

Interview with  
Yang Bodu

楊伯都專訪



## About the Artist

### 關於藝術家

楊伯都（生於 1986 年，中國天津）的作品探索了一種游離於精神層面上的「藝術景觀」。在其以繪畫為主的藝術實踐中，她陸續描繪了一系列博物館、畫廊及藝術機構的建築景觀，將觀賞作品的私密性與藝術空間的公共性揉雜在一起，探索了筆下這些抽象、空曠而又有些理想化的空間的戲劇性、神秘感以及關係結構。在其近期創作中，楊伯都一直在觀察一些由光線及結構相互作用而形成的「建築瞬間」，並以此作為其個人的觀察方式和最終的繪畫元素基礎。她的創作發生在這些神秘的空間之內，在私人與公共、創造與凝視以及觀看與被觀看之間游走。

楊伯都於 2012 年獲得賓夕法尼亞美術學院純藝碩士學位，於 2008 年獲得天津美術學院純藝學士學位。在賓夕法尼亞美術學院就讀期間，她曾於 2011 年獲得了 Justine Cretella 紀念獎學金，於 2012 年在年度學生展覽中獲得了獎學金信託獎。她曾在 MASSIMODECARLO 畫廊北京及巴黎 Pièce Unique 空間、當代唐人藝術中心曼谷及北京空間、香港 MOU PROJECTS 等畫廊舉辦過個展與個人項目。她也曾參與各種機構展覽，包括賓夕法尼亞美術學院、北京木木美術館及天津美術學院美術館。她的作品被多家機構永久收藏，包括賓夕法尼亞美術學院、北京木木美術館、上海龍美術館及深圳坪山美術館。2021 年，楊伯都入選 The Artsy Vanguard 全球藝術先鋒榜單。

藝術家目前生活和工作於中國北京。

Yang Bodu (b. 1986, Tianjin, China) explores the construction and concept of the "art scene" that exists and lingers on in our minds. In her painting-centered oeuvre, Yang depicts a series of architectural landscapes comprising museums, galleries, and art institutions, investigating the intricate contradiction between one's intimate encounter with artworks and the public nature of exhibition venues. Frozen on her canvas are ambers of theatricality, mystery, and balance found within these abstract, empty spaces imbued with idealization. In her recent works, Yang observes the "architectural moments" shimmering within the interplay between light and building structures—elements that form the basis of her personal observation and, ultimately, painting practice. Her works capture the wonders that take place within these ambivalent spaces and further flourish as they negate the relationships between the private and the public, the acts of practicing and looking, as well as being the viewer and being viewed.

Yang received her MFA from the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (PAFA) in 2012 and her BFA from the Tianjin Academy of Fine Arts in 2008. During her studies at PAFA, she won the Justine Cretella Memorial Scholarship in 2011 and the Fellowship Trust Prize for her presentation at the Annual Student Exhibition in 2012. She has held solo exhibitions and presentations in galleries such as MASSIMODECARLO Beijing and the gallery's Paris outpost Pièce Unique, Tang Contemporary Art in Bangkok and Beijing, as well as MOU PROJECTS in Hong Kong. Her work has been exhibited at various institutional venues, including PAFA, M WOODS in Beijing, and the Tianjin Academy of Fine Arts. Her works are also included in the permanent collections of several institutions, including PAFA, M WOODS in Beijing, Long Museum in Shanghai, and Pingshan Art Museum in Shenzhen. In 2021, Yang was featured in The Artsy Vanguard.

The artist currently lives and works in Beijing, China.



Artist Portrait

藝術家肖像





Installation views of "The Death of Ying"

「鷹之死」現場圖

On the occasion of Yang Bodu's solo exhibition "The Death of Ying," the gallery team had an in-depth discussion with the artist, highlighting the thoughts and concepts behind her art practice. The exhibition opened at MOU PROJECTS in Hong Kong on March 23, 2024. The title of the exhibition, "The Death of Ying," bestows an indescribable sense of drama and cruelty upon the showcased works, with the word "death" pointing to the moment of the grand finale of life's embrace, encapsulating the intertwining elements of fear and bravery, peculiarity and familiarity that lie at the core of human existence. In the exhibition, Yang unveils a refined selection of eight paintings crafted over the past two years, subtly diverging from her acclaimed *In the Museum* series (2011–ongoing). Infused with an irresistible sense of intimacy and introspection, the exhibition embarks on a poignant exploration of personal narratives and literary allusions, chronicling a heartfelt journey straddling a prevailing persistence and soft reconciliation.

