

## “TREASURE” YOU CAN TAKE HOME

A dragon curls around the sun, hovering above a peony in full bloom and a cascade of crashing waves. These elements, viewed together, form the Chinese character for “treasure.”

What may sound like a painting straight out of our summer special exhibition *Emperors' Treasures* (page 6) is an intricate image on a piece of wearable art. Look for the design on a custom T-shirt at the museum store.

We commissioned Taiwan-born, San Francisco-based artist Martin Hsu to create an exclusive design to complement *Emperors' Treasures*. Hsu is best known for his signature character Dragon Boy, a charming, cheeky kid (outfitted in a dragon suit) who explores the world with his dog, looking for adventure.

It was Dragon Boy that first captured the attention of Raymond McKenzie, the museum's manager of retail operations. Since meeting Hsu several years ago, McKenzie has been eager to find the right project to partner on.

“Who wouldn't love a little kid dressed up as a dragon finding the magic in life?” McKenzie says. “I like that Martin's work is playful, and that it looks very much like San Francisco but is also clearly influenced by traditional Chinese aesthetics.”

That's pretty much how Hsu describes his artistic point of view, which evolved from his experience as an immigrant in the U.S. drawing on his rich cultural heritage for creative fuel. His body of work — which has been exhibited at the Japanese American National Museum, Google's headquarters and galleries in San Francisco, Los Angeles and Taipei — includes fantastical retellings of folktales, adorable Chinese zodiac animals, and quirky cartoon renderings of anime visionary Hayao Miyazaki, one of his idols.

“My strength lies in fusing East Asian sensibilities with Western subject matter,” he says. “In my humble attempt to create 'New Traditional Asian Art,' I hope to pay homage to the classics by introducing contemporary ideas.”

Hsu says he was “over the moon” when tapped for the *Emperors' Treasures* project because it gave him the chance to honor two institutions that he holds dear. Some of his fondest childhood memories, he says, are of exploring the National Palace Museum, Taipei, with his family. And since moving to San Francisco, the Asian Art Museum has become his “creative refuge.”

Hsu filled his design with auspicious symbols to make the shirt not only visually striking but also meaningful.

“I hope this design encompasses my love, respect and appreciation for both museums,” he says. “And I hope it awakens the explorer spirit in people of all ages.”

Dragon Boy would approve. ■



Above: **Wish by Martin Hsu**  
Prints \$40 and up.



Martin Hsu's family helped out with his 2012 Dragon Boy exhibition in Taipei. Photograph courtesy of Martin Hsu.