

陶元浴素

CHINA

FACES

Black and White Images of Contemporary Chinese Ceramic Artists [Since 2009]

"Since 2009, as the chief photographer of Ceramic Science and Art magazine, planned and filmed the documentary portrait feature of 'China Faces - Black and White Images of Contemporary Chinese Ceramic Artists'. In the past 14 years, more than 700 contemporary Chinese ceramic artists, ceramic professors and experts, masters of arts and crafts, ceramic art masters, and ceramic craftsmen from production areas have been photographed and published in this magazine. In 2013, held a solo exhibition entitled 'China Faces - Black and White Images of Contemporary Chinese Ceramic Artists' at the Hangzhou Peace International Convention and Exhibition Center."



Photographer Gao Daqing

Profound Penetration Into both Vision and Soul

Exploring the Contemporary Ceramic Artist Gao Daqing's Black and White Visual Art Photography in "China Faces."

Written by Shen Qi



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The fundamental difference between photography and taking pictures lies in the different nature of "focus." Taking pictures uses "hand-eye" focus, while photography employs "mind's eye" focus. The former can be called "physical vision," while the latter is regarded as "spiritual vision." A contemporary Chinese poet, Mo Mo, symbolically named it "Focusing with the Soul." As a result, photography elevates to the realm of art.

Gao Daqing's portrait photography series, titled "China Faces," is precisely such an artistic creation that embodies the concept of "Focusing with the Soul."

The first batch of artworks from "China Faces" made its debut at the "2010 China Contemporary Ceramic Art Exhibition."

By incorporating portrait photography of participating ceramic artists into the ceramic art exhibition, it creates a mutually reflective and meaningful "interpretation" between the artwork and the individuals portrayed. This seems to be the first instance of such an approach in China. The results can be imagined: both the visitors and the ceramic artists themselves are captivated and greatly appreciate the concept. It has garnered praise and admiration from all who have experienced it.

Subsequently, the "China Faces" series of works have been published in "Ceramics Science and Art" magazine, creating a unique "artistic landscape" with its vivid and timeless artistic style. It not only captures the attention as a distinctive feature of the publication but also showcases the emerging talents of renowned figures in the contemporary Chinese ceramic art scene. It establishes its own lineage and evolves into a special "artistic archive" carried by portrait photography, attracting considerable attention within the ceramic art community.



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Project planning



Academic host



Photography Execution



Media support



Exhibition support

Photographer Gao Daqing hails from a scholarly family in Xi'an. From a young age, he practiced calligraphy, painting, and played with cameras, laying a solid foundation for his skills. He pursued studies in the field of library science during his university years and even received awards for his poetry writing. After graduating, he gradually focused his various interests and diverse knowledge on the art of photography. With years of dedicated exploration and cultivation, his proficiency has reached a level of quiet excellence. Gao later founded Gao Ge Advertising Co., Ltd. in Guangzhou, engaging in commercial photography, book design, film and television advertising planning, and production. His outstanding achievements in promoting Chinese fashion industry's professional brand culture have earned him praise and recognition within and beyond the industry.

Despite achieving success in his career, Gao Daqing remains true to his original aspirations. He has a passion for reading, appreciating art, and collecting. He possesses the sensibilities of a literary person, the integrity of a gentleman, and an artistic temperament. He is humble, sincere, and maintains a low-profile demeanor—a self-adjustment that brings forth a clear and harmonious atmosphere.

There is one thing that remains steadfast in his heart, hidden and cherished: his dedication to selecting unique subjects and creating extraordinary works. In recent years, he has been deeply engaged in documentary photography, with various themes quietly emerging. "China Faces" stands as a representative masterpiece among them.

The success of "China Faces" can be attributed to two fundamental factors: a deep understanding of ceramics and a profound understanding of people. Gao Daqing's choice to name his work "China Faces" fully demonstrates that he is a person who truly "knows ceramics." The title itself suggests his knowledge and appreciation of the essence of ceramics.

When it comes to ceramic art, both in ancient and modern times, from East to West, there is one word that encapsulates the deepest, highest, and most moving qualities: "Su" (素). In the context of creation, "Su" represents the beauty of simplicity, where there is an abundance of quality without embellishment. It is through simplicity that ingenuity emerges, and strength is born from modesty. The resulting work appears naturally perfect, surpassing the ordinary and the mundane.

In terms of appreciation, "Yu Su" signifies a state of being "pure" and "clean." A pure heart leads to a calm spirit, washing away worldly cares and embracing the natural. This engenders a sense of reverence, fostering harmony between oneself and the surroundings, creating a tranquil and idyllic existence.

