



“Robert Oxnam: Chinese Inspiration/North Fork Creation” Opens at William Ris Gallery

July 11, 2018
by Sponsors

On Exhibit: July 14 - August 12, 2018

Opening Reception: Saturday, July 14, 2018, 4 - 7 pm

Artists Talk: Saturday, July 28, 2018, 4 - 6 pm

William Ris Gallery, 1291 Main Road, Jamesport, NY 11947

[The William Ris Gallery](#) is pleased to present Chinese Inspiration/North Fork Creation, a solo exhibition of sculpture, color photography and ink paintings by noteworthy artist and international specialist in Chinese history and culture, [Dr. Robert Oxnam](#).

The exhibition will include over 40 works of wood sculptures, color photographs and ink drawings that explore Oxnam’s artistic persona – a merging of Chinese philosophy and artistic tradition, American resourcefulness and imagination. Organized and curated by the artist and his wife, Dr. Vishakha N. Desai, a scholar of Asian Art, the exhibition will concentrate on Oxnam’s wood sculptures. Inspired by “Chinese Scholars Rocks” (gongshi) that highlight natural shapes in ancient stones weathered in riverbeds and mountains, Oxnam’s sculptures also pay tribute to the beauty and spirit of the North Fork – weathered wood found on the shores of the Long Island Sound from Port Jefferson to Orient Point.



“Prayer” by Robert Oxnam, 2009. Weathered Brazilian Wood, Organic Paints, Natural Waxes, 19 x 11 x 6 inches. Courtesy of William Ris Gallery.

“As I work, I am moved by several Chinese philosophies (especially Daoism) and by the notion that I am taking an old Chinese aesthetic approach and applying it to a fresh medium. I even share the Chinese preferences for certain tactile qualities in rocks – balanced, but unusual shapes, deep indentations, bumpy surfaces, intriguing holes. But I want to emphasize that my sculptures are not

an effort to copy scholars rocks, nor to make old wood look like scholars rocks. I am seeking inspiration, not replication. And, unlike those who created Chinese rocks, I do not use tools to shape them to my own vision; rather I preserve existing forms and let the wood speak for itself," writes Oxnam. After "harvesting" his wood from the coastline, he cleans, sands, and balances the wood, always keeping true to his mantra - do what Nature tells you to do and do nothing against Nature's original intent. The sculptures are then coated in fine layers of milk paint, burnished and polished with natural base waxes creating a vibrant translucent patina.



"Han Dragon (relief)" by Robert Oxnam, 2010. Weathered Wood Trunk / Roots Junction, Organic Paints, Natural Waxes, 36 x 24 x 14 inches. Courtesy of William Ris Gallery.



"Windswept" by Robert Oxnam, 2011. Weathered Wood, Organic Paint, Natural Waxes, 62 x 36 x 28 inches. Courtesy of William Ris Gallery.

Oxnam's digital photographic color images of glacial rocks found along the coastline of Long Island are also respectful and inspired by his quest for Qi, the Chinese belief that certain life force or energy flow is found around us and it is up to us to acknowledge and embrace it. Taken with a macro lens, his images concentrate on the abstract geological patterns found on the rocks dating from the last ice age. Focusing on small details undiscernible to most beach walkers, Oxnam's photographs suggest vast expanses reminiscent of "Google Earth" images.

Oxnam's ink drawings are dynamic responses to his sculptures and contain a vigor and brilliance reminiscent of Franz Kline, Jackson Pollack and Chinese ink-wash paintings of the 20th century.

In 2005, Robert Oxnam, (b. 1942 Los Angeles, CA), published a psychological autobiography, *A Fractured Mind*, (Hyperion Press), revealing the fact that he has Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID, formerly called multiple personality) and it was at this time that Oxnam had an artistic epiphany where his art-making embraced his Chinese expertise, creative energy and psychological dissociation. He sees his artwork as linking both his Chinese spiritual and American innovative sensibilities.

Oxnam's past exhibitions include: Chambers Fine Art Gallery, Rockefeller Brothers Fund, Triple Candie Gallery, Interchurch Center, Brecknock Hall, Full Moon Arts Center, Art Sites Gallery and New York Public Library at 53rd Street. In addition to being a frequent speaker on topics concerning China and Asia, Oxnam has given keynote addresses on the "Psychology of Creativity" to such

organizations as An Infinite Mind, Orlando FL and the Conductors Retreat at Medomak, ME.



“Gremlin” by Robert Oxnam, 2011. Weathered Wood, Organic Paints, Natural Waxes, 26 x 15 x 11 inches. Courtesy of William Ris Gallery.

About the artist – Robert Oxnam was President of The Asia Society for over a decade (1981–92). Prior to his presidency, he served as the Society’s Vice President and Washington D.C. Center Director (1979–81) and as China Council Director (1975–81). Since the 1990s, Oxnam has often acted as a lecturer for prominent Americans seeking in-depth knowledge of China, including Bill Gates, Warren Buffett and former President George H. W. Bush. In 1992-95 he was also Special Correspondent for the MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour, hosting an acclaimed nine-part special on China.

Robert Oxnam was educated at Williams College (B.A. 1964, Phi Beta Kappa) and Yale University (M.A. 1966, Ph.D., 1969). He taught at Trinity College, CT (1969–75), Columbia University (1990s), and Williams College (Bernhard Professorship, 1995). He was also Visiting Professor and at Beijing University from 2004-2005. His academic honors include the Williams College Bicentennial Medal (1993) and the Trinity College LL.D. (1994).

Robert Oxnam is the author of two novels, both from St. Martin’s Press: Cinnabar, 1990 – a mystery thriller on 20th century China and Ming, 1995 – a historical novel about 17th century China. He has also authored or edited several non-fiction works on Asia Ruling from Horseback, on the Manchu conquest of China; Dragon and Eagle, a comprehensive review of U. S. – China relations. A Fractured Mind elicited widespread media coverage including CBS’s 60 Minutes, ABC’s Good Morning America, NBC Today Show, PBS, The New York Times, Time Magazine, Daily Telegraph and the BBC.



“Desert Flower” by Robert Oxnam, 2009. Weathered Wood, Organic Paints, Natural Waxes, 14 x 10 x 10 inches. Courtesy of William Ris Gallery.

BASIC FACTS: “Robert Oxnam” is on view from July 14 to August 12, 2018. An Opening Reception takes place on Saturday, July 14, 2018, 4 to 7 pm. An Artist Talk takes place on Saturday, July 28,

2018, 4 to 6 pm.

William Ris Gallery is located at 1291 Main Road, Jamesport, NY 11947 Gallery hours are: Daily from 12:00 - 5:00 p.m. and by appointment. www.williamris.com.

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