

An Interview with Xiaolu *Fable and the Prophet - Inside and Outside the Red Line*

访谈 | 杨晓鲁《传说与先知——红线内外》

English Version

SUNZEN : This series of *Fable and the Prophet* is your third series on this theme. Can you tell us the story behind these three series? Where did the inspiration of the *Fable* and the *Prophet* series come from?

Yang Xiaolu: The theme of *Fable and the Prophet* was introduced in the mid to late stages during the creation of the first series. In the structuring of the entire creative framework, I adopted a progressive narrative method to capture my childhood memories of exploring the place that was significant and mysterious for me. I illustrated *Fable* and the *Prophet* by interlacing past and future, time and space. Such juxtaposition was my original intention for the series. In the creation process, the implantation of figurative art gives the paintings a variety of surprising effects, it's ethereal, introspective, attentive, oppressive and absurd. I intentionally created a theatrical atmosphere with stage-like sceneries, and constructed my storytelling basing the framework of theatres. By doing this, I leave more space for the viewers to imagine. My use of metaphor also creates a sense of substitution that brings viewers into my environment.

SUNZEN: In the creation of the "Red Line" series, compared to the previous two series, your way of expression has also changed significantly. What is driving these changes? And how did the "Red Line" series gradually take its shape?

Yang Xiaolu: The proposition for this third series continues the framework of *Fable and the Prophet*. At the primary stage of the creation, the theme has been locked to "*Fable and the Prophet - Inside and Outside the Red Line*". The birth of this mainline put an invisible shackle on me for more than a year of my creation. At the same time, it helps me keep my promise of progressive substitution. At the beginning of the second series, I explained my motivation and persistence of this theme in a short essay, and friends who know me will see the changes in the two series. The idea of "Red Line" emerged suddenly in obscurity and metaphor. While giving the viewer more room for imagination, it also adds a strange and eccentric feeling to the image. Surprisingly, it also played an intervening role in the Feng Shui layout of my painting. The red line relentlessly penetrating through the sky represents the desire for power and the insurmountable stories. I also hope that the "Red Line" series can give representational narratives greater room to growth.

SUNZEN: Why did you choose "Red Line" as a central element of this series? Does it have any special symbolic meaning?

Yang Xiaolu: In this case, let's talk about the "Red Line". Everyone has different interpretations of the red line, either inside or outside art and paintings. But these interpretations share similarities in a certain way. In fact, the "red line" is an eye-catching symbol worldwide, and it can be seen everywhere in our daily life. It appears on the streets, in hospitals, government departments, and environments that are closely related to people. Wherever it appears, people will unconsciously look at it, assessing its function and restricted area or direction it marks out. It serves as a guide for people to make decisions about going forward or backward and being permitted or not. In the more intuitive expressions of my pictures, the red lines become restrictions, imprisonments and insurmountable spaces. In daily life, they make me feel the same, especially when I see iconic ideas or things with a red label or theme. I wonder if you feel this way? Crossing the red line is a popular but sensitive topic nowadays, regardless of the economy, life, attitude towards people and certain radical politicians, macro and micro. I don't know if this explanation will make people have more contemplation...

SUNZEN : You often incorporate absurd, humorous and symbolic elements in your works, many of which are hidden in the details of the picture, making the people who discover it surprise and laugh. Can you talk more about these interesting details? Why did you choose this implicit expression?

Yang Xiaolu: In fact, I think direct and straightforward are very different expressions. The difference lies in conveyance and continuation. In front of figurative paintings, what people can see is quite direct. So I suppress the feelings to the end, use small details to gradually convey the power in the picture. I release it slowly, so the details become my tool to implicitly speak up my voice. As for the various details and stories in the picture, those are the buttons and brackets that I put into my paintings.

SUNZEN : This series of works were created after you immigrated to Canada. What is the difference between this immigration experience and your "study in Russia" experience? What influence does it have on your creation?

Yang Xiaolu: In fact, when it comes to living abroad, I really have a lot of experience. I was born in Beijing and spent most of my childhood in Beijing. The different folk customs have a huge influence on the life and values of a Beijing child. After that, my study abroad life in Russia covered most of my youth. I spent nearly 11 years under the education and influence of the great Chauvinism. After that, due to family reasons, I moved to South Korea and spent nearly two years. I went through many trips while creating and teaching, and moved to Canada in the past two years. It really made a

perfect conclusion for the many years of uprooted life in all different places. Having said that, I think that emigration doesn't matter to me that much anymore, because the concept of belongingness has completely lagged behind, and my wandering life becomes the best example of "the world is home".

