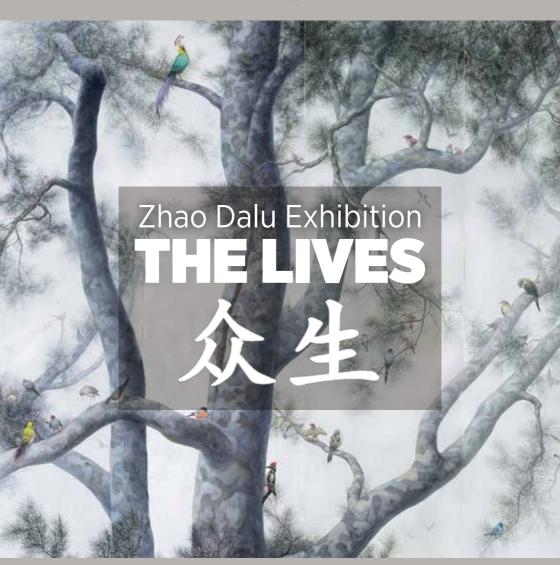
WESTERN SYDNEY UNIVERSITY



Australia-China Institute for Arts and Culture



11 May - 23 July 2021 Western Sydney University Monday - Friday 9.30am - 5pm

Building EA.G.03 Parramatta South Campus

INTRODUCTION THE TWO WORLDS OF ZHAO DALU

By Carrillo Gantner AC

Like other Chinese born artists in this country, Zhao Dalu is an artist caught between two worlds – China and Australia. He was a classmate of my wife Ziyin at the Beijing Film Academy (BFA) in the late 1970s straight after the Cultural Revolution, though he was in the designer program and she in the director program. In September 1979, along with Ai Weiwei, Dalu was a member of the select group of freelance artists who participated in the famous first exhibition of avant garde in China, *The Stars Art Exhibition* in Beijing, which came to be regarded as a milestone in the development of China's contemporary art.

After graduation from BFA, Dalu worked briefly as a production designer in China Central Television and subsequently became Professor of Painting at Beijing Capital Normal University until he moved to Australia in the late 1990s. He became a master of portraiture and figurative works which brought him wide admiration.

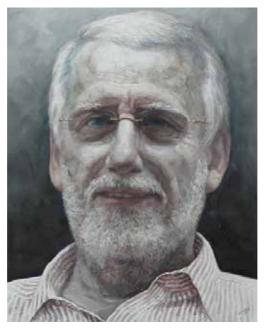
I first met Dalu in Melbourne in October 2008 just before he returned to live in Beijing. His Melbourne studio was full of superb canvases including portraits of Stephen Fitzgerald. our first Australian Ambassador to China after Gough Whitlam established diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China in 1972 (this work is now in the collection of the National Portrait Gallery in Canberra) and another of John Clark, long term Director of The National Institute of Dramatic Art in Sydney (now in the collection of the University of Tasmania from whence John hailed). Each of these fine portraits had won the Peoples' Choice Award in the Archibald Prize, though not the major award.

In the years that followed, we met Dalu and his photographer wife Xiao Xi in Beijing on many occasions, usually in his studio at the rear of Ai Weiwei's house. During this period, he exhibited several major series of work including a very successful exhibition called *Reading Memory* at the China National Gallery which captured the emotional but fading memories of life as a young man on an agricultural commune during the Cultural Revolution.

DaLu now lives again in Australia, just outside of Melbourne. His home is full of his art, on canvas and on the walls as trompe d'oeil, and he has laboured hard with his hands and his eye to create a beautiful garden. Like early English migrants to this country who were never satisfied to be here and yet never satisfied when they went back "home" (read *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony* by Henry Handel Richardson), Dalu is disconnected from his roots and caught between two different worlds, unable to find complete satisfaction in either.

As a wonderfully skilled and versatile painter, now living in the dry Australian countryside, Dalu is currently painting imagined memories of China, a dream world of longing for a place he never really inhabited, a world of Chinese temples, pine trees and lush green bamboo. sometimes filled with colourful imagined birds. Perhaps Dalu's most 'real' work are still his portraits, whether of leading Chinese cultural figures or sometimes Australians. and especially of his wife Xiao Xi for whom he paints a different portrait every year in whatever location they find themselves. Dalu painted a superb wintry portrait of me which is both fiendishly accurate and utterly imagined. I love it.





