

The New Traditional of Illustration

With this show we are presenting several young artists who mix traditional aesthetics and techniques with a modern sensibility. They use the old form to finish their work but they continue to add new concepts into their works. In this exhibition we start from formal traditional work to commercial, and then to more contemporary. Through this process we can get a sense of how traditional painting grows into The New Tradition of Illustration.

Five artists represent different backgrounds of traditional approaches. They have various concepts and materials to share. The exhibition will include Eastern and Western style painting.



Yuanjin Wei, graduate from Guangzhou Academy of Fine Art major in Art Education. Now is a MFA illustration practice student. Her works are mainly focused on Chinese Traditional painting combined with contemporary content. I always have some new concept in my mind and I love to use the old form to express it. Mix the Eastern and Western culture together will be my goal of illustration.

Curator Talk:

We are having five artists represent different backgrounds of tradition, they have various kind of concepts and materials spread before us. The exhibition will include Eastern and Western style. First it will focus on the real traditional work, which is Li Jin who used rice paper and ink and Chinese color. Then Yoko shumizu uses the same materials. She has a strong social connection in her work because it had a commercial viability. In the middle will have a connection between Eastern and Western style which is

Tenmyouya Hisashi. He used the Western material such as acrylic combined with Eastern way of the gold leaf on the background to complete his work. Next will be Western, Liu Ye's works used the traditional oil painting way but the cartoon like painting. Last, is Todd Conover used who used the tradition image with new form of collage that combined layers of paper.

Formal traditional work

Li Jin



Li Jin is ... doesn't just portray the human form with all its imperfections and blemishes, but he celebrates them. Relishing in the banal, he focuses on everyday activities such as bathing, eating, reading...or simply doing nothing at all. His subjects, more often than not, appear to be caught by surprise; rather as though snapped by an intruding photographer...not that this seems to bother them.

- Celina Teague



Li Jin
Healthy Life 2004
Chinese brush, ink and grass paper

This artwork is a self-portrait, with Li Jin drawing while seated at a bamboo desk on a bamboo chair. Plants and trees surround him, as though he is in nature. In the city people usually have fancier sofas or desks. He is painting a fish. Li Jin represents life in the traditional manner, but the character's cloths are contemporary, and the composition of the picture is more western, with the desk and chair extending beyond the painting. People live in a rapidly moving world, but in the Chinese tradition, people were encouraged to calm down and draw something peaceful so that they might develop a healthier life. For the Chinese, "Healthy Life" means to live within a simpler tradition.



Li Jin
 Untitled 2007
 22 x 88cm Chinese brush, ink and rice paper

In China, it is said that: “Eating is the sky of the life”, Li Jin randomly draws a variety of food surrounded with the words that explain the methods to cook the food. The form of the painting is avant-garde for a Chinese traditional painting. In the traditional form, an object and its text are next to each other, with some blank space left for the imagination. Li Jin used words to fill the empty spaces, although some parts of words are jumbled. He used the traditional free hand brush to represent the contemporary food. This painting seems to illustrate the artist living natural and unrestrained.



“Diet male and female picture” focuses on human living, food and the relationship between male and female. In this work there are two typical Chinese people, as Li Jin said: “normal people paint regular painting.” The table behind them holds a hot pot meal, which is something of contemporary life, this traditional painting. Li Jin takes a snapshot of a moment, including facial expressions and object details of today’s world.

Li Jin
Diet male and female picture 2009
45.5x49cm Chinese brush, ink and rice paper

Commercial Tradition

Yuko Shimizu



Yuko Shimizu is a freelance illustrator lives and works in New York City. She works in a studio with two other illustrators whom she considers a her New York family. She often creates charged science-fiction fantasies and personal creative visions which deftly meld traditional Japanese graphics with surrealism and comic culture.

She each project with classic methods drawing her basic forms and figures with Japanese calligraphy brushes and later digitally supplementing them with additional colors and backgrounds creating a sense of elegantly and harmoniously composed images the look of graphic prints.



Yuko Shimizu made this picture for The Word magazine (UK) monthly supplement CD, Now hear this! Her work focuses on the imagination. The picture shows a full moon over an arched bridge straight out of Hiroshige and a half-clothed tattooed woman holding a boom box on her shoulder. Here we recognize the strong Japanese influences. With its artful mixture of old and new this work shocks with the unexpected juxtapositions.

Yuko Shimizu
Now hear this! Cover for October issue 2007
Japanese calligraphy brush, ink, digitally supplementing color



Yuko Shimizu
Panda Bear Girl, 2004
Japanese calligraphy brush, ink, digitally supplementing color

In this painting, a girl is dressed like a panda bear, taking out her sword to face the arrows flying at her. Behind the panda bear girl, are images of Fujiyama Japan's famous volcano and the skyline of New York City. It refers to how Yuko Shimizu went to New York City alone. There she met different situations, but she was brave and used her own weapon to deal with them. This work portrays her imagined heroism. The background shows that the two cultures can get along with each other. Yuko Shimizu also used the Japanese comic composition to give this painting more drama and interest.



