

Haoyun Erin Zhao

Rivers Flow Through Us

October 23 – December 20, 2025

Opening Reception

Thursday, October 23, 6-8 pm



Morgan Lehman Gallery is pleased to present *Rivers Flow Through Us*, a solo exhibition of new paintings by Haoyun Erin Zhao. Through calligraphic mark-making and translucent layers of color, Zhao gives shape to movements in nature that are otherwise formless: wind, water, fire, and Qi, the energetic life force that runs through the universe, revealed through practices such as meditation, calligraphy, and Qigong. Deeply inspired by nature as an ecological, spiritual, and symbolic force, her practice draws on both cultural and personal meanings embedded in natural forms while reflecting the inseparability of our inner lives from the environments that sustain us. Her abstract forms recall wings in flight, grasses bending in the wind, and rippling currents.

Birds first appeared in Zhao's paintings in 2023 during a period of profound change that left her with a sense of uncertainty and loss. Looking up at the sky and watching them soar became a source of comfort, offering glimpses of freedom and resilience. What began as a momentary solace soon turned into a practice of observing, photographing, and studying them. Birds came to embody courage and wisdom, as well as trust in unseen currents. These qualities now infuse her paintings, where their presence is suggested through calligraphic gestures and luminous color.

Translucency plays a central role in Zhao's practice. Some of her recent works are double-layered, with transparent fabric stretched above painted canvas, creating shifting spaces that respond to light and movement. These surfaces shimmer and change as viewers move around them, recalling rivers, flames, and the subtle bonds of quantum entanglement. For Zhao, the process of layering transparent calligraphic marks reflects life itself. One decision leads naturally to another, each past moment folding into the present without disappearing, each layer entering and reshaping the larger network of experience.

Ultimately Zhao's work turns toward transformation and renewal. Painting is a meditative act through which she reimagines difficulty as an uplifting language of color and form. The works invite viewers to slow their pace, to notice the traces of energy in flight and water, and to feel nature's quiet oscillation between fragility and resilience.

Haoyun Erin Zhao is an artist based in San Francisco, California. Zhao is the recipient of the Swatch Art Peace Hotel Residency (Shanghai, China), Golden Foundation for the Arts (New York, U.S.), Meta Open Arts (Burlingame, U.S.), Edition/Basel Residency (Basel, Switzerland), Kala Art Institute Residency (Berkeley, U.S.), among others. Her work has been showcased at prominent institutions including the de Young Museum, Exploratorium Museum, and the International Print Center New York. Zhao's pieces are held in collections such as Google, IBM, LinkedIn, ICBC, Meta, Kaiser Permanente, Boston Children's Hospital, Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, as well as numerous private collections.