Politics in Art
Asian Style in the Face of Tradition and Change

Selections from the Collection of Andrew B. Kim & Wan Kyun Rha Kim
Walsh Library Gallery

presents

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Andrew B. Kim and Wan Kyun Rha Kim

November 3, 2000 - January 7, 2001

Reception
November 17, 2000  5-9 p.m.

Sponsored by
The Asia Center
and
The Division of University Affairs

Co-curators
Scott Hankins and Nina Pierro,
Students in the Graduate Program in Museum Professions

Faculty Adviser
Jo Ann Cotz, Gallery Director
At Fifty

The Fates do not cow the man who fears not old age!
Long years have passed since we shared wine and debate
Over those who would be heroes for times yet to come:
The wind-like sword of Wei dismayed the tiger,
And at Wu's banner, battle-stained crimson, the dragon was sore amaze.
The tortuous paths of Shu veil many an ancient tear,
But in the expanse of this virgin land I have been renewed.
My brushstrokes conquer the universe. I smile to see
My native land, wrapped in all the colours of the dawn.

by Muli Tang
Introduction

Over the past two decades, it has been our pride, privilege, and pleasure to have collected the work of some remarkably gifted artists from Mainland China. In 1983 we started to assemble our collection of oil paintings of "Revolution Art" from China. These artists who experienced the turmoil of the Cultural Revolution are now painting landscapes, portraits, still life and most recently abstract works. Their constant experimenting with new techniques will continue, we believe. We have interfaced with these artists, and we have kept up with them in their new works. We have had long visits with them in their studios and homes. We have just returned from a visit with Muli Tang in Montreal, Canada, having a private viewing of his recent works. Wang Zhenghua and Zhang Mingji are always nearby in New York City, and we feel that they are like our own family members. We also hear from time to time from other artists who now live in China.

The uniqueness of our collection might be that we are remaining in contact with each artist. We have tried to collect, as much as we could, their entire life's work. Several pieces in the collection stand out among the finest examples created at critical moments in China's modern history. When Jo Ann Catz expressed her interest in exhibiting some of these paintings at Walsh Library Gallery, we embraced the idea of showing the collection for the first time to the Seton Hall University community. Ours has been a living experience. We wish others to enjoy and share the excitement and fun with us.

Wan Kyun Rha Kim
August 15, 2000

Thoughts about Politics in Art

In this exhibition we present a selection of the works in the art collection of Andrew and Wan Kyun Rha Kim. The thirty-three works exhibited are by artists from Korea and China, and date from the last half of the twentieth century. In this collection we see the role politics can play in artistic expression, showing both a free and imposed aesthetic. To understand this effect, the exhibition is divided into three stylistic areas: traditional, propaganda and revolution, and a new freedom. These styles do not follow a chronological path, but are fluid, reflecting both the traditions of the past and the current artistic style practiced. Each is influenced by the political ideology of the time.

Traditional
Asian art reflects a religious belief in peace and harmony with nature. The traditional medium used was watercolors and ink, the two often combining to show nature and man's relationship to nature. This traditional imagery is centered, and consists of a shallow depth of field or perspective. The background for these images is usually washed and incomplete. The focus is on the central image not the entire picture plane. We see examples of this in the works by Korean artist Lee So-Ji, but also in Chinese artists Wang Zhenghua's Children Going to School and the series of works by Zhang Hongtu. Despite the tight control over artistic expression in China after the communists came to power in 1949, artists still used this traditional form but were forced to redesign their work in a politically acceptable format. The work by Zhenghua, painted in the new medium- oil, uses red scarves on the children (the symbol of the Party) as a central feature in an otherwise traditional format. In Hongtu's watercolors and oil paintings we see depictions of simple landscape features that were deemed "not harmful" by the Party.

Revolution and Propaganda
clearly shows the new imposed style of the Communist Party. Images are realistic, full of detail, and have proper perspective. Artists were retrained in the Soviet Socialist Realism style. Art was no longer a means to express ones love of beauty and nature, but was instead used by the government to further its ideology. People were citizens of the state, working and living only to serve and better the state. Images from large-scale historical oil paintings (Yenan Political Rectification Speech, 1949-1950 by Luo Gongliu) to propaganda posters (see series by Xu Wenhua), show citizens in their new roles and glorify Party leadership, especially Chairman Mao.

