

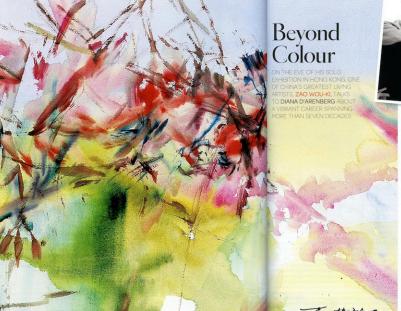
of big-ticket Chinese artists one regularly encounters at auction all colourful grimaces and big-eyed white masks -Zao Wou-ki's paintings are examples of elegiac elegance and timelessness. His atmospheric brushes of colour have become iconic and so sought-after that China's Hurun Report places him in the top three of China's top living artists by auction results. But Zao's influence and significance extends well beyond the secondary marketplace. He has enjoyed exhibitions and retrospectives at some of the most prestigious institutions in the art world, was decorated as a Grand Officer of the French Legion of Honour and was elected to the Académie des Beaux-Arts in France. It's no aggrandisement when architect

IM Pei refers to Zao as "one of the greatest artists on the European scene." This month, Zao will present an exclusive collection of his

watercolour works at Hong Kong's Feast Projects in Ap Lei Chau.

MONG THE SEA





LIVING LARGE

part of a series of large-format



The 91-year old Zao has spent more than six decades away from China. As much as his work inhibits elements of his homeland, it also owes a delet to the works of the modern Western greats. When Zao made the move from China to Europe as a youth, it made his momething of a cultural trailblazer. Today he has undoubtedly become one of the most revered and respected Chinese-born artists, and is often addressed as matter

Born in Beijing in 1921. Zoo grew up surrounded by art in his parent home. But as a student of painting at the Academy of Fine Arts in Hamphou. Zao found himself at odds with the Edwourded Chinese pictorial style. He wanted to break free of conventions, to learn how "to represent the wind, how to paint emptriness, or the clarity and purity of light," and to discover the works of the European masters. Zoo moved to Paris in 1948, at the vocention of the Company of the Company of the Company masters. Zoo moved to Paris in 1948, at the vocention of the Company of the Co

In Paris, he enjoyed the bohemian lifestyle that the era yielded for artists, including friendships with Matisse, Miró and Picasso. Early paintings hint at Picasso's structure and deconstruction as well as Miró's spatial skill.

well as Survo's Spidial solar. But it was Paul Klee's ability to convey and insure enrotion and transcendence that had the greatest resonance with Zao. Like Klee, he took upon the conversion and transcendence that had the greatest resonance with Zao. Like Klee, he took with the conversion and the with Zao. Like Klee, he took with the conversion and the

proximity to Western art also helped Zao deepen his awareness of Eastern art, as well as redefine his role as an artist bridging East and West.

"I think I can say that painting with marks is a Chinese invention," Zao remarks, "Fut Chinese painters have never taken it seriously, and for a long time I was misterated of the facility than the control of the control of the control of the Chinese Chinese (allignaply, I had remained in exercise in style – a like of virtuous domostration that I mistrussed." Despite this, a distinct visual vocabulary emerged Letensively in corporating natural elements into his work, Zao developed an expressionist take on Chinese landscape painting, with loca breabwork of the control of

Flowers, trees and rocks are rendered in loose fluid and indistrict brushstrokes, reeminiscent of Turner. The marks become merely suggestive of a shape, not revealing their nature upon cursory glance. "I saw spaces come into being, made or unmade according to my whim, in an invasive impression of lightness: lightness of brush and colour, the lightness of the moment of time passing. If you make an artwork and you are not happy with it, see it as a chance to experiment,"

he instructs. "Set yourself free – something wonderful might happen!" Zao approaches his subject matter with the awe of an animist, in thrall of nature and the inspiration it can yield. "Sometimes it is more interesting to

try to capture the sound of the wind in a tree's leaves, or the movement of light across them, than to actually paint the tree," he instructs.

"Being an artist is never about becoming famous," Zoo stresses, "You do it became you have to - because it is your life. If you don't love it, you to boold not be doing in. If it's about making money basides, there are easier ways to achieve both." If It's about making money basides, there are easier ways to achieve both. "It's a farr yfrom the markets oriented discourse we've come to associate with contemporary art codes, Each of Zoo, painting is emotion partyed into material works, brought to file by texture beyond the paint. So - evenling another word be beyond the paint. So - evenling another word the paint.

STROKE OF GENIUS FROM LEFT Zao and his wife

FALTRO

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