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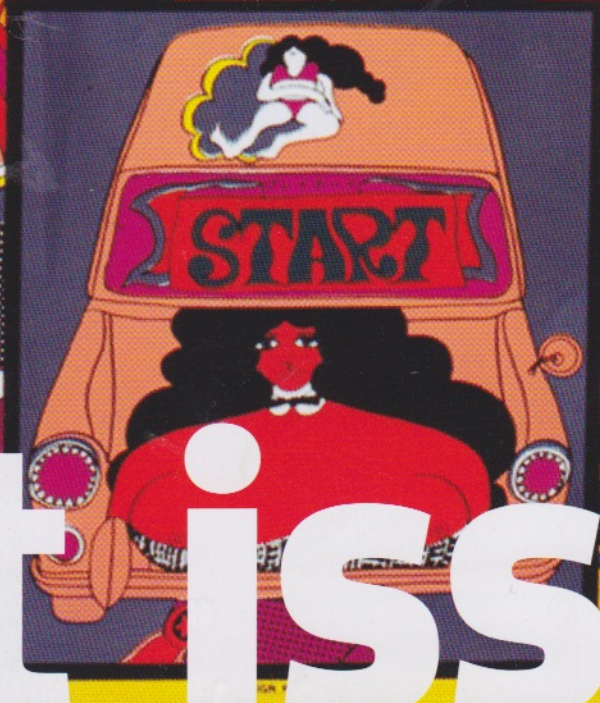
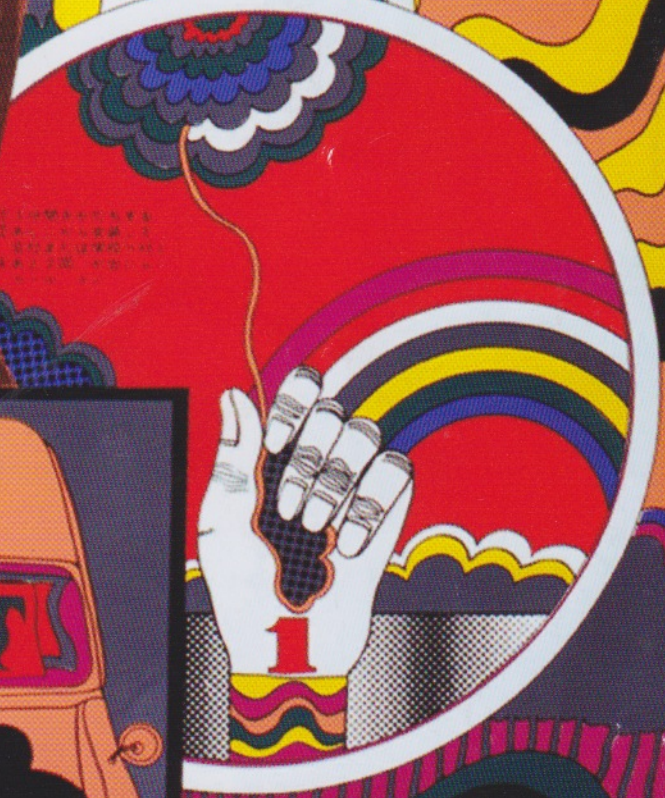
# 48 HOURS

① 2月  
② 回休  
③ 回休  
④ 回休  
⑤ 回休  
⑥ 回休  
⑦ 回休  
⑧ 回休  
⑨ 回休

ルを2000  
でセンを

① 顔を洗ってくる  
② 回休

① みんなにビールをこちそうする  
② スタートへもどる  
③ 夢空ひばりの水鏡の写真をさがして集  
④ ホアイ ペイント 真中にカオをかく



# artissue

# The prism of time

Exhibition traces the beginning of conceptual photography in China, writes **Vanessa Yung**

**NEW FRAMEWORK:  
CHINESE AVANT-GARDE  
PHOTOGRAPHY 1980s-90s**  
Blindspot Gallery

Blindspot Gallery's latest exhibition tells the story of contemporary China - one that is seen through mainland artists who saw the need to have their own independent and critical voice.