Of course, my feelings in Russia and Canada are very different. As the ideology and social structure are very different, the impact on life and career are also quite different. In fact, what an artist faces in today's society is not just his own paintings and his own artistic creations. It's a synthesis of the entire life experience, so the interpretation is outside the picture. Since my artistic practice can accommodate both large and small space, the new environment and changes in life have actually little effect on my creation, and I am also used to such changes. Due to the planning of my painting time, I often leave a large proportion of time for creation within the prescribed scope. Over the years, thanks to the support of galleries, I have established myself as a professional artist. Mood and environment rarely affect the quality of my works. In fact, it is just like working. My creative time is working time. If a certain event drags my plan, I will make sure it won't affect the overall timeline and the arrangement of subsequent creations. I think this may be what distinguishes me from art lovers. It is somewhat boring, but it is my profession.

SUNZEN : How do you draw inspiration? Artists who have had a big influence on you?

Yang Xiaolu: In fact, when it comes to inspiration, I think it is very unreliable. In fact, I rarely rely on inspiration in the process of my own creation. Many ideas flash through quickly but unable to support the creation of a continuous and coherent final work. The creation is more derived from long-term materials, accumulation and sufficient nourishment of drawings, although that makes many of my friends think that painters create inspiration. And I even heard many people believe that painters should drink more and listen to music to find the feelings and inspirations. Different professions are worlds apart. A momentary inspiration is like a snapshot of the scenery. Yes, the scenery flashes through. But if it's too fast for you to press the camera shutter, how can we solely rely on this flash of inspiration to complete a whole painting?

SUNZEN : I heard that you are already conceiving the fourth series of Fable and the Prophet. Can you tell us a bit about it?

Yang Xiaolu: Speaking of spoilers, it's actually quite difficult for me. I think if I say things before I've done them, and the energy to do things will flow away, so I'm not going to spill. But after the third series, the feelings of substitution and superposition I mentioned before will be fully reflected. In the creation of the fourth series, it is closer and more intuitive, but the metaphor will still be the main theme. Mixed with different objects and

unusual scenery, materialism and idealism, and it is more ritual and more contextual. I wish for a smooth creation of the series. I also hope that it could meet you as soon as possible. Thank you Mr. Pan, curator Viahsta and everyone at Sunzen Art Gallery Vancouver. We hope that everything will return to normal soon after the epidemic. Thanks again!

中文版：

SUNZEN：这次展出的作品是您传说与先知的第三个系列，能讲讲您这三个系列的故事吗？传说与先知系列的灵感来源于哪里呢？

杨晓鲁：传说与先知的主题是在第一系列的中后期才引入的，在布局整个创作构架中，我采用了递进的叙事方式，把我儿时的记忆和对神秘地的探索，用过去与未来时空交错的方式展现给大家，这也是传说与先知的初衷。在创作过程中，具象艺术的植入又使画面有多种的效果，像空灵、格局、环保、压迫、荒诞，分别以类似舞台布景的形式搭建了故事的主线并设计了画面的环境，从而给观者留下了更多遐想的空间，隐喻到细节的创作手法也造就了一系列的代入感。

SUNZEN：在“红线”系列的创作上，相对于之前的两个系列，您的表现方式也有了比较大的变化。是什么驱动了这些改变？“红线”系列又是如何逐渐成型的？

杨晓鲁：第三系列命题还是延续了传说与先知的框架，创作之初就已锁定主题为《传说与先知 - 红线内外》。也正是这一主线的诞生，给我之后一年多的创作拷上了一个无形的枷锁，当然也诠释了递进代入方式的承诺。在第二系列开篇中曾以短文的方式讲解了我的动机和坚持，了解的朋友也都会从两个系列中看出变化。“红线”在朦胧和隐喻中乍现而生，在给观者更多遐想空间的同时增加了画面诡异的效果。在不平凡中领略大自然怪异风景的同时，对我设计画面的风水布局也起到了穿插的作用。那红线无情的穿透力更代表了权力欲望和不可逾越的种种故事，也更希望红线这个系列，能给具象叙事主义以更博大的空间。

SUNZEN：为什么选择“红线”作为本系列的中心创作元素？它有什么特别的象征意义吗？

杨晓鲁：这样的话我们就由“红线”说开去。对红线的理解，画面内外各有不同，但又有异曲同工之妙。其实，“红线”在人类活动中是一个醒目且在日常生活中随处可见的世界性的标志，他出现在街道、医院、政府职能部门和各个与人们息息相关的环境中。凡是有它出现的地方，人们都会下意识地偷眼观瞧，在脑中判断他的功能性和它所限制的方向性，从而使人决定进退、做法云云。在更多的直观表述和我的画面作用中，多的是限制、禁锢和不可逾越的空间，同样在生活中也会有这样的感觉，特别是每当看到有红色主题的标志事物，不知道你会不会有这样的感觉？跨越红线也是现而今无论经济、生活、为人处事态

度和某些激进主义的政客、宏观和微观等一系列的流行和敏感的话题。不知道，这样解释，会不会让人有更多的遐想.....

