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摄
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集

Photographie Album of

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VESTLGES

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ANCIENT

片

CAPITAL



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旧 京 残 片

沈继光摄影集

Photographic Album of Shen Jiguang

VESTIGES



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ANCIENT
CAPITAL

人民美術出版社

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BELIEF

信念



人，一生倾其全部心血，大约只能做一件事。到了弥留之际，仍会感到事情没有做完，不如人意。

他属于自己的天性了。想探索地平线那一边的奥秘吗？就要不断往前走，但也知道地平线将不断随之前移。

他以不能实现为最终的目标。

在相反情感与理念的交织磨难中，似乎有点自自然然了。

一切都是悖论，都是相反相成，都是互为代价，都是一种流动的循环。

Man's life is only able to do a thing throw all one's energy. On one's deathbed, man feels still the matters are not over and are not just as you wish.

He belongs to his own nature. He expects to explore the secrets of those one side of the horizon, he will want to walk uncesingly ahead, but he knew the horizon would move unceasingly along with his exploring to one.

He took unable to realize one as final aim. Ir interweaving and hardship feeling with ideas it look as if it is nature.

All are contrary to reason and opposite and complementary to each other, interact as cost and is a moving in endless cycle.

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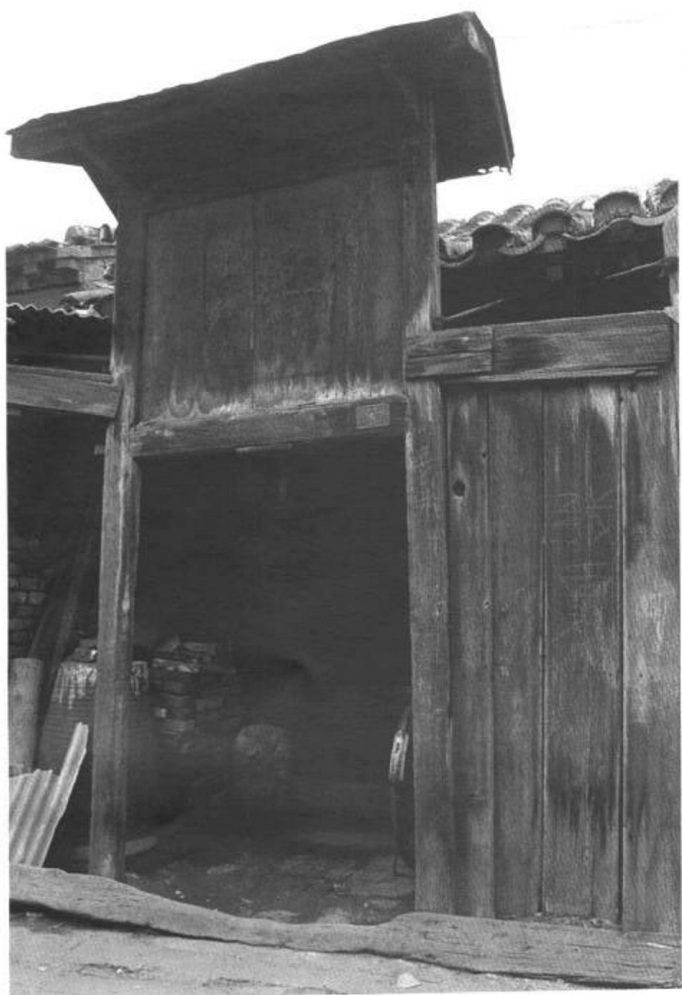
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序

我是在北京胡同中长大的，自然对它有着十分深厚的感情。每每望见那被风雨剥蚀了的老墙，在老槐深荫下伫立着的旧宅门，心中就会油然而生发出一种亲切缅怀的感情，使我总忍不住要驻足深情地多望上它几眼。胡同是北京人生活的空间，人们岁岁年年在那里与它相依相伴，以它为舞台，编织了几代人的悲喜剧和许多平凡的故事。它是社会和历史的见证者，也是它们的产物。尽管它已经显得很衰老了，尽管它已变得几乎有些面目全非了，但我们从它的身上，或者透过它的某一个侧面或局部，仍能想像到它昔日的风采是多么的楚楚动人，或者回想起它和我们北京人相联系着的许多事情。

