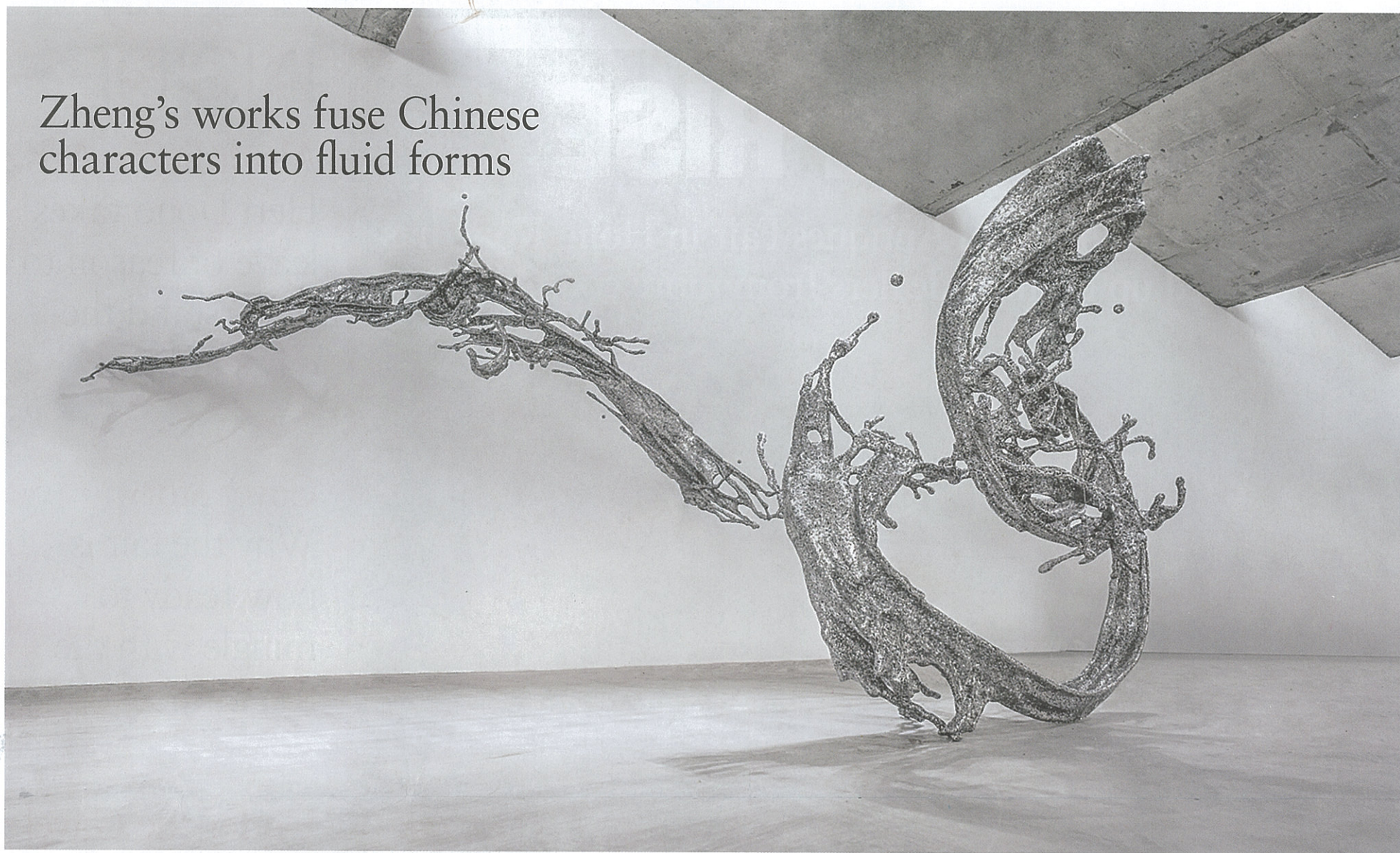


ZHENG LU ON HIS GRAVITY-DEFYING SCULPTURES

CALLIGRAPHY IN 3-D

Zheng's works fuse Chinese characters into fluid forms



ENCOUNTERING ZHENG LU'S giant sculptures, in which he crafts cascades and splashes of water out of metal pieces linked together like chainmail, a question forms 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, in Singapore, reflected on the same question. The gallery's introduction to the exhibition said that his works are influenced by his study of Chinese calligraphy, an art form he practiced growing up in a literary family; the Beijing-based artist was born in 1978 in Chi Feng, Inner Mongolia.

To explore these sculptures further, we spoke to the artist ahead of the exhibition, which concluded recently. Excerpts:

What made you want to create such a difficult, ambitious work?

This series was my brainchild, born when I was pursuing the Master of Fine Arts degree in sculpture at the Central Academy of Fine Arts, Beijing. It was an extension of my thought process during the final project of my Bachelor's years. I have been deeply interested in Chinese calligraphy and transcribing poetry since I was young, and wished to



"Water in Dripping — Leisurely," 2014

merge this interest with sculpture. 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 action. Calligraphy is practiced through a customary copying of masters' works by apprentices — in Chinese art practice, it is

believed that you can only master the technique and understand the idea behind it 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 these sculptures made?

The works are composed of

"Water Dripping — Splashing," 2014, by Zheng Lu



The artist, Zheng Lu

thousands of Chinese characters, which are laser-cut to stainless steel and then hand-welded together in a fashion similar to making 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 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 are 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.

— SAMUEL SPENCER