As the century moved towards a close, we see change again. After the death of Mao in 1976, strict control began to loosen. Finally, by the 1980s, there was a new freedom in China. Zhang Mingji's, Memory of the Window, July 1994, introduces this section:

During the Cultural Revolution, people would often break each other's windows. However, if you put Mao's portrait in the window, no one would dare do such a thing. Here, the window is broken, exposing the ocean and horizon beyond.*

In A New Freedom, we look beyond the Cultural Revolution to a new cultural liberalism and finally a new aesthetic. As restraints from the government loosened, artists explored both traditional and contemporary styles. The goal was a new artistic vocabulary that could incorporate both the old and new. This is evident in the strong detailed realism found in February, 1994 and The Misty Li River, 1993; in abstract images like Mao, 1996; or the Renaissance-esque Bacchus, Apollo and Mars Hunting Together, 1994. As different styles continue to be explored and the political sphere becomes more inviting, what new role will artists play? What new dimensions will experimentation bring?

Scott Hankins and Nina Pierro, Co-curators
September 2000

About the Artists

Lee So-Ji
Born in Chong, Chongpukdo, Korea. Lee So-Ji works in the footsteps of the past. His lithographs reflect traditional Asian style and show the customs of the past, despite rapid modernization throughout his homeland. Lee's works have been shown in numerous exhibitions in Japan, Korea, and the United States over the last thirty years.

Wang Zhenghua
Wang Zhenghua graduated from the Central Academy of Fine Arts, Beijing in 1961. Since then he has had a successful career as a painter and art professor. Professor Wang has gained acclaim for both his early realist paintings as well as his more recent work in romantic abstraction, winning numerous awards. His The Remaining Years won one of the only fifteen awards of excellence in the First Exhibition of Chinese Oil Paintings in 1987. Professor Wang's work has been shown in solo and group exhibitions in China and abroad. Recently, his work has been shown at the Oriental Gallery, New York; the Art House Gallery, San Francisco; and is entered in The Great Exhibition of Oil Painting of the Century 2000, Beijing.

Zhang Hongtu
Zhang Hongtu studied at the Central Institute of Arts and Craft (BA, 1969) in Beijing and the Art Students League, New York (1982-1986). Zhang remained in school until 1973 during the Cultural Revolution (1966-76). In addition to his studies, he spent time traveling in China and in 1982, came to study in New York. Since then Zhang's work has changed significantly from the semi-abstract early style seen in this exhibition to the Material Mao series shown at the Bronx Museum of Art in 1995-96. His work has been shown in numerous solo and group exhibitions and publications, most recently in New Painting, the Cheryl McGinnis Gallery New York; Repaint Chinese Shan Shui Painting, Yale University; and Lineage, d.u.m.b.o. Arts Center, Brooklyn, New York.

Luo Gongliu
Luo Gongliu was born in Guangdong in 1916. He was trained in painting at the Hangzhou National Art Academy and the Lu Xun Art Academy in the 1930s. After 1949 he was appointed to the Administrative staff that made policy for the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing, where he made substantial contributions to the development of its oil painting program. Luo Gongliu undertook advanced study at the Repin Art Academy between 1955 and 1958. He directed the history painting campaign of 1961. In 1996 there was a retrospective on his work at the Yanhuang Art Museum, Beijing, China. Following the model of Soviet Socialist Realism Luo Gongliu has created powerful historical paintings. Not only do they glorify the image of Mao, but they also instill pride in a nation in the midst of turmoil and change.

Muli Tang
Muli Tang was born in Shanghai, China in 1947. Muli Tang began drawing and painting at an early age. He taught himself to draw while studying art books. He received his formal education at the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing, where he earned a master's degree in 1980. He earned his second master's degree in 1984 from the Royal Academy of Art in London. In 1983, he was named by the Peter Moore Foundation as one of the fifteen most outstanding artists in the United Kingdom. He has been a professor at the Central Academy of Fine Art 1980-81 and a visiting professor and artist-in-residence at Cornell University (1985-89). The university commissioned and permanently displays many of his large-scale paintings. He continues to be exhibited and collected by many institutions. He has been particularly productive in portraiture for outstanding figures in many fields. He and his family currently reside in Montreal, Canada.

Muli Tang has traveled through nearly thirty countries to study masterpieces, famous scenery and native culture. These experiences resulted in the development of a graceful style and impeccable skill. One senses from his art not only a love for life and nature, but also a pursuit of perfection and sensibility. His beautiful images of China relate this love and keen sense of nature. His glimpses of the common man and woman bring us closer to the heart of a nation previously exotic and distant. These personal portraits tell of a universality and beauty in all of nature's gifts.

