



RED SEA
GALLERY

Zhong Chen, b. 1969



Zhong Chen was born in Zhongshan, China and arrived in Australia at the age of 19 to explore his love of painting. Once in Australia he completed a Bachelor of Visual Arts at the University of South Australia before being awarded the prestigious International Samstag Scholarship to complete a Master of Fine Arts from the Chelsea College of Arts in London in 1998. He was then awarded two Australian Council grants to participate in residences in New York in 2001 and 2006.

Zhong Chen's work explores issues of historical and contemporary cultural identity as well as his own transcultural psyche and feelings of belonging. His work can be divided into two distinct groups, one echoing ancient Chinese iconography and traditional Chinese illustration and the other being more vivid, stylized and cartoon-like.

The latter, as seen in his current 'The Kung-Fu Series' uses thick black lines like those created by a calligraphy brush. The gestural way in which he paints being a reflection of his own life journey; an amalgam of traditional Chinese folk art, wood block prints and ink brush painting (which Chen studied as a young man in China) and complemented by the minimal colours and composition that follow a rather Western structure. Stepping away from realism, the works are set against blocks of brilliant colour, the figures brandishing swords, wearing elaborate headdresses, riding bizarre animals and casting furtive side-ways glances.



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Paintings like *Boy On A Dragon* reflect Zhong's cultural journey, whilst also relating to one of the 12 symbols of the Chinese zodiac – 2012 being the Year of the Water Dragon. Kung- Fu, meanwhile, was an important part of growing up for Chen. He practiced this martial art and was influenced in the world of Kung-Fu movies. The paintings depict a journey; an exploration of all the elements involved in seeking a new life in another country, whilst maintaining links to his Chinese heritage.

Zhong Chen has held over 55 group and solo exhibitions to his name; gained acclaim as a three-time Finalist in the Archibald Prize (2007, 2008, 2011) and the Wynne Prize (2006, 2007, 2008). He has also been a Finalist in the Sulman Prize (2008) and in 2009 was awarded the People's Choice Award for the Portrait Salon Des Refuses Prize.

Zhong Chen's artworks are held in numerous collections including the Art Gallery of South Australia, BHP and Macquarie University and in numerous private and corporate collections in Australia, Japan, China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, New York, Paris, Switzerland and London.