

Three Pathways - Chinese Master Printers come to Washington.

Judith van Praag

Art Partners International, headed by Georgetown artists Catherine Gill and Barbara Pitts initiate and organize cultural exchanges. Their goal is to encourage deeper understanding of different cultures by creating a network of people, one on one. In 2002 a delegation from Washington state, sponsored by The China Workers Center for International Exchange (of Bellevue) visited Beijing, Tianjiin, Xi'an, Wuhan, Nanjing, Suzhou, and Shanghai. Gill and Pitts presented work by Northwest artists to students and faculty at Chinese partner schools, they gave workshops and enjoyed residencies.

Now it is Washington's turn to welcome a Chinese delegation. Master printers Zhang Guanghui, Jin Bao Ping and Chen Qi will visit Seattle, Olympia and Spokane to demonstrate centuries-old and modern techniques and present workshops.

Chen Qi uses distinctive historical Asian icons in his contemporary watercolor woodblock prints. Some measure 8 by 8 feet and are created with many plates and printed by hand; quite a feat. His absolute mastery of technique marries tradition and innovation. Hair fine lines, total command of every gradation between black and white and moisture control make Chen Qi master of his medium. Born in Nanjing, China, Chen Qi, protégé of the honorable Wu Jun Fa, is currently deputy academic dean of Nanjing Arts Institute and deputy director of Shangmei College, Nanjing Arts Institute.

Jin Bao Ping's middle name means peace; an expression of his parents' hope and wish for the future. Being sent off with such high expectations has implications, the artist's early work shows preoccupation with China's unstable condition and reads like political manifestos; human figures expressing alienation, suspicion and mistrust, a rebellious response to the restrictions laid upon artists by Mao. Later Jin introduced the horse as main image, a symbol for freedom, a sure sign that the artist can now "walk his own road". Non traditional color washes applied with traditional brushes give a contemporary feel to his lithographs. Jin Bao Ping is professor and head of the lithography department of printmaking at the Xi'an Academy of

Fine Arts in Xi'an.

Zhang Guanhui is passionate about the regional Chu art of the pre-Qin Dynasty. His interest in history, literature and archeology speaks from his modern, colorful oeuvre. In the North Bank series (1990-1995) the use of 3, 4, or even more of the same size woodblocks creates depth as well as distance between his subject matter; traditional women, as described in Chu Ci (classical poetry written by Qu Yan) and modern day city dwellers. In 'One Who Washes Hair' (1996-2002), traditional Chinese "elegant culture" is replaced by vulgar themes (those who wash hair in public could be advertising the equivalent of a "massage parlor") expressed with the immediacy of relief print, the fusion between block and paper. Born in Wuhan, Zhang Guanhui is currently vice dean and vice professor of the print-painting Department at the Hubei Academy of Fine Art.

The exhibit "Three Paths to Expression: Printmakers from Central China" will be on view at Pratt Fine Art Center's Main Gallery, 1902 S. Main Street in Seattle and at the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction at the Old Capitol Building in Olympia, both from July 20 to August 13.

In association with Art Partners and Seattle Print Arts, Pratt Fine Art Center offers two Master Artist intensive workshops – the first in the Seattle Print Arts Visiting Artist Series. "A Modern Glimpse into an Ancient Technique: Woodblock prints; Focus on Expressive Inking", conducted by Chen Qi July 26-27 and "Chiaroscuro in Carving", lead by Zhang Guanhui July 28-29.

The workshops are held at Pratt's renovated Yellow Building (1905 S. Main) which houses a new and larger completely equipped print studio. For more info call (206) 328-2200 or visit www.pratt.org.

Jin Bao Ping will conduct a two-day noncredit Master Artist Institute in printmaking "Exploring Waterless Lithography: A Low Toxic Alternative", at Evergreen State College July 20-21. For more information call (360) 867-5515 or visit www.evergreen.edu/extendededucation

Twenty Washington high school students can participate in a free workshop lead by Chen Qi, Jin Bao Ping and Zhang Guang Hui

on Saturday August 7 from 10 A.M. - 4 P.M. at the Avanti High school, 1113 Legion Way SE in Olympia. Presses, supplies and lunch will be provided. There are still a few spots open, call Art Partners (206) 763-3135 email info@artpartners.net or visit www.artpartners.net

The woodcut prints the students create will be exhibited during a reception (free and open to the public) from 4-6 P.M. at the Olympia Center (corner Olympia & State Street), where Master Artists, students, members of the Olympia Art Commission, professional artists and college level educators will mix and mingle. Later on the student exhibition will travel throughout Washington State.

In addition to the above, the three artists will enjoy professional exchange opportunities with members of Seattle Print Arts, printmakers in Olympia, and at Gonzaga University in Spokane. They'll go on studio and collection tours all over the state.

This is a unique opportunity to see the art of and meet, or work with three inspiring Master Artists from central China. If anything, try to go to the free presentation of wood cutting methods and "meet the artists" reception at Pratt Fine Art Center, in the Yellow Building, 1905 S. Main in Seattle, on Thursday July 22 6-8 P.M.

The exchange was made possible by The Washington State Arts Commission, The City of Olympia Arts Commission Department of Parks and Recreation, The City of Seattle Office of Arts and Cultural Affairs, Seattle Print Arts, The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, Pratt Fine Arts Center, The Evergreen State College, Gonzaga University, Olympia School District, Art League North, the Jundt Collection Art Partners International, and many generous donations from businesses and individuals.

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