

Zhao Gang: *Shanshui Poetry*

赵刚：山水诗

ZIAN Gallery
September 19 — October 25, 2025
20-2 Chekengwu, Yuhang District, Hangzhou, China

“The realm shaped by the self: through my eyes I behold the world, and thus all things are imbued with the colours of my being.”

— Wang Guowei

Zhao Gang: *Shanshui Poetry* features a series of new paintings that represent the artist's life long obsession of the intertwining narratives of literati lifestyle, landscape, psychological paths of the past and present. As a seminal genre in classical Chinese literature, *Shanshui* poetry first appeared in the *pre-Qin* and *Han* dynasties, flourished during the *Wei*, *Jin*, reached its zenith in the *Tang*, and attained further philosophical and aesthetic refinement in the *Song*. Shaped by the interplay of social transformation and literary thought, generations of literati turned to mountains and rivers as vehicles of feeling, seeking spiritual solace and transcendence in the purity and remoteness of nature.

In Zhao's recent works, he revisits this lineage, transforming observations and recollections of his surroundings into rhythmic meditations of the mind. Since leaving China in 1983 to study in the Netherlands, then at Vassar College in the United States, Zhao has lived between cultures for decades. After more than twenty years in New York, he returned to Beijing on the eve of the Olympic Games. Washes of colour echo sentiments shaped by migration, displacement, and the passage of time.

“Though the shifting landscapes may differ, the cherished remains the same.” Elderly boatmen adrift on bamboo rafts, mountain ridges dissolving into cloud, the shimmer of lakes, the resonance of bells mingling with snow — through such images, Zhao charts the shifting cycles of the seasons and the subtle metamorphoses of day and night. Within these motifs, he continues to probe the intricate, often fraught entanglements of self-identification, cultural encounter, and historical rupture.

About Artist

Zhao Gang

b.1961, Beijing, China

Lives and works in Beijing and New York

Zhao Gang delves into the fluidity of individual identities, the clash of cultures, and the intricate interplay of fragmented historical events. His works are deeply rooted in a rich and nuanced cultural heritage, drawing

inspiration from both classical and contemporary, Western and Chinese influences. Within his work, patterns and concepts gracefully unfurl, expertly deconstructing visual narratives. At the age of 18, Zhao Gang became the youngest member to join the avant-garde artist group known as the 'Star Group', heralding the onset of the modern art movement in China. Driven by a pursuit of artistic freedom, they laid the foundational stones of contemporary Chinese art. Zhao Gang's artistic style is characterized by audacious and almost exaggerated narrative techniques and brushwork. These elements serve not only as a perpetual reaffirmation of his own existence but also as a defiant stance against the prevailing trend of artistic refinement. His works celebrate the unfettered freedom and authenticity inherent in painting. His experience of studying abroad and living overseas since 1983 has given his works a diverse style with distinctive international characteristics. Upon returning to Beijing in around 2006, Zhao Gang redirected his focus to the intricate interplay between his unique cross-cultural experiences and the annals of Chinese history. Born in this land, yet traversing the path of a new immigrant, he grapples with the sentiment of estrangement that threads through his art.

Born in Beijing in 1961, Zhao Gang currently works and lives in New York and Beijing. He attended the Maastricht Institute of Arts (formerly Stadsacademie voor Toegepaste Kunsten) in The Netherlands (1983), and Vassar College, New York (1984-1987). He obtained a Master of Arts degree from Bard College, New York in 1999. Zhao Gang has held solo exhibitions at various institutions, including the Long Museum (Chongqing Branch), Chongqing, China (2022); Long Museum (West Bund Branch), Shanghai, China (2021); Kuandu Museum of Fine Arts, Taipei (2020); Pérez Art Museum, Miami, FL, USA (2019); Museum of Contemporary Art, Santiago, Chile (2016); Ullens Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing, China (2015); Suzhou Museum, Suzhou, China (2015); Today Art Museum, Beijing, China (2011); Hong Kong Arts Centre, Hong Kong, China (2008); and He Xiangning Art Museum, Shenzhen, China (2006), among others. His works have also been featured in numerous group exhibitions, including the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY, USA (2017); Beijing Minsheng Art Museum, Beijing, China (2015); OCAT Contemporary Art Terminal (Xi'an Branch), Xi'an, China (2014); Guangzhou Triennial, China (2008); Performa Biennial, New York, NY, USA (2007); and Yokohama Triennale, Japan (2005).

Press

ZIAN Gallery
info@ziangallery.com

Ziyi Liu
ziyi@ziangallery.com
+86 134 7789 2488

Address

20-2, Chekengwu, Yuhang District,
Hangzhou, China

E-mail

info@ziangallery.com

Mobile

+86 177-6716-9419