

FOTOFEST2008 – CHINA

Photography from China 1934 – 2008

March 7 – April 20, 2008
Houston, Texas



For Information and Visuals:

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WU Gaozhong, *Cat, reply is positive*, 2003
Courtesy of the artist

www.fotofest.org

(HOUSTON - FEB 19, 2008) Chinese Photography is the focus of one of the largest photography events in the world. **Photography from China 1934-2008** is the cornerstone of **FOTOFEST2008**, the Twelfth International Biennial of Photography and Photo-related Art, **March 7 – April 20, 2008** in Houston, Texas.

Photography from China 1934-2008 features ten newly commissioned and curated exhibitions, featuring 34 Chinese artists, including two recently recovered archives from the 1930s and 1940s. In addition to these exhibitions, FOTOFEST2008 presents a **Symposium on Chinese Photography in the 20th Century** with Chinese scholars **GU Zheng**, (Fudan University, Shanghai) and **CAO Tai**, (Guangdong Museum, Guangzhou) as well as a film program, **New Cinema in China**, with the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (MFAH) and the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA).

Forty Chinese artists and curators will attend FOTOFEST2008, its acclaimed portfolio review for artists; the Fine Print Auction; professional workshops; and the special presentation by **Hewlett-Packard** of new printing technology for art work. The China programs are a centerpiece of FOTOFEST2008, the six-week, city-wide celebration of photo-based art.

FOTOFEST2008-CHINA exhibits, with over 1,000 art works, are one of the largest presentations of Chinese photography ever done in the United States.

The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the Menil Collection, Houston Center for Photography and the Holocaust Museum Houston are among 117 other organizations presenting exhibitions as part of FOTOFEST2008. Many of their exhibitions continue the China focus and the ancillary subject of Transformations as well as their own independent themes.

Photography from China 1934-2008, FotoFest's exhibition program for FOTOFEST2008, reveals the diversity of roles and styles that have shaped photographic art over the past 74 years in China. The China programming is the result of several years of travel by FotoFest's creative directors and co-founders, **Wendy Watriss** and **Frederick Baldwin**, looking at the work of over 200 Chinese photographers from Beijing to Kunming. In 2006 FotoFest and Chinese partners staged **Meeting Place FotoFest Beijing 2006**, a re-creation of FotoFest's biennial portfolio review in China. the event brought in 278 photographic artists, documentary photographers and photojournalists came from almost every province in China for a four-day review with international reviewers invited from FotoFest's network.

ETHNOGRAPHY, PHOTOJOURNALISM AND PROPAGANDA, 1934-1975

Reflecting a growing interest by the Chinese in the peoples and politics of China's western border regions near Tibet, **ZHUANG Xueben** (1909-1984) began traveling to China's far-western border regions in 1934. His work from 1934-

1939 is one of the earliest and most serious photographic examinations of ethnic minorities in these regions. FOTOFEST2008 is the first time this work is being shown outside of China.

In 1937, at the age of 25, **Sha Fei** (1912-1950) had himself assigned to the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) 8th Route Army during the anti-Japanese War (1937-1945). Sha Fei photographed combat and training with the Chinese forces allied with CHIANG Kai-shek, against the Japanese. He set up pictorial magazines to publicize the 8th Route Army and its work in rural villages, and he organized a mass media system that became a principal part of the CCP's propaganda system for the next 20 years, through the 1970s. After Sha Fei's controversial execution in 1950, his work was blacklisted until the late 1980s when his family and colleagues succeeded in rehabilitating his name. FOTOFEST2008 exhibits the newly recovered work of Sha Fei for the first time outside of China.



Sha Fei, *The Eight Route Army fighting at Futuyu, the Great Wall in Hebei. (Spring), 1938*, Courtesy of WANG Yan

Editors and photographers trained by Sha Fei during the war became leaders of major CCP pictorial news media and propaganda agencies, using photography as one of the primary media promoting Chairman MAO Zedong's agenda during The Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). The exhibition curated by **CHEN Gaungjun** and **XU Weiyang**, founders of **798 Gallery**, one of Beijing's most respected photography galleries, shows how photography was choreographed to promote the message of collective solidarity. The exhibit, commissioned by FotoFest, features three photographers working for news publications during The Cultural Revolution: **WENG Naiqiang**, **XIAO Zhuang**, and **WANG Shilong**.

