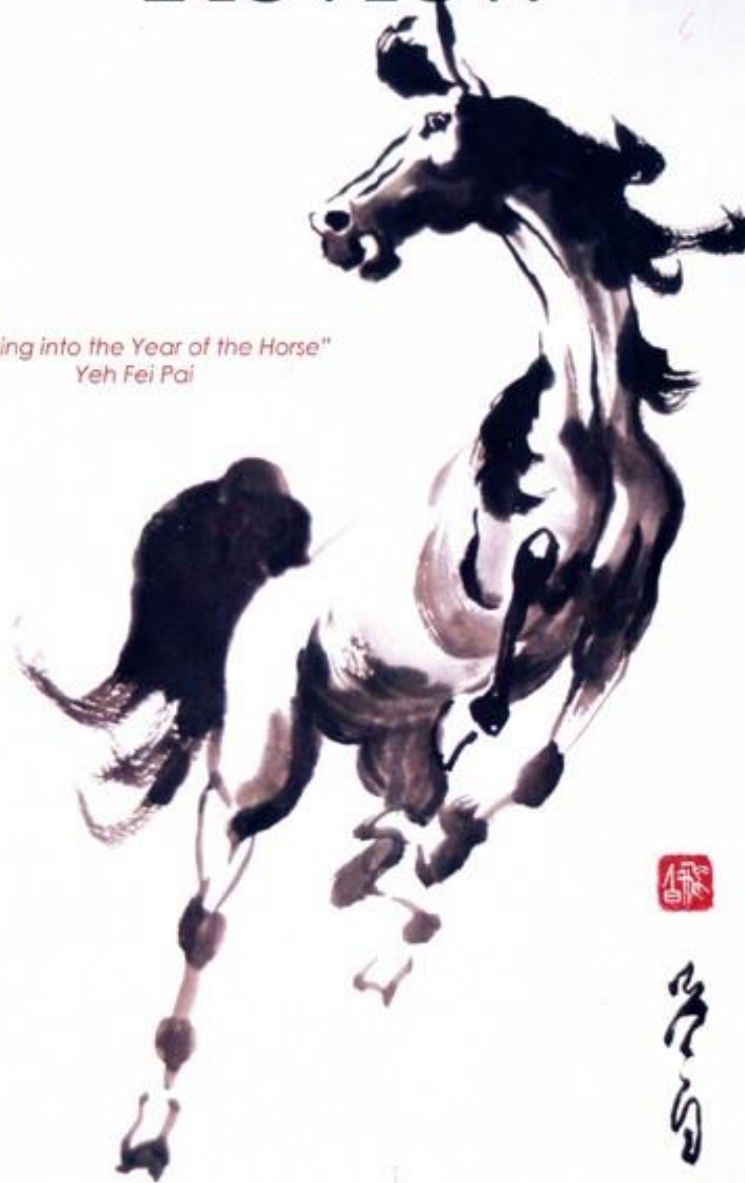


Jacksonville Review

"Looking into the Year of the Horse"
Yeh Fei Pai



February 2014 • JacksonvilleReview.com

A Conversation with Artist, Yeh Fei Pai

This month, we are pleased to present an interview with world-renowned artist, Yeh Fei Pai, our cover artist. Born in 1950 in Taiwan to Den Yu Chen and Yeh Tsui Pai, he now lives in the San Francisco Bay Area.

JR: Tell us a bit about what it was like growing-up as the son of a revered Republic of China military nationalist soldier and officer. Your father rose to the rank of General in an era of worldwide instability and chaos, yet he possessed immense artistic talent which you obviously inherited.

YFP: As a child, I wished I had a Magic brush. As a young child, I was intrigued and amazed by Walt Disney's Cartoons. With the stroke of a brush, princes and princesses, castles and Mickey Mouse sprang forth right in front of my eyes. I said to myself, "I wish I have a magic brush." This notion, in some way, influenced my spontaneous and swift strokes in capturing the horses' energy and motion.

In elementary school, I would draw little characters in the corner of textbooks. When I thumbed through those books, those little characters came to life, dancing and flipping. Now I can show infinite motion without thumbing through.

My father was rarely home during my childhood. His large desk, calligraphy tablets, shuen paper (rice paper), ink stones and brushes were readily available for me to experiment with drawing and practicing calligraphy.

One day in high school, I asked my father, "Why do your horses always have that piercing sparkle in their eyes?"

He replied, "It was the spirit of the revolution."

Then I asked, "What is the difference between the revolutionary soldier and a soldier?"

He replied, "The revolutionary soldiers always advance to the most dangerous places." At that moment, I saw that same piercing sparkle in his eyes.

From then on I looked for dangerous experiences through mountain climbing and diving. These adventures did not compare with my father's experiences as a Revolutionary General.

However, through my close encounters with nature, I began to appreciate the philosophy of "Harmony between Humanity and Nature". This philosophy has become the spirit of Fei Pai's Celestial Horse Art. All aspects of the universe resonate in harmony with each other.