Indeed, isn't the ultimate value of the beauty of ceramics as a static art form encapsulated in this notion? "Starting with the elemental, rooted in simplicity; nurturing the essence of the heart, bathing in emotions." Gao Daqing, the photographer, has a profound understanding of ceramic art, which can be considered as a profound insight and a true statement of those who "know ceramics."

"Knowing ceramics" is the key to understanding those who engage in the art of pottery.

"Delving deeply, experiencing attentively, having an independent perspective, and capturing objectively, using black and white imagery to document the portraits of humble and pure ceramic artists, compiling a personal perspective of visual ceramic history—this is the beautiful vision in my heart."

Through this statement, it is clear that Gao Daqing's aspiration is to immerse himself in the world of ceramics, observe it closely, and capture its essence through his unique perspective. He aims to create a visual chronicle of ceramic art that reflects his personal vision, portraying the artists in their raw and genuine form.

Upon careful consideration of Gao Daqing's statement on his creative approach, it becomes evident that he comes prepared with a clear vision.

Having an independent perspective and capturing images objectively allows him to authentically and flawlessly depict his subjects. By delving deep into the experience and attentively appreciating the Here, the term "soul" is not used as an empty and deceiving word. In the realm of art, the soul represents the potential that arises from the integration of knowledge, skills, temperament, intuition, and experiential understanding.

By harnessing this potential through accumulated experience, Gao Daqing's artistic images showcase a perfect balance of form and essence, each demonstrating their unique charm. They leave viewers yearning to delve deeper into the minds of these individuals and ponder the nature of the artistic creations they produce.

Upon closer examination, one can appreciate the distinctive aesthetic appeal of art photography, which extends beyond the subject matter and encompasses a beauty of form that captivates the viewer, enhancing its aesthetic value beyond the confines of the theme.

In the end, regardless of which art history we discuss, it is essentially a history of styles. It is not about what you say, but rather how you say it and how your expression differs from that of predecessors and others. This is particularly true in the case of photography, where the unprecedented advancement of scientific technology has equipped sophisticated cameras with the ability to achieve any desired image recording. The only difference lies in that decisive moment when you press the shutter, where the accumulated experiences and the "memory" of the photographer's subjective spirit, shaped by the journey of life, come into play.

Choosing black and white imagery to create expressive portraits of these ceramic artists who have maintained their artistic integrity and artistic character without losing their "humble and pure" essence is undoubtedly another highlight of "China Faces". In an era of fashion and role-playing, it is rare to see individuals walking the path of simplicity and authenticity. Writing their stories through the lens of simplicity reflects both respect for ceramics and the ceramic artists, while also

carrying a hidden sense of continuity.

Using a plain color to portray a plain heart, and revealing the true essence through a pure heart, this approach pays tribute to ceramics and the ceramic artists, serving as both a form of respect and a hidden connection.

The key here lies in Gao Daqing's selection of using documentary-style sketches as a starting point for this series of works. Through spontaneous capture and deep communication, combined with his exceptional artistic processing and profound understanding of the subjects, he skillfully transforms "documentary" into "portrayal." The resulting images not only exhibit a realistic and vivid depiction of the subjects but also possess a subtle artistic expression. Even in the encounter of unfamiliar individuals, there is an instant connection and a conveyed sense of familiarity, akin to meeting a kindred spirit.

Therefore, in terms of style, Gao Daqing's "China Faces" can be summarized by three words: "Su" (simplicity), "da" (authenticity), and "cheng" (sincerity). "Su" represents simplicity and embodies both a rare aesthetic style and a profound visual depth. "Da" represents authenticity, focusing on the inner essence and highlighting the character, effectively capturing the unique temperament of the subjects. "Cheng" represents sincerity, conveying the photographer's genuine understanding and passion for the individuals through heartfelt connection and genuine emotions.

Overall, Gao Daqing's "China Faces" series encapsulates the essence of simplicity, authenticity, and sincerity, showcasing a remarkable aesthetic style and a profound connection with the subjects.

Among these three aspects, "Cheng" (sincerity) serves as the foundation. With sincerity, one can achieve "Su" (simplicity), and through simplicity, one can attain "Da" (authenticity). "Da" encompasses the integration of realistic depiction and spiritual characterization, resulting in distinct and unique styles.

The significance of "China Faces" lies in its dual emphasis on artistic value and documentary value, making a double impact. It not only showcases visual depth but also reveals the depth of the soul. To sum it up, this series can be described as a soulful exploration of art, encompassing both its artistic and literary values.

Ultimately, good photography is merely a form of "discovery" that sets it apart from others. It is about discovering the soul through the soul and uncovering art through art. Then, with the gentle touch of the wind's hand, the shutter is pressed.

Then, one must patiently await the eyes and hearts that will rediscover and appreciate the wonders of the artwork, fostering a sense of resonance. As for how many such kindred spirits there are, only time can tell.