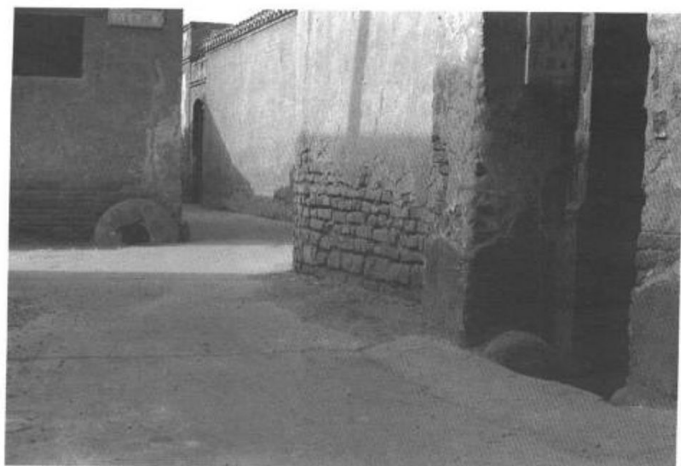
北京的胡同是美的，这种美既是外在的也是内含着的：端庄、大度、朴厚而耐人品味，很像我们北京人一样的为人品性。其实这也不奇怪，因为它毕竟是北京人创造的艺术。它的每一个宅院的造型、风格虽然不同，但它们都能很自然地统一在胡同的整体空间氛围内；它的每一条胡同的样子虽然都能使我们一眼就区分出来，但千百条胡同却是那么融洽地依附于整座的城市，就像城中的一条条血脉，少了哪条也不成。它们和那些巍峨的皇城宫殿、宏大排场的道观寺庙、笔直宽敞的通行大道一样，共同造就了整个北京的形象，是整座城市造型结构中不可或缺的重要组成部分。您若依样画葫芦，或干脆原模原样地把它复制后搬迁到世界其他国家的城市中，它的味道就没了。它

Ganjing hutong



有雨搭的木门

甘井（原乾井）胡同



Xibeiuanerxiang lane

西北园二巷



Xicha Hutong

石水槽

西岔胡同（原惜薪司西岔）

的美是被整体制约着的，当然，它也充实着城市的整体。另外，它不能离开我们中华民族生存的环境。

对于具有深厚的历史、人文和艺术价值并在世界城市建筑领域内风格独具的这样一座古城的改造，依我有点近于天真和理想化的想法是：尽量把它较完整地保存下来，然后在它的旁边再开发一座既现代化又有中国特色的新城市，使新旧两座城池相映成辉。即或退一步考虑：我们没有相应的财力和物力这样做，那么，也应从深邃的历史发展眼光，请专家学者集中智慧搞出一个既保持有旧北京风格又适合现代社会要求的整体城市规划设计方案，并立下严格的规定——任何一个局部或细节的改造建设立项，都必须服从整体要求！

然而，在旧城改造的漫长过程中，曾经出现了许多令人扼腕痛心的事情——世界上最有特色、规模最大、保存最完整的北京城墙和城楼的拆毁，即是一例。

我们的城市建设日新月异，特别是北京市的现代化步伐迈得很大，成就令世人瞩目，受到广泛称赞。但是，也间或能听到一些微辞甚至尖锐的批评（当然，如果很中肯的话，也会变成一种建议）。有一次，我问及一位美国有些名气的建筑家对北京的观感，他说：“不少的局部很美，但是作为一座大城市，它的整体轮廓线不清晰！”我是个画家，当然知道，如果我在自己的画布上未能将要描绘对象的整体轮廓勾画清楚、准确，该是件多么难堪的事情。

旧的轮廓基本失去了，新的轮廓又还模糊不清，我们只有亡羊补牢，尽全力弥补就是了。可是，近些年新建成的高楼大厦，却仍是“各唱各的调，各敲各的锣”，声音很不和谐。譬如王府井大街那一片儿：一座宏大的厅馆，是个“立正”姿势，左邻再盖的一座高楼就来了个“稍息”动作，过两年，斜对面的广场上又拔起一座楼宇，干脆来了个“向右转”。像这样断断续续勾画轮廓，不注意从整体上树立城市形象的建筑行为，至今在不少地方仍在重复进行着。想到此，我不禁要问一句：“北京，您将来的轮廓到底是啥模样？”在这种心情下，倘佯在几乎要被一片片高楼大厦淹没了的北京旧胡同中，我便时常像望见一件残破不全的古代陶罐或泛着历史光泽的旧陶片，想像起那件古陶最原初的全貌一样，唤起对老北京全貌的追忆。是的，遗存下来的旧宅老胡同，仍旧能够折射出历史，带给人们许多依恋旧城的精神慰藉。

