

上海书画出版社

陆元敏

苏州 SUZHOU 州 CREEK

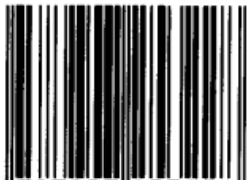
河

LU YUANMIN

SHANGHAI FINE ARTS PUBLISHERS



ISBN 7-80725-322-3



9 787807 253228 >

定价：38.00 元



图书在版编目(CIP)数据

苏州河 / 陆元敏摄. — 上海: 上海书画出版社, 2006.
10

ISBN 7-80725-322-3

I. 苏... II. 陆... III. ① - 摄影集 - 中国 - 现代 ② 苏州河 - 摄影集 IV. J421

中国版本图书馆CIP数据核字(2006)第099995号

责任编辑 徐 可
封面设计 胡 斌
责任校对 郭晓霞
技术编辑 朱伟南

苏州河

陆元敏 摄

上海书画出版社 出版发行

地址: 上海市延安西路593号

邮编: 200050

电话: 61229010

网址: www.duoyunxuan.com

E-mail: shcpph@online.sh.cn

上海文艺大一印刷有限公司印刷

各地新华书店经销

开本: 890 × 1240 1/32

印张: 6 印数: 1-3,000

2006年9月第1版 2006年9月第1次印刷

ISBN 7-80725-322-3/J · 305

定价: 38.00元



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鸣谢:

邢建榕、彭莱、施瀚涛、李淑丽、李波、孟韬、张翔、胡远行

出品人: 卢辅圣

策划人: 姜伟

摄影: 陆元敏

翻译: 郑超

责任编辑: 徐可

平面设计: 胡斌

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

Xing Jianrong, Peng Lai, Shi Hantao, Lyen Li, Li Bo,

Meng Tao, Zhang Xiang, Hu Yuanxing

PUBLISHING DIRECTOR: Lu Fusheng

CURATOR: Jiang Wei

PHOTOGRAPHER: Lu Yuanmin

TRANSLATOR: Henry Zheng

EXECUTIVE EDITOR: Xu Ke

GRAPHIC DESIGNER: Hu Bin

吴淞江本流跨有吴县、吴江、昆山、青浦、嘉定及上海五县一市的土地。两岸港浦纵横，沟浍歧错，灌溉区域约及二千五百九十平方公里。言其价值，约有四端：太湖泄水要道，上海与内地的交通，沿江农田的灌溉，分蓄黄浦江潮量。

以上是就吴淞江全部的价值而言，在上海方面更可利用以供租界西区及闸北等地工厂的运输，借小船驳送自外洋运来的货物，事简费省，无异将黄浦水线延长十余公里。此外港口可供商舶的寄碇，江水可备市政的供应，已在次要之列了。

吴淞江古时仅称松江，一名笠泽江，亦名松陵江，近时俗又称为苏州河。

苏州河的名称起源在上海开辟商埠以后，本属外国侨民对于吴淞江的俗称，初时惟于外人书报中见之。但数十年来国人亦颇有从而附和者，因此相沿成习，至今也就成为吴淞江的别名了。

吴静山

摘录自1936年《上海市通志馆期刊》

With numerous tributaries, Wusong Creek winds its way through, the towns of Wuxian, Wujiang, Kunshan, Qingpu, Jiading, and the urban area of Shanghai, covering an irrigated area of some 2,590 square kilometers. It plays an important role in four regards, as a channel to release floodwater from Lake Tai, as a transportation channel linking Shanghai to the inland, as a source of water for irrigation, and as a channel to absorb the tide flows of the Huangpu River.

Above are the general values of the creek. In terms of its use for transportation, Suzhou Creek is critical to the plants and factories to the west of the former International concession and in Zhabei. Since it is easy to deliver goods from overseas by boats via this waterway, Suzhou Creek virtually serves as an extension of the Huangpu River by over ten kilometers. In addition, it also has such subordinate functions as a mooring for merchant ships and as a source of the city's water supply.

The Wusong Creek was known simply as Song Creek in ancient times or, by other accounts, Lize Creek or Songling Creek. The name Suzhou Creek did not come into use until recently.

As an alternative name for Wusong Creek, the name Suzhou Creek was coined by Shanghailanders and made its first appearance only in newspapers published by foreigners. But in recent decades, the name has also become popular with the natives, and it is now acknowledged as an official byname for the Wusong Creek.

