

New exhibit examines Chinese traditions and modern aspects

PORT PERRY — Timing, as they say, is everything.

The Kent Farndale Gallery is showing its good sense of timing with its new exhibit, *Situation, Positioning, Location* by Toronto artist Margie Kelk. Through her works, she looks at the relationship between Chinese culture and the country's rush into the 21st century. This comes in the month before the Olympics are held in China for the first time.

The works in the exhibit, which runs until July 30, are derived from her recent book, *Caged*, in which she equates the Chinese love of caged birds with the situation of people who live in poverty and poor conditions in China, she said. They, too, are imprisoned, she said.

"It's something that makes you think during this Olympic year," Kelk said.

She uses traditional Chinese iconography (opera masks, horses, calligraphy) to highlight China's ancient craftsmanship, the beauty of its landscapes, drawing more attention to the ravages of industrial pollution, she said. While travelling in China with her husband on his

business trips, she saw many parts of China tourists don't normally see, particularly the coal-mining region of Datong, to the west of Beijing. She said lumps of coal lined streets and were piled in doorways and coal dust was everywhere.

"This sad reality was quite a contrast to the graceful flowers and singing birds found in so much traditional Chinese art and handiwork, examples of which were for sale at the various tourist sites I visited," she said.

That's where the mix of tradition and today's China comes in.

There are six framed photography-based wall panels, each featuring a single subject. In one, a tomb figure of hero warrior Zhong Kui shows him deriving his strength from his sword and fan, each emblazoned with a designer logo.

Kelk has visited China six times and is learning Mandarin. She is president of Propeller Centre for Visual Arts in Toronto. She has exhibited her works in group shows throughout Canada and the United States.



Celia Klemenz /News Advertiser photo
Margie Kelk at the opening of an exhibition of her work 'Situation, Positioning, Location' currently on display at the Kent Farndale Gallery in the Scugog Memorial Public Library. The exhibit runs until July 30. Ms. Kelk is framed by two brushworks of 'The Intrepid Ghost Killer, Zhong Kui' and joined by Jeff Shymko and Peter Kelk, right.