

A Well-Known Chinese Painter

# HUANG YONGYU

## and His Paintings 黄永玉



黄永玉和他的画

\*

外文出版社出版  
湖南美术出版社  
湖南彩色包装印刷厂印刷  
中国国际图书贸易总公司  
(中国国际书店)发行  
北京399信箱

1988年(8开)第一版

(汉英)

ISBN 7-119-00673-8/J·484(外)

11000

84-CE-674D

A Well-Known Chinese Painter

# **HUANG YONGYU** **and His Paintings**

FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS      BEIJING  
HUNAN ART PUBLISHING HOUSE      CHANGS'



HUANGYONGYU

# 黄永玉

北京·外文出版社

长沙·湖南美术出版社

J 221.8  
20075



FIRST EDITION 1988

Copyright 1988 by the Foreign Languages Press

ISBN 0-8351-2327-8

ISBN 7-119-00673-8

Published by the Foreign Languages Press

24 Baiwanzhuang Road, Beijing 100037, China

Hunan Art Publishing House, Changsha

Distributed by the China International Book Trading Corporation

(Guoji Shudian), P.O. Box 399, Beijing, China

*Printed in the People's Republic of China*

## **My Heart, Only My Heart**

I paint to give people delight.  
I shoot or praise with my poems  
And bear miseries with my shoulders;  
I travel everywhere on my feet,  
And embrace friends with my arms.  
I express my ridicule or love with my eyes,  
And listen to the world with my ears.  
The type of my blood is O, and it'll suit anyone  
    Who takes it away.  
My heart, only my heart,  
Oh my dear native town,  
It belongs to you!

*Huang Yongyu*

# NOT EXACTLY A FOREWORD

by Zhang Shizeng\*

MR. Huang Yongyu asked me to write something for the present album.

A foreword, as we all know, is usually written by a master artist for one of his disciples, or by a famous person for someone he wants to promote. But Huang Yongyu is my senior and my teacher. Thus a foreword for his album written by a person like myself is something out of the ordinary.

It turns out, however, that Huang Yongyu likes things out of the ordinary. Once when I was going to write his biography, I asked him for ideas. "Be sure that you are off the beaten track," he said. So he prefers things which may seem unusual to other people, and this has encouraged me to write a few words for his album.

I made his acquaintance when I brought him something from a friend living in another part of the country. Naturally, I made an appointment by telephone before going to him. At his door, I was struck by a notice which told visitors to call him on the phone first to avoid a reluctant meeting which might prove disappointing to both parties. Not so pleased at these words, I thought I should say good-bye to him almost immediately after delivering the package.

Huang Yongyu answered the door, a pipe in his mouth, which has become a feature familiar to everyone who knows him.

I rose to leave after giving him the package. But he said, "Wait a moment, please. I'm halfway through a painting and don't want the pigments to dry. I'll be back in a few minutes."

The conversation was carried on by Mei Xi, Huang's wife. Huang came back in less than 15 minutes. He said, "I have to add a few more touches to my painting. Why don't you come to my studio? We can talk there, if you don't mind my working at the same time."

We went to his studio, where the conversation lasted a couple of hours, if not more.

After several visits to his house, I learnt that this was one of the essential ways he did his paintings, without which he could not have produced so many large and small works marked by an endless variety of innovations. There are usually some visitors in his living room. The notice at the door puts people off, but many come by appointment, and some of them become Huang's friends following a delightful or even exciting sharing of views. Obviously, he can neither have too many guests nor do without friends.

The guests are not necessarily artists or writers. Once I happened to meet some barbers from a hotel at Huang's house. One of them asked the painter to do a piece for his daughter who was getting married, and he did some plum blossoms for her. A young barber said he would also like to have a painting for his daughter in preparation for her eventual wedding. "How old is she?" Huang asked. "Only four," said the young man. "Let's

wait a couple of years," Huang chuckled.

In an autobiographical essay, Huang answers a question about the most impressive experience in his life. "It is the fact that I have met so many nice people," he writes. He may not be aware that he, too, is a nice person encountered by many people.

