**ZAO Wou-ki (Zhao Wuji, 趙無極, 1921-2013)**

Zao Wou-ki was a French artist of Chinese birth active in the latter half of the twentieth century. His paintings are stylistically akin to those of the Abstract Expressionists, while paying homage to Chinese ideographic tradition. Born into a cultured family, Zao enrolled in the National Hangzhou Art Academy in 1935, where he was appointed an instructor in 1941 on the recommendation of his teacher, Lin Fengmian (林風眠, 1900-1991). Zao settled in Paris in 1948, and soon established himself in the French art world. Here, he was able to develop a synthesis of Western lyrical abstraction and Chinese poetic landscape. Through gestural brushwork and colour washes, his oil canvases suggest light, space and movement, without recourse to legible imagery of nature. His prints, often reproduced as book illustrations, bear similar rich qualities and have further enhanced his reputation. Zao made public appearances on his visits to China in the 1980s and inspired young artists to experiment with abstraction. Naturalised as a French citizen in 1964, Zao was elected a member of the Académie des Beaux-Arts in 2002.

**References and further reading**

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