

Zhao Gang: *Shanshui Poetry* **赵刚：山水诗**

19 September - 25 October, 2025

20-2 Chekengwu, Yuhang District, Hangzhou, China



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“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.



Ford the Stream

2024

Oil on canvas

80 x 200 cm; 31 1/2 x 78 3/4 in



we are on the boat

we are on the same boat





The Old Man and the Sea
 2024
 Oil on canvas
 80 × 200 cm; 31 1/2 x 78 3/4 in







Anxiety
2024
Oil on canvas
38 x 61 cm; 15 x 24 in







Southern Song Poetess
2025
Oil on canvas
150 × 120 cm; 56 x 47 1/4 in









The Chaos
2024
Oil on canvas
80 x 200 cm; 31 1/2 x 78 3/4 in







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).



Zhao Gang

b.1961, Beijing, China

Lives and works in Beijing and New York

Education

1999

Completed M.F.A., Bard College, Annandale on Hudson, New York, USA

1984 - 87

Attended Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, New York, USA

1983

Attended Stadsacademie voor Toegepaste Kunsten (Maastricht Institute of Arts), Maastricht, The Netherlands

Solo Exhibitions

2024

'Carnivore', Lisson Gallery, Shanghai, China

'China Stories', Galerie Nagel Draxler, Berlin, Germany

2023

'Zhao Gang's Solo Exhibition: Platform', Jia Art, Wuhan, China

2022

'Holiday', JINGHOPE Art Center, Sanya, China

'Nothing is Happening', Long Museum Chong Qing, Chongqing, China

2021

'Domestic Anxiety', Long Museum West Bund, Shanghai, China

2022

'Supports / ColorLumps as Anthropography of History', Kuandu Museum of Fine Art, Taipei

'Chinese Eastern Railway: Zhao Gang', Long March Space, Beijing, China

2019

'History Painting', Pérez Art Museum Miami (PAMM), Miami, USA

'Passage to Dynasty', Greene Naftali Gallery, New York, USA

'Diluted Retrospective', Each Modern, Taipei

'Hermeneutics and Deconstruction', Galerie Nagel Draxler, Cologne, Germany

2018

'Acquiring Identity', Long March Space, Beijing, China

2017

'Useless Things – Zhao Gang New Works', AYE Gallery, Beijing, China

'Zhao Gang', Tang Contemporary Art, Hong Kong, China

'Earlier Works', Nagel Draxler Kabinett, Berlin, Germany

2016

'Zhao Gang', Tilton Gallery, New York, USA

'Contemporary Chinese Painting', Galerie Nagel Draxler, Cologne, Germany

'Zhao Gang: The Road to Serfdom II', Museo de Arte Contemporáneo (MAC), Santiago, Chile

'Zhao Gang', Dingyun Art Salon, Wuhan, China

2015

'Cocksucker Blues', Bank, Shanghai, China

'Paramour's Garden', Suzhou Museum, Suzhou, China

'The Road to Serfdom', Ullens Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing, China

'The Collection of Lust Empire', Aura Gallery, Taipei, China

2014

'Emperor and His...', AYE Gallery, Beijing, China

2013

'The Khitans', Platform China, Beijing, China

'Another Reality', Gallery LIN, Taipei, China

2012

'Zhao Gang Solo Exhibition', Wada Fine Arts, Tokyo, Japan

2011

'Sisyphus', Aura Gallery, Beijing, China

'Sick Man', Today Art Museum, Beijing, China

'Burning the Wood: The Collection of Du Yuesheng', AYE Gallery, Beijing, China

2010

'Zhao Gang', Galerie Christian Nagel, Berlin, Germany

2009

'Dance in Dream', Triumph Art Space, Beijing, China

2008

'Painting of Zhao Gang', Hong Kong Art Center/ Hanart TZ Gallery, Hong Kong, China

'Zhao Gang', TSI Yi Space Gallery, Beijing, China

2007

'After Thought', Galerie Christian Nagel, Cologne, Germany

'Zhao Gang: Recent Works', 10 Chancery Lane Gallery, Hong Kong, China

'Portrait Landscape Memory', He Xiangning Art Museum, Shenzhen, China

2006

'Broken Narrative', Galerie Bleich-Rossi, Vienna, Austria

2005

'Want Sex', Beijing Art Now Gallery, Beijing, China

'The War Game', Galerie Christian Nagel, Berlin, Germany

2004

'Irony of Mistranslation', Michael Goedhuis, New York, USA

2002

'Zhao Gang', Gallery 4A, Sydney, Australia

1999

'Constructed Dreams', Courtyard Gallery, Beijing, China

1994

'Zhao Gang', Peg Alston Fine Arts, New York, USA

1992

'Zhao Gang', Vorpai Gallery, New York, USA

1991

'The Unpainted Landscapes', Gutharc Ballin Gallery, Paris, France

1990

'Zhao Gang', Vorpai Gallery, New York, USA

1989

'Zhao Gang', Via Del Moro 25/b, Rome, Italy

1987

'Zhao Gang', Lavaggi Gallery, New York, USA

Group Exhibitions

2025

'Depictura', Lisson Gallery, Shanghai, China

2022

'Upstairs Cities', ASE Foundation, Shanghai, China

2021

'Jing Zhe', Surplus Space, Wuhan, China

'1st Meseberg International for Contemporary Art', Galerie Nagel Draxler, Meseberg, Germany

