



CHINA
2000
FINE
ART

Zhang Daqian (1899-1983)

Hills in the Rain (Splashed-ink Landscape)

1966

Ink and color on gold board, framed

17 x 12 in. (43.2 x 30.5 cm)

Signed Yuan weng, with one seal: Daqian

Literature: Exhibition of Paintings by Chang Dai-chien, Exhibition catalogue, plate 17. Laky Gallery, Carmel, California, USA, 1970

Exhibited: Exhibition of Paintings by Chang Dai-Chien, Laky Gallery, Carmel, California, USA, 10-31 May, 1970

Exhibited: International Asian Art Fair 2004, New York, NY



Inscription: 爰翁。丙午（1966年）夏作。

Yuan weng (signature). Bingwu (year 1966) summer. Seal: Daqian



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Zhang Daqian (張大千, 1899-1983) was one of the best-known and most prodigious Chinese artists of the twentieth century. He is also regarded by many art experts as one of the most gifted master forgers of the twentieth century. Born into a family of artists in Sichuan, China, he studied textile dyeing techniques in Kyoto, Japan and returned to establish a successful career selling his paintings in Shanghai.

After his early success in Shanghai, Zhang extended his career to the north in the late 1920s, when he became active in the cultural circles of Beijing. He began to collaborate with the well-known Beijing painter Pu Xinyu, and together they became known as the "South Zhang and North Pu," an epithet that is still used to refer to their collaborative works of the 1930s.

In 1940 Zhang led a group of artists to the caves of Mogao and Yulin for the purpose of copying their Buddhist wall paintings. The group completed over 200 paintings, and the experience left Zhang with a repository of religious imagery.

In reaction to the political climate in 1949, Zhang left China, went to Taiwan, and then lived in Hong Kong and India before building residences in various places, including Mendoza, Argentina; São Paulo, Brazil; and Carmel, California. His meeting with Pablo Picasso in 1956 in Nice, France, was publicized as an artistic meeting between East and West.

Zhang began to experiment with splashed ink and color on paper in 1956 while he was in Europe. Some scholars regard his innovations as a response to Abstract Expressionism or other developments of modern art bubbling up during his overseas sojourn. Zhang, however, maintained that his main inspiration stemmed from the ancient "pomo (潑墨)" technique of Tang Dynasty artist Wang Mo (王默, ca.734-805). Zhang's failing eyesight from cataracts likely played a role also. Given Zhang's encyclopedic knowledge of traditional Chinese painting, as well as his exposure to the modern Western art, it is highly probable that all these influences intertwined and resonated within him. He possessed an uncanny ability to perceive artistic parallels across cultures, ultimately forging a unique and vibrant language through his splashed ink and color creations.

Zhang lived in the Bay Area and in Carmel-by-the-Sea, Calif., on the Monterrey Peninsula, during the mid-to-late 1960s, a time of great creativity and stylistic change for him. During that time, he formed important relationships with art-world figures such as Chinese art expert James Cahill of U.C. Berkeley, René-Yvon Lefebvre d'Argencé, and Carmel dealer Les Laky, whose gallery became Chang's main commercial venue.

Zhang's first solo exhibition at the Laky Gallery in 1967 featured some of the artist's new style of splashed ink and color paintings. His exhibition in the mid-sixties in Taiwan had already created quite a shock and controversy of praise and criticism. This painting "The Hills in the Rain" was painted in 1966 and was exhibited in Zhang's second solo exhibition at the Laky Gallery in 1970. The celebrated "Snow Mountains in Switzerland" painted during a trip to Switzerland in 1965 was also in this Laky gallery exhibition. During this period of the mid 1960s, Zhang was bringing his splashed ink and color technique to the pinnacle of development. The spontaneity and abstract qualities of the splashed ink and color of "The Hills in the Rain" unleash a lofty, mysterious radiance, which is anchored by the added contour lines defining houses along the paper's lower edge, adding a narrative layer to this otherworldly glamor.



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In 1978 the artist settled in Taipei, Taiwan. His residence, Moye-jingshe, next to the National Palace Museum, is now the Memorial Museum of Zhang Daqian.