

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



(Continued)

The Boxers series represents 2008 Olympic Games champions from the game of sanda (a type of kick-boxing based on Chinese martial arts.) Gao Lei's photos of these athletes borrowed from contemporary advertising techniques of "larger than life" portraits which create a sense of heightened absurdity juxtaposed with a grave seriousness.

Gao Lei's other two series, Panorama and Infrared, are both landscape based and reflect overly exploited locals used previously in Chinese propaganda.

The Panorama series consists of images that represent the former prosperous oil fields and grasslands used for Chinese propaganda. Over time these places were exploited and disappeared from popular Chinese view. Gao Lei is resuscitating these discarded and abused places. The artist looks for hope in their desolate imagery. Gao Lei, refusing to leave them in a black and white state, hand colored them in orange and cyan to symbolize this sense of hope.

Finally, for his series Infrared, Gao Lei used Infrared photography. His places once more reflect official landscapes used in Chinese photojournalism. This provided him with a concrete technique for exploring the ironies present in exploited land as well as, "the panic caused by the absence of spiritual value, and the decline of traditional civilization in a modern metropolis." These photos were all taken at noon, although they appear to be nighttime shots. Gao Lei invites the viewer to explore two contradictory points in time in a two dimensional surface