

Interview with Huang Baoying

黃寶瑩專訪



About the Artist

關於藝術家

Huang Baoying (b. 1997, Shenzhen, China) captures the ephemeral moments that unfold in her mundane surroundings through her painting-centered practice. With meticulous attention to detail, she is keen on depicting purposeful and representational still lifes, delving into the bitterness, melancholy, and displacement that permeate her past experience. For Huang, painting serves as a conduit for her "nomadic" thoughts, allowing her to confront the conflicting emotions arising from both nostalgia for the past and estrangement in the present. As a Chinese diaspora living abroad, the experience of always residing in a transient state also contributes to the multi-layered sense of belonging embodied in her works. Through painting, Huang addresses the disconnected emotions and alienation deeply ingrained in her personal history, revealing her most introspective and authentic inner self.

Huang received her BFA in Illustration from the School of Visual Arts in 2019 and her MFA in Painting from Boston University in 2022. Her works have been exhibited in multiple places, including Hashimoto Contemporary, LATITUDE Gallery, and The Painting Center in New York, as well as Stems Gallery in Brussels, Alpha Gallery in Boston, and Bonian Space in Beijing.

The artist currently lives and works in New York, US.

黃寶瑩（生於1997年，中國深圳）在其以繪畫為核心的藝術實踐中，捕捉了日常中的樸素事物和即時發生的事件。在她以靜物為主要的作品中，細緻入微的筆觸勾勒出具有特殊含義和指向意義的物件，深入探究她過去經歷中所感受到的苦楚、憂傷與流離。對黃寶瑩來說，繪畫是她「遊牧」思想的媒介，使她能夠在緬懷歷史和疏離現實的衝突之間尋得慰藉。作為一名居於海外的華人，持續處於居無定所的狀態也促成了她作品中所表達的多層次的歸屬感。透過繪畫，黃寶瑩表達了個人經驗中根深蒂固卻不連貫的情感，以及與外界產生距離感背後隱藏的最內省和真實自我。

黃寶瑩於2019年獲紐約視覺藝術學院插畫純藝術學士學位，並於2022年獲得波士頓大學繪畫純藝術碩士學位。她的作品曾在紐約 Hashimoto Contemporary、LATITUDE Gallery、The Painting Center、波士頓 Alpha Gallery、布魯塞爾 Stems Gallery，以及北京伯年藝術空間等地展出。

藝術家目前工作和生活於美國紐約。



Artist Studio

藝術家工作室



黃寶瑩：遺忘與記憶的選擇
2023年10月28日至11月25日

Huang Baoying: Choice of Oblivion and Remembrance
October 28 - November 25, 2023

On the occasion of Huang Baoying's solo exhibition "Choice of Oblivion and Remembrance," the gallery team had an in-depth discussion with the artist, highlighting the thoughts and concepts behind her creative practice. The exhibition opened at MOU PROJECTS in Hong Kong on October 28, 2023. Unveiling a captivating collection of recent paintings, the exhibition invites viewers to a space populated by the ethereal presence of flowers, books, indoor plants, and museum objects from the artist's everyday life. Through the coded narratives and signs in her paintings, as well as the floral installations scattered around the show, Huang seamlessly intertwines personal diasporic experiences, contemporary cultural symbolism, and a poignant melancholy that resonates with recent collective societal events, revealing a tapestry of ideas and emotions intricately entangled with her identity.

值黃寶瑩個展「遺忘與記憶的選擇」之際，畫廊團隊與藝術家進行了一次深入的探討，談及了藝術家的創作理念以及創作過程中的所見所想。展覽於2023年10月28日在MOU PROJECTS香港空間開幕。此次展覽呈現了一系列近期繪畫作品，邀請觀眾進入一個由藝術家日常生活中出現的花朵、書籍、室內植物和的博物館物品組成的空靈空間。透過畫作中的加密敘事和象徵符號，以及散落在展覽中的花束裝置，黃寶瑩將個人流散經歷、當代文化表徵與與近期集體社會事件共鳴的憂鬱情感無縫地交織在一起，揭示了與她身份錯綜複雜地糾纏在一起的思緒和情感線索。



"Choice of Oblivion and Remembrance" installation view

「遺忘與記憶的選擇」現場圖

MOU PROJECTS (MP):

The exhibition is titled "Choices of Oblivion and Remembrance." Will you share some insights into the meanings behind it? How does it relate to the exhibited artworks?

