中国摄影

CHINESE PHOTOGRAPHY

二十世纪以来

TWENTIETH CENTURY AND BEYOND

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当代视觉文化中的身份问题进行了反思。人物僵硬的姿态和漠然的表情使照片看起来像是标准的身份证照。作为一名谙熟后现代理论的艺术家，邱志杰认为，在这个世界上，"个人已完全被转变成了一种信息处理，符号和密码掌控了真实的人，我们的身体仅仅是它们的载体而已"。[54]

七、城市与人

在 90 年代和 21 世纪初年中国当代艺术各门类中，对环境巨变反映最为敏感的是实验艺术。这些巨变包括传统景观和生活方式的消失，后现代城市和新城市文化的兴起，以及大规模的移民。对这些巨变的兴趣所隐含的是一个"换代"过程：这些艺术家中的大多数在 90 年代开始他们的生涯，因此终于能够告别文革的视觉及精神重担。他们因此可以评点已经成为"过往"事件的文革和六四学潮，在此同时又和当下中国的变迁进行直接、积极的对话。这些变迁中最吸引这些艺术家注意力的一个方面是城市的迅速发展。90 年代和 21 世纪初，北京和上海这些大都市的显著特点是持续的拆毁和建设：如林的起重机和脚手架，轰鸣的推土机，无处不在的尘埃与泥泞。每天都有旧房子被推倒，腾出空地以修建新的大酒店和购物中心。成千上万的人们从城区迁徙到郊外。从理论上讲，拆除和搬迁是都市现代化的必要条件。但在现实中，这种状况带来了日益显著的城市和居民之间的异化：他们不再处于一个互属关系。

这种状况是许多 90 年代实验摄影作品的背景和内容。从 1997 到 1998 年，尹秀珍忙于收集平安大道建设工地上"一种正在消失的现时遗迹。"平安大道是由政府和私人企业共同投资建设的庞大工程项目，总投资达 3.5 亿美元。作为东西横贯北京的第二条主要大道，它首先必须在北京市区人口最密集处开出一条宽约 30 米，长约 7000 米的空地。尹秀珍所收集的材料主要包括两种：房屋（及其居民）拆迁前的图片和拆迁后留下的屋瓦。然后她用这些材料创作各种各样的装置作品。在有些装置中，她在排列成行的屋瓦上放上了拆毁房屋的黑白照片，作品极似墓地。我们或许确实可以把这种装置看成是一个象征性的"公墓"，只是这里死去的不是人，而是传统房屋。

但在这种拆迁和搬迁的过程中人也的确是消失不见了。人类主体的消失于是成为展望的象征主义作品《诱惑》的主题。这个作品由一组用衣服和胶作成的"人的躯壳"组成，每一件中空的躯体呈现出极度扭曲的姿态，给人以激情、痛苦、折磨、生死抗争等种种印象。但事实上这里并没有人类主体在抗争，也没有抗争的对象。由于内部中空可以悬挂，这些人体外形不是被设想为稳定的雕塑，而是做为欲望和迷失的符号，可以被无限制地纳入任何不同的环境之中。特定的地点把这些人造外形的一般内涵转化成特定意义。悬挂在脚手架上，它们获得一种强烈的不稳定和焦虑感；放置在地表，它们就和泥土联系在一起，唤起死亡的观念。最具戏剧化的装置方式是把这些中空的人体散放在城市废墟之中。拆迁的房屋和这些人体都表明对于破坏和断裂的吸引以及对毁灭和伤害的钟情，虽然所拍摄的照片并没有表明除了建筑和空壳以外，到底是什么真正地受到了伤害。

