

中国

Deng Wei

Chinese



CHINESE by Deng Wei 中国人 邓伟 著

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CHINESE

邓伟 / 著

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## Introduction

“Chinese” which was exhibited at the 2010 Shanghai Expo, is a reflection of photographer Deng Wei’s expression of Chinese spirit. Since China adopted reform and opened up its policy 30 years ago he travelled around the world, but his heart never left China. He always paid close attention to the Chinese. With a strong sense for the present, his works reflected the elegant presence of eminent cultural figures and people from every walk of life. All of his photos communicate the beauty of the Chinese spirit.

In 1986, when Deng Wei’s “A Photographic Record of Eminent Culture Figures of China” was published, a door for Portrait photography featuring eminent people in the Chinese new era was started. During the 1990s, with strong perseverance, he travelled around the world and shot celebrities and cultures. His cameras were focused on portrait and the world of culture. He has contributed lots of classical works for the Chinese and for the world’s photographic gallery, while he contributed extraordinarily to the cultural exchange between China and the World. With his sincere attitude towards art, his celebrity portraits are of great historical value. All these stand the test of time; it is a milestone which can’t be replicated in the history of photography.

On the fast lane of science and technology, the “Chinese” was exhibited at Shanghai Expo, praising those Chinese people who created abundant spiritual and material wealth. During the past 30 years, Deng Wei captured lots of splendid and brilliant moments in his photos. He help us all dig deep and reveal the inside world of people, demonstrating the glory of the human spirit. While appreciating the photos, we are not only electrified by the classical art moments, but also touched by the literary research and historical retrospective.

China Federation of Literary and Art Circles

April 2010

## Editor's Note

When We met Deng Wei in 2004, he modestly claimed he was merely a person taking photos. At that time, his “Portrait of Peace” was exhibited at the United Nation Headquarters. “Deng Wei and Fifty Faces” was published. It was sponsored by China Intercontinental Press and supervised by the Information Office of the State Council. His works proved that he was a dedicated artist, who insists on putting thoughts into practice. It was a great honor for us to engage in this project, which was highly praised as a Pioneering Undertaking in Photography History. It took 10 years for a man to travel all around the world to finish it. We selected fifty excellent world celebrities portraits and published them; it was an enjoyable experience.

In the 2010 Shanghai World Expo, Deng Wei's “Chinese” photography exhibition was visited by about 2.6 million people. It was successfully exhibited and it was widely praised by the Chinese and foreign audience. Through a glimpse of these portraits, we can see the Chinese intellectuals historical scars during the past century and get a feeling of the context which upholds the Chinese spirit.

We selected and sorted out about hundreds of films provided by Deng Wei this year. According to the author's choice, we edited the “Chinese” album from the perspective of visual arts and photography. It is divided into Chinese Intellectuals in the 20th Century and Contemporary Bearings according to different time periods.

The part of Chinese Intellectuals in the 20th Century was created by Deng Wei in the 1980s in the name of culture. He carried out rescue-style shooting, as it was hard to predict the path that destiny would follow taking the elderly's life away. He is a conscious youth emerged at the right time and he spent lots of valuable time to finish this project, recording a dim light of culture's intellectuals before they passed away. In 1986, his “A Photographic Record of Eminent Cultural Figures of China” was published, the album which took eight years, became the last tribute to the former cultural generation of china. All these portraits share a rigorous shooting method and a unique aesthetic perspective,

rendering the spirit and cultural heritage of the older generation. It still has a very artistic and historical value. Deng Wei's fate with photography doesn't end with the publication of this album.