正是出于这样一种情感和认识，我很看重沈继光先生的劳作成果，同时，也很感佩他的那种为着一种纯真善良的愿望的实现，而十几年如一日的直取不舍的精神。

但愿我们能向沈先生拍摄的这些照片中的建筑，在十几年后仍能问上一句“您好”！

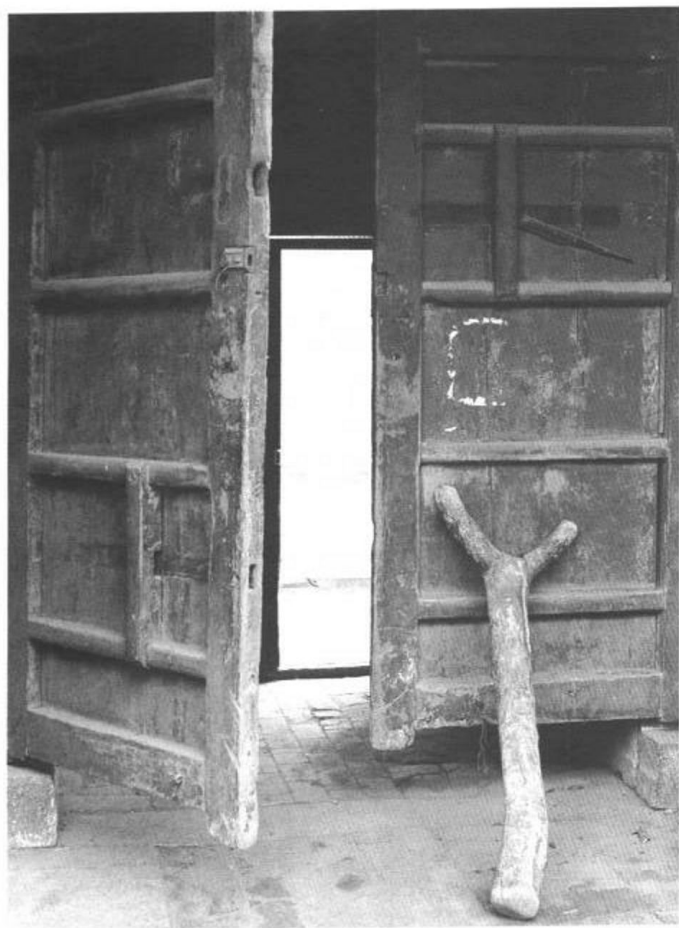
1997年7月9日

by Liu Yushan

PREFACE

I was born and grew up in Peking's hutongs (lanes), and naturally, I have profound feelings for them. Whenever I see the weather-beaten old city walls, the old doorways under the shades of old Chinese scholar trees, a nostalgia will well up in my heart, and I cannot but stop and watch them with fond feelings. Hutongs are living space of Peking citizens, which have served as a stage where sad and happy stories of generations are performed. They have witnessed the changes of society and history, and are also a product of them. In spite of the fact that they are age-old and some of them are changed beyond recognition, yet from these hutongs or a single aspect of them, we can still imagine how delicate and charming they used to be or we can bring to mind so many things associated with them.

Peking's hutongs are beautiful inside as well as outside. They are dignified, generous, simple and honest, and thought-provoking, very much like the quality of Peking citizens. This is no wonder because they are creation by Peking citizens after all. Any courtyard is different from another, though they are all unified in the entire space of a hutong. And any hutong differs from another, but all hutongs are harmoniously dependent on the whole of the city, and just like the blood veins in a body, none is dispensable. Along side with those majestic-looking palaces, magnificent temples, straight and wide boulevards, they make up the whole image of Peking, an important part of the city. If you make a copy of it and place it in any other country in the world, it will appear out of place altogether. For its beauty lies in its entire entity, and it also enriches the city. Besides, it cannot live if it is up-



Dongyangmaying

门户

东养马营某院



rooted from its Chinese living environment.

In my opinion, which might sound naive and idealistic, the best way to transform a city with such historical, anthropological and cultural value and its uniqueness in the world's architecture is to preserve the entire ancient city and build up a modern one with Chinese characteristics beside it, with the old and the new setting off each other and forming a pleasant contrast. If that cannot be attained because of the of financial and material strength, we should ask experts to pool their wisdom to draw up a complete construction plan which will preserve the style and features of old Peking and comply with the needs of modern society. A paramount principle should be followed: any partial or detailed alteration must comply with the needs of the entirety.

in the long course of transforming the old city, however, there have happened so many distressing things. For one thing, the demolition of the city walls, the most unique, gigantic and intact city walls of the world are destroyed.

Our construction of the cities is changing their faces day by day, and especially, construction in Peking has made big strides, its achievements being admired and praised by the whole word. We have, however, also heard mild and strong criticisms (of course, if they are correct, they can serve as suggestions). Once I asked an American architect of some reputation for his impressions of Peking. He said, "Parts of the city are simply beautiful, but as a whole, the city lacks clarity!" As a painter, I certainly understand how

embarrassing it would be if I failed to give a clear image of the whole picture.

