

## **Lilies in Bloom in Paris, France: The Story of The Artist Yang Kai Residing in France**

Written by Wang Yugeng in May. 25 2006

In early 2006, Yang Kai returned from Paris to Beijing with nearly 20 years' worth of oil paintings that he had created during his study in France. He organized his first solo exhibition in China, titled *Walking in France - Yang Kai Oil Painting Exhibition*, at the National Art Museum of China. There was no grand opening ceremony, no fervent celebration scene. Instead, a large flower basket, over a meter in height, stood in front of the exhibition hall. Hundreds of blooming white lilies exuded an elegant fragrance. Over 80 of Yang Kai's masterpieces were displayed amidst this fragrant display. Although the intention behind the flowers' gifting was unclear, it was surmised that it must have carried a beautiful sentiment. His beautiful wife, Julia, resembled a blooming lily herself, welcoming friends and relatives from afar with a smile. Initially, the number of attendees was not substantial because the central hall was hosting the opening ceremony of a revered old painter, Wang Qi's exhibition. Perhaps it was the scent of the lilies that attracted more and more spectators. Initially, they strolled around while casting glances, but gradually, their steps slowed, their gaze fixed on the paintings. Eventually, they stopped to observe slowly. Yang Kai's paintings directed people's gazes toward distant Paris.

Starting from "A Corner of the Paris Academy of Fine Arts," to "Paris Academy - Walls," "Library of the Academy," moving to "Seine Riverside" opposite the Louvre, and "Sainte-Marie Church," it felt as if one was strolling through the bustling streets of Paris. Ascending to the heights of Montmartre, one could behold the urban charm of "Blue Paris" and "Silver Paris." In "Viewing the Eiffel Tower," we were led to appreciate the splendid sight of "Red Roofs" and "Blue Roofs" of Paris. From Paris's "Early Spring," "Springtime," the "Green Shade" of summer, the autumn hues on the "Trees," all the way to the "Winter Sunlight," we experienced the four seasons of Paris alongside his journey. The iconic structures of Paris such as the Eiffel Tower, Louvre, and Sainte-Marie Church were symbols of the city, while the orange window frames, red pointed roofs, blue sloping roofs, and warm white walls depicted the modern French impression. Within the harmonious colors emerged the profound fragrance of Paris, perhaps an exaggeration, but the blue, white, and red tones on the canvas indeed conveyed the authentic "flavor" of Paris.

Perhaps it was due to the Year of Sino-French Culture, not only experiencing the artistic works of the French Impressionists but also gaining insights into the customs, architectural styles, and exotic ambiance of France through a series of events. Especially memorable was the grand parade of Beijing residents on the Champs-Élysées in Paris, broadcasted live on television for several hours. It provided a glimpse of the authentic Paris from a different perspective. Therefore, seeing Yang Kai's artwork today felt incredibly accurate and familiar, capturing the essence perfectly.

This familiarity led to a thorough examination of each piece. After observing most of the works in the exhibition hall, one painting, "Lilies," immediately caught my eye. In the

center of the canvas, a blooming lily greeted me with a smile. The weighty flower bud seemed to nod warmly at me, while the slightly swaying green leaves appeared to wave in greeting. At this moment, the beautiful lily ceased to be a still life within the frame but rather an animated presence trying to step out of the painting. At that instant, the fragrance of the lily seemed to waft from within and outside the painting, a scent that was refreshing and soul-soothing. Viewing such a vivid scene, it felt as though I suddenly understood the intention behind the floral gift, yet struggled to find suitable words to define it. Perhaps the answer lay within the painting of the lily itself.