A quotation from *the Journal of the Shanghai Archives* (1936 edition), authored by Wu Jingshan

长河长存

姜纬

老地方，书店里的茶仍然温润。“我最近寻到了一批底片，大概有一百多张，全是苏州河的，呵呵，”陆元敏的眼睛熠熠有光，“我自己也忘记了，现在想起来了，是十几年前头拍的。一个朋友要我几张照片，结果一翻，哎，倒寻出这点来了。”对于我来讲，2005年初冬某个下午陆元敏的这些话，并不会引发很大的惊讶。

感谢陆元敏，这些到目前没有几个人看见过的照片，使得做书有了良好的基础，这是一本值得期待的书。同时，我也要感谢布罗代尔，在他之后，才可能有这样的书。

1994年夏天，在长江三峡的游轮上，我第一次读布罗代尔，读他的《15至18世纪的物质文明、经济和资本主义》。夜幕降临，江水浩荡，汽笛长声短声，凭生远意。

在那时，布罗代尔把我带向15世纪——“现代”的源头，那里有欧洲的城堡和草场、大明王朝的市廛和农田，我们走进住宅，察看餐桌上的面包、米饭，有没有肉，有什么菜；走向森林、原野和海洋，看见五百年前的人们在艰难地行进，我们注视着每一个细节：他们身上皮衣的质地、车轮和船桨、行囊中银币的重量、签下契约时所用的纸笔……

布罗代尔说，这就是“历史”，历史就在这无数温暖的细节中暗自运行。

长江上的夜读，思绪如江水涣涣泱泱。布罗代尔和法国年鉴学派使我确信，那些发生于前台，被历史剧的灯光照亮的事件和人物其实并不重要，在百年、千年的时间尺度上，真正重要的是人群在黑暗中无意识的涌动，是无数匿名个人的平凡生活：他们的衣食住行，他们的信念、勇气和灵感，当然还有他们的欲望和愚昧。历史的面貌、秘密就在这些最微小的基因中被编定，一切都由此形成，引人注目的人和事不过是水上的浮沫。

我很乐于寻找那些隐没在历史的背面和角落的人们，在重重阴影中他们的日常性活动远较个别的、传奇的历史事件更具本质意义，正是他们从过去塑造了现在。比如说，一艘商船上的无名商人把玉米、番薯的种子带入中国、无数农民在漫长的时间里把它们撒遍大地，相形之下任何帝王将相、才子佳人都显得卑微渺小，因为它所带动的生存条件的变化、人口数量的增长构成了中国历史演进的基本力量。

因此我喜欢读布罗代尔的一切书：《菲利普二世时代的地中海和地中海世界》、《15至18世纪的物质文明、经济和资本主义》、《法兰西的特征》，在这些书中，人民以及人民的生活不再是空洞的，他们被呈现出来，而且获得了雄辩的意义。这使我们有了一个稳固的立场，在这个立场上，可以质疑一切关于我们的历史和生活的戏剧性叙事。

陆元敏的照片是这个稳固立场的可视化。在这些照片里，河流袒露出了它的家常——那是生活的循环，是日复一日的日子，是视觉上的疲倦和单调，摄影家们往往提不起兴致去拍：苏州河不是引人注目的审美对象，也不是增强人类活动戏剧性的舞台。但陆元敏决心留存这样的一条河，我认为，他真正的考验和困难来自那令人不知所措无从说起的家常经验，他一定得绷紧肌肉和神经，全力证明语言的力量，使重复、单调的河流获得强劲鲜明的风格。

《苏州河》是陆元敏1990年代的代表作品之一，这里的大部分照片是1991至1993几年间问世的。陆元敏的苏州河不是流过去的水，而是一坛有年份的醇厚老酒，就如他对我讲的：“辰光好像停牢了一样。”这“辰光”，是他小时候有几趟到亲戚家路过苏州河留下的印象，更是有关父亲的记忆：他父亲的单位就在河边，也去过多次，在年少的陆元敏眼里，那是另外的一个世界，一个目不暇接的世界。所以他调到普陀区文化馆工作，每天上下班都要经过苏州河时，封存的记忆“复活”了，人们具体的生存，从环境到行当，从面貌到动作，一切还停在那儿，昨天仿佛就在眼前，丰沛而刻骨铭心。《苏州河》成了陆元敏那些年最主要的功课，他沉浸于“停牢”这样的“辰光”的欣喜中。就这样，似水流年，我

