

# Zhao Bandi's Renaissance

2022.9.29 – 10.30

Curator: Cui Cancan

Guest Curator: Gao Yuan

Tang Contemporary Art, Beijing Headquarters Gallery Space

Tang Contemporary Art is proud to announce the opening of artist Zhao Bandi's solo exhibition "Zhao Bandi's Renaissance" on Aug. 27th, 4PM at Beijing Headquarters Gallery Space. Curated by Cui Cancan, and with Gao Yuan as guest curator, the exhibition will present several important oil painting works over Zhao Bandi's past 30 years and a new sculpture work.

## Zhao Bandi's Renaissance

Cui Cancan

*Zhao Bandi's Renaissance* is to portray human ideals using painting, sculpture, space and other media like the masters of the Italian Renaissance.

Zhao Bandi's romantic journey started with painting pandas, followed by Zhao Bandi's sports meeting, Zhao Bandi's movie, *Zhao Bandi's Party*, *Zhao Bandi's Hut*, and *Zhao Bandi's Italian Renaissance*. His life is full of avant-garde, romantic and bizarre colours.

In the early 1990s, Zhao came to Baiyangdian, Beijing's suburb famous for the "Baiyangdian Poets". Unlike the suburbs of Moscow, it has natural and tranquil surroundings and gives nostalgic vibes. Zhao Bandi painted a small landscape *Baiyangdian · Duancun*, in which a wooden boat is moored on the bank of a lake. The lush greenery and pure sky resemble Barbizon, situated on the outskirts of Paris, portrayed by French painters in the 19th century.

After more than three decades, Zhao revisited Baiyangdian and painted three landscapes. He no longer uses the method that is true to nature. The beautiful pastoral scenery has turned into a dreamy scene which is full of emotions about the time. The boat in the water seems to be from a scene in a dream or the long-gone dream of a teenager. The incomplete picture is like a broken mirror, a rippling reflection in the water, or a sad and beautiful memory. It has three romantic names: *Scenery of a 16-Year-Old*, *Eden's Path* and *Lingering Twilight*. The paintings he created more than 30 years ago and his recent work have become a subtle entrance of a time tunnel connecting the two ends of memory.

In 1988, Zhao Bandi, in his youth, portrayed two young girls and named this painting *A Letter From Afar*, which became a shared memory of a generation. The painting is reminiscent of Johannes Vermeer's *Woman Reading a Letter*. It depicts mixed emotions experienced by youth. It either depicted the inner feelings of the subjects or Zhao's personal feelings in his youth. Today, this painting looks a little nostalgic. It has become a part of art history, just like that era. The fallen photo paper and the long-disappeared letters have become people's impressions of Zhao Bandi and the new generation at that time, as well as their memory of their long-gone youth.

Thirty years later, Zhao Bandi picked up his paintbrush again to portray the young people around him. His artwork *Portrait of Lunan, a 17-Year-Old Girl*, features a girl wearing an anime cosplay costume, eager to play an imaginary character in ACGN culture. His other artwork, *Chic Girls*, illustrates the post-modern life of two fashionable girls with youthful vigour and enthusiasm. The crossed shapes in the painting represent dynamism, and the vivid colours depict that time flies. Compared with his paintings 30 years ago, the aesthetics of the times and characters have already changed. The concept of youth distorts the unified tradition: the contemporary, modern, cool, and fresh elements are intertwined with the classical, timeless, warm and mature elements in his paintings.

A group of brand-new panda sculptures is surrounded by elegant drapery, Baiyangdian Lake, and the lights in the theatre. The adorable and innocent Pandas are giving high fives and jumping. Their chubby bodies alleviate the sadness with the passage of time. It appears as though human values, paintings, sculptures, and architecture in the Renaissance are recreated in a visual palace where time and space are united. As a classic moment of Zhao Bandi's personal Renaissance, this visual palace symbolizes his desire to use a wide variety of media like the Renaissance masters.

The concept of "aesthetics" emerged in the 1990s. Zhao Bandi, a talented artist, defined the era with his works. Zhao Bandi has created a variety of paintings and sculptures and featured in performances, exhibitions and films, etc., for the past 30 years. He revamped conventional aesthetics and led the avant-garde lifestyle, becoming a prominent and innovative artist in contemporary Chinese art.

During the years when Zhao paused painting, the nature of his work changed, due to the ever-changing figures and events and their real, bizarre and fresh attraction to the artist. As an artist who only occasionally picks up his paintbrush, Zhao takes "life" as a concept, as well as an elegant and splendid performance. His perception of life is reflected in his paintings, his secular yet romantic life, and his avant-garde, elegant, and bizarre legends throughout the past 30 years. They provoke us to think about the sadness and beauty contained in "time and space", and our desire and capability to create beauty and a new life.

### About Artist

Zhao Bandi was born in Beijing in 1966. He lives and works in Beijing. As a lead figure of the Chinese avant-garde art movement, his creative process involves performance art, painting, video art, fashion, film, social activism, etc.

From 1999 to 2004, Zhao Bandi's many public works about Pandas were shown in many cities' metro, airports and streets both domestic and abroad, including Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen, Milan, London, Manchester, Birmingham, Oslo, Tokyo, etc. From 2010 to 2013, Zhao Bandi's philanthropic art project "Building a Nursing Home with Creative Energy" attracted more than 20 thousand Chinese youth to participate and create artworks of their own. He used the income from the project to build a nursing home in Kaifang, Hebei province and provided a safe home for 46 lone elderly people. From 2013 to 2014, the film *Let Panda Fly* directed by Zhao in accordance with the aforementioned project was nominated by both the 29th Warsaw International Film Festival and many other international children's film festivals. It was shown in theaters across China.

### About Curator

Cui Cancan is an active Chinese independent curator and critic.

### About Guest Curator

Gao Yuan, cultural scholars and art critic in France.