Yuko Shimizu

On new movie letters from two jima, Entertainment Weekly year end issue 2006
Japanese calligraphy brush, ink, digitally supplementing color

The Clint Eastwood film, Letters from Iwo Jima, inspired this artwork. In the painting we can see a Japanese army officer handing over a letter to a demure Japanese woman in the foreground who may be either a wife or a mother. They are portrayed in profile so that we can focus on the Japanese soldiers struggling through curling waves in the background. Further in the background, Iwo Jima stands against the Rising Sun flag. Overhead several bombers fly through blossoming cherry trees. Two panels at the top right display the name of the film and the director. This work refers to the movie, from a Japanese perspective.



In this illustration, two men wearing neckties and shirts tucked into boxing shorts. Below the knees, the grey haired man's legs are bare, while the man in glasses has a pair of samurai shin guards. Under their feet are the suits representing their cultures, a cape and the samurai suit. This cover illustration refers to the notion that it is time western and eastern people fight together against their common enemy: Money. Standing back to back in comic form, Yuko Shumizu illustrated how the people from different cultures may stand on the same side.

Yuko Shumizu
Portrait of two Nomura executives, *EUROMONEY* (UK) October 2009 issue cover
Japanese calligraphy brush, ink, digitally supplementing color

Contemporary Tradition

Tenmyouya Hisashi



Tenmyouya Hisashi was born in Tokyo in 1966, and currently lives in Saitama, Japan. After working as an art director for a record company, he now makes his living painting. He has shown steadily since his first show in 1990 at age 24, including shows at the Whitney in New York and others in Tokyo, Berlin, London, Paris, Madrid, Kiev and Sao Paulo.



Tenmyouya Hisash pronounced his artwork “Neo Nihonga” which refers to a new style of traditional Japanese painting. He used acrylic to paint the robot with the weapon. A grand, powerful, threatening dragon wraps around the robot’s middle. Hisash used gold leaf on the background, which makes it similar to a rock painting. Rock painting uses colorant made from plants or rocks, which is shinier than the normal color, especially with the golden background. The concept of painting a robot is more common in Japan. Tenmyouya Hisash created this work using traditional techniques, combined with everyday imagery in an oversized format.

Tenmyouya Hisash
RX-78-2 Kabukimono, 2005
200x200cm acrylic, gold leaf, wood



Tenmyouya Hisash
Trucker 2003(Left)
200x146cm acrylic, gold leaf, wood



Tenmyouya Hisash
Eight "Serpent and Crane" Moves vs. "Drunken Fist" 2001
64.3x88.7cm acrylic, gold leaf, wood

In the first painting we can see two men fighting as though on a video game screen. Tenmyouya Hisash painted multiple hands, to show the action. He used the same materials as in Rx-78-2 Kabukimmo, but with different concepts. He wanted to show movement and animation in a single picture. The second work shows a robot with a truck on its back. Hisash shows the robot in three dimensions to make it seem more real and perhaps to imply that the Japanese are developing their robotic artificial intelligence.

These paintings show Japanese popular culture, video games, robot trucker. Tenmyouya Hisash is one of the contemporary artists in Japan, whose works are daring, genre confounding and even avant-garde in their Neo Nihonga way.

Western Tradition

Liu Ye



Regarding Liu Ye's work superficially they evoke the impression of being manga-like or just illustration, however, his style is influenced by traditional painting applying stroke by stroke, layer by layer. For Liu Ye, Jan Van Eyck (1385-1441), a Dutch painter of the Northern Renaissance or Jan Vermeer Van Delft, the Dutch painter of the 17th century, are artistic influences. The still life paintings of Jean-Baptiste Simeon Chardin (1699-1779) also influenced Liu Ye in his works.



Liu Ye
Ruan Lingyu, 2002
60x45 cm Acrylic and oil on canvas

Liu Ye used a blue background to represent the artist Ruan Lingyu's life in this portrait. Ruan Lingyu was the most famous movie star of the early 20th century. She made 29 movies during her life and was also multitalented artistically. At 25 years old she died from suicide and left a letter about social gossip about ruining her reputation. Liu Ye painted her selfportrait as a pretty face with no emotion. On her face we can see the sparkle in her eyes which looks like tears. With his western traditional oil painting skills, he Liu Ye shows the figure's smooth and delicate skin lit from the left side of the painting and the face express purity and honesty. The artwork is very delicate and rich.



Liu Ye
Once Upon a Time in Broadway 2005(Left)
210x210 cm Acrylic and oil on canvas



Liu Ye
wow 2003
90x90cm Acrylic and oil on canvas

Liu Ye's work may look like illustrations for children's books (his father was an author of children's books), but upon closer inspection it becomes clear that these paintings have an edge. Liu Ye, who grew up in Beijing, mixes childhood memories from the time of the Cultural Revolution with the realities of a new market economy. His paintings incorporate his version of Dick Bruna's Miffy, references to art history and literature, as well as an evident sexuality and loss of innocence. In these paintings we are both the audience and in the painting, standing behind the girl and Miffy (a famous Japanese character) as we focus on the painting in the artwork, Mondrian's work: Broadway Boogie Woogie (1942-43) on the left and another Mondrian-style painting on the right.



