

百变上海 A CHANGING SHANGHAI

徐喜先, 徐建荣 | 上海人民美术出版社 | XU XIXIAN, XU JIANRONG | SHANGHAI PEOPLE'S FINE ARTS PUBLISHING HOUSE

百变上海 A CHANGING SHANGHAI

一位普通市民数十年的影像志 THROUGH THE CAMERA LENS OF AN ORDINARY CITIZEN

徐喜先, 徐建荣 | 上海人民美术出版社 | XU XIXIAN, XU JIANRONG | SHANGHAI PEOPLE'S FINE ARTS PUBLISHING HOUSE

图书在版编目(CIP)数据

百变上海 / 徐喜先, 徐建荣摄. — 上海: 上海人民美术出版社, 2004.10 (重印)

ISBN 7-5322-2211-X

I. 百... II. ①徐...②徐... III. 上海市—概况—摄影集 IV. K925.1-64

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字 (2004) 第 033341 号

百变上海

摄影: 徐喜先 徐建荣

责任编辑: 张 翠

出版发行: 上海人民美术出版社

(上海市长乐路 672 弄 33 号)

经销: 全国新华书店

印刷: 上海中华印刷有限公司

开本: 640 × 860 1/16 印张 14.5

版次: 2004 年 5 月第 1 版

印次: 2004 年 10 月第 2 次印刷

印数: 3001-6000

书号: ISBN 7-5322-2211-X/J · 2091

定价: 68.00 元

见证时间

姜 纬

50年前的徐喜先无论如何也想不到他在日后所拍的照片会是一份无比珍贵的影像文献。上世纪40年代初，徐喜先出生于上海，父亲是个奉帮裁缝，早年曾在现在淮海路附近的洋服店学生意。徐喜先有4个妹妹1个弟弟，生活的艰辛使他从小感到了长子的责任。那年他13岁，有一次到江湾给弟弟买药，当时的江湾还是一片荒野，阳光照着杨柳树，气韵氤氲，他回忆道：“弟弟得了顽症，父母心里焦急，我心里也不好过，所以这一天我所见到的大自然的阔大美景给我非常深的印象，我的心灵好像被撞击了一样，郁闷不畅的心情好过多了，我始终无法忘却这一刻。”

前程的茫然、住房的逼仄、亲人的病痛、生活的不易、诗文的熏陶，户外田野的风光景物给予他最为暖心的抚慰。他利用空闲时间到江湾大场一带采蘑菇、采木耳，除了改善自家的伙食，还能到市场上出售，他还记得前后共计约有一千多元的进账，这在当时是个很大的数目，大自然为他和他的家庭奉献了精神和物质两方面的硕果。

徐喜先决意为如此亲近可人的自然景物做一些记录，他想到了作画写生，但一段时间下来，觉得不行，一来是没受过专门训练，力不从心，二来是时间太慢，跟不上四时变化的节奏。最好是拍照，尽管他心里明白：拍照虽好，花费却着实不少，白相照相机可不是一般人家所能想的，但这个念想一旦出现，却总也挥之不去，可以讲一直耿耿于怀。到了1962年，徐喜先参加工作了，在虹口区粮食局吴淞粮管所票证组上班，他发现他所钟爱的田野风光已经开始遭受人为的毁蚀，那时兴起的“土地平整”运动加速了郊县自然景物的消亡，他很着急。1965年他第一次买了台二手德国产相机，花了60元，差不多半年薪水的积余，从此徐喜先开始了他的记录之旅。这台相机没有跟随他多久，那时吃饱穿暖日常生计成为压倒性的主题，于是又被卖掉，如此买卖相机

