

Wanxin Zhang



Master ceramists of two generations at Sonoma Valley Museum of Art

Richard Shaw and Wanxin Zhang take distinctive figurative approaches

Charles Desmarais February 21, 2019 Updated: February 24, 2019, 9:15 pm



Wanxin Zhang's sculpture "Richard's" (2012) is a portrait of fellow ceramicist Richard Shaw. Photo: Grace Cheung-Schulman

Skirting San Francisco proper, both north and south, the Sonoma Valley Museum of Art joined forces recently with Santa Clara

University's art gallery to assemble an exhibition by two masters of the clay medium in sculpture. The Santa Clara presentation of "Richard Shaw and Wanxin Zhang" closed in January; the Sonoma version of the show continues through April 9.



Richard Shaw, "House of Cards with Pearlware House and Fence Design" (2012) Photo: Alice Shaw

Born a generation and an ocean apart, Richard Shaw (born in Los Angeles, 1941) and Wanxin Zhang (born in Changchun, China, 1961) both take a figurative approach to their medium. Shaw is well known for illusionistic depictions of the kind of objects one might expect to find on a living room side table (a half-full ashtray, a deck of cards), and for surreal compositions built up of such objects (stick-figure men, for example, with tree branches and baseball bats for limbs).

Zhang's style is more expressionistic. Where Shaw regularly fools the eye of even close observers, employing meticulous technique and dinnerware finish, Zhang allows drips of glaze and lumps of rough-carved clay to indicate the hand of the artist and suggest emotional content. Most of the works included in the show point to China and its heritage, both the real and the stereotypical, but the routes there could not be further apart.

"Richard Shaw and Wanxin Zhang": 11 a.m.-5 p.m.,
Wednesdays-Sundays. Through April 7. \$10. Sonoma Valley

Museum of Art, 551 Broadway, Sonoma. 707-939-7862. <https://svma.org>



Richard Shaw, "Canton Creamware Collection Spill" (2018) Photo: Alice Shaw



Wanxin Zhang, "Untitled Warrior" (2008) Photo: Catharine Clark Gallery



Richard Shaw, "The House at China Cove" (2009) Photo: Alice Shaw



Wanxin Zhang, "Unbelievable Promise" (detail) (2014) Photo: Catharine Clark Gallery