Award-winning Chinese artist shares expertise with campus, community

His own images of flowers, birds, mountains and Chinese homes were gorgeous — detailed, evocative, intensely colored.

But in his two-week residency at Bates this fall, prize-winning artist Zhang Yi shared more than his finished work. Well-attended by the college community and local schoolchildren, Zhang’s workshops at the Museum of Art included traditional painting techniques and related cultural insights.

Ngan Dinh ’02, who attended seven days of Zhang workshops, shares one such insight. According to Zhang, she says, the lotus blossom is a powerful symbol for many Chinese. It represents the belief that, just as this beautiful, aromatic flower grows in the murky water of a pond or swamp, a pure and attractive person can emerge from the humblest background.

Zhang, who began painting in the traditional watercolor style when he was 5 years old, teaches art at the Nanjing University of Science and Technology. Two of his paintings shown at Bates have won national competitions in China.

“Classical Feelings,” his exhibit at Bates (and his first in the United States), displayed his full range. It encompassed two formal painting styles — the expressive, abstract Xieyi style, and the dense, detailed Gongbi — and three categories of subject. Those categories were landscapes, human figures, and the natural subjects lumped together as “bird and flower” paintings.

The residency coincided with Celebrate Bates! Weekend, when many students, faculty and parents attended painting workshops with Zhang. Dinh gives the youthful, slender artist high marks for his teaching ability, even though he doesn’t speak much English. (Translators for the workshops included Sze Wei ’01 and Margaret Maurer-Fazio, associate professor of economics, who was instrumental in bringing the artist to Bates.)

Although she had never had a studio art class prior to the workshops, “I was very happy with what I did” with Zhang, Dinh says. “He made it easy and enjoyable.”

“Whenever I came into the class, and picked up the brush and started listening to him,” she adds, “I forgot everything else in the world.”

With Maurer-Fazio translating, the youngsters quickly got the knack of selecting the proper brushes, diluting the paint just so, and conjuring up lotus petals and tadpoles on the frail sheets of rice paper.

Lee Calihan ’03, an art major, arrived with Behnke’s class. Just beginning a 30-hour commitment to observe the class for her Perspectives on Education course, she was already completely comfortable with the kids.

“It’s good to see possible careers after Bates, and since Mrs. Behnke is a Bates graduate, it also gives me a sense of what people have done with their education and personal and philosophical beliefs,” says Calihan. The experience, she adds, “has deepened my connection with the surrounding city as well.”

As for Ngan Dinh, she attended the workshops in spite of competing demands from her honors thesis and searching for a grad school. “This was a once-in-a-lifetime kind of thing,” she says.
Fall Greetings

By Ed and Joan Tiffany P'03
Co-Chairs, Bates Parents & Family Association and Parents Fund

In September, Bates enrolled the largest number of first-year students in the College’s history. This is wonderful news — Bates is more popular and valued than ever! At our first meeting of the 2001-2002 Parents Fund Committee, held during Celebrate Bates! Weekend, President Harward remarked how the College’s popularity has flourished as it is recognized worldwide for its values of egalitarianism and independence. He mentioned how appreciative the College is to have so many parent volunteers who donate their time and resources to Bates and how this directly correlates to Bates’ popularity and success. To first-year parents, welcome to the Bates community! We hope you and your student are enjoying the college experience thus far. Please consider investing some of your time volunteering for the Parents & Family Association — this will provide you with a way to stay connected to your student’s life at Bates.

We are happy to have the opportunity this year to chair the Parents & Family Association and Parents Fund. We see our task as two-fold: to raise much-needed financial support for Bates and to be a sounding board for the College while providing insight and inspiration for parent volunteer activity. In order for all the areas of parent volunteering at Bates to be represented, we are in the process of creating a Parents & Family Association and Parents Fund Steering Committee. Chair representation would come from the Parents Fund, Welcome, Parents in Admissions, and Office of Career Services Parent committees. One of the goals this year is to recruit chairs and more members for these committees. Linda Dodd P’04, our Welcome Committee Chair, has recently joined the team. If you are interested in getting involved with one of these committees, please refer to the Bates Parents & Family Association Volunteer descriptions and accompanying tear-off Parent Volunteer Card in this newsletter. The work provides a unique opportunity to be involved with Bates, and we hope to accomplish much while having fun! To find out more, please call 207-786-6336 or e-mail parents@bates.edu.

Parents Fund Update

Last year, more than 1,400 current and former Bates parents and grandparents contributed $554,491 — 20% of the total Bates Fund. A special thank you to the volunteers on the Parents Fund Committee and to all the parent and grandparent donors for your generosity and commitment of philanthropy. As we move forward into the 2001-2002 Fund year, the goals are $600,000 and 40% participation (1,578 donors). This represents an 8% increase in dollars and 3% increase in participation. Although this is a challenging time to be fundraising, we believe that now it is more important than ever before to recognize the value of investing in our future through the liberal arts education that Bates College provides. We hope you will consider helping us advance the College’s teaching and learning community for the benefit of our nation and the world with a gift of any size to the Parents Fund.

