

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Local artist, **Patti Warashina**, becomes first ceramic artist to receive **2020 Smithsonian Visionary Award**

By **Nina Huang**
NORTHWEST ASIAN WEEKLY



Patti Warashina in her studio

At 80, Patti Warashina has accomplished a lot and received many prestigious awards in her distinguished art career, but her latest achievement was the 2020 Visionary Award from the Smithsonian Institute. And,

this is the first time it's been awarded to a ceramic artist. Warashina almost went on a completely different path, had she not taken a career-changing art class in college. Warashina grew up in Spokane and was raised by her mother, after her father passed when she was 10. Warashina's mother was a stay-at-home mom for a few years, but was also very artistic. Warashina remembers fondly of a large dollhouse that her mother made for her that she used to play with a lot. While her artistic influences came later, as a child, she was very interested in sports. Her mother eventually worked at J.C. Penney in their display department and was able to get her creative juices flowing working with her colleagues. Warashina's father was a Japanese immigrant and his priority was to make sure his kids were educated. "That was pretty unusual for my dad, who was a Japanese man, to have his daughters educated. We knew from the very beginning that we'd go to college. I prepared myself for that," she said. Warashina's sister was a lab tech and planned to go into dental hygiene. Her brother was supposed to be a doctor. The family eventually moved to Seattle because there was a big Japanese community there. Warashina had plans to go into medical tech or dental hygiene, but she ended up taking a drawing class during her freshman year, and loved it. In fact, it was taught by Dow Constantine's father, John. She took more art classes and never left. "The material was just hypnotizing for me, I'd spend all my time in the art department. I snuck into the building as an undergrad and got to know the grad students. I decided to go to graduate school not knowing what I'd do with it," she said. After Warashina graduated with a ceramics degree, she got married and applied for a job in the Midwest.



"Dreamer" in process 2020, installation 2021

There were only five ceramic jobs in the United States at the time. She found her way into teaching and it was a way to support her art. Along the way, she's taught at Eastern Michigan University, Cornish College of the Arts, and the University of Washington. In addition to local pieces in the Bellevue Art Museum and the Meydenbauer Center, her works are in the collection of the Museum of Arts and Design, New York, National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto, and the Smithsonian American Art Museum. Warashina was also busy raising her two daughters during her career, but she still was able to keep up with her exhibition record. "I was also interested in experimental ceramics at the time, it was really breaking out of the conservative mold," she explained. In the 1950s, the Bay Area became known for the front

see **WARASHINA** on 11

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■ ASTROLOGY


Predictions and advice for the week of September 5–11, 2020


By Sun Lee Chang


- 


Rat—Some time spent away from the fray could give you much needed clarity for when you rejoin the action.
- 


Dragon—Not sure which tool to use for the job at hand? While speed is important, accuracy is a higher priority.
- 


Monkey—A concerning trend can be reversed if you catch it early enough. Don't wait until it becomes a bigger issue.
- 


Ox—Despite the lack of change on the surface, do not assume that applies to what is present underneath.
- 


Snake—You definitely know how to make an entrance. Give as much consideration to your exit as well.
- 


Rooster—Check to make sure you got what you asked for upfront, as you will have more leverage at that time.
- 

Tiger—Not every argument is worth winning. In the current game, choose your battles very carefully.
- 

Horse—Are you finding that things are clicking into place this week? Use this momentum to your advantage.
- 

Dog—Instead of lamenting a redo, seize on it as an opportunity to refashion more to your taste and preferences.
- 

Rabbit—Is your view partially obstructed? Check out what is going on at all levels before moving forward.
- 

Goat—There is much to gain from simply asking the right question and following where it leads you.
- 

Pig—A small gesture can have a big impact. Don't underestimate your power to contribute in a positive way.

WHAT'S YOUR ANIMAL SIGN?

RAT 1912, 1924, 1936, 1948, 1960, 1972, 1984, 1996, 2008, 2020 OX 1913, 1925, 1937, 1949, 1961, 1973, 1985, 1997, 2009, 2020 TIGER 1914, 1926, 1938, 1950, 1962, 1974, 1986, 1998, 2010 RABBIT 1915, 1927, 1939, 1951, 1963, 1975, 1987, 1999, 2011 DRAGON 1916, 1928, 1940, 1952, 1964, 1976, 1988, 2000, 2012 SNAKE 1917, 1929, 1941, 1953, 1965, 1977, 1989, 2001, 2013 HORSE 1918, 1930, 1942, 1954, 1966, 1978, 1990, 2002, 2014 GOAT 1919, 1931, 1943, 1955, 1967, 1979, 1991, 2003, 2015 MONKEY 1920, 1932, 1944, 1956, 1968, 1980, 1992, 2004, 2016 ROOSTER 1921, 1933, 1945, 1957, 1969, 1981, 1993, 2005, 2017 DOG 1922, 1934, 1946, 1958, 1970, 1982, 1994, 2006, 2018 PIG 1923, 1935, 1947, 1959, 1971, 1983, 1995, 2007, 2019

*The year ends on the first new moon of the following year. For those born in January and February, please take care when determining your sign.

AWAY from 7

it clear from the start that each of them has a fascinating secret we will learn if we stay tuned (sometimes sooner than later—let's just say not all of the secrets are super well hidden). There's the Russian, Misha Popov, who plays with puppets and has some kind of drama going on with his wife and daughter. Or the Indian, Ram Arya, who is, at first, the commander's biggest fan, but then in a moment of anger tells the others that he, too, has sacrificed to be there. Finally, there's the Chinese crew member, Lu Wang, whose stoic surface and loyalty to her country, we just know, is hiding some kind of boiling passion and individualism underneath.

