

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**"About My Hometown"
a solo exhibition of Zhang Xiao****16 May - 27 June 2015****Opening Reception: Saturday, 16 May 2015, 4 - 6pm
(Guided tour by artist starts at 4:30pm)**

Venue: Blindspot Gallery (15/F, Po Chai Industrial Building, 28 Wong Chuk Hang Road, Wong Chuk Hang, Hong Kong)

Opening hours: Tuesday to Saturday, 10am to 6pm (Sunday and Monday by appointment only); closed on public holidays

Blindspot Gallery is pleased to present "About My Hometown", the third solo exhibition of Mainland artist Zhang Xiao at Blindspot Gallery, featuring the six latest photography and mixed media series from the artist. Revolving around the theme of "hometown", it highlights Zhang's shifting focus from the portrayal of life in contemporary China in his previous series such as *Coastline* (2009-2013) and *They* (2006-2008) to reflections on his homecoming, and the experiences and presences that surround it in his new works. It also demonstrates the artist's use of a wider range of media in his creative repertoire.



Featuring instant films taken in his home, i.e. Yantai in Shandong province, the black and white photo collage series *Shift* was created through a process of detachment and reassembly that echoes Zhang's relationship with his hometown. In a delicate and time-consuming process, the artist created the instant film emulsion lifts and manually assembled them into works of photo collage. The faint, painting-like images not only mirror the shifting homeland in Zhang's perception, but also hint at the changing landscapes from China's ongoing transformation.

Memories of home life ring in the mixed media series *Home Theater* (2015), which draws on Zhang's recollection of watching TV and films on VHS during his childhood, a symbol of luxury in China in the 1990s. The artist selected six of his favourite films and TV shows from the 1980s-1990s, and made a screen capture of the most notable scene in each film or show for the label for the VHS tape. The film soundtracks are played simultaneously alongside the exhibit, weaving an intricate web of sounds that denote the re-creation of the bygone eras.



The rendition of the past underlines *Eldest Sister* and *Relatives*, and the two series mark a humorous tribute to the once popular practice of “New Photography” in the rural villages of Northern China. Photo editors, whom the artist calls “travelling folk artists of image”, roamed the villages with their notebook computers and created composite portraits for the villagers, like the ones comprising Zhang’s cousin’s face and models’ figures from *Eldest Sister*. In enlarging these old photos into near life-sized portraits, Zhang resurrects the sense of aesthetics, attitudes and even longing of those who inhabited the Yantai of his early years.

Living (2014-15) is a light-hearted portrayal of the reality in today’s China. It features Zhang posing for a photo with presumably the day’s newspaper and imitating those retired elderly who, having moved away from their hometowns where the records of their household registration were made, must provide photographic proof of themselves still living to obtain their pension funds. This work also recalls Zhang’s experiences and memories of working in the media for five years in the past.

From the shifting form of culture and entertainment, the aesthetics of the people about beauty and modernism to the absurdity of national policy, Zhang’s new works come from his personal experience and childhood memory, yet, they are glimpses into an ever-changing country and the lives of its people, which resonate and connect with the wider audience.

The artist will be present at the opening reception. Interviews are welcome and can be arranged.

About Zhang Xiao

Born in 1981 in Yantai city, Shandong province, China, Zhang Xiao graduated from the Department of Architecture and Design at Yantai University in 2005. Before becoming a photography artist in 2009, he was a photojournalist for *Chongqing Morning Post*. Zhang won the Three Shadows Photography Award in 2010 with *They* series. He also received the second Hou Dengke Documentary Photography Award in 2009, The Photography Talent Award (France) in 2010 and the Prix HSBC pour la Photographie in 2011 with his *Coastline* series. Zhang’s work has been widely exhibited in China and overseas in recent years. Zhang currently lives and works in Chengdu city, Sichuan province, China.

About Blindspot Gallery

Blindspot Gallery is set up to bring contemporary photography, an art form that has entered the blind spot of the Hong Kong art scene to a higher degree of visibility. We feature both established and emerging photographers and artists, mainly from the region but also beyond.

For enquiries and media interviews, please contact Ms. Lesley Kwok at 2517 6238 or by email info@blindspotgallery.com

Image captions:

Zhang Xiao, *Eldest Sister in Her Barber Shop*, 2012, Instant film on paper, Image: 17 x 26 cm, Framed: 57 x 42 cm

Zhang Xiao, *Eldest Sister No. 4*, 2014, Archival pigment print or Lightbox, 150 x 100 cm (Edition of 3 + AP) / 90 x 60 cm (Edition of 5 + AP)

(Images courtesy of artist and Blindspot Gallery)