Bates College Sustainers Program

This program makes it easy for parents and families to give to the College in monthly installments via credit card or electronic deduction from your checking account. By becoming a sustainer, you get a head start on supporting the 2002 Fund and will not receive any appeals by mail, saving the College money on paper and postage! Please call 1-888-522-8371 if you want to sign up or learn more about the program.

Cross-Cultural Communicator

Senior Volkkan Yildiray Stodolsky spent summer 2001 in Sarajevo conducting 25 interviews with Bosnian Muslims and Christians who were teen-agers during the Bosnian conflict. He explored the relationship between war and cultural identity, in particular the myth of “ancient hatreds” used to explain longstanding conflicts in the region. “It was fascinating to witness the birth of a new identity,” says Stodolsky, whose interviewees saw themselves as Bosnians rather than as members of an ethnic or religious group. “They are sick of war,” he says.

Stodolsky also received a 2001 Beinecke Memorial Scholarship for $32,000 to support his graduate education. He hopes to earn a Ph.D. in Islamic cultural history. A resident of Germantown, Md., Stodolsky was born and educated in Istanbul, Turkey, and has lived in Holland, Croatia (during a Bates Fall Semester Abroad), and in Russia (during a junior semester abroad). “My greatest passion is to communicate with different cultures,” he says.

Mentors Make a Difference

Muzna Bachani ’05 of Mombasa, Kenya, is enjoying the process of getting to know her Bates mentor, Joanna Lee, director of affirmative action.

In its first two years, the Bates College Mentoring Program helped to create 40 mentor-mentee relationships. As it enters its third year, 50 additional bonds have been formed between faculty/staff and incoming students who have volunteered to participate in the program. Individuals are matched on the basis of questionnaires.

The mentoring program, an integral part of the Enhancing Diversity Through Connection initiative, is designed to enhance the Bates experience of several groups of new students, including transfer students, international students, students of color, students from Maine, and students from underrepresented social and class backgrounds who often feel uncomfortable at first.

The program provides these students with an adult mentor with whom they can discuss academic, social, and personal matters. Muzna Bachani ’05 of Mombasa, Kenya, values the program for “making college life easier for me.” She credits her mentor, Joanna Lee, director of affirmative action, for “being there to help me out at all times.”
‘Faust’ presentation touches listeners in light of Sept. 11 tragedies

For the third year, as parents and alumni converged on Bates for the annual Celebrate Bates! Weekend, faculty prepared a symposium that would share and celebrate the quality of Bates scholarship.

The humanities faculty took the spotlight for the symposium on a sunny, chilly Saturday morning. The 10 presentations examined questions of identity, nationality and boundaries through lenses as diverse as Australian soccer and sexual identities in the history of Ellis Island.

But with the tragic events of Sept. 11 fresh in everyone’s mind, one presentation in particular seemed to transcend scholarly concepts and speak to the hearts of listeners.

Denis Sweet, professor of German, originally intended to trace the literary evolution of the character Faust, the audacious doctor whose intellectual hunger leads him to trade his soul for the devil’s services. Sweet wanted to show how changing outlooks and beliefs changed the way the Faust story was interpreted over five centuries.

In the event, though, Sweet didn’t start with Faust. Instead he reminded the audience — students, parents, colleagues — of the awful transformative power of the terrorist attacks on this nation. As with all of us, “everything I did was called into question after Sept. 11,” he said.

Sweet went on to say that in the crisis he found poetry more and more valuable as a source of solace and insight. “People are looking for deeper meanings,” he said. “People are also questioning evil, the nature of evil.” Enter the character who invokes evil in the name of what he believes is good — Faust, whose story has driven poems, plays, and novels.

With lyrical clarity, Sweet laid out Faust’s progress from legend to literary icon to, eventually, broad cultural symbol. When the rule of faith was strong, the story was used to illustrate the dangers of Satan’s power. As the age of science dawned, the doctor’s quest for knowledge was transformed from hubris to heroism. Finally, in the hands of the great German poet Goethe, Faust entered the modern age of uncertainty.

And here Sweet was speaking not to curious intellects but to people seeking a handle on Sept. 11. When Faust betrays the innocent Margarete, he explained, he is not punished with damnation, a concept that has lost its relevance. Instead, Goethe points to the possibility of a kind of redemption attained after many errors and much pain.

As intractable as the world situation seemed, and as near as evil seemed to lurk in those days after Sept. 11, this reminder that human redemption is possible came as a comfort of sorts. Even if, as Professor Sweet suggested, such redemption lies at the end of a long struggle.

