

**Zhang Daqian (張大千)****1899–1983****Painter, Collector, and Forger**

One of China's most internationally renowned artists of the twentieth century, Zhang Daqian was also a notorious forger of paintings. He was born into an artistic family—his older brother was painter Zhang Shanzi (1882–1940)—in Neijiang, Sichuan province, and was encouraged to paint from a young age. He studied textile weaving and dyeing after he joined his brother in Kyoto, Japan, in 1917. Two years later Zhang moved to Shanghai, where he was instructed in calligraphy and traditional *guohua* painting by Zeng Xi (1861–1930) and Li Ruiqing (1867–1920). He quickly became skilled at copying paintings, particularly those by the master artists of the Ming and Qing dynasties.

In the late 1920s, Zhang moved to Beijing and began collaborating with Pu Xinyu (Pu Ru, 1896–1963). Later he moved onto the grounds of the Master of the Nets Garden in Suzhou. His paintings were frequently exhibited in China, Japan, and Europe. In 1940 Zhang made his first visit to the Buddhist caves at Dunhuang. He repeatedly returned to the caves over the next four years to copy the frescoes and later publish the results. Zhang moved to Argentina and then to Sao Paulo, Brazil, in 1952. On his first visit to Paris in 1956, he met and exchanged paintings with Pablo Picasso. Zhang traveled extensively from that time until his death in Taipei, Taiwan, nearly thirty years later. He received numerous honors during his long lifetime, and his art was internationally recognized.

Zhang's ability to absorb contemporary ideas aligned with his solid traditional Chinese painting technique. He achieved a fluidity to his art that enabled him to emulate the styles of early masters with consummate ease. Using original materials and techniques that were indistinguishable from the artist he was copying, Zhang created forgery after forgery. Many of his forgeries entered museum collections around the world, including those of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, and the Freer Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.

**Literature**

Xu Bangda, "Connoisseurship in Chinese Painting and Calligraphy: Some Copies and Forgeries," *Orientalism* 19, no. 3 (March 1988), pp. 54–62.

Shen C. Y. Fu, *Challenging the Past: The Paintings of Chang Dai-chien* (Washington, DC, 1991).

Liu Yang, *Lion among Painters: Chinese Master Chang Dai Chien* (Sydney, 1998).

Jiazi Chen, *Chang Dai-Chien: The Enigmatic Genius* (Singapore, 2001).