

Entering Nature, Expressing Eternity

— Written before Yang Kai's Art Exhibition in France

By Wang Yugeng

At various scenic spots, one often encounters oil painters setting up their easels for sketching, and on several occasions, I've seen many sketches made by artists. But when you witness Yang Kai's sketches, it immediately leaves you in awe! What astonishes is his swift and composed sketching state, while what moves you is the vigorous and fresh emotionally stirring large-scale touching images he creates on the spot!

"Sacred Mountain and Holy Water" is Yang Kai's first large-scale oil painting sketch. In the summer of 2008, he rushed back to his long-estranged hometown in Gansu, heading straight for the Tianshan Mountains—the Qilian Mountains where his soul lingered. Having gazed out the window in Paris countless times, having heard the call of the sacred mountain in the depths of his mind, he now embraced its embrace, an indescribable passion compelling him to spread the entire canvas on the grass. At this moment, he didn't care about usual techniques; instead, with lightning speed and strength, he wielded his brush like a knife, smudging, and erasing vigorously. Along with his strokes, the layered snow-capped mountains reached towards the sky, the clear holy water shimmered and flowed into the distance, the lush grassland rapidly emerged piece by piece, and the blue sky with floating clouds approached. In the midst of his enthusiasm, suddenly, clouds drifted, lightning struck, and a heavy rain followed. He hurriedly used rocks to shelter the canvas from the rain. When the rain stopped and he returned to the painting, shaking off the water droplets, the picture remained undamaged, and he continued to paint (this was his skillful use of oil colors). The post-rain light and air were incredibly fresh. The burst of inspiration accompanied by passionate brilliance, wielding large brushes like knives to create bold strokes and dancing small brushes delicately, layering colors lightly and heavily, capturing the true colors of nature on the canvas! The mountain and water scenery in

front of his eyes immediately came "alive," and a large painting measuring over 2.5 meters long and 1.1 meters wide was thus created.

This on-site sketching scene, which would typically be unbelievable unless witnessed in person, convinced everyone who saw this artwork: this creation did not come from a studio! Many small insects stuck to the painting's surface serve as proof; perhaps they were drawn by the greenery or enticed by the smell of paint, inadvertently adding a wild "flavor" to the "color." However, this was not the real proof. The real proof lay in the rich and passionate colors integrated into every part of the painting, giving the initial impression that there was no deliberate depiction; the artwork was undoubtedly created in one go! The flowing brushstrokes were like musical notes, rhythmically connecting light and dark color blocks, forming a symphony that could be seen and heard.

This was his first time organically merging the spirit of Chinese painting's freehand style with the techniques of oil painting. Fan Di'an, the director of the National Art Museum of China, described Yang Kai's painting as "the discovery of landscapes, the crossing of cultures," embodying an artist walking in the realm of Eastern and Western cultural arts. The infiltration of Eastern and Western cultures, coupled with his adept oil painting techniques, allowed him to be more unrestrained, galloping across the vast grasslands and soaring amidst the blue sky and white clouds, capturing the beautiful landscapes of Gannan and Qinghai, laying them out like a natural azure carpet on the canvas. The "Sangko Grassland" and "Imperial City Grassland" on the Dajiu Beach, "Qinghai Lake of Clouds" and "Yungahai," and "The First Bend of the Yellow River - Maqu" at the foot of the plateau were his masterpieces of that period. He brought the most beautiful grasslands of China to people's eyes, the charm of colors making one seem to smell the fresh air and fragrance from the grasslands, while the expressive freehand style made one feel as if they were there, feeling relaxed and joyful. The vast pictures and grand sense of space led insiders to evaluate that Yang Kai's vision surpassed Paris, marking a return and elevation of the artistic connotation after his return from Paris. This was further expressed more profoundly in his subsequent Jiangnan series sketches.

He went to Wuyuan in Jiangxi, Mount Huangshan in Anhui, Wuyi Mountain in Fujian, and Moganshan in Zhejiang, sometimes with sketching groups and sometimes with fellow artists. The natural beauty of the Jiangnan water village is poetic and inspiring at every turn. The painter's ability to shape the scenery is not in question; the key is to express the poetic "meaning" on the canvas. At this point, Yang Kai's years of sketching experience began to show. "Bamboo Forest Green" was his most meticulous work. In the painting, a cluster of jade bamboo soared straight into the blue sky. From bottom to top, through the gaps between bamboo poles and leaves, a small bridge, a stream, and houses partially obscured and revealed in the bamboo forest. From near to far, as the mountains rose and the valleys extended, a fresh and beautiful space gradually widened and extended. The most dashing stroke at the end perfectly conveyed the theme of the painting: the wind blew the bamboo leaves, "flying" green highlighted the entire picture, and the poetic and artistic meaning of the bamboo forest was fully revealed.