多次。文革期间，徐喜先是个“逍遥派”，平素里喜欢吟诗拍照，早被“革命群众”铆牢，他恐怕这些照片会给家庭带来祸害，一把火把照片和书籍烧掉。但树欲静而风不止，1969年他到基层粮店工作，刚结婚生子不久，终因一首打油诗得罪造反派头头，被遣送至长兴岛劳动改造，一年之后回家。莫名获罪，莫名开释，始终没有交代明确的“罪名”。徐喜先对这一打击如今已能淡然谈及，印象最深莫过于冬日冰天雪地挖河挑泥。徐喜先回粮店里继续做营业员，毕竟是肚皮里有点墨水的聪明人，70年代中期改行做了机修工，搞技术革新，自动售米机数他做得最好，外地单位还专门来学习取经。一次因劳累过度，从家里的梯子上摔下来，轻度脑震荡的后遗症造成他左眼视神经萎缩，但这并不能阻断他从小存在脑海中对自然景观立此存照的冲动。到了1978年，他又活动开了心思，买了一台很普通的二手相机，总想要留住感动过他的良辰美景，这动机如此朴素、纯粹、强烈，以至于值得用毕生的精力去践行。

一段时间过后，从郊县风光延伸到市区景物，摄取的东西越来越多，徐喜先觉得该有个计划，有个安排，大上海太大了，他发现在上海生活了这么多年，还是有许多地方没去过，于是在河南路延安路口测绘局门市部15元买了地图册，当时买这本册子还要凭单位介绍信。这本册子保存至今，上面非常详细地标明了上海地区各区各县各乡各镇的交通、景点以及历史背景，为他制定计划提供了方便。他往往会事先画好行走拍照的线路图，在拍摄过程中怕日后记不清日期和发生的情况，还相应做了笔记，而整个80年代，买进卖出照相器材的情况还是频繁发生着，这也从另一侧面印证了徐喜先艰难困苦的生活和坚持不懈的努力。

就这样，到上世纪末，徐喜先拍摄了两万余张涉及上海城镇面貌、乡村风光、建筑道路、江河水系、百姓生活方方面面的黑白照片，足迹踏遍上海各个角落，行程三万余公里，相关文字记录五十余万字，其中的甜酸苦辣和坚毅执着历历在目。他为这些耗费了巨大的精力和物力，他曾自述：“我们生活中曾经经历的事物，都有可能成为日后魂牵梦萦的记忆，感谢造化使人类发明了摄影术，使我们对逝去的光阴能有真凭实据的留念，否则，只能在梦中苦苦相忆。”

如今徐喜先退休在家，整理着那些伴随他数十年的照片和记录，常常唏嘘不已。他告诉我：在那些外出拍照的日子里，他时常感受到日子过得很快，日子里的变化很大，他镜头中的传统上海经历着不可逆转的没落。在奉贤道院镇，以前街上有十余家茶馆，很热闹，但又很闲适，人们工余饭后在茶馆吃茶，看河流行舟，如今再去，镇上老屋依旧，只剩下一些老人，青壮年都离开了，搬去新的规划区，他和老人们闲话，老人们流泪，徐喜先说等这些老人故去，老镇也就彻底消亡了，这样的情景每天都在上海的郊县发生着，他说起这样的人和物，感慨但无悲怨，只有一丝轻轻的忧郁和遗憾。徐喜先早年一段时间要搭淞沪铁路火车采蘑菇，他还记得50年代末从宝山路到江湾车票是7分钱，到吴淞1角3分，这一条中国历史上最早的商业铁路，到1987年底停止营运，他的镜头记录了这条铁路最后的时光：两旁逐渐蚕食过来的民居，一人高的野草丛，老式蒸汽火车缓缓驶来，而旁边人家一伸手就可以够到车窗，终于荒废了近十年的铁路旧址上如今矗立着轨道交通的高架。在徐喜先的叙述里，还有一些生动有趣的事情，比如淳朴的乡民如何保存传统的生活方式：在奉贤庄行乡潘垫村，有座古桥，原名太平桥，在云水怒、风雷激的时代，“太平”两字显然不合时宜，危急关头，机智的乡民用凿子把凸出来的“太”字中的一点、“平”字中的左右两点凿平，变成了“大干桥”，政治上无比正确，也就保存了一座古桥，听到这里，我禁不住和老人一同开怀大笑。

