

From Gaza to Beijing  
Photography by Gao Lei  
An Exhibition Curated by Wu Hung

April 23 - June 19, 2010

opening reception : April 23, 5 - 8pm



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Chicago, Illinois: From Gaza to Beijing: Explorations in Photography by Chinese Artist Gao Lei

On April 23, 2010, Walsh Gallery debuts works by emerging Chinese photographer Gao Lei, and curated by Wu Hung. From Gaza to Beijing presents four series of photos entitled Gaza Series, Boxers, Panorama, and Infrared. There will be an opening reception on Friday, April 23 from 5:00 - 8:00 p.m. The show runs from April 23-June 19, 2010. The artist and curator will be present at the opening reception.

Gao Lei's photo series represent a rejection of both purely conceptual and purely documentary styles in favor of a redefinition and fusion of these genres. He begins with the Gaza Strip and the Sahara Desert, where he spent 83 days in 2004, and moves on to portraits of Olympic athletes and landscapes of environmental destruction in China. Ultimately, Gao is grappling with the possibility of portraying truth with all its contradictions.

Gao Lei sees himself as a new kind of storyteller, using photography both to examine current realities and to clarify his own confusions. His search for images that express these dualities took him to remote locales like the Sahara Desert, Gaza Strip, Inner-Mongolian grasslands, north China, oil fields in the Liao River region of China, and the Great Wall. As Gao Lei says,

"I started taking photographs due to the influence of some words I read as a child: 'What the eye sees is real, what the ears hear is false.'...I'm the kind of person who seeks after perfection and truth; to use photography, this instrument for telling lies, to pursue these goals is for the most part to engage in a fruitless battle with yourself."



Gao Lei's oldest series, Gaza (2004), represents a documentary style in which the artist took images of people in extremely harsh environments, whether political or environmental. What attracted him to this very dangerous place in history was its harsh contradictions. As Wu Hung says, "Why is the place closest to the sacred – this is a holy land for both Christians and Muslims – precisely the location of the purgatory of contemporary mankind?" This series is presented not because of its documentary nature, but because it represented the artist's own disillusionment with the attainability of truth through a documentary style.