

WALK INTO
RAIN FOREST

名家工笔画
系列丛书

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走进 雨林

萧溶工笔
花鸟画

XIAO RONG'S
PAINTINGS OF
FLOWERS
AND BIRDS
IN TRADITIONAL
IN CHINESE
REALISTIC
STYLE



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袁晓岑题



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藏书章

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——谈萧溶的工笔花鸟画

花鸟画和人物画、山水画是中国绘画中的三大科系，而花鸟画中又有工笔和意笔之分，称工笔与写意。两宋时期是工笔花鸟画发展的峰头时期。从现存的花鸟画作品来看，工笔花鸟画在两宋时期，作品从各方面都达到了高度成熟，并独立于画坛，受到后来的文人名士高度赞扬和推崇。徐悲鸿先生就认为：“吾国最高美术属于画，画中最美之品为花鸟”。无疑在两宋绘画中，工笔花鸟画当为代表。

新中国成立之后到现在的改革开放，中国画发展很快，面貌多样，吸收广泛，群体叠起，呈现出中国绘画的勃勃生机。而业内人士认为工笔画发展尤为突出，它不但有继承，更有广泛的吸收，它不但有观念的转变，又有理念上的突破，所以受到了广大群众的喜爱，从而出现了好多优秀作品与画家，在各大美术展览会上都给人耳目一新，这是广大工笔画家努力的结果。在云南，萧溶是受大家关注的一位。

萧溶其父萧士英是我省著名工笔花鸟画家，萧老先生曾留学日本，其没骨花卉在当时云南享有盛誉。在父亲的影响下，萧溶自幼喜欢绘画，工作后，又从事植物绘图工作，使他走上了从事工笔花鸟画之路。这一路程是漫长而艰难的，萧溶付出了不少血汗。而他又选择了以热带雨林为主题的热带花卉。近几年来萧溶的花鸟画创作取得了令人瞩目的成绩，他继承了中国工笔花鸟画的传统，坚持骨法用笔，随类赋彩，构图平稳，开合有制，每一幅作品都给人清丽浓厚之感，取得这样的成绩，没有艰苦的努力是不行的。

云南地处边疆，长期的交通不便给人带来了许多困难，但也增加了神秘性，尤其是热带雨林，它的神秘时时吸引着好多探奇人的心。热带雨林不同于北方的寒林和中原的杂木，热带雨林是一个美丽多彩的神奇世界。历代画家都没有表现过，起码在历代保留下来的作品很少表现，现代画家要以它为描写对象，必须一步一步做起。萧溶明确了目标，确实一步步做起，他结合工作，仔细观察、写生，积累了大量资料。过去历代画家多生活在北方和江浙，发达的中原文化和绘画息息相关，而云南这块被认为的蛮荒之地却有着中原文化的遗迹，又有着滇文化及少数民族文化的传统，萧溶深深地体会到如果要画好画必须两种文化有所结合，才能表现出广大人们所喜闻乐见的作品，所以在他的绘画中很少有猎奇、图新鲜之感，多是自然与平和。这和他积极主动地去塑造形象，有感而发有很大关系，正因为这样，他的作品充满着生活气息。这种生活气息是和他多年身在植物学界，经常深入大自然密不可分的。他对自然一草一木，一花一石的研究，使他感受到在风霜雨露中花鸟的自然形态、晦明变化，激起他的绘画激情，从而体现了艺术来源于生活。所以他的作品没有粗制滥造之感。现在也流行着一种看法，不管物象的生长规律如何，地域如何，画出来好看就是好，我个人认为不可取，好的花鸟画一定是符合自然规律，而又有花鸟画艺术特点，才能叫人信服，要不然就成为花鸟画中的四不象。

萧溶在此基础上创作了大量且幅面不小的作品如《南疆春深》、《雨林幽馨》、《雨林花香》等，有的参加了全国美展和省中、大型美展，体现了他创作大型绘画的驾驭能力。而以热带雨林题材为主，他也画了一些小幅的生动活泼的作品，这些作品精致、明快，用线流畅，这些作品和他的大型工笔构成了他绘画的热带雨林风貌。如《雨林奇葩》、《雨林金斛》、《版纳春晨》、《滇南野卉》等。这些作品如对热带雨林不熟悉是很难达到现在效果的。

为了运用技巧的不断熟练，从传统中提高自己，从而使自己的表现能力逐步加强，他也画了一部分过去前辈画家经常表现的题材，如牡丹、茶花、兰花、竹等，在这些绘画中，他特别注意技术、技巧的发挥，尽自己所能地把画画得丰富、深厚，博取众家之长，而使画面显得轻松、简练、精巧，尤其是他的牡丹、茶花就更有自己的独特面貌。

