

Artist Spotlight

Artist
Employment
Program



St. Lawrence County Arts Council

C R
N Y



Sharon Cheng

Sharon is a contemporary visual artist originally from Taiwan where she obtained her art degrees, focused on western style arts, and worked at Taipei Fine Arts Museum and universities.

In addition to oil as her primary medium, her work includes contemporary water-base paintings, installation, and mixed media sculpture.

The eastern concept of chi, also called energy, spirit or soul, is her backbone of her art creation and the Circles, symbol of peace and harmony, is the motif that she applies in her recent artworks. Sharon has shown her artwork in the North Country, Adirondacks, New York City and abroad.

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"As an artist, the Creatives Rebuild New York program means that the importance and contributions of Art to a healthy society are finally recognized, and artists are seen as essential workers. Not only will this program allow me to connect to the diverse talents in our community, but it will also deepen my understanding of the North Country art communities. As I curate exhibitions, that offer opportunities for artists in various career stages, I hope to bring NoCo something interesting and evoking curiosity and creativity.



As for myself as an individual, I am amazed by the sheer generosity of the CRNY program funded by three philanthropic foundations to New York art communities. I am truly impressed by its/their vision. I will be prepared to be inspired by all the talent in the North Country. I hope my new work, as a result of my endeavors, will be woven into the rich fabric of the North Country Arts."

-Sharon H.J. Cheng

Artists:
 Marie Adam
 Ravinder Agarwal
 Dianne Drayse Alonso
 Georgette Bacon
 Irja Boden
 Marion Bradish
 Roy Brash
 Andre Brien
 John Elwood Cook
 Ruth Crotty
 David Crowell
 Kasarian Dane
 Eric Drayse
 Virginia Dupuis
 Betsy Elswit
 Gregg Fedchak
 Lorre Florin
 Chloe Gardner
 Ethan Henry
 Frederick Holman
 Aaron Horeth
 Stephen Horne
 Samantha J. Johnson
 John Junglaus
 Drina Connors Kay
 Michael G. Kraik
 Victoria L'Abbe
 Gary Larsen
 Hennie Marsh
 Hope Marshall
 Jeanna Matthews
 Jennifer A. McAdam
 Suzan McDermott
 Douglas McDonald
 Bruce Millen
 Pamela Morley
 Paul N. Pedersen
 Kimberly Pitzrick
 Cammie Ramsdell
 Lynne Reichhart
 Thomas Robarge
 Kari Zelson Robertson
 R. Paul Saphier
 Eleanor Sweeney
 Greg Trombly
 Mary Ann Varley
 Raymond Whalen
 Ken Wiley
 Pam Winchester
 Janet Marie Yeates

2015 Members' Juried Art Exhibit

May 23-September 27, 2015

**You are invited to the opening reception
on May 23, 2015 from 2 – 4 PM**



Frederic Remington
Art Museum

303 Washington Street, Ogdensburg, NY
 in the Richard E. Winter and Torrey Family Galleries

Prizes awarded by juror Sharon H. J. Cheng will be presented at the opening reception - Best in show: \$100, 2nd: \$75, 3rd: \$50

An additional public's choice prize will be awarded based on an open vote, both at the museum and at www.fredericremington.org during the exhibit. The cut-off for voting is September 21. The prize, a framed print of Frederic Remington's 1887 painting, *Small Oaks*, will be awarded at the museum on September 29.

One vote per person, please.



Winter Light 2015
 by Michael G. Kraik
 oil 28 x 22"

Many of the works will be for sale. One third of the proceeds benefit the Frederic Remington Art Museum, and two thirds go to the artist. The exhibit will have an online gallery at www.fredericremington.org.

Sharon H.J. Cheng, an Artist

by John Berbrich

John Berbrich: Hi, Sharon. Let's start off with some background. Tell me a little about growing up in Taiwan.

Sharon Cheng: I grew up in southern Taiwan—the Tainan area. Tainan is one of oldest Taiwanese port cities and is famous for its rich cultural heritage. When I was young, Taiwan was still a poor country that had been invaded or colonized by Portuguese, Dutch, Chinese, and Japanese. In a sense, my family was kind of unique in the local community,



because my grandmother was Japanese and my mother grew up in Japan. I spent most of the long summer vacations with my Japanese grandmother who loved singing, reading novels, and holding regular Ikebana activities with her friends. Her love of Fine Arts had a great influence on me. As most Taiwanese students, I studied hard

to pass regional and national entrance exams for middle school, high school, college and so on. Besides rigorous school education, my parents encouraged me to learn ballet, painting, swimming, piano, and violin; painting was my favorite. One day, my father surprised me with my first set of oil paint colors and a beautiful cherry wood sketch box when I was about 11-years-old. That was a very special moment in my early life. I remember the excitement of speeding on my bicycle to my painting teacher's studio and the proud feeling when I collected painting competition awards at school. Later on I decided to study Fine Arts when I was a junior in Provincial Tainan Girl's High School where I was a member of the Fine Arts Club.

John: So following high school you studied art?

