

PRESS COVERAGE



Reversed Images: Representations of Shanghai and its Contemporary Material Culture

September 25 — December 23, 2009

1. Art Daily, 9.17.2009
2. Art Slant, 9.25.2009
3. Chicago Gallery News, Fall 2009
4. Chicago Tribune, 11.20.2009
5. New City Chicago, 11.16.2009
6. Time Out 8.27.2009
7. Time Out, Fall 2009

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The Museum of Contemporary Photography Presents Robert Adanto's The Rising Tide



Shot in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Shenzhen in the summer of 2006, this unflinching and incisive study captures the confusion and ambiguity that characterize the new China.

CHICAGO, IL - Robert Adanto's feature-length documentary, *The Rising Tide*, which explores China's meteoric march toward the future through the words and works of some of the Middle Kingdom's most talented photographers and video artists, including Weng Qingdong, Cao Fei, Xu Zhen, Yang Yong, Chen Qian and O Zhang, will screen in association with Reversed Images: Representations of Shanghai and Its Contemporary Material Culture at The Museum of Contemporary Photography in Chicago on October 1st.

Shot in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Shenzhen in the summer of 2006, this unflinching and incisive study captures the confusion and ambiguity that characterize the new China. "An often surprising and thought-provoking documentary," wrote WICN's Mark Lynch, "The rest of us better make an effort to grasp what their work is about, or get out of the way. An 'eye-opener' in every sense of the word, if you are an artist, curator or art teacher be sure to catch this film."

The documentary premiered at the United Kingdom's China Now! Festival as part of Constant Stream: China 08 at the Royal College of Art Helen Hamlyn Centre in London, where it screened with a film by acclaimed Chinese director Jia Zhangke. The film has also enjoyed screenings at The Hammer Museum in Los Angeles, The Smithsonian Institution's Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington DC, The National Center for Contemporary Art in Moscow, The Worcester Art Museum, and The Patricia & Philip Frost Art Museum in Miami. The film was also featured at The Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto, screening in conjunction Shanghai Kaleidoscope, an exhibition curated by Christopher Phillips of the International Center for Photography in NY, and was an Official Selection of The Cape Winelands Film Festival in Cape Town, South Africa. In May of 2009, the film screened in association with *Maijpong: Contemporary Chinese Art from the Sigg Collection at the Peabody-Essex Museum in Salem, MA and at the Hong Kong*

International Art Fair, where Mr. Adanto participated in Asia Art Archive's Backroom Conversations series. In June, the film was screened in conjunction with The China Project at The Queensland Art Gallery of Modern Art in Brisbane, Australia and The Works Art and Design Festival in Edmonton, Alberta. Later in October, the film will screen at the Schirn Kunsthalle in Frankfurt, in conjunction with Art for the Millions: 100 Sculptures from the Mao Era.

Today's News

September 14, 2009

- Exhibition of Works of Art by Joan Antoni Toledo, Founder of Equipo Cronica, Opens
- International Group Exhibition Presents the Work of Six Prominent Rising Artists
- Pakistani Artist Farida Batool Presents New Works in Her First Solo U.S. Exhibition at Alcon
- Camera Work Gallery Presents Works by French Photographer Jean-Baptiste Huyrh
- Italian Photographer Benno Grassani's Iconic Photographs on View at Hamiltons Gallery
- Lanxess Commissions Unnatural Rubber Exhibition with Warhol Museum
- October Gallery to Present Romuald Hazoume's "Made in Porto-Novo"
- Nassau County Museum of Art to Present Norman Rockwell: American Imagist
- Japanese Art Dealers Association Members Present Exhibitions During New York City Asian Art Week
- Cheekwood Museum Celebrates its 50th Anniversary in 2010
- Crush, the New Photographic Installation by Paul Koolker, on View at Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen
- A Work of Art at the University of Leicester has Captured in Time the Human Tragedy of the 9/11 Atrocity
- Plains Art Museum Holds Retirement Reception for Sue Peley
- The Museum of Contemporary Photography Presents Robert Adanto's The Rising Tide
- Illustration from Myrtle Beach Art Museum Exhibit Traveling to New York
- Design 21 Announces Call for Entries for UNESCO's Dream Center Logo Competition
- Mumbai will be Hosting the Celebrated Indian Contemporary Art Expo
- Arts Leaders Join U.S. Rep. Over at Norman Rockwell Museum to Highlight Arts Sector's Role in Economic Recovery
- The School of Visual Arts Presents a Panel Discussion Theory and Practice: Apofias of Perfection

Menu

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Shanghai in Chicago
by Abraham Ritchie

