

Rising Dragon: Contemporary Chinese Photography

At the Katonah Museum of Art

March 25 – September 2, 2012

Dear Teachers,

We have entered the Chinese year of the Dragon, an exciting and auspicious time believed to bring good fortune and power. The rising dragon also symbolizes the ascendance of China as a global economic power. At the Katonah Museum of Art, your students will be surrounded by the photographic images of more than 35 artists who examine the rising dragon that is China. They will compare and contrast documentary photographs with staged and manipulated images, learn about composition and point of view in making a strong photo, and discuss how artists have portrayed both the past and the present in China. In the Learning Center, the art of Grace Lin is on display. Lin's charming picture books explore Chinese cultural traditions with bright, bold colors and designs. And, in the Project Gallery we have the surprising calligraphic work of Xu Bing.

Our tours are tailored to the needs of your group. To help prepare students, we have provided the following materials. Please share the materials that are appropriate with all classroom teachers whose students will be visiting the exhibition. All material can be downloaded from our website www.katonahmuseum.org under "Teacher Resources."

- Two Maps of China
- Three images from the exhibition for discussion with your students
- Pre-visit activities: *China, Changing Fast* and *The Portrait*
- Pronunciation of Chinese names
- A Glossary of Terms
- About Grace Lin
- Name Tag Sheet – Please have each student arrive wearing a name tag with his/her first name clearly written. You can use your own nametags or the enclosed sheet.

Before you visit, ask your students what they know about China and Chinese traditions. Have they seen pictures of China? Do they know how big it is, what the landscape looks like, how many cities there are? Have they eaten Chinese food or participated in any Chinese festivals? This will make a good platform from which to explore the works of the artists.

At the Museum, tours are designed to engage students in active discussion, support core curriculum connections, and foster a greater appreciation and understanding of both traditional and contemporary Chinese art. Our hands-on art activity allows students to express their understanding in a unique visual language. The KMA Education department welcomes collaborative planning for class visits to ensure the value, relevance, and enjoyment of your students. Let us know how you will be using your visit so that we may best serve you. Please call 914-232-9555, ext. 2985 to discuss the specifics of your tour.

Karen R. Stein
Director of Education
Katonah Museum of Art



UPCOMING PROGRAMS TO NOTE ON YOUR CALENDAR:

- **EDUCATORS' PREVIEW: 2012-2013 Exhibitions**
Tuesday, May 22, 2012, 4-6pm. Free
What could the KMA possibly have in common with the movie Ice Age? The answer is Blue Sky Studios whose amazing work will be on display in the fall of 2012. From initial sketches to character development and full-blown animation, the exhibition Ice Age to the Digital Age: The 3D Animation of Blue Sky Studios (September 16, 2012-January 20, 2013) follows the movie-making process for a number of Blue Sky Studios' well-known animated movies. The exhibition is sure to be popular with students of all ages. In addition, get a first glance at the Spring exhibition, **Bed, Body, And Beyond: The American Quilt Evolution** (February 24-June 16, 2013), which will showcase the work of North American quilters working from the beginning of the 19th century to the present, exploring how quilts have evolved in their form, fashion, and function. Our Educators' Preview will provide teachers an opportunity to plan for their visits in the fall.
RSVP: 914-232-9555, ext. 0 or ewilliams@katonahmuseum.org
- **THE ART OF CHINESE CALLIGRAPHY (FOR ADULTS)**
Monday, April 2, 10:00am - 3:00pm. \$60 members/\$75 non-members, materials included
Chinese culture is steeped in the history of writing, and for two thousand years the tools used to write calligraphy have not changed. This one-day workshop introduces the ancient art of brush writing. Participants will learn basic strokes and techniques, as well as the history, scripts, styles, and aesthetics of traditional Chinese calligraphy.
RSVP: 914-232-9555, ext. 0
- **CHINESE CULTURE FAMILY DAY**
Sunday, April 11 1:00 - 4:00pm
A day of fun activities introduces families to fascinating aspects of traditional Chinese culture.



