

10 Chancery Lane Gallery

Katie de Tilly
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PRESS RELEASE ATTN ART EDITORS

CHINESE CONCEPTUAL PHOTOGRAPHERS: SHAO YINONG AND MUCHEN SHOWING AT 10 CHANCERY LANE GALLERY November 25, 2005- January 14, 2006

October 25, 2005 Hong Kong—10 Chancery Lane Gallery of Hong Kong is proud to show the works by Conceptual Contemporary photographers, Shao Yinong and Muchen, entitled “Assembly Halls” on November 25, 2005.

The husband and wife team of Shao Yinong and Muchen in the series entitled, Assembly Halls have traveled to the 23 different provinces in Mainland China and photographed in truth and simplicity the very profound leftovers of the cultural revolution, which spanned between 1966 until 1976. The assembly halls are all different, some are old barns, some renovated into restaurants, and still others into sewing factories. The empty halls devoid of life reek with a ghost-like atmosphere of the past at once nostalgically beautiful and at the same time simmering with the historical intensity of one of China’s most turbulent periods. The halls ring with emptiness and it is in this emptiness that your mind is free to wonder and contemplate the collective memory of a nation’s gathering grounds where billions of people were indoctrinated, judged, and humiliated publicly but at the same time a place that later symbolized ceremonial gatherings such as graduations. Although the rooms are vacant there is a feeling that the crowds have either just left or are just about to arrive.

For the artists, the Assembly Halls, represent both a personal and collective memory of their youth as they both lived through the years of the cultural revolution as children, regardless of the fact that Shao Yinong, born in 1961, was caught more in the intensity than Muchen, born in 1970. In the past they also created works inspired by personal themes such as, “Family Register,” a photographic family tree of their own family, and “Childhood Memories,” a pictorial journey of places they remember as children. However, in the Assembly Hall series they were able to withdraw themselves from their

direct experience and they succeed in creating a series of work that allows the viewers space to create their own narratives.

In describing the Assembly Halls, they are all taken in the same way from the back of the room looking at the front of the stage from the center of the hall all at the same level taken with only natural light or ceiling light. They are empty. A wide angle camera is used. The time of day is different in the different halls. Small towns vs. big towns. Farms vs. urban environments. Red is evident throughout the series. From the cameraman's eye there is a repeated series of rectangles bordering the images from the outer walls to the frame of the supporting beams leading eventually to the stage drawing your eye into the center of the room. The rectangles are further supported by a triangular rooftop reminiscent of a Chinese peasant hat. The geometry gives depth to the photographs. Additionally the balance and strength of the images are pulled together by pairs of objects that further give strength and solidity to the space and their purpose.

Shao Yinong and Muchen have exhibited extensively worldwide (see resume) and *Art in America* quoted with regard to their works for the Shanghai Biennale '04, "Interestingly, the series confronted, on the opposite wall of a long corridor-like gallery giant sharp-focus prints of Shao Yinong and Mu Chen's recent studies of Cultural Revolution assembly halls, most of the interiors now in crumbling disuse or converted for commercial purposes. At once precise and lush, historio-politically nuanced and complex, the series was arguably the best Chinese work, regardless of medium, in the entire 2004 Shanghai Biennale." – Richard Vine, *Art in America*, February 2005

For more information and interviews, contact Katie de Tilly or Cleo Lam at 2810-0065. The artists will be in Hong Kong for the opening reception on November 25, 2005 from 6-9 pm.

**10 Chancery Lane Gallery
Katie de Tilly Contemporary Artists
Exhibition of Shao Yinong and Muchen,
Assembly Halls
November 25, 2005
Cocktail Reception 6-9pm**