At the lower right corner of the canvas sat a thick-based, transparent, tall glass. It was partly visible, containing only half-filled water, and the flower stems, usually straight, now curved gracefully forward, brimming with the vitality of flower buds, blossoms, and leaves as if about to fly out of the window. This innovative composition increased the difficulty in depicting the stems above and below the water, but every detail received meticulous attention, rendering the painting incredibly realistic. Especially notable was the portrayal of the thick glass at the base, the tall design of the glass, striking a natural balance between heavy color and transparency, providing a visually pleasing effect at first glance. The composition of the window's corner and the incoming light created a vast space within the small canvas. The appropriate angle chosen for the window sill, along with the accurately rendered window frame's perpendicularity, created an elegant space for the lily flower. What truly enchanted the lily in the painting was the adept use of colors. White and green dominated the canvas. He blended shades of white and green to convey the subtle vitality onto the petals and leaves, emitting an air of delicate life. This breath of vitality brought the lily flower to life, gradually emanating from this subtle sensation. Although it might seem to be a matter of brushstroke techniques, it was his profound understanding of colors that made the difference. His exceptional treatment of green leaves in various lighting conditions showcased his skill. Each green leaf bore a unique hue, skillfully painted from the root to the tip, creating vibrant leaves that beautifully complemented the flowers. The emphasis on coloring the petals was remarkable. Mixing faint blue into the white color, delicately applied on the flower surface, highlighted the translucent texture of the petals. Subtle green veins extended from the flower's core to the tip, exuding the lily's innate elegance. The careful coloring of the stamen enhanced the sense of fragility, with vibrant orange-red hues delicately touching the anther, seemingly susceptible to the slightest breeze. The faint orange-red on the petals confirmed this delicacy. The two purple-black pistils placed on the robust stamen acted as a focal point in the painting. Though the three flower buds had minimal coloring, they appeared spirited, with a faint yellow blooming at the mouth, a touch of light green swelling the buds, and a highlight lifting the buds' heads, encapsulating potential and showcasing vitality, the organic combination of color and form.

After a detailed observation of the entire painting, "Lilies" represented not only a beautiful floral image but also symbolized a personality and spirit. Upon revisiting his Parisian street scenes, the academy's environment, and the Eiffel Tower, it was this personality and spirit infused into the paintings that made them particularly appealing. In "The Discovery Studio of Uranium," although the artist's work was not visible, a glimpse of a few items through the deep blue windows revealed the artist's meticulous work ethic.

This integration of Eastern and Western spirits and concepts was his best expression. This sentiment was further evident in his "Studio Series." The monotonous and dull studio, within his artworks, appeared relaxed and engaging. The sprouting branch of a green fern precisely resembled the curves of a female model's buttocks. Though separated by the back of a chair, the visual effect was enchanting, instantly portraying a romantic French ambiance. This was his personal experience in Professor Caron's studio at the Paris Academy. In many of his works, shadows of famous painters such as Van Gogh, Cézanne, Monet, and Corot could be discerned. However, there were no traces of direct imitation; instead, Yang Kai's unique painting language and distinct style prevailed. In the free art world of France, his new realistic painting style infused with an Eastern spirit garnered recognition from his French counterparts. Several of his works were featured in French art salon exhibitions, and this painting of "Lilies" received high praise and appreciation from French artists.

After examining all the works, the intention behind the flowers was clear. Still, I couldn't resist asking why, amidst a city teeming with diverse and renowned flowers, he favored the lily. He replied, "The lily is elegant, symbolizing purity, nobility, and beauty. It's my favorite flower and the artistic image I most wish to portray. It's also a symbol of commitment between me and my beloved." With this statement, Yang Kai expressed his reverence for the lily. Throughout his nearly twenty years of artistic career in Paris, the elegance of the lily has been the true essence of his artistic pursuit and an emblem of his personality and spirit. He has painted several lilies in a series, each different, yet all expressing the same spiritual essence.

As I was about to leave the exhibition hall, I took another glance at "Lilies." At that moment, I saw the flower personified, an embodiment of character, a representation of spirit. The lily was his unspoken communication with friends, and "Lilies" felt more like a symbol representing Yang Kai! His acceptance by others was akin to the blooming lilies in Paris.

