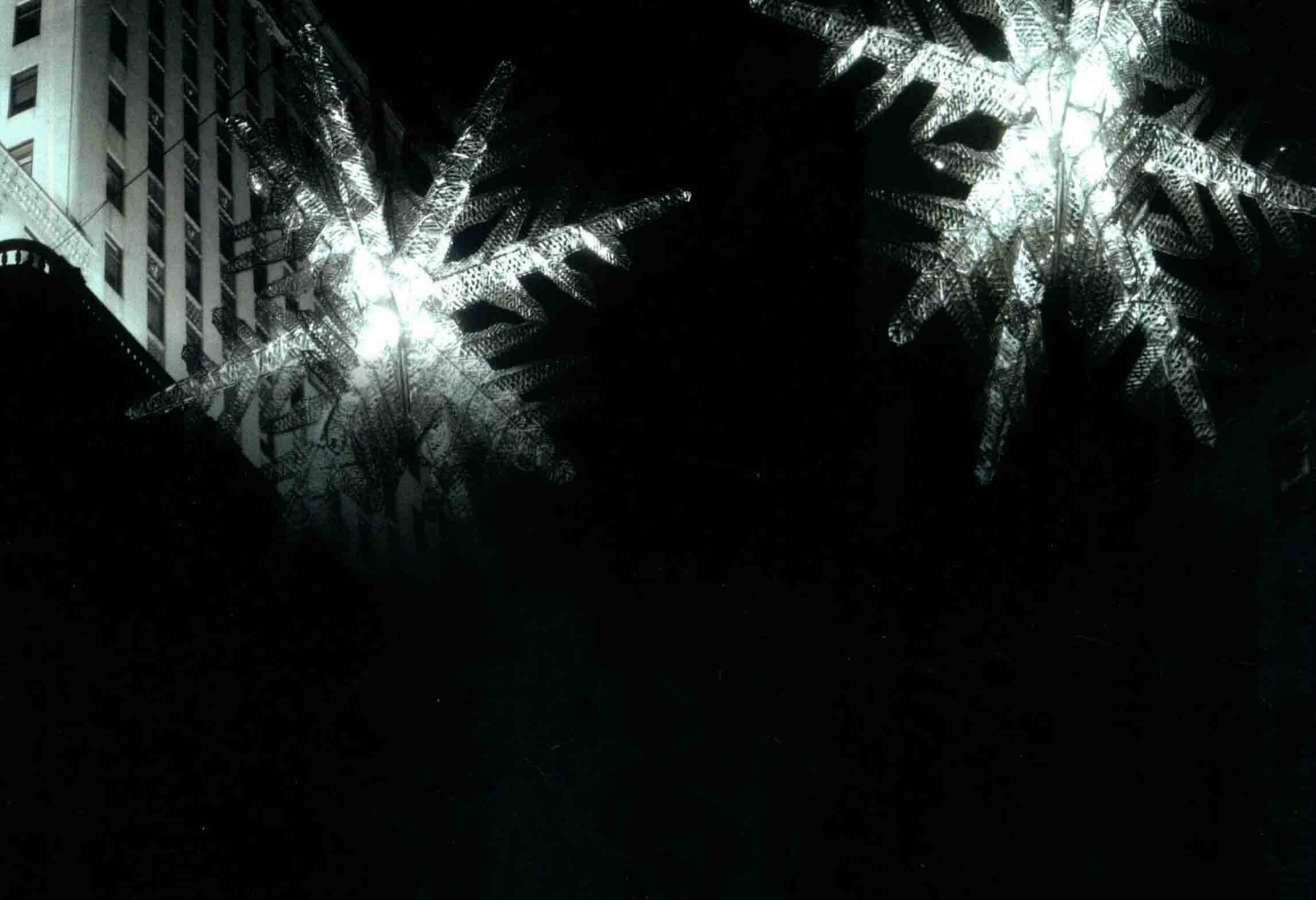


NEW YORK WINTER



Lawrence
PHOTOGRAPHIC COLLECTIONS





NEWYORK WINTER

SHUCHUNARTS PHOTOGRAPHIC COLLECTIONS





Self Portrait
自攝像

Preface

Shen Li

Lawrence is a long-standing family friend, first with my artist father, Roujian, despite the disparity in age, and then as a friend with each and every member of the household, including my young daughter Vivian. His skillful hand has seized via the camera lens many a moment of joy in our family and many a moment of father engrossed in painting in the photos, a large part of which get selected for our family photo albums. Father once wrote about his art. Although it was a short essay, he cherished it with lasting respect and gratitude. On the eve of getting his first photography collection published, he has honored me with the commission to write a preface. He is aware that I am a self-taught novice art critic with a capacity to write about art in English as well as in Chinese, mostly thanks to the privilege of growing up in an artist's family with a constant exposure to varied artworks. To his mind, this experience of mine outweighs a certain level of fame demanded for writing an introduction to an art catalogue — jokingly referred to as WIAC in Umberto Eco's essay "How To Write an Introduction to an Art Catalogue."

The photographer's choice of snowy New York as the subject for the photography collection is not a whimsical idea. A non-native New Yorker and unlike those relocated in the metropolitan city from other states, Shuchun belongs in E. B. White's category of those, who, born elsewhere, came to New York in quest of something. In his case, he has chased after the Muse all the way from Shanghai to New York City. Versatile and resourceful, he has been engaged in multiple mediums of art including oil painting, photography, art design, and antiques repair, each of which enriches the other in a way it could not have possibly perked itself up to a higher notch had it restricted to its own bounds. For him, all the art mediums, not differentiated as high or low, are but representations of his sensory experience. Photography hence does not serve as a housemaid for painting. By the same token, art design and antiques repair can inspire his work in photography and painting. All of them go hand in hand with one another to catch the moments that stir ripples in his heart.

On the visual spectrum of New York City, the scenes shrouded in snow are the very ones evoking his nostalgia, especially for his carefree childhood associated with fantasies and fairytales. By extension, they also bring to mind the lyricism of Chinese literati running in his bloodstream. That is why he goes all out to freeze the varied scenes of New York City with his digital camera, from light to heavy, icy to moderate, hustle to hush — with all the feats enveloped in cityscapes and snowscapes. Rather than relish a sense of kitsch, his digital camera allows him to do a barrage of snapshots with emotional rawness, on-the-spot immediacy, and pictorial rapture. His refusal to submit to a photoshop makeover speaks volumes about the pursuit of these artful effects.

