and by creating a "divine realm" in the paintings, and releasing an odor-less aroma that's conducive to meditation and ponderance. Like those of us who are long-time urban residents, when we walk into the garden after a busy day and are surrounded and embraced endlessly by plants, it allows us to forget the sorrows and troubles of reality temporarily. In the works in the "Someone Was Just Here" exhibition, Yuan wants to explore the attitude and state of mind once leaving the "garden." Similar to the film "New Dragon Gate Inn" film, where there should not have been an inn in the desert with flying sand and rocks, yet the inn serves as a "sacred realm" of the desert, or the "garden" in the traveler's eyes. Those who traverse the desert with resolute ambitions endure pain, encounter wicked surprises, and hope to arrive at the "New Dragon Gate Inn" as soon as possible for safety and rest. Yet, the most challenging thing is not only walking into the desert but having had a short repose at "New Dragon Gate Inn" to pick up one's courage to carry on. In other words, to continue on the unfinished journey, address the unavoidable questions, confront urgent difficulties, challenge a predetermined fate, or face the person in one's heart with passion or despise... Admittedly, Yuan Yuan's solo exhibition "Someone Was Just Here," while impressing every visitor with the artist's profound and professional compositional skills, their distinctive and expansive subject around botany, and the artist's carefully rendered divine and meditative realm, the show would encourage its viewers to ponder, once "stepping out of the garden calmly," would one give up or continue to fight, or to remain steady or transform as one pleases...

In the first decade of her artistic path, Yuan Yuan has been delivering a nearly perfect score. When the artist paused and chose to step into her own "garden," she launched into a complete respite and reflection. At this point, she has turned around and left the "garden" elegantly, and with a more relaxed, fuller, and purer state of mind, she continues to wander in the promising future with unhinged confidence.

*This Moment is Today
Neruda
Yesterday is fading into
The fingers of light and the eyes of sleep
Tomorrow will come with green feet
No one can stop the river of dawn
No one can stop the river of your hands*

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Text by Cao Yu