



HUNG LIU

A NEW RELEASE FROM PAULSON PRESS

Paulson Press in Berkeley, California is pleased to announce the release of seven new color etchings by Bay Area painter Hung Liu. Completed in July of this year, these print editions will be available for release October 1997.

Hung Liu does not limit herself to any one medium in her larger body of work, which includes painting, installation and mixed media pieces. And, true to this vision, these new multiple plate prints show the range of effects possible in intaglio printmaking. Working from an impressive archive of early Chinese photographs, Hung Liu used softground, a technique that picks up even the most subtle line details, to draw figures directly onto the plate in both *Witnesses* and *Mu Nu/Yellow River*. In *Passion Flower*, she combined this technique with silkscreens that were used to transfer images to the plates. She frequently used spitbite (painting acid directly onto the plate) to create the gestural and painterly drips that she achieves in her paintings by dissolving the paint with linseed oil. In the set of prints called *Permutations*, Liu explored the use of aquatint in achieving broad areas of flat color as backdrops for her appropriated imagery.

Witnesses shows two small children dressed in traditional Chinese clothing, richly patterned with embroidery. The details of their clothing are somewhat obscured by painterly drips and misty areas of sepia, ochres and reddish-brown colors. Liu drew a festive ornament (a traditional Chinese folk art object) to the left of the children. She often incorporates objects in painted form or attaches the actual objects to a painting as an allegory; here, it might symbolize the beautifully dressed children as charming and quiet witnesses to a rapidly changing culture.

Liu used a similar palette of neutral earth tones in *Mu Nu/Yellow River* which shows two figures leaning down, ropes stretched tight behind them as they work to pull an unseen boat up river. "Mu Nu" means "mother" and "daughter" in Chinese and reveals the toiling figures as female. The women's faces are obscured so that we just see the silhouettes of their hunched bodies struggling with what is traditionally a man's job. The beautiful atmospheric effect achieved by the use of spitbite is reminiscent of traditional Chinese landscape painting, only translated through a Westernized conceptual style.

In *Passion Flower* two figures pose in a boat set against a background made from two heavily aquatinted plates of ultramarine blue and violet, which, when combined, produced a velvet-like purple. The scene is from a photograph that appeared in a vintage "catalog" of Chinese prostitutes (who were often assigned flower names) dressed in both Western and traditional Chinese attire that appealed to the westernized sensibility of the male customer. Each corner boasts a passion flower in full bloom that Liu drew from four different angles. Liu is perhaps best known for her paintings of prostitutes that present an interplay of cultural viewpoints: Chinese and American, male and female, past and present, artist and viewer.

Permutations is a set of four prints that deal with the tenets of Chinese culture. Old-fashioned acrobats are pictured as if in performance, carefully balancing objects used in their acts, such as hoops, plates, parasols and yo-yos. These figures can be seen as an allegory for Liu's efforts to balance the two strong cultural traditions that have shaped her life. The left section of each print is devoted to a grid of geometric shapes that, upon closer examination, reveal themselves to be different arrangements of a "Magic Square." Liu is referring to "qi ao ban," translated as "seven magic boards," the ancient Chinese game of math in which a square is broken into seven geometric shapes that can be reconfigured into unlimited permutations. The bright colors that dominate this set of prints, and the others from this project, are common in traditional Chinese folk art, an ongoing visual source for Liu.

In her work, 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

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Witnesses, 1997
Color softground and soapground aquatint with softground
Somerset white paper
Image size 12 1/2" x 10 1/2"
Paper size 20 1/2" x 17 1/2"
Edition of 35



Mu Nu / Yellow River, 1997
Color spitbite aquatint with softground
Somerset white paper
Image size 16" x 28"
Paper size 25" x 36"
Edition of 35



Passion Flower, 1997
Color aquatint etching with softground and scrape and burnish
Somerset soft white paper
Image size 20" x 20"
Paper size 29 1/2" x 28"
Edition of 35



Permutation / Hoops, 1997
Color aquatint and hardground etching
Somerset white paper
Image size 18" x 24"
Paper size 26" x 31"
Edition of 20



Permutation / Yo-Yo, 1997
Color aquatint and hardground etching
Somerset white paper
Image size 18" x 24"
Paper size 26" x 31"
Edition of 20



Permutation / Parasol, 1997
Color aquatint and hardground etching
Somerset white paper
Image size 18" x 24"
Paper size 26" x 31"
Edition of 20



Permutation / Plates, 1997
Color aquatint and hardground etching
Somerset white paper
Image size 18" x 24"
Paper size 26" x 31"
Edition of 20

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.

Now Chair of the painting department at Mills College in Oakland where she has taught since 1990, Hung Liu received her BFA from China's Beijing Teachers College in 1975, an MFA from the University of California, San Diego, and the equivalent of a master's degree in fine arts in 1981 from the Central Academy of Fine Art, also in Beijing. The recipient of numerous awards and honors, Liu has received two painting fellowships from the NEA. In 1993 her installation at the M.H. DeYoung Memorial Museum in San Francisco was selected as the best show of the season by an emerging artist by the International Association of Art Critics. Her paintings will be featured in an exhibition in October at the Steinbaum Krauss Gallery in New York, and at the Rena Bransten Gallery in San Francisco in May of 1998. She is also being honored with a 10-year retrospective of her paintings that opens in 1998, traveling throughout the United States.

For more information about these prints, please contact Paulson Press at (510) 559-2088. Prices subject to change.