



Xie Hong Dong

Xie Hong Dong grew up in rural Gansu Province. He knew nothing about art or the contemporary art world and the idea of being an artist was unimaginable and nonexistent for him in his environment. It was worlds away from his life and experience.

At a young age he left home after middle school and traveled through China, observing and learning about his culture and the world around him. From Tianshui to Xi'an to Sichuan, Hubei, Fujian, Shandong, Qinhai, Yushu, Guangdong Xie kept moving on. He taught himself English and learned to cut hair to earn a living. Despite many hardships and no visible hope for a decent future, he still did not give up on his dream to find a way out, perhaps to even become an artist.

Little did he know, at the time, that these varied and lonely experiences would be the early foundation of his art education. Xie has proven that “experience is the best teacher.” In 2012 Xie’s wandering stopped, he decided to leave Shenzhen and made the move to Beijing to start a new life. After about a year he founded, what is now, a very successful hair studio and has become an integral part of the community in Cao Chang Di, Beijing. Living at the center of the Chinese art world Xie met many artists. As he began going to the local galleries, museums, studios, and reading new books, he began to take his photography more seriously.

One of his early projects was to return to his hometown and into the rural mountains to document the people and their pure way of life to help preserve the memory of a quickly vanishing culture in the new industrial China. His simple black and white portraits and landscapes go far deeper than what first meets the eye. He has a natural and learned ability to see past the surface of his subject matter to reveal deeper truths.

His humbling life experiences have given him a sensitivity that sees things most people just pass by. Whether he is working in color or black and white, abstract or landscape, portraits or interiors, they are all imbued with a sense of wonder, mystery, and love. Xie seeks out and reclaims that which is lost and forgotten, and brings it into the light, into our world, where we all can see, marvel at, and believe.

About his Photography Works

Threads of light and darkness weave in and out of the work of Xie Hong Dong. His work is as deep as it is simple. He finds in nature or in circumstances what is unseen and forgotten, and brings it out into the light, presenting it to us for the first time in his uniquely personal way. There are no digital manipulations, staging, or superimposing of photos to achieve surreal effects. He just photographs what he sees. His straightforward and honest approach to photography unlocks the beauty and the deeper truths of our natural world in unexpected and revelatory ways. He captures the spirit within the flesh and transforms them together into a new being.

Xie Hong Dong’s photographic work has been influenced by his experiences growing up in Gansu Province and through his travels in the rural areas of his home region, and throughout China. Xie states that “photography, for me, is about the ‘eye,’ or what we see, the ‘emotions,’ or what we feel when we see something, and the camera, the tool that records these elements.” By using both digital and 35mm film formats Xie has tried to preserve certain elements of nature, local cultures and people as a witness to them before they vanish and at the same time to uncover deeper and more eternal truths about them by creating new images through abstraction. By abstracting or manipulating images in different ways he creates new ones that have the ability to live on beyond their life span.

In his first exhibition, “Dust & Light,” Xie Hong Dong has selected images from several series of his photographic projects: abstract, landscape, and life portraits.

The first word in the exhibition’s title, “Dust,” recalls the ancient scriptures that say, “From dust you came and to dust you will return.” There is a bittersweet beauty in Xie’s work; grainy textures, labor in the shadow of the city, fallen trees, empty webs, blacks, grays, and whites, a brokenness and longing that seem to lead us to our ultimate destination; dust. But Xie does not leave us without hope for his photos are also imbued with a sense of impending light, a “Light” that is

about to break through the darkness and show us the way. A light that reveals the truth that we are not alone, that there is beauty even in the deepest shadow. He shows us that life is a journey; ecstatic, fearful, mysterious, a struggle, but in the end, through the lens of perseverance, creativity, and love all that is broken can be healed and all that is lost can be found.

Born: Gansu Province, China, 1985

Group Exhibition

2018 *Inside The Reed and Ice Crystal*, Stanley Fung and Xie Hong Dong's joint photography exhibition, Artrue, Taipei, Taiwan

Solo Exhibition

2016 *Dust and Light*, curated by James Elaine, Clerkenwell Space, Beijing, China
