

## Hung Liu: *Fu* & *Golden Glyphs*

In collaboration with the Magnolia Tapestry Project, Hung Liu has produced two tapestries in 2006: *Fu* (*Happiness*) and *Golden Glyphs*. These original works were created from layers of digitally collaged elements scanned from sketchbooks and paintings by the artist. Liu often works from 19th and 20th century photographs of Chinese laborers and courtesans, which she surrounds with a unique mixture of traditional Chinese symbols, calligraphic flourishes, and dripping veils of linseed oil. Liu's husband, philosophy professor Jeff Kelley, describes her work as an alchemical marriage, in which "the fresh, luscious poetry of the "mineral period" (painting) presses against the dry atrophied plates of the "chemical period" (photography)." Liu's tapestries, then, are the grandchildren of this marriage -- a new hybrid, in which the singular texture and familiar physical presence of textiles are infused with the precise values of the "digital period."

In China, peaches and bats represent longevity and happiness; accordingly, the title of *Fu*, Liu's second tapestry, is a homonym meaning both "bat" and "happiness." The work



Hung Liu, *Fu* (*Happiness*), 2006 - Jacquard Tapestry, 79 x 81 in. Edition of 10



Hung Liu, *Golden Glyphs*, 2006 - Jacquard Tapestry, 79 x 81 in. Edition of 10

possesses a remarkable depth, as if Liu had hand-painted each layer directly onto the cotton. Its colorful flora and fauna give *Fu* a sense of flowering and emergence -- a counterpoint to its central figure's enigmatic expression, which subtly hints at a secret joy. The eponymous figures of Liu's third tapestry, *Golden Glyphs*, were woven using gold metallic thread. They are based on sketches from ancient Buddhist cave murals found in Dunhuang, in the Gobi Desert, to which Liu made a forty-day pilgrimage in 1980.

Much of the meaning of my [work] comes from the way the washes and drips dissolve the historical photographs I paint from, opening them to a slower kind of looking, suggesting perhaps the cultural and personal narratives fixed in the photographic instant. I have also begun to weave passages from traditional Chinese bird and flower genre painting into the photographic field, further compromising the photographs and evoking a sense of the cultural memory underlying the surfaces of history. Altogether, I hope to wash the subject of its exotic "otherness" and reveal it as a dignified, even mythic figure.

-- Hung Liu