The Northwest Asian Weekly talked to Vivian Wu, who plays Lu Wang, and who was excited to return to U.S. screens after having spent the past decade or so primarily in the Chinese film and television industry. Wu, who started her career in China, got a foot up from her role in "The Last Emperor," as well as "The Joy Luck Club," where she played the tragic figure of the mother who poisons herself. "After 'The Last Emperor,' I moved to Hollywood to become a Hollywood professional actress," Wu told the Weekly. "But the first 10 years...the majority of the roles I was offered were pretty one-dimensional Asian."

Wu shared that the role of Lu was worth taking on because it was, finally, something different.

"I felt Lu is unlike other Asian roles you see," she said. "This is a very multi-layered character with an emotional arc. She represents the new modern Chinese image and for me, it is very important to portray Chinese women in a positive light and this one is."

While the composition of the crew in "Away," at least on the surface, might be along certain obligatory political lines taken from real world national dynamics, Wu affirmed that the cast and the filming process was very sensitive to diversity.

"The shooting really proved that it was the right move...our creators, writers and directors were so open-minded. Apart from acting, I was welcome to voice my creative input...I was able to bring in Chinese calligraphy, tai chi, all these authentic Chinese cultural things into the show. It's not the way I remembered Hollywood 12 years ago... This is very refreshing and encouraging."

Wu, who remembers Seattle from a part she once played as a mafia concubine, told the Weekly, "I do hope that the audience will like Lu as much as I did." While we can't give any spoilers, Wu agreed that, when it comes to Lu's secret, "Stories like that need to be seen...the struggle between Lu's sense of duty to her country, to the mission, to her family, and [it's] the first time ever she has allowed herself to face her true authentic self. It's amazing. This is a great love story. It's very powerful...From the concubine to the astronaut, Vivian has come a long way."

"Away" offers a message about empathy and working

together that resounds in today's fractured world. As the commander says at the press conference prior to launch from the Moon, "Getting to Mars might be the hardest thing that humankind has ever tried. It requires the best of us from all of us. And maybe it's not our nature to work together. But the future demands otherwise. We will come together now in pursuit of a dream that was once thought to be impossible. If we can do this, we can do anything."

Is it worth it? For Wu, yes. And for the crew? It remains to be seen. Perhaps it is up to each individual, as each crew member struggles with the sacrifices he or she has made to be there—and the same would have to be said for the audience. Ultimately, "Away" is about how much we value home—even when we go far, far away in order to save it. In the show, this mission to Mars is dubbed "humanity's greatest mission." The Weekly asked Wu if she agreed with that and why.

"I personally feel we are a curious race. Humans are curious and the Earth is beautiful, but at the same time, the Earth, we tend to see problems, which is also human. We want to go out into space. It's a dream. We live for hope and we live for dreams. We live for fantasies. As a Chinese person, I was told about the Moon. From a long, long time ago, there have been these fantasies about loved ones going to the Moon. I get it. We want to go to the Moon and Mars. Why not?" ■

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WARASHINA from 6

movement, and a fellow named Peter Voulkos started experimenting with sculptures, steel, metal, wood, and paintings.

"My work was really based on learning pottery. We were told to not just dip it in a glaze, but told to decorate. We were encouraged to take a lot of drawings at the time. Surrealism drew me into the figures and my work was becoming very tight, I felt more comfortable looking at literal imagery, and that's how I got into ceramics," she explained.

Warashina mentioned that ceramics have evolved over the years—it went from being pretty conservative and mainly used for utilitarian ware, but Voulkos made it more experimental.

Warashina was also inspired by her then husband, Bob Sperry, who had worked on experimental ceramics and large-scale murals.

"My studio is my work and I treat it like going to work every day. I really enjoy it, I enjoy problem solving and one idea leads to another, I'm along this quest to discover what's in your head," she said.

What she's currently working on depends on the period. She's working on a visual diary right now, and the content is often influenced by the everchanging daily news.

"The next piece is my favorite, it's like working on a puzzle. My ideas are generated through what I read or seen on TV. I'll have four cups of coffee in the morning while reading the newspaper, and then once I'm energized, I just go," she said.

In addition, she's working on a very large outdoor piece in South Lake Union for a private company. She's very excited to reveal it next year. It's going to be about 14 feet long in aluminum cast, similar to ceramic.

Warashina has a lot of projects going on at once. For example, she's working on a series of cats and mostly experimental projects. She has a show coming up in California later this year.

She still has endless shows to look forward to, and there's never a dull moment. ■

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BILL & TED from 5

are basically the spitting images of their dads, played by Weaving and Lundy-Paine. The young women's taste in music and their perspectives, as portrayed in the movie, is so much more broad and far-reaching than their fathers. They go on their own adventures, and rather than just meeting up with mostly white male historical figures, as Bill and Ted did in previous films, their daughters go through time to meet Jimi Hendrix and Louis Armstrong, Mozart, and also—really surprisingly, Ling Lun, legendary flutist and founder of music from ancient Chinese history.

Lastly, I would be remiss if

I didn't talk about how Keanu Reeves is just legit a treasure and we need to protect him at all costs. While he and I both know he's not the most gifted of actors, there's something extra and special about him and the characters that he plays. He imbues them with this sensitivity or vulnerability that is intriguing and hard to pin down. In this movie, I love that he just loves his best friend—in a pure and positive way. That just feels nice! ■

"Bill & Ted Face the Music" is out right now on streaming services and in theaters.

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