

Press Release

May 8, 2017

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Guo Guozhu: Urbanization

On view: May 11 – July 18, 2017

<http://www.wmingart.com/exhibitions/guo-guozhu-urbanization>



Guo Guozhu (b. 1982)

Lingering Garden 流園 No.2 122°82'E 30°72'N, 2015

315 gsm | Hahnemühle Photo Rag Baryta

31 x 39 inches (78 x 100 cm)

Edition: 8

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Between 2005 and 2009, China disbanded over 7000 village committees each year. Rapid urbanization resulted in the disappearance of 20 villages everyday on a land once thriving on agriculture. – China Statistical Abstract 2010

W. Ming Art is pleased to present *Guo Guozhu: Urbanization*, a solo exhibition organized by Siqiao Lu. The exhibition is on view from May 11th to July 18th, 2017.

This exhibition showcases three groups of photographs from *Guo's Urbanization* series (2013-2017), a research-driven documentation of vanishing villages along with the process of rapid modernization in Southeast China. Guo's 143 photographs, which make up three chapters of the current investigation – *Lingering Garden* (2015-present), *The Entrance Hall* (2013), and *Relics of a Village* (2013) – capture the transfigured landscapes, deserted interior spaces and unwanted personal belongings in villages that had been relocated. His photographs, which share formal characteristics with images made for taxonomic classification, examine systematically the aesthetic of ruins within contemporary context.

Urbanization in Asia captivated a number of western photographers in the past two decades-- works by Peter Bialobrzeski, Ambroise Tézénas, Sze Tsung Leong and others represent the sublimity of concurrent massive destructions and constructions occurring in Asian metropolises. Beyond the constant surfacing of buildings and debris left from their demolition, this spectacular urban development in Asia has another alarming side— the steady growth of modern infrastructures has led to large outflows of resource and population in rural areas. Focusing on the opposite effects of the “urban boom”, Guo states that, “when attempting to document the process of urbanization, I try to imply the struggles outside of the picture: for Chinese culture, which is built upon the prosperity of agriculture—traditional communities organized around families are engaged in a historical combat with industrialization and globalization.”

Guo Guozhu noticed the phenomenon of vanishing villages when he migrated to the city of Xiamen from his native village Yongchun in Fujian province. While researching for two magazine editorials on social issues concerning rural areas in Shaoxing, Zhejiang in 2012, he became increasingly preoccupied with the city-village dichotomy. In the following year, Guo set out to compile records of deserted villages. His investigative documentation raises concern about the collapse of agricultural community, while still remains optimistic for possible rejuvenation of the uninhabited homeland.

Lingering Garden portrays deserted villages as a kind of modern ruins that has fascinated photographers since the invention of the medium. Since the starting of this series in 2015, the ongoing project has presented 69 documents in the format of photograph. Capturing an estranged place, Guo imagines a world where human beings cease to exist. To further explore the nature of time and perception, he marks the places photographed with their objective

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locations within the geographic coordinate system, rather than their names known to the villagers for centuries. In effect, Guo reduces places full of individual memories into scientific records, or, transforms them into no man's lands that are given back to the hands of nature.

For the project *The Entrance Hall*, Guo photographs the standard architectural structure of different residential complexes repeatedly, almost in an obsessively formalist manner, and this project results in 38 photographs. In rural China, the entrance hall is not only an important place for hanging pictures, receiving guests, and hosting family celebrations, but also a vital site for reinforcing family hierarchy, and maintaining contact with acquaintances. The depiction of numerous entrance halls reconstructs the typical Chinese lifestyle, and to a certain degree, preserves the past as a specimen of a single cell, in complete isolation, resistant to the passage of time.



Guo Guozhu (B.1982)

The Entrance Hall 堂前间 No. 22, 2013

315 gsm | Hahnemühle Photo Rag Baryta

31 x 39 inches (78 x 100 cm)

Edition: 5

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In *Relics of A Village*, a series containing 36 photographs in total, Guo turns found items into ephemeral and fragile installations in the alienated setting of family ancestral homes. Images of fallen stacks of tableware, scattered ID photos, and other objects standing in solitude, provide a glimpse into parts of the inhabitant's inner psychology, traditions, rituals, and religious beliefs. There is no denying that some of these objects were rearranged. Such stage-like settings undoubtedly channel the theatricality of the everyday life.



Guo Guozhu (B.1982), *Relics of a Village Series*, 2013, 315 gsm | Hahnemühle Photo Rag Baryta, each: 15 3/4 x 15 3/4 inches (40 x 40 cm), edition: 8

Guo Guozhu

Guo was born in Yongchun, Fujian province, in 1982. He graduated from the Department of Mechanics at Nanchang Hangkong University in 2005. In 2002, he started working on the narratives concerning the “space” and social relationships constructed around such space. Guo takes “space” as both his primary subject and medium. When he attempts to depict or use a space, he tends to generate a series of questions, which emerge from personal inquiries and end up examining social phenomena.

Guo’s work was exhibited in many photo festivals and museums, such as: Pingyao International Photography Festival, Pingyao, China (2009); China-Holland Contemporary Arts Exhibition, Xiamen, China (2010); The Second Beijing Photo Biennial, CAFA Museum, Beijing, China (2015); Jimei × Arles International Photo Festival, Xiamen, China (2015); Photography New Academy Exhibition of China Academy of Art, CAA Art Museums, Hangzhou, China (2015) and so on. He was selected as one of the TOP20 China Cutting-edge Contemporary Photographer, 2015. He was listed in The Three Shadows Photo Award & New Talent Award, 2016.

He currently lives and works in Xiamen, Fujian.

W.Ming Art

W. Ming Art is a private art advisory and consulting company founded in 2010 by Xiaoming Zhang. W. Ming represents artists for exhibitions and sales, and provides private sales and art advisory services for private and institutional clients globally. W. Ming has professional team members in Europe, America, and Asia; the company specializes in modern and contemporary art, especially in the field of Asian modern and contemporary works. W. Ming has two office spaces, one in Beijing and the other in New York.

Press Inquiries: Siqiao Lu : +1 412 315 4289, siqiao.lu@wmingart.com

Sales inquire: Xiaoming Zhang: +1 917 535 6286, xiaoming.zhang@wmingart.com