His success in literary creation is likewise outstanding. A collection of his short poems, entitled *There Was Such a Time*, won a first-grade national prize for vernacular-style poetry in 1983. A collection of his prose writings, *A Scene Under the Sun*, came out in the same year. The next year saw the publication of his essays under the title, *Three Accounts by Yongyu*, by the Sanlian Publishing House. He is busy with both painting and writing. He told me that he had a notebook in his bedroom, in his living room, and almost everywhere else in his house. He would write down anything he had heard or thought of which seemed useful. Once I took a journalist to his house, who told the story of how a widow and an widower, both in their seventies, had to elope because their marriage was disapproved by the children on both sides. Bellowing with laughter, Huang took it down immediately. I was not sure how he was going to use it, but I got some idea of his literary effort.

Huang Yongyu never went to a regular school of art. But he had talent and worked hard. He studied by himself and learnt from friends, from society and from life. Perhaps this is why he is able to exhibit such initiative and vitality in his works without any set pattern.

Up till the 1960s, Huang Yongyu devoted himself mainly to woodcuts. The period from the late 50s to the middle 60s marked the golden age of his woodcuts. His colour woodcut prints, such as *Ahshima* and *Spring Tide*, brought pleasant surprises to fellow artists with their strong folk flavour, pronounced ethnic characteristics and refreshing style. Since the 1970s he has produced an abundance of colour ink paintings. Among these are landscapes and flowers and birds of a lyrical quality done by freehand techniques, and there are also human figures or scenes with a humorous message or a historical allusion. The fresh themes, the bold strokes and the dripping colour combine into a unique style in contemporary Chinese painting.

Huang Yongyu holds his audience in high esteem. He often says that it is up to the spectators to evaluate the works of an artist, who can hardly evaluate himself. This is quite true. Instead of giving more comments, I leave it to the readers to evaluate the works reproduced on the following pages.

That is what I know about Huang Yongyu as a person. Let's not call it a foreword.

\* Zhang Shizeng is Associate Research Fellow of the Academy of Chinese Painting and Deputy Editor-in-Chief of the magazine, *Studies in Chinese Painting*.





# PAINTINGS



出  
左  
也  
中

黄永玉画

壬戌秋



**Looking the left.**

During the "cultural revolution" (1966-76), "Leftist" ideology dominated all China. Thus what was on the left side was considered revolutionary and what was on the right side, counter-revolutionary. This painting is a satire on the situation.

100 X 100 cm. 1982.

內觀日疏有謂六月二十日為觀蓮  
節。范承與共夫各以蓮子饋遠為  
獻。吳郡記亦云荷花蕩在封門之  
外。每年六月二十四日遊人最盛。

畫粉雲集此節，吳俗所謂荷花  
生日也。承玉昨觀劇歸，深夜作此圖。  
余晨起見雨，喜之告其昨日乃荷  
花生日也，不能信。

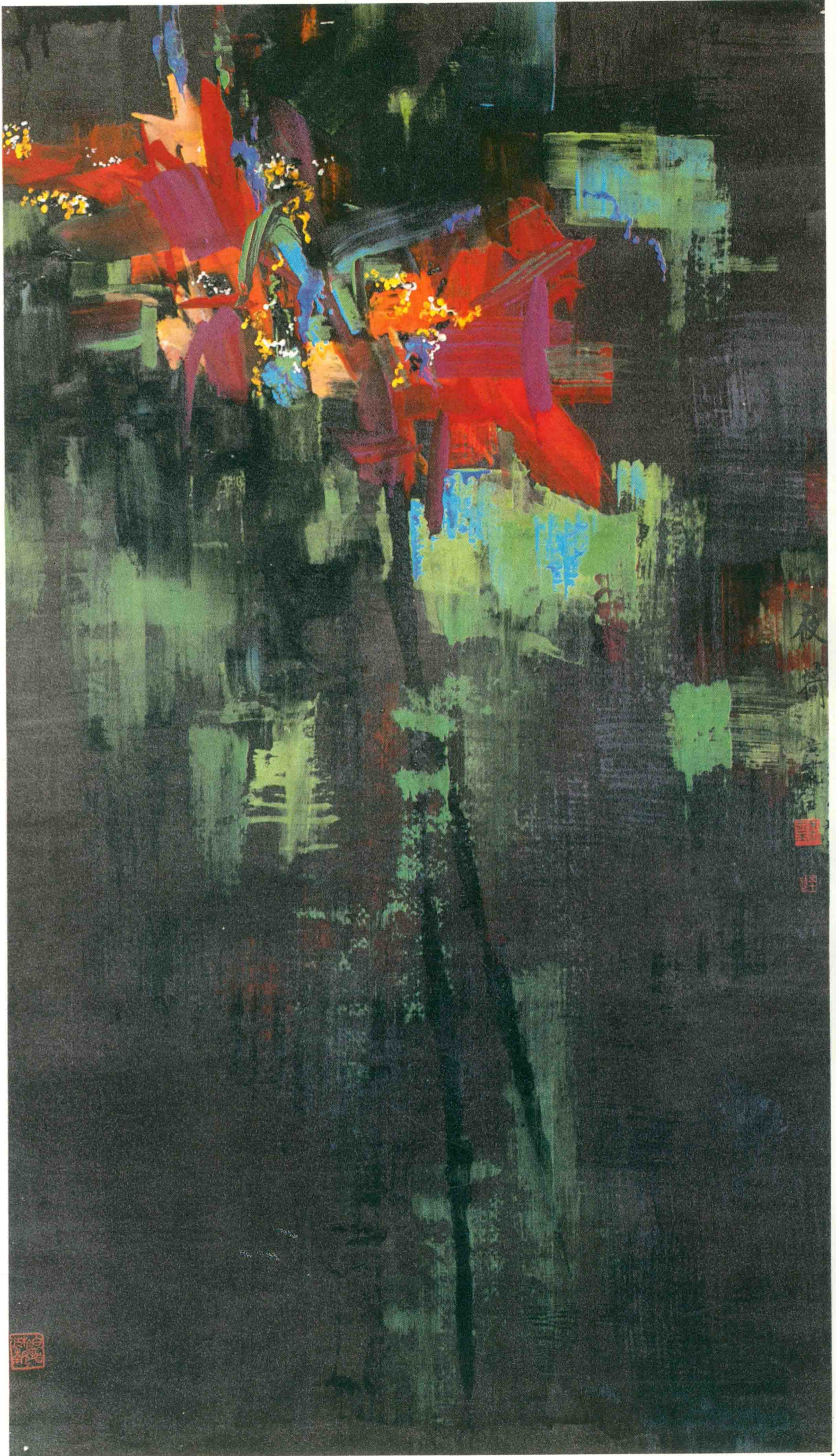
梅溪題記  
七七年  
八月九日



黃永玉  
丁巳年  
六月十四日

### The birthday of lotus flowers.

In the area around Suzhou in Jiangsu Province, the 20th day of the sixth month on the lunar calendar is the Festival for Viewing Lotus Flowers. On the 24th day of the sixth month every year a great number of visitors go by boat to the Lotus Lake outside the Fengmen Gate. This day is called the birthday of lotus flowers. The painter watched the lotus flowers till midnight and did this painting. 100 X 100 cm. 1977.



**Lotus flowers  
at night.**  
60 X 105 cm.



**A beneficial bird.**

With one eye open and the other closed, this owl has watched people of different kinds over the years. It is a beneficial bird, being the natural enemy of the "four pests" (a reference to the "Gang of Four" in the "cultural revolution"). The painter was criticized because of this work during the "cultural revolution".

60 X 92 cm. Inscription in 1978.

**Narcissuses by a stream.**  
100 X 104 cm 1976.



老子之身不足以其年而  
中一石一欲欲難去入西悅生  
然生之身也出則予胸中或本有一悅生以來而山若退也



**A pond in the woods.**  
100 X 90 cm. 1978.



**A wild bird amid autumn cogongrass.**  
100 X 110 cm. 1973.

