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Chinese Artists to Come for Hefner Exhibition

Five Chinese artists, Wang Yidong, Wang Huaiqing, Cao Li, Ai Xuan, and Luo Zhongli, will be coming to Norman, Oklahoma, for the opening of Through an Open Door: Selections from the Robert A. Hefner III Collection of Contemporary Chinese Oil Paintings showing March 2 - April 6 at the Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art. They will also be present for a panel discussion with exhibition curator Jon Burris Tuesday, March 4, at 7:00 p.m. at the museum.

“"We are honored to host such distinguished visitors and accomplished artists,” said Director and Chief Curator Tom Toperzer. “Their work exemplifies some of the best art to come out of China since the Cultural Revolution, and we are pleased to be able to share it with the people of Oklahoma.”

Among them will be Wang Yidong, who painted the image on the exhibition poster South China Woman. He will be autographing copies of the poster at the opening Sunday, March 2, from 2 to 4 p.m. at the museum, 410 W. Boyd on The University of Oklahoma campus.

Wang Yidong, like all other artists in China during the Cultural Revolution, was allowed to paint only portraits of Chairman Mao. As in Renaissance workshops, each artist specialized in one portion of a portrait. For instance, beginners painted only one small detail, such as a button, and worked their way up to the prestige of painting faces. In this way, Wang learned portraiture.

Wang Huaiqing, who will also be present at both events, is represented by works spanning a fifteen-year period, in which he shifts from realism to abstraction.
The work of Cao Li documents the changes which have taken place in China since the Cultural Revolution. His paintings tell a story, will an illustrative, fantasy quality. Born in the Year of the Horse, Cao Li always finds room for horses in his paintings.

Ai Xuan's father was Ai Qing, one of China's most famous modern-day poets. During the Cultural Revolution, his family was sent, as were many artists, to serve hard labor in Tibet to be "rehabilitated." His large portrait of Mao Tse-Tung hangs in Tiananmen Square. He was greatly impacted by the sense of loneliness he found in Andrew Wyeth's work, and developed a similar style which has become known as Country Realism in China. Hefner eventually brought Wyeth and Ai together for a visit in Wyeth's museum in the U.S.

Luo Zhongli caused an uproar in 1980 when he exhibited his canvas Father. It was the first monumental painting the Chinese had ever seen which depicted someone other than Chairman Mao. Father II, an oversized canvas which hangs in this exhibition, is a different version of the same subject.

Paintings from 29 other artists, covering styles from Socialist Realism to "New Wave," to Surrealism, are included in the exhibition, which is free to the public. Museum hours are Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday, 10:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.; Thursdays from 10:00 a.m. to 9 p.m., and Saturdays and Sundays, noon until 4:30 p.m. For more information or accommodations on the basis of disability, call 325-3272.

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