Wang Yufung
This oil on canvas depiction of Chairman Mao painted by Wang Yufung in 1968 is characteristic of the Socialist Realism style being produced by Chinese artists during the Cultural Revolution. In this scene Mao Zedong is shown as a larger than life figure in an agricultural setting dressed as one of the people. Great emphasis was placed on figure painting during the 1950's and 1960's.

Xu Wenhua
Xu Wenhua graduated from the Shanghai Academy of Drama in 1979 and worked as an instructor of Industrial Design until 1985. In 1986, Xu moved to New York City and continued working as an artist. His work has been shown in many exhibitions internationally, and he has received many prestigious awards in his home country and internationally. His works are held in the collection of The Fine Arts Museum of China in Beijing.

One of Xu's paintings was featured on the cover of Time magazine on April 29, 1991. The original drawings of Xu's posters (shown in
this exhibit) have been copied multiple times and circulated in some of the most remote areas of China. Posters were used to communicate political messages as well as to entertain.

Zhang Mingji

From the age of five in the City of Dongsheng, Mongolia, where he was born in 1952, Zhang Mingji has been putting his artistic talents to work. He received his first award when he was eight for a painting entitled Cat of My Family. His first picture and poetry book, The Half Bowl of Water, was published in 1972. Thanks to the book’s success, the Inner Mongolian People’s Publishing House employed Zhang Mingji as an art editor. He graduated from the Tianjing Art Institute in 1978. That same year, he enrolled in the oil painting department of the Central Academy of Fine Arts, Beijing, where he received a Master’s degree in 1980, remaining at the Academy as a lecturer.

In 1984 he immigrated to Australia and was awarded an Australia-China Council grant for a painting project entitled Life in Australia in 1985. In 1989 Zhang Mingji moved to the United States and enrolled at New York University for his Ph.D. He currently resides in New York.

In the paintings of Zhang Mingji we see a new freedom emerge from a classical background. The influence of European classical and surrealist masters is evident in his style. His subject matter gives us a view of a creative mind unleashed in a world full of stimulation and unending avenues to explore. It is in this new freedom that Zhang Mingji can express his unique philosophy of life.

Ai Xuan

Ai Xuan, was born in Hebei Province in 1947 to a literary family. His father was Ai Qing, one of China’s most prominent poets. He began his art training after enrolling at the Beijing Central Academy of Fine Arts Preparatory School in 1963. The Cultural Revolution began shortly before his graduation in 1967 and interrupted further formal training. From 1969 to 1973, he served on a military farm in Tibet. After 1973, he was stationed in Chengdu as an artist and was able to devote himself to his art. While stationed in the border region in the mid-1970s he created propaganda art.

Since 1980 Ai Xuan’s paintings have been exhibited six times in the Chinese National Exhibition. His work won the silver medal in the Second National Youth Exhibition of 1981. In 1986, he participated in the Second Asian Art Exhibition in Japan and the Eighth National Salon in Paris, in which he received an honorable mention. In 1987, he moved to the United States, where his works received great praise in The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, Art News and The Christian Science Monitor. That same year, his paintings were shown in New York at the Harkness House exhibition, Contemporary Oil Paintings from the People’s Republic of China. Hefner Galleries, New York, held solo exhibitions of his work in 1987 and 1988. After a lengthy stay in the States, the artist returned to China, where he continues to paint.

Ai Xuan along with many young painters was sent to remote locations in the late 60’s in response to student uprisings in the cities. As a direct result of this unique experience he has created powerful images of Tibetans and Nomads, which are hauntingly beautiful and not easily forgotten.

Cao Liwei

Cao Liwei was born in Liaoning, China in 1956. He studied at the Beijing Central Academy of Fine Arts from 1978 to 1982 and won first prize for his entry in the graduation exhibition. Between 1981 and 1985 he traveled extensively thought out the Provinces of Qinghong and Gangsu as well as Tibet, getting a feel for the landscape of these areas.

In 1985 Cao Liwei earned the silver medal at the National Exhibition of Fine arts. Since that time, his was has been exhibited in France, Canada, and Japan, and in New York at the 1987 Harkness House exhibition, Contemporary Oil Painting from the People’s Republic of China, and the Hefner Galleries in 1988 and 1989. He now resides in New York.

Cao Liwei’s travels to the outer regions of China and Tibet give a vastness to his landscapes. They invoke the feeling of never-ending earth and sky in all the harshness and beauty of nature at its most elemental. The trees, stones and mountains in his painting seem to dominate his landscapes with their ageless strength and wisdom while his human and animal images seem to blend into and become one with this power of nature.