My father also had his kind and light-hearted side. The same qualities are present in my paintings. This is one of my favorite paintings, entitled "Upside-Down Still a Hero".



*President Chiang Kai-Shek &
General Yeh Tsui Pai*

I was always able to express myself freely in accordance to my true nature while I was growing up. This contradicted with the Taiwanese social mentality of the sixties - "thinking nothing, but achieve entering a higher level educational school". For this, I am deeply grateful to my mother for allowing me to pursue my dreams without strings attached.

I graduated from National Cheng-Chi University, Taiwan, in 1974 with a major in journalism. From 1971 to 1974, I was the newspaper column cartoonist for the Journalism Department's weekly journal. I studied black and white photography and darkroom manipulation. This in-depth exposure to modern art media impacted my painting's compositions and their sensitivity to lighting.

I began composing music during this same period. This helped me to comprehend the similarity between the rhythm of the music and the rhythm of painting. Among the best-known contemporary musicians, I am particularly impressed by the legendary sitar Virtuoso Ravi Shankar, and the Brazilian Bossa Nova musician Antonio Carlos Jobim. While they have a place in the creation of unique local music, they have also greatly impacted world culture.



"12 o'clock High"

JR: After graduating from college in 1974 in Taiwan at the age of 26, you headed to San Francisco. Tell us about your experience on the west coast and what you did during this time.

YFP: From 1978 to 1981, I studied television production and film at San Francisco State University. I combined my passion for poetry and calligraphy, with the disciplines of cinematography and music to create my "Yeh Fei Pai Celestial Horses".

JR: Tell us about how you create your work.

YFP: Chinese painting emphasizes the mind. Poems, my own creations and quotes from ancient poets, are often inspirations for my paintings. When the sun shines on the just-completed paintings, I feel like a "God!"

JR: Your work focuses on Celestial Horse Art. Your horses appear to *float in the air* and *gallop* across the page. Tell us something about the deeper meaning of the horses and what they represent to you and your cultural heritage.

YFP: I paint Celestial Horses as a tribute to their virtue. According to Confucius, "Horses are praised by their virtue, not by their strength." Thus, I chose horses to be my incarnation.

JR: You are also an accomplished poet, calligrapher, cinematographer, and musician. Are you working on any projects now?

YFP: I am currently recording and producing songs that I have written over the years, many with the emphasis in advocating environmental awareness.

I noticed as I traveled through the countryside over the years, young people are still listening to my music and remembering the lyrics of my songs.

What is most meaningful to me is that the China Youth Corps choreographed a Camp Fire Dance routine using my song, entitled "Camp Fire". More than three decades later, children still dance around the campfire singing my "Camp Fire". It has become pop culture.

JR: Can you tell us about your family today?

YFP: I am happy that my son Eric Kevin Yeh is willing to accept the responsibility to be the third-generation successor of Yeh's Celestial Horse.

JR: How often do you visit Southern Oregon and what are your impressions of Jacksonville?

YFP: My first invitation was in 2006 from SOCCA as the featured artist to exhibit at the Schneider Museum of Art, in Ashland.

When I climbed the ladder to finish the last stroke of the horse's mane, I received an explosive applause from the audience at the Meese Auditorium. I was very touched by their warm response. A few more live art and music performances at the US Hotel in Jacksonville were also joyful. The vivid memories still bring warmth to my heart.

Jacksonville is a beautiful and friendly place. I am honored to receive a return invitation from SOCCA to celebrate 2014, the Year of the Horse, with the people in Jacksonville.

There are two 2014 events scheduled in Jacksonville to showcase my art: an exhibit at the Elan Art Gallery, starting on February 7th, and a live performance at the US Hotel on February 8th.

And my 2014 events scheduled in Medford include a live art performance at HEC, February 6th, at 6:30 PM (by invitation only), the Rogue Gallery exhibit from February 7-28, and a tour & book signing on February 8th, 2:00-4:00pm.

JR: Do you have any advice for budding artists who'd like to be professional artists in today's world with dwindling public resources allocated for the arts and arts education?

YFP: Keep your day jobs!

JR: Your work has been shown and purchased globally, hasn't it.

YFP: I am grateful that I can use my art as a vehicle to help raise funds for disaster recovery and medical research. I recently donated a painting, entitled "Leap Over the



Kingdom,” to an American Cancer Society Gala event live auction. The event was held in September 2013 at the Old Grandview Ranch (owned by Dr. Donald Head, a world-renowned art collector).

Amongst collectors of my art are business owners, entrepreneurs, homemakers, engineers, corporate executives, retirees, and fellow artists.

I was pleased that in 2008, members from the overseas Nationalist Party were in the San Francisco, to present my painting, entitled, “Benevolent Invincible”, to the now President of Taiwan, Republic of China, Ma Ying-Jeou as a warm welcoming gift.

For more on Yeh Fei Pai, please visit his website at www.feipaihorses.com.