

Sunrise at Taishan Mountains

PHOTOS BY JU CHUANJIANG / CHINA DAILY

A rich palette

Zhao Yanbin breaks with ink painting tradition in his heavy use of color, **Wang Qian** reports

A recent three-day solo exhibition of Chinese ink painting by Zhao Yanbin at the Shandong Art Gallery attracted enthusiasts to the artist's depictions of nature and rural life.

Sponsored by the Shandong Artist Association and the provincial department of culture, the show was held from Dec 8 to 10.

The exhibition featured more than 100 ink paintings Zhao created over the past two decades including representative works such as *Chinese Farmer's Dream*, *The Yellow River Stone Forest* and *Impressions of the Taishan Mountains*.

Wang Junmin, deputy Party chief of Shandong province, and Yang Chongguang, head of the Chinese Traditional Culture and Art Research Institute at Peking University, visited the exhibition and spoke highly of Zhao's works.

Born to a rural family in 1956, Zhao was always attracted by the natural beauty of his home village in Zhaoyuan, Shandong province and developed a particular interest in drawing when he was a child.

During his studies at the Beijing Painting Academy while in his 30s, Zhao learned painting from masters such as Wang Wenfang and Cui Zifan, and finally formed his own style that combines traditional and modern elements.

The artists of traditional *xieyi shuimo* — or freehand ink painting — usually pay great attention to the subtle changes of the ink and brush strokes and avoid the overuse of colors.

But Zhao tends to apply heavy colors in his pictures to show his strong affection for nature and life. At the same time, he largely preserves the brushwork and compositions of traditional freehand ink creations.

"Chinese ink painting is about



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Zhao Yanbin was born in Zhaoyuan city, Shandong province in 1956. He is a member of the Chinese Artists Association and a researcher with the Chinese Traditional Culture and Art Research Institute at Peking University. He is also the deputy director of the research center on ink painting founded by Chinese art master Cui Zifan in Beijing.

showing the spirit and essence of things. Various styles and forms can be used to express your true feelings for the world," Zhao said, explaining why he developed his colorful style.

"Life is the source of art," he said, adding that comprehension comes from keen observation.

With that guiding principle, Zhao once traveled thousands of kilometers to the Yellow River Stone Forest, a national geological park in Lanzhou, Gansu province, eight times in a single year.

"What I try to do in all my life is to look for the true beauty in nature that is often so transient. So I have to keep exploring and experimenting with forms of expression," said Zhao. He noted some of his works took years to complete and were modified time and time again.

The efforts paid off. His artwork, especially the Yellow River Stone Forest series, is highly praised by critics and fellow artists.