Cao Liwei depicts a land where harsh reality constantly challenges the body and its beauty infinitely stimulates the soul.

Wan Kyun Rha Kim

Wan Kyun Rha Kim was born in Seoul, Korea. She attended undergraduate and graduate school at Smith College where she holds a degree in Physical Chemistry. Mrs. Kim currently resides in New York City with her husband Dr. Andrew B. Kim. They have two sons. She has spent many years as a key figure in the New York community, serving as member, consultant and advisor on many boards and committees. Her leadership and charisma have allowed her to embrace many areas of interest including art, music and golf.

Mrs. Kim’s great passion for art has inspired her to create her own paintings. Living in New York City is a constant stimulation and inspiration to her. It is her “museum without walls”. The many artists’ work she has collected and her personal friendships with them over the years have also influenced Mrs. Kim. Her artistic style is constantly developing and changing while maintaining her own individual strength and passion.
Works on Exhibit

Tradition and Change

Asian pride in tradition and a rich heritage make scenes of everyday life full of meaning and emotion. A deep sense of purpose and community give root to a shared identity. These scenes of times past charm us with their simple message and subtle nuance. Step back in time and look closely for those elements which carry forward in the dynamics of change.

Lee So-Ji

A Market Day, 1981, lithograph on rice paper, 14” x 128”
Kung-Kang-Su-Wol-Rae, no date, litho 100/80 rice paper, 15” x 15”
Skylark, 1981, lithograph 100/70, on rice paper, 15” x 15”
Needle’s Eye, 1981, lithograph 100/89, on rice paper, 15” x 15”
Switch, 1981, lithograph 100/92, on rice paper, 15” x 15”
Bedwetting, 1981, lithograph 100/78, on rice paper, 15” x 15”

Wang Zhenghua

Children Going to School, 1963, oil sketch on paper board, 10 1/4” x 13 1/2”

Zhang Hongtu

Ball Players, 1963, watercolor, 7 3/4” x 9 5/8”
Farm, 1972, oil on canvas, 5 1/2” x 9”
The Fallen Tree, 1959, watercolor on paper, 9” x 7 1/2”
Wind, 1963, watercolor on paper, 3 1/2” x 7 3/4”

The Fallen Tree, 1959, Zhang Hongtu, watercolor on paper, 9” x 7 1/2”

Children Going to School, 1963, Wang Zhenghua
oil sketch on paper board, 10 1/4” x 13 1/2”

A Market Day (detail), 1981, Lee So-Ji, lithograph on rice paper, 14” x 128”
Standing Mao, Wang Yufung, October, 1968, oil on canvas, 26 1/2" x 20"

Mao's Children, 1965, Xu Wenhua, oil on canvas, 32 1/2" x 33 1/2"

The Young Bugler, 1971, Multi Tang, oil on canvas, 29" x 28"

Standing Mao, October, 1968, oil on canvas, 26 1/2" x 20"

Mao's Children, 1965, oil on canvas, 32 1/2" x 33 1/2"

The Soldier, 1979, oil on canvas, 21 1/2" x 17 1/2"

Love Your People, 1976, (Scenes of 1976 earthquake of Tang Shan City in background) poster, watercolor on paper, 21" x 32"

Study Hard, Prepare for the Progress of the Socialist State, 1980, poster, watercolor on paper, 32" x 21"

Great Progress for the Socialist Mother Country, no date, poster, watercolor on paper, 18" x 28 1/2"

Love Your People, October 1983, poster, watercolor on paper, 30 1/2" x 21 1/2"

Advocating Education, no date, poster, watercolor on paper, 20 1/4" x 32"

Yanan Political Rectification Speech, 1949-1950, oil sketch on canvas, 27 3/4" x 35"

Revolution and Propaganda

Traditional elements are moved aside in China as social realism dominates the artistic scene. With the mandated glorification of the new Communist Party and its political leadership, especially Chairman Mao. During the Cultural Revolution (1966 - 1976), we see the rise of Revolution Art, which takes on a life and realism of its own. It carries the people to a new time where the politics of the past must blend with the move towards technology and industry to create a new and modern path.

Luo Gongliu

Yanan Political Rectification Speech, 1949-1950, oil sketch on canvas, 27 3/4" x 35"

Multi Tang

The Young Bugler, 1971, oil on canvas, 39" x 28"

Wang Yufung

Standing Mao, October, 1968, oil on canvas, 26 1/2" x 20"

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Love Your People, October 1983, poster, watercolor on paper, 30 1/2" x 21 1/2"

Advocating Education, no date, poster, watercolor on paper, 20 1/4" x 32"
A New Freedom

As we look through the window of change there is an endless horizon. With the death of Mao in 1976 there is a revival of cultural liberalism. The push toward economic development brings an end to isolationism. By the end of the century artists looked to the world for inspiration and embraced artistic freedom in subject and style.