Liu Ye
A view of my teacher's back 2004
90x90cm Acrylic and oil on canvas



Liu Ye
Pink 2003
90x90cm Acrylic and oil on canvas

The artworks Pink and A view of my teacher's back show violence situations despite peaceful colored backgrounds. It illustrates the Chinese who are born in the 1970 and 1980's when teachers punished children if they were bad in class. His work explores his concerns. The characters in his paintings are done in a cartoon style with a simple style of drawing. They show the deep meaning even though the cartoon style of composition is more rigid and mechanical. He uses his memory and his imagination to compare with currently reality.

College Traditiona

Todd Conover



Personal statement: "My love of all things beautifully designed and visually interesting is what fuels my every moment. Artistic creativity is a gift that when controlled can seemingly move the earth. It is my goal as an artist for others to see what I do, and to provoke insightful thought through this shared vision."



Todd Conover used Paris Hilton and Nicole Richie to replace the usual form of the Virgin Mary and child. He also painted luxury brand logos, Gucci and Chanel around the figure, which reference popular culture. In this painting he explores the meaning of money worship by satirizing the people who live for money. The name BFF refers to the figures in the painting as best friends. By focusing their lives on acquiring luxury brands as opposed to the Virgin Mary whose life was focused on doing God's will.

Todd Conover
"BFF's" 2007



Dovima and Elephants 2009



“Charleston” 2009

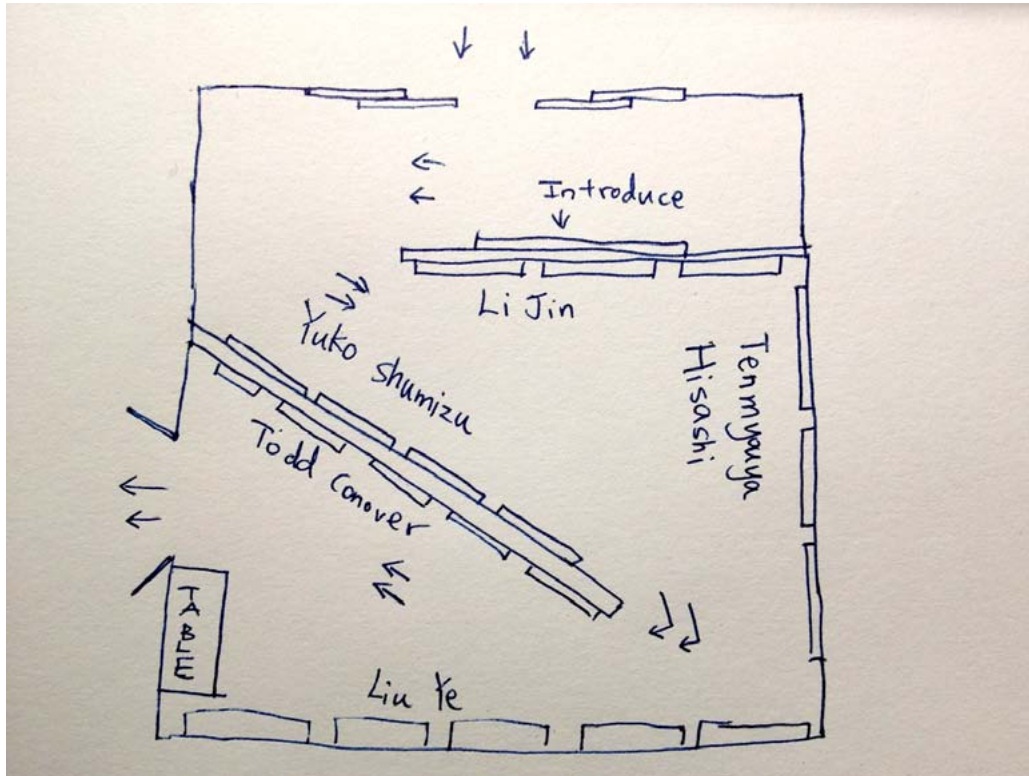


“1920's” 2009



“1920's” 2009

These four painting were made by Todd Conover. In this series, he used different patterns, colors and layers to create an old fashion vision. Compare to the other parts of The New Tradition of Illustration exhibition, Conover uses new methods of digital technology to represent old forms of the image. Todd Conover transferred the old photos from fashion history to create his new paintings. He used different patterns in different layers to make them rich and colorful. His illustrations use computer programs to express his ideas.



In the entry of the Exhibition, there will be a wood door with a paper window with an introduction statement on the paper. The gallery will be in a raw house with warm light on the wall, which feels like the old phenomenon. Each part of the Exhibition will have a short statement to show different concepts of that artist opinion to the “New Tradition Illustration”, also each painting will have a QR code for people to get on the Artists’ website. Near the exit will have a wall for people to share their opinion with each other with paper stick on the wall or leave the comments on the Internet after they scan the QR code on the wall.

Thank You

Yuanjin Wei