荣荣所拍摄的北京拆迁照片中也没有人物的存在，而是用断壁残垣之中残留的形象填充空白。这些形象原本装饰室

内空间，但现在却暴露在外。两条龙很可能是从前某家饭店的遗迹；一幅年画同样昭示着原来主人的传统品味。这些"遗存"形象中最多的是各种美人招贴画，其中玛丽莲·梦露到香港的时装模特正在煽情微笑。虽然画面被撕破，有的甚至缺损了大半，但这些形象仍然对观者有着一种强烈的诱惑力——不仅是因为画面中的魅力人物，而且也因为画面的空间虚幻感。通过强化的三维空间、大量的镜像以及画中画，一堵残破的墙壁仍然被转化成为一个幻想的空间。我们可以把这些作品同张大力的影像联系起来观看。作为中国最有名的图鸦艺术家，张大力通过自己的艺术发展出了一个与北京的个人"对话"。从1995年到1998年，他在整个北京城里涂画了2000多幅自己的形象——一个光头侧面像——大多是在拆了一半的、空荡荡的房子里。不管多么短暂，他把这些城市废墟变成了公共艺术场地。通常他为自己的行为和摄影方案所选择的场地突出了三种对比：第一种将拆迁场地与官方建筑对比。第二种对比废弃的民居与得到保护的皇家宫殿。第三种对比毁灭与建设：在废墟瓦砾中拔地而起的是千篇一律的、国际风格的耀眼摩天大楼。

因此，张大力的兴趣不单纯是表现拆毁，而是揭示被拆毁的民宅和得到尊崇、保护、和兴建的建筑之间的不同命运。他的照片因此沟通了荣荣的"城市废墟"照片和90年代中国实验摄影中的另一个流行主题——日益显露的新城市景观。在这后一类图片中，我们看到翁奋拍摄的海口的影像，表现一个女孩坐在墙上向远方遥望，顺着她的目光我们看到在地平线上升起的海市蜃楼般的城市景色。墙在这里因此不仅分隔了空间，也分隔了时间。这个女孩不仅连通着"此地"与"彼地"，也连通着"此时"和"彼时"，将观者的视线带向诱人的未来。与此相反，罗永进的《新居民楼》则剥去新城市的虚幻，拒绝人造海市蜃楼美景的吸引：他的新建居民楼晦暗阴沉，看起来如同废墟一般陈旧。值得注意的是，他对作为幻想乐园的未来城市的抵制使他回到了纪实摄影传统，也就是说，回到了影像的力量必须根植于对"真实"的探索。

李天元的三联作品《天元空间站》进一步表明了新的城市景观在改变艺术家观点，激发其想像力等方面所具有的影

Fig. 10 Zhang Peili, Continuous Reproduction, 1993, set of 25 black and white photographs, 10" each, edition of 15

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Fig. 8 Geng Jianyi, Building No. 5, 1992, series of black and white photographs, 100 x 80 cm each

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响和作用。中间一联表现艺术家独自站在北京市中心一幢现代化的玻璃建筑前，人物模糊的面貌掩盖了他的身份，同时建筑的国际化风格也消抹了任何地方风格特点——画面中的人物可以是世界上任何一座城市里的任何人。右边一联是高倍显微镜下的人指甲，经无限放大后类似于银河系中的宇宙深渊。与之相对的左联是一张北京城的卫星照片，展现了来自太空的回眸一望。在这张照片中，一个白色的圆圈标志出艺术家在城中所站的地点，从而把观者的视线又引回到中间一联。但是这联显示的现代北京也没有什麽地方特征，把它想像为一座居民太空站也未尝不可。

新兴城市对实验艺术家的魅力不仅在于城市建筑上，同时也在于它日益多样化的人口构成。比如，胡杰明的《1999－2000传奇》记录了艺术家对于城市生活随机性的兴趣。这件装置作品用透明胶片制成，表现不同电视频道同时播放的人们各类活动的零乱场景，把观者置于一个媒体的迷宫之中，使之对城市的时间性和空间性进行反思。这类作品所表现的城市与传统中国城市的概念可说是背道而驰：传统城市具有典型的、规整如棋盘的形象，封闭在城墙之内。而新兴的城市则漫无目的，立体多元，快捷多变，喧闹嘈杂，蓬勃有力。它拒绝一声不响地呆在那里，成为美的赏析的被动目标，而是要求观察者参与其中，感受它的生命活力。

ture, which constitutes an important genre in contemporary Chinese experimental art.[53] A common tendency among experimental artists, however, is a deliberate ambiguity in portraying their likeness, as if they felt that the best way to realize their individuality was through self-distortion and self-denial. These ambiguous images are still about the authenticity of the self. But they inspire the question "Is it me?" rather than the affirmation, "It is me!" More than one third of the self-portraits by experimental artists in the 2001 publication Faces of 100 Artists use this formula.[54] Many such images, such as Lin Tianmiao's and Jin Feng's self-portraits, make the subject's image blurry, fragmentary, or in the process of vanishing. Lin's digitally generated portrait, four meters high and two and a half meters wide, is out of focus and devoid of hair; the image thus represses the artist's female identity but enhances its own monumentality. Entitled *The Process in Which My Image Disappears*, Jin Feng's self-portrait shows the artist writing *en face* on a glass panel. As his handwriting gradually covers the panel, the letters also blur and finally erase his image.

