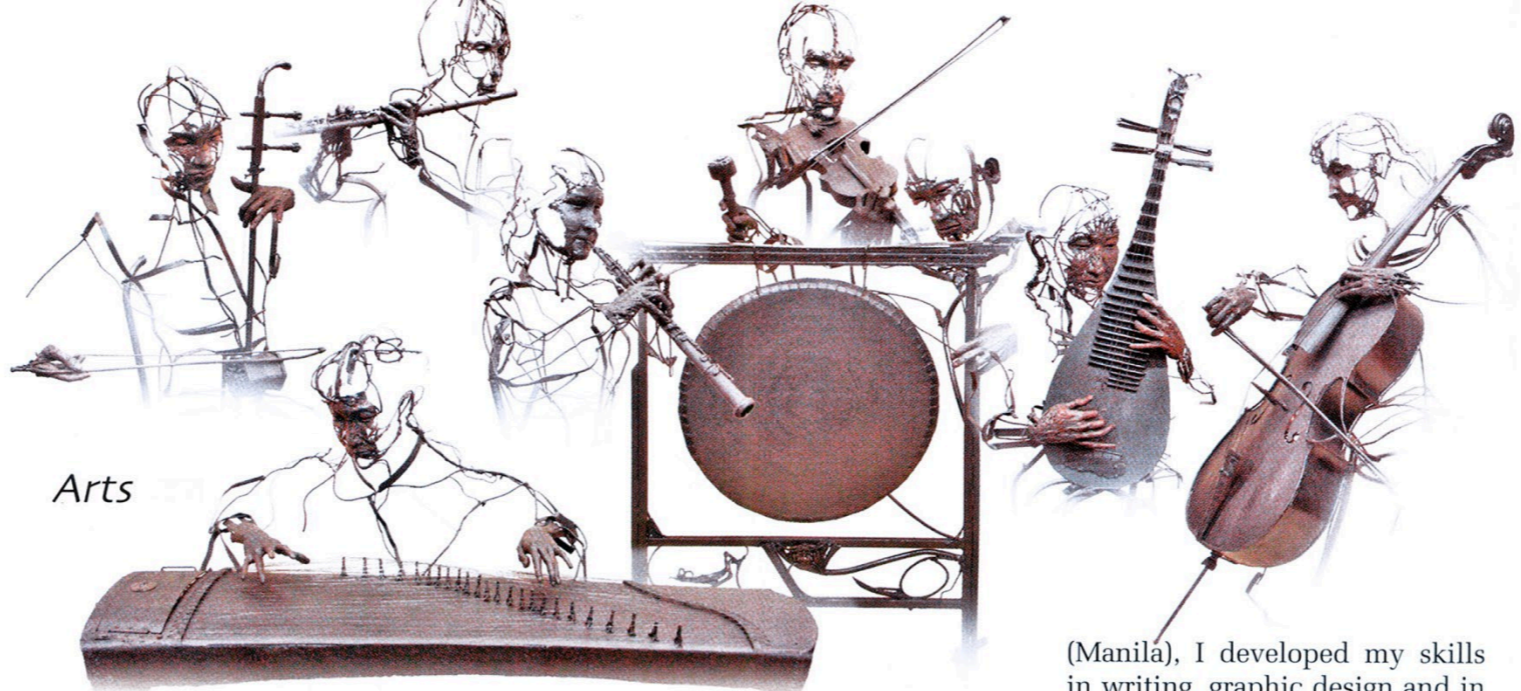




The Silk Road Symphony



Arts

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Chinese artist **Lau-Kwok Hung** spoke recently to *New City* about his art and his life.

Hung, when did you realize you were a gifted artist?

Since very young I was aware of being gifted. My works often found prominent place at the classroom's corner of honour. At the age of six, one day at school I set out to paint an imaginary Chinese porcelain vessel. By following my own instincts, I came up with a crayon display of chromatic perspective that stunned my teachers. I began to identify that 'gift' as a fire within. It took me decades to learn to tame or harness this fire, before finally becoming friends with it!

As a Christian, I feel privileged to have inherited such a vast

artistic vision and spirituality, to have been endowed with such endless resources for inspiration. I am grateful to be gifted, but I have learnt too to correspond seriously. My mantra is: 'Lord, You have entrusted me five talents. Look, I have gained five more!' (Matthew 25: 20).

Tell me about your career to date

I left Hong Kong for Florence at the age of nineteen to begin my formal education at the Art Academy, majoring in sculpture. I was recruited by the multi-artistic group Gen Rosso and trained to dance, sing and act and then toured with them in Western Europe and south-east Asia for six years. In the 80s, employed by *New City Magazine*

(Manila), I developed my skills in writing, graphic design and in photography. Sculpting in metal became my major bread-winning occupation during a four year sojourn in Switzerland. Now I have settled down in the Focolare town of Loppiano in Tuscany, Italy, where I pursue my career.

What are the main influences in your art?

Great western draftsmen and great Chinese calligraphers.

I particularly love the sculptures you have done on the orchestra. Where did this idea come from and what are you trying to say?