To a large extent, his oeuvre is representational with his marks left on it. To integrate the ingredients of *chinoiserie* into the snowy landscapes seems to be the style he works with and on that score he triumphs as a photographer.

As a self-trained art critic with few principles to fall back on, I approach his photography sampling with an attempt to "see more, to hear more, to feel more," a classic sensory canon loosely known as the erotics of art proposed by Susan Sontag. The reason lies in that his photos first and foremost keep track of and highlight his own sensory experiences and they in turn invite the viewer to interact with the

oeuvre to savor the pleasures of seeing more, hearing more, and feeling more.

With scanty snow visible on the metro staircase, 42nd Street Metro Entrance, for instance, is more like a cityscape than a snowscape. The photo speaks for itself as part of the landmark Broadway with an enormous billboard of the musical *Mary Poppins* towering on the left of the staircase in the foreground. Standing around the metro entrance are some globe-shaped lamplights, in the design of curvilinear floral forms, reminiscent of the art-nouveau-styled metro entrances famous in the city of Paris. Aside from two cars double-parking in front of a café, there is no crowd swelling up the street except for a few passengers hidden behind the staircase leading to the platforms below. Paradoxically, despite the street-front theaters, coffee shops and even a McDonald's standing side by side, the visual complexity conveys an Oz-like hush in contrast with the hustle and bustle notoriously associated with the downtown area. The feel of tranquility, unusual and almost on the verge of being eerie, gets accentuated in *Empty Chair*, a photo taken in the Central Park. In the center of the photo is a close-up of a park chair with a thick layer of snow covering the seat, part of which is rendered in shadow and part in sunlight, exemplifying a binary principle of yin and yang. The snow depicted in a light-to-heavy range sets off the double-barred back and the legs of the park chair. Uncovered by any snow, the dark calligraphy-like frame defined by the bars and legs looks like a skeletal structure, with the contrast subdued between blacks and whites. As if lying in the remotest corner of a hushed land to be coated with snow layer after layer, this empty park chair gives a feel of the Chinese literati longing for peace and reclusion from the sound and fury of urban life.