Now that the old image has lost while the new is not clear enough, we have to try our best to make up for it. Regrettably, tall buildings have been put up these recent years in the way that "each paints in his own way", presenting a most disharmonious picture. Take that section at Wangfujing Street. A magnificent-looking hall "stands attention", while to its left a tall building "stands at ease", and in two years another tall building will be erected across the square, which will "turn right". Construction without consideration for the entirety like that has repeated again and again. I cannot but ask, "What will you look like in the future, my dear Peking?" In such a mood I linger a bout in the hutongs which are being drowned in the seas of tall, modern buildings. At such a sight I cannot help thinking of the features of old Peking as if I saw in a broken piece the whole appearance of an ancient clay vase. Yes, indeed, the existent old houses and hutongs still reflect the city's original, historic features, bringing to people some nostalgic, spiritual condolence over the ancient city.

It is out of this feeling and awareness that I highly appreciate Mr. Shen Jiguang's fruits of hard labor. Meanwhile, I adore his unswerving spirit to materialize his pure and good-will wishes in the past decade and more.

May we wish to be able to say "hello" again to the buildings in his pictures in a decade's time.

残片古城

一位惯于用画笔、画布工作的美术家，在由1984到1996的十几年时间里，利用业余时间，几乎走遍了北京东西两城以及宣武、崇文的所有胡同，有的胡同甚至不止篋了一过，拍摄了约1600张照片，从中精选出200余幅，于是有了这本专题摄影集。在几年前的“胡同热”之后，已有过不止一部拍摄胡同的作品集面世，我相信那绝非重复劳动。不同的摄影者以其各自对胡同的诠释，丰富了对京城这巨大文本的理解。

这或者会让“文化研究者”——如此密集的京城学界感到惭愧。我在一篇随笔中，谈到自己对所处城市的“熟视无睹”：“其实对那些日日面对的城市符号，何尝真地推究过它们的文化意义，以至这城市的意义结构！我们陶醉于‘古城’这字样引出的‘历史苍凉感’、‘世事沧桑感’，满足于现成而陈旧的意义之境，从来不曾试图像海上评论家那样读上海，当然更没有能力也不力图像罗兰·巴特读埃菲尔铁塔那样读故宫、广场、天桥等等，而它们每一件都经得住过细的解读。我们甚至不曾做一些最基础的工作，比如依‘城市学’已提供的线索，对有关这巨大实体的文献进行分类清理……我们尚未认真将‘北京’作为学术的对象……”这里所说，当然包括我自己。而我被沈继光的摄影作品所吸引，也正在这种时候。

沈继光所提供的这部专题摄影集，其取材几乎覆盖了整个北京老城。他漫长的摄影之旅由胡同出发——在这里他曾久久留连——终于踏勘至他最初构想未及的京城的其他部分：紫禁城，大学……由专注于这城正在消逝的部分，到将这城变动中的景观收摄入镜头，他摄取了在时间中经历着自身命运的重大



Doujiao Hutong

门联：春秋多佳日，礼义为丰年。

豆角胡同



锦帽胡同

变动的北京，同时将他本人的情感历程也摄入其中。这期间有过上面说到的“胡同热”，一批有关胡同的书，突然间摆上了京城的大小书摊；紧接其后的，是“怀旧”被作为文化批评者的话题，但这些似都与沈继光无干。他仍日复一日地背着他的摄影器材，在胡同中作无尽头的搜寻。几年前的一天，我不意在厂甸遇到了他，当时他正穿着工作服，俯身向墙，专心致志地拍摄有着“宝祥窑”印文的墙砖。那是个休息日，他的四周走动着的休闲的人们。他曾说起过眼看着同行纷纷下海，“似乎坚实的海岸反倒危险了”。而他自己却“死心塌地地站在岸的土地上，拿着一根断枝，画自己所爱的那个圆”。在我看来，在被极尽形容的“大众文化”的火爆喧嚣中，沈继光选择的，正是对艺术以及经由艺术对自己生存价值的孤独坚守。

海上友人写过题为《城市伊甸园——漫游者的行踪》的书，在那本书中将自己界定为“观望者”。沈继光所作的显然不是这种意义上的“漫游”及“观望”，他自认为与其所拍摄的城市息息相关。但他这并不意味着无所批判的认同。他拍摄了古城的被时间剥蚀、其作为人的生存环境所发生的变化。而在我看来更有意义的仍然是沈继光以他自己的方式对“城”与“人”的关联的诠释。他在胡同里不停地游走，不只因被物态所吸引，而更像是为了感受历史时间，思索个人与历史，寻绎他与世界的那一种联系。当然他为此而选择胡同（而非新建筑拔起的长安街），绝非出于偶然。他并不讳言他的“怀念”。倘若超越“时尚”的视野，不妨承认怀旧是人类永远的情感流向，植根于人的经验与意识活动的深处；而在现代化的过程中，它