作为对照，徐喜先拍摄的黑白照片和他儿子拍摄的彩色照片并置在本书里，同一个地点，相同的角度，父与子、传统相机和数码相机、黑白和彩色，戏剧化的场景中，是时间的流逝。

苏珊·桑塔格在其杰出的论述摄影的著述里这样写道：“摄影为世界设立了一种长期的看客关系，它拉平了所有事件的意义。”在一种二元论的世界观中，一边是落后、破败和陈旧，一边是进步、文明和新气象，每当这二者相对而立的时候，它们就同时被取消了本身的质地、血肉，沦为—对相互矛盾、相互斗争的观念，通过这种斗争和矛盾，人们在不知不觉中就完成了一个宏

大的历史叙事，那就是与过去的生活全面决裂。当然也有人讴歌过去，好像过去是他的“精神家园”，但“精神家园”如果不指向任何一段真实时光和真情实意的话，就像酒吧里挂着的一件蓑衣，是一个虚悬的能指，它仅仅喻示着现实生活的空虚无聊。而在我看来，徐喜先父子的照片并置揭示了摄影术的确是消亡的象征，拍照片便是参与进人和事物的易逝以及无常当中去，世间万物在脆弱而不堪一击上是等量齐观的，只有时间才是唯一的、恒久的，才有资格笑到最后。因为这样的“长期”，所以必然“拉平”，这样的并置绝不止于两代人，后之视今，犹如今之视昔，照片见证了白云苍狗，见证了这缓缓降临的浩大的宿命。

同样是桑塔格，她说：“最早的超现实主义照片出现在19世纪50年代，当时的摄影者首次走出室外，逡巡在伦敦、巴黎和纽约的街头，寻找不事修饰的栩栩如生的现实生活的侧影。如今，这些具体、特别、充满常人轶事的照片——一刻刻逝去的时间，消逝的习俗——对我们来说，仿佛要比任何经重叠、曝光不足、曝光过度等手段处理过的抽象和诗意的照片要超现实得多。”我现在越来越坚信：看上去最平实、最传统的，内里往往蕴涵着最大气、最大智的质地和元素，刻意经营时髦的观念和前卫的扮相往往是浅薄、牵强而危险的，伟大的艺术作品似乎是分泌出来而不是被构造出来的。在未来的日子里，会有人这样写道：“中国最早的超现实主义照片出现在20世纪，当时的摄影者走出室外，逡巡在城镇、乡村、战场……”还是时间的缘故，恍如隔世，使得当时确凿无疑的现实衍化成了“超现实”，时间驾驭了现实，洞穿了现实。

当历史和时光的宿命强行覆盖所有人的生活时，总有人试图顽强地、执拗地收藏内心的私语，向往着在极端的限制中争取自由，这是人的基本处境，在这样西西弗式的、艰难局促的处境中，守护、表现着我们不敢正视、力图忘却的图景，被社会、被我们兢兢业业的日常生活和日常经验、被我们的文化齐心协力遮蔽的我们世界的底部，不能因为现在拥有宝马大奔和高尚社区而遗忘曾经的脚踏车、黄鱼车和穷街陋屋，除非那些过去的生活及其片段有尊严和意义，人们现在的生活及其片段才有尊严和意义，因为目前终究要过去，关于它们的意义也只有到过去的岁月中去寻找。

时间的流程中，凡是出现过的，不分先后彼此，在镜头中都有着同等的位置和价值，所以，徐喜先的照片，既结实致密又透亮轻盈，就像一道光照耀着纷纷扬扬的微尘，杂乱无章的世界由此获得短暂但耀目的精确形式和丰满意义，这是关于人的自尊、勇气、内心力量的悲怆故事。