们看见一个人从河边走过来，走向灯火灿烂的今天，身后的河流渐行渐远，但是即便这样，他也发现他的心里、身体里依然伸展着那条悠长的河流。

上海乃至中国最早的一批民族企业就诞生在苏州河两岸，市民生活从煤米油盐到垃圾处理，亦依赖于河畔众多的库栈码头，沿河民居连绵不断，人口密集，在相当长的时段中这条河与每一个上海人的居家过日子有着不可替代的血脉关联。从作者按下快门以至追溯前七八十年的岁月中，季节、饮食、服饰、房屋……还有人的表情、人的信仰、人的境遇其实并未发生翻天覆地的变化，照片中那些在重重限定之下、在命里注定的逼仄中梦想和受累的人，被注视但并不自知，他们承受生活的坚忍和与生活的苦斗，那些结实丰富的情境，构成了苏州河最基本的现实，那正是城市和河流芜杂表皮之下真实的经脉和骨骼，它有强大的活力，它不管不顾，甚至有时候冲垮了作者的预设，它的生动、广大、宽阔和它的复杂，使任何文字的述说都显得孱弱不堪。

苏州河曾经是上海的内在机枢，上海人和它百感交集的繁复经验在陆元敏手中呈现。作为敏锐的摄影家，他看出了“他”的河流和“我们”的河流有着根本的差异，这不仅是翻新几座桥梁、冲淤排污绿化的问题，追忆旧日点滴时光会使我们感到事情远没有那么简单。城市大规模地改造是一个当代现象，但当河流不再是“他”的河流时，苏州河的精气神在人民生活中的内在瓦解、断裂就已经开始了。

陆元敏的照片决意对它做出重述，朴素的影像里，苏州河重新成为安放一切的中心，重新庄严、雄辩、令人敬畏。一般的照片是“拍摄”出来的，他的照片是“流淌”出来的，这是非常重要的区别。人不是与他的世界对抗或从他的世界出走，从根本上看，人是在承受、分担和体现世界的命运，人物带着他的整个世界行动和生死。摄影家的情感与慈悲，他的宏大与郑重其事，他对时间和命运的领会一概由此发端。这是中国摄影久被遗忘的根本精神，而这个人的照片让我们重新记起那长河落日的气象。

Long Flows the Creek

Jiang Wei

In the bookstore we frequented, there was a small talk over tea, warm and gratifying. “I have recently found a batch of films, around a hundred in total. Alas, all of them are of the Suzhou Creek.” Lu Yuanmin said, his eyes sparkling, “I have almost forgotten them, and now I remember that they were taken more than a decade ago. A friend of mine asked for a few photos of the creek, I searched and these are what I have found.” Lu’s casual comment on an afternoon in the winter of 2005 was nothing new to me.

Thanks to Lu’s effort, these photos, known only to a limited few, would make for a good volume, one that will reward anticipating readers. At the same time, I am also grateful to Fernand Braudel, without whom the book would not have been possible.

In the summer of 1994, I read *Material Civilization, Economy and Capitalism, 15th-18th Century* by Braudel while cruising through the Three Gorges of the Yangtze River, and this was my first encounter with his works. Darkness was falling; the gurgling torrent, mixed with ships’ whistles long and short, carried me far away.

Braudel’s narrative took me back to the 15th century, the origin of the “modern times”, and I saw the castles and grasslands of Europe, juxtaposed with the urban scenes and fields of the Ming Dynasty in China. I entered the residences to check the bread and rice on the dinner table, and to examine whether there was meat and vegetable in the dishes. I also walked through forests, plains and along seashores, seeing a crowd of people inching forward. I was able to capture every single detail, the texture of the fur coats, the wheels of the vehicles, the oars of the boats, the weight of the silver coins in the bags, the quill pens and the parchment they used for signing up agreements.

Mr. Braudel asserts that such is history, a process hidden in numerous intimate trivial details such as these.

Reading on deck in the evening, I felt that the tide of my thoughts was in full flow. Braudel and his *Annales* school have convinced me that the panoply of historical events and persons do not deserve the importance with which they have been attributed. In a long period of several hundred to several thousand years, the real driving force is generated from the collective unconsciousness of the public groping in the dark, or, in other words, the everyday existence of numerous anonymous persons, their daily necessities, convictions, courage, inspirations, and of course, their desires and ignorance. The profile and the secrets of history were encoded in such minute details. The major events and persons were nothing but the foam floating on the surface.