也有可能提供反思现代性的一个维度的吧。

阅读他有关北京的全部摄影作品，收入和未收入此集的，你会发现沈继光对局部、片断的偏好。局部、片断——他称之为“残片”，无疑寄寓着他最深刻的生活印象，以至形成了他把握对象的基本方式。“残片”式的世界形象中，有为他所感知的生活世界的破碎、崩解，以及古城原有的文化和谐的消失。他不但拒绝制造有关“整一”的幻觉，而且拒绝“艺术”意义上的光润、装饰性，拒绝甜俗。他的近于苛刻挑剔的艺术感觉，比如他对“质朴、单纯、浑厚、未完成性”以至“草图效果”、“漫不经心”的偏好（他一再告诉我说，“完美多少都有平庸的感觉”），也使得他宁取朴拙而不惜放弃“标准构图”的对称、均衡。你不难想到，他对冬季的偏好自与郁达夫理由不同。他所迷恋的似乎不是“北方生活的伟大幽闲”（郁达夫《北平的四季》），而是冬季剔除了修饰的庄重、素朴、沉静。他对于“断梗残蒂”的审美爱好，在我看来，甚至有某种偏执的意味。

与此相关，你还会注意到这位业余摄影师对“凝定”与“厚重”的偏爱。他所拍摄的“墙”的系列，“门”的系列，以近于固定的机位，以有意的角度的重复，呈示块、面；以严整的构图，展示给你砌在砖石中的人的生存环境、生活态度（门上的对联是物象又是对此的文字注脚）。这些气象不同的老门老墙，或俨然，或温煦，固然提示着你不同的人的故事——可供连续而成城的故事，那种已由实人生抽离的静态，又含有某种抽象意味。你更经作者的引导，由这类精心选取的空间形象感受时间，刻画于物态的时间。在这一种读解下，照片上呈现于墙体、门面的诸种岁月侵



Xixinglongjie street

门联：多文为富，和神当春。

西兴隆街



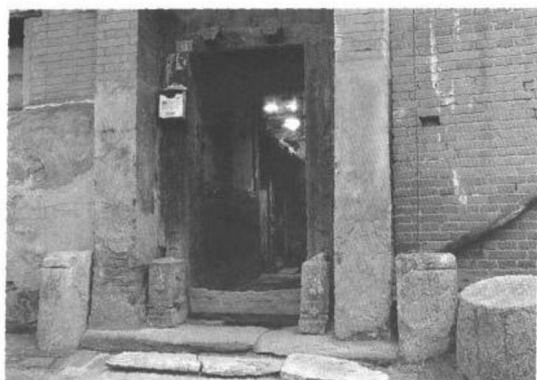
Nanyudai Hutong

南玉带胡同

蚀的痕迹，都即刻生动起来，也使你的历史感随之生动。这部摄影集，更适于读作关于“时间”的文本。

你当然也会注意到，较之那类公认具标志性的城市建筑，沈继光借助摄影机镜头久久注视着的，更是那些与普通人生相关的琐屑物件。半蚀的青铜门钹，凹状的门槛，用作护墙的磨盘、柱础、石碾、石臼，长着瓦松的屋顶，沿街的水缸，门楼里的藤椅和小板凳，鸟笼、花盆与鱼缸……这也是其作品中最有“怀旧”气息的部分。人的文化感情总是附丽于“物”的。对此，《红楼梦》提供了经典性例证。你还不难想到张岱的《陶庵梦忆》。甚至如王夫之那样严肃的学者、思想家，也写过《杂物赞》。当穷居荒山之时，借记忆中的“杂物”，怀念一种不能复现的生存形态、生活方式。沈继光借助于摄影机的镜头，读一座消失中的大城，捕捉其呈现于夕阳余晖中的苍凉姿态，所传达的不止是一个城市的文化变迁，也是一般所谓的历史推移、时间迁流的消息，和这动荡、流转留在“物”也即“普通人生”之上的印痕。他力图赋予个人化的时间经验以表达上的朴素与亲切。

