

Contemplating Haiga art

By Alexandra Steed - Sep 24, 2015

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(Ben Lucas | Concordiensis) Haiga's style combines poetry, haiku and calligraphy.

On Aug. 29, 2015, a new exhibit opened in the Mandeville Gallery on the second floor of the Nott Memorial centering on the art of Haiga.

Titled "Haiga Painting" by Ion Codrescu, the collection of paintings in the gallery is small and, at first glance, looks fairly nondescript.

Haiga is a type of Japanese art that combines Japanese poetry, haiku and calligraphy. The paintings in the gallery are black and white and each work has a different image with poetry surrounding it.

These works are typically small, often made to fit on an album cover or to decorate a fan, so as to seem more intimate.

Codrescu compares Haiga paintings to "a musical miniature: an impromptu or a nocturne of Chopin" and thinks they are an excellent way to highlight the influence of haiku or any other type of poetry in people's lives.

Codrescu is a Romanian artist and has been focused on Haiga paintings for quite awhile. He has his Ph.D. in Visual Arts from the National University of Arts in Romania and has toured the globe, giving lectures about Haiga paintings.

Codrescu's works have been exhibited in several different countries, and he has been published in over 100 books and magazines.

He currently teaches art history, creativity in art and comparative art at the Ovidius University of Constanza in Romania.

No one is quite sure who created Haiga painting but Nonoguchi Ryuho, an artist who lived from 1595 to 1669, is thought to have established the style.

The style was created to be simple and profound. Haiga is a medium that aims to force people to think about art for longer periods of time. The style and influence is similar to minimalist Zen paintings, an art form which was popular with the Samurai who held power in Japan during this time period.

Haiku poetry was a popular pastime with the well to do of the Edo period when Haiga eventually made it on to the scene, and its link to poetry quickly made it an attractive type of entertainment.

Since this time period, Haiga had evolved along with society, but in most respects it has stayed true to its original style: simple, almost minimalist and somewhat formal.

Several modern artists have used Haiga for their political cartoons, using poetry to explain the statement made in their art. Other artists have taken to using new mediums like photography, alternative digital imagery and other types of media for their work. Yet still there are traditional artists, like Codrescu, who stick to the tried and true method with calligraphy, haiku and simple images.

Haiga is a style of art that is small, beautiful and definitely worth visiting at the Mandeville Gallery. The exhibit will remain open until Nov. 29, 2015.