



Press Release
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EXHIBITION HIGHLIGHTS RECENT WORK BY ACCLAIMED CHINESE –AMERICAN ARTIST
HUNG LIU: APSARAS
November 13-January 2

An exhibition of the recent work by the California-based artist Hung Liu will open at the Fort Collins Museum of Contemporary Art on November 13, 2009. Organized by the Nancy Hoffmann Gallery in New York, this exhibition focuses on Liu's response to the 2008 Sichuan Earthquake that killed approximately 90,000 people, including thousands of school children that died in their classrooms.



In the year after the quake, Liu devoted herself to the *Apsaras* paintings that depict people in the aftermath of the disaster. The subject of these paintings is less the disaster itself than the mythic emotions on the faces of the survivors: grief, shock, confusion, courage and mourning. Passing across their faces are traditional images of Buddhist flying angels, known as Apsaras, or heavenly nymphs.

In the late 1970s Liu studied and copied the Buddhist images that are painted on the walls of the ancient Dunhuang Caves in Gansu Province in the Gobi Desert. These flying angels were originally meant as aids to meditation and enlightenment and in Liu's paintings they become visual offerings, acting like prayers in an attempt to repair a picture broken by the earthquake.



In addition to these human subjects, Liu has also painted a sequence of four images of a dead deer she found and photographed as she was hiking near her home in Oakland, California. Liu, whose work is based on contemporary or historic photographs, photographed the animal from above and found that the prone animal seemed to be flying or rotating through space. The four canvases, each with a painted variation of the deer, represent the seasons and the cardinal directions. Along with the grace of its limbs and body, the sense of the deer's weightlessness reminded Liu of the Apsaras of Dunhuang.

In an October 23rd New York Times review of the show in New York, art critic Holland Carter wrote:

Evocations of protection and mourning recur. The form of a dead deer floats angelically in space. Memorial candles flame against a dark ground. A bird descends. An old woman weeps. It's easy to imagine such paintings turning sentimental. In Ms. Liu's hands they never do. Everything — the images, the overlays, the forthright brushwork, the pictures as a group — is soberly judged, deeply felt, mature. It's hard to ask for more.

Hung Liu was born in Changchun, China in 1948. She grew up during the Cultural Revolution that was intended to purge China of any remnants of bourgeois culture. After being sent to the countryside for four years to work with peasants in the fields, Liu began studying art. In 1984, she obtained a passport from the Chinese government and enrolled in the visual arts program at the University of California, San Diego.



Liu's work has been shown at the Brooklyn Museum of Art, the Corcoran Gallery of Art, The Denver Art Museum, The Smithsonian Institution and the Oakland Museum of Art in California. She is widely collected nationally and internationally and her work is included in the collections of the Dallas Museum of Art, The De Young Museum in California, the National Museum of American Art in Washington and the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis. The artist has twice received a Painting Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts and is the recipient of a Joan Mitchell Foundation grant.

FCMOCA information:

201 S College Ave.
Fort Collins, CO 80524

Hours: Tuesday through Friday, 10-5
Saturday, Noon-5
Closed Sunday and Monday.

Admission: \$5.00 Adults
\$2.00 Seniors
Free Admission for FCMOCA members, students, and children.

For more information call: 970-482-2787

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