

## ***Under the Curtain of Prophecies***

*Note from Curator*

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Leisure-time topics around prophecy, fortune-telling and supernatural power grow in popularity, as some have even succeeded in heralding this pandemic. Unsurprisingly, when we are experiencing such a global catastrophe, we seek consolation from forces that we believe have immense power. Too immense to be fully uncovered. As Karl Marx had quoted, "Religion is the impotence of the human mind to deal with occurrences it cannot understand." Thus, just like Anselm Kiefer's passion for Kabbalah, Yang's obsession with cosmic myth and supernatural power becomes a metaphoric disguise for his ambivalent emotion towards Zhongnanhai in Beijing - the current State Council of China.

Zhongnanhai was built in the Ming Dynasty (1406). It had served generations of emperors as the imperial garden and had become the central headquarters of the Communist Party in 1949. As a child, Yang was fascinated by this distant and mysterious garden, as he grew up with many folktales about this place. Nowadays, more stories have come out of this place as it houses the highest political figures of the country, and it's impossible to access for the public. A childhood encounter allowed Yang to briefly observe this place from far away, and that encounter has planted a seed of dialectics that nurtured his artistic creation for many years. At the intersection of imagination and reality, past and present, Yang paints that far-away scene he captured. The continuously extending horizon of Zhongnanhai with a symmetrical and consistent composition echoes Kiefer's large-scale works with an open field and a far vanishing point which creates that strong sense of space.

On Yang's open canvas, the placement of those symbolic details always attracts me. The searchlight in the night sky, the two back shadows conspiring something, the airplanes and UFOs hidden in clouds... These elements draw us back to the present and struck us with his manifestation of the current crisis. Such a flash of light instantly makes the pictures more theatrical, like the apple in Franz Kafka's *Metamorphosis*, it becomes a passcode towards tacit understanding between the viewers and the artists.

Looking at Yang's work is like opening a gift box casually wrapped in semi-transparent plastic. You can guess what's inside by briefly peeking through, but once you open it, it contains a complete set of thoughts, emotions and feelings that will always bring you surprises. He inherits the implicit expression in Chinese culture but chooses to be honest and outright through the medium of paintings. Thus his subject matters remain highly personal, displaying his keen sensibility and intimate emotions. As the series of *Fable* and the *Prophet* progress, he gradually lifts the curtain to unveil the show staged deeply in his mind.

## 传说的帷幕之下

策展人序言

VIAHSTA YUAN

近来，围绕预言、先知和超自然力量的话题日益流行起来，似乎它们真的成功地预示了这次疫情。的确，当我们经历这种全球性灾难时，人们总会从他们认为强大的力量中寻求安慰，这种力量也因其未知、神秘而显得更加强大。卡尔·马克思早前便说过：“宗教是人在处理其无法理解事件时的无助。”于是，犹如安塞尔姆·基佛（Anselm Kiefer）对卡巴拉（Kabbalah）的热情一般，杨晓鲁把对宇宙神话和超自然力量的痴迷，尽然诠释为他对北京中南海（现任中国国务院）矛盾情感的隐喻与表达。

中南海始建于明朝（1406年），它曾是历代皇帝的御用花园，并于1949年成为共产党的中央总部。这里的民间传说伴着杨晓鲁的成长，从童年起，他便对这个遥远而神秘的花园深深着迷。如今，这里成为了最高政治人物的办公场所，其不对公众开放的制度更增加了他的神秘感。曾经，童年时期的一次际遇使杨晓鲁对中南海有了一次短暂的遥望，也正是那次际遇，在他心中播下了辩证思维的种子，也滋养了他多年的艺术创作。在过去与现在、想象与现实的交汇处，杨晓鲁用笔触描绘出他捕捉到的那些遥远的景象，画布中的中南海，犹如一条不断延伸的地平线，对称且一致的构图与基佛的大型作品遥相呼应，其开阔的视野和遥远的灭点营造出强烈的空间感。

在杨晓鲁开阔的画布上，那些象征着细节的布局总是吸引着我。夜空中的探照灯、两个密谋的背影、隐藏在云层中的飞机和不明飞行物……这些元素将我们拉回当下，一语道破他对当前危机的不安。这样闪光的瞬间使画面更具戏剧性，就像弗朗茨·卡夫卡（Franz Kafka）的《变形记》中的苹果一样，它成为了观者和艺术家之间默契的密码。

看杨晓鲁的作品就像打开一个用半透明塑料包装的礼品盒，一瞥的瞬间，只是朦胧的轮廓，已然让人心动，全然展开，其中包含着完整的思考、情感和意识，这些带给观者的惊喜是无限的。杨晓鲁继承了中国传统文化中内敛的部分，却选择通过绘画极其真诚坦率地将自我意识传达给观者。因此，他的主题也是非常个人化的，表现出了敏锐的洞察力和内在的情感。随着预言与先知系列的发展，他将逐渐为在他心中上演的戏剧揭开帷幕。