Under the direction of Hirasawa Professor of History Atsuko Hirai, Yuko Eguchi ’03 of Tokyo presented a Japanese tea ceremony. A sizeable Celebrate Bates! crowd was captivated by the ceremony, held in the Joan Holmes Perry ’51 Atrium in Pettengill Hall.
Welcome to the Bates Parents & Family Association

The Bates Parents and Family Association (BPFA) was established more than 15 years ago as a way for parents and guardians of Bates students to become involved with the Bates College community. The association includes volunteer programs in the offices of Development, Career Services, and Admissions. It fosters greater and more open communication between parents and families and the College.

All parents and guardians of current Bates students are considered members of the BPFA and are invited to volunteer for its activities. This is done through volunteer committees and financial support of the College.

Bates Parents Fund Committee

The Bates Parents Fund is the annual fundraising effort conducted by the College during the fiscal year (July 1-June 30). The Parents Fund is a critical component of the overall Bates Fund, which raises annual unrestricted dollars from alumni, parents, friends, corporations, and foundations in support of Bates’ educational programs. These unrestricted gifts help provide the College with flexibility to respond to the areas of greatest need in order to enhance students’ total educational experience over the course of each year.

Contributions to the Parents Fund help meet current expenses for the essentials that make a Bates’ education one of the best in the nation. Essentials funded include academic programs and faculty support, extracurricular activities, guest lecturers, library acquisitions, health services, counseling, tutoring, and financial aid.

The role of the Parents Fund Committee is to help increase the funds raised each year by providing philanthropic leadership and fostering supportive relationships between the College and parents. Committee members focus on personally contacting current and past parents as well as grandparents throughout the fiscal year to help the College gain their vital support. The BPFA Office provides all the necessary materials and assistance.

Welcome Committee

The Bates Welcome Committee is an important program through which current and past Bates parents personally contact families of incoming first-year students during the late winter and spring to welcome them to Bates’ extended community. Committee members answer questions and provide helpful tips. They may even host a regional “send-off” picnic during the summer months. This year, volunteers welcomed nearly 500 families — you may have been one of them!
News headlines, association reports, and organization contacts all confirm the weakness of the economy and the difficulties the members of the Class of 2002 may experience in their job search.

“Many companies already have reduced their hiring plans and some have allocated significantly fewer funds for college recruiting efforts,” reported a journal of the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE).

We second that opinion. Bates students can access a variety of options, strategies, and services that will prepare them for a volatile and uncertain job market.

We take Melancon’s advice seriously at the Office of Career Services (OCS). We work closely and carefully with students as they define themselves and their needs for their first few years after graduation. We assist them with the critical skills and techniques of cover letters, resumes, and interviewing. Last year we had more than 2,000 counseling appointments, including walk-ins and scheduled sessions.

Complementing this personal approach are the ever-increasing technological resources available to students. Hundreds of pages and links at the OCS Web site www.bates.edu/career offer students a range of programs, services, and recruiting options.

Even in the best of times, the reality of the job market means that about 80 percent of all available jobs are never listed. OCS addresses this reality with a variety of innovative strategies; we also remind seniors that networking opportunities within the Bates family represent a traditional and invaluable career resource. “I would certainly recommend networking,” said one recent Bates graduate, “because I found that Bates alumni are very dedicated to and interested in helping recent Bates graduates.” Students interested in contacting Bates Alumni Career Advisors can now access this volunteer group through Batesnet, the alumni community online wwww.bates.edu/for-alumni.xml.

Essentially, we agree with a recent Bates graduate who encouraged students with these words: “The task of finding a job can be daunting, but be persistent and you will succeed. Utilize any and all options available to you. I received some legitimate leads from people and places that I never would have expected!”
Climb Every Mountain

Rachel Austin, winner of the 2001 Kroepsch Award for Teaching and assistant professor of chemistry and environmental studies, greeted the Class of 2005 at its Matriculation Dinner in early September with some inspirational thoughts about the next four years.

Along with presenting nuts and bolts about attendance and note-taking habits, she urged her young audience to assume responsibility for their own educations by becoming ardent about their studies. “You are here to develop a life-long passion,” she told them. “Take comfort in the fact that native ability or inclination towards a particular subject plays, in my experience, a very small role in whether you will ultimately succeed in it.” Austin asked first-year students to “get comfortable with discomfort. Accept not knowing,” she said. “Real transformations take time.”

“I keep an image in my mind of a college education as rock climbing training,” she said. At first you start off at a low level with lots of ropes and pulleys and assistance. Over time, you, the apprentice rock climber, learn how to use your muscles and your mind in such a way that you can climb increasingly more difficult rocks with less and less assistance.”

“Hopefully four years from now, when we come together again for the senior banquet in this space,” Austin continued, “you will be able to find and engage in intellectual challenges without a homework assignment. In the intervening time, we the faculty will be here to help you climb, but the more you challenge yourself, the more you dig in, the stronger and more capable you will become.”

Remember this above all else, concluded Austin: “Cynicism is boring. Boredom is boring. Not caring is boring. Loving what you do isn’t boring. If you learn how to love your work, your life will be much richer. That’s what you’re here for. Take responsibility, and take advantage of your responsibilities.”