值楊伯都個展「鷹之死」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 2024 年 3 月 23 日在 MOU PROJECTS 香港空間開幕。展覽的標題「鷹之死」使得此次展出的作品被籠罩上了一層難以言說的戲劇性和殘酷性：「死」一字既指向了一種生命結局的偉大瞬間，也濃縮了這一過程背後人類生命最高形式的恐懼與堅毅、陌生與熟悉。展覽中，楊伯都呈現了她在過去兩年中精心創作的八件繪畫作品，悄然編排了一個與其《在博物館》系列（2011 至今）有微妙的不同的創作思路。展覽以一種不可抗拒的親密感和內省感為基調，探索了錯綜交織的個人敘事和文學片段，從而展開了一段有關執着與解的心路歷程。

## MOU PROJECTS (MP):

In this exhibition, you have transformed the gallery space into an architectural structure that enables linear narration. Can you share your thoughts on the space and the motivation behind this decision?

Yang Bodu (Yang):

I drew the floor plan in just ten minutes. On an afternoon in the autumn of 2023, I had already envisioned the exhibition—the long "tunnel" had already appeared in my mind.

The placement of the walls depends on the "trajectory."

I often construct walls within my mind; they serve as the skeleton or the framework for the entire exhibition. The paintings mounted on these walls share a relationship akin to flesh and bone, while the audience acts as the blood coursing through them. At this moment, the space comes alive, with an endless flow.

On the other hand, the process of making an exhibition closely resembles the process of seeking (or constructing) a place to dwell. Similar to Taiyi Zhenren meticulously folding 300 bones from lotus leaf stalks to give life to Nezha, the true essence of my being only "resides" within each exhibition.

I recall a joke I stumbled upon a few days ago.

A takeaway rider said to a customer who ordered food: "Okay, I'm coming to get you now."

Customer: "I'm already hidden."

MP:

Your latest series of paintings centered around Marilyn Monroe is particularly worth mentioning. How does this body of work relate to your previous work? Where did the inspiration for the series come from?

## MOU PROJECTS ( MP ):

此次展覽中，你將畫廊的空間改造為了一個具有線性敘事功能的建築結構。可以分享一下你對展覽空間的看法，以及這次空間改造背後的動機嗎？

楊伯都 ( 楊 ):

平面圖是在十分鐘內畫好的，針對於這個空間，我其實在 2023 年一個秋天的下午已經看到了這個展覽，那個長長的「甬道」已經出現在了眼前。

牆面出現在哪裏取決於「軌跡」。

我經常在腦內建牆，牆面於整體而言是骨架，對於每張附着於上的繪畫來說，就是骨肉的關係，觀眾則是流動於其中的血液，這個房間在這個時候就有了生命，川流不息。

退一步來說，做一個展覽的過程很像尋找（建立）棲身之地的過程，這句話並沒有過份。就像太乙真人將荷葉梗兒折成三百骨節，真正的我只「活」在每一次的展覽中。

我記得前兩天看到的一個笑話。

外賣騎手給點餐的顧客說：「好了我現在要來找你了。」

顧客：「我已經藏好了。」

MP:

在你最新創作的以瑪麗蓮·夢露為核心的系列繪畫中，夢露的形象格外生動搶眼。這組作品是如何與你以往作品產生聯結的？作品的靈感源於何處？

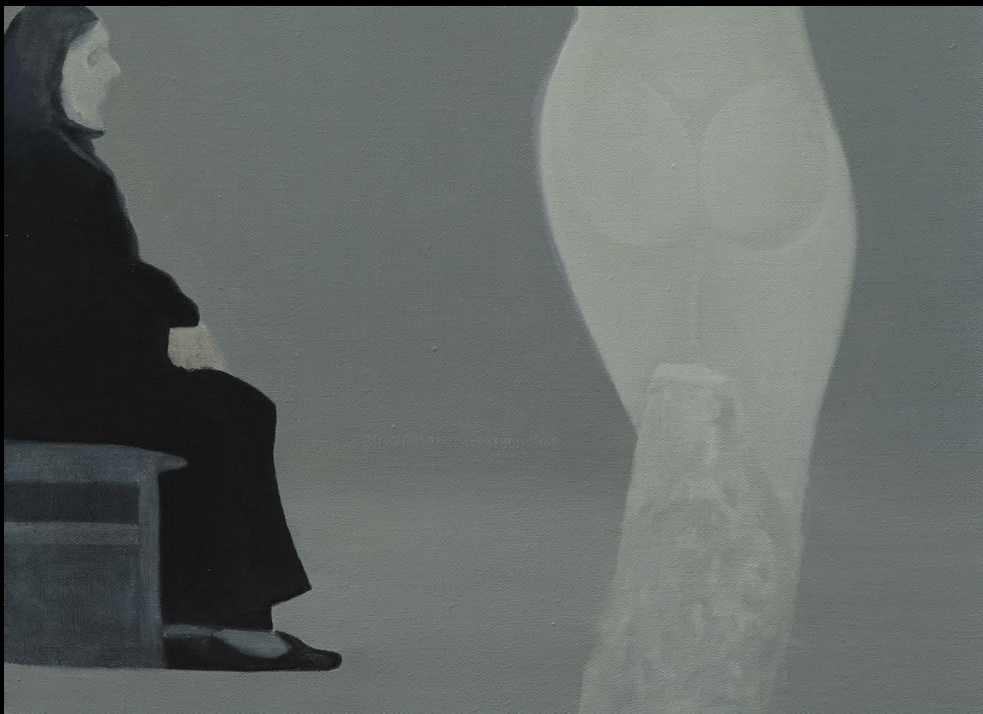
楊:

只因她在電影裏流下了一滴眼淚。



Monroe, 2022-24  
Oil on canvas  
23.2 x 27.2 cm

《夢露》· 2022-24  
布面油畫  
23.2 x 27.2 cm



Up: Yang Bodu  
*Treasure and Guardian*, 2019  
Oil on canvas  
70 × 80 cm

Down: Edvard Munch  
*Two Women on the Shore*, 1898  
Woodcut  
33.5 × 42.6 cm

上：楊伯都  
*《Treasure and Guardian》* · 2019  
布面油畫  
70 × 80 cm

下：愛德華·蒙克  
*《岸上的兩個女人》* · 1898  
木刻雕版  
33.5 × 42.6 cm

Yang:

All because she shed a tear in *The Prince and the Showgirl* (1957).

In a scene from the movie, she portrays a young dancer who accidentally ends up seated in a church during the day, adorned with her medals. At that moment, she experiences a profound "sensation": gazing upon the castle and the coastline through the stained glass, she hears heavenly hymns resounding in her ears. It is a sacred experience, so distant from reality, yet intimately connected to her soul. Then she sheds a tear, despite never having wept even at the departure of her beloved one.

That is where it all began.

At the same time, in a state unlike any other photographs of Monroe, "hope" is found in her eyes in that movie, as if the future were still distant and full of possibilities.

In my 2019 solo exhibition in Hong Kong, I showcased a series titled *Treasure and Guardian* (2019), featuring marble sculptures portrayed from the back. It was a preliminary prototype of the Monroe series. The composition of *Treasure and Guardian* is reminiscent of photography, but they are not static. Rather, it represents a simpler relationship between the eternal statue and its guardian. Upon completing this older series of paintings, a sense of familiarity washed over me. Only later did Edvard Munch's painting *Two Women on the Shore* (1898) come to mind.

The scene in *The Death of Ying—Monroe 17:50* (2022–24) also evoked Munch's painting in my mind. In the work, Monroe, in a slumbering state, is lifted and carried away by four men (perhaps from a sofa or the beach).