Although he stayed at the other side of the ocean for many years, Deng Wei knows that the distance can't separate his nostalgia for his motherland. He never stopped photographing his compatriots. In 1990s, he shot the Nobel laureate in Physics Chen Ning Yang in New York, architecture master IM Pei; he shot the first Chinese President in America Chang-Lin Tien at the University of California, Berkeley ; in San Francisco, he took photos for mathematics master Chen Xingshen; he shot painter Zhao Wuji in Paris and so on. After returning back to China, he still dedicated his passion to creation, while more and more splendid Chinese figures appeared in his lens, such as Yuan Longping, Zhong Nanshan, Yang Liwei, Jackie Chen, Yao Ming ...

While editing this album, we get the chance to know lots of impressively touching shooting stories which are not far away from us. We are looking forward to know more about their life's journey, their brilliant thoughts and thus getting a feeling of their grand personality. Deng Wei creates full of enthusiasm; he insisted on writing his interview dairy and with his fresh and meaningful writing style, he recorded those celebrities growing experiences, insights on life and pursuit for their career. He also recorded the way they do research, their views on art and their wishes for the youth. Without any doubt, all these people become inspirational spiritual wealth. Therefore into this book we include each celebrity's biographical sketch and parting word of advice. We are willing to share it with readers both at home and abroad. The readers will gain a complete perspective, as if they are able to see and hear each person.

China Intercontinental Press

November 2010

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## An extraction of Deng Wei's dairy

February 7th, 1981 Saturday, Beijing sunny

When I met him, Mao Dun did not appear in public anymore, neither did he have a haircut nor did he shave specially for my shooting. He sat on the chair most of the time because it was not so easy for him to move around anymore. He was in a good mood for talking so when I mentioned about my plan to make a Chinese culture celebrity album, he was very excited, "You have to stick to it and carry out this plan, it is a solid and great project for the history of China". I took it as an expectation from the former generation to young generation. Persistence and hard work is the foundation for this album, and the process would be a journey of happiness filled with hardship.

February 13th, 1981 Friday, Beijing cloudy

When I met Liang Shuming, who was a friend and countryman of Chairman Mao he once debated with Chairman Mao face to face, however, this ideologist and philosopher was forgotten by people. The topic between us is photography. "I do not like photographing, I am reluctant to go to the studio because when the shutter is pressed, the cameraman would ask me to smile and I do not like to smile since childhood; this is my personality". I replied: "What I want to record is the original version of you." I pressed the shutter when I was talking.

Mr. Liang once remarked in his masterpiece: "The heart is different from any other materials, it should not be showed in front of people, however, everyone has a heart". The strong power of the portrait was to let people get a feeling of other peoples heart.

February 15th, 1981 Sunday, Beijing sunny

“My face is not good-looking. I would rather you not take this photo.” With head bowed, Ai Qing was busy reading files in his hands. After a decade long of calamity, everyone was racing against time. I set up a camera and waited for the right time patiently, an hour later Ai Qin asked: “Did you take it?” At that moment I almost forgot my job, he was so devoted that I was dragged into his poetic realm. “What I want to show to the readers is my work, however, since you are so devoted, this photo would be an exception.” Ai Qing lighted a cigarette and started to work while talking.

February 22th, 1983 Tuesday, Shanghai cloudy

After taking a drip in HuaDong hospital this morning, I suffered from an allergy, lots of red points began to spring up in my body, the doctor entrusted me not to catch a cold. In the afternoon, with a large breathing mask, dressed in a heavy padded coat, I went to the ward, since both Ba Jin and me were ill, the greetings were eliminated. We did not talk much, Ba Jin sat in a chair near window, sunshine came from his right side. Inside the frame, I saw a picture as clear as water.

February 26th, 1983 Saturday, Shanghai cloudy

When I arrived at Fudan University at noon, Professor Su Buqing had just left for a meeting in Beijing half an hour ago.

March 11th, 1983 Friday, Beijing sunny

I took a photo for Bing Xin at the National College this morning; it was not easy for me to set up the tripod support because the space was limited. Bing Xin told me, she had shared a desk with her husband Wu Wenzao for more than twenty years, she chose to live here because it was far away from the city and was very quiet.

