Inspired by China’s terracotta soldiers and contemporary events, Zhang’s life-size glazed ceramic sculptures humorously critique Chinese culture.

EVENTS

Wednesday, Sep 2,
3:30 pm
Artist Lecture & Gallery Tour:
Maier Rm, Fromm Hall

4:30 pm
Reception:
Sculpture Terrace, Kalmanovitz Hall

In DETOUR, sculptor Wanxin Zhang examines China’s winding path toward the future.

Zhang is perhaps best known for his life-size ceramic sculptures depicting modern day versions of Xian’s Terracotta Warriors. For Zhang, the original sculptures—created as an army for the afterlife of China’s first Qin emperor—are precursors to Mao’s conforming Red Guards. In response, Zhang’s warriors seek freedom and individuality. They are not protectors of an ancient emperor or dictator, rather they are individuals with their own personalities and characteristics finding their way in 21st century society.

With his most recent works, Zhang directly addresses ideas of cultural influence and contemporary politics. Made up of smaller pieces, these installations include busts, architecture, and depictions of familiar western motifs and explore current topics such as the Beijing Olympics and U.S.-China relations. The blending of cultural references (for example, the melted embrace of the Forbidden City and the White House) suggests the growing symbiotic relationship between the two countries.

In all of his sculptures, Zhang brings together years of traditional Chinese training and the influence of the California Funk Art Movement. His use of hand-built, stacked slab construction and heavy surface work draws from California artists Robert Arneson and Peter Voulkos. The works in DETOUR are decidedly postmodern in source and style, providing a humorous, yet instructive critique of China’s cultural revolution and the many ways in which the past informs the present.

Wanxin Zhang was born in 1961 in Changchun, China and educated at the Art School of Jilin and the LuXun Academy of Fine Arts. He has lived in San Francisco since 1992 and earned a MFA in Sculpture from the Academy of Art. His work has been exhibited in galleries and museums, collected both nationally and abroad, and awarded the prestigious Joan Mitchell Foundation Grant and the Virginia Groot Foundation Grant.

Co-sponsored by the University of San Francisco’s Center for the Pacific Rim.