在摄影范畴，我们习惯了精英式的人物和主流媒介替我们选择观看的方式和视野，同时，我们轻快或痛苦地付出了代价：放弃自主的权利。徐喜先不是我们现时约定成俗意义上的“摄影家”——一个在“艺术家神话”中自我娇宠的“天才”，他成为了像蒲松龄一样在勾栏瓦社中向民众收集故事的“闲人”。徐喜先作品的问世标志着一个重大的转向，即摄影话语绝不再是少数专业人士操控的玩意，摄影的价值判断需要民主化的重建，过去的二三十年是上海乃至中国剧变的时代，徐喜先作为一介平民，在与大时代的对话和周旋中暗自微妙地发出自己的声音、在社会历史的记录文本中坚持个人的、独立的、民间的立场，这些令我无比的激动。徐喜先的作品不仅仅是一个传奇，拍照早已成为了徐喜先生命的一部分，照片里的绝大部分场景已不复存在，针对这部分影像严重缺失的事实，他的作品无疑有着不可替代的价值，山一般雄壮而厚重的规模是任何一个后来者——如果立志具体而确切地保存他的时代和生活，就必须面对的标准和高度。近年来，我一直强调摄影的溯源努力，纪实类摄影一直被扭曲为点缀和装饰；在当代艺术浮华背景下，这类摄影又被说成是应该“终结”的，不管何种情形，都没有给予它以应有的生存空间，而在我们身处的时代和环境，这类摄影不仅有充分的理由存在，而且还应该发扬光大，这首先取决于摄影界艰苦卓绝的溯源的努力。当徐喜先按下快门的时候，已回到了摄影的原初理想和本质：拍照的人看到的世界是已经发生、尽人皆知的世界，这世界等待着一个镜头张开让它凝固，从而见证了时间的无情流逝。

Witness to A Changing Era

Jiang Wei

Fifty years ago Xu Xixian could never imagine that his photographs would be a valuable visual record in the years to come. Xu's father was a tailor who started his career as an apprentice in a shop on today's Huaihai Road. Born in Shanghai in the early 1940s, Xu had four younger sisters and a younger brother. As the oldest child, he faced the hardships in earning a livelihood for his family. When he was thirteen years old, he once had to travel to Jiangwan to buy medicine for his sick brother. At that time Jiangwan was still a desolate piece of land, but the sight of willows bathed in the sunlight was refreshing indeed. "My parents and I were worried about the illness of my brother," recalled Xu, "yet the beauty of Nature offered me a welcome relief. The sight was so impressive that it still lingers in my mind."

The future was anything but certain; the room was terribly crowded; the brother was seriously ill—life was not easy for Xu Xixian. But the picturesque scenery in the countryside offered a relief to the string of misfortunes. He started to pick mushrooms and fungi in Jiangwan and Dachang to supplement the diet of his family. He also sold the surplus in the market, and earned over one thousand yuan—a large sum by the standard of its day. Thus Nature provided both material and spiritual nourishment for him.

Xu Xixian decided to make a record of the beautiful scenery, and he thought of making sketches first. But after he tried for some time, he had to give it up, both because drawing requires professional training and because it was too time-consuming. An ideal solution was photographing, but he knew that the expense of a camera would make it impossible. But once the idea emerged, however, he simply could not retreat from it. In 1962, he started his career as a clerk at the coupon office of the Wusong Grain Administrative Center. At that time the "land-reclamation" campaign started and it encroached on his cherished landscape. The destruction worried him greatly. In 1965 he bought his first camera, a second-hand German one, at 60 yuan—almost his savings for half a year's work—and started his expeditions. But soon he had to sell the camera to get needed cash. In a time of desperate poverty, everything else had to give way to earning a livelihood. He kept buying cameras and selling them in hard times, then re-buying them—this recurred several times. Then the Cultural Revolution broke out. His "peripatetic" lifestyle, penning poems and shooting photographs, were considered intolerable by the "revolutionary masses." So he had to burn all his photographs and books to avoid troubles. But he was still not free from political misfortunes. In 1969 he was working in a grass-root grain shop. Not long after his son was born he was sent to a labor camp on Changxing Island in the Yangtze River because a leader of the "Insurrectionists" found his attempts at poetry offensive. The detention lasted for a year. He was sentenced for no reason and released for no reason; the nature of the charge against him was unclear throughout. Now he has