2020

'Life During Wartime: Art in the Age of Coronavirus', USF Contemporary Art Museum, Tampa, USA

2018

'Turning Point - 40 years of Chinese Contemporary Art', Long Museum West Bund, Shanghai, China

'Painting: Now and Forever, Part III', Greene Naftali, New York, USA

2017

'Art and China after 1989: Theater of the World', Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, USA

'Marching in Circles', Long March Space, Beijing, China

'Today. Future', Guiyang 798 Art Center, Guiyang, China

'Zhao Gang: Comfortably Dumb', KWM Art Center, Beijing, China

'Carnival', Massimo De Carlo, Hong Kong, China

2016

'Self', Massimo De Carlo, London, UK

'Global Terror', Nagel Draxler Kabinett, Berlin, Germany

'Our Painting', Yang Museum, Beijing, China

2015

'Chinese Spirit - The Fourth Chinese Oil Painting Exhibition', Chinese Academy of Oil Painting, Beijing; Tianjian Art Museum, Tianjin; Shangdong Art Museum, Jinan;

Shanghai Art Museum, Shanghai; Xi'an Art Museum, Xi'an, China

'The Civil Power - Beijing Minsheng Art Museum Opening Exhibition',

Minsheng Art Museum, Beijing, China

'Big Painting Exhibition', Platform China Contemporary Art Institute, Beijing, China

2014

'About Painting', OCT Contemporary Art Terminal, Xi'an, China

'The Unofficials: Art before 85', Boers-Li Gallery, Beijing, China

'Early - Wang Xingwei, Wang Yin, Zhang Enli, Zhao Gang, Zhou Tiehai',

Platform China Contemporary Art Institute, Beijing, China

2013

'Paint(erly)', BANK, Shanghai, China

'Life Drawing Project', Platform China Contemporary Art Institute, Beijing, China

'Jungle II - A Thriving Morphology: Theory of Relativity', Platform China

Contemporary Art Institute, Beijing, China

2012

'Pinellia', Aura Gallery, Beijing, China

2010

'Demolition Milk II', Kunst Im Tunnel, Düsseldorf, Germany

2009

'Malen ist Wahlen 1981-2009', Galerie Christian Nagel, Berlin, Germany

'Embrace Suzhou Exhibition of the Chinese Contemporary Arts', Suzhou Museum, Suzhou, China

Guangzhou Triennale, Guangzhou, China

Yokohoma Triennale, Yokohoma, Japan

2008

'Delirious Beijing', PKM Gallery, Beijing, China

'Chinese Apartment Art: 1970s -1990s', Shuimu Art Space, Beijing, China

'Global EurAsia', Art Cologne, Cologne, Germany

2007

'Yi School: Thirty Years of Abstract Art Preview in Beijing', Wall Art

Museum, Beijing, China; CaixaForum, Madrid, Spain

'Origin Point: Star Group Retrospective Exhibition', Today Art Museum, Beijing, China

'Harlem School of New Social Realism', PERFORMA, New York, USA

'A Point in the Red: Contemporary Chinese Art', Kashya Hilderbrand Gallery, Zurich, Switzerland

'Feng Zhengjie & Zhao Gang', Tilton Gallery, New York, USAC

2006

'Jiang Hu: 34 Contemporary Chinese Artists', Tilton Gallery, New York, USA

'The Face of Contemporary Art in China', Virginia Beach Contemporary Museum of Art; Federal Reserve, Washington D.C., USA

2005

'Contemporary Erotic Drawings', The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, Ridgefield; Diverse Works Gallery, Houston, USA

'A Project - Incommunicable', Platform China Contemporary Art Institute, Beijing, China

'David Diao and Gang Zhao', Hanart TZ Gallery, Hong Kong, China

2004

'Sunrise Sunset', Smack Mellon Gallery, New York, USA

'Silknet', Galerie Urs Meile, Luzern, Switzerland

'Le Monie et la Demon - Chinese Contemporary Art', Museum of Contemporary Art Lyon, Lyon, France

2003

'David Diao / Gang Zhao: at Mid-Career', Asian American Arts Center; Chambers Fine Art, New York, USA

2002

Jessica Murray Projects, New York, USA

2001

'Reconfiguration', Central Academy Gallery of Fine Art, Beijing, China

'Wei Liu and Gang Zhao', Ray Hughes Gallery, Sydney, Australia

2000

'Demand for Artistic Freedom, The Stars 20 Years', Tokyo Gallery, Tokyo, Japan

1998

'Salon 300', Williamsburg, USA

'David Lowe and Gang Zhao', Peng Gallery, Philadelphia, USA

1990

'The Door', P.S.1 Institute of the Arts/Blum Helman Gallery, New York, USA

1989

'The Stars: 10 Years', Festival d'Automne de Paris, Paris, France

1987

SUNY Albany Art Gallery, Albany, USA

1986

'Beijing/ New York: Avant-Grade Chinese Art', Sharon Creative Arts Foundation, Connecticut; Vassar College Art Gallery, Poughkeepsie; City Gallery, New York, USA

1980

'Xing Xing (The Stars)', China Art Gallery, Beijing, China

1979

'Xing Xing (The Stars)', Beihai Park, Beijing, China

Collections

Long Museum, Shanghai, Chongqing, China

M+, Hong Kong, China

Museo de Arte Contemporáneo (MAC), Santiago, Chile

Pérez Art Museum Miami, Miami, Florida, USA

Suzhou Museum, Suzhou, China