



# News Release

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## **NMCC Community College month exhibit features Chinese artwork scrolls**

**Aroostook County** - A one-of-a-kind collection of Chinese artwork scrolls is on display at Northern Maine Community College throughout the month of April as part of the campus-wide celebration of National Community College Month. The exhibit is available for public viewing in the main corridor of the Edmunds Conference Center.

The collection belongs to Dr. Kenneth Petress, professor emeritus of communication at the University of Maine at Presque Isle, who acquired the scrolls during his time spent living and teaching in China. Petress spent his formative years in China but left in 1949 to spend time in the Philippines, Thailand, and the United States.

“These works have been gifts from the artists or the families of artists,” said Petress. “When I received the gifts, I promised I would not sell the work for money and that I would make every effort to give others the opportunity to view the scrolls. This exhibit is part of the way in which I am keeping that promise.”

Most of the scrolls were done by an artist or a relative of someone personally known to Petress, and date from the late 1800’s to the late 1900’s. The oldest, a full color depiction of a Chinese girl, was created in 1870.

Two scrolls featuring roses date back to 1883 and 1885. The most recent, that of a house by a stream was the work of a student artist. Petress’ personal favorite is that of a lily pond, created for him in about an hour by a young lady who sought to describe her home province and hand-lettered an invitation to visit on the surface of her painting.

Each of the twelve scrolls bear similar markings -- the red signature of the artist and the signature of the guild to which he or she belonged, as well as vertical black lettering which is usually the first few lines of a poem, novel, or other literary work.

“What many don’t realize, is that Chinese art is a depiction of another form of art,” said Petress. “The scroll was not the painting. Each painting was carefully attached to the paper or silk-covered scroll by a second skilled artist/craftsman who identified his work by the color of the string used to wrap the scroll. It was the personal signature of the artist.”

Over the years Petress has exhibited the works at UMPI, as well as in the community at such venues as the public library and local high schools.

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*Northern Maine Community College students Denise Sock (left) and Shannon Smart look at the collection of Chinese art scrolls on display in the Edmunds Conference Center at NMCC. The exhibit will be on display through April, which is National Community College Month.*