In this photography collection, there are a series of reed- and tree-based works echoing the said literati sentiments and the pictorial joy of water-and-ink painting. *Morning Reeds*, for instance, is illustrative of these pursuits on the part of the photographer. With the sea captivated in three chunky color areas — silvery white, indigo gray, and mustard gray — to serve as the background, a small shrub of reeds shoots from the upper right corner of the composition. As a few thin stems are broken, the tussles are bowing low, while others are still bracing the icy wind to welcome the sunrise with a fresh refill of life force. In the photograph entitled *The Tree of Life*, the accent of vitality is expressed in the crumpled yet enduring magenta-hued leaves, resistant to the snow, blizzard, and all, in the dead of winter. Taken in the Central Park, the scene of ageless quality is divorced from the specifics of time and place, with nothing to do with the sentimental overtone dominant in, say, O. Henry's "Last Leaf."

In this photography album, a large part of the oeuvre owes something to the characteristic of lyric abstraction crucial to the Chinese literati spirit. But the question of intelligibility hardly arises. Nothing is found to hold back the urge to see more, hear more, and feel more on the part of the viewer, mostly by dint of the immediacy of the snapshots that have not undergone darkroom trickery, multiple exposures, or digital manipulation. Devoid of any dash of *trompe l'œil* magic, these snow-based photographs, straight yet creative, find expression in the literati-inspired representation of the photographer's sensory perception of New York City.

序

沈黎

劉樹椿是我們一家人的老友，與父親柔堅是忘年之交，隨後，又一一成為我們每個人的朋友，包括我年輕的女兒小唯唯。樹椿曾用嫺熟的技巧用相機鏡頭捕捉我們合家歡樂的畫面，還留下了父親專心致志作畫的珍貴照片，他的攝影作品一直保存在家庭的相冊中。父親曾撰寫過短文評論樹椿的藝術作品，他視若珍寶，感念至今。在他首部影集即將出版之際，應他之邀，我有幸為他作序。但凡替藝術作品集或目錄寫序，為序者須有相當的知名度，意大利著名作家埃柯（Umberto Eco）在“怎樣為藝術圖錄寫序”（How To Write an Introduction to an Art Catalogue）一文中，曾將此類“寫手”諷稱為WLAC。樹椿知道我生于藝術之家，長期接觸各類藝術作品，耳濡目染，是無師自通的藝術評論新手，且又能用中英雙語撰寫藝術評論，對他而言，我這一經歷的價值遠勝于如上所述的“知名度”。

作為攝影家，樹椿選擇紐約雪景作為影集的題材，絕非一時之間心血來潮。樹椿不是土生土長的紐約人，也非從別州遷居紐約的美國人；他屬於美國作家懷特（E. B. White）所寫的第三類人紐約人，即生于異鄉，來紐約追求自己的夢想。從上海到紐約迢迢萬裏，樹椿一路追尋自己的繆斯女神。樹椿多才多藝，通曉多類藝術手段，包括油畫、攝影、藝術設計和古玩古畫等修復。他主張兼收并蓄的手法，使藝術媒質相得益彰，不再各自為營。在他看來，各類藝術載體並無高低之分，均能用來表現自己的藝術感受，攝影因而不再被視為繪畫的侍婢；同樣道理，藝術設計與古玩古畫修復亦能給他帶來攝影與繪畫創作的靈感，這些藝術媒介交相輝映，以不同的方式表現令他怦然心動的景色。

紐約的景色多姿多彩，那白雪皚皚的景色特別能勾起了他對故鄉的思念，那無憂無慮的童年，充滿了各種幻想與童話的色彩，同時也激活了流淌在他血液裏的那種中國文人的詩興，催促他使用一臺數碼相機去跟踪紐約繽紛變幻的雪景，一幕幕，一幅幅，或明或暗，或鬧或靜，或凜冽或溫馨，市景與雪景，盡收眼底；用數碼相機拍出的一連串快照，無需后期加工，却得心應手地創造出難于企求的即興效果。樹椿的作品具像寫實，頗具個人色彩，匠心獨運地運用中國繪畫風格來表現紐約雪景。作為一名無師自通的藝術評論家，我缺乏可以依靠的條條框框，所以特別推崇美國人文藝術精英桑太格（Susan Sontag）的藝術信條，她注重直觀感覺與體驗，將“看得更多，聽得更多，感受得更多”作為

