

gates symbolize the opening of friendship between the two countries and the blending of two cultures," he said.

"Since being elected head of the Communist Party of China last November, Xi has done something that people really like. People think he's different. People expect a lot out of him."

Regarding his future plans, Wang said he wants to try something new: create works that combine modern computer technology with Eastern art. Wherever his creative energies take him, Wang said he'll always owe a lot to his family. "Although they may not understand my pursuit, they have always had my back," he said. "They are kind and generous people. Their deep love for my hometown in Hunan has strengthened my bond with China." ■

(Photos by Courtesy of Wang Chun)



Muscatine's Golden Key

jjjing@bjreview.com



Green Temptation



White Birch

The In-between Artist

Living abroad brings a unique Chinese style By Ji Jing

Painter Chun Arthur Wang, a professor at the Columbus College of Art & Design in Ohio, first moved to the United States in 1992. Though he may speak English more than his native Mandarin and he may be living in the "West," a strong Eastern sentiment still pervades in his work.

During years of experimentation, Wang has developed his own style by combining traditional Chinese techniques with Western oil painting, gaining much praise from American artists in the process. His works are now sold to both private collectors and public institutions.

Art critic Ann Starr said Wang's paintings usher the audience into a quiet and peaceful world. Though she has never met the artist personally, she quickly sees Chinese cultural aesthetic presented in his paintings.

Wang's heart and stomach are firmly rooted

in the East, his favorite spot in the United States being Chinatowns and his favorite dish, steamed fish head with diced hot red peppers from his hometown in central China's Hunan Province.

"The longer I remain in the States, the more I miss my own culture," he said.

The Other Side of the Earth

Every time he returns to China, Wang visits the countryside. Beyond the vast and growing cities is where he draws his inspiration, particularly among China's 55 ethnic minorities.

In March, Wang held an exhibition in Muscatine County, Iowa, named *The Other Side of the Earth*.

"Instead of painting bustling cities, I chose to focus on the quiet and poetic life of minorities back home," he said. "I'm deeply concerned

that culture, honesty, entrepreneurship, sincerity and compassion all deteriorate under the impact of consumerism."

In contrast to the West's focus on China's high-speed economic growth, Wang chose a less explored facet of local life.

"I have a strong preference for presenting the lives and cultures of minorities. Their mysterious religions, their gorgeous clothing and handicrafts and their strong family ties have all enthralled me," he continued.

"However, it's a great pity that with the fast growth of the economy and the expansion of cities, traditional cultures are disappearing at an alarmingly high speed," Wang said.

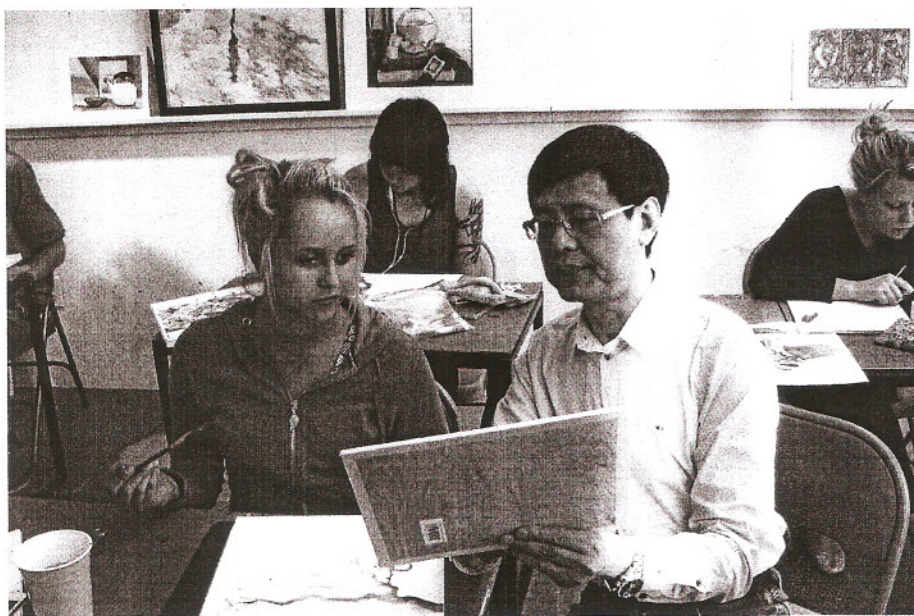
A key to friendship

One of Wang's paintings displayed at the Muscatine Art Center named *Muscatine's Golden Key* features Chinese President Xi Jinping receiving two golden keys from the town in the state of Iowa.

In 1985, Xi visited Muscatine as a young official from Zhengding County in Hebei Province, traveling with a delegation studying agricultural technology. He stayed with a local family to get a taste of everyday American life and later on received a golden key for his work boosting ties between Zhengding and Muscatine. In February 2012, Xi revisited his old friends in the county as China's vice president, when he received a second golden key.

"People were touched by the story that Mr. Xi did not forget the local family that hosted him for three days during his first visit. The friendship between Mr. Xi and ordinary Americans impressed many Chinese people, including me," Wang said.

Wang said he used Muscatine's iconic Norbert F. Beckey Bridge and the Mississippi River in the background as symbols of a partnership between China and the United States. Behind some auspicious clouds are two traditional Chinese vermilion red gates. "Those



IN CLASS: Professor Wang Chun makes comments on a student's painting