I went to her house on the 6th, however, since it was Sunday, there were a lot of people, so we agreed on next week. I forgot 120 films while shooting, so I went back to my home in the city to get it. This is about twists and turns during the shooting. Before parting, she wrote words of encouragement for me. As the writing mirrors the writer, her words were warm and powerful.

November 11th, 1989 Saturday, Guangzhou

receiving the last letter from father

My child: right now I just came back from Summer Palace, but you are on the airplane. The title of the book you asked me before this trip is "Moaning words", written by Lv Kun(Ming Dynasty), he said: turn vital energy into strength , in this way you could overcome any difficulty. All the famous scholars, sages, philosophers all these successful people, they are never afraid of difficulties and setbacks.

Life is not easy. It would be a disaster lying at the ivory tower to enjoy. Great achievements come from hard work , indeed this is a truth. Work hard and not ask for harvest or fame, make a contribution to the society.

From my father on November 7th, 1989 eleven o'clock (am) sent out from Ping Anli

October 22th, 1992 Thursday, Paris sunny

Shooting was interrupted by a telephone call, a black person sent six boxes of wine, Zhao Wuji said: "The French typically like to drink wine kept for a couple of years, the wine produced this year is cheap, but the price would rise when you store it so the main reason I store wine is to treat guests." Although he never smokes, there were dozens of pipes in the studio.

When the topic came to the Chinese and Western arts influence on him , he remarked: "As for the oriental art, the bronzes which were produced in Shang and Zhou dynasty, their style and structure represents the most ancient spirit. I am also fond of Fan Kuan and Mi Fu s paintings, they express space in a unique way. The western artists, such as Matisse and Monet, also influenced me a lot."

While he was attentively listening to a symphony in the studio, I pressed the camera, the background was an empty frame, his works were full of unknown, and always facing the future.

February 10th, 1994 Thursday, New York snowy

Following my suggestion, professor Yang sat next to a desk closed to window, he was marking on a piece of paper with lots of formulas on it. He said he was comfortable with my style of shooting. And then he continued to talk to his students, I grabbed the instance while he was thinking devoutly, with his hands crossed, behind this peaceful face, there is an abundant world.

The weather was very cold, it was about ten minutes of walk back to parking lot from professor Yang's place. The snow was more than a foot high, facing piercing wind, suddenly I realized today was the New Year's Day. Two Chinese in a foreign land forgot to greet to each other: "Happy New Year".

November 25th, 1994 Friday, Dublin cloudy

I accepted reporter Kevin's interview from Irish "Independent". He asked: "a few years later, when your book was published, most of the famous politicians would be replaced, what is the meaning of your work then?" I told him there was a book titled "World famous people's feature" in my family, it was bought by my father in 1930, either for my father at that time or years later for me, that was an fascinating book. Most of the figures in the book were born during the last century, but why they still touch us today? The figures in my camera played an important role in the society, they contributed a lot for the society and humankind. Whether they were in position or not is not that important, I just want to record a history moment and their shining thoughts, this should be a wealth for the whole humankind. I still remember when I took photos for Chinese intellectuals, Nie Gannu wrote for me: take photos by your heart. Each photograph I take is communication between heart and heart, it is the reason why I travel around the world to take photos.

October 24th, 1997 Friday, Beijing

Who is he? Mr. Ch'ien Chung-shu?!

I had not met him for 8 years, and now he appeared a little bit strange to me, where was the chipper, smart and humorous Mr. Ch'ien Chung-shu? My tears flooded out, "Respected Ch'ien Chung-shu, I came to see you and I am Deng Wei, for 8 years, I always miss you, I miss you so much." The nurse bent over to Ch'ien Chung-shu's ear, repeated what I said. Mr. Ch'ien Chung-shu turned his eyesight toward me, with his mouth trembling. "He said, he knows who you are, you are Deng Wei, who once took photo for him." the nurse said. Then I looked at the sick-bed, and tears silently flowed from the corner of Mr. Ch'ien Chung-shu's eyes.

