

Savour
Washhouse Gallery, Sydney
1 – 20 November 2005

'Savour', Chris Chun's new exhibition opens at the washhouse gallery, 711 Darling Street, Rozelle, NSW 2039 on 1 November 2005.

Following Chris's sell-out exhibition last year, 'Savour' continues Chris's exploration of family and identity through images of food, and objects symbolic in Chinese culture. Chris's last show 'Eat to Live' was a personal travel diary of great foods he has eaten around the world. In 'Savour' Chris returns to Australia and focuses on family and childhood.

Chun's work has become more personal with greater depth of meaning whilst still retaining the positive, sunny outlook that so delighted viewers of his first exhibition. Throughout the works his use of colour, texture and composition has strengthened as he depicts a happy, personal relationship with the people in his life, and his continuing joy of the table.

Excerpts from Chris's notes:

Chinese culture is very rich in symbolism and each aspect of life has been represented by a suitable collection of symbols. The use of which is both enriching psychologically and helps to ensure the essential health and happiness of the people. Yet, on another level, Chinese paintings are also loved purely for their beauty. So they are both works of art intended as an expression of something, to be enjoyed either as a focus of meditation or as a means of transmitting a message, and simultaneously to give aesthetic pleasure and a balanced attitude to all who see them.

Paintings have long been designed to form a kind of language that can be used to express hopes, beliefs and convey good wishes to others. They are often chosen as gifts by the Chinese. They can also be enjoyed as a focus for meditation in which the symbolic meanings and the harmonising yin/yang balance is conveyed to one's self.

Their characteristic themes - tigers, mountains, bamboo, horses etc. - represent not only themselves, but also something beyond themselves.

As most Chinese believe in sympathetic magic, good symbols are believed to be quite capable of producing good fortune. Symbols portray a purposeful foray into the enchanted world of the imagination and Chinese paintings have long been considered an excellent medium for their expression.

Some common symbols

Butterfly.

Denotes renewal and rejuvenation, the ability to bounce back from setbacks or disappointments, a transformation of spirituality. They stand for beauty and metamorphosis. It symbolises the human soul. In Japan, the butterfly symbolises young womanhood. Two butterflies dancing about one another symbolise marital happiness. In China, the butterfly symbolizes long life and beauty.

Chun says "Butterflies can represent many things such as joy, freedom, love, happiness, living in the moment, transformation (which is very apt for me), understanding where you are in the cycle of life.

I guess the journey of a butterfly represents a growing confidence in my painting. The chrysalis or cocoon is a common symbol of potential, usually individual potential: rags to riches, Cinderella to princess, ugly to beautiful, all are metaphors to the miraculous change from chrysalis to adult. As butterflies only live for a couple of weeks at the most, they are very symbolic of when I try to capture an emotion or feeling in my painting that may only last for a moment such as the first smell of fresh baked cakes but the memory lasts forever."

Five Elements.

Shown by the colours green, red, black, yellow and white. Green clouds indicate a plague of insects. Red symbolises virtue, especially truth and sincerity. Black symbolises guilt and vice. White indicates moral purity. Yellow is a sign of prosperity.

Goldfish.

A spiritually confining situation, or belief

The Chinese words for goldfish are identical with the two words meaning "Gold and Abundance" therefore many Chinese keep goldfish at their homes or in ponds in temple gardens. Water and fish both mean 'wealth' in Chinese symbology.

Chrysanthemum.

Symbolises autumn. Its Chinese name sounds similar to the words "remain, nine, and long time." It is best to pick chrysanthemums on the 9th day of the 9th month.

Clouds.

Symbolise good fortune and happiness, especially when they have more than one colour.

Peach.

A symbol for longevity, the peach is the most symbolic of any tree or fruit. It's tree wood and colour keep demons at bay, and it's flower petals can cast spells on men.

Pear.

Symbol of longevity because pear trees live a very long life.

Peony.

The Queen of Flowers, the peony is an emblem of wealth and distinction.

Bowl.

The bowl is one of the eight Buddhist precious things. It represents the stomach of the Buddha and may also represent the urn into which the bones of the dead are put.

Vase.

Common to Chinese paintings, the word vase in Chinese sounds much like the word for "peace." Flowers are popular offerings to the gods and the vase is an important part of that offering. Shown with a wide variety of plants and flowers, the vase gives rise to a broad field of symbolisms.

Yin and Yang.

The negative and positive forces of universal life. They are represented by the symbol that is a diagram of an egg showing the yolk and the white, in dark and light colours to distinguish the two principles. The Yin embodies the female principle and is associated with the earth, with the North and the cold. The original meaning of the word means "shady side," the side of the mountain not facing the sun. The Yang signifies heaven, sun, light and vigour. Together the Yin and Yang make up the Tao, the eternal principle of heaven and earth and the origin of all things human and divine. This, in turn, produces Chi, the perfect balance of all things.