Lao Gan 老甘 2009 oil on canvas 布画油画 183×142 cm



ABOUT THE ARTIST

Zhao Dalu is a Beijing-born contemporary artist. He studied fine arts at Beijing Film Academy in 1978 and was in the first exhibition of the famous Stars Art Group in Beijing. By the mid-1990s he was included in the Who's Who of Chinese Artists. He had taught fine arts at the Capital Normal University in Beijing for many years. He studied oil painting in Italy and is known for his unique integration of the traditional Western oil painting techniques into his Chinese rural landscapes. Zhao Dalu moved to Australia in 2001 and is now Melbourne based.

During the 1990s, he held multiple solo exhibitions in Rome, Beijing and Singapore. In 2001 he was invited by Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) as the only representative of Asian-Pacific artist to participate in the first *L'uomo per*

la terra (Men for Earth) art exhibition at FAO's headquarters in Rome. Since 2003 he has held several solo exhibitions in Sydney. Shenzhen and Beijing. In 2003 he won the Archibald Prize People's Choice award for his portrait Lao Fei. Dr Stephen FitzGerald. the first Australia's ambassador to China. In 2004 he was a finalist of the Archibald Prize for his portrait Stage Life - John Clark. In the same year, his portrait Art Student was a finalist in the Doug Moran National Portrait Prize. His latest portrait Days of Sunshine was nominated for the National Portrait Gallery Darling Portrait Prize in 2020. His works have been collected by the National Art Museum of China, the He Xiangning Art Museum, the National Portrait Gallery of Australia and the Queensland Art Gallery & Gallery of Modern Art. Australia.

艺术家简介

赵大陆先生生于北京,成名于九十年代初。他于1978年考入北京电影学院美术系,并曾多年 执教于首都师范大学美术学院。他是1979年在北京举办的首届"星星画展"的参展艺术家。 赵大陆先生曾经在意大利学习欧洲传统油画技法,并且擅长将之用于中国乡土题材的绘画创 作中。赵大陆先生于2001年移居澳大利亚,现居于墨尔本。

九十年代期间,赵大陆先生在罗马、北京、新加坡举行过多次个展。1997年应邀为香港招商局制作历史组画。2001年6月作为亚太地区画家的唯一代表应邀参加联合国粮农组织在总部罗马举办的《人与土地》文化艺术展,荣获联合国粮农组织银质奖章。自2003年以来在悉尼、北京和深圳举行多次个人美术展,其中包括2011年在中国美术馆举办的《阅读记忆》和2012年在何香凝美术馆举办的《象外》。2003年以油画《老费》入选澳洲最富盛名的阿奇博尔德肖像画奖,是唯一一位在悉尼和墨尔本两地同时获得最高民意奖的艺术家。2004年又以油画《舞台生涯-约翰·克拉克》入选阿奇博肖像画展。同年,油画《艺术系学生》入选澳大利亚道格莫兰国家肖像展。2006年应邀为中国船级社创作历史组画。2020年以油画《阳光的日子》入选澳大利亚国家肖像美术馆举办的首届达令肖像画展。

赵大陆先生的作品被中国美术馆、何香凝美术馆、澳大利亚国家肖像美术馆、澳大利亚昆士兰州立美术馆、中国航海博物馆、联合国粮农组织、雅昌文化集团、香港招商局集团等主要机构与重要私人藏家收藏。



ARTIST STATEMENT

Art creation is my lifestyle. It is not a career or means of making a living, but a pursuit of freedom in life and free spirit. Art is like a soulmate to me. I have in-depth dialogues with art and art brings me the utmost joy in life.

In 2020, too many lives have been taken away by COVID-19. The world is filled with uncertainties and human lives are so insignificant and fragile. This has made me re-think about the meaning of life and how we should treat lives. Artists' thoughts and artworks should reflect human concerns. So I created the 12 Chinese zodiac animals wearing different styles of masks. In this series, I have combined my concern for life with my love for drawing.