MP:

For the exhibition, you choose to present a text that combines your recollections of your late teacher Ying, the protagonist of the exhibition, with excerpts from the novel *A Passage to India* (1924) by the British writer

這是出自《遊龍戲鳳》(1957)的一幕——晚上還是小舞女的她白天已經陰差陽錯地戴好了勳章坐在教堂，在那一瞬間她感受到了「一些東西」：從玻璃的彩畫中她看到城堡與海岸，耳朵裏聽着來自天上的贊美詩，這神聖的、與實際生活相離甚遠（但又與靈魂貼合得如此相近）的一切讓她流下了一滴淚。就算在和心上人離別之際她都從未哭過。

這便是緣起了。

同時，這也是所有夢露在世的照片中我沒看到過的一個狀態，她在那一瞬間，在虛幻的電影中誕生了「希望」，仿佛未來還很長。

我在2019年的香港個展中畫過《Treasure and Guardian》(2019)系列，在那裏潔白的背影雕塑也有着此時此畫的指向，畫面中呈現出一種類似鏡頭感的構圖，但是它們不再是靜態的了，而像是一個更加單純的關係，永恆的雕像與它的看守。這個系列畫完我有一種熟悉的感覺。後來我腦中才浮現出愛德華·蒙克(Edvard Munch)的《岸上的兩個女人》(Two Women on the Shore, 1898)。

這次的《鷹之死—夢露 17:50》(2022–24)中睡着的夢露，雕像一般的她被四個人抬起(抬離此地)(也許是從沙發上或是海灘上)，這一幕也是會讓我想起蒙克彼畫中的滋味。

MP:

展覽中，你選擇呈現一篇文本，當中結合了你對於展覽的主角——你的老師「鷹」的回憶，以及英國作家E. M. 福斯特小說《印度之行》(1924)的選段。這篇文章背後的故事是什麼？你是如何決定以文本的形式呈現這些內容的？以及文章中英夾雜的形式意味着什麼？

楊:

這篇文章便是「背後的故事」本身了。

我寫了些很簡單的內容，並不複雜。像是一些文字的肖像，文章寫得比畫畫還慢，從2010年想







E. M. Forster. What is the background story here? How did you decide to present an essay that interweaves English and Chinese passages? What meaning does the unique format of the essay hold in conveying the message?

Yang:

This essay is the "background story" itself.

I wrote something very simple, not complicated at all. It's like a portrait of words, written more slowly than producing a painting. Starting from 2010, I only wrote a bit when I thought of it, more like slowly sweeping the details out of my memory, so it's kind of like a little pile of memory powder. I read *A Passage to India* in 2008, and there are moments that come back to me again and again, such as the "sight" of the caves, which is so evocative and appealing to me.

The dual-narrative structure was also used in Rosalind Krauss's essay on Sol LeWitt, where she inserted a fragment of one of Samuel Beckett's novels about a man who carries four pebbles in his pocket and ritualistically pulls them out from time to time to suck on them in turn, which creates a tapping, rhythmic sensation as you read.

There are two parallel time-space presented in the text—the past (in my vision) and a story that can be accessed at any time. I wanted to juxtapose the text about Ying with the two women's points of view of "the cave" in *A Passage to India*. This juxtaposition mirrors the effect of placing two paintings side by side; the time spent reading mirrors the process of viewing.

MP:

The title of the exhibition, "The Death of Ying," symbolizes the true story of your teacher's death, but also alludes to the cruelty, romance, and drama behind such a death. What does the death of "Ying" mean to you?

起來就寫一點點，有點慢慢把細節從記憶中掃出的感覺。所以這篇文章有點像一小堆一小撮的記憶粉末。《印度之行》是我 2008 年讀的，有些片段會在腦海中反覆出現，比如山洞的「景象」對我來說就充滿了感召力和吸引力。

雙線的結構曾經也在 Rosalind Krauss 寫 Sol LeWitt 的文章裏看到過，她把薩繆爾·貝克特 (Samuel Beckett) 一篇小說的片段直接插入論文，小說講了一個把四塊鵝卵石揣在兜裏然後很儀式化地不時拿出石頭來輪流吮吸的人，在閱讀中會產生出如敲擊般的節奏感。

在《鷹之死》中存在兩個時空的並列，一個（在我的視野裏）已經過去了的事情和一個在書中隨時都可以進入的故事。從《印度之行》中兩位女性的視角去看「那個山洞」——是我想在文中和鷹的文本去並列觀看的，其實很像兩張畫面的並置。閱讀的時間即是觀看的過程。

MP:

展覽名為「鷹之死」，這既象征着你的老師去世的真實故事，又暗指這種死亡背後所包含的殘酷性、浪漫性和戲劇性。「鷹」的死對於你來說意味着什麼？

楊:

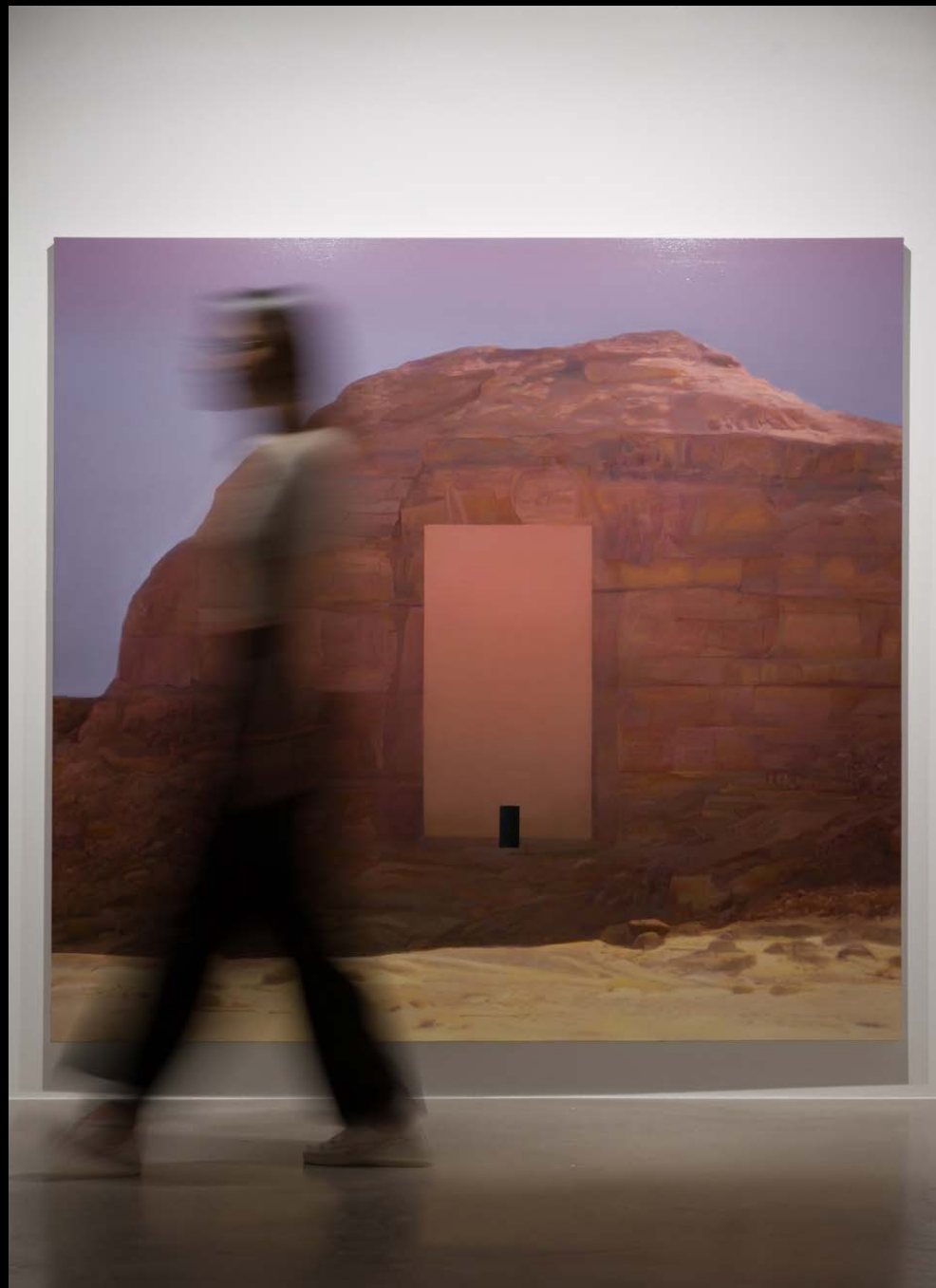
可以說《鷹之死》文章的全篇都在講述一個事情：那就是這個「死」對於我來說意味着什麼。