Reversed Images: Representations of Shanghai and Its Contemporary Material Culture
Museum of Contemporary Photography
Columbia College Chicago, 600 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago, IL 60605
September 25, 2009 - December 23, 2009

For most of us, the artists working in China have only been accessible across the



Zhang Qing, *603 Football Field*, 2006, 13 digital prints, Courtesy Shanghai, Shanghai

A standout in the exhibition was Zhang Qing's *603 Football Field*, a video installation presented with photographic c-prints of a soccer game ("football" to the rest of the world) held in a tiny Shanghai apartment. Two teams of grown men plus one referee, actively negotiate a bed, desk, bookshelves, in an attempt to score a goal in the kitchen at one end or in the bathroom at the other. The game is complete with uniforms, the ref, and a midfield line. Initially this is hilarious, as the players boot the ball around the apartment, damaging things and knocking them over. Humor allows anyone anywhere access to the piece, but there's a deeper level beyond laughter. The video monitors are installed like surveillance cameras, monitoring a private space. The small space is funny at first, but it implies the loss of Shanghai's green spaces, where the game should be properly played. If these men are forced to play in an apartment, where do Shanghai's children play? Qing uses humor as an access to address

more serious points.

The MoCP continues to pursue ambitious exhibitions, this time bringing Shanghai to Chicago. Heavily focused on Shanghai as a physical city, "Reversed Images" presents a variety of artistic practices, some of which work better than others. The most interesting take a critical approach that doesn't necessarily sacrifice aesthetics.

--Abraham Ritchie

<http://www.artslant.com/chi/articles/show/11794>

Posted by [Abraham Ritchie](#) on 11/30
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internet, magazines, or other media. Fortunately, there's been a subtle wave of exhibitions featuring Chinese art in Chicago this year, the most notable being the sculpture in Millennium Park and the large survey at the Chicago Cultural Center "The Big World: Recent Art from China." Joining these exhibitions is the Museum of Contemporary Photography's (MoCP) survey of Shanghai artists, "Reversed Images: Representations of Shanghai and Its Contemporary Material Culture."

Shanghai has grown into a city of approximately 18 million people, among the one of the largest cities in the world. If the construction boom in the U.S. was noticeable, in China and Shanghai it has been totally transforming, as neighborhoods are swallowed by massive high-rise developments. The overwhelming urban nature of Shanghai is addressed by almost all the artists address in some way.

I'm most likely not going to get to China anytime soon (unfortunately), but I am extremely curious to know what it is like to be an artist in a country that is Communist, [holds the most U.S. debt](#), is the most populous in the world, and the fastest growing economy. It seemed that the most interesting pieces in the exhibition were the artists that both addressed Shanghai as a city but went beyond its sheer urban-ness. Notable in this sense was the collaborative, five-channel video installation *40+4: Art is not enough! Not Enough! The Making of the Arts in Shanghai '80-2008* the interviewers asked forty questions to forty artists about artmaking issues, conducted over a twenty-year span. These questions ranged from general practice questions ("Have you ever been doubtful of you being an artist?"), to questions more specific to China, like the relationship between art and politics or art and morality. The editing was made obvious through fast cuts between responses, indicating that a certain view was being shown but the conversation was still very engaging. Hearing forty artists ruminate on the last twenty years of practice in China was fascinating and revealed diverse opinions and artistic approaches.

Made on the literal other side of the world, disappointingly some of the work fell into familiar artistic devices. Olivo Barbieri's *Shanghai* consists of multiple color images of a highway overpass. I was immediately reminded of any number of highway overpass images, from the images of the famous East Los Angeles freeway interchange, to an image of a Chicago's freeway shown last year in the Chicago Cultural Center exhibition "Made in Chicago." Barbieri's work is different in that the freeways have blue accent lights, but otherwise it blends into a host of freeway images. Liu Gang's *Paper Dream* series presents actual advertisements put up around construction sites to promote the new housing units. These have momentary interest as they are from Shanghai yet closely resemble the advertisements of the U.S., but don't go much deeper.

MoCP
Museum of
Contemporary Photography

600 South Michigan Ave.
Chicago, Illinois 60605
312 663 5554

Reversed Images:

Representations of Shanghai and
Its Contemporary Material Culture

September 25 –
December 23, 2009



Yang Fudong, *Honey 3*, courtesy of Shanghart, Shanghai



The exhibition is made possible in part by a grant from the
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mocp.org

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www.chicagotribune.com/entertainment/chi-1120-galleries-reviewnov20,0,1316783_story

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Art reviews

Chicago galleries: Shanghai then, now and beyond

Lori Waxman

Special to the Tribune

November 20, 2009

Shanghai is an unbelievably disorienting city, bursting with human and motor traffic, crisscrossed by glowing infrastructure, punctured by Space Age skyscrapers and simmering with the ruins of old neighborhoods.

