

Z's Family and H's Family

reviewed by [Lil Copan](#) in the [December 28, 2010](#) issue



A series of oil paintings titled *Yan' Guan Town*, by Chinese artist Liu Xiaodong, explores two families, one Christian and one Muslim, both living in a region of China considered a "crossroads of cultures." At the center of the series are two paintings: large family portraits. The Christian family—"Z's Family"—is shown in their church, while "H's Family," the Muslim family, is seen in the café that the family runs. (Painting was not allowed in their mosque.) The series is filled in by studies of individual family members. Through these studies Xiaodong patiently builds a picture of religious practices and of common and private spaces. He offers reportage, not interpretation. In one interview, Xiaodong said, "The artist has a responsibility to use his critical powers to cut through social issues for a dispassionate standpoint. . . . You don't need to condone or blindly eulogize."

—Lil Copan