Asia



CHINA

CHINA IN RELATION TO THE USA
China's population (Nov.2010) 1,339,724,852 or 19% of world
USA's population (Feb.2012) 313,014,000 or 4.5% of world

(The USA is outlined. China is filled in.)



WHAT GOES ON IN CHINA?



Many of the artists in *Rising Dragon* take pictures of the changes happening in China.

Study the map.

What can you tell about industry in China?

How does the East compare with the West of the country? How about North vs. South?

LOOKING AT A PHOTOGRAPH

Take a minute to look carefully at Li Wei's photograph *Live at a High Place #6, Beijing*.

Look at different aspects of it. Use your glossary as you analyze this amazing picture:

Focal Point: What is the center of interest in this picture?

Spatial relationships: What is around the focal point? Where are things in relation to the focal point?

Composition: How is everything arranged on the page?

Perspective: Where do you think the photographer is?

Foreground, Middle ground, Background: Does the photograph have all three elements, or not?

Cropping: The photographer chose to crop the image close to the figures. Describe the visual impact of his choice.

Balance: Is this picture balanced or not? What makes it that way? How does it make you feel?

Scale: How big are the people in relation to the surrounding? How does that make you feel?

Focus: Is everything in focus?

Vertical & Horizontal Elements: Most pictures feature some things that are vertical and some that are horizontal. Is that true for this picture? How is this picture different?

Now that you have analyzed this photograph, it's time to take a step back to look at it as a whole.

What feeling does this picture give you?

What do you think the artist is trying to make us think about?

Li Wei is an artist who creates performances that are photographed. For these performances, Li is often the main character. He is always the screen writer, casting director, special effects and stunt coordinator, producer and director - - all in one. Li does not take the photograph himself, but works with a known photographer to carefully work out camera angles and calculate the risk factor. Cranes hoist Li Wei and others into a scene, and ropes or wires hold performers up. The final photograph is computer generated, where Li carefully removes the evidence of ropes and scaffolding. Extreme care and attention is paid to the angle of the light and the shadows. The results are dynamic and astounding.

Gravity is the constant and riveting element in Li Wei's photographs. It reflects his feelings about the modernization that is taking place so quickly in China. In these times, it is hard to know what is real. Li's images express not only the heady dislocations of today's China, but the powers of the mind to create its own realities regardless of the facts.



093-01. <<生活在高处6>>, "Live at the high place 6", 2008.10.09, Beijing, 176x176cm

Li Wei
Live at a High Place #6, Beijing, 2008
C-print
39 3/8 x 39 3/8 inches

THE DOCUMENTARY PHOTOGRAPH

Photographs that capture ordinary life are called documentary photographs.

Do you have any documentary photos in your home?

What do your pictures show?

Take a look at Zhang Xiao's photograph *Three Gorges No. 1*:

What could you tell someone about this place?

How is it different from where you live?

Is it quiet or noisy here?

What do you think it smells like?

What sort of clothing do people wear here?

Zhang Xiao works as a documentary photographer in his job as a photojournalist and for his art. He takes pictures of ordinary life in towns and cities throughout China, recording the great changes taking place every day. *Three Gorges No. 1* is part of a series of photographs called *Three Gorges*. The city of Chongqing is located at the head of the Three Gorges dam and is an economic center for the upper reaches of the Yangtze River. Zhang says that "Chongqing has become one of the most representative cities in the process of the development of modernization of China."

Can you imagine what changes will happen next in Chongqing?



ZHANG XIAO
Three Gorges No. 1, from the “Three Gorges” series, 2008
Digital Chromogenic Print
31 ½ x 39 ½ inches
Courtesy of the artist

CHINESE TRADITIONS

The artists in our exhibitions have thought about how ancient traditions fit into modern life. The picture books of Grace Lin show us the many interesting traditions that Chinese and Chinese-Americans participate in.

Take a look at Grace Lin's beautiful painting:

What do you think is going on?

How many activities can you count? (Look carefully!)