Most of these images are raw, revealing and iconic. RongRong, the curator of the group exhibition, is one the 12 photographers showcased who were influential in the evolution of Chinese photography during those two monumental decades that saw rapid and drastic changes sweeping across the mainland. These include Ai Weiwei, Gu Zheng, Han Lei, Hong Lei, Jiang Zhi, Liu Zheng, Mo Yi, Qiu Zhijie Zhang Haier, Zhao Liang and Zheng Guogu.

"In the past, photography was mainly used for political propaganda and for practical purposes. But since the 1980s many self-initiated, independent photographers started using it to express their own thoughts and produced many experimental works," says RongRong, who

was born Lu Zhirong. "The title of the show, 'New Framework', echoes the fact that these works were created beyond the notion of servicing certain officials or institutions. Their works embody the photographers' personal voices and attitude towards society. They are representative because they created a new direction."

The 12 photographers are all considered important photographers. They contributed to the different styles and movements that moved China's photography from the "new documentary" style to more conceptual and experimental works.

But RongRong says that, irrespective of how they have been described, what ties these artists together is that they are all true to their feelings.

"What matters is that they all respect the call of their hearts and express what they feel honestly through their works, even though they all have their own style and approach," he says.

Many of the works were published in *New Photo*, the mainland's first independent conceptual photography magazine that RongRong co-founded with Liu Zheng in the mid-'90s. But for a more comprehensive retrospective, works by



pioneers active since the '80s, including Zhang Haier, Mo Yi, Gu Zheng and Han Lei, have been included.

On show are Han Lei's images of mainland urban life during the '80s, which feature pictures like that of a man balancing two children on two bicycles. These contrast with the ambitious "The Chinese" series Liu Zheng made from 1994 to 2002, which depicted less usual subjects such as transvestites and Shaolin monks. The black-and-white images they both created are a bold portrayal of the Chinese spirit and soul, through which the two then-young photographers also searched for their own identities.

Hong Lei's "Forbidden City" series,



I Would rather die than see  
the clouds passing by.



我寧願死去  
也不能眼看白雲  
流過



Clockwise from far left:  
Ai Weiwei's *Dropping a Han  
Dynasty Urn*; and 1994.6;  
*East Village* by RongRong;  
Hong Lei's *Mirror*; *Miss C* by  
Zhang Haier; *Guangdong*  
by Han Lei.

**Chinese  
photographers don't  
have a home. There are  
many good works, but  
no official venues to  
show them**

**RongRong, artist and  
curator**

which includes images of a dead bird posed in the former imperial palace, is also very representative, as the former painter infuses painting into his photography to give a nostalgic edge. Ai Weiwei's works, including *Dropping a Han Dynasty Urn* (1995) which shows an urn falling from his hands and breaking on the floor, reflect his

rebelliousness and eagerness to challenge old and stubborn values.

RongRong chose his own controversial "East Village" series as it marks his voyage into experimental photography. It's also a movement important in contemporary art history, presented in the form of performances by artists including Zhang Huan and Ma Liuming, who lived in the artist community which was banned by the authorities soon after.

"Although these photographers' voices are weak, they are crucial to reflect current affairs," says RongRong. "Photography still has a very ambiguous status in the mainland. It is not valued nor recognised as art, like ink painting, calligraphy and sculpture. Chinese photographers don't have a home. There are many good works,

but there are no official institutions like museums for us to show them. But it's important, and cannot be omitted, as it records what's happening."

"I'd like to show that we do have good photographers who produce good works with fresh angles and different possibilities. Our work is not homogenous. [That's because] we have this bunch of independent photographers who have been pushing hard to show otherwise."

**Blindspot Annex, 15/F Po Chi Industrial Building, 28 Wong Chuk Hang Road, Wong Chuk Hang. Wed-Sun, 11am-7pm. Inquiries: 2873 3819; Blindspot Gallery, 24-26A Aberdeen Street, Central, Tue-Sat, 11am-7pm. Ends June 22. Inquiries: 2517 6238**