藝術評論的宗旨。我選擇這樣的角度，是因為樹椿的攝影作品本來就著重于凸顯他本人的直觀感覺，這就自然地引發讀者與之分享“看得更多，聽得更多，感受得更多”的藝術樂趣。以《42號街地鐵入口》為例，地鐵樓梯上的積雪稀疏零落，使得這幅作品看起來更像街景而不像雪景。百老匯音樂劇Mary Poppins的巨幅廣告在背景中赫然聳立，地鐵樓梯處于前景，無人上上下下。地鐵入口周圍矗立着一些球形路燈，曲線如花朵般玲瓏，令人聯想起巴黎城中以新藝術風格著稱的地鐵入口。畫面上除了汽車雙行停靠在一家咖啡館外，街上幾乎不見人影，只能透過地鐵的樓梯依稀看到寥寥幾名路人。耐人尋味的是，儘管面朝大街的劇院緊緊挨着那家咖啡館，旁邊還有一家麥當勞，此刻的景色却透出一股神秘的靜謐，靜謐得甚至有些詭異，與市中心常有的熱鬧和喧囂形成強烈的反差。這種異乎尋常的靜謐也回蕩在《空椅》之中。作品攝于中央公園，畫面正中是一張公園長椅的特寫，上面覆蓋着厚厚一層積雪，一半被籠罩在陰影裏，另一半沐浴在陽光中，活脫體現了陰陽兩儀之道。在積雪由明及暗的烘托下，未被積雪覆蓋的雙欄椅背和椅腳顯出一幅鏤空的骨架，白雪與黑影從而形成鮮明的對照。這張空蕩蕩的椅子，宛如栖身于寂靜之上的遙遠角落，任憑落雪層層覆蓋，在鬧市的喧囂中渴求寧靜歸隱，那不正是中國文人心緒的寫照嗎？樹椿的影集裏有一系列以蘆葦和樹木為主題的作品，以凸現文人畫的酣暢情懷。《清晨的蘆葦》表現的恰是心靈的追求，畫面背景是色彩斑駁的大海，跨越銀白、藍灰和黃灰三色；小小一叢蘆葦，從畫面右上角斜逸而出。數莖蘆葦已然斷折，葦絮低垂；其余的則依然在寒風中傲然挺立，迎接旭日，期待着新生命力的注入。題為《生命之樹》的照片也攝于中央公園，樹干上褐黃色的葉片雖已皺折不堪，却透着永恒的“生命力”的氣概，在深冬嚴寒中傲霜鬥雪。這亘古的贊美生命的主題，超然游離于具體的時空之外，毫無哀傷之情，也無意用《最後一片樹葉》（美國短篇小說家歐·亨利（O'Henry）的名篇）來賺取心酸的眼泪。

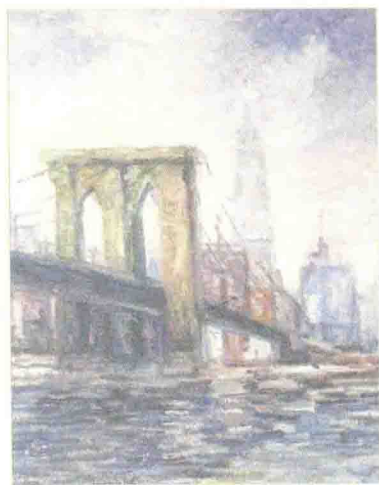
樹椿攝影集裏的大部分作品頗具大寫意的韵味，表達了中國文人精神的精髓。儘管抽象，却又明了，有助于人們“看得更多，聽得更多，感受到更多”。他從不倚賴暗室技術、多次暴光、障眼法、數碼特技等名目繁多的花招，而是追求原汁原味直白而又富有創意的表現形式，以心中的文人情懷淋漓盡致地表達自己眼中的紐約景象。

■ 都市風情

CITYSCAPE

都市風情	■	Cityscape
中央公園	□	Central Park
住宅民居	○	Residential
海邊河流	△	Beach & River
生命之樹	◇	The Tree Of Life





*S*now, a nature
mercies kindly sent.
blowing, blowing every
where,
brings joy and pure
recalls with its plain yet
rich hue...

