

Wild North China: Yu Chengyou

Water-based woodcut prints - British tour 2011

The exhibited prints show the prowess of a printmaker in complete control of his technique. Water based relief printing is full of pitfalls but in Yu Chengyou's hands it looks effortless. His images are sublimely simple with a real understanding of texture, space and colour.

These prints have been printed in the multi block technique, i.e. one block for each colour allowing the artist to revise colour choices, thus refining the image to the last degree. Hand burnished without the aid of a press. This in itself widens the scope for the outcome of the print, varying pressure and ink consistence to achieve more subtle from each block.

The rich colour in some of the prints is remarkable in the opacity and sharp clarity of the printing, making the cuts razor sharp. This is then contrasted with more traditional water block printing, giving washes that show off the characteristics in the fine papers printed on and the handling of painting the blocks. This mix of techniques is what makes these prints so masterful and has allowed Chengyou to create whatever he wants to depict with exceptional depth and brilliance.

Yu Chengyou 's images have drawn upon the natural surroundings of the northern provinces of china, from wild life to human life , places that through the simplicity of his style, seem tranquillity and uncluttered, quite a contrast to the metropolises' of China. Solace from the maddening crowd and industrialisation of China. His work promises something better for us, a world to strive for. These are prints of vision and style, with analytical precision and imagination, that is unique to Yu Chengyou

Review by James D L Hill

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