"In the Water's Edge" comes from a line in the Book of Poetry, naming the Lishui Oil Painting Sketch Base. Yang Kai expressed his own "In the Water's Edge" with poetic sentiments. Indeed, Lishui is by the waterside, where reeds are green and lush. It is also the season of late autumn turning into early winter frost. However, the sought-after loved one... As Yang Kai's hand moves, the layers of color progress forward, towards the distance, towards the depths, painting and writing, progressing with great difficulty. The beautiful ancient town has become elongated, but the white walls and black tiles of the houses, the branches of the red maple tree, remain vivid and clear. Precise and effective brushstrokes, shining brightly, every stroke depicts the shape, while also creating color and ink, as if seeing the traces of his "study abroad." He has been to and painted the sketching sites of French masters, such as Barbizon. Today, he presents another deeply profound "Maple Leaves and Morning Dew," displaying the Oriental "Barbizon." Here, he finally found the long-awaited loved one—the sanctuary of art.

"Lishui Dagangtou" is a close-up of the Ou River. The town of Dagangtou standing by the river emphasizes the head of the great "port," although only a corner

of the town's vertical face is visible, the town's characteristics are evident. The unique composition supports the three-dimensional space of the entire picture, widening the water surface horizontally and stretching it vertically, presenting the special scenery of "In the Water's Edge." He used the technique of Chinese painting's scattered-point perspective to depict the fishing boats near the water, the scenery on the opposite bank, the villages upstream, and the distant valleys with precision and detail, harmonizing near and far, embodying natural poetic sentiments and artistic feelings within.

Surprisingly, what connects the poetic essence is the "water" in the river. Water is originally formless and colorless, yet in Yang Kai's strokes, water not only takes on various forms but also various states, thanks to the reflections of sunlight and shadows cast on the water. He used various techniques, brushstrokes, and even the ink methods of Chinese painting to vividly portray the dynamic and static existence and natural temperament of the water in the water village. He created many masterpieces: "Hongcun Moon Pond," where the stones are reflected in the white walls and black tiles; "Man River," where the water rushes against small and large pebbles; and "Xie Village Family," accompanied by the murmuring stream.

Even in paintings without water, there's an abundance of "water." In works like "Pingshan Ancient Town," "Tachuan Autumn Scenery," and "Tianshang Renjia," although water isn't visible, the feeling of water's moisture is present. In "Zhuxi's Hometown," this moisture reaches deep into the heart. Two tall camphor trees in front of the door speak of Zhuxi's hometown's features. They were planted by Zhu Xi over 800 years ago, surrounded by lush trees. The light and color on the trees, rich and transparent, with the leaves swaying in the wind, emit a fragrant "scent." This fragrance cannot be seen but can be felt. It was the infiltration of French painting art that gave Yang Kai the real essence of this "scent."

Colors are like air, painting colors means painting air, expressing the existence of various objects in the air. This is what Yang Kai learned by studying the sketching techniques of the masters in Paris, acquired through experience and subtle influence. All of his sketching is a wholehearted experience of this process. After attempting various sketches, showcasing all his skills, he painted the panoramic view of "Wuyi

Mountain is the Best under the Sky." The light of day and water, the blue water and red cliffs, the winding streams around the undulating peaks, the light pink reeds drifting by the streams, and the Wu Yi Academy concealed within the deep green forest... All these elements displayed the beautiful and picturesque wonders of Wuyi Mountain. At this moment, colors flowed like the air, every brushstroke was a connection and penetration of air, every stroke was a portrayal of air in the objects, quietly conveying poetic and artistic meanings beyond the painting, a 3.9 meters long and 1.53 meters wide large-scale sketch of Oriental charm was born.

