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Kipling, Kay. "Animated Film Time Spy Takes on Some Big Topics at The Ringling's Center for Asian Art." *Sarasota Magazine*. August 1, 2019.

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Still image from Sun Xun's Time Spy. Copyright the artist.

There's a different kind of animated film coming to The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art in August. Far from a Disney blockbuster, Chinese artist Sun Xun's *Time Spy* is a 3D movie described as a "fantastical and disquieting meditation on global history, environmental collapse, power and the indifference of time to human concerns." That's a lot to unpack.

The film, which will be on view in the Pavilion Gallery of the Ting Tsung and Wei Fong Chao Center for Asian Art, Aug. 11 through Feb. 16, presents not only food for deep thought but an unusual style. Sun Xun uses traditional techniques including ink painting, charcoal drawing and woodblock printing in his films. According to The Ringling, hundreds of Chinese art students helped Xun in carving, inking and scanning the woodblock for each frame of the film, juxtaposing traditional and analog methods with modern 3D animation.

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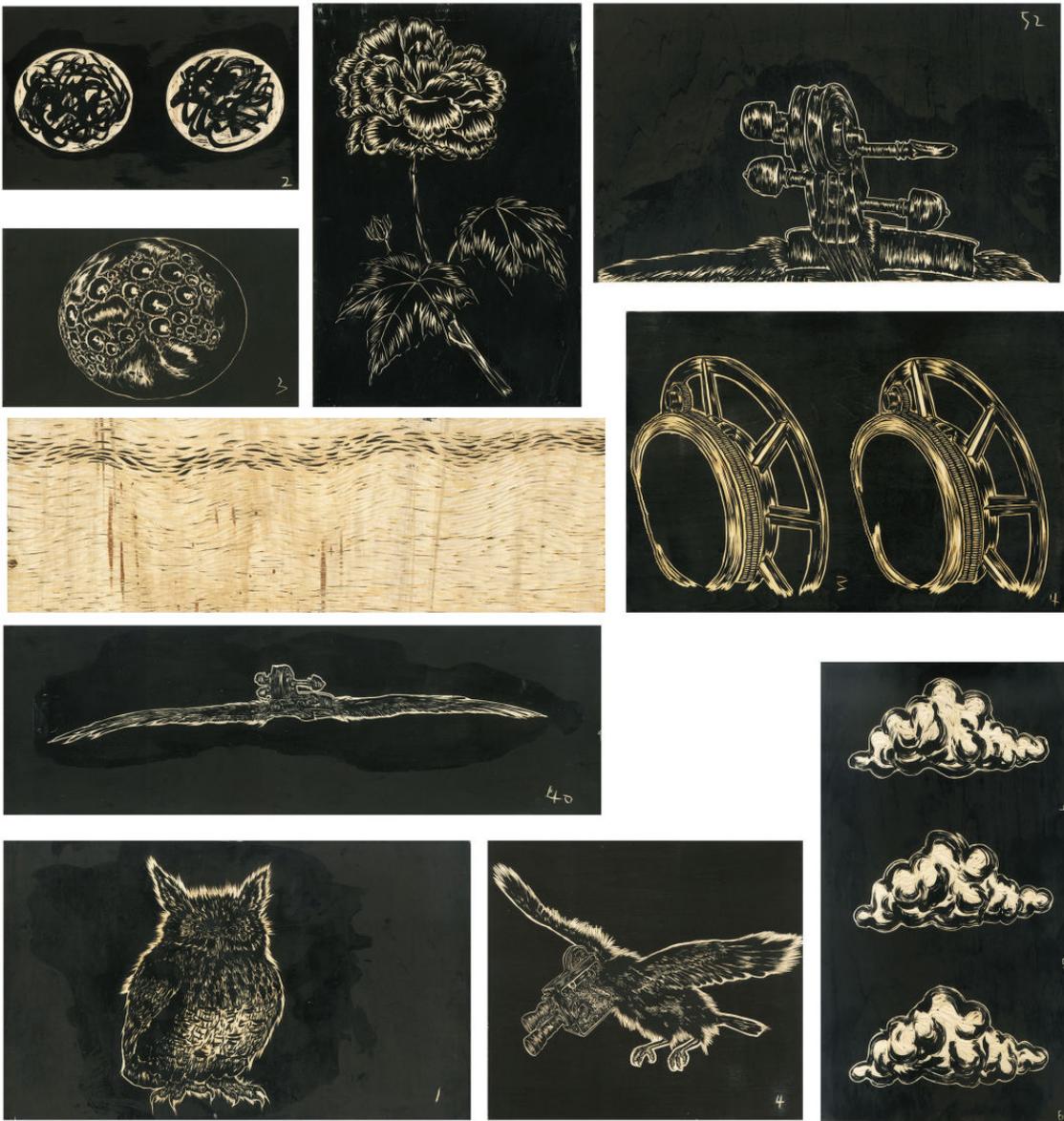
Time Spy woodcut painting. Copyright the artist.

Also old-school: the stereoscopic technique that uses red and cyan to render the film in three dimensions. (The museum will provide tinted glasses to watch *Time Spy*.) And Xun adheres to the tradition of emphasizing long-running Chinese themes like the five elements (metal, wood, water, fire and earth) in his exploration of the nature of time.

Aside from the unusual visuals, *Time Spy* employs a darkly theatrical score composed by Zhang Fei and performed by the Beijing Young Philharmonic Orchestra that “heightens the palpable sense of foreboding,” according to The Ringling’s press materials.

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Originally conceived as part of a project called Reconstruction of the Universe, a multimedia installation made for the second edition of the Audemars Piguet Art Commission, *Time Spy* promises an immersive experience. In his native China, Xun is the founder of Pi Animation; his work has been seen in solo and group shows at the Guggenheim Museum in New York, the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles, Saint Louis Art Museum and the Minsheng Art Museum in Shanghai.



Time Spy, 2016, acrylic and ink on carved wood panels, in 10 panels. Copyright the artist.

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