

Introduction

The Luo Brothers first solo exhibition in the United States is also a first for the Mandeville Gallery – our first exhibition of contemporary Asian art. Encouraged and aided by Union’s burgeoning East Asian Studies Program, the Mandeville Gallery is pleased to present the work of these young Chinese artists to American audiences in the Capital Region.

Welcome the World Famous Brand is a series of paintings spectacularly rich in form and content, blending the traditional with the contemporary. The Luo Brothers utilize two very traditional Chinese media: lacquer paint, a medium whose deeply saturated hues seem to glow from within; and ink-on-paper, which creates a softer effect with washes of color. Their densely packed surfaces are crowded with a blend of traditional, Cultural Revolution, and consumer-culture icons which seem poised to leap out of the painted space and overwhelm us. What are we to think when a traditional Chinese New Year’s baby – a symbol of prosperity for the coming year – flies toward us holding out a Coke and an Oreo? How are we to respond when the Forbidden Palace – symbol of Chinese communism – becomes the backdrop for a giant pair of Adidas sneakers? Do these images proclaim the triumph of a global consumer culture? Are modernization and commodification inexorably linked? The joy of these paintings is their ability to impart serious social commentary through a delightfully boisterous horror-vacui of Asian and Western icons that seem to spill out of the painted space and engage us.

This exhibition marks the beginning of a series of cultural events at Union College this spring organized by the East Asian Studies Program and presented under the title **SERIOUS POP – SOCIAL COMMENTARY IN ASIAN POPULAR CULTURE**. The Mandeville Gallery is delighted to kick off this series with the Luo Brothers exhibition.