Huang Baoying (Huang):

The exhibition explores melancholic, introspective, and solitary emotions at its core. Many of the artworks represent pivotal moments in my life over the past two years and embody my experiences and inner reflections as an artist, woman, and citizen in response to specific events in society.

The exhibition's title is inspired by a quote from Milan Kundera's *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* (1979), which states, "The struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting." By incorporating the concept of "choice," I aim to emphasize the importance of individual care—each person has the choice to forget or remember. Personally, I believe in the significance of continuous remembering and storytelling as responsibilities of artists.

MP:

The still life and interior scenes portrayed in your works often exude a sense of tranquility, yet they also contain intense emotions and hidden information. How do you achieve a balance between these contrasting elements?

Huang:

My works carry a strong autobiographical trait, and the emotional connections within them are deeply personal. For me, life and art are two parallel worlds that are constantly connected. Disruptions in one world can have a ripple effect on the other, and my artwork serves as a bridge between these worlds. Take the diptych *Mother Tongue* (2023) for example. It's important for me to share the specific locations of the two scenes—Shenzhen and New York—because they embody the subtle emotions tied to my

MOU PROJECTS (MP):

此次展覽名為「遺忘與記憶的選擇」，這背後帶有怎樣的深意，又怎樣與這次展出作品聯繫在一起的呢？

黃寶瑩 (黃):

這次展覽的底色是憂傷、內省而孤獨的，當中很多件作品都是我在過去兩年重要時間段的錨點，它們標注了我作為藝術家、女性和公民對於一些具體事件的記錄和反思。

米蘭·昆德拉的《笑忘錄》(1979)中有一段話：「人與政權的鬥爭，就是記憶與遺忘的鬥爭。」這次展覽的標題其實是對這句話的直接引用，而我加上了「選擇」這個概念，多了一些對個體的關懷——每個人都可以在遺忘或者記憶中做選擇。我的選擇很明確，不斷的記憶和講述是創作者的責任。

MP:

你作品中呈現的靜物和室內場景，大多數都是非常靜謐的，然而當中所隱藏和包含的信息和情緒卻異常洶湧。你是怎麼找到當中的平衡點的呢？

黃:

我的作品有很強的自傳性，所以其中很多的情感鏈接都是非常私人的。生活和創作對我來說有點像兩個平行世界，永遠都在同步進行，但其中一邊發生的震動會波及到另一邊，而我對作品和創作的講述就像這兩個世界的通道。舉個例子，雙聯畫《母語》(2023)中的兩個場景的具體坐標——深圳和紐約，是需要我公開分享給觀眾的，這是這件作品很重要的一個信息，作品背後還有很多我往返兩地之間的微妙情感。所以在觀眾看來，作品表面上的視覺元素與作品背後的信息和情感有可能是割裂的，需要瞭解我這個人或者讀一下我寫的文字才能更容易走進作品。

我的作品描繪了很多樸素的日常，是普世且通俗的，根據觀眾生命經驗的不同會有很多種解讀方式，作者的動機和講述只是其中的一種。我不喜



Mother Tongue, 2023
Oil on canvas
Diptych: 121.9 × 101.6 cm (48 × 40 in) each; 121.9 × 203.2 cm (48 × 80 in) overall

《母語》，2023
布面油畫
雙聯畫：每件 121.9 × 101.6 cm (48 × 40 in)；整體 121.9 × 203.2 cm (48 × 80 in)



Wait until the game starts, 2023
Oil on canvas
91.4 × 91.4 cm (36 × 36 in)

《等到球賽開始》· 2023
布面油畫
91.4 × 91.4 cm (36 × 36 in)

back-and-forth experiences between these two places. While what audiences see on the surface may seem disconnected from the emotions and information behind the artwork, getting to know me or reading the words I've written can provide a deeper understanding of the connotations and emotions embedded within.

My works often portray simple everyday moments that are universal and relatable. There are numerous interpretations of an artwork based on the audience's life experiences, and the artist's intentions and narratives are just one way to understand it. As such, I prefer not to make my artwork into a puzzle or intellectual test. I value the fluidity of interpretation, in which there is no definitive answer, allowing a painting to embody diverse meanings across different generations or contexts.

MP:

Several artworks in this exhibition explore themes of identity and belonging. Are these themes connected to your personal experiences as well?

Huang:

In 2015, I moved to New York at the age of 18, and I have now been living here for over eight years. This time span was neither too short to have a significant impact, nor long enough to completely transform me as a person. The experience of constantly moving between two vastly different worlds has led me to question where I truly belong and who I really am. At times, it feels as though this lifestyle has split me in two: one part shaped by my upbringing in China, aware of the cultural norms and expectations, and the other part, newly formed, rebellious, and passionate, influenced by the diverse and open culture of my current environment. This sense of duality permeates every aspect of my life, making it challenging to fully embrace one side while living in the other. Consequently, I feel incomplete in either place. This ongoing struggle has sparked numerous ideas and fueled my artistic practice with a unique power.

歡把作品當成謎語來給觀眾做智力測驗，我喜歡作品的流動性，沒有固定謎底的流動性，以及一張畫在不同的時代或語境下可以有不同的意義。

MP:

此次展出的數件作品都帶有一種對於歸屬感和身份認同的探究，這是否也與你自身的經歷有關？

黃:

我 2015 年第一次到紐約，那個時候我剛剛 18 歲，到現在已經定居在這座城市八年多了。這段時間沒有長到能夠把我塑造成另一個人，但說短也不短。長期在兩個截然不同的社會往返，產生了很多歸屬感和身份認同的模糊地帶。有時候我會覺得這種生活模式把自己分成了兩半：一半的我是成年以前就被塑造好的，知道如何當一個合格的中國人；另一半的我叛逆又熱情，是在一個多元開放的社會文化中新成長出來的。這種分裂感滲透了各個維度，我很难去把屬於其中一個地方的那一半自己帶到另一個地方生活，所以在任何一個地方我都是不夠完整的。這種長時間複雜糾結的狀態放到創作中能夠產生很多思考的力量。

MP:

繪畫是你與現實和解的一種途徑嗎？你覺得你的作品和現實之間的關係、你自己和繪畫之間的關係是怎樣的呢？

黃:

和解是無論如何都要進行的，如果不當畫家我還會用其他方式做這件事情，有可能是種花、烹飪或者烘培。我很幸運在年紀很小的時候就遇到了繪畫，它伴隨了我所有的成長，變成了我最自然的表達方式。

MP:

你筆下捕捉到的場景多數都發生在夜晚，這其中

MP:

Is painting a way for you to come to terms with reality? How do you perceive the relationship between your artwork and reality, as well as between your art practice and yourself?

Huang:

Coming to terms with reality is a necessary pursuit, regardless of the means. If it weren't through painting, it would likely be expressed through other activities such as gardening, cooking, or baking. I consider myself fortunate to have encountered painting at a young age. It has become the most natural and instinctive way for me to express myself.

MP:

Many of the scenes you depict in your artwork take place at night. Is there a specific reason for this choice? In your opinion, what distinguishes indoor scenes at night from those during the day?