INDEPENDENT DOCUMENTARY PHOTOGRAPHY, 1985-2000

In the mid-1980s, a new generation of Chinese photographers began to produce strong personal bodies of photo-documentary work outside official media and news agencies. The first to gain international prominence was **WU Jialin** with his work on Yunnan province. A chance discovery of this work by FotoFest co-founder Frederick Baldwin at Marc Riboud's Paris apartment led to his first exhibition in Western art world at FOTOFEST1996.

Two subsequent generations of photographers continue to develop independent approaches to documentary work. **LU Nan's** interest in the ethics of social interaction, led him to photograph the institutionalization of the mentally ill and underground Catholic communities in China. **Li Lang's** early poetic work with the Yi People in central-western China has led to his current work exploring the human imprint on China's landscape.

CONCEPTUAL AND STAGED WORK - NEW PHOTO, 1994-1998

In 1996, two Beijing artists, **RongRong** and **LIU Zheng** founded the influential **New Photo** magazine, an independent, underground publication that circulated in Beijing's art circles. The magazine signaled a burgeoning Chinese interest in photography as a medium of contemporary art and marked an important turning point in the development of contemporary photography in China. FOTOFEST2008 presents this new exhibition for the first time outside of China, with 15 artists published in **New Photo** magazine. The exhibit is curated by **ZHANG Li** and **WU Hung** and organized by **Three Shadows Photography Art Centre** in Beijing.

CONCEPTUAL AND STAGED WORK - CURRENT PERSPECTIVES, 1998-2008

Individual shows of 11 current, multi-disciplinary Chinese artists address issues of identity, memory, spirituality, gender, urbanism, and the complex relationships between the present and the past in contemporary China. Designed as a series of one-person exhibitions, these shows feature **BAI Yiluo**, **CANG Xin**, **CHENG Lingyang**, **XING Danwen**, **LIU Lijie**, **LIU Ren**, **SUN Guojuan**, **WANG Chuan**, **WU Gaozhong**, **YAO Lu**, and **ZENG Han**.

The printing of over 900 of the China fine art prints has been made possible by the global support of Hewlett-Packard. The prints were done by Q-Image in Beijing with the latest of the Professional Photo Imaging Z series HP printers.

Ten artists from FOTOFEST2008's China exhibits have been granted scholarships and will attend the FOTOFEST2008 Meeting Place International Portfolio Review, March 7-20, 2008.

Exhibits curated and commissioned by FotoFest are accompanied by 19 other China-related exhibits presented independently by other participating art spaces in FOTOFEST2008. The shows include a collaboration with the Asia Society and Houston Center for Photography on coal mining in China – *Mined in China* with China expert Orville Schell, internationally known Magnum Photo photographer Susan Meiselas and 10 Chinese photographers.

Among Houston-based Chinese photographers participating in FOTOFEST2008-CHINA, members of the Houston Chinese Photographic Society are showing at the Houston Center for Photography and the Phoenix Events Center in Houston's Chinatown.

With the fourth largest Chinese American population in the United States, members of the Houston Chinese Photographic Society, the Chinese Community Center and the Asia Society Texas Center are collaborating with FOTOFEST2008. On an academic level, Chinese artists, curators and scholars will be talking with Rice University's Art History Department and the newly established Chao Center for Asian Studies.

For more details on FOTOFEST2008 exhibitions and other programs please visit www.fotofest.org.

OTHER PROGRAMS

135 Area-wide Exhibitions in Participating Spaces:

March 7 – April 20, 2008

The International Portfolio Review for Artists:

Principal Sponsor: Hewlett-Packard

March 7 – 20 and April 3 – 6, 2008

Artist Workshops:

With partial support from Hewlett-Packard

March 11 and 16, 2008

Hewlett-Packard Print Center:

March 8 – 18, 2008

International Fine Print Auction:

March 11, 2008

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For more information on FOTOFEST2008 or for visuals, please contact:

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QI Zhijie, *Fine Scan # 006*, 1997
Courtesy Three Shadows Photography Art Centre