Viewers may be familiar with Chinese landscape paintings with flowers, birds and characters in them. But in my landscape paintings, I used oil painting materials to create an effect of Chinese-style ink wash painting. I also combined the delicate Chinese

Gongbi techniques with western contouring to make the background seemingly empty so as to highlight the central subject. I often use inscriptions and stamps to give my paintings a feel of being traditional and contemporary at the same time.

This exhibition also includes paintings that I have created in recent years featuring Buddhism. Buddhism has had an essential and significant impact on the development of culture, education and philosophy in Asia. I am always intrigued by how people view a traditional religion from a contemporary perspective

艺术家自述

我把艺术创作当作了自己的生活方式,不是我的谋生手段,不是职业,而是对自由的生活、 自由的精神的追求。我把艺术当自己最知心的朋友来对待。我能跟它深层次对话,它能给我 的精神带来最完美的享受。

2020年的疫情带走了太多的生命。世事无常,人的生命太渺小和脆弱了。在过去的一年中我反思最多的是应该如何对待生命。人生的意义究竟是什么,艺术家的思考以及创作是有其社会责任的。基于这样的思考,我画了"疫情下的十二生肖图"。我把对生命的关怀,以及自己对于素描的情结都包含在这十二兽首的作品里面了。

本次展出的作品中有中国式山水、花鸟、人物等。模拟传统中国水墨画的表现手法,使用油画工具材料绘制。以中国工笔画的精细绘制手法加之西式的光影造型,将背景完全虚空化,以突出主体的形象。很多作品中使用了中国画里的题字与仿制的印章,使画面看上去既传统又富当代性,用油画造型手段把中国式的意向内涵尽呈于观者的面前。我近年还创作了一组佛教系列的绘画并在此次展出。佛教对东方文化、教育与哲学的发展有着本质、源泉式的意义。如何用当代的目光审视传统的宗教是我的兴趣所在。

WORDS FROM AI WEIWEI



This is a message from me for Zhao Dalu solo exhibition. I have known Zhao Dalu for over 45 years. I started my art career with him. I see him as a teacher in terms of his skills and his love for art. I really admire his long-standing devotion to his practice, his honesty, sincerity and his great humour. Of course his skill is superb. Today, not so many people still have that kind of sincerity and understanding of how our brain controls hands to create a great image on canvas or a piece of paper. I have seen the 12 drawings of the Chinese zodiacs, which are fantastic. You don't see that kind of drawing style and that kind of humour that

often. So the world has become a much more impatient, rougher and quick-grabbing place, rather than to put your hands, your heart and your mind really smoothly, deeply into drawings or paintings. I am very proud of Zhao Dalu's work. I always think he does what he is doing the best.

艾未未寄语

我为艺术家赵大陆美展的寄语。我与赵大陆相识45多年。我跟他一起开始了我们的艺术生涯。在绘画技巧以及对艺术的热爱上,我视他为我的老师。我很敬佩他对艺术创作的长期奉献,欣赏他的诚实、真诚,还有他的幽默,而他的技巧更是精湛。如今,已经很少有人能像赵大陆一样认真钻研,并且理解如何运用我们的大脑控制双手,能够在画布与画纸上描绘出如此精妙的画作。我看了赵大陆的十二生肖系列,非常出色。赵大陆细腻写实的绘画风格与幽默的艺术语言,非常难得。在如今这个急躁、粗糙又快节奏的社会里,已经很少有画家能够如此专心致志地将自己全身心投入到绘画中。我为赵大陆的艺术作品感到十分骄傲。我始终认为,他在他的创作领域里做到了极致。

A NOTE OF APPRECIATION

By Stephen FitzGerald AO

When Zhao Dalu sat down in my garden in February 2003 to begin sketching for a portrait, it was the first time we had met. He had only arrived in Australia in 2001, and sought an introduction. As is appropriate in a Chinese cultural context, he had used a go-between (中间人). Of course. There were two, actually. Dalu had asked Sun Yü, Conservator of Chinese Art at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, who in turn asked my friend and colleague at the Asia-Australia Institute at UNSW, Luhua Tang, and both were enthusiastic. They liked the idea of a Chinese artist who had adopted Australia as his home, painting an Australian scholar and diplomat who had adopted China as his profession, the idea suggesting as it did a certain resonance. a kind of metaphor for the interpersonal and cultural intertwining that had grown between Australia and China.