甚至是整個展覽，每一張畫，都在說這個。

「緊緊圍繞着主題」就像一個颶風，卷繞着塵土和很多能卷起的東西一起無目的的前行。

這個力量也不受我的控制。

在《鷹之死—夢露 17:50》中，睡着的她被四個人抬起，但這一幕也不是影片中的原景。只有「她」被保留了，侍從變成了未知的黑衣人，地點也從大公的府邸來到了無名的海岸線上。在這裏，夢露的故事與「鷹」的故事合二為一。這是「鷹之死」的一個畫像：就這樣進入未知，也是「我」



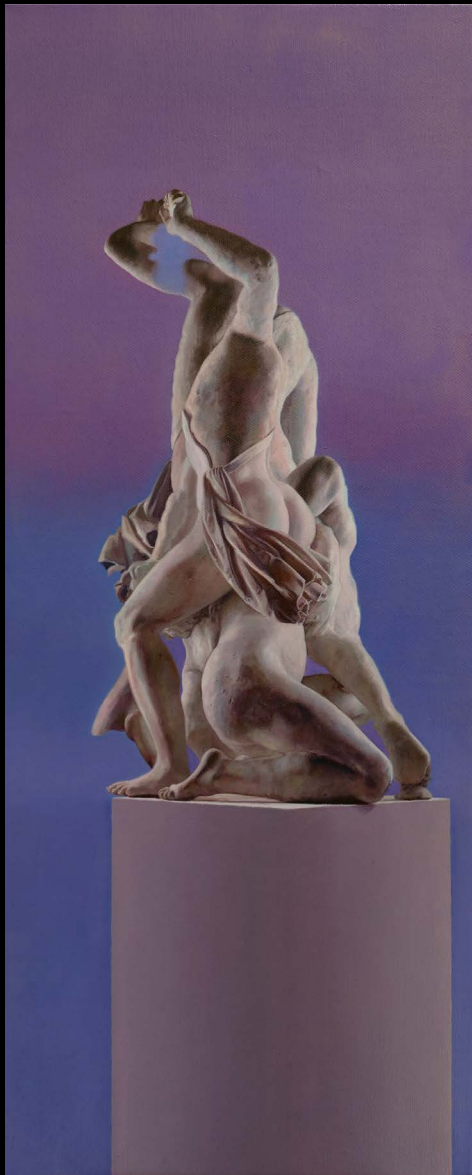
The Death of Ying—The Caves 5:53, 2024  
Oil on canvas  
180 × 190 cm

《鷹之死—山洞 5:53》· 2024  
布面油畫  
180 × 190 cm





Samson Slaying a Philistine, 2022-24  
Oil on canvas  
Set of 2: 70 × 28.4 cm each; 70 × 56.8 cm overall



《參孫殺死非利士人》· 2022-24  
布面油畫  
共兩件：每件 70 × 28.4 cm；整體 70 × 56.8 cm

Yang:

You could say that the entire essay presented in the show is about one thing only, and that is what this "death" means to me.

Even the whole exhibition, and every painting in it, is about this.

"Tightly revolving around the theme" is like a hurricane, swirling aimlessly forward, carrying along dust and many things that can be swept up.

This force is not under my control either.

In *The Death of Ying—Monroe 17:50*, Monroe is lifted up by four men, but this scene is also not the original one in the movie. The only thing preserved here is "her body," while the attendants from the film have been transformed into unknown figures dressed in black, and the location has changed from the Grand Duke's residence to an unnamed shoreline. Here, the stories of Monroe and "Ying" become one. This is a portrait of "The Death of Ying" as she enters the unknown. It also represents the blankness and imagination I had for not being able to witness Ying's final moments in real life. What was she like at that moment? Who was with her? Where did she go after all? It is not mentioned in the essay but appears in the exhibition in the form of a painting: she seems to have fallen into an eternal sleep right here and now, relaxed and fearless.

The cave retreats behind the rocks and becomes a place of shade. If I had traveled this far, I would have had to sit in the shade and rest. "The Death of Ying" was no longer violent, and the cave became a door to the bedroom under the giant object.

"Sleep after toil, port after stormy seas, ease after war, death after life."

MP:

Can you share your thoughts on *A Passage to India*?

