

From Beijing to Paris

Rebecca Liew examines the late abstract painter Zao Wou-Ki's artistic practices that bring together Eastern and Western idioms

Is it possible to be bound by two traditions and not just one? Zao Wou-Ki believed so, and it shows in the late French-Chinese abstract painter's works, over 40 of which feature in STPI's annual special exhibition. On loan from a private collection, lesser-known pieces in Zao's oeuvre – prints, ink work and paintings among them – are on show at the gallery, charting the influential artist's career from the '50s to the early noughties.

Bold, calligraphic lines that sweep, leap and fall take centre-stage against, at first glance, a series of watercolours. But look closer, because they're a reflection of Zao's mastery of printmaking. He incorporates motifs of the French tradition *peintre-graveurs* ('painter-engraver'), with Chinese calligraphy – a true fusion of East and West. Art appreciators will also spot influences from Picasso, Cézanne and abstract expressionist Paul Klee.

In 1964, the Beijing-born painter received French citizenship, marking the start of what he calls his 'artistic awakening'. Among the techniques he employed was lithography, in which an image is drawn on stone or metal with a greasy material then rolled with ink onto a blank canvas. His paintings – they hang today on the walls of major art galleries such as the Museum of Modern Art and Tate Modern – are a showcase of his control of the calligraphy brush, each stroke channelling the temporal and spatial shifts we experience in our lives.

So it's rather apt that Zao himself saw his practice evolve over his career. Because in 2010, three years before his passing, he completed his final piece: a watercolour painting.

Zao Wou-Ki: No Boundaries is at STPI until Aug 27.



'Untitled' (1968), etching with aquatint

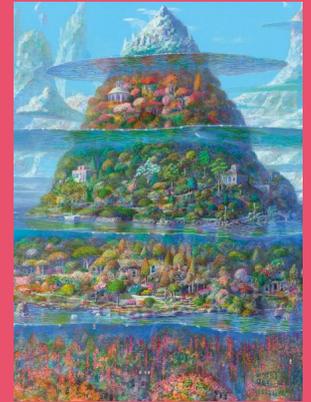


'Untitled' (1970), lithograph

ALL IMAGES: ZAO WOU-KI PROLITTERIS, ZÜRICH, 2016

Critics' picks

Top upcoming art shows



▲ STUDIO GHIBLI ARTWORKS

Permanent exhibition

Studio Ghibli fans, get excited: a selection of original celluloids from the great Hayao Miyazaki are on permanent display at Polar Bear Gallery, including scenes from *My Neighbour Totoro*, *Princess Mononoke* and *Laputa: Castle in the Sky*. Admire them alongside works by Japanese fantasy artist, Naohisa Inoue, who's behind the surrealist background art for *Whisper of the Heart*.

Polar Bear Gallery 69A Haji Ln (9169 4880, www.contemporaryart.com.sg).

📍 Bugis. Fri & Sat noon-8pm; Sun noon-6pm. Free.

LIMINAL STATE

Until Aug 31

Five local emerging contemporary artists come together to represent different perspectives of Singapore's rapidly changing rhythm and environment.

Mizuma Gallery #01-34 Gillman Barracks, 22 Lock Rd (6570 2505, www.mizuma.sg). 📍 Labrador. Tue-Sat 11am-7pm; Sun 11am-6pm. Free.

IN SILENCE

Until Sep 4

The exhibition features the work of eight international and local contemporary artists inspired by Bali's Nyepi Day, or 'day of silence', and its practice of atonement and renewal.

Pearl Lam Gallery #03-22 Gillman Barracks, 9 Lock Rd (6570 2284, www.pearllam.com). 📍 Labrador. Tue-Sat noon-7pm; Sun noon-6pm. Free.



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