As Dalu sketched, we chatted about his life and the development of his style of painting, and he related how he became an artist in China and how he had spent time in Italy, learning the painting techniques and drawing skills of the great Italian portraitists, which had informed his work ever since. He reflected ruefully that he thought this aspect of his art was under-appreciated in the Australia of the time, where the wave of painters who had moved to Australia from China in the late 1980s and the 90s, whose art was mainly of a different kind, had achieved much acclaim.

Dalu's reflection was soon happily confounded by the portrait of which I was the subject. It was accepted for the Archibald, winning the vote in the People's Prize in both Sydney and Melbourne, and acquired by the National Portrait Gallery in Canberra. At the Archibald, listening to the comments of people as they came past Dalu's entry, what impressed them was precisely that very fine

drawing technique he had studied in Italy. So, as it turned out, the Italian connection actually served him well.

Now, there is a fascinating Italian connection in his most recent exhibition, *Birthmark*, shown online by the Vermilion art gallery in Walsh Bay in March this year. It is based on 12 bronze fountainheads in the shape of the Chinese zodiac animals, that were part of a water clock fountain in the Yuanming Yuan or Old Summer Palace in Beijing, where the bronze heads would spout water to tell the time. Looted by Western powers in the Second Opium War in 1860, these figures were in fact the work of an Italian Jesuit, Giuseppe Castiglione, who went by the Chinese name郎世寧, and who became a court painter to three Chinese emperors.

In Dalu's zodiac paintings, each of these heads is wearing a face mask, a whimsical take on the current pandemic, behind which there is a much deeper allegory. This is the muzzling of truths that are uncomfortable or unwanted to establishment points of view. These are not explicit in the paintings, but they might suggest, for example, the truth that the creator of these precious 'Chinese' fountainheads was not Chinese at all but Italian, or the truth that the West in nineteenth century China was imperialist and colonial and wantonly looted China's treasures, or the truth of the suppression of independent and critical voices in today's People's Republic of China, or the true but often denied wellsprings and current instigators of racist stigmatising of ethnic Chinese in contemporary Australia.



Lao Fei 老费 2003 oil on canvas 布面油画 183×142 cm

Castiglione's painting style was a fusion of European and Chinese traditions, just as Dalu's own painting is infused by both, and there's an appealing universality to this cultural affinity - an Italian artist who became Chinese, and after nearly two centuries inspiring, and resurrected by, a Chinese artist deeply influenced by Italian art and pursuing his art in Australia. Neither artist culturally confined, both artistically cosmopolitan.

Afterword:

Standing at the back of the viewers at the Archibald in 2003 as they passed by the portrait, I overheard a group exclaiming in Chinese "Do you really think his nose is that big!", and one turned and saw me standing there and nudged her companions. And they

fled, giggling and pointing and guffawing, into the crowd.

I have recorded elsewhere another anecdote from that time. When asked about the portrait by the press, Dalu answered: "He has a very interesting face and a special nose". Now, big or 'high' noses (高鼻子) being a historic Chinese caricature of Westerners, friends reacted to Dalu's remark with great hilarity. One even said my nose had achieved recognition as a beacon in Australia-China relations.

Thank you Dalu. March 2021

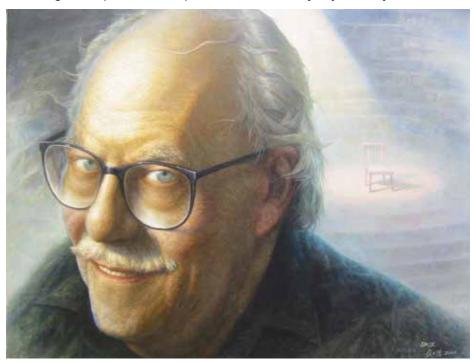
I'm happy to acknowledge that.

