

By Victoria Donohoe
INQUIRER ART CRITIC

Haverford College. Ying Li, a colorful painter from an equally colorful background in her native Beijing, shows sensual and opulent paintings of the past three years at Haverford College. Featured are 40 paintings in three series by this Haverford faculty member who survived 1960s political turmoil in China when her family was forcibly split up and she was sent to a reeducation camp in the countryside, before immigrating to this country in 1983.

Themes of her partly abstract paintings range from farmland painted in Umbria, Italy, to large paintings inspired by Vermont waterways, and also still lifes of solid objects including seashells and skulls. Li has not settled into formula.

She uses color exuberantly and paints seemingly with an abandon yet rhythmically, her well-controlled thick paint lashing across the canvas. The considerable attraction of her work may be due to the combination of heart and mind on view here. This is feeling art, with thought behind it, rather than an arid series of exercises played out in an art ghetto for only a small coterie.

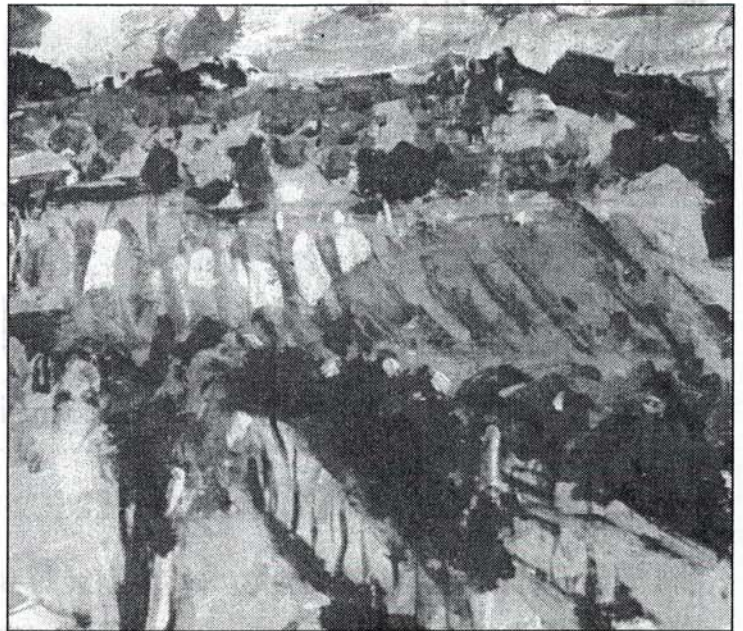
By selecting just certain motifs to give expression within each landscape or other subject, Li attempts to glide into abstraction. And yet she never quite drains any motif of narrative content, which does have interest in her work.

If Ying Li's latest display is a legible search for ways of penetrating people's consciousness to arouse emotional reaction, her journey back and forth between what is recognizable and what isn't, nonetheless confers on these paintings a mystical flavor or otherworldly quality.

Haverford College's Cantor Fitzgerald Gallery in Whitehead Campus Center, Coursey Rd., Haverford. To Dec. 8. Mondays-Fridays 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., Saturdays-Sundays noon to 5 p.m. 610-896-1037.

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"Fields of Montecastello" is part of a show featuring art by Ying Li at Haverford College, where she is on the faculty. It runs to Dec. 8.