I moved close to Ch'ien Chung-shu's ear, and I told him: "Respected Ch'ien Chung-shu, I have fulfilled my dream of taking photos for celebrities around the world. Now I am back home, preparing for exhibitions and publishing books." "Great, not easy." although Mr. Ch'ien Chung-shu said mumbled, I got it. His head was moving around on the pillow.

I did not know it would take 8 years after I left hometown, 8 years later, most of the acquainted elders had passed away. And Mr. Ch'ien Chung-shu was at the sick-bed, so I could never listen again to their wisdom and instruction...

I left with tears in my eyes, I could not forget his eyes, gazing at me attentively after a long parting.

May 31th, 2009 Sunday Beijing sunny

I have called Yang Liwei, he would be back to Beijing 10 days later, and then we could settle a specific time for shooting, “My dean has told me about it, is there anything I can do to support you?” He was very gentle.

February 24th, 2010 Wednesday, Shanghai sunny

I plan to take a photo for Yao Ming near the wall outside the basketball stadium. I asked him to draw a self-portrait on the canvas which was used for strategy planning. “Among all the classes I took, I am the poorest at art and music.” He finished a simple self-portrait while talking. The portrait was very expressive. He said: “I forgot the ears.” I told him what matters was spiritual resemblance. This must be the highest standard for drawing?! He smiled happily. His happy mood entered into the frame, he listened to the voice of basketball so attentively, as if he was totally intoxicated. Yao Ming, what were you imaging right then?

April 5th, 2010 Monday, Beijing sunny

The shooting was arranged at 3 o'clock in the afternoon. During the gap for light setting, his assistant took some dumplings for him and until then I did not know he had just come back from America and that he even did not have lunch. Five minutes later, after finishing lunch, the shooting continued and he started to mumble in English, as if he was reciting lines in film, his head leaned on a Ming style wooden chair, as if he was a drunk master. There were people taking photos by phone, suddenly he shouted: “Please do not take photos by cell phone.” When we move to the balcony for the outdoor scene shooting, he climbed on to the fire escape, with his foot kicking toward the wall. After that, I climbed to the ladder to finish a high angle shooting, he had to lie on the corrugated roof. I apologized: “Thanks for your cooperation, Brother Jackie.” He replied immediately: “Thanks for your serious attitude, Mr. Deng.” After the shooting, he expressed thanks to every staff member as apparently, he was a very dedicated actor.

May 4th, 2010 Tuesday, Changsha sunny

In the twinkling of an eye, Yuan Longping had jumped into the paddy field as deep as tens of centimeters. The doctor held him to stop him from falling down. He was already eighty years old, I felt a little bit of sore. When I invited a group of farmers to assist the shooting, he jokingly said: "Supporters are also very important." He bent down, skillfully pulled out a paddy and with his chest stood up tall. "Great!" I blotted out with emotion. "Indeed, Great!" He was in high spirit, replied confidently. He invented hybrid rice, which brought tremendous production increase for agriculture. It was considered as a secret weapon to solve world hunger. In the eyes of his colleagues, he was the most respected and able elder.

May 6th, 2010 Tuesday, Guangzhou sunny

When I took photos for academician Zhong Nanshan, I noticed he had not changed his name plate for years. His assistant told me, he was so busy, and the patients registered for him are booked for the next two years.

I do wish the photo I took of him could arouse people's memories. During the SARS outbreak, he was so brave and honest, and he saved lots of patients. He made a tremendous contribution for central decision-making and for the world's fair treatment to China's epidemic situation. This portrait is not about a moment; he is like a statue, an eternal symbol, in it we see a history scene, a scene remembered by every Chinese.

Before he left, he told me: "I have to finish lunch as soon as possible, there are patients waiting for me in the afternoon." He is humble and modest, always busy standing on the frontier of medical treatment.