

Zhou Tao

Artist, illustrator, book-maker Ward Schumaker's exhibit "Elixir Refused" opens tomorrow at the Stir gallery, featuring works on paper with words and phrases he has painted, printed or cut out, such as "Hark! Who cometh? The king's messenger arrives."

On the occasion of his Shanghai exhibit, Schumaker's printed edition of his handmade book



'Who cometh? Hark!' US artist

"Elixir Refused" will be published. Visual poetry, the book is a fine example of his art of book-making.

Schumaker was the teacher of Fong Jianwei, owner of the gallery, at the California College of Arts in Oakland. "My current work is the result of prayer, or the lack of it," Schumaker writes in the statement about the show.

"Elixir Refused" is like Schumaker's series of large works on paper, employing cut-paper texts, paint spills and deft brushwork, the culmination of five years of almost exclusive book-making.

Usually Schumaker paints both the images and text on big paper as the original script, and these are then used for publication. But more often his books are handmade with classical printing techniques.

The texts in the book can be viewed as abstract shapes or they can be read literally. The texts are derived from the Hindu Gitas, European musical theater such as

Brecht and Weill's "The Three-Penny Opera" and the artist's dreams.

The whole story is like poetry by Ezra Pound, the influential American poet whose major works are considered illusive but visual. Schumaker's texts tell a sword-and-magic-type story of medieval times, in which the hero refuses the elixir at last after battles and an odyssey-like journey.

In 1965, at the age of 22, Schumaker quit painting after the governor of the US state of Nebraska and other officials threatened him with imprisonment for entering what they deemed a pornographic painting into a state-run exhibition (judges had awarded him first prize). He began painting again in 1997.

But as an illustrator since 1976, Schumaker has produced work that has appeared in over 100 magazines, including The Atlantic Monthly, The New Yorker, Le Monde, Esquire, Japan, Bloomberg, Kiplinger, and Fast Company.

He is also the author and illustrator of three children's books — "Dance," "Sing a Song of Circus" and "In My

Garden." He has illustrated two limited edition letterpress books for Yolla Bolly Press, "Two Kitchens in Provence" by writer M.E.K. Fisher and "Paris France" by Gertrude Stein.

For his work on the Stein book, he received a silver medal from the New York Society of Illustrators. He is also the creator of a number of logotypes, including Moose's Restaurant in San Francisco, Columbus Bakery in New York and Mos Burger in Tokyo.

He has received awards for illustration, art and design. His works hang in prestigious private and public libraries.

His work hangs in the Zimmerli Museum of Rutgers University and the Joslyn Art Museum. His books appear in private collections, as well as the New York and Boston Public Libraries, Swarthmore and Claremont Colleges, and Stanford and Wake Forest Universities.

The artist lives and works in San Francisco.

Date: through June 26, 10:30am-9:30pm
Venue: Stir Art Gallery, 172 Jinxian Rd
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