Not that I've been. But if the works on display in a pair of related exhibitions of contemporary art from Shanghai are to be believed, this city of 18 million is the epitome of today's rapidly changing urban landscape. In the blink of an eye, a high-rise replaces an old alley of brick town houses. With the flash of a chopstick, slinky furs supersede communist fashions.

"Reversed Images: Representations of Shanghai and Its Contemporary Material Culture" at the Museum of Contemporary Photography is the more extensive of the two shows here, featuring a dynamic mixture of animation, documentary video, sculpture and photography. The supplementary "Shanghype!" at the Hyde Park Art Center offers a looped screening of short works of video art, with some of the same artists (and artworks) as at the MoCP.

But back to being disoriented. Or not. One stunning point of orientation is offered immediately as you enter the MoCP galleries: Shi Guorui's mural-size panorama of the Shanghai skyline, frozen in dreamy, hushed black and white. On one side of the broad, still Huangpu River lies the Bund, the city's stretch of historic, quay-side buildings. On the other rises the sharp, daring peaks of the new Pudong district. But orientation can be a fiction, even here. The otherworldly calm and eerie contrast of the image are the result of the camera obscura method used to create it -- a technique that demands extremely long exposure time and produces a reversed negative.

The reality probably looks more like Olivo Barbieri's multipanel picture of a freeway junction at night, with pedestrian walkways, highways and roads overlapping in a dizzying tangle of concrete



pillars, streaks of light and fuzzy greenery. But even here, artistic technique colors actuality so that it feels more true than it really looks. Everything is tinged in shimmering hypercool turquoise and greenish yellow. The scene is empty -- only two vehicles give a hint of life. To find warm human presence, one must look elsewhere.

But the warmest presence also is the most complicated, the story of what gets left behind in the relentless push toward structural and economic progress. Some of the most moving work in "Reversed Images" tackles this theme by recording the disappearance of residential areas and their inhabitants. Shu Haolun's aptly titled documentary "Nostalgia" intimately revisits the traditional Shikumen houses and Longtang alleyways where the filmmaker grew up, surrounded by a dense community of family and neighbors. Su Chang painstakingly crafts a model of one such town house, a building torn down like so many others to make way for new construction. The artist duo Birdhead presents a hefty, cacophonous photo book picturing its neighborhood, Xin Cun, and its total razing to make way for the World Expo 2010 site.

Zhou Xiaohu takes a less sentimental approach with a digitally constructed panorama of a devastated quarter, whose real interest for the artist is as a site for a temporary sculpture -- a trompe l'oeil assemblage of bricks, spray paint, piping and 2-by-4s that looks like three 200-foot-long white streaks, but only if seen from the angle of the camera. In the face of Zhou's irreverence stands the neutrality of Xu Xixian and Xu Jianrong's paired photographs of Shanghai. The father took his in the 1970s and '80s. The son revisited those locations 20 years later, producing an astonishing set of "after" images. Each picture retains but a single marker from "before" -- a building, a bridge, a roller coaster -- while all else is radically changed and densely built up.

Against all such seriousness and reality is Zhang Qing's hilarious "603 Football Field," in which a cramped Shanghai apartment turns soccer playground for a match between six teenagers. The midfield line straddles the living room; the blue team scores in the kitchenette and the white team in the sun room. Somewhere midplay the bed sheets are destroyed, the trash overturned and the couch trampled. It's a critique of tiny living spaces and lack of parkland, but also a tongue-in-cheek nod to the creativity of necessity.

A provocative epilogue for the story of Shanghai is provided by two very different works that appear in both venues. A computer animation by Cao Fei depicts the whirlwind construction of RMB City, an art community on a dense urban island in the virtual world of Second Life. Part creative endeavor, part capitalist experiment (RMB stands for Renminbi, the Chinese currency), the "city" will partner with international art institutions to host online cultural exhibitions amid its fantastical conglomeration of postmodern architecture, hydroelectric station, giant Mao monument, floating panda balloon and spinning Ferris wheel.

Meanwhile, Mathieu Boryseviz offers a short, surreal film about an American man (the artist) who searches Shanghai for his Chinese wife hours before she gives birth to their baby. Speaking Shanghaiese, the local dialect, he asks neighbors and vendors if they've seen his wife recently. They haven't, but his explorations allow an intimate look into the city's daily life. Meanwhile, his wife wanders the vastness of the metropolis in belly-baring vanguard clothing, looking like a fabulous visitor from outer space. The couple's baby, born in the final moments of the film, takes on the imprint

Chicago galleries: Shanghai then, now and beyond - chicagotri...

http://www.chicagotribune.com/entertainment/chi-1120-gallerie...

of all of this -- the local, the intimate, the old, the new, the interracial -- and stands, finally, for the future.