Huang:

I possess a strong Pisces personality, with five important stars in my astrological chart falling under this sign and four of them residing in the twelfth house. The twelfth house is often associated with the unconscious, representing the mysterious side of one's inner world. Interestingly, I am someone who deeply trusts my intuition. In the past couple of years, I have noticed these traits manifesting in my art practice. Apart from committing to the painting medium, I don't confine my creative intentions. I paint whatever I feel compelled to paint. While my artworks depict tangible objects and employ realistic techniques, there are moments of inspiration and a constantly shifting visual language within the images—the elements of the unconscious that I strive to capture.

Visually, the most notable distinction between daytime and nighttime is the lighting. Nighttime light is serene, mysterious, and filled with nuances.

有什麼特別的原因嗎？在你看來夜晚和白天的室內場景有什麼不同呢？

黃:

我是一個雙魚座特質很強的人，星盤上五顆重要的星都落在雙魚座，其中有四顆落在十二宮。十二宮代表神秘的心靈深處，碰巧我是一個特別相信自己直覺的人，這兩年我發現這些特質都體現在我的創作上。除了媒介的範圍以外，我不會將作品劃分成具體的系列，也不會規範自己的創作動機，大多數時候都處於一個想畫什麼就畫什麼的狀態。雖然我的作品都是具象的物，手法也偏寫實，但是畫面中有很多靈光一閃和變幻的繪畫語言，這些無意識的東西是我極力保留的。

從視覺上看，白天和夜晚的最大的不同是光線，夜晚的光是安靜、神秘而充滿變化的。

MP:

你的創作過程通常是怎樣的？可否分享一些你工作室中的故事？

黃:

前面有提到過我的創作節奏是很有機的，這和我本人的生活狀態很有關係，所以隨時保持高敏感的狀態對我來說很重要，任何時候遇到的景象都有可能成為新的畫面，情感上的波動也會一起體現在創作上。我會經常用手機拍照記錄一些有意思的瞬間，心裏也記下，然後慢慢在感受沉澱的過程中構思一個新的畫面。每張畫的過程都不一樣，有時候花很長時間磨出來的感覺很好，有時候磨不出來刷掉後重新重新用大筆快速過一遍的感覺又是對的。但是每幅畫的收尾都很重要，需要頭腦十分清醒地做判斷。

MP:

可以分享一本最近在看的書嗎？你從中得到了什麼體會？



Don't sink into oblivion, 2023
Oil on canvas
152.4 × 116.8 cm (60 × 46 in)

《不要軟埋》，2023
布面油畫
152.4 × 116.8 cm (60 × 46 in)







A common exiled state of being, 2023
Oil on canvas
61 × 76.2 cm (24 × 30 in)

《一種普遍的流亡狀態》· 2023
布面油畫
61 × 76.2 cm (24 × 30 in)

MP:

What is the usual process of your art practice? Could you share some anecdotes from your studio?

Huang:

As I mentioned earlier, the rhythm of my art practice is organic and closely intertwined with my personal life. It's crucial for me to remain highly aware of my surroundings. Any moment or scene I come across has the potential to inspire a new artwork, and my emotional fluctuations often find their way into my practice. I often capture intriguing moments with my phone or remember them for later, then shape them into new compositions during moments of reflection and rumination. This process varies each time. Sometimes, I find it rewarding to take a long time to perfect each detail slowly, while other times, starting over and quickly refining the piece feels right. In any case, the final touches are especially important, requiring a clear-headed judgment call.

MP:

Can you recommend a book you recently read? What insights did you gain from it?

Huang:

This August, I read Fang Fang's novel *Soft Burial*, published in China in 2016. The book explores a traumatic story set in modern China that spans three generations. I was particularly drawn to the novel's ending, where the young protagonist, confronted with a repressive family history, chooses to escape and forget. The author's writing is soft and gentle, sympathizing with the weight of forgetting rather than interrogating the reasons behind it. Another character in the story, a younger scholar, takes on the responsibility of remembrance, shouldering the burden naturally. After finishing the book, I was left with a mix of hope and heartache.

