



*Red Leaves Mountain, 2006-2009,
Oil on canvas 180 x 160 cm (70 9-10 x 63 in.)*



Zhu Jinshi in front of his work

ARTIST PROFILE ZHU JINSHI

Your CV mentions the 1985 Tuhua exhibition ('it was forbidden'). Please elaborate on what was forbidden and why?

This was an exhibition without artwork. Only one other artist's works and mine had been brought to the exhibition site. Then the authorities came and we were told that the exhibition had been sanctioned. We had already announced the show and invited a lot of people. The works couldn't be sent to the exhibition site yet we could not let the guests know not to turn up. So the opening was still full of crowds. This exhibition was considered avant-garde at that time and "outside of the government system" art. Abstract art was considered "political" art at the time.



*The Bicyclist, 2008, Bamboo,
Yongjin brand bicycles, installation,
dimensions variable*

*The Bicyclist 2008,
Bamboo, Yongjin brand bicycles,
installation, dimensions variable (Detail)*



Looking at your artistic biography, you started exhibiting outside of China in 1986. How did the transition from China to the international art scene happen?

During the mid 80's, while I was still in Beijing, I had many foreign friends. They suggested that I visit the West. Among these friends was the director of the German National Gallery who came to China in 1985. It was he and his friends who introduced me to Berlin.

Tell us more about the 'Stars Group' and about any other members of it that you are still in contact with.

The 'Stars Group' was not an organised group. There were 26 of us altogether, with 26 different personalities. There was no organisation or discipline - it was a very anti-establishment group. We were not only interested in politics, however, which is what people believe today. 'The Stars' was representative of the people from that generation - a group of prominent artists in the 1970s. I kept in touch with some of them till the mid 1990's, mostly with my teacher, Mr. Zhou Maiyou. He is 74 years old now, but continues to paint.

Tell us about your installation works

I went to Berlin in 1986 and two years later, I had my first installation work. It consisted of one cubic meter of linen in Berlin and one cubic meter of Xuan paper in Beijing. During the following 10 years I was focused on Xuan paper. During the 1990s, I was looking for an atmosphere - a feeling through the placement of material in space. After the year 2000, my focus shifted entirely to China. Works such as 'Power and the country', 'Existence and water', 'From limited to unlimited' represent an interaction between art and society.

Describe your method of painting the 3D type works we saw in London

I call this work "thick painting". In front of the canvas, first there is the material, then the paint. Two parallels are the 18th Century artists being concerned with the figure while the impressionists were focused on colour. What I pay attention to is the material. Painting is first an object, then a canvas. But the "thickness" is not absolute - "emptiness" in the painting is also a "thickness".

To what extent are the cultural influences of your personal background present in your works?

My work reflects a mixture of two cultures. This mixture is a dilemma but also a connection; it is a confrontation but at the same time a harmony. In fact, we can't escape from this mixed feeling - it is like this shore and the other shore, but it is not just a definition of East and West geographically speaking. There is no direction between the shores. ■



Observing the Autumn, 2008
160x180cm



Young Qiao At Chibi, 2006,
Oil on canvas, 160 x 180 cm



*Zhang Fei shoots an arrow, 2006,
Oil on canvas, 160 x 180 cm*



*Why coming into this world, 2006-2007,
Oil on canvas, 280x500 cm*



*Overturned seventeen arches
bridge, 2007, Oil on canvas,
200 x 250 cm*