

# Interview: Zheng Lu on His Huge Gravity-Defying Sculptures

BY SAMUEL SPENCER | APRIL 06, 2016



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"Water Dripping - Splashing," 2014, by Zheng Lu  
(Courtesy Sundaram Tagore Singapore)

Encountering Zheng Lu's giant sculptures in which he crafts cascades and splashes of water out of chainmail, a question forms itself in your mind: "How did he make those?"

Many visitors to Art Stage Singapore in January asked the question when they first saw the artist's work, and visitors to his latest exhibition, "Reflections on Still Water" at Sundaram Tagore Gallery Singapore will reflect on the same thing.



To answer this question and explore these sculptures further, we spoke to the artist in the lead up to this exhibition. Excerpts:

**What was it that made you want to create such a difficult, ambitious work?**

This series was my brainchild during the Master of Fine Arts degree in sculpture in the Central Academy of Fine Arts, Beijing. It was an extension of my thought process during the final project of my bachelor years. I have been deeply interested in Chinese calligraphy and

transcribing poetry since young, and wished to merge this interest with sculpture making.

The "Reflection on Still Water" series carries a significant aspect from this childhood hobby – text transcription and calligraphy can become a form of muscle memory, or even become unconscious actions. Calligraphy is practiced through a customary of apprentices copying master's works in the Chinese art practice – the Chinese believes that you can only master the technique and understand the idea behind by copying the classics, and then you can push the idea further by introducing new interpretations and possibilities. My work is a result of such practice.

**How are the sculptures made?**

The works are composed of thousands of Chinese characters, which are laser-cut into stainless steel and then hand-welded together in a fashion similar to linking chainmail. The interlocking forms are then molded into dynamic compositions according to a cast. Finally the welded joints are sanded down and polished.

**Why did you decide to make them out of individual Chinese characters?**

Chinese is my mother tongue. The form of Chinese hieroglyph characters (hàn zì) offers a sense of beauty, and there are different ways of interpreting a character.

**How planned out are they before they are made — do you draw out exactly what you want them to look like or as they planned as they're being made?**

It depends. Sometimes I do sketches beforehand, and at other times I explore form and balance while working the mold.

*“Zheng Lu: Reflections on Still Water” runs from April 15 - May 19 at Sundaram Tagore Gallery Singapore.*

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