

Paperart and all that jazz

Camarillo fest promises a feast for the eyes and the ears

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Jason Redmond / Star staff
Paper sculptures by BiJian Fan of Camarillo will be featured at the Camarillo Art & Jazz Festival.

For paper sculptor BiJian Fan, art is a spiritual journey.

"My creation of art balances work and life; it makes me a happier and better person," said Fan, 46, a biotech engineer at Amgen.

Fan's work was recently on exhibit at the Olympic Culture Festival in Beijing, and it's featured through Sunday in a members show at the Camarillo Art Center. His work will also be on display this weekend in Camarillo, along with the works of other artists, at the Camarillo Art & Jazz Festival.

Unlike traditional sculpture, which involves carving, casting, molding and constructing, Fan's paper sculptures are made by folding, cutting, weaving, curling and other alternative techniques.

"My paper sculpture explores paper's aesthetics, vulnerability, adaptability and other characteristics," the Camarillo resident said.

Born in Beijing, Fan learned the art of paper folding and cutting from his grandmother.

Paper, which purportedly was invented in China in 105 A.D., is deeply rooted in Chinese art and culture.

"I try to carry this tradition and create cutting-edge paper sculpture," said Fan, who has exhibited his paper sculptures across the country and earned numerous awards in juried art exhibitions.

Gerri Johnson-McMillin, past president and an artist in residence at Studio Channel Islands Art Center in Camarillo, said Fan's pieces portray a sensitivity that she looks for in an artist's work.

She recalled her introduction to his craft after he went to work as a volunteer docent at the gallery.

"When I first saw BiJian's work, I had to take a double take and really examine the beautiful and intricate cut work of these paper sculptures," said Johnson-McMillin of Port Hueneme. "They are more than paper; they become alive with their own characteristic ambiance."

All that art

In addition to Fan's creations, the works of at least 75 artists will be on display throughout the Camarillo Art & Jazz Festival, which will run Friday through Sunday in Camarillo.

Media will include paintings, ceramics, photography, jewelry, sculpture, fiber, glass and metal, wood and collages.

Artwork will be on display along Ventura Boulevard as well as at festival events at the Camarillo Ranch House and Studio Channel Islands Art Center, which will hold its fifth annual gala auction Saturday.

"There will be work in just about all media," said Maggie Kildee, festival spokeswoman. "The art walks will feature everything from wonderful high-end crafts to fine art and sculpture."

Many of the artists exhibited their work at last year's festival, she said.

During the art walk Saturday, middle school students will take part in a chalk-drawing competition on Ventura Boulevard; a professional chalk drawer also will be drawing. Hands-on children's art activities also will take place throughout.

On Saturday night, art and music will combine at Studio Channel Islands Art Center, which will host a gala featuring live performances by swing band Hot Club, a live auction, dinner and a performance by sax player Eric Marienthal. SCIART's galleries also will be open for ticket holders who want to view the center's 10th anniversary exhibit.

Going Home'

For this year's festival, Fan is donating a special piece to SCIART's gala auction: a 20-by-16-by-3-inch paper sculpture of a dove going back to nest, titled "Going Home." Symbolizing peace, it was juried in a peace-themed art exhibition last year at the Ojai Art Center.

This summer, Fan exhibited his paper sculptures at the Olympic Culture Festival in his hometown of Beijing, based on the theme "Salute Beijing Olympics, Display Chinese Civilization."

The jury committee selected 80 artworks, including Chinese calligraphy, painting, sculpture and Chinese folk art from Chinese artists worldwide.

More than 800 people, including government officials, dignitaries, artists and student delegates from Taiwan, attended the opening ceremony.

Fan said exhibiting his artwork in front of a home crowd was a humbling experience.

"It was a complete a shock to my family and all the people in China who knew me as a mathematician and engineer only," he said.

"I have kept my art in the closet because my father warned me not to divert my energy from climbing the corporate ladder," Fan said. "My exhibition at a premium museum for Olympics and the exposure on national TV changed his mind.

"My father is very proud of me and said my creativity is hereditary."