

VISUAL ARTS

Tibetan Art featured at two Eugene shows

Public Library

Tibetan thangka painting is one of Asia's greatest artistic traditions. Its purpose is to carry on the dharma (teachings of Tantric Buddhism), the religion native to Tibet. They are created to be hung in temples and private shrines using sacred and ceremonial concepts as their subjects. Their purpose is to facilitate the beholder's transference from everyday existence to the spiritual realms.

An exhibit of thangka paintings is currently on display at the Eugene Public Library. It will remain throughout the month of October. This exhibit was put together by Elayne Quirin and her family from their frequent visits to the Tibetan refugee centers in Asia.

Each work was chosen for its authenticity and beauty. Each was created with strict conformity to iconographic rules prescribing in minute details the appropriate mudras (hand gestures), asanas (body positions), ayudhas (attributes), ornaments and colors for each deity.

The Tibetan Buddhists place great emphasis on visualization. This is the practice of mentally embracing and eventually realizing a oneness with the deities introduced to us by the art form. A person's ordinary mind is constantly engaged in warping reality into a polarized subject/object field. The deities in thangka art supply us with concepts which we may first view as objects, but as meditation progresses, one may well reverse positions and accord them the status of subjects. Thangka deities do not exist independently of us or our qualities, for they are not things, but ways of being. They are not limited to existing in a so-called objective world, but neither are human beings.

There is no limit to the levels of meaning expressed in every detail of these paintings. The knowledge is there because the art is not separate from the reality it brings to our attention. The art and the world of our own experiences inform and enrich each other until they ultimately merge into a deeply felt comprehension of universal insight.



Kerns Art Center

"Tibet in Eugene" is a new exhibition at Kerns Art Center, organized and sponsored by Eugene's Tibetan Library. The coordinators collected artifacts, many of which have never been viewed publicly, from around the Northwest. The exhibition features works from simple household items to musical instruments and elaborate temple art, including antique pieces brought out of Tibet during the 1959 Communist invasion.

"We hope that the art exhibition and cultural activities we planned will provide windows into both the exotic, vanished Old Tibet and the tiny Tibetan enclave that exists in Lane County," said coordinator Carol Diane. According to Diane, only 500 Tibetans live in the United States, and 12 of them reside in Lane County. Most all of them are participating in the preparation of this exhibition.

Some of the special activities planned are slide shows, daily tours, lectures, a cooking demonstration, and evenings for meditation and chanting. Check with the Art Center for the times of these events.

This exhibit, along with etchings by Betty LaDuke, will be on display during the month of October. Kerns Art Center (a.k.a. Maude Kerns) is at 1910 E. 15th in Eugene.



"Staffs of Irresponsibility," cast paper pulp. by Aaron R. Friedman.

Exhibit challenges ideas on art

by Elizabeth Brinton

The New Zone Gallery opened a new season a couple weeks ago and celebrates its fourth year as the place to see, to participate in, and to be challenged by contemporary art. NZG gives its members the opportunity to show current works in an environment which frees the artists from the need to cater to current trends, art world hype, marketing, and other concerns. Outside of academia, where else can artists and art lovers find a fertile ground for making and receiving messages through art?

People may find rough spots in this exhibit, may find some of the presentations crude or difficult to read, but that is simply a by-product of NZG's role as a forum for new blood, and for experimentation. NZG is almost a studio; creation can happen on the spot, and collaborations are a natural event in the space.

When I viewed this exhibit, there was a feeling in the air—something was going on and was still changing and living in the space. The installation piece by Mike Walsh titled "At Risk, Golden Temple, Burning House, Lost at Sea" combines the public and private symbols frequently used by the artist and suggests a bad dream, or a worse reality, utilizing small symbolic objects. In this piece Walsh uses his corner of the gallery like a little theater, turning the viewer into a giant. This is a mysterious scene, where a tiny prone figure in a little boat floats through an alien world. This landscape is made with the little houses (often seen in Walsh's work), fibers, numbers on the wall and on rocks, and with

other materials suggesting dream-like space. I imagine Walsh building these inner worlds with the intense seriousness of a child at "play."

In another installation work, Mike Bukowski and Bob Gibney create "Temporal Reconnaissance." This work is made from a combination of things including construction materials, gauze, found objects, rock and broken concrete. The piece seemed to be in transition, and was still being changed around by the artists shortly before I saw it. There are sperm-like shapes on the wall moving towards a blue "egg," oblivious to all the walls and barriers laid out all around them. This looks almost like a feminist statement for some reason, created by men, and somehow has a poignancy and humor that seems male. It might be a different thing next week though, and in any case will evoke different ideas from other viewers.

Aaron Friedman is exhibiting his first large work in cast paper, titled "Staffs of Irresponsibility." Floating amoebic forms in bright colors are found in repeat on the walls in a flat white. These organic shapes undulate and create counterpoints in space. Viewers who have seen Friedman's prints and paintings will recognize these abstractions as familiar characters, and will enjoy watching Friedman play them out in yet another way.

Katherine Gorham provides us with a disturbing look at growing up female in the 1950's in her boxed tableau, "Growing Up in America." Of particular interest is her use of fused glass for the depiction of some rather sinister

elements.

Boats seem to be a big theme with NZG artists. There must be some subconscious interactions among all these sensitive beings. Boats appear in Pam Cohen's ceramic works, and in Virginia Taylor's painting titled "Life Boat," an uncluttered picture of a small boat which seems to say more than it shows on the surface.

Toys or toy-like found objects are seen in several works by various artists. Tina Dworakowski exhibits "Yo Yos," which are functioning yo yos, with extraordinary messages, and are made of a variety of materials, unlike any yo yo you may have seen before.

Architecture and ideas surrounding houses are evident in many of these pieces. The beauty of simple architectural detail, and of light in a room, provides a powerful and quiet refuge, in Robert DeVine's "Morning in March."

Other two-dimensional works include evocative photography by Larry Quik, and drawings by David Vala. Vala's drawings reflect an interest in architecture, but like Dworakowski's yo yos, this is a new and playful look at what is ordinary only on the very surface. In "Freeway Garden," and "Phantom II," Vala displays an imagination for wonderful magical spaces. I wanted to visit these places.

There is rich interaction in this show, and we have the chance to see in a way that challenges our vision and our ideas about art. See this show during gallery hours, from 11 to 4 pm Monday through Saturday. This exhibit will run through October 15th.



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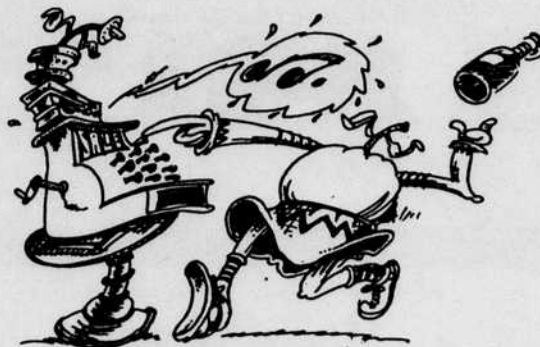
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