no more complaint about that horrendous experience, yet the agonizing labor of digging slit from the bottom of a frozen river in the winter is still fresh in his memory. After his release he returned to the grain shop and then in the mid-1970s became a mechanic. As a clever man, he was full of innovations and became a top manufacturer of automatic grain-selling machines. His crafts even drew some apprentices from outside Shanghai. Once he fell down the stairs of his home because of fatigue, resulting in a minor cerebral concussion; this later gave rise to atrophy in optical nerves of his left eye. Even this handicap could not prevent him from his commitment. In 1978, he bought another ordinary second-hand camera and resumed his photographing. The motivation was so simple yet so strong that he decided that it would always be a part of his life.

After some time, he found it necessary to draw up a schedule for his trips, as there were so many things for him to shoot, either in the suburbs or in the downtown. Shanghai was such a large city that there were still many places he had never been to. So he bought an atlas at a bookstore on the corner of Yan'an and Henan Roads. The purchase not only cost him 15 yuan but also required a reference letter issued by his employer. On that atlas, which he still has, he marked the places of interest in each town, village, and district, and then planned the traffic routes and prepared background notes on the historical sites. The detailed schedule on the routes benefited his photographing expeditions. In addition, he has kept notes on their dates and what he experienced on the road. Throughout the 1980s, he bought and sold cameras several times as he had done before, as he still had not risen

above his poverty.

Thus he continued his photographing, and by the end of the last century Xu had developed an archive of over 20,000 black and white photographs, covering a broad spectrum of subjects: roads, buildings, rivers, and daily life; he had traveled to almost every corner of Shanghai, covering a total of 30,000 kilometers. His notes ran to over 500,000 words, bearing witness to all his painstaking efforts. His hobby absorbed a tremendous part of his time and energy. "The sights that we have experienced in our life may become distant memories in the days to come. The invention of the camera is really a blessing in that it enables us to record the bygone era, otherwise it can only be wistfully recalled in our dreams," he said.

Now Xu Xixian is elderly and retired. While he was categorizing his treasured photographs and notes, mixed feelings would come to his mind. Everything is changing at a dizzying pace, he sighs, the old Shanghai depicted in his photographs is irretrievably disappearing. In the town of Daoyuan in Fengxian County, there used to be more than ten teahouses. When men came off work, they regularly gathered there to drink tea or to enjoy the view of the river traffic: the atmosphere was both lively and relaxed. When he paid a second visit to the town, he found only the old houses and the old men remaining there. The younger generation has left their old hometown forever. His talk with these old folks brought them to tears. He knew that the old town would be completely dead when they were gone: this is an everyday occurrence in the suburbs of Shanghai. A shadow

crossed his face when he spoke of this. He also remembers that in his early years, he always took the train from Baoshan to Wusong to pick mushrooms. This was the very first railway line in China, and it stopped operating at the end of 1987. In the late 1950s, the ride from Baoshan to Jiangwan cost seven cents, and the ride to Wusong, thirteen cents. His photograph preserves a last look at this railway: the weeds rise as high as a man; the steam locomotive is coming slowly; the windows of the railway car are within an arm's reach of the neighborhood on its flanks. After it had been abandoned for almost ten years, the railway was replaced by the elevated metro line. There were also quite a few humorous episodes that he experienced in his journey. In Pandian village in Fengxian County, there is an old bridge originally named Tai Ping, or Eternal Peace. Obviously such a name was not suitable in the tumultuous era of the Cultural Revolution. In view of the troubled times, the quick-witted villagers chiseled off the dot in the Chinese character for "Tai", and the two dots in the character for "Ping", and the name became "Da Gan" or "hard work" instead. "Hard-Work Bridge"—politically correct! A flash of genius helped save the bridge from vandalism. Both of us could not help laughing.