Does this remind you of any traditional events that you participate in? (How about the Fourth of July?)

What is unusual about this festival? What is familiar to you?

Would you like to join in? What is the first thing you would do if you were in this scene?

This is a picture of the Moon Festival. It is a thanksgiving holiday celebrated in the Fall. The holiday began as a harvest festival that marked the time when farmers had finished gathering their crops. Now it is celebrated as a time to give thanks for a good year. The traditions of this festival center around the moon. On the night of the festival, the moon is bright and full in the sky. The roundness of the moon symbolizes harmony and the wholeness of the family. Families pay homage to the moon by eating mooncakes and moon-shaped fruits. Children are allowed to stay up late and parade with lanterns in the moonlight. Adults sometimes read or recite moon-inspired poems. And everyone sends a secret wish up to the moon with the hope that Chang-O, the moon goddess, will grant it.

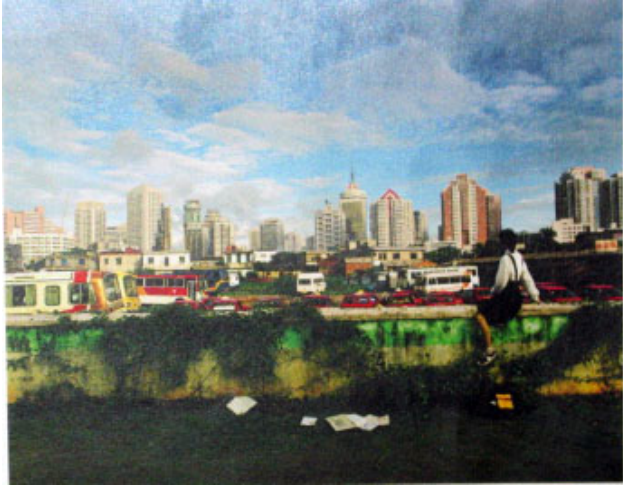


“...this night of the Mid-Autumn Moon Festival.”
From **Thanking the Moon** © 2010, Alfred A. Knopf
Written and illustrated by Grace Lin
Gouache
8.75 x 20.5 inches

CHINA: CHANGING FAST

Many of the artists in our exhibition think about how quickly their country is changing. Weng Fen decided to record the changes in his hometown city of Haikou over a period of 10 years. The girl in the picture seems to be like us – watching what happens.

Look carefully at the photographs:



WENG FEN, *Sitting on the Wall Series*, 2001



2005



2010

What changes do you see between 2001 and 2005?

What changes happen between 2005 and 2010?

Find something that stays the same:

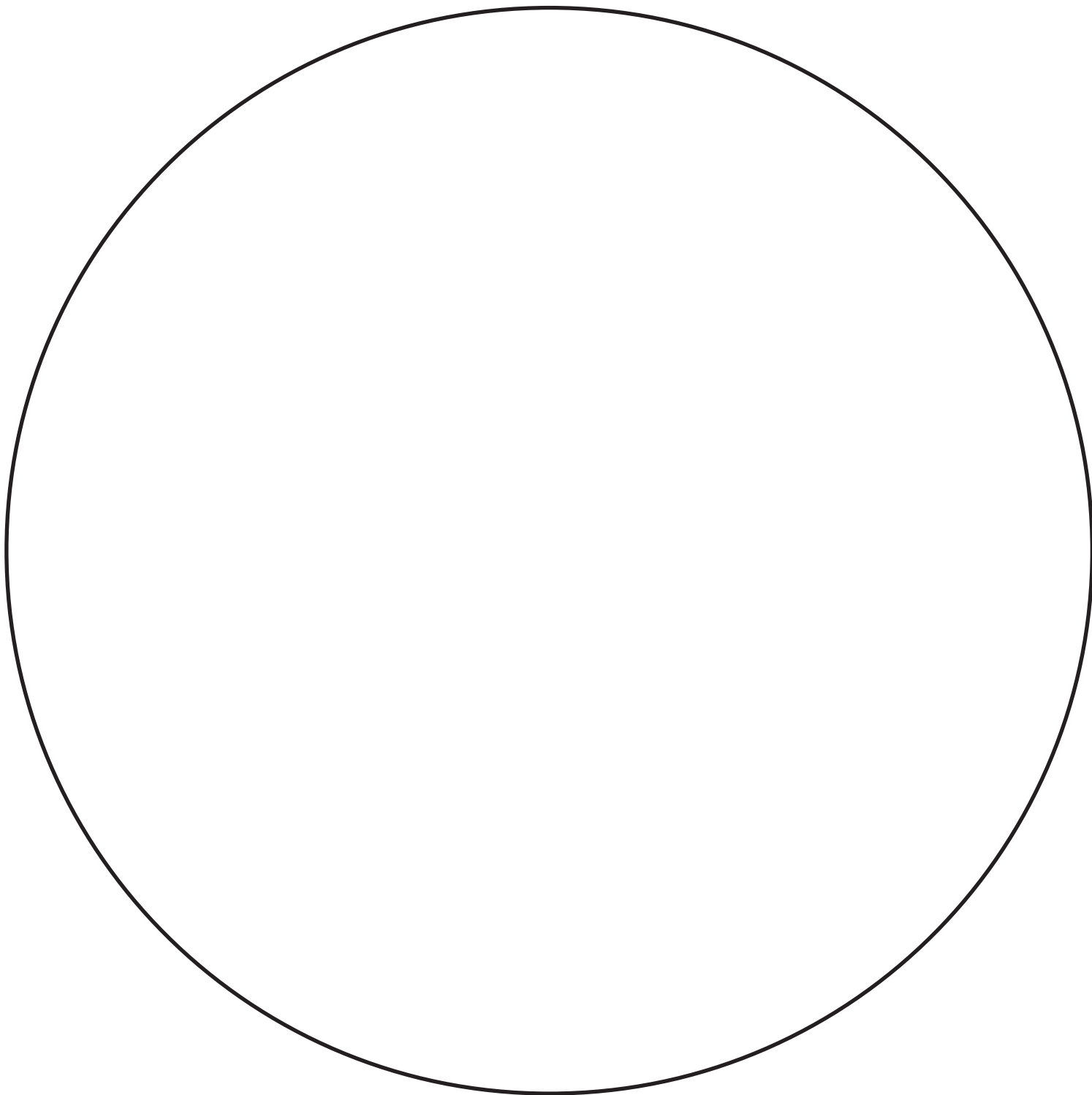
THE PORTRAIT

In an ongoing photographic project *Future*, the artist Weng Fen honors the brightest young girls from high schools in different cities throughout China. He photographs one girl from each city, in profile, with her city as the background.

In the space below draw yourself or a friend. For the background draw in the neighborhood, city, or town where you or your friend lives.



WENG FEN
Future – Beijing, from the series *Future*, 2009



RISING DRAGON: CONTEMPORARY CHINESE PHOTOGRAPHERS

Chinese Names

Nobody likes it when his/her name is pronounced wrong. But, Chinese names are hard for Americans to figure out. Here is a list of the artists in our exhibition with the phonetic pronunciation. Try a few of them out loud.

