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At New York City's Chambers Fine Art, Lu Shengzhong regularly exhibits abstract paper-cut works that strongly allude to ancient Chinese silk paintings and Eastern mandala images. During a recent show, the artist's "Being and Nothingness"

(above), 1991, covered one gallery wall. To its left hung his "After Effects of Tiananmen" series, 2000. Each panel measures 55" x 14". Shengzhong's "Great Peace and Tranquility" (facing, above) and his "Poetry of Harmony" series (facing, below), both 2000.

LU SHENGZHONG With titles like "Calling Soul," "Poetry of Harmony" and "Great Peace and Tranquility," Chinese artist Lu Shengzhong, who now teaches in the folk art department at the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing, signals the breadth of his art's philosophical themes. But rather than painting enormous murals or fabricating huge sculptures, Lu creates large-scale, wall-mounted works with nothing more than scissors and tissue paper. His art makes use of a generations-old, traditional Chinese cut-paper technique.

Lu, who was born in 1952 and grew up during the turbulent Cultural Revolution, did not follow the pack of Chinese contemporary artists who embraced the international vogue for installation art as his country began opening up to the West in the 1980s. "I walked away from the cultural confusion of the

time and turned back to traditional folk art," he says.

At first glance, his red tissue-paper tableaux, with their central, round, mandala-like forms, resemble ancient calligraphic works, with cascading streams of hand-drawn characters summarizing the thoughts of sages. Actually, those vertical lines of red marks are made up of the negative-space from Lu's larger designs.

Abstraction evokes familiar art forms in Lu's own oeuvre, whose harmoniously conjoined elements, he believes, serve metaphorically as his personal statement "against the separation of body and soul in contemporary thought." Materially speaking, nothing is wasted in Lu's art; the delicate products of a knowing touch, his cut-paper creations assume the heft and presence of monuments, with an aura of grandeur.