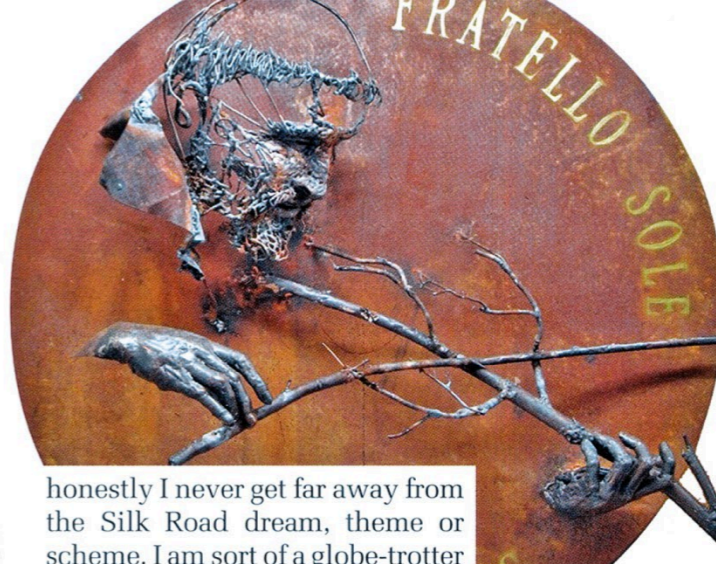
The concept of the Silk Road is my favourite theme, a poetic way to talk about exchange, networking, bridging, etc. As a major sculptural project, and an ever-growing orchestra, 'Silk Road Symphony' is my homage to all human efforts in promoting harmony among peoples.

Overall – what messages are you trying to convey through your art?

Art is beautiful. Art is empowering. The world will be a better place if we relate with each other with love and respect.

What projects are you involved in at the moment?

I'm open to all inspirations, but



Fratello Sole

honestly I never get far away from the Silk Road dream, theme or scheme. I am sort of a globe-trotter myself, promoting intercultural projects, like Chinese calligraphy workshops, wherever possible. I multitask between metal sculpture, networking, and education.

What is it like working in Loppiano?

Loppiano, the small international village where I live, is conducive to art making. Besides being situated at the heart of scenic Tuscany with its suave sunsets, undulating hills and valleys manned with cypress, olive groves and vineyards, it is modelled after the Gospel's principles of harmony in human relationships. It is a microcosm of a better world. It is a much-visited community and showcases an imitable, dynamic life-style for all walks of life.

But I am often away from Loppiano, 'on mission', presenting my art in the 'real world'. In this sense, Loppiano is both a base and a pit stop: it is where I go home to, and also where I get fully fuelled for the road ahead.

Tell me about the Hung Atelier and your work with young artists.

Since two thousand, my studio has been visited by thousands of people annually. Besides being modestly equipped for serious art productions, it has also become a place for relaxed exchanges on cultural and artistic issues. This way, I keep myself up to date. It

is among my priorities to build bridges with younger generations of artists.

My recent teamwork with artist Vicky Frazer, twenty-two, from England was by far one of the most enriching experiences. July last year saw us embarking on a full immersion of art in Austria with other young artists – a cultural tour which eventually landed us in a metal symposium in the mountains. Last October, Vicky began her four month stay at my Tuscan studio. She was youthful and full of energy and quickly this post graduate student in textile design from London soon proved her versatility by mastering the basics of metal sculpture. Vicky is hard-working, and is largely unfazed by adverse conditions such as working with high voltage tools, fumes, dust, noise and so on.

Tell me about your recent trip to China.

Last November, an art-entrepreneur friend invited me to kick start a Metal Art Symposium at Foshan (Guang Dong Province, China) to be sponsored by a local new media industrial theme park. Four artists would be invited to produce artworks on-site during a two-week period.

While I was entrusted the task of bringing together a group of international artists, I realized we had to create and safeguard above all the soul of the Symposium. It would be a time of witnessing

how we related with one another, besides the actual art production itself.

I invited Vicky to join three adult artists (including myself). She humbly declined, fearing she was not qualified. I said, 'But you have three months to prove you are!' She took up the challenge and made enormous progress in working with the plasma-cutter, and ended up venturing into a comprehensive study of Chinese imperial robes. Each sculpture was a metaphorical synthesis between steel and silk, fire and fabric; unity of contrasts.

At Foshan, Vicky proved herself on a par with more seasoned artists, and earned for herself what she truly deserved. With her amiable ways, and being the only young artist in the group, she was a perfect inclined plane for us to reach out to the youth, including the more than three hundred who came to our conferences one Saturday.

For two weeks, our quartet toiled under the same roof, surrounded by a team of local assistants so eager they seemed like guardian angels. There was so much equality, earnestness and fraternity among us.

The Foshan experience turned out to be a ground-breaking event which saw people from diverse social sectors, interact harmoniously with one another. What a feeling, to revitalize through art, the Silk Road spirit of connecting peoples, on the very soil of China, where it all started! You can see more of Hung's art on www.atelierhung.com



Harpist



Lau-Kwok Hung



Matteo Ricci detail.