WORDS FROM JOHN CLARK AM

I was hung in the NSW Art Gallery in 2007. A remarkable painting entitled *Life on Stage* by Zhao Dalu was a finalist that year for the Archibald Prize. The portrait was an exceptionally large and minutely detailed head that seemed or be sharing a private joke with the viewer as if to say "I tricked you that time." I still look at that portrait with a sense of wonder and think "This is a much more interesting person than me".

A good portrait is like a good performance in a play or a film. There are good actors whose stage technique never fails to produce a good result, but the finest actors have the ability to create a living and breathing human being, who draws the audience into the life of the play, no matter what the style of the production is. So it is with the best portraiture.

The viewer is confronted by a real human being whose thoughts and feeling become more fascinating the longer we allow the work to cast its spell. Zhao Dalu is this kind of exceptional talent whose work demands an important place in this exhibition at the Australia-China Institute for Arts and Culture at Western Sydney University.



Stage Life-John Clark 舞台人生一约翰·克拉克 2004 oil on canvas 布面油画 145 × 180 cm

12 Chinese Zodiac Animals 《十二生肖》

2020 pencil on paper 纸上铅笔素描 60 × 40 cm

The 12 zodiac animals represent the human world and every individual life. The head images are drawn with reference to the historical bronze sculptures in the Old Summer Palace in Beijing, which were destroyed during the Second Opium War in 1860. Face masks have a poignant contemporary reference to this global pandemic. The 12 zodiac animals also represents the Chinese 12-cycle concept of time. Apart from 12 months a year, in ancient China, people divided a day into twelve sections. So the number 12 also connects time, space, culture and memories.

十二生肖代表的就是芸芸众生,代表的是 每一个生命本体。戴口罩也标志着当今疫 情之下人们生活的真实写照。十二生肖又 另含有时间的概念,每个生肖代表一个年 份,十二为一个轮回,在计时上一年有十 二个月,我们中国还有一天十二个时辰的 说法,十二等于把生命内在的东西与时 间、空间、文化、记忆等等都联系在了一起。





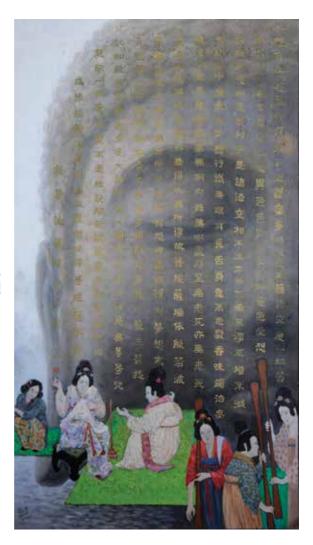




The Prajna Paramita Heart Sutra《心经》

The Prajna Paramita Heart Sutra is regarded as a comprehensive version of Buddhist scriptures. Understanding The Prajna Paramita Heart Sutra is the first step in understanding Buddhist scriptures. The Buddha portrayed in the painting is Sariputra.

《般若波罗蜜多心经》被认 为心经是佛经的总括,读懂 了心经,读佛经就入门了。 画中佛头像为舍利佛。



Heart Sutra 心经 2020 oil on canvas 布面油画 130 × 75 cm

Great Compassion Mantra 《大悲咒》

The Great Compassion Mantra contains the sayings of Guanyin Bodhisattva, seeking a good ending of everything.. The Buddha portrayed in the painting is Guanyin Bodhisattva.

《大悲咒》是观世音菩萨 为利乐一切众生而宣说,, 祈求一切圆满。画中佛头 像为观世音菩萨。

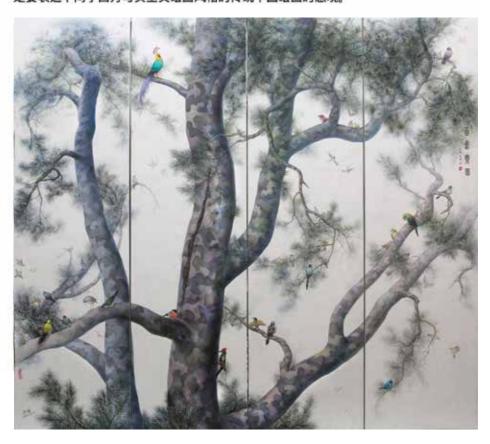


Great Compassion Mantra 大悲咒 2020 oil on canvas 布面油画 130 × 75 cm

Paradise 《乐园》

Birds are a part of the living world. Birds are closer to heaven. Using oil painting for traditional Chinese landscape painting is to express the difference between the western landscape style and subtlety of Chinese landscape painting.

