

THOUGHTS ON THE EXHIBITION. . .

File PA Zagar

As I was working on this exhibition, I started to think about my visit to the Folk Tree gallery in 1987 and how another high point in my stay was visiting Simon Rodia's Watts Towers. Among my stacks of art work in my studio in Philadelphia, I started pulling out documentations of my visit to the towers, thus beginning a series of paintings and etchings of the towers.

In explaining my work method, I would like to tell the story of the three Chinese brush paintings displayed in this gallery. In 1987, I represented the city of Philadelphia in Tianjian, China and I studied Chinese brush painting with teacher Han Wen Lai. In the Spring of 1989, Han Wen Lai was a guest of the city of Philadelphia and he stayed in my home. His stay rekindled my interest in Chinese brush painting. I made several paintings in the technique, depicting the towers. I asked Han Wen Lai to use his calligraphy to write a poem by Lao-tse (the founder to Taoism) on each painting. I embellished the works by including photographs of the Watts Towers that I had taken in 1987 along with photos I had recently taken in my garden and studio. Thus you see my working method of melding disparate objects and juxtapositions of time and space that would be disorienting in linear time, but are just fine in my easy stream of consciousness and my Garden of Eden world.

Kathi, who is writing all of this down, reminds me that yesterday I told her a story about the relationship between Simon Rodia and Lao-tse. Simon Rodia worked for some 30 years or more on his towers and then suddenly left, never to return. The story we have about Lao-tse is that he was very disgruntled about human society and was on his way out of town never to return when the gate keeper asked him to impart his knowledge, which he did, and left.

ISAIAH ZAGAR
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