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LIU Post Review: Hillwood Art Museum

by Cristina Foglietta | February 29, 2012



One does not have to travel far to see quality art; just go to the second floor of Hillwood Commons. The Hillwood Art Museum at LIU Post has amazing work by professional artists. I recently visited and was impressed by what the museum has to offer.

The museum is showcasing *Mind Space: Minimalism in Contrasts* from now until April 5th. The artists on display include He Xiangyu, Zhang Yu, Lei Hong, and Zhu Jinshi. All four are Chinese abstract artists who convey the concept of Maximalism to a global audience.

My favorite piece at this museum was He Xiangyu's fan series. There are five white fans, all made of silk, which feature scenery from China. In one year, Xiangyu cooked thousands of tons of Coca-Cola and crystallized the resulting liquid into powder creating his ink. I think his series of fans symbolizes going through hardships and overcoming them.

The fan series is an example of reforming traditional wash paintings with Western expressionism and the patterns of Western folk art. According to *Mind Space: Maximalism in Contrasts*, by Gao Minglu, the curator for this exhibition, Xiangyu pursues the creation of wash paintings with oriental conceptual elements in the 1980s through the expression of personal symbols and intense emotions.

The first fan has a picture of a secluded house surrounded by trees on top of a mountain by a lake. Movement is definitely occurring in the picture. Movement can be seen in the ripples in the ocean created by the rocks and in the different placement and directions of tree branches. The branches of the trees are full grown and have lots of leaves. Nearly the entire fan was done in ink. I think this fan shows someone or something that is usually abundant and well off but is now facing trouble for the first time.

The second fan shows high mountains with growth branches on top and leaves. There are a few houses in the middle of the fan next to tree branches. There are fluffy clouds on top, high on the fan. I think this fan represents obstacles and progress in one's life.

Enormous rocks take up most of the third fan. There are small branches, which are almost bare on the rocks. The leaves are starting to grow on top of the branches a little. There is a lake next to a rock on the right hand side. Two men have an old-fashioned wagon with three oxen, and they are trying to get across the lake. There is clearly movement in this piece. One man is curled in a ball, hugging his legs, and sitting in the back of the wagon. The other man is guiding the oxen through the lake, standing in the lake with them. The front ox is no longer in the water; he pushed hard. The other two oxen are still in the lake, trying to get out. There is a house in the corner of this piece and a dark, black sky. I think this fan represents the process of overcoming your difficulties and the struggle of trying to get through hard times.

The fourth fan has a mountain on the right hand side with long, full-leaved branches up high. The sky is bright, and there are similar mountains in the distance. I think this fan represents the accomplishment of finally overcoming a difficult struggle.

The fifth and final fan is a bright white sky. There is a house surrounded by long, full-growth branches. I think this represents growth, renewal and rebirth. A fair portion of the fan is blank. I think that this represents that the rest of the future is still unknown and unwritten.

So, next time you are in Hillwood and you have finished your meal or your club meeting, check out what The Hillwood Art Museum has to offer. The Museum is open from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday, from 9:30 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. on Thursday, and from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. on Saturday. The Hillwood Art Museum's phone number is 516-299-4073. Its website is <http://www.liu.edu/museum>.