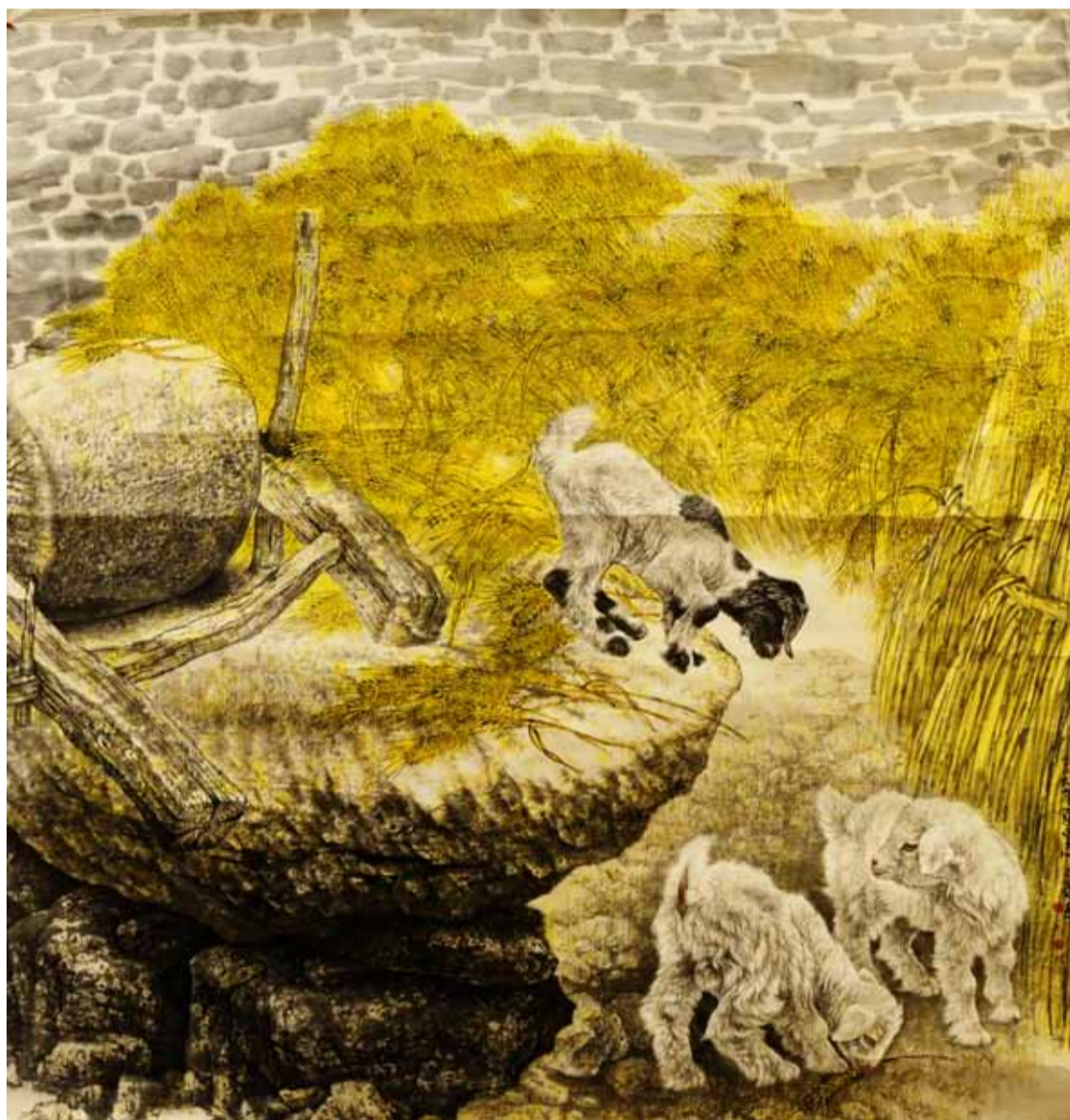
"His works are eye-catching. They combine reality and imagination, using ink to vividly express the spirit of the nature," said Liu Dawei, chairman of China Artists Association.

Renowned Chinese art critic Shao Daqian once said "Zhao's paintings are creative and full of innovation, showing a unique interpretation of his attitude toward life."

His portrayal of magnificent views and his enthusiastic brushwork have brought favor from both domestic and overseas collectors, including Kim Young-sam, former president of South Korea.

His works have won awards in many global events including the 12th International Art Exhibition held at the Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1988. He has also been featured in media outlets such as CCTV and South Korean broadcaster KBS.

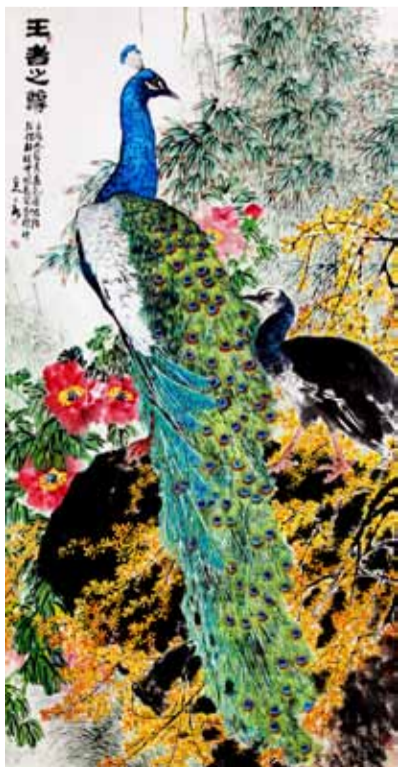
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A Rural Backyard



Yellow River Waves



King of Birds



Winter Snow



Autumn



Spring



Harvest