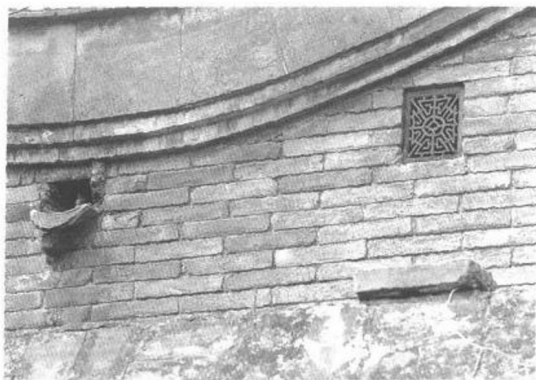
凭借摄影机的镜头，他也注视那些具有一般文献意义的对象，如砖雕字号的三义厚广货庄，益记布庄，阳平会馆的戏楼，以至第一助产学校基石，等等。在拍摄中更慎用技巧，惟恐技巧遮蔽了“历史”（主要是近代历史）杂沓参差的遗痕。他要的是绝无修饰的“文献性”——当然这只能在有限的意义上达到。摄取即选择，即修辞。无技巧也正是一种技巧。但你仍愿意理解沈继光的如下意图，即让对象“自己”发声，让它们自己述说自己。他甚至确信听懂了客体那“厚实的语言”。尽管这“客观性”在事实上，不能不是对



院门

小江（原小蒋家）胡同

Xiaojiang Hutong



疏通

南篦子胡同

Nanbizi Hutong

摄影者作为主体的另一种强调。作者无法逃离这种悖论式的处境。

但上述追求确也导致了表达上的特殊效果。他的摄影语言的庄重、其情感的沉郁，是富于感染力的。你会注意到这些影像的色调偏于冷、暗。“色调”作为对“老城”的更直观的诠释，参与了价值态度、文化感情的表达。这部摄影集的凝重的调子，却又并非仅由洗印等技术手段，而是由贯穿作者创作过程的“态度”、由作品的整体格调构成。文化意境，也正是沈继光所着力追求的东西。此外你还不难感到，沈继光强调他作为摄影师的“业余”身份。他有意地在摄影作品中保存画家的形式感及对空间形式的把握方式。绘画因素的进入，又使朴质见出新鲜。然而拍摄“时间”者自身毕竟在时间中。我发觉沈继光近期的摄影作品似趋于精致。他自己也不可能不承受时间的作用，有得到与失去。但你也因此可以向他期待更多，即使他所提供的未必都能使你满足。

当摄影作品不足以发抒其文化感怀，沈继光也诉诸文字。于是有那些标题或“无题”。在几年间写给我的信中，他一再表达了他的追求。他谈到他所倾心的“真度”，说“一个汉瓦当的残片，一个明末窗棂的雕花，一个四代人使用过的铜烛台”这些有关当时社会风范的提示，远胜于精心的艺术加工之作。他说他所关注的并非建筑形式，而是有赖文化素养“才能品出的气息与味道”。他说，“浮面地表达眼睛所看到的东西”不是他的目标。他说，“当看到一片片青堂瓦舍的旧院被拆除，往日的门墩、上马石、护墙的磨盘埋入了建筑工地的地基里”，他“强烈地感觉到一个时代就要嵌入地层了”，他要用摄影机表达的，正有这

“感觉”而不止于“事实”。早在1992年的一封信里，他就说到，他的拍摄胡同“只是找到了个契机——发言的契机”，以便表达一个人在目前社会变动中的感喟与思考。在读了这部摄影集之后，你会认为在借诸镜头的“思考”中，沈继光所达到的是值得羡慕的。并非每个人都有能力思考，更非每个人都能找到表达其思考的方式。在某种意义上，表达更其艰难。表达就是思考。

当然，这并不意味着我对他的思考无所保留，事实上我总发现我与沈继光思路的参差。在一个急剧变动着的时代，这是再正常不过的事。我曾不以为然于他为作品所拟的某些标题，提醒他“怀旧”这一种文化感情可能包含的偏蔽，甚至说到胡同作为生存环境，它的缺陷，它的不合理。但怀旧之为价值选择，在不同的历史情境、语境中，从来有不同的意味。何况他的摄影作品，传达的是远较“怀念”复杂的信息！

我得以结识这位摄影家，是由我的一本关于胡同的书为媒介。上文已说到我的惭愧，我经由小说文本读“城”这大本，远不如沈继光的细致与坚韧。他的摄影作品令我印象深刻的，就有这执拗而专注的凝视。那不只是对古城也是对“历史”的凝视。在这由商业大潮随处引起的漂浮与迁流中，这略如岩石的固守，也足以令人起敬的吧。何况沈继光非常清楚自己做什么，他有他所喜爱的那个圆。在你翻开这部摄影集的时候，会恍然看到那个死心塌地地站在岸上的艺术家，正用他手中的那根断枝，画着他自己的那个圆的吧。