Other artists employ different methods to deconstruct their conventional images. Yin Xiuzhen's *Yin Xiuzhen*, for example, is a concise biography of the artist, consisting of a series of her ID photographs arranged in a chronological sequence. The portraits have been cut into insoles and installed into women's shoes that Yin Xiuzhen made together with her mother. In so doing, the artist imbued the fragmented images with a sense of vulnerability and intimacy, transforming the standard ID photos into genuine self-expressions. Qiu Zhijie's photos, *Tattoo 1 and 2*, result from his persistent experiments to make his own image transparent.[55] The man standing straight in a frontal pose in both pictures is the artist himself. In one photo, a large character bu—meaning no—is written in bright red across his body and the wall behind him. Different parts of the character are painted on his body and on the wall. When these parts connect to form the character, they create the strange illusion that the figure's body has disappeared, and that the character has become independent, detached from the body and the wall. In other words, this character rejects the ground and makes the person invisible. The other picture employs a similar technique, with metal dots attached to both the body and the background. While the body again seems to vanish, the repetitive dots form an ever expanding visual field, with neither set boundaries nor clear signification.

Like Yin Xiuzhen's photo installation, these two photos by Qiu Zhijie reflect upon contemporary visual identifications of individuals. The figure's unnatural pose and expressionless face make the photos look like ID pictures. As an artist well-versed in postmodern theories, Qiu Zhijie believes that in this world "individuals have been completely transformed into an information process. Signs and codes have overpowered actual human beings, and our bodies have become merely their vehicles."[56] These two photos illustrate an answer to the artist's question of how to make such signs and codes—passport photos, archives, etc.—disappear for a second time in an artistic representation.

VII. People and Place

Works in the last section of this exhibition respond to drastic changes in China's contemporary environment—the vanishing of traditional landscapes and lifestyles, the rise of postmodern cities and new urban cultures, and the large-scale migration of populations. Underlying these interests is a generational shift in experimental art: a majority of the

artists featured in this section started their careers in the 1990s, and have been finally able to bid farewell to the Cultural Revolution and its visual and mental baggage. They can therefore comment on the Cultural Revolution and the June Fourth Movement as events firmly in the past. At the same time, they directly and rigorously interact with China's current transformation. An important aspect of this transformation, one that attracted many artists' attention, was the rapid development of the city. A striking aspect of a major Chinese metropolis like Beijing or Shanghai in the 1990s and early 2000s has been a never-ending destruction and construction. Old houses were coming down everyday to make room for new hotels and shopping malls. Thousands and thousands of people were relocated from the inner city to the outskirts. In theory, demolition and relocation were conditions for the capital's modernization. In actuality, these conditions brought about a growing alienation between the city and its residents: they no longer belonged to one another.

This situation is the context and the content of many works in experimental photography of the 1990s. In 1997 and 1998, Yin Xiuzhen was busily collecting, as she had said, "traces of a vanishing present" along the construction site of the Grand Avenue of Peace and Well-being (Ping'an Dadao), an enormous project funded collectively by the Chinese government and individual investors with a total budget of 350 million dollars. Envisioned as the second largest east-west road across central Beijing, the avenue took up a broad strip of land, some 30 meters wide and 7, 000 meters long, in the most populated section of an overcrowded city. Yin Xiuzhen collected two kinds of materials: images of the houses (and their residents) before they were demolished and roof tiles of the houses after they were demolished. She then used

these materials for various installations (fig. 26). Bearing black-and-white photos of the demolished houses, the rows of tiles in this installation have an uncanny resemblance to a graveyard. In fact, we may think of this installation in terms of a mass grave, only the "dead" here are places, not people.

