

Three Sisters in Atlanta: Works on Paper Take a Journey from Beijing

2009

The three Zhang sisters were born in Northeast China and raised in an artistic family. Their parents are retired fine arts professors from the Lu Xun Academy of Fine Arts, Shenyang, China.

Old enough to remember the Cultural Revolution (also known as the “ten bad years” from 1966-1976), the sisters,



Hong, Bo and Ling Zhang were born under the Red Flag. Barely old enough to understand the terms “Revolution” and “Long Live Chairman Mao,” the sisters grew up in the wake of the Cultural Revolution. Ling, the eldest sister, was born in the beginning of the Cultural Revolution and the younger twins were born in the middle of the political storm. Despite the lack of basic material goods such as a refrigerator, indoor plumbing or a television set, they remembered a happy childhood living on the campus grounds of Lu Xun Academy of Fine Arts, Shenyang, in Northeast China. As young artists growing up at the academy, the sisters studied and practiced painting for long hours in order to pass the national

college exams.

All three sisters received advanced degrees in fine arts.

Ling, the eldest sister, received her M.F.A from Central

Institute of Nationalities in Beijing, China in 1988. Hong and Bo, twin sisters, received their B.F.A from Beijing Central

Academy of Fine Arts in 1994. After her graduation in 1988, Ling came to America. She was invited to participate in

the Exhibition of New Emerging Artists from China in Chicago. Not long after the Chicago show, Ling made a name for herself as an artist and she settled in Atlanta, Georgia, where she continues to paint and show her work internationally.

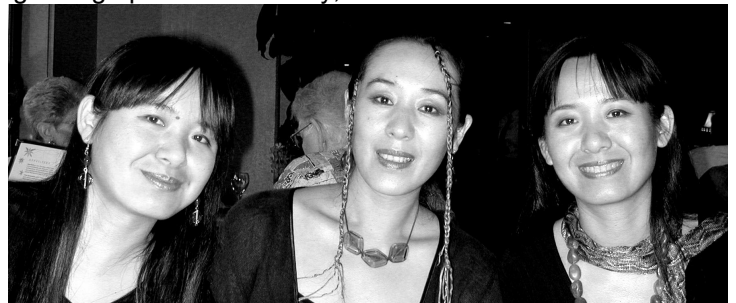
Once Ling was established in the United States, she invited her twin sisters, Hong and Bo, to come to the United

States in 1996 and continue their education in American art schools. Hong received her M.F.A from University of

California, Davis in 2004, and she is currently living and working as a professional artist in Lawrence, Kansas. Bo

finished her M.F.A from Georgia State University the same year. After graduation, Bo moved back to Beijing and she is presently working at Onemoon gallery as an art director and teaching part-time at Beijing Central Academy of Fine

Arts.



Although the current show displays the Zhang sister’s works on paper such as drawings, prints and rice paper mounted on canvas or panel, the artistic medium among the three sisters is very diverse. Ling’s oil paintings and works on paper are a sophisticated combination of rich colors and spiritual concepts. The subject matter in her paintings and drawings reflects her early experiences in the Tibetan Autonomous Region in China and the Buddhist ideals of meditation and introspection. At the same time, her work addresses human emotions and the fine line between dreams and reality. Ling conveys her ideas through several mediums such as ink, pencil, charcoal and watercolor on paper as well as oil on canvas. In 2006, Ling finished a drawing “Culture and Nature”, which was based on Hong Zhang’s 2003 outdoor installation at the artists’ residency in Skowhegan. By combing the old school desk with the “growing out tree branches, it is the metaphor for interweaving of learning journey with the flourish of nature.



Bo works primarily with printmaking and her concentration is etching. She is fascinated with the unpredictable visual impact that the printmaking language provides. Her previous abstract prints are the explorations and experimentations of materials. She more focuses on the texture, process and medium rather than the concept of the work. In her recent series "Treasure," Bo uses lithograph and photo-transfer techniques to convey her concept through presenting



a cultural mix of traditional and modern contradictions in contemporary China. The images in these prints combine rare Chinese objects with practical everyday items to make a cultural joke of "high" versus "low", "serious" versus "casual", "dirty" versus "clean" and "enter" versus "exit".

Hong is trained in the fine-style Chinese painting tradition, and she combines the time-honored technique with contemporary concepts. While Hong also intentionally incorporates practical everyday objects in her work, she uses long hair as a metaphor to reflect her personal life. Her "Hairy Objects" series is about humor, beauty and repulsion. She said, "To me, long hair not only looks



beautiful, but sometimes it can be very unattractive in particular settings. I combine hair and everyday objects to evoke different feelings and emotions through a surrealistic approach." Hong has been working with hair imagery since 2002, and her ceiling to floor long detailed charcoal drawings of hair reflect her identity as a Chinese women as well as sister, daughter, wife and mother.