Adou	(Ah –Doe)	Rong Rong	(rONG- rONG)
Cao Fei	(Chow –Fay)	Sun Ji	(sON Gee)
Chen Qiulin	(Chen – Chow Ling)	Tamen	(Ta Men)
Chen Wei	(Chen- Way)	Tian Taiquan	(TEA-EN – TIE – CHEW-on)
Huang Yan	(WHO-Juan- Yen)	Wang Jin	(Weng- Jin)
Jiang Pengyi	(John – Pen-EE)	Wang Qing Song	(WONG- CHANG- SONG)
Lai Shengyu	(Li SuNG-YOU)	Wang Wusheng	(WONG- WOO-SHANG)
Li Lang	(Lee- LONG)	Weng Fen	(wANG- fEN)
Li Wei	(Lee-Way)	Xu Zen	(SHU- Jen)
Liu Ren	(Lee-U- Ren)	Yang Xiaogang	(Y-ANG –TSCHOU-gANG)
Liu Zheng	(Lee-U – Jeng)	Yang Yi	(YONG YEE)
Liyu +Liubo	(LEE-U + LEE-u-Bow)	Yao Lu	(yOW- LU) OW= when you're hurt
Lu Guang	(Lou-Gwan)	Yu Haibo	(E- wu – Hi-bow)
Lu Hao	(Lou-HOW)	Zhang Huang	(John- WHEN)
Ma Liang	(Ma – Lang)	Zhang Lijie	(John – Lee-jay)
Maleonn	(MAH – lee- OWN)	Zhang Xiao	(John- SH-OW) OW
Muge	(Moo –Ga) (quick)	Zhou Hai	(j-OW – HI) OW = when you're hurt
O Zhang	(O – ZhANG)		
Peng Rong	(pen WRONG)		
Qiu Zhijie	(CHEW-jEW-jAy)		

RISING DRAGON GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Photography Terms:

Here are some terms used when talking about photographs

Documentary – a photograph of a person, place or thing used as a record of an historical event

Manipulated – a photograph that has been altered in any way after the photograph was taken

Landscape – a photograph of a natural setting, such as mountains, a lake, or a prairie

Urban Landscape – a photograph of an industrial setting such as a factory or a city

Portrait – a photograph taken of a person

Interior Scene – a photograph taken inside

Exterior Scene – a photograph taken outside

Composition & Spatial relationships – how the objects in the photograph are arranged

Focal Point – a place in a photograph that your eye is drawn to, usually an important area made to stand out

Perspective – the appearance of 3-dimensional depth in a flat picture

Scale – the size of objects in comparison to other objects in the same photograph

Focus – the area of a photograph that looks sharp, not blurry

Cropping – purposely cutting off part of an image from the final photograph

Balance – the same amount of things on all sides of the photograph like objects, shapes, colors, etc.

Value – the range of gray tones in a black and white photograph

Color Value – the range of shades of a color in a photograph

Vertical/Horizontal Elements –elements that go along an invisible line, either up and down or across the page

Foreground – the area of a photograph closest to where the photographer was when the picture was taken

Middle Ground – the area of a photograph that is between the foreground and the background

Background – the area of a photograph farthest away from the photographer when the picture was taken

Thematic Terms:

Artists in this exhibition think about a lot of different things that affect their work. Below are a few themes.

Identity – how you see and describe yourself. “I am ...”

Urbanization – the process of changing into a city

Consumerism – the purchase of more and more things

Propaganda – a message that is meant to convince you of an idea

Memory – the things we remember

Displacement – being taken out of your usual or proper place

GRACE LIN

Grace Lin grew up in upstate New York with her parents and two sisters. While her sisters studied and became scientists, Grace dreamed of being a world champion ice skater. She didn't quite make it to skating stardom, but the drawings she did of herself twirling on the ice showed much promise and art quickly became her new career focus.



After majoring in illustration at the Rhode Island School of Design, Grace set out to achieve her goal of creating children's books. She remembered as a child that there were very few books about Asian Americans and she longed to read about a person like herself. She has written and illustrated eleven picture books, illustrated ten others, written four novels, one early reader, and has three new books coming out soon.

Grace Lin's books have received many awards. Critics praise her bold illustrations, which have been called "jelly-bean-colored." Grace says that her repeated use of the "swirl" pattern is inspired by Van Gogh's *Starry Night* and also symbolizes the "endless circle" in Chinese culture. Her style is not showy or dramatic, but her attention to detail and use of intricate patterns make the illustrations beautiful and engaging.

Nametag Activity Sheet

RISING DRAGON: CONTEMPORARY CHINESE PHOTOGRAPHY

On your visit to the Katonah Museum of Art you will see amazing photographs taken by artists living in China today.

Use the outline below to create a nametag to wear on your visit. Please make sure your name is clearly written.