SUNZEN: 您作品中经常融入荒诞幽默而又极具象征意义的元素，许多都隐藏在画面的细节中，让发现的人像发现了惊喜一般忍俊不禁。可以多讲一讲这些有趣的细节吗？为什么会选择这种含蓄的表达方式？

杨晓鲁: 其实我认为直接跟直白是不同的表达方式，其区别在于传达次序不相同，而且在一副具象绘画面前，人们所感受的内容更以直接居多，所以我压住底层的感受而用小的细节娓娓道来，更能将画面中的力量徐徐放出，所以那些细节变成了我委婉而直白地诉说，至于画面中的种种细节和故事也正是我置放画眼的扣子与机括。

SUNZEN: 这一系列作品都是在您移民加拿大后创作的，这段移民经历与您当年的“留俄”经历相比有什么不同？对您的创作又有什么影响呢？

杨晓鲁: 其实谈到在海外的生活，我是非常有体会的。我生于北京，在北京的成长涵盖了大部分我的童年时期，不同的民风，也造就了一个北京孩子最初的人生观和价值观。之后，在俄罗斯的留学生活又跨越了我的青年时期，在内涵大沙文主义的教育学业中，我度过了近11年的生活。之后，由于家庭原因，我又在韩国生活近两年的时间，边创作边教学，多处奔波经历了很多。近两年移居加拿大，真是给异地生活的多次连根拔起做了一个完美的诠释。说到这里，我想移不移民和我的生活已经没有太大的关系，因为归属感的概念已经完全滞后于我的奔波状态，也许就是最朴素的那句话“四海为家”吧。当然，在俄罗斯期间与在加拿大期间的感受是截然不同的。

由于意识形态和社会结构有很大的不同，反应在生活和事业上的影响也是完全不同的。其实一个艺术家在现今的社会中所面对的不只是自己的画和自己的艺术创作，而是整个生活经历的综合体，所以说，法在画外。由于我的绘画是架上绘画，对空间的要求可大可小，其实新的环境和空间的变化，对我的创作影响不大，而且我也习惯了这种变化。由于对创作时间的计划，使我在规定范围内还是给创作留下了很大的时间比重。多年来由于画廊的支持，我很顺利地步入职业艺术家的行列，很少因情绪的变化、环境的变化而影响作品质量，其实如同上班一样，我的创作时间就是上班时间，如果有某些特定的事件不能规避，只能延长作品完成的时间，但并不影响后续创作的安排。我想这也许就是我与艺术爱好者陶冶情操式绘画的区别，不免有些乏味。穷其一生地工作吧！

SUNZEN: 您通过什么方式汲取灵感？对您影响比较大的艺术家有哪些呢？

杨晓鲁: 其实说起灵感，我自己认为非常的不靠谱，其实我自己的创作很少依赖灵感，而且有很多想法转瞬即逝，没法儿形成持续连贯创作成一张最终作品的条件，基本上创作更多来源于长期的素材、积累和充分的画稿滋养。很多认识的朋友都会认为画家是靠灵感创作的，甚至有认为画家应该多喝酒找状态、找灵感，用听音乐之类的臆想达到创作境界，

其实这可以理解，毕竟隔行如隔山。转瞬的灵感如同景色的抓拍，有的景色你连相机快门都来不及按下，我们画家又如何依靠这闪现的灵感而完成一幅画作呢？

SUNZEN: 听说您已经在构思第四个系列的 传说与先知 了，可以给我们透露一些吗？

杨晓鲁：说到剧透，其实对我来说蛮难的，我认为事情没做之前就说出来，要做事情的气就跑了，所以还是不剧透了吧，但是延续第三个系列之后，我之前所说的代入感和叠加式的感受会充分地反映在第四个系列的创作中。第四个系列距离更近，感受更直观，但隐喻还是一个主基调，夹杂着一些不同寻常的景物，唯物与唯心掺半，更有仪式感，更富情景性。

祝愿我的系列创作顺利，也希望早日与大家见面。感谢潘先生及温哥华三生缘全体工作人员和策展人Viah的鼎力安排，期待疫情早日过去一切回归平常。再次感谢！