

METAMORPHOSIS

ZHEN GUO'S EXPLORATION INTO HER SELF
THROUGH MYTH AND MEMORY



METAMORPHOSIS IS A WORD THAT CAPTURES NEW YORK BASED, MULTI-DISCIPLINARY ARTIST ZHEN GUO'S LIFE AND WORK AS A FEMINIST STORYTELLER AND MAKER. HER IMAGERY AND SCULPTURAL FORMS LEAD THE VIEWER ON A SPIRITUAL AND MYTHICAL JOURNEY, AN OPEN-ENDED INVITATION TO EXPLORE AND PROMOTE GENDERED NOTIONS OF EQUALITY, DIVERSE IDENTITIES, AUTONOMY, AND FREEDOM.

THIS SEMESTER'S RESIDENCY AT U-M IS AN OUTGROWTH OF AN ARTISTIC INITIATIVE CENTERED AROUND THE DRAGON IN ASIAN CULTURE AS A SYMBOL OF TRADITION, INNOVATION, AND INCLUSIVITY. GUO IS THE ARTISTIC LEADER OF THE PROJECT WHICH CULMINATES IN THE BUILDING AND DANCING OF A DRAGON BODY—ACTIVITIES THAT BRIDGE TRADITIONAL CRAFTS WITH MODERN ARTISTIC INTERPRETATIONS.

KEY TO GUO'S ARTISTRY IS THE USE OF YARN, STITCHERY AND TEXTILES, PRACTICES ROOTED IN HER YOUTH WORKING IN GARMENT FactORIES DURING CHINA'S CULTURAL REVOLUTION AND HER TIME WITH VILLAGE HOMEMAKERS WHOSE BRILLIANTLY COLORED EMBROIDERIES, PATTERNED FABRICS AND PAPERCUTS EMBELLISH FAMILY INTERIORS, DÉCOR, AND CLOTHING. GUO'S MULTILAYERING OF RECYCLED MATERIALS AND FABRIC TO CO-CREATE THE HEAD OF THE DRAGON ECHO THE LAYERS OF HER LIFE, EXPERIENCES THAT LED TO HER OWN IDENTITY AS A FEMINIST, A SURVIVOR OF DOMESTIC ABUSE, AND A TRANSNATIONAL/TRANSCULTURAL ARTIST.

MAGNIFICENT, COLORFUL, RE-IMAGINED...



(RIGHT) ZG'S PRELIMINAFY DRAWING OF THE DRAGON HEAD PROVOCATIVE AND SLIGHTLY SCI-FI

CRAFT AND MYTHOLOGY MERGE TOGETHER THROUGH GUO'S BRIGHT, TUFTED YARN PAINTINGS OF KALI (RIGHT), THE SANSKRIT WORD FOR TIME AND, AS GUO INTERPRETS, A SYMBOL OF SALVATION AND TRANSFORMATION.

RESILIENCE AND THE FEMININE AESTHETIC ARE SHAPED FURTHER IN INK PAINTING, A MEDIUM CHARACTERISTIC OF TRADITIONAL CHINESE ART. LARGE SCALE INK PAINTING (CHROMA SERIES, BELOW) ON RICE PAPER SUFFUSED WITH WATER AND BRUSHED WITH DEEP VERTICAL STROKES ARE REMINISCENT OF NATURE'S LANDSCAPE AND BODILY SENSUALITY. THE SOAKED IMAGERY RECALLS THE DRAGON AS A HARBINGER OF RAIN AND INHABITANT OF WATER DRENCHED ENVIRONMENTS. THE GREY SOFTENED LANDSCAPES ARE BROKEN WITH SKYLIGHTS OF SATURATED COLOR BANDS, FRAGMENTS OF A RAINBOW, NOT ARCHED BUT BROAD AND DELIBERATE, LIKE TORN PATCHES, OR WAVES, THAT COVER, AND, AT ONCE, OPEN THE VISTA.



ZHEN GUO



ZHEN GUO'S VISION OF TIMELESSNESS AND IDENTITY WILL BE ACTIVATED IN SPECIAL SHOWINGS FOR THE PUBLIC THROUGH THE SINUOUS BODY OF THE DRAGON AS IT BURROWS THROUGH AND AROUND OUTDOOR ART VENUES CHASING THE PEARL OF WISDOM—A SYMBOL OF THE DRAGON'S HUNT FOR KNOWLEDGE AND TRUTH. THIS FANTASTIC CREATURE MADE BY STUDENTS AT U-M AND ACCOMPANIED BY COMMUNITY-DANCED DRAGONS IS LIKE A VOYAGER STANDING IN FOR US ALL--AS A REINVENTION OF SELF, A VOICE FOR MARGINALIZED PEOPLE AND PLACES, AND, FOR ALL VIEWERS, AN OPPORTUNITY TO JOYFULLY

EXPERIENCE A MOMENT BEYOND
THE ORDINARY...



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Zhen Guo was born in Shandong Province, China, and experienced the “Cultural Revolution” during her teen years. She graduated from the Chinese Painting Department of the China Academy of Art in 1982 and was hired there to teach in its Chinese Art Department.

Zhen Guo is one of the earliest explorers of ink art after the reform and opening up of China. She immigrated to the United States in 1986 and established Zhen Guo Art Studio in New York City in 1988. Guo has participated in many international art exhibitions and has long been committed to the research and exploration of contemporary feminist art.

Major auction houses such as Sotheby's have repeatedly promoted her works. In recent years, Guo has curated and participated in: “Existence: International Women's Art Exhibition” in Changsha, China; “Please Touch, Body Boundaries,” a large-scale exhibition at Mana Contemporary Art in the United States; “Asian Women Artists Exhibition”; at Jeonbuk Provincial Museum of Art, South Korea, and many more abroad and in the United States.

Zhen Guo now lives and works in New York City.