He moved from sketching the scenery to sketching his state of mind and artistic mood. This wasn't just a transformation of his artistic style but a demonstration of his artistic proficiency. Zhu Naizheng called his art increasingly "towards purity." "The Forbidden City" and "Di'anmen Street" were completed on the same day at Jingshan. Facing forward, he painted the solemn silhouette of the Forbidden City, while looking back, he depicted the peaceful prospect of Di'anmen Street. Both had the summarization of his sketches from a high vantage point in Paris, and both had the incorporation of sketching techniques, yet the expression of color was entirely different. The former, due to backlighting, made the palace inside the red wall appear solemn and ancient; the artistic expression in color conveyed the historical time and space, evoking profound contemplation. Meanwhile, the latter was under the bright sun; seen from inside the red wall to the outside, the magnificent ancient buildings shone brilliantly and colorfully, expanding into the distance, presenting the original meaning of Di'anmen Street and demonstrating the prosperous scene of today's Beijing's old streets.

If these two sketches were on the weightier side in terms of their expressive color, then "The Nine-storey Pavilion of Mogao Grottoes" was an "expression." Hence, the "expression" had long been forged in his heart! As a native of Lanzhou, he deeply loved Dunhuang and even more so revered the guardian of Mogao Grottoes—Mr. Chang Shuhong! At this moment, the long-awaited "expression" that had been hidden for a long time surged out bit by bit with his brushstrokes. The brown wooden columns stood upright, and the five-level pavilion leaned against the cliff, rising layer

by layer, until the ninth floor pavilion broke out of the mountain and pointed towards the blue sky! This perspective, this construction, was pre-designed by him, allowing people to see the grandeur and vicissitudes of Dunhuang from the side, erecting a monument as a prelude. The Nine-story Pavilion is a symbol of Mogao Grottoes, and the towering poplar trees in front of the pavilion are the witness of Dunhuang, witnessing Mr. Chang's lifelong dedication to Mogao Grottoes. The strong and vivid depiction of the tree leaves was Yang Kai's expression, with colors bursting out with passion, and the branches and leaves of the big tree kept reaching towards the Grottoes, as if seeing Mr. Chang still guarding Mogao Grottoes after all these years!

From freehand sketching to expressive sketches, this was not just a transition of sketching techniques but the highest realm of his sketching and painting, its real significance lying in "writing life." Art is the eternal expression of life. Yang Kai fully immerses himself in sketching nature, using his art to "express" the eternity of life. Achieving such a high level of expression is the result of his artistic cultivation over many years, always maintaining a clear academic consciousness and excellent cultural temperament, learning the pure painting language from respected artists such as Picasso, Cezanne, Corot, Monet, Matisse, and others. In today's art field, Yang Kai continues the artistic style of previous Chinese painters who studied in France, such as Lin Fengmian, Xu Beihong, Wu Dayu, Yan Wenliang, Liu Haisu, Wu Zuoren, and Wu Guanzhong. He retains the artist's authentic painting language and has developed his own "New Realism" painting style, capturing the instant feelings of the landscape, focusing on the scene, perfectly combining Chinese landscape painting with Western landscape oil painting. His works are both vivid and serene, elegant and fresh, skillfully using colors, pointing directly to the present, and expressing the eternal through his expression!

April 2nd, 2012, in Beijing

走进自然 意写永恒

——写在杨凯赴法画展前

文/王玉庚

在多处风景胜地常见到支起画架写生的油画家，在各种场合也曾看到过多幅写生油画。但当你看到杨凯写生时，立即为之惊撼！惊的是他挥笔施色、从容不迫的写生状态，而撼！是他临场写就的气势蓬勃、新鲜动感的大幅感人画面！

《神山圣水》是杨凯画的第一幅大幅油画写生。2008年夏他回到阔别已久的家乡甘肃，迫不及待地奔向他曾魂萦梦绕的天之山——祁连山脚下。在巴黎曾多少次站窗前遥望，多少次在冥冥之中听到神山的呼唤，而今拥进它的怀抱，难以言表的激情促使他将整卷画布铺在草地上，此刻他已不在乎寻常的刀工笔法，以极快的速度和力度挥笔按刀、涂擦劲抹。随着他手笔——积雪的神山层叠着伸向天边，清澈的圣水泛着粼光流向远方，茂绿的草地一片一片地迅速长起，蓝天映着白云一朵一朵地飘来飘去。正画到兴头上，忽然云影飘过、电闪雷鸣、大雨随即而至，他赶忙用石块压住画布暂且避雨。待雨过天晴回到画前，抖去画布上的水珠，画面完好无损接着画（这是他巧施油彩的一绝）。雨后的光色空气无比清新，迸发的灵感伴着激情神彩飞扬，挥着大笔刮刀气壮山势，舞着小笔柔刷情顺水流，重按轻提、层层尽染，大自然的本色上了画布！眼前的山水景象即刻“生”动起来，一幅长2米5多、宽1米1的油画大作就此写成。