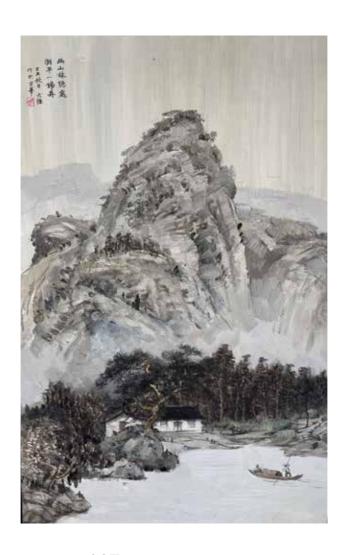
鸟类亦是大自然万物众生之一,它们的世界更近天堂。用油画表现中国画主要 是要表达不同于西方写实主义绘画风格的传统中国绘画的意境。



Paradise 乐园 2019 oil on canvas 布面油画 180 × 50 cm × 4



Landscape #1 山水画#1 2009 oil on canvas 布面油画 83 × 53 cm



Landscape #2 山水画#2 2009 oil on canvas 布面油画 83 × 53 cm



Landscape #3 山水画#3 2021 oil on canvas 布面油画 50 × 50 cm



Landscape #4 山水画#4 2021 oil on canvas 布面油画 50 × 50 cm

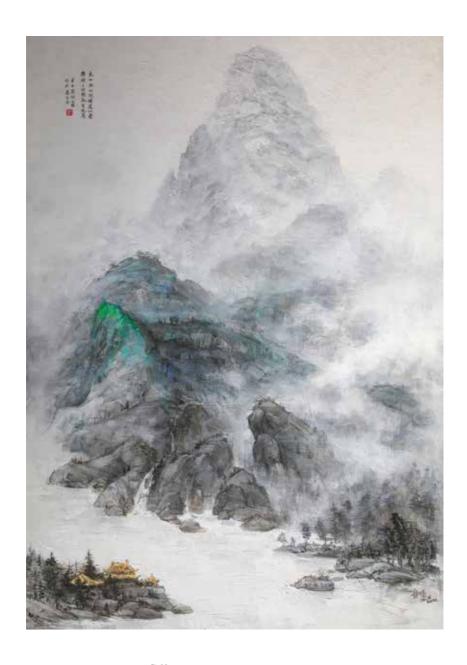


Image beyond Image #29 象外#29 2021 oil on canvas 布面油画 130 × 90 cm



Bluestone-Phoenix 青石-凤 2015 oil on canvas 布面油画 130 × 90 cm



Bluestone-Lotus 青石-荷 2015 oil on canvas 布面油画 130 × 90 cm



Bluestone-Bird 青石-鸟 2015 oil on canvas 布面油画 130 × 90 cm



Bluestone- Dragonfly 青石-蜻蜓 2015 oil on canvas 布面油画 130 × 90 cm



The three companions of winter - Pine 岁寒三友之松 2015 oil on canvas 布面油画 90 × 160 cm



The three companions of winter - Bamboo 岁寒三友之竹 2015 oil on canvas 布面油画 90 × 160 cm



The three companions of winter - Plum blossom 岁寒三友之梅 2015 oil on canvas 布面油画 90 × 160 cm



Image beyond Image #11 **象外**#11 2012 oil on canvas 布面油画 60 × 90 cm

WESTERN SYDNEY UNIVERSITY



Australia-China Institute for Arts and Culture

SPECIAL THANKS TO Carrillo Gantner AC and Ziyin Gantner

for their support to the exhibition and the ACIAC

Curator: Monica McMahon
Producer: Jing Han
Assistant Producer: Jiawen Li
Coordinator: Lina Gong

Australia-China Institute for Arts and Culture Gallery

Building EA.G.O3, Parramatta South Campus Western Sydney University Corner of James Ruse Drive and Victoria Road, Rydalmere