在現實生活中沒能見到鷹的最後一面的空白與想象。她在那時候是什麼樣子的？誰陪着她？終究去了哪？文章中沒有提及，但在展覽中是以畫面的形式出現：她在此時此地仿佛陷入了永恒的睡眠，輕鬆愜意而又無懼。

山洞隱退在巖石之後，變成了一個陰涼所在。如果我長途跋涉至此，是肯定要坐在這片陰影裏乘涼休息的。「鷹之死」不再有暴戾的情緒，山洞變成了巨物之下的通向臥室的門。

「勞累後的睡眠，暴風後的港口，戰亂後的和平，生命後的死亡。」

MP:

可否分享你的《印度之行》讀後感？

楊:

馬拉巴山洞被不斷地想起，提起（文章中已引用過的）池塘邊的談話已經讓它的陰影出現在祥和的花園中。

「岩洞裏有任何裝飾嗎？」

「沒有。」

「岩洞的洞口有存在的必要，因為人類得從洞口進入岩洞。然而在其他的花崗岩裏面，是否有一些沒有入口的花崗岩石室？是否有一些花崗岩石室從神明降臨於此以來，就不曾被人發現？」

「就算人類出於好奇而挖開這些岩洞，也不會發生任何好事或壞事。」

「馬拉巴山洞的回聲和上面說的那種回聲全然不同，它是一種非常單調而毫無差別的回聲。」「假如先前有人在那山洞裏講粗鄙的言語，或者引述高雅的詩篇，那得到的反響一定都是相同的一聲『ou——boum』。」

「那回聲以一種難以描述的方式在破壞她控制生活的能力。」







Yang:

The Marabar Caves was constantly recalled, bringing up the conversation about the caves by the pond (as quoted in the essay) had already brought its shadow into the peaceful garden.

"Are there any carvings in the caves?"

"No."

"An entrance was necessary, so mankind made one. But elsewhere, deeper in the granite, are there certain chambers that have no entrances? Chambers never unsealed since the arrival of the gods."

"If mankind grew curious and excavated, nothing, nothing would be added to the sum of good or evil."

"The echo in a Marabar cave is not like these, it is entirely devoid of distinction." "If one had spoken vileness in that place, or quoted lofty poetry, the comment would have been the same—'ou-boum.'"

"The echo began in some indescribable way to undermine her hold on life."

"What had spoken to her in that scoured-out cavity of the granite? What dwelt in the first of the caves? Something very old and very small. Before time, it was before space also. Something snub-nosed, incapable of generosity—the undying worm itself."

Adela ran out of the cave into madness as she repeated to herself:

"In space things touch, in time things part."

MP:

It has been five years since your last solo exhibition at MOU PROJECTS. How do you feel your work has changed since then? Are there any new experiences and feelings?

「在那個花崗岩融化晨光的山洞裏，是什麼東西對她講話？是何物居住在第一個山洞裏？可能是某種小而古老的東西。在時間和空間之前，也比空間高齡，是個像獅子鼻一樣的東西，一點也不高貴——它本身是條不死的蟲。」

阿黛拉跑出山洞陷入瘋狂，她自言自語地重複：

「在空間裏萬物緊密相連，而在時間上卻相互分離。」

MP:

距離上次你在 MOU PROJECTS 的個展已有五年之久，你覺得自己如今的創作與那時有何不同？有什麼新的體會和感悟？

楊：

(此處省去避重就輕的五十萬字)

MP:

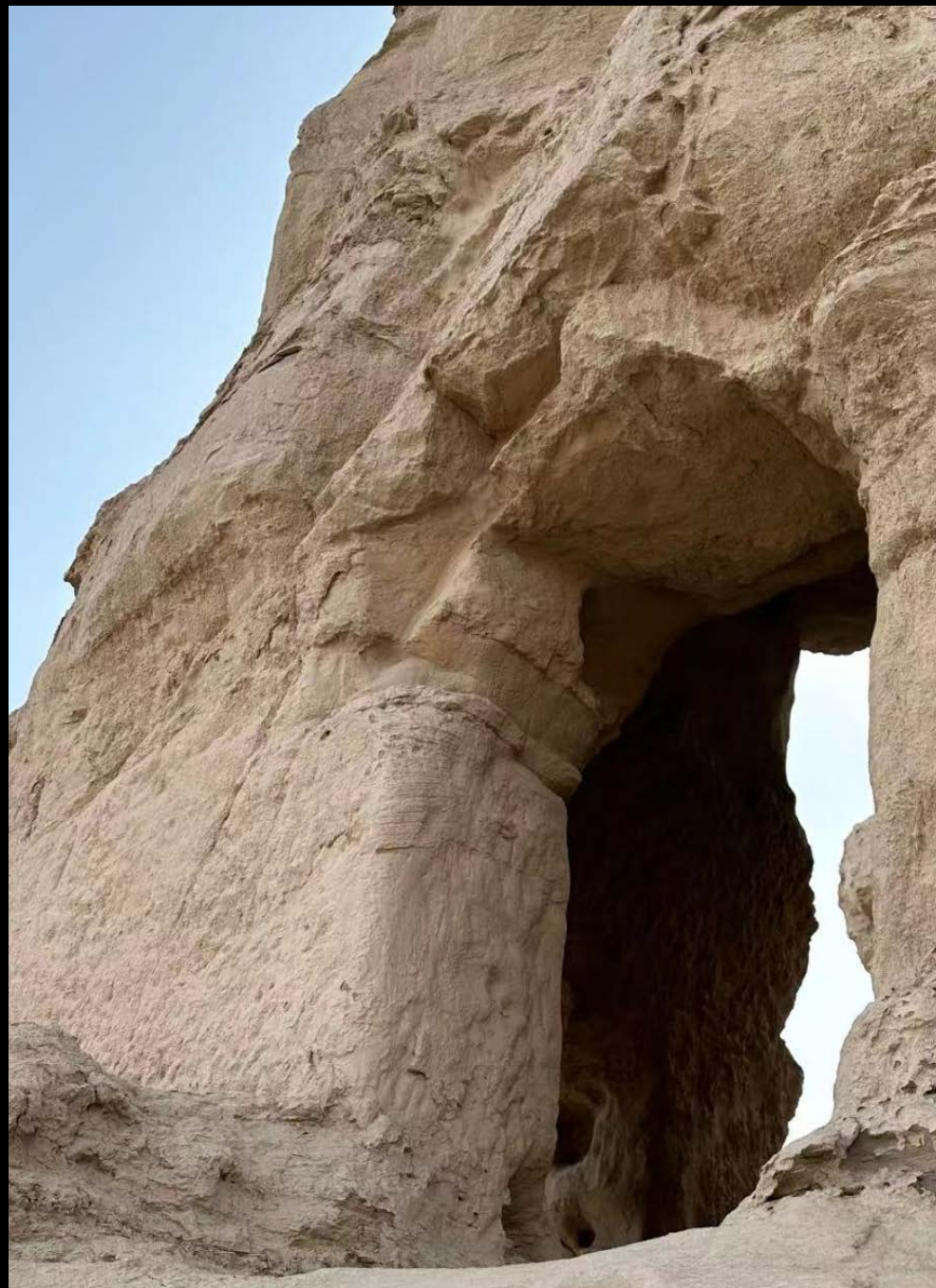
接下來的計劃是什麼？

楊：

昨天去爬山，在半山庵裏坐着休息，一個老太太被攙扶着走到門前，指着問兩旁：「那第一個字是什麼？」

我抬頭看：

正殿之上四個大字——「是大世界」。



Photographed by Yang Bodu in Asku Prefecture, Xinjiang  
Image courtesy of the artist

楊伯都拍攝於新疆阿克蘇地區  
圖片由藝術家提供



Yang Baodu's Studio in Beijing  
Image courtesy of the artist

楊伯都北京工作室  
圖片由藝術家提供

Yang:

(Half a million evasive words are omitted here.)

MP:

What is your upcoming plan?

Yang:

Yesterday, I went hiking and sat down to rest in a nunnery halfway up the mountain. An old lady was helped to the door, pointed, and asked, "What's the first word there?"

I looked up:

Four big words above the main plaque—"To a greater world."







Copyright © 2024 MOU PROJECTS Ltd. and  
the artist.

Photos by Felix SC Wong.

All images courtesy of Yang Bodu and MOU  
PROJECTS.

All rights reserved.

MOU PROJECTS

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

MOU PROJECTS