"Reversed Images: Representations of Shanghai and Its Contemporary Material Culture," at the Museum of Contemporary Photography, Columbia College, 600 S. Michigan Ave., 312-663-5554, mocc.org, through Dec. 23

"Shanghype!," at the Hyde Park Art Center, 5020 S. Cornell Ave., 773-324-5520, hydeparkart.org, through Dec. 13

onthetown@tribune.com

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NOV 16

Review of Presentations of Shanghai and its Contemporary Material Culture/Museum of Contemporary Photography

Photography, South Loop

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RECOMMENDED

Infiltrating Chicago gallery spaces with their full-fledged, cutting-edge work that constitutes a genuine avant-garde and blows away domestic products, Chinese photographers now bid fair to take over the city in this show in which a battalion of shooters presents the manifold perspectives that mix and match in the metropolis of Shanghai. Grappling with the destruction of old Shanghai and the disappearance of traditional lifestyles, and the eruption of a postmodern cityscape and its accompanying consumer culture, the contributors are uniformly visual social critics, probing into the glitzy decadence of middle-class high-rise existence, commenting mordantly on the lives of those still trying to cling to the past, and spoofing real estate ads, among any number of other skeptical moves. These artists are not political activists, and one suspects that their cultural approach is deeply rooted in their psyches rather than being a result of a dictatorial regime's censorship. The banner image in the show is Yong Fudong's large-format staged color portrait of the "First Intellectual," a man with wildly tousled hair who stands in the middle of a wide avenue dressed in a business suit and holding a briefcase in one hand and a large brick in other; blood drips from his face and his eyes and he is agape with bewildered astonishment, indeed panic. A consummate conceptual artist, Fudong explains the image best—the First Intellectual has been wounded, but he cannot decide whether to throw his brick at society or smash it in his own face. Would that the West were so deep and sophisticated, but perhaps senility has set in and ambivalence has taken flight. (Michael Weinstein)



Through December 23 at the Museum of Contemporary Photography, 600 S. Michigan.

Focus: China

Art from the People's Republic dominates a series of exhibitions and lectures at Columbia College this fall.

The Chinese government must not realize how awesomely subversive printmakers can be, because it doesn't stop Tibet's Derge Parkhang—a "printing temple" founded in 1729—from disseminating Buddhist texts made with its collection of 300,000 printing blocks. Prints, books, photographs and videos from the temple are on view



in this exhibition. "This photo shows a block cutter at the Derge Parkhang doing the first, rough cut on a double-sided printing block," explains cocurator Patrick Dowdey, who spent three summers doing research at the Derge Parkhang with the show's other cocurator, Columbia College prof Clifton Meador.

WHAT "Pearl of the Snowlands: Buddhist Printing at the Derge Parkhang" **WHEN** Sept 11-Dec 5 **WHERE** Center for Book and Paper Arts (1104 S Wabash Ave, second floor, 312-369-6631, bookandpaper.org)



Zhang Qing's *603 Football Field* (2006, pictured) proves you can hold a soccer game in your apartment. "I wanted to show a playful and ironic 'inside' situation," says curator Davide Quadrio. "Zhang Qing's work is always light, surreal and unpredictable, and I thought *603 Football Field* could help the show to have a moment of 'lightness.'"

WHAT "Reversed Images: Representations of Shanghai and Its Contemporary Material Culture" **WHEN** Sept 25-Dec 23 **WHERE** Museum of Contemporary Photography (600 S Michigan Ave, 312-663-5554, mocp.org)

18 **Time Out Chicago** Aug 27-Sept 2, 2009

Art & Design

Fall Preview 2009

Focus: China

Art from the People's Republic dominates a series of exhibitions and lectures at Columbia College this fall. By Lauren Weinberg



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Tao Huang wants you to stop associating Chinese design with knockoffs. "There's still a lot of copycats," the Columbia College prof acknowledges, "but there's a lot of innovation and creative effort going on, too." She curated this exhibition to introduce 14 Chinese designers' and studios' work to an American audience. Huang says she's including Jianye Li's *Flexibin* (pictured) because the award-winning design is a brilliant concept: LI, who works for Philips Design Hong Kong, created the trash can out of a single piece of stainless-steel wire.

WHAT "Found: Contemporary China Design" **WHEN** Oct 1–Nov 7 **WHERE** Leviton A+D Gallery (619 S Wabash Ave, 312-344-8687, www2.colum.edu/adgallery)