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THURSDAY, JULY 23, 2015

Chinese Artists Part of Exchange Program with MCA

POSTED BY EILEEN TOWNSEND ON THU, JUL 23, 2015 AT 6:27 PM

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"I'm going to make this again but much bigger," sculptor Bangmin Nong told me yesterday, gesturing towards a half-finished clay maquette. "Not huge," he continued, "...just bigger. And hollow it out. Chinese clay works differently than American clay." He shrugged.

Nong's maquette, a small figure of a woman falling backwards off a rock, felt mythological. Was it drawn from a story? "From my feelings," Nong smiled. "I often feel like this. Like I am falling."

Nong and I spoke in the Memphis College of Art ceramics studio, where Nong and four other Chinese sculptors are temporary summer residents. Known collectively as Studio Nong, the Chinese artists are in Memphis for a week, during which time they will give a public lecture (Friday night, 6:30 p.m. at MCA), hold open studio hours (most of the day Sunday), and visit several local museums. From there, they will travel to Kansas City Art Institute and to Jun Kaneko's studio in Omaha, NE.

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The idea for the Studio Nong residency was born in 2011 in collaboration with Memphis College of Art professor Leandra Urrutia. Nong and Urrutia met at a residency in Maine. There, a casual conversation turned into a plan. In 2013, four American artists visited the Guangxi Art College in Nanning, China, where Nong is an associate professor. Nong involved four of his colleagues at the Art College and an exchange was born.

"We all work between different media," Urrutia told me. "Several of us come from painting or brushwork backgrounds. If we have one thing in common it is that we are all interested in figurative work. But the Chinese and American approaches to the figure can be very different."

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Urrutia said she is excited for 2016, when the four American artists will return to China. She hopes to one day get students involved in the residency, as well. "Art provides a space for understanding for us," she said, "despite language and cultural barriers."

The Memphis College ceramic studios at Memphis College of Art will be open to the public Sunday, July 26 from 9-10:45 a.m., 2:30-5:30 p.m. and 7-9 p.m. An artist talk that is also open to the public will take place on Friday, July 24th in Myers Auditorium, at 6:30 p.m.

Tags: Studio Nong, Bangmin Nong, Memphis College of Art, Guangxi Art College, Image

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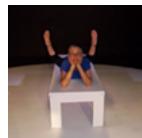


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