## 盛开在法国巴黎的百合

文/王玉庚

——旅法画家杨凯

2006年初，杨凯带着他赴法学画近20年的油画作品从巴黎回到北京，在中国美术馆举办他在国内的首次个展《旅法步履——杨凯油画展》。没有隆重的开幕仪式，没有热烈的庆贺场面，唯有一个一米多高的大花篮立在展厅前，数百朵盛开的白百合散发着高雅清香，杨凯的80多幅精品之作就展现在这纷香中。虽然对送花人的用意不太清楚，但猜想其中一定蕴藏着一个美好的情结。他美丽的夫人朱娅也如同一朵盛开的百合，含笑迎着远道而来的家乡亲友。开始观众并不是很多，因为中厅正举办德高望重的老画家王琦画展的开幕式。也许是百合花香，引来了越来越多的观众。刚踏进厅时还边走边看，渐渐地脚步放慢虽还在挪动视线却定在画面上，后来索性驻足慢慢观看。杨凯的画将人们的视线带向遥远的巴黎。

从《巴黎美院一角》起，《巴黎美院——墙》、《美院图书馆》、到卢浮宫对面的《塞纳河畔》、《圣梅教堂》，仿佛看到他漫步于巴黎的市井街头；登上蒙马特尔高地一览《蓝色巴黎》、《银色巴黎》的都市风采；在《埃菲尔铁塔远眺》中，让我们跟他一起领略巴黎《红房顶》、《蓝房顶》亮丽的一景。从巴黎的《早春》、《春色》到夏日里的《绿荫》，《树》上的秋色，一直到《冬日里的阳光》，我们随他的步履一起度过巴黎的一年四季。画面上的埃菲尔铁塔、卢浮宫、圣梅教堂等标志性建筑是巴黎的象征，而橘黄色的小窗、红色的尖屋顶、蓝色的斜屋顶、暖白色的墙是法国现代印象的写实。融融的色彩里透露出法国巴黎的浓浓“香”味，这么说可能有点夸张，但画面上蓝白红的色调确实让我们感受到了地道的巴黎“味道”

这也许是因为中法文化年不仅看到法国印象派的艺术作品，还在一系列活动中了解到法国的风土人情、建筑风格和异国情调。特别是北京人在巴黎香榭丽舍大道上的盛装行进表演，电视台几小时的实况转播，已从另一个侧面看到了真实的巴黎，所以今天一看杨凯作品的描绘就感觉画得很到位而亲切。

可能正是因为有这种亲切感，所以对每一幅作品都看得很仔细。在我看过展厅中大半作品后，一幅《百合花》让我眼前骤然一亮。就见画面中央那朵盛开的百合正含笑迎着我的目光，带点重量感的花蕾仿佛在冲我亲切地点头问候，有点飘动的绿色长叶好像是在招手致意。此时美丽的百合已不象是那瓶中的静物，倒象一个欲走出画面的灵动花者。此刻感觉画里画外百合花的馨香一起扑面而来，香气袭人，沁人心脾。看着这如此生动的画面，似乎让我一下子明白了送花人的用意，可一时又找不到合适的词语确定。也许就在百合画里。

画面上一只厚底、透明、细高的玻璃杯放在右下角，只露出半边，水也只倒进多半杯，把一般直插的花枝呈弧线形向前探出，充满活力的花蕾、花朵、枝叶象是欲随之飞出窗外。新颖的构图使枝叶在水上水下、杯内杯外的表现难度加大，但他在每个细节上都做了精心处理，让人感觉画的很写实。特别是对厚厚的杯底玻璃质的描绘、杯高的设计，在重色与透明中使画面上物与色都趋于自然平衡，让人一眼看去很舒服。而窗户一角的构图和外光的照入，使不大的画面却有了很大的空间，一是看窗台的视角选得合适，由于有角度的层层推进很自然地拉出了空间与距离。二是对窗楞的刻画的非常仔细，直而平行的线面，与窗框立面成90度的垂直准确无误，精心为百合花设置了一个雅境空间。最有特点的是对花形和花瓣的设置，三朵百合花一朵正面盛开，一朵侧开、另一朵半含背掩，姿态各异，展示了花朵最美的部位。每一片花瓣都勾勒的灵动秀美，特别是花瓣尖的俏弯勾，勾出了百合花形的俏美。花枝的弯弧型让长长的叶子顺势有了舞者的飘逸，一片叶尖轻点在花蕾上带出了温柔的情丝。不过真正让百合出神入画的是他对色彩的运用。白和绿是画面的主色，他将白、绿随着光色深浅浓淡的变化微微润融在花瓣和叶面上，透露出细微的生之气息，使百合花的盎然生机就从这微感妙觉的气息中冉冉升起。这看起来好像是用笔的技法问题，其实是他对色彩的深入理解。在给绿叶用色上显示出了他的独到。每一片绿叶在光色的空间里各有不同，他将不一样的绿色顺叶脉从叶根到叶尖细心地润染在叶面上，生动的绿叶在不经意的变化中托起了花朵。对花瓣的用色更讲究，白色里匀进淡淡的青色，如施粉霜一般轻轻敷在花面上，在润泽中透出花瓣半透的质感，浅淡的绿色