But people have indeed "disappeared" during such demolition and dislocation; and this is exactly the subject of RongRong's photographs of Beijing's demolition sites. Devoid of human figures, the half-destroyed houses are occupied by images left on walls, which originally decorated an interior but which has now become the exterior. A pair of dragons probably indicates a former restaurant; a Chinese New Year painting suggests a similarly traditional style. The majority of such "leftover" images are various pin-ups from Marilyn Moroe to Hong Kong fashion models. Torn and even missing a large portion of the composition, these images still exert an their alluring power over the spectator—not only with their seductive figures but also with their seductive spatial illusionism. With an enhanced three-dimensionality and abundant mirrors and painting-within-paintings, they transform a plain wall into a space of fantasy. These works can be viewed together with photographs by Zhang Dali, the most famous graffiti artist in China, who developed a personal dialogue with Beijing through his art (fig. 27). From 1995 to 1998, Zhang Dali sprayed more than 2,000 images of himself – the profile of a shaven head—all over the city, often in half-destroyed, empty houses. He thus transformed these urban ruins into sites of public art, however temporarily. The locations he chose for his performance-photography projects often highlight three kinds of comparisons. The first contracts a demolition site with an official monument. The second contrasts abandoned residential houses with preserved imperial palaces. The third contrasts

destruction with construction: rising from the debris of ruined houses are glimmering high-rises of a monotonous, international style.

Zhang Dali's interest, therefore, lies not simply in representing demolition, but in revealing the different fate of demolished residential houses from buildings that are revered, preserved, and constructed. His photographs thus serve as a bridge from Rong Rong's urban ruin pictures to another popular subject of experimental Chinese photography in the 1990s—representations of the emerging new cityscape, as seen in Yang Yong's representations of southern Chinese cities such as Shenzhen. Li Tianyuan's striking triptych *Tianyuan Space Station* further demonstrates how the new cityscape can reorient an artist's point of view and stimulate his imagination. The middle panel of the triptych represents Li standing in front of a modern glass building in central Beijing. His blurry image conceals his identity and the building's international style omits any local reference—he could be anyone in any city around the world. The right panel is a microscopic detail from the inside of the human body, infinitely enlarged to resemble a cosmic abyss amidst a galactic nebula. The opposite left panel presents the view of a returning gaze from the space—an aerophotograph of Beijing. The white circle on this aerial map indicates where the artist stands in the city, and leads the viewer back to the central panel. Once viewed on earth, however, modern Beijing is again stripped of local features and can be imagined as a space station for its inhabitants. In a very different style, Luo Yongjin's *New Residential Buildings* offers a realistic, cynical view of the new city. Gloomy and depressing, his newly constructed residential buildings appear as abandoned ruins. Significantly, his rejection of the new city as a promised land has guided him back to the tradition of documentary photography, in which

the power of an image must lie in its exploration of truth.

The emerging city attracts experimental photographers not only with its buildings but also with its increasingly heterogeneous population. Hu Jieming's Legends of 1999–2000, for example, registers the artist's fascination with the randomness of urban life. Made of photo transparencies with fragmentary scenes of people and their activities, this installation leads the audience to explore a city by throwing them into a maze. The new Chinese city it represents deliberately rebels against its predecessor. Whereas a traditional Chinese city has the typical, orderly image of a chessboard-like space concealed inside a walled enclosure, the new city is sprawling yet three-dimensional, fast and noisy, chaotic and aggressive. It refuses to stay quiet as a passive object of aesthetic appreciation, but demands our participation to appreciate its vitality.

To Chen Shaoxiong, a member of the avant-garde Big-Tailed Elephant Group in Guangzhou, a heterogeneous city resembles the stage of a plotless tableau; what unites its characters is the place they share. This notion underlies his series of photographs in this exhibition, which are conceived and constructed like a series of puppet theaters within the real cityscape. Images in each photograph belong to two detached layers: in front of a large panoramic scene are cut-out miniatures – passersby, shoppers, and policemen amidst telephone booths, traffic lights, different kinds of vehicles, trees, and anything found along Guangzhou's streets. These images are crowded into a tight space but do not interact. The mass they form is nevertheless a fragmentary, without order, narrative, or a visual focus. In Chen's photo installation in this exhibition, two constructed tableaux of such cityscapes in