

VILLEPIN



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Shaped by Dominique and Arthur de Villepin's passion for art, Villepin is a gallery created by collectors for collectors. Inspired by the founders' own collections and profound knowledge of the Asian art market, Villepin offers a new gallery concept based on the art of collecting.

Through their experience building close friendships with artists, the father-son duo wish to share their expertise with fellow collectors by curating artworks that they themselves would love to collect, ultimately nurturing a unique model of collecting based on long-term relationships with artists and their estates or foundations.



1992, Portrait (Reserved rights)

## THE ARTIST ZAO WOU-KI

Born in Beijing, Zao Wou-Ki (1920-2013) worked predominantly in oils, watercolor and ink, but also experimented with engraving and lithography. Wou-Ki means ‘no limits’ in Chinese – a prescient forename for an artist who embraced different cultural identities without ever being beholden to one. In 1948, Zao relocated to Paris. The French capital was an inspiration for Zao, who had idolized Matisse and Picasso in his formative years and continued to be influenced by Western modernism and the work of the Impressionists and Expressionists.

Zao is considered to have been one of the most successful painters born in China of his generation, with his paintings widely recognized as an exemplary reconciliation of Chinese and Western aesthetics, in which the language of modern Western abstraction is enriched by a Chinese chord deeply rooted in the past. Zao’s work has been celebrated in numerous museum shows around the world, including most recently the Musée d’art moderne de la Ville de Paris, France; the Asia University Museum of Modern Art, Taichung, Taiwan; Asia Society Museum, New York, USA; and STPI, Singapore, amongst several others.

FRIENDSHIP & RECONCILIATION

BY

ZAO WOU-KI



# OIL PAINTING





“I paint my own life, but I also seek to paint an invisible space, one made of dreams where one always feels in harmony, even amid the disturbance of contradictory forces. Each picture, from the smallest to the largest, is always a fragment of this dream space.”

- ZAO WOU-KI



**ZAO WOU-KI (1920 - 2013)**

***22.11.2002 - 10.12.2003***

oil on canvas

130 x 162 cm

Painted in 2002 - 2003

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# ZAO WOU-KI



**ZAO WOU-KI (1920 - 2013)**

***Sans Titre, (Juillet 1948)***

oil on canvas

38.2 x 53 cm

Painted in 1948

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**ZAO WOU-KI (1920 - 2013)**

***10.05.62***

oil on canvas

130 x 89 cm

Painted in 1962

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# ZAO WOU-KI



**ZAO WOU-KI (1920 - 2013)**

***03.06.70***

oil on canvas

46 x 55 cm

Painted in 1970

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ZAO WOU-KI



**ZAO WOU-KI (1920 - 2013)**

***25.03.2004***

oil on canvas

65 x 81 cm

Painted in 2004

© 2020, ProLitteris, Zurich





## ZAO WOU-KI



**ZAO WOU-KI (1920 - 2013)**

*Le vert caresse l'orange - 11.06.2005*

oil on canvas

195 x 97 cm

Painted in 2005

© 2020, ProLitteris, Zurich

At the peak of his art, Zao Wou-Ki, with his keen eye, restitutes to us the primal peace, from the bottom of the water, from the depths of the ages, a few grasses with fishes in *Le vert caresse l'orange* – The wind caresses the orange – 11.06.2005. This moving painting is both a painting lesson, one of these enigmatic lessons, interrupted with silences, full of irony and wisdom, that Zao Wou-Ki could generously provide, and a meditation about time and age. The infinite tenderness it conveys

has an acute awareness of the fragility of life, of the fleetingness of the moment. It is indeed a caress of the soul, rubbing against each other the painting of the origins, with its codes and quests, like these reeds with birds, on a gold background, which familiarity we can feel, and on the other side the great hand of the colors, triumphant and completed, of the mature years. This painting is the caress that Zao Wou-Ki, once aged, addresses the child he has been, encouraging him to start on the path again.



# WATERCOLOR



F. # 2 A O





**ZAO WOU-KI (1920 - 2013)**

*Sans Titre (La Cavalerie)*

watercolor

67 x 102 cm

Painted in 2008

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There is no shortage of experts and pundits who believe that Zao Wou-Ki was but a Chinese painter who happened to be influenced by the Western abstract movement. Although there is a grain of truth in such belief, oftentimes commentators tend to overlook the fact that Zao Wou-Ki himself was a key member of the said Western movement. Not only were his paintings enthusiastically received by both European and American audience, but also his earlier exhibitions in France

were praised by such grandees as Joan Miró and Pablo Picasso; moreover, he was a resident in post-war Montparnasse. Zao Wou-Ki was by no means a mere product of Western teaching, but a master who contributed much to the development of modern abstraction in China. This alone would be a feat that distinguishes any artist, but Zao Wou-Ki was furthermore a great synthesizer reconciling two opposite fronts, hence revered as one of the foremost artists of the 20th century.



ZAO WOU-KI



**ZAO WOU-KI (1920 - 2013)**

*Sans Titre*

watercolor

24.9 x 32 cm

Painted in 1950

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# CHINESE INK





“I realized that the practice of ink painting was becoming more than a game , a relation I had always had with it.”

- ZAO WOU-KI



**ZAO WOU-KI (1920 - 2013)**

*Sans Titre*

chinese ink

93 x 94 cm

Painted in 2007

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## ZAO WOU-KI



### ZAO WOU-KI (1920 - 2013)

#### *Sans Titre*

chinese ink

48.5 x 59 cm

Painted in 2005

© 2020, ProLitteris, Zurich

Oil on canvas was the mainstay Zao Wou- Ki's repertoire but, beginning in the 1970s, he found room for ink wash painting too, at a time when the fragile conditions of his wife kept him away from his studio. The apparent ease with which he turned to ink wash in the 1970s, belied his ambivalent feelings toward the medium. Wielding brush and ink came almost inherently, perhaps rather so easily that he soon ceased to encounter any challenge. As an artist, his primary interests laid in oil on canvas, a medium that in various ways is the exact antithesis of ink wash on paper. However, soon enough Zao Wou-Ki would find something other than "ink-play" in the medium. "Gradually, I

realized that the practice of ink painting was becoming more than a game, a relation I had always had with it." In this work, ink explodes while his brush dances across the paper in performances that underscore his mastery of the Chinese medium. Broad strokes of ink – sometimes rich black, other times pale and diluted – take the place of the lavish palette of his oil paintings. For all the seeming spontaneity and emphasis on gesture, composition and structure remain paramount. For Zao Wou-Ki, refocusing on Chinese ink wash was not merely a return to a childhood activity, but a signal of a new stage of his artistic journey.





# VILLEPIN

## **Gallery**

53-55 Hollywood Road  
Central, Hong Kong

## **Opening Hours**

Tuesday - Saturday  
11:00 - 19:00

[www.villepinart.com](http://www.villepinart.com)

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