

Wang Jie

The Liuli China Museum on Taikang Road is widely known as a venue that showcases works by the world's top glass artists.

So many people are surprised to know that 29-year-old Zhao Jinya is having a solo exhibition at the museum.

"Nebulosity Walk in Thy Memory," Zhao's first large-scale exhibition in China, assembles more than 30 pieces as well as her latest experimental watercolors and sketches.

Born in 1994, Zhao received a Bachelor of Arts from the China Academy of Art and her Master of Arts and Master of Research from the Royal College of Art in London.

In 2019, she was invited to the Southern Illinois University as an artist-in-residence, and in 2022, to Taoxichuan Glass Studio in China's "porcelain capital" Jingdezhen, Jiangxi Province.

Often using hazy layers of colors and rhythmic, curvy shapes, the artist brings to her work a tender allure not often associated with glass. Originating from her unique technical language of glassblowing, her iconic use of colors and layering of glass provokes a haptic visual effect.

"I see glass as an ideal medium to explore themes of environment, emotions and personal experience," she said with a smile.

Her practice delves into the innermost characteristics of the medium of glass, probing the relationship between color, form and composition.

Over the years, she has kept pushing the boundaries of glassblowing techniques and the esthetic expression of the medium.

Her works parallel her personal life experiences and emotional exploration, which is also indicated by their titles.

For example, "7 August 2021 12:39" was made in the latter half of 2021 and was inspired by a family trip to Heaven Lake in the Changbai Mountains. The piece is composed of shapes that are frequently used in the artist's work, supplemented by

# Exploring emotions, personal experience through glass art



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the gradient effect of two colors and sandblasted layers, all of which are signatures in her glass art.

**Q: When did you first encounter the medium of glass? What's your first work?**

A: I visited an international glass exhibition called "Breathing through Transparency: International Contemporary Glass Art Exhibition" in 2013. This was the first time I approached glass art, and this exhibition had a great influence on me. I was touched by the transparency and translucency of glass, so I decided to work with this wonderful

material and create my own works.

My first piece was done with cast glass with an amber color. I played with the thickness of glass to create color differences.

**Q: What's your favorite glass artwork? Why?**

A: I love all my works; they are babies to me. Each of them has its own story and journey, and they represent me in my different stages.

**Q: Many see the beauty of glass artwork, while ignoring the hard labor behind it. How do you overcome the hardships? What was your most severe harm in the production process?**

A: I think hot glass is one of the most challenging techniques — working under high temperatures within a limited time, shaping the hot glass with tools without the direct touch of hands, all these make work with glass a little harder than with other materials.

In my eyes, an artist should have deep understanding of the material itself, as such familiarity is not easily obtained through practice or research, but via years of feelings and experience.

You know, glass cannot be envisioned according to any fixed concept.

**Q: You furthered your study in the UK and the US — how did you benefit from these experiences, more**

**in technique or more in concept?**

A: I believe more in concept.

I see glass as an ideal medium to explore the themes of environment, emotions and personal experiences. All my personal experiences and journeys have become my inspiration and led to who I am.

**Q: You seem to be very interested in the geometric composition in glass. Why?**

A: The geometric compositions in my works are abstraction and translation of my personal experience.

I am doing a practice-based PhD at the Royal College of Art, and my research challenges the existing problem that we are losing multisensory abilities as an adult. I wanted to propose the concept of the "synesthetic touch."

**Q: Can you use three adjectives to describe your artworks?**

A: Synesthetic; ethereal; obscure.

**Q: In your eyes, what special traits are needed to be a successful glass artist?**

A: To truly appreciate the material, work with it and challenge the boundary of it.

**Date:** Through September 3 (closed on Mondays), 10am-5pm

**Venue:** Liuli China Museum  
上海琉璃艺术博物馆

**Address:** 25 Taikang Road  
泰康路25号



"7 August 2021 12:39" recalls Zhao's memory of a family trip to Heaven Lake in the Changbai Mountains. — Ti Gong