The term "soft burial" in the book refers to the practice of shallowly burying a body

黃:

今年八月的時候我讀了方方 2016 年在國內出版過的小說《軟埋》，小說的敘事跨越了三代人，講的是中國近代一個充滿傷痛的故事。我很喜歡這個小說最後的落點：年輕的主人公面對壓抑的家族歷史最後選擇了逃避和遺忘。作者的筆是善良且溫柔的，它並不叩問遺忘的理由，反而充分共情了個人無法承受的重。故事另一位年輕一輩的學者在最後擔負起了記憶的責任，這種擔負是自然而然的。這本小說讀完之後我既覺心痛又有希望。

「軟埋」是指人死後不入棺材，直接將屍體淺淺葬進土裏，是對生命極大的詛咒。作者在書中將軟埋一詞的意思延伸為活着的人對於個人歷史和經歷的不追究和輕易丟棄。《軟埋》裏很多的聲音都在呼喊「不要軟埋，不要軟埋！」我也把這句話作為我當時正在創作的一張畫的標題，同時把這本書的實體放進了《一種普遍的流亡狀態》(2023) 的畫面裏。

我最近還讀了一本關於流亡的小說——杜布拉夫卡·烏格雷西奇 (Dubravka Ugrešić) 的《疼痛部》(The Ministry of Pain, 2004)。主人公是一位來自前南斯拉夫的知識女性，戰爭後移居到了荷蘭。小說討論了離散導致的創傷、崩塌的家園還有社群的重新建立，這些都是與我創作內核相關的話題。這本書給我最大觸動的部分是末尾長達五頁的長詩，讀的時候像是五雷轟頂。

MP:

你的未來創作計劃是什麼？

黃:

我在年底會申請一些 2024 年的駐地項目，想要在全世界範圍內認識更多的藝術家。在創作上，我會再進行一些新的探索，包括在圖像和繪畫語言的層面上。比起為了籌備一場完整的展覽而創作，我還想試着用完全自由開放的心態去創作，甚至可以再去多冒一下險，這是我明年比較明確的目標。我想要再積累一批高質量的作品，然後在具體作品的基礎上再去梳理文字，一步步走扎實，才能有越來越好的作品。

in the soil without a coffin, symbolizing a significant curse on life. The author extends this meaning to the concept of how people overlook and casually discard their own personal history and experiences. In the book, many of the characters repeatedly mention the phrase, "Don't sink into oblivion!" I used it as the title for a painting I was working on back then and incorporated an image of the physical book into my work *A common exiled state of being* (2023).

Recently, I also read *The Ministry of Pain* (2004) by Dubravka Ugrešić, which explores the trauma caused by diaspora, the collapse of homes, and the rebuilding of communities. This resonated deeply with the core themes in my art practice. The most impressive part of the book for me was the final five-page-long poem, which left me awe-struck.

MP:

What's the plan for your future art practice?

Huang:

I will apply for some 2024 residency programs at the end of the year and want to meet more artists around the world. In terms of practice, I will make some new explorations, particularly within the realms of visual imagery and the language of painting. Instead of just grinding for a big exhibition, I'm aiming to create with completely free and open mind, and even take more risks. These are clear goals for me next year. Besides, I also want to accumulate another batch of high-quality works, and then polish my writing based on these specific works. Building up step by step is the key to producing better work.

At the end of the year, I plan to apply for various residency programs in 2024 to connect with artists from around the world. In terms of my artistic practice, I want to embark on new explorations, particularly within the realms of image-making and the language of painting. Instead of solely striving for a major exhibition, my aim is to paint without restrictions, taking more risks along the way. These are the clear goals for

me in the coming year. Additionally, I hope to produce another collection of high-quality works and refine my writing based on these specific pieces. Building up step by step is the key to producing better work.



Rumor and Desire: Museum I, 2023
Oil on canvas
59 × 59 cm

《傳言和慾望：第一個博物館》· 2023
布面油畫
59 × 59 cm





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202, The Factory, 1 Yip Fat Street,
Wong Chuk Hang, Hong Kong
mouprojects.com

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