

ONE ON ONE

By Vicki Stavig

The William Rolland Gallery of Fine Art at California Lutheran University in Thousand Oaks, California, is hosting an exciting exhibition of paintings and drawings by seven contemporary Chinese figurative artists through April 9. Participating artists are oil painters Z. S. Liang, Nan Liu, Mian Situ, Jove Wang, Zhaoming Wu, Xu Weixin, Yu Ji, and Aihua Zhou, who also is curator of the show.



Mian Situ - *Morning on Market Street, San Francisco, 1905*

Organizing this exhibit, Zhou says, “is an experiment in breaking stereotypes about Chinese art. It provides a cultural exchange platform for artists to demonstrate their artwork and individual style and enable a stereotype-breaking understanding of Chinese art and culture.”

Figurative realism has a long tradition in Chinese art, especially in ink painting, sculpture, and ceramics. Western oil painting and drawing media were introduced to China during the 20th century, which enabled a unique



Jove Wang - *A Day on the Silk Road*


fusion of Western artistic technique and Chinese cultural themes.

“Today,” says Zhou, “many Chinese artists are influenced by Western studio practices, adapting its rich tradition of theory and artistic principle to fashion styles that blend classical and contemporary elements to create new voices of their own. Chinese figurative art in the 21st century is not merely a veneration of the physical form, though it is rightly appreciative of it.”

The exhibit will feature 30 pieces. “It will focus on three areas of contemporary Chinese figurative realism,” Zhou says. One area consists of contemporary realist artists living in California whose work focuses on traditional subject matter and techniques, reflects China’s history and traditional culture, and gives viewers a powerful sense of its continuing cultural reality.

The second area, Zhou says, are realist artists, living in China, whose work blends contemporary elements with traditional style, while the third consists of artists who live in the United States and “use their brushes as a tool to speak their own artistic languages, while at the same time giving us a strong feeling of how passionate they are about the American world in which they live.”

Participating artists come from different regions of China, and they honed their skills through various training systems. “They are all masters of their field and extremely well known in China,” Zhou says. “Each artist has a distinctive art style and subject matter. I wanted to find art that stretched the boundaries of our expectations of what Chinese figurative artists do.”

Zhou found that art—and you can, too, by visiting the William Rolland Gallery of Fine Art. 

Vicki Stavig is editor of *Art of the West*.