

The Mad Man About Painting

Ka Bo Tsang

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[Animated ROM logo appears with sound sting]

[Panning shot of a large red image of a man painted on cloth, and Ka Bo Tsang, in the exhibition Drama and Desire: Japanese Paintings from the Floating World 1690 - 1850 in the Garfield Weston Exhibition Hall]

Now I mentioned earlier on that Hokusai was very versatile. This *[Ka Bo gestures to the painting]* is an example of his versatility. He not only painted the traditional formats of hanging scrolls, hand scrolls and screens, but he also, ah...painted everyday articles, such as this banner, here.

[Fade to a close-up of the painting of Zhong Kui, panning down from the top of the man's hat to his feet] The figure depicted here is Zhong Kui, in Japan, it's called Shoki, and, this deity was originated in China, was according to popular belief, he was, um, Tang Dynasty figure, *[fade to view of Ka Bo, standing next to the painting]* 7th century. He passed the civil service examination but because he's um...because of his ugly face *[fade to close-up of the man's face]* he was passed over, and...in anger, he dashed himself against the palace steps and he committed suicide.

[Fade to view of Ka Bo standing beside the banner]. So, but later on, um...the founder of the Tang Dynasty, Gaozu, emperor Gaozu, he rehabilitated, um, Zhong Kui, and elevated him to the position of um, a properly recognized scholar. So, later on, during the um, 9th century, another emperor had a dream about Zhong Kui. Ahh, in this dream, Zhong Kui was ... expressed his gratitude for his rehabilitation, and he promised the emperor that from now on, he would protect the country from, um, demons and disease.

[Fade to close-up of the man's head, pans down to his feet to show the colour of the pigment] Images of Zhong Kui were mainly done in either in black ink or in cinnabar, such as this one. And, frequently, *[fade to a view of Ka Bo standing beside the banner]* during a special festival, the boys' festival, which falls on the fifth day of the fifth month, banners with images of Zhong Kui would be flown above, um, houses, and red Zhong Kui, were believed to be able to protect children from smallpox.

[Close-up of Ka Bo's face] Um, Hokusai produced, um, many, produced art on many different media *[zoom out to show Ka Bo standing next to a lantern in a glass case; other art works are visible in the exhibition space in the background]*. This is an example of another medium that he worked on. This is a lantern, *[zoom in to the lantern]* and it depicts a dragon confronting a serpent *[zoom in to show a detail of the dragon]*. Now dragon is... are considered the symbol of um, positive, *[fade to detail of the serpent's head]* and the serpent is a symbol of the negative *[zoom in for a close-up of the serpent's eye]*.

[Fade to a view of Ka Bo standing beside the lantern]. The positive and negative elements, or the yin and yang, are the central ideas of the cosmology of the Chinese. The Chinese believed that in the universe, there are two complementing and contrasting forces *[pans over and zooms in on the lantern]*, the yin and the yang, and...everything in the universe *[fade to a 360 degree view of the lantern, with the exhibition space visible in the background]* is the result of interaction of, between these two forces. Here, on this lantern, which is round, the effect is particularly...good, because there is no end, um, in their confrontation.

[Close-up of a painted lantern in a glass case, showing a tiger; zooms out to reveal Ka Bo standing next to the lantern pointing to it] Now here is...um...another lantern, belonging to the same pair. Here, you see a dragon *[fade to detail of the dragon's head]* confronting a tiger *[fade to a detail of the tiger's head]* instead of a serpent. The idea is the same *[fade to Ka Bo standing next to the lantern]*, still representing the two forces contesting or complementing each other.

[Fade to 360 degree view of the lantern, with the exhibition space visible in the background] Hokusai was so good at doing everyday articles and decorating them, that in his days, he often produced many, many such lanterns to line up the grounds of the Shinto shrine, or the Yoshiwara. *[Fade to close-up of Ka Bo speaking]* We can only imagine that on festival days, the whole ground would be lit up with very decorative lanterns.

[Video ends with animated ROM logo and sound sting]