



HUNG LIU

A NEW RELEASE FROM PAULSON PRESS

Paulson Press in Berkeley, California is pleased to announce the release of six new color etchings by Bay Area painter Hung Liu. These print editions will be available for release October 2003.

Hung Liu returned for her third project with Paulson Press in the fall of 2003. In this project, Hung embodies the intimacy of hand-drawn images and beautiful materiality reminiscent of her paintings. Liu references historical photographs, and using an improvisational painting style, liberates the rigid methodology of socialist realism - the style in which she was trained. Her images dissolve the photo-realism of propaganda art, in effect converting socialist realism into social realism. As art critic Kenneth Baker aptly notes, "Many modern artists have proclaimed painting a realm of freedom, but too little contemporary work makes us feel the truth of this view. Bay Area painter Hung Liu's new work does..."

In her La Ran series, she captures the likenesses of young women, who share the foreground with prominent patterns that recall Chinese batik, or La Ran, practiced in the minority regions of Guizhou province in Southwestern China. Liu's bold, colorful and orderly patterns honor traditional Guizhou batik design in their simplicity and power. Liu focuses viewers' attention equally upon the subject's face and the batik pattern, while hinting at clothing through painterly strokes and drips. Similar to some of Liu's early paintings, Liu affixes objects, such as mirrors, ceramic figurines and glass bottles, to the work. These "offerings" serve as allegories, the figurines in particular bearing witness to history and its consequences.

In La Ran: Pomegranate, the coral-colored flowered background actively engages in a dialogue with an androgynous-looking young woman, clothed in a delicately drawn jacket punctuated by jade green buttons. From the print, Liu suspends a cinnabar mirror, a male ceramic figurine and a glass bottle. In La Ran: Butterfly, Liu poses a beautiful woman looking away from the viewer, her elaborate coiffure mirroring the subtle, cream butterfly pattern. Liu draws parallels between the woman and butterfly as beautiful yet elusive subjects. In this print, Liu attaches a glass bottle and a pair of ceramic male figurines. La Ran: Phoenix, Liu juxtaposes the image of a stoic woman with a vibrant yellow and red stylized phoenix pattern, and attaches a glass bottle, a male figurine and Chinese opera masks.

In Liu's series, Men at War, she displays a greater focus on what she calls the "mythic poses" that underlay the photographic surfaces of history, including the tension inherent in elemental human activities such as laboring and competitive games. The situations depicted are derived from particular, traditional Chinese circumstances, but seem epic, trans-historical, and allegorical. With an overlay of line drawings of traditional Chinese images such as screens, starcharts and stylized human figures, Liu offers her subjects artistic evidence of their own rich heritage - as if to remind or comfort them.

In Men at War: Battle I, the laborers deeply tanned torsos echo the color of the tree that they struggle to fell. The background changes from rose to cream, and is overlaid with a subtle depiction in red of women, as well as a peacock and dragon. As noted by Baker, the figures' proximity represents a collision of social roles impossible in classic Chinese art or in traditional Chinese society. Liu also attaches objects to this print, in this case a silk, embroidered box and a figurine of a woman playing a musical instrument. In Men at War: Battle II, a drawing of a woman and Chinese screen are situated behind chess players occupying the foreground. A silk embroidered pillow and a figurine of a woman playing musical instrument are attached. In Men at War: Starchart, Liu uses the same chess players as in Men at War: Battle II, but overlays the image with a starchart (the most commonly used method of reading astrology charts in China), prompting a comparison between the carefully planned movements of a chess game and the potentially preordained events of one's life.

1318 Tenth Street Berkeley, California 94710

Tel 510 559 2088 Fax 510 559 2085

e-mail: info@paulsonpress.com



La Ran: Pomegranate, 2003
Color softground, spitbite aquatint and aquatint etching with scrape and burnish with attached objects
Image size: 22 x 17"
Paper size: 31 x 25"
Edition of 20



La Ran: Butterfly, 2003
Color softground, spitbite aquatint and aquatint etching with scrape and burnish with attached objects
Image size: 22 x 17"
Paper size: 31 x 25"
Edition of 20



La Ran: Phoenix, 2003
Color softground, spitbite aquatint and aquatint etching with scrape and burnish with attached objects
Image size: 22 x 17"
Paper size: 31 x 25"
Edition of 20



Men at War: Battle I, 2003
Color softground, spitbite aquatint and aquatint etching with scrape and burnish with attached objects
Image size: 17 x 22"
Paper size: 26 x 30"
Edition of 20



Men at War: Battle II, 2003
Color softground, spitbite aquatint and aquatint etching with scrape and burnish with attached objects
Image size: 17 x 22"
Paper size: 26 x 30"
Edition of 20



Men at War: Starchart, 2003
Color softground, spitbite aquatint and aquatint etching with scrape and burnish
Image size: 17 x 22"
Paper size: 26 x 30"

In essence, Hung Liu addresses the "cultural collisions" she has faced since coming of age during the decade of the Cultural Revolution in China, and since emigrating to the United States in 1984. With her move West came the shedding of her social realism training, and the incorporation of more Western-based painting styles. The beauty of her work underscores her thoughtful exploration of such probing issues as the conflicts between personal and national identity. Her search for, and discovery of, her own distinct voice as a woman and Chinese-born, American artist echoes through these exquisite prints.

Liu was born in Changchun, China in 1948, growing up under the Maoist regime. She emigrated to the US in 1984 to attend the University of California, San Diego, where she received her MFA. She currently lives in Oakland and is Chair of the painting department at Mills College in Oakland where she has taught since 1990. The recipient of numerous awards and honors, Liu has received two painting fellowships from the NEA. She is also being honored with a 10-year retrospective of her paintings that opened in 1998, traveling throughout the United States. Her work is included in many major museum collections including The Whitney Museum of American Art, The Walker Art Center, The Dallas Museum of Fine Art, The Spencer Museum of Art, and locally, The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Jose Museum of Art, The Oakland Museum, and the M.H. de Young Memorial Museums.

For more information about these prints, please contact Paulson Press at 510.559.2088. Prices and availability subject to change without notice.