**WU Hao (吳昊 1932 –)**

Wu Hao resides in Taiwan and is known for his oil paintings and woodblock prints, which are strongly influenced by Chinese traditional folk motifs. Having the opportunity to learn painting and drawing techniques in his spare time, he studied under the well-known artist and teacher Li Chung-sheng (1912-1984 李仲生). Wu was one of the founders of the Ton Fan Art Group (*Dongfang huahui, Eastern painting group*東方畫會). Later, he developed an interest in the print medium, and in 1966 became a member of the Modern Graphics Association (*Xiandai ban huahui* 現代版畫會). By the 1980s his work became more decorative, particularly in his use of bold colours and stylized subjects drawn in dark outlines, resulting in bright and eye-catching works. Wu Hao was inspired by Chinese folk art traditions at a time when many of his contemporaries, who had left to study abroad, were interested in modernist academic trends and the use of Eastern aesthetics in genres such as Abstract Expressionism. Wu’s work was known in Taiwan not only for its “Chineseness” but also for its nativist sentiments (*xiangtu*鄉土) which alluded to the nostalgia prevalent in Taiwan in the 1970s.

Born in Nanjing from a middle-class family, Wu came to Taiwan in 1949 when the Nationalist government was leaving China at the time of Communist insurgency. Despite his desire to paint when he was younger (influenced by his grandfather who did traditional Chinese painting) he could not elicit his father’s support, who felt he needed a more viable profession. The year after he arrived in Taiwan, he joined the air force, where he served as an officer until 1971. His arrival in Taiwan enabled him to pursue art studies, learn Western drawing and painting techniques, work with various materials, and gave him the opportunity to meet and work with a number of teachers and fellow artists.

In 1950-51 he studied painting under Li Chung-sheng and also started painting with artists such as Hsia Yang (夏陽; 1932 –) who was one of the founders of the Ton Fan Group (東方畫會). In 1952 Wu, along with other Ton Fan artists Hsia and Ouyang Wen-yuan (歐陽文苑), converted an air-raid shelter into an art studio that was also used as a meeting and exhibition space for other artists. In 1964, Wu became interested in woodcut prints, as paint was proving to be expensive and prints were easier to sell. The print medium enabled him to express a modern art which also had a Chinese sensibility, something he aspired to reflect in his works. He was further influenced by elements such as the Dunhuang cave paintings, and worked to depict a wide range of subjects including aspects of everyday life in Taiwan, plants, fruit, landscapes, people and animals.

**References and further reading**

---- *The Momentum of the Group Ton-fan Marked in Shanghai* (Dongfang huahui jinianzhan shanghai meishuguan zhanlan zhuanji) (1999), National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts,Taichung.

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Wu Hao: Holiday Tiger, 1964
Woodcut (46 x 81&#160;cm) @ the Collection of Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts
While many realistic contemporary painters at the time specialized in classical painting styles for tigers, Wu Hao takes another approach with his tiger that makes you think it is not a man performing tiger, as it should be in the festival occasion, but the tiger itself emerging from the man. Remarkable is also the tail that winds around at the rump like a snake before emerging in a curved loop almost touching as it leaves the solid body of the tiger. The lack of ferocity of this tiger is also emphasized by its cat whiskers and the ba-kua trigrams of which only two are visible on the forehead of the tiger. 

Wu Hao

*Holiday Tiger* 1964

woodcut; 46 x 81cm,

Collection of the National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts