MICHAEL
GOEDHUIS

ZENG XIAOJUN

LANDSCAPE

1987
Ink on paper
152.4 x 67.31 cm (60 x 26 $^{1}/_{2}$ inches)



Circa: 1987

Artist description:

Born in Beijing in 1954, Zeng Xiaojun graduated from the Central Art and Craft Academy of Fine Arts in 1981. Two years later, he moved to the United States and lived for the next fourteen years in Boston, where he exhibited and taught until 1997. Ironically, his growth as a scholar in the Chinese sense took place in America, where his deep connoisseurship in classical Chinese furniture and objects of the traditional scholar's studio developed. Drawing inspiration from the literati landscape painting tradition, especially works by Shen Zhou (1427 – 1509) and Wen Zhenming (1470 – 1559) of the Ming period, Zeng extracts rocks and trees from the context of landscaper and scrupulously depicts them as isolated objects. Employing a delicate balance between dry and wet, lines and dots, his meticulously executed paintings – whether of single or intertwined old trees in Beijing of Nara, Japan, or of scholar's fantastically shaped rocks, or brush-holders fashioned from tree roots – remind us of the Chinese intellectuals' fascination with these subjects as embodiments of their own spiritual perseverance in times of difficulty and turbulence. Together with Liu Dan's, Zeng Xiaojun's ink paintings are a powerful example of how the high culture of traditional China can be reinvigorated for contemporary society.