多少年来，萧溶在工笔花鸟画创作中不断耕耘、进取，并不断地克服自己工作中带来的呆板、太理性化的障碍，在工笔花鸟画领域中取得了好成绩。他曾经用较长时间为中国邮政画过几套精美的邮票，受到广泛的好评并获奖。但是他淡泊名利，为人谦和，他不断地向来访的知名画家学习。凡是接触过萧溶的画家也都得到过他在生活各方面的照顾。而萧溶在他的周围又团结了一批有志于工笔画的青年画家，为云南花鸟画的发展作出了贡献。

面对自己的成绩，萧溶并不满足，他还有很多的想法，还在不断地努力。我想只要有这种精神，他一定会取得更大的成功，并有多更多更好更精的作品出现。

王晋元

Walking into Rainforests

Xiao Rong's Paintings of Flowers and Birds in Traditional in Chinese Realistic Style

It is long known that paintings of flowers and birds, paintings of figures and paintings of landscapes are three major constituents of Chinese paintings. It is also known that flowers and birds can be represented in either realistic or free-sketched styles. During the Song Dynasty in Chinese history, painting of flowers and birds in a realistic style developed so fast and so well that it reached the peak of its sophistication in its growth. Looking at the extant works of this school, we can clearly see that paintings produced during that period dominated in the field of fine arts with expertise and maturity. As a result, it has been highly assessed and appreciated by famous artists and critics ever since. Mr. Xu Beihong, an outstanding artist in China, once expressed his commentary on the works in this style: "Painting in our country is the highest form of art, while flowers and birds are the most beautiful objects in painting." If we look carefully at the works of flowers and birds during the Song Dynasty, we may find that realistic style is more frequently applied than others are. Therefore we may as well call it a typical style of that age.

During the long period between the birth of People's Republic of China and the country's Opening up to the outside world, Chinese painting underwent a rapid development. Wide absorption from other schools, great diversity in artistic forms and fast growth of young artists brought great vigor and vitality to Chinese fine arts. According to the opinions held by experts in the field, painting in Chinese realistic style has achieved the fastest growth compared with those in other styles. This is because artists of this school have not only inherited the legacy left by their forefathers in the circle, but also absorbed extensively from other styles. And above all, they have transformed their conceptions and ideas of painting through their practice and meditation. As a result, works in this style have long received great popularity among people, which inevitably stimulated the emergence of a large number of talented artists, whose fine works exhibited a rare feature of freshness and novelty. These gratifying achievements no doubt stemmed from their diligence and perseverance. Xiao Rong in Yunnan is one of these great artists.

Xiao Rong is from an artist's family. His father Xiao Shiyong was a famous artist with expertise in painting of flowers and birds in Chinese realistic style. He studied fine arts in Japan for a period and came back to Yunnan to continue his career as an artist. He soon established himself as an expert in painting flowers in a soft and gentle style, which was typical in painting in the Song Dynasty. Influenced by his father, Xiao Rong displayed keen interest in painting in his early boyhood. When he grew up, he took up a job of plant sketching, which inevitably led him to his life long profession as an artist of flowers and birds in Chinese realistic style. The process of his progress and maturity was long and arduous, which proved to be the fruit of his perspiration and creation. He chose tropical flowers in rainforests as his main concern and achieved tremendously in this field during the recent years. In his paintings he shows a solid foundation in traditional Chinese painting techniques, which can be seen clearly in his vigorous strokes, appropriate colors, balanced composition and a well-controlled alternation of tension and relaxation. All his paintings present such an image to the audience that they are both fine and pretty in appearance and broad and profound in implication. From his works we can come at a conclusion that great achievements can never be secured without years of intelligent and creative work.

Yunnan is situated in frontiers. For a long time, it suffered from isolation as a result of its poor and backward transportation. However, this in turn adds to the mysteriousness of the area, especially the attraction of its tropical rainforests, which grabs the curiosity of a great number of explorers. Tropical rainforests, which are different from forests in the north and in the Central Plain, always present charming, colorful and mystical visions to the world. Nevertheless, we find no artists have ever chosen this topic in their works in the entire Chinese art history, at least nothing among the extant works. Therefore, modern artists, once they decide to take that as their life-long objects in painting, must embark on their projects in a step-by-step approach and Xiao Rong is one of them. With a clear goal in mind, Xiao accumulated a large quantity of materials through his constant sketches from nature with his keen observation and down-to-earth attitude. Through his work, he realized that many famous artists in history, living in either north or Jiangsu and Zhejiang (east coastal provinces of China), were profoundly influenced by the culture of the Central Plain, which were closely connected to their artistic creation and eventually became part of their art. In Yunnan, a place once called wilderness, we can surprisingly discover a mixture of cultures, which comprises not only culture of the Central Plain, but also that of local Yunnan as well as cultures of various ethnic groups. Good works in Yunnan therefore must show a combination of these cultures, as they will ensure a good reception from people with different backgrounds. In his works, Xiao Rong shows no interest in seeking novelty and strangeness. Instead, he endeavored to present his objects in a