雪，大自然的恩賜物。
飛雪漫天，飄飄悠悠，帶給人們歡
樂、純潔的回憶；樸素而有色彩……



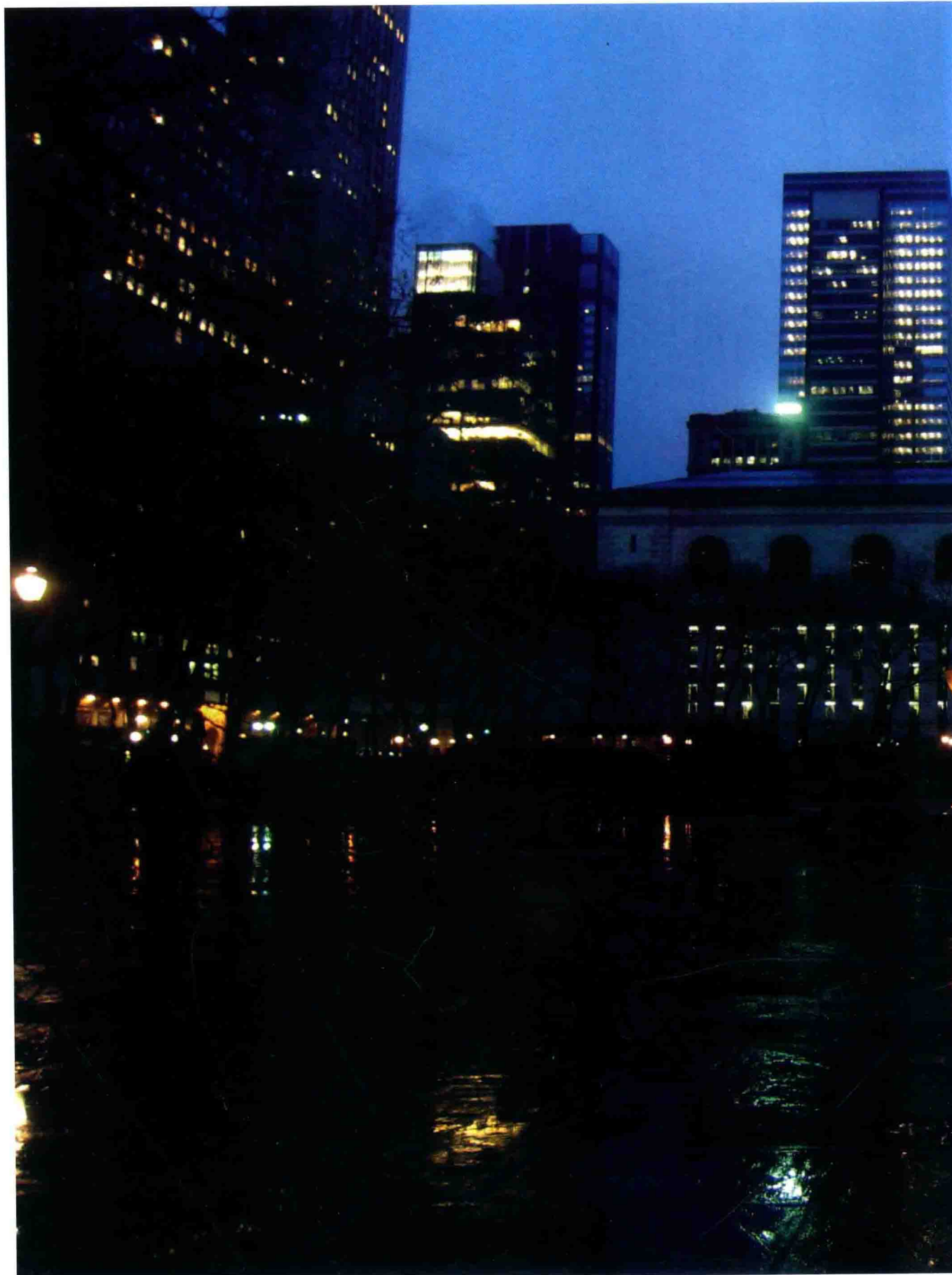


hello · 你好



Splendid · 流光溢彩





Library surroundings · 圖書館夜色





Washington Square · 夜在華盛頓廣場



Merry Christmass · 聖誕之樂