这本是现场亲眼所见才能置信的写生画面，却能让所有看到此画作的人认定：此作绝非出自画室！那画面上粘着的许多小飞虫就是一佐证，它们许是奔着绿色或是嗅着油彩味道而来，却在不经意中加进了野“味”之“色”。其实这并非力证，力证在于画面上那处处融进了饱含激情的浓郁色彩，给人的第一感觉是，没有刻意的描绘，画作必是一气呵成！那流畅的笔触如同一个个跳跃的音符，将深浅浓淡的色块、色面有节奏地连成一幅看得见旋律、听得见声音的交响诗情画。

这是他第一次将中国画的大写意精神与油画的写生技巧有机地融合在一起。中国美术馆馆长范迪安称杨凯的绘画是“风景的发现，文化的穿越”，是行走在东西方文化艺术领域中的画家。东西文化的浸润，娴熟的油画技法使他更加放飞

心情，驰骋在辽阔的草原、翱翔在蓝天白云间，把甘南、青海的风光美景尽收眼底，如铺天然碧毯一般一幅一幅铺在了画布上。达久滩上的《桑科草原》、《皇城草原》，蓝天下的《云之青海湖》、《云尕海》、高原脚下的黄河第一湾《九曲黄河之源——玛曲》，成为他那时期写生力作。他把中国最美的大草原带到世人眼前，色彩的魅力让人似乎能闻到来自草原的清新空气与花香，而写意的韵味让人如亲临其境、心旷神怡。阔远的画面，宏大的空间感，圈内人评价杨凯的视野超越了巴黎，是他巴黎归来艺术内涵的回归与升华。这在之后的江南系列写生中表现的更为深透。

他先后去了江西婺源、安徽黄山、福建武夷山、浙江莫干山，有随写生团，也有与画友同行。江南水乡的天然美景处处是诗境，时时生诗意，画家对景物的造型能力都没问题，关键是要把这诗意之“意”表达在画面上。此时杨凯多年历练的写生功底就显露出来。《竹林飞翠》是他用功最精细的一幅。画中一丛玉竹扶摇直向蓝天，从下往上，透过竹竿空档、竹叶间隙，小桥、溪水、人家在竹林中半掩着隐现；由近看到远，山在升高、谷在延伸，一个清新秀美的空间渐阔渐远地展现。最潇洒的是收官疾书的挥笔，恰到好处地点透了画作的主题，风吹竹叶飘，“飞”出的翠色提亮了整个画面，竹林的诗情画意之“意”也尽显无余。

“在水一方”出自诗经一语，为丽水油画写生基地的冠名。杨凯以其诗意写自我心中的《在水一方》。画中的丽水的确在一方，水的那一边也有芦苇碧色苍苍，也是深秋白露凝结成霜的季节，而寻觅的伊人却……，随着杨凯的手笔，色彩的层层递进，向远处、向深处，书着、写着，苦苦地前行，美丽的古镇已变得细长，但一片白墙黛瓦的民居、红枫古树的枝桠依然清晰可见，精准到位的笔触，笔笔生辉，一笔下去即是造型素描，又是色彩笔墨构成，仿佛见到他“旅法步履”上的足迹。他曾到过、也画过的法国大师们的写生之地巴比松，今天他将又一幅意蕴深邃的“枫丹白露”呈现东方的“巴比松”。在此终于找到了他久久可望难即的伊人——艺之圣境。

《丽水大港头》是瓯江的特写，临江而立的大港头镇，突显了大“港”之头，

垂直的立面虽只露出镇的一角边缘，但镇的特征已然托出。独特的构图撑起了整个画面的立体空间，将水面横向拉宽，纵向拉远，大视野地呈现了“在水一方”的特景。他运用中国画散点透视的技法将近水的渔舟，对岸的景物，上游的村镇，远处的山谷，一一描绘得精准细致、远近相宜，自然而生的诗情画意尽在其中。

而连起诗意的竟是这江中之“水”。水本无形、也无色，但在杨凯笔下水因触碰到万物而变得不仅有形，且千姿百态，更因有天光、物影映在水中而丰富多彩。他运用各种技法、笔法、甚至中国画的墨法，将水乡之“水”的动静生存状态、自然气质表现得淋漓尽致。以此他画出了多幅力作：一塘映着白墙黛瓦的《宏村月沼》，那冲击着大小鹅卵石的《漫水河》，伴着潺潺溪水的《协里人家》等等。