In this album I complement Xu Xixian's photographs with modern shots at the same places by his son, Xu Jianrong. The juxtaposition of the old black and white images and the new colored ones, the father and the son, the traditional and the digital cameras, provides for a tableau of a changing era.

In her outstanding book *On Photography*, Susan Sontag asserts: "Taking photographs has set up a chronic voyeuristic relation to the world which levels the meaning of all events." In the perspective of dualism, the outmoded stands in contrast to the fashionable. The two sides are constantly confrontational. In the end time moves on, and we tend to embrace the new and forget about the past. Of course the past is valued by some as their "spiritual retreat," but such "past" is has no meaning at all if it has no reference to reality. It is as a fanciful dream as a hollow reality. The photographs of the father and the son are *memento mori*; to take photographs is to participate in the mortality and mutability of another person or thing. Time is the only constant factor, and in the face of it all other things appear transient and fragile. It flows eternally on, in such a "chronic" process that it "levels" the meaning of all events. So such juxtaposition of the old and the new has an effect extending far beyond two generations. Viewing today's sights in the future will be just as viewing the bygone sights today. Photographs provide an ideal medium to witness how the vanished subjects use to look like; photography is an elegiac art.

"The earliest surreal photographs come from the 1850s," added Sontag, "when photographers first went out prowling the streets of London, Paris, and New York, looking for their unposed slice of life. These photographs, concrete, particular, anecdotal (except that the anecdote has been effaced)—moments of lost time, of vanished customs—seem far surreal to us now than any photograph rendered abstract and poetic by superimposition, underprinting, solarization, and the like." Now I become increasingly convinced that some

most simple and traditional works can harbor the most sharp and sensitive insights, while the exaggerated and unsubstantiated ones are shallow, far-fetched and short-lived. It is likely that someone in the future will proclaim like Sontag, "The earliest Chinese surreal photographs come from the 20th century, when photographers went out prowling the towns, the countryside, and the battlefields..." It is just because of the passage of time that the objective things turn "surreal." Time is stronger than reality.

It is inevitable that everyone suffers over the course of time. In the face of it, however, some undaunted few maintain their Sisyphean efforts to preserve images of the past. Many people tend to undervalue the significance of such efforts, thinking it unworthy of the efforts. But the significance of the past is undeniable. We should not forget the old bicycles, tricycles, and the shabby housing of the past even when we have the luxury cars and stylish residential quarters of today. Only by comparing our lives in the past can we determine the significance of them today. So the presence of everything, no matter whether it comes early or late, shares an equal value in the camera lens. Just as a shaft of light illuminates the particles in the air, Xu Xixian's works illuminate the deep significance of the bygone era as well as illustrate a stirring human story.

In the field of photography, we are tempted to be influenced by the media and the social icons, and fall prey to the grand, mega-hyped illusions. Xu Xixian is neither an icon, nor even an artist by common standards, but his works are all rooted in real life. The advent of his works calls for a major revision to the evaluation of photography: it is no

longer dictated by a few professionals. Great changes have taken place in the past three decades in Shanghai and in China. Humble as he is, his experience has brought him face to face with facets of a changing era that might otherwise have gone unremarked. Photographing has become an integral part of his life, and his works have turned out to be a sweeping saga. Most of the subjects that he has captured on celluloid have passed into history. Given the absence of a visual record of them, his works can be seen as a valuable sociological document. Moreover, they have set a benchmark for those who wish to document the life of their contemporary era. In recent years, I always stress that photography should be loyal to life rather than hide the truth in order to provide a pleasant scene. But unfortunately in today's materialistic society, this is not encouraged as it should be. To succeed in this regard is no easy, however, since it requires journalistic integrity and unremitting efforts. When he presses the shutter release of his camera, Xu virtually returns to the original intension and the essence of this art: the photographer captures what has happened in a familiar world, a world that awaits a camera to freeze it and to witness the relentless melt of time.