I am eager to explore those persons who have faded in oblivion and are not represented in history. Largely ignored, their daily activities have proved more consequential than those few recorded events; it was they who made history what it is now. For example, an anonymous merchant brought seeds of corns and sweet potatoes to China in a cargo ship, and numerous farmers cast those seeds in fields over the years. Such figures have eclipsed all those in the imperial court and the talented scholars, since they contributed to the improvement of the human existence and to the increase in population, the essential elements to propel forward the history of the country.

Then I fell in love with all the books written by Braudel, such as *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*; *Material Civilization, Economy and Capitalism, 15th-18th Century*; and *L'Identité de la France (The Identity of France)*. In those books, the people and their lives are no longer rendered in abstract terms; rather, they are given a heightened significance. Thus they are the benchmark for us to question the dramatic account of history and our lives.

Lu Yuanmin's photos are a visualization of such a benchmark. In these pictures the creek lays bare its ordinariness, that of the recycling of daily life. As such sights are visually boring and monotonous, few photographers would bother to capture them. The creek is neither an object for aesthetic appreciation nor a stage for dramatic of human activities. But Lu Yuanmin decided to make a visual record of it. In my opinion, the real challenge is to give sense to the ordinary scenes, when one hardly knows how to begin with. Therefore, he has to use all of his senses to present a poignant account of the creek and a strong feature true to it.

The Suzhou Creek is a signature work of Lu Yuanmin covering the 1990s. Most of the pictures collected here date from 1991 to 1993. What flows there is not plain water, but more like liquor brewed for a long time. He told me, "It was as if time froze when I shot the pictures." By saying this he referred to his boyhood, a time when he was impressed by the sight of the creek on his way to visit his relatives, but more visual experiences of the creek were related to his father, whose office by the creek was also a place he frequently visited. In the eyes of a young boy, that was a place in another world where exciting sights abounded. Many years later, he was assigned to work in the cultural office of Putuo district. The childhood memories became revived when he crossed the creek every day to and from his office. The existence of the people, their living environment and their industries, and their expressions and gestures all remained unchanged, looking as if yesteryear's sights had come flooding back, rich and poignant. Shooting photographs of the creek then became his major task in those years — this enabled him to indulge in the delight of seeing the "frozen snapshots." Years have elapsed since then, and we can still see a person coming from the creek, and the creek flowing long behind him, filling his heart and his body.

The early industrial enterprises of Shanghai and of China were established on the flanks of the Suzhou Creek. The daily lives of the Shanghainese rely heavily on the ubiquitous docks along the creek, from the acquisition of the necessities for daily living to the disposal of trashes. In particular, the creek was critical to the sizable population living on its banks. For a long time, the creek has been playing an irreplaceable role in the life of every local citizen. From seventy or eighty years ago to the time when the photos were taken, the seasonal changes, the food, the clothes, the houses of the people did not undergo a drastic change, neither did their expressions, beliefs or environment. Braving difficulties and unaware that they were being noticed, those people makes for the basic features of the Suzhou Creek. Their resilient struggle and their rich private experiences have become an integral part of the culture of the creek and an underlying feature of this city. Both vigorous and arbitrary, such human condition knows no bounds as it makes its headway, rendering any account in words pale in comparison.

The Suzhou Creek, once the nerve center of Shanghai, has witnessed the intricate experiences of the local populace that related to it, and it was Lu Yuanmin who brought them to light. As an astute photographer, he has spotted the difference between *his* creek and *ours*. It is not simply a matter of renovating bridges, dredging up silt, or planting trees and grass. Trace the memory of the lost age and we can find it is far more complicated. The large-scale facelift of the city came only in recent years, yet when the creek is no longer recognizable to him in this process, some warning signs have already emerged: The spirit of the creek is in jeopardy when the creek becomes alien to the life of the local populace.

Lu Yuanmin seeks to reiterate the significance of Suzhou Creek with his photographs. In his simple images, the waterway regains the central position it formerly occupied. It makes a comeback with grandeur, eloquence, and awe-worthiness. Ordinary photographs are “shot” with human endeavor, but these photographs come out naturally like flowing liquid, and this makes a critical difference. It does not make much sense for human beings to combat the world they live in or to desert it. Fundamentally, they are living with the rest of the world and subject to its ups and downs. A photographer’s emotions and sympathies all stem from this. This is an understanding long absent from the Chinese photography, and now it looms large in these photographs, in a glory comparable to the setting sun.