即使没有水的画作也“水”气十足，在《屏山古镇》、《塔川秋色》、《天上人家》作品中，未见有水却让人感觉到了水的润泽。在《朱熹故里》，这种润泽、润到了心田。门前两棵高大的香樟树道出朱熹故里的特色，这是朱熹八百多年前亲手栽下，故里周围被茂盛的树丛环绕着，树上的光与色、浓郁中带着透亮，随风而动的树叶生发出融融的“香气”。这香气看不见，但却能让人感觉到。是法国绘画艺术的浸润给了杨凯画出这种“气”的真功。

色彩像空气，画色彩就是画空气，在空气中表现各种物象的存在。这是杨凯在法巴黎学习研究大师们的写生方式，耳闻目染、潜移默化所悟到的。他所有的写生正是在全身心地体验这一过程。在尝试了写各种“生”，十八般武艺都施展后，他画出全景的《武夷山秀甲天下》。天光水色、碧水丹崖，九曲溪水环绕着起伏的山峰，溪畔边飘荡着轻粉的芦花，掩于青林深处的武夷书院，……如诗如画的武夷奇秀一览眼下。此时色彩如流动的空气，每一笔都是气的连接与贯穿，每一笔都是气在物象中的写照，悄然中带着诗意与画意飞出画外，一幅东方神韵的长3米9、宽1米53的写生大作问世。

他已从对景写生到画心境、画意境，这不仅是他艺术风格的转变，更是他艺术纯熟的表现，朱乃正称其艺术日渐“走向纯粹”。《紫禁城》和《地安门大街》

是同一天在景山上完成。向前画了故宫的沧桑背影，朝后画了地安门大街的祥和前景。两幅都有他巴黎临高远眺写生的概括，也都有写意的融入，但色彩的表达却截然不同。前者由于是逆光，红墙内的宫殿显得凝重苍苍，色彩中意境表达的是历史的时空，意涵深远引人深思；而后幅是艳阳高照，从红墙内看到外，宏伟的古建筑华丽耀眼，一片绚丽多彩向远处阔展，再现了地安门大街、太平鼓楼原本寓意，也显示出当今北京老街国泰民安的盛世景象。

如果说这两幅写意的成色重了些，那么《莫高窟九层阁》就是“意写”了。因此“意”早已在他心中铸就！作为一个兰州人他深爱着敦煌，更深深敬重着莫高窟的守护神——常书鸿先生！此时心潮涌动蕴藏已久的“意”随着他的手笔一点一滴的释出，棕红色木柱一根根竖起，五间阁倚靠山崖一层层地升高，到第九层阁已冲出山崖，指向蓝天！这一视角、这一构筑是他预先设计好，让人从侧面看到千年敦煌的雄伟与沧桑，更为立起一座丰碑作铺垫。九层阁是莫高窟的象征，而阁前高耸入云的钻天杨更是敦煌的见证，见证着常老历尽艰辛万苦守护了一生莫高窟。片片树叶的劲写是杨凯意写语言，带着激情的色彩是意的迸发，大树的枝叶都频频向着高窟伸过去，仿佛看见常老没有走依然守护着永远的莫高窟！

从写意到意写这不是单纯写生技法的转变，而是他写生绘画的最高境界，其真正意义就是在“书写生命”。艺术是生命的永恒表达，杨凯走进大自然竭尽全力去写生，正是用他的艺术“意写”生命的永恒。能写到如此之高境界，是他多年艺术素养的积淀，始终保持着清晰的学术意识和优秀的文化气质，向他所尊崇的毕沙罗、塞尚、柯罗、莫奈、马蒂斯等艺术大师学到纯粹的绘画语言。杨凯在当今艺术领域，承继了林风眠、徐悲鸿、吴大羽、颜文樑、刘海粟、吴作人和吴冠中等老一辈留法的中国画家之画风，保留纯正绘画语言的艺术家的。并形成自己“新写实”绘画风格，即捕捉对风景此时此刻的瞬间感受，注重现场感，将中国山水画与西方风景油画完美结合，作品形神兼备、宁静致远、优雅清新，色彩运用娴熟，直指当代，**意写永恒！**

2012.4.2 于北京