

For Immediate Release

HAI ZHANG: *Aged Innocence*

September 17 – November 20, 2021



MIYAKO YOSHINAGA is pleased to present a solo exhibition by a New York-based artist **Hai Zhang** entitled *Aged Innocence* from **September 17 to November 20, 2021**. This is Zhang's second solo exhibition at the gallery. A reception (in-person) for the artist will be held on Friday, September 17, 6-8PM. Gallery hours are from Wednesday to Saturday 11AM-6PM.

Between 2013 and 2017, Zhang frequently returned to his homeland China on his job assignment as a photographer. By then, the economic prosperity in the big cities was visibly affecting the lives in small towns and remote areas. The unprecedented changes before his eyes as a cultural insider urged him to capture tens of thousands of black-and-white images that exemplify the historically and culturally complex locales and their inhabitants. The exhibition features a selection from this massive photo archive in the format of small prints and large collages.

Zhang's framework for *Aged Innocence* demonstrates abundant cultural - references while remaining true to his personal viewpoints. There are, for example, a pastoral scene of a horse on a riverbank in Zhengzhou and a glimpse of a cemented waterfront in Wuhan. These humble contemporary scenes represent the essential presences of the Yellow River and the Yangtze River respectively, the origins of the great civilizations that continue to draw inspiration for Chinese culture. The ethnic hegemony of Han is challenged by the gaze of a Hui minority boy Zhang met in a Xi'an mosque. Further upstream from the Yellow River, Zhang visited the city of Baotou in Inner Mongolia where he captured the explosive steam smoke emitted by one of its steel mills, a lifeline industry for the region's population. In Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, Zhang caught a group of teenagers playing in an out-of-season winery, a behind-the-scenes glimpse of the nation's thriving wine industry. His vernacular lens empathically illuminates each small corner of this vast country.



(continue to back)

(continue from front)

Zhang left China at the age of 24 to study architecture in the U.S. where he was later naturalized and raised his family. Zhang's goal to collect, preserve, sort, and reconfigure images makes his work distinctive. Juxtaposing, layering, isolating, and grouping images generates intriguing cinematic narratives which serve to shed light on the aging of his subjects as well as the aging of his own memories about them.

Zhang states: "Every time I return to China, I become increasingly aware of the passage of time between visits and my inability to keep pace with the country. It has become a human impulse to collect the images like souvenirs as a reminder of the experience. Yet the documentary images serve as a perfect metaphor for the fragmentary nature of memory and the desire to take ownership of it."



The exhibition also introduces his recent project, *The Beginning*, in our adjunct space. From March 2018, Zhang took one roll of 35mm color film every day in the streets of Harlem and the Bronx in order to better understand the unknown neighbors of his home in Morningside Heights. As in his Chinese projects, the portraits of children, workers, marketgoers, a barbershop, a street musician, etc. remind us of the universal qualities of human life beyond their different realities. What fascinates Zhang is the "changing, vanishing, yet stubbornly lasting parts of the society," referring to gentrification and how residents adapt or resist. Zhang wants his images to invite vigorous conversations and interpretations.

Born in 1976 in Kunming, China, **Hai Zhang** lives and works in New York City. Since relocating to the U.S. in 2000, he has resided in Alabama, Miami, Washington, DC, and New York. He has exhibited in North America, Asia, and Europe. Travels extensively throughout China resulted in three projects he called his Chinese Trilogy: "Don't Follow Me, I'm Lost" "Unintended Homecoming" and "Aged Innocence." His work from the series *the eye is not satisfied with seeing* and *To Kill A Mockingbird* are in the permanent collection of The Library of Congress, Washington D.C..



For the *Aged Innocence* project, the artist would like to acknowledge the valuable advice and support of Elizabeth Breiner, an independent curator/writer based in the U.K. and formerly in the U.S..

For more information and works by Hai Zhang, please contact info@miyakoyoshinaga.com and/or +212 268 7132