1997年2月

VESTIGES OF THE ANCIENT CAPITAL



Cuzhang Hutong

A painter who is accustomed to his paint brush and cloth, Mr. Shen Jiguang, making use of his spare time, went over again and again all the lanes in the Eastern, Western and Xuanwu Districts, and managed to have taken 1,600 pictures during the past decade and more from 1984 to 1996. He selected about 300 from the pictures to make it an album, and thus produced a great work of art, which records faithfully the vestiges of ancient Peking. Surely this is not the first album of such kind, especially after “the *hutong* craze”, a few other albums of such content had come out. I do not think Shen’s is a redundant work, for each photographer has his/her own interpretation of the *hutongs*, thus enriching our appreciation of the ancient capital Peking.

Perhaps that would make the scholarly circles of the capital, where so many “cultural researchers” are gathered, feel rather shameful. In one of my essays, I criticized myself for “turning a blind eye to those familiar sights”: “As a matter of fact, we face those symbols of the city every day, but never delve into their cultural significance or not even the city’s meaningful structure! We are lost in our “desolate feelings for history” or “bleak feelings for the changes of the world” that rose from the two words “ancient city”. We have been self-complacent for the ready but outmoded sentimentality, never having tried to appreciate Shanghai as the over seas observers did, and of course, we have not been able to appreciate the Forbidden City, Tian An Men Square, Tian Qiao as Roland Butt did to Eiffel Tower. We have not

福 自教子胡同而东，有西砖胡同，中间横胡同叫醋章胡同，《顺天府志》作醋张胡同，有宏衍庵。稍南有小巷，叫门楼胡同，诗人龚自珍少时寓此。
醋章（原醋张）胡同



Zhuiba Hutong

古槐泰然，沧桑阅尽。

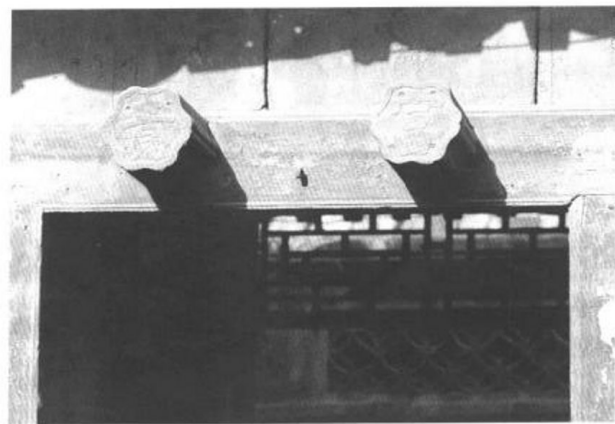
锥把胡同

even started such fundamental work as sorting out those documents about the great entity to which, “urbanology” has provided with clues...We have not yet made serious studies of Peking as an object for scholarly studies. I was among the criticized, needless to say, and it was at that moment that my attention was arrested by Shen’s photographs.

The materials for Shen’s album came from almost all parts of the old urban areas of Peking. His photo journey started from *hutongs*, where he had long lived, and covered those parts of Peking, which he had at first given no thought of: the Forbidden City, universities, etc. As he focused on those parts of the city which were disappearing, he took in the city’s changes, a Peking that was undergoing great changes, fused with his own emotions. During that period, there was the “*craze for hutongs*” with a large number of books about hutongs displayed in book stalls in the streets; and soon afterwards, “nostalgia” had become a topic of the day for the cultural critics. Shen, however, did not seem to have anything to do with them. Day after day, he traveled from hutong after hutong, carrying his camera, to search for what he wanted. One day a few years ago, I bumped into him at Changdian, where I found him stooping over something on the wall and made a picture of it with all his attention. That was a brick engraved with “Bao Xiang kiln”. It was a weekend and around him were people enjoying themselves. He once said that when he saw his colleagues “going down to

the sea” (a present day jargon for “go in for business”), he felt that “the firm and strong shore seems to be shaky and dangerous”. But “he stood firm on his ground, and holding a broken branch, he drew the circle he was fond of”. In the midst of the hubbub of “pop culture”, what Shen had chosen, in my opinion, was to hold on to art and its value of existence.

