



Zhao Gang: History Painting
**Chinese-American Artist Explores Cross-Cultural History of the
East and the West Through the Lens of an Outsider**

Opening May 24, 2019 at Pérez Art Museum Miami
Opening Reception: May 23, 6–9PM



Zhao Gang. *There is An America*, 2007. Oil on canvas. 78 3/4 x 118 1/8 inches. Pizzuti Collection

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(MIAMI, FL — April 15, 2019) — **Pérez Art Museum Miami (PAMM)** is pleased to present ***Zhao Gang: History Painting***, an exhibition of fourteen paintings that bring together the radically multicultural aspects of Gang's art and identity as an artist who is both Chinese and American. On view from **May 24, 2019 through January 5, 2020**, the exhibition serves as a critical re-reading of the history of contemporary art both in the East and the West.

Zhao Gang is a key figure in Chinese contemporary art, and the youngest member of the Stars Group—China's first modern art movement. Born in Beijing in 1961, Gang left China in 1983 to study, live, and





work in Europe and the United States. After returning to China 24 years later, Gang developed a dynamic, provocative painting practice that freely combines Western and Eastern influences as a lens to reflect on the profound changes affecting his native country. Before Gang left, there was no such thing as “Chinese contemporary art.” By the time he returned, globalization had ushered in not just multiple styles and forms of art, but also an entire art economy.

Zhao Gang: History Painting will feature fourteen paintings, dating from 1997 to 2018, that bring together the complex cross-cultural aspects of Gang’s identity and practice. Though the artist is Chinese and American, he is considered—and considers himself—an outsider in both cultures. As both native and newcomer, Gang has developed a darkly ironic, often crude approach to depicting Chinese history. His paintings elide centuries-old tropes with images from the Cultural Revolution, images drawn from memories of his childhood, and images of China as an economic and cultural powerhouse in the new millennium.



Left: Zhao Gang. *Mao Coin*, 2006. Oil on canvas. 37 x 26 inches. Courtesy the artist and Galerie Nagel Draxler, Berlin/Cologne

Right: Zhao Gang. *A Corridor of the Classroom*, 2014. Oil on canvas. 78 3/4 x 70 7/8 inches. Frank F. Yang Foundation, Guangzhou

A number of the works will be displayed salon style inside a 130 square foot “apartment” built inside PAMM’s Rose Ellen Meyerhoff Greene and Gerald Greene Gallery in order to mimic the Beijing practice of showing art in residential apartments—a practice that sustained the city’s experimental scene in the 1980s and ‘90s. The idea of “apartment art” rose as young artists organized exhibitions at home as a





response to the lack of exhibition opportunities and government-approved venues. Gang's "apartment show" will materialize the challenges faced by artists of his generation in China, while drawing parallels between instances of censorship in both East and West, as well as artists' responses to the ongoing curtailing of freedom of expression.

Zhao Gang: History Painting strengthens and expands PAMM's emphasis on the art and culture of the Atlantic Rim—the Americas, Western Europe and Africa—all places that have historically seen a significant uptick in the presence of Chinese investment, immigration, and culture. In the same way in which it is possible to speak about artists who represent a gender-neutral intersection of identities and cultures as Latinx, it is also possible to speak about Zhao Gang's artworks as being emblematic of and anticipating a growing Chinese-Western cross-culturalism. His paintings, in many ways, predict and expand the idea of a contemporary art that opposes cultural binaries and incorporates ideas and motifs from many cultures at once.

Zhao Gang: History Painting is organized by Guest Curator **Christian Viveros-Fauné** and coordinated at Pérez Art Museum Miami by Assistant Curator **Jennifer Inacio**.

ABOUT ZHAO GANG

Zhao Gang (b. 1961, Beijing) currently lives and works in New York and Beijing. He made his artistic debut as a member of the Stars Group, one of the first avant-garde artist groups to open the era of contemporary art in China, when he was just 16 years old. Shortly thereafter he pursued formal art education in Europe and then New York, studying at the State Academy of Fine Art, Maastricht, Holland; Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, USA; MFA, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, USA. Afterwards, Zhao Gang lived overseas for over two decades, developing a diverse body of work as his perspective became distinctively international. Since returning to Beijing in 2006, Zhao Gang has turned his ever-expanding focus toward the entanglement of his personal past with Chinese history and his unique position, at once a native and a newcomer, in China today. His selected museum solo exhibitions include: *The Road to Serfdom II*, Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, Santiago, Chile, 2016; *Paramour's Garden*, Suzhou Museum, Suzhou, China, 2015; *The Road to Serfdom*, Ullens Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing, China, 2015; *Sick Man: Zhao Gang*, Today Art Museum, Beijing, China, 2011. His selected group exhibitions include: *Art and China: Theater of the World*, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 2017; *The Door*, P.S.1 Institute of the Arts/Blum Helman Gallery, New York, USA, 1990. He has participated in important biennial/triennial exhibitions as PERFORMA 07, the Guangzhou Triennial, and the Yokohama Triennial.

ABOUT PÉREZ ART MUSEUM MIAMI

Pérez Art Museum Miami (PAMM) promotes artistic expression and the exchange of ideas, advancing public knowledge and appreciation of art, architecture, and design, and reflecting the diverse community of its pivotal geographic location at the crossroads of the Americas. The 35-year-old South Florida institution, formerly known as Miami Art Museum (MAM) and led by Director Franklin Sirmans, opened a new building, designed by world-renowned architects Herzog & de Meuron, on December 4, 2013 in Downtown Miami's Museum Park. The facility is a state-of-the-art model for sustainable museum design and progressive programming and features 200,000 square feet of indoor and outdoor program space





with flexible galleries; shaded outdoor verandas; a waterfront restaurant and bar; a museum shop; and an education center with a library, media lab, and classroom spaces.

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