

**ART OF THE MASSES: UNDERSTANDING THE TIMELESS, CYCLICAL,
SUPERSTITIOUS, UNIFYING HABITS OF
CHINA'S COUNTRYSIDE** by Renee Covalucci

Chinese Folk Arts and Peasant Painting (15 minutes)

1. Map of China indicating painting counties; Detail map showing Shaanxi Province showing Huxian, Xi'an and Cave dwelling areas near Yan'an
2. Folk arts of the peasant community: Overview New Year's Prints (Shandong) & 1950s industrial lithography for the growing masses.
3. Papercuts
4. Cave dwelling area and the people of Shaanxi (near Huxian and Yan'an)
5. Examples by Huxian artists: Topics of paintings—agricultural life cycle, festivals that mark time and tradition, elements of tradition (make noise to scare off demons, feast, clean house, visit relatives, animal husbandry, embroidery)
6. Examples by Southern Jinshan artists: works are very creative, to the point, positive, festive, full of the good things in life... An element of classical Chinese Painting used in a Southern festival painting is **sound!**
7. Similar to Xu Bing, these city artists were sent to the countryside: Dong Jiansheng (my teacher) and Ding Jitang were both influenced by peasant painting; Ding taught drawing techniques and woodcutting to Peasant painters; Dong makes peasant paintings for fun, quite a large portfolio that shows a new side of his personality.
8. Powerpoint ends with outline of an art lesson and a brainstorm of broader topics for grades k-12.

WORKSHOP Exercise (25 minutes) __ stations: These pictures tell stories

- 3 Teams (may prefer grade levels together) select paintings and items and brainstorm topics for discussion that you might use with students.
Name a note taker and reporter for your group.
- Test some ideas based on the lessons you currently teach or units that you know exist in your schools (Grade 4 neighborhoods/community), books students read, cultures they have studied that may compare well..., and select one or two of them to guide a discussion. *Note taker capture full list.*
- Make three observations that will be obvious to students and list them; make three more that may be more subtle and require hints (pattern, symmetry; tiny details, identify animals and activities); develop questions for students to investigate based on what they know from these communities, travels to the countryside (or to countries), seasons, festivals, industries (how things are made), knowledge of other cultures...

Group presentations: 20 minutes (5 minutes per group/gather at each table)

- Present your group work to the class: Share how will you guide students to study these paintings?

More questions for discussion:

Propaganda or art? Older students may enjoy this discussion after the morning session...

Note the differences between the location of the communities: Huxian (central/north) Jinshan (coastal/southern) may be an interesting way to begin a geography lesson.

Huxian: <http://heartofhealinggallery.squarespace.com/peasant-paintings/>

Huxian: <http://www.artisticchinese creations.com/peaspain.html> (type Pan Xiaoling in search bar, or google Pan Xiaoling Peasant Painter)

Jingshan County: <http://www.folkartchina.com/>

GROUPINGS OF ITEMS ON TABLES

SLIDE LIST GROUP 1: CULTIVATION (focus on Threshing, by Pan Xiaoling)

- 1 Covalucci Hebei1.jpg
- 1 Covalucci Hebei3.jpg
- 1 Covalucci Hebei4.jpg
- 2 ThreshingPan.jpg
- 3 CornHarvestPan.jpg
- 3 SorghumPan.jpg
- 4 AncientBronzeAnimals.jpg
- 4 AncientBronzeOxen.jpg
- 4 Ding Tractor.jpg
- 4 Papercut FemaleMaleWorkers.jpg
- 4 Papercut FemaleWorkers.jpg
- 4 Toys of scrap cloth.jpg
- 4 Toys Ox of scrap cloth.jpg

SLIDE LIST FOR GROUP 2: CYCLES AND THE CALENDAR: (focus on Ox Dance, from the studio of Pan Xiaoling)

- 1 DingNewYear.jpg
- 1 OxDancePan.jpg
- 1 Papercut Zodiac.jpg
- 2 Papercut ChildrenAnimals.jpg
- 2 RedEnvelope.jpg
- 2 TigerSlippers.jpg

SLIDE LIST GROUP 3: YIN/YANG WEALTH PURITY (focus on The Beginning and Ending of Harvest by Pan Xiaoling)

- 1 BeginningEnding HarvestPan.jpg
- 2 Papercut BabyFish.jpg
- 2 Papercut Fish.jpg
- 3 MorningExercisesPan.jpg
- 3 PanStudent.jpg

CLUES:

Ox/Water buffalo the coming of spring

Fish in Chinese sounds like the word for "Abundance and Affluence" so the fish symbolizes wealth. Fish shown with a lotus blossom symbolize "Year after Year may you live in Affluence" (chinesepaintings.com)

Lotus (or sea-rose) is of unique importance in Chinese folklore and symbolism. It is the symbol of purity. The lotus comes out of the mire but is not itself soiled. It is inwardly empty yet outwardly upright. It has no branches but yet smells sweet. The words for lotus in Chinese have the same meanings as: to bind, connect (in marriage), one after the other, uninterrupted, to love, and modesty. It is one of the Eight Auspicious Symbols of Buddhism. (chinesepaintings.com)

MORE WEBSITES:

- <http://www.chinesepaintings.com/chinese-symbols.html>
- <http://www.asianartmall.com/refsymbols.htm>
- <http://www.123chinesenewyear.com/>
- <http://www.history.com/topics/chinese-new-year>
- <http://www.enchantedlearning.com/crafts/chinesenewyear/>
- http://www.moonconnection.com/moon_phases.phtml
- <http://www.chinahighlights.com/travelguide/festivals/mid-autumn-festival-story.htm>
- <http://pem.org/sites/perfect-imbalance/lessons.php>
- <http://resources.primarysource.org/content.php?pid=56325&sid=0> (by Covalucci)