

Hongnian Zhang

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Biography

Hongnian Zhang is a Chinese American oil painter who works in the Western academic tradition. Works by this gifted artist have been exhibited and acquired by museums, galleries, corporations and private collectors in the United States, China, Taiwan, and Japan.

Growing up in China, Mr. Zhang became accomplished in art at a young age. He was one of the top students at the highly selective and prestigious Central Art Academy's Affiliated High School in Beijing. The instruction there was rigorous, paving the road for his future success. Unfortunately, the Cultural Revolution broke out and temporarily forestalled his art career. In 1970, Zhang and his classmates were sent to a forced labor camp in the remote countryside. He labored there for 4 years and creating art was prohibited.

In 1974, Hongnian returned to Beijing and soon became a rising star. As the youngest artist ever to be appointed to the Beijing Art Academy, he created large-scale oil paintings that caught the public's attention and heart. His innovative oils helped develop "Scar Art", an important artistic movement in China that examined the painful memories of the Cultural Revolution. Two of his "Scar Art" paintings, *No!* and *We Were Young Then*, were acquired by China's National Art Museum for their permanent collection. In 1979 he was elected to the All China Artists Association. He was the youngest artist at that time to have achieved the honor. In 1984, his painting, *Preparing For Winter*, one of the first oil paintings depicting Tibetan life, won the Bronze Medal. It was also acquired by the National Art Museum for their permanent collection. At the same time, Hongnian was accepted to the extremely selective Central Art Academy's Master Degree program.

The following year, Zhang came to the United States to broaden his knowledge of Western art. In 1986, he was one of the five artists in New York's Grand Central Art Galleries show, "Realism from China." This ground-breaking exhibit introduced Chinese oil painting and sculpture to the Western world. Art News and CBS were among the media groups acknowledging the show with interviews and favorable reviews. Hongnian continued exploring Tibetan pastoral themes with his 1988 solo show, also at Grand Central.

In 1991, Hongnian moved to Woodstock, New York and continued creating realistic works. He expanded his subject matter to include Chinese and American historical paintings, and eventually contemporary American life. Several of his large-scale epic paintings on Chinese history have been featured in National Geographic Magazine. Four of these paintings were purchased by the National Geographic Society for their permanent collection.

In 2000, Zhang and his wife, artist Lois Woolley, co-wrote [The Yin Yang of Painting](#). This book explains his philosophy and methods of painting. In 2008, China's Ren-Min Mei-Shu Publishing Company selected Zhang as one artist in their Living Masters monograph series on [Chinese Contemporary Distinguished Oil Painters](#).

Hongnian Zhang has taught oil painting in America for many years, at both the graduate program of New York Academy and the Woodstock School of Art. Recently, Mr. Zhang accepted a position as Professor of Oil Painting at Fudan University's Shanghai Institute of Visual Art. He is currently working with other Chinese artists to establish an Association for Epic and Historical Painting. He divides his time between China and the United States.