脉络由花心淡向瓣尖，百合的高雅气质由内而发。而对花蕊的施色更小心翼翼，把鲜艳的橘红色粉融融地触到雄花柱头上，似乎有点风就能吹落的感觉，花瓣上的淡淡的橘红色证实了这点。两颗紫黑色的雌蕊点在雄蕊中间粗壮的花柱上，成了画面的点“睛”之笔。三个花蕾虽然施色不多但很显精神，平起的淡黄绽开了花嘴，一抹淡绿鼓起了花苞，一点亮色抬起了蕾头，内含着蕴力，外显示活力，这是色与形的有机结合产生的效果。室外的亮堂与室内的暗色的光色对比让人感觉有空气的流动，如一阵清爽的穿堂风吹动了百合的花枝。画面上每一设置都有它的妙用，每一笔运色都是一个表达，不能再增也不能减少，已是一幅真正完美的作品。

细读了整幅画面后，《百合花》不仅是一个美丽的的花者形象，更是一种人格精神的象征。回首再看他的巴黎街景、美院环境、埃菲尔铁塔，正是因为也有这种人格精神的融入，才让我们感到格外的亲切有味道。在《铀之发现工作室》里虽然看不见主人在工作，却从两扇深蓝色窗露出的一点物品中看到主人严谨的工作精神。这是他东西方精神与观念有机结合的最好的表达。接下来看到他的《画室系列》同样也有这种感受。单调枯燥的画室在他的作品中显得轻松而有趣味，一笔绿萝的枝芽正好成了女模特臀部的线条，虽然还隔着椅背，但视觉效果就是这样妙，一下子让我们看到法国味的浪漫。这正是他在巴黎美院卡隆教授工作室的切身感受。在他的许多作品里能看到有凡高、塞尚、莫奈、科罗等著名画家的影子，却没有生搬硬套的痕迹，完全是他自己的绘画语言和独特风格。在法国自由的艺术世界里，他的带有东方精神的新写实主义画风得到法国同行的认可，多幅作品参加法国艺术沙龙展示，这幅《百合花》更是获得法国艺术家们高度评价和赞赏。

看过全部作品已完全明白送花人的心意，但还是想问他在花都巴黎，有那么多名花为什么独钟情于百合，他说：“百合花高雅，象征着纯洁、高尚、美好，是我最喜欢的花，也是我最想表现的艺术形象，它还是我和爱人的定情物。”一席话道出了杨凯对百合花的崇尚，近二十年巴黎的艺术生涯，百合花高雅特质是他艺术追求的真谛，更是他人格精神的象征。他画的百合已成一大系列共有十几幅，虽然每一幅画的各有不同，但对美的精神表达却是相同的。

在我即将离开展厅的时候，又看了一眼《百合花》，那一瞬间看到花者的回眸一笑，一个人格化的美，一种精神的化身。百合花是他与朋友的不言而喻，而《百合花》我更觉得是代表杨凯的符号！他被大家认可，是盛开在法国巴黎的百合。

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