natural and mild way. This is because he takes a positive attitude in his work and gets inspiration for his creation right from nature. His work, which results from his long-term life and work in the field of plants, is full of strong tinges of everyday life. His frequent visits to nature supplies him with so many opportunities to observe grass, trees, flowers and birds that he can arrive at the depth of the knowledge of the natural postures of these creatures in wind, fog, rain or dew. His impulse for creation to a great extent is often inspired by different shades of colors of his objects as they are shown in different lights. His works reveal such an undeniable truth that art stems from life and can never be produced in a rough and reckless way. Nowadays there goes a popular idea that once the object is painted well, the art work can thereupon be judged as excellent, regardless of the law of its growth and the area it comes from. Personally, I don't agree on the view, simply because good works of flowers and birds must both conform to natural laws and display the features of art. Only when paintings have reached that standard, can they be regarded as moving and convincing. Otherwise they are stupid and will always be judged as neither fish nor fowl.

Based on these principles, Xiao Rong has created a great number of large-sized works, such as *Spring in Southern Frontiers*, *Delicate Fragrance in Rainforests*, and *Sweet Flowers in Rainforests*. Some of his works, which has shown his broad vision and great ease in manipulating large-sized art works, are exhibited in the national and provincial art exhibitions. In addition, he has accomplished quite a few small-sized works with tropical creatures as main topics. These little paintings are lively in style, delicate in craftsmanship, and lucid and smooth in artistic touch. His large and small sized works in traditional Chinese realistic style present before the audience a whole concept of tropical rainforests. His successful works, such as *Wonderful Flowers in Rainforests*, *Golden Noble Dendrobium in a Rainforest*, *Spring Morning in Xishuangbanna*, and *Wild Flowers in South Yunnan* show clearly that it is impossible for him to achieve what he has without a profound knowledge of tropical rainforests.

In order to improve his ability of artistic expression and technique in traditional styles, he learned a lot from traditional Chinese artists. For one thing, he selected quite a few common topics that many ancient artists are interested in, such as peony, camellia, orchid, and bamboo. In these works, he endeavored to exert his skill and technique to make his works rich and profound. His extensive absorption brought him a light, succinct, and exquisite style. Among all of his works, painting of peony and camellia best displays his strength and characteristics.

Xiao Rong has been working hard in painting flowers and birds in Chinese realistic style for a long time,. He tried to break away from rigidity and rationalization that his job may bring him. His efforts bore rich fruits and high acclamation for him. In addition, he spent a long time designing and painting several series of stamps for China and Yunnan Post. These stamps brought him not only favorable comments, but also many high awards. A gentle and modest man as he is, he never thinks much of fame and wealth. In spite of his great achievements, he still finds a lot to learn whenever he meets famous artists visiting Yunnan from outside. Besides, he never hesitates to help those in need. That's why many young artists like to come to consult him and take him as their advisors. Now a group of promising young artists are growing around him and are trying to make greater contributions to the art of painting flowers and birds in Yunnan.

Xiao Rong is never satisfied with his attainments. He has high aims and lofty pursuits in mind and is trying to reach them with his never-ending efforts. I believe that he is sure to succeed in his ultimate goal and will no doubt produce works larger in number and better in quality in the near future, because he is a man with ambition and aspiration.

Wang Jinyuan
June, 2001



雨林幽馨 166 × 164cm 1994
 Delicate Fragrance in a Rainforest



雨林金斛 80 × 85cm 1995

Golden Noble Dendrobium in a Rainforest



溢香幽兰报春风 80 × 82cm 1988
Fragrant Orchids Herald Spring Wind



雨林奇葩 80 × 84cm 1995
Wonderful Flowers in a Rainforest



版纳春晨 80 × 85cm 1995
Spring Morning in Xishuangbanna



幽泉秋韵 81 × 84cm 1995
Autumn Charm at a Quiet Spring



雨林花香 83 × 177cm 1984
Fragrant Flowers in a Rainforest



南疆春深 158 × 198cm 1989
Depth of Spring in South Frontiers



雨林深处 171 × 164cm 1996

In the Depths of a Rainforest



南疆风韵 164 × 158cm 1999
Enchantment of South Frontiers



初 暮 66 × 66cm 2000
At Twilight



春晖

160 × 209cm 1989

Spring Sun