Zhang Mingji

Memory of the Window, July, 1994, oil on canvas, 24" x 18"
Bacchus, Apollo, and Mars Hunting Together, April 1994, oil on canvas, 59" x 47"
A Tang-Dynasty Moon, Oct 1995, oil on canvas, 30" x 40"

Ai Xuan

February, 1984, oil on canvas, 30 1/4" x 30 1/2"

Xu Wenhua

The Dress, 1980, watercolor on paper, 32" x 22 3/8"
Best Time to Stretch Out and Fly with the Wind, June 1985, poster, watercolor on paper, 18" x 24"

Wang Zhenghua

Old Man at the Fire, 1988, oil on canvas, 31" x 31"
Nude, 1988, oil on canvas, 31 1/2" x 21"
Under the Sun, 1992, oil on board, 9 3/4" x 15 3/4"

Cao Liwei

Herding in the Meadow, 1990, oil on canvas, 24" x 32"

Muli Tang

The Misty Li River, 1993, oil on canvas, 23" x 47"

Wan Kyun Rha Kim

Mao, January, 1996, oil on canvas, 24" x 18"

The Misty Li River, 1993, Tang Muli, oil on canvas, 23" x 47"

Mao, January, 1996, Wan Kyun Rha Kim, oil on canvas, 24" x 16"
Exhibition Events

The Asia Center presents
The Andrew Kim Lecture Series
The Asia Day
November 5, 2000  2-5 pm
Beck Room, University Library

Distinguished Speakers:
Joseph Winder, President of KEI (Korea Economic Institute), Washington, D.C.

A Reception will follow in The Walsh Library Gallery to view the exhibition
Politics in Art: Asian Style in the Face of Tradition and Change.
Selections from the Collection of Andrew B. Kim and Wan Kyun Rha Kim.
For more information call The Asia Center Phone: 973-275-2304  email: yoonjune@shu.edu

Politics in Art Gallery Reception  November 17, 2000, 5-9 p.m.
Remarks by the artists at 7 p.m.

The Curators
Nina M. Piero
Nina Piero is co-curator of the exhibition and a student in the Graduate Program in Museum Professions at Seton Hall University. Putting together this exhibition has been a "labor of love" for Nina. It has given her a chance to put her knowledge and creativity to work. Nina presently works in the Registration Department at the Newark Museum.

Scott R. Hankins
Scott Hankins, co-curator of the exhibition, is a student in the Graduate Program in Museum Professions at Seton Hall University, where he is studying Museum Registration. He is an Assistant Registrar at the Newark Museum. A photographer and sculptor, Scott's works have been shown in student shows at Frostburg State University and at Raritan Valley Community College.

Jo Ann Cotz
Jo Ann Cotz is the Director of the Walsh Library Gallery and an Adjunct Professor in the Graduate Program in Museum Professions. She has worked in the Gallery since it opened in the University Library in 1994. She has an MA from New York University.

Special Thanks
The Gallery Director and the Co-curators would like to take this opportunity to thank Andrew and Wan Kyun Rha Kim for their enormous generosity in sharing their art collection with the Seton Hall University community. Visits to their home in preparation for the show have been a special opportunity to learn about Korean and Chinese culture. We are especially grateful to Mrs. Kim for sharing her knowledge, infectious enthusiasm and hospitality. The University and surrounding New York Metropolitan area will be greatly enriched by experiencing Politics in Art.

Acknowledgements
Special thanks to our sponsors The Asia Center and The Division of University Affairs for supporting this exhibition and the corresponding events. We especially thank June Yoon and Helen Cunningham for their continued support of Gallery projects. Thanks also to Eva Gale, TLTC, and Xueqing Bao, University Library webmaster, for technical support in conjunction with the production of the exhibition. Thanks to Laurie Pine and Frank Fleischman, for Public Relations.

Walsh Library Gallery is grateful for the collaboration of the Graduate Program in Museum Professions, Department of Art and Music. Special thanks to Dr. Barbara Cate, Director of the Museum Professions Program. Walsh Library Gallery is part of the University Libraries under the direction of Dr. Arthur Hafner, Professor and Dean. For more information about the Gallery visit our website at http://www.library.shu.edu/gallery or call Jo Ann Cotz, Gallery Director at (973) 275-2033.