



Eun-Sook Kim's Zen Garden Exhibit at the Corner Gallery radiates its "tranquil twilight" for guests of the gallery to see. The exhibit will be on display for the month of July Tuesday through Friday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturday 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Exhibit portrays meaning of Zen

By MICHELE DERIEUX HANDLEY

"Let us spend one day as deliberately as nature..." suggests Henry David Thoreau in his reflections about his year at Walden Pond.

Eun-Sook Kim invites you to such an experience of quiet and of contemplation in her Zen Garden Exhibit July at the Corner Gallery. The Gallery is open Tuesday through Friday, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturday 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

The exhibit room is transformed by the 40-foot-long banner of muted tree peonies hanging along the ceiling, backlit as if in tranquil twilight.

Reflecting all of the earth tones in the glazes and the flowing shapes of nature in her pottery, Kim has created a sanctuary filled with images of floating fish, delicate paintings of water lilies and woodcut of elegant geese against a blue-gray sky.

The centerpiece is the lowering elevations of a fountain where the water springs from a ceramic lily pad into a smaller pot decorated with flowing-tailed fish and sings a quiet song as it enters the pool graced with water lettuce and small "koi," golden fish.

Even the bamboo matting and woven small benches and preserved tree carving that allow one to sit and contemplate this serenity, all are made of the fruits of nature.

Kim is careful to point out that Zen means nature was recreated

through her, certainly using her artistic skills as painter, potter and engraver, but she emphasizes being led by nature, not her own ego.

Having seen the word "Zen" used in so many divergent ways, I asked Kim to define it for me. She pointed to her head and said, "Zen does not come from here," then she proceeded to point with emphasis to her heart, "This is where Zen resides."

According to Kim, Zen is easily practiced as a philosophical outlook: it does not encompass or contradict religion. She emphasizes Zen as being "in harmony with" nature, and by extension in harmony with oneself and with others.

Although Kim suggested I stress the total harmony of the garden not its separate parts, I must recognize her many unique gifts as artist that allow this serenity to come together so well. The long banner hung around the entire room was an instance of Kim's mastery of the "Xie-I" form of watercolor brushwork on highly absorbent rice paper. Double-loading her brush with a lighter, then darker hue of the same shade, she makes a stroke that not only captures the flow and muted tones of each tree peony petal but the water absorbent rice paper causes the brush stroke of color to blend slightly into the white of the paper as if the petals were in fluttering in the breeze.

In her framed water lily series,

Kim uses the "Gong-bi" style of watercolor painting on nonabsorbent rice paper. The lack of absorbency causes the colors to remain pure and more definite on the surface and allows her to use as many as 20 shades of green for each leaf, giving even each white lily and leaf grouping a depth of colors.

One of my favorite pieces is the banner directly behind the flowing fountain. In this elongated scene, Kim has captured the effortless grace of fish swimming in a suggested stream that mutes their colors. Sitting there in front of the smaller gurgling pond, one is also immersed in the sense of fish floating freely in a larger current.

Her pottery flows in large and small natural shapes as their soft earth-tone glazes stand in contrast to pieces woven from fibers in nature. Even the pond is surrounded by smaller pieces representing frogs and turtles in darker colors of the shadows. The two larger watercolors across from the bamboo seating area express Kim's "optimistic realism" in exuberant bursts of colors.

As I exited the Corner Gallery, I was besieged by the discordant metallic sounds of a nearby car stereo thumping out Rap. Even then the harmony I had felt in the garden stayed like a residual memory and I walked serenely on. This is Kim's lasting gift of Zen to those who sit in her magical garden and contemplate.