A book written by an overseas friend is entitled “Urban Eden—Footprints of a Roamer”, in which he defines himself as a “looker-on”. What Shen has done is certainly not “browsing” or “looking-on” in the sense of the expressions. He thinks he is closely bound with the city he is photographing. This, however, does not mean that he accepts it without criticism. He photographs the ancient city which is being corroded by time, and he records its changes as living environment. It seems to me, what is more significant is the relationship between “man” and “city” as interpreted by Shen in his peculiar way. He traveled through the hutongs, not merely attracted by what he saw, but it seemed more likely that he wanted to experience the past history, thinking of the individual and history and trying to search for the connection between himself and the world. It was not purely out of accident that he chose hutongs (but not the newly built Chang An Avenue). He does not try to cover up his “nostalgia”. If we transcend the vision of “fashion”, we may as well recognize that nostalgia has always been the trend of human sentiment and rooted in the deep of human experience and sense. Whereas this, in the course of



Dongsiquitiao

门簪：富贵。

东四七条(原七条胡同)

modernization, may provide some food for thought.

Going through Shen's photo works of Peking, either those are or not collected in the album, you can find his partiality for part and fragment. He calls such "part" or "fragment", as "vestiges", where, no doubt, dwell his deepest impressions of life, which has formed his basic method to deal with his objects. In the world of "vestiges" there is the broken living world, falling apart and the disappearing of cultural harmony of the ancient city. Not only does he reject the phantom of "entirety", but also "artistic" polishment, decoration and sweet vulgarity. His almost exacting sense of art, such as his partiality for "simplicity, purity and incompleteness" as well as "draft effect" and "carelessness" (he has told me again and again: "Perfection somehow gives the impression of mediocrity".) has made him adopt simplicity and clumsiness at the expense of symmetry and equilibrium of "standard composition". You can easily imagine that he has different reason for his fondness for winter from Yu Dafu's. What he is obsessed with is not "the great leisure of northern life" ("The Four Seasons in Peking" by Yu Dafu), but the solemnity, simplicity and quiet without embellishment. In my view, his fondness for "broken stalks and faded flowers" tends to be stubbornly biased.

In this connection, you will notice that this amateur photographer's partiality for "condensed stillness" and "heavy dignity". With the fixed position of the camera and



Langfangertiao

这是大栅栏廊房二条，临接前门大街的一段斜坡。石头仍是百年前铺的石头，条纹大约是防滑的，今天仍能防滑。

廊房二条东口



屋檐下

故宫东华门大街

the intentional repetition of the same angle, the “wall” series and the “gate” series he photographed present a complete composition of block and surface, displaying amongst bricks and stones human living environment and their attitude towards life (footnoted by the couplets on the doors). These different old doors and walls, either majestic-looking or affable-looking, provide you with stories, stories that can be made into a book, and its stillness that has been extracted from actual life implies certain abstractness. Moreover, guided by the author, you will, from the carefully selected photos, experience time, time that is depicted by reality. Viewing the photos in such a perspective, you will find the traces left by time on the walls and doors animated with history. Therefore, this album is more suitable to be regarded as a reading text of “time”.

Also you will notice that in contrast with those buildings of city’s landmarks, Shen’s camera has been focusing on those odd things of ordinary people: half-eroded bronze knockers, dented threshold, millstones as wall protection, pillar bases, stone rollers and mortars, roofs with tile moss, water vats along the lanes, cane chairs and wooden stools in the doorway, bird cages, flower pots and fish basins...all this being most “nostalgic”. People’s cultural sentiment is always dependent upon “things”. For this, the famous classic novel “Dream of Red Mansion” has provided classical evidence. You can also easily associate this with “Remembrance of Dreams at Tao Cottage” by Zhang Dai, “In Praise

of Knickknacks” by the serious scholar and thinker Wang Fuzhi, both by recalling “knick-knacks” they cherished the memory of the way of living and existence that cannot repeat itself. Shen Jiguang reads the disappearing metropolitan, in an attempt to catch its bleak poise in the setting sun, and what he conveys is not only the vicissitudes of a big metropolitan city, but also the information of passing history and time with traces of the turmoils in the “things” and “ordinary life”. He endeavors to entrust personalized time experience with simplicity and amiability.

By the lens of his camera, he also directs his attention to objects with documentary significance, such as San Yi Ho Goods Store with carved brick sign, Yi Ji Cloth Store, the opera stage of Yangping Guild Hall and the corner stone of the First Midwifery School. He takes great care of the techniques he employs for fear that they eclipse traces of “history” (mainly, of modern history). What he wants is “documentary” without ornament—of course, this can be attained in a limited sense. Viewing with a camera is selection, rhetoric in writing. Artlessness is a kind of art. You will understand Shen Jiguang’s intention: let the objects voice and explain themselves. Shen believes that he has understood the “substantial language” of the object, although this “objectiveness” actually cannot but be another form of emphasis on the photographer as the subject. And the author has no way to escape from the paradoxical situation.

The pursuit mentioned above leads to a special effect in