Sharon: Yes, in Taipei. First, I did my undergraduate study, majoring in oil painting at the Chinese Cultural University. Then I did my graduate study at the National Taiwan Normal University where I continued oil painting and wrote a graduate thesis on Pieter Bruegel the Elder. In spite of my busy student schedule, I enjoyed teaching children arts and crafts at private lessons and workshops in my free time. After obtaining my Master's Degree, I got my first regular job at the newly established Taipei Fine Arts Museum, where I worked in different departments and gained experience in promoting art education, teaching oil painting, and curating and organizing

exhibitions; I became interested in art conservation. At the same time, I was also a Lecturer, certified by the Ministry of Education, teaching drawing and other classes at universities. As you can see, my focus shifted from art creation to teaching, art management, and art conservation, which I wanted to study abroad, especially at New York University.

John: How did you end up in New York?

Sharon: In 1989, I was very fortunate to have the opportunity of a lifetime to work at Asian Art Conservation at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, with a grant provided by the Starr Foundation. After the 6-month training, I entered the Conservation Center at New York University as a special student. It was a very exciting time for me in New York where I was nervously adjusting myself on many fronts. The air was filled with energy, high expectation, and excitement, yet I felt comfortable among millions of New Yorkers, who come from every corner of the world.



Belonging, Sharon H.J. Cheng, 2012

I met my husband in New York. He was doing his last year of Ph.D. study at that time and then became a professor at the University of New Orleans. We got married in New Orleans and enjoyed the Southern hospitality and good food. I didn't do much in art there, except to work

at a painting restoration studio less than a year and was briefly in an architecture program with a generous scholarship at Tulane University. My love of art creation was long dormant, until we moved to Potsdam in July of 2000.

John: When you were in college, were there any particular artists or schools of art that especially inspired you?

Sharon: Impressionism, expressionism, and Fauvism were quite popular in Taiwan at that time. People appreciated works of Renoir, Monet, Van Gogh, Gauguin, Picasso, Modigliani, Matisse, etc. After becoming an art college student, I got to know more artists whom I hadn't known about before. They entered my realm as my soul mates and raised the horizon of my personal art world. I adored Picasso

and loved his incredible gift. The profound self-renovation spirit through his long colorful career widened my view of being an artist. I was also amazed by works of Paul Klee, Joan Miro, and Wassily Kandinsky. One thing for sure, I was most intrigued by the works of Surrealist artists Rene Magritte, Max Ernst, and Salvador Dali, especially Magritte. I didn't have much experience in sculpture, but I had (and still have) special feelings about works of Alexander Calder, Constantin Brancusi, and Louis Nevelson.



A Trapped Artists' Mind, Sharon H.J. Cheng, 2013

John: You mentioned sculpture. I noticed that influence in your 3-dimensional works. What sort of material do you use when working in 3-D?

Sharon: I didn't have much training in sculpture, because the department gave most attention to oil painting back then. It all started in 2012 when I was working on my oil painting "Belonging," in which I used a piece of chopped branch

with an Origami crane perched on it as a model. During the painting process, I got the idea of transforming the model into a 3-dimensional work. I painted skies on a piece of scrap wood found in a garage, made four more hand-painted Origami cranes, and added two twigs; that's the story of the birth of my first 3-dimensional work "Community." As a painter, I usually paint something on the wood base to make it the stage, where found objects, like tree branches, twigs, feathers, sea shells, and other items such as hand-painted Origami cranes, a parakeet egg, and embroidery threads become part of the arrangement in the space. For my recent 3-dimensional work, I use plaster as the main "ingredient." Then depending on each project, I make simple plaster forms to "work" with an old birdcage, or a no-seat rocking chair, some maps and papers, crystals, acrylic rods, nails, etc. Compared with 2-dimensional work, I feel 3-dimensional work involves more planning in procedure and sequence. It might be just because I am still green in 3-dimensional creation.

John: It seems that you don't use Chinese or Taiwanese themes in your art. Do you do this consciously?

Sharon: No, I don't avoid using Chinese or Taiwanese themes. Chinese Symbolism has been a substantial element in my work. Many depicted objects have their special, hidden meaning; however, although I might see things through

Chinese or Taiwanese eyes, I'm not a historical painter. My work is highly influenced by Chinese philosophy, in which the existence of 'Chi', also called Energy, Spirit, or Soul, between heaven and earth conveys not only the beauty of nature, but also the soul of nature. I believe Soul is something that makes artwork 'talk'. As a whole, my art is a result of the intertwining of visual expressions, inspirations from nature and life's journeys, and the resonance of poetic sentiment and melody. I love traveling and have visited more than a dozen countries and lived in Paris for a year. I like to think of myself as a citizen of the world, who has her cultural roots in her heart, yet embraces various cultural backgrounds and values. My up-coming solo show titled 'In and Between the Air', at Pleiades Gallery, NYC, in May will present 2-dimensional and 3-dimensional works in oil and mixed media. It's an exhibition about my personal celebration and appreciation of my life journey through the amazing universe. It is very exciting. I can't wait to show my new work to everybody. It's going to be a beautiful spring!



Flashback, Sharon H.J. Cheng, 2013

Sharon H.J. Cheng is an artist working in oil, mixed media and sculpture. Her Studio, Contemporary Visual Arts, is located in Potsdam and is open during the annual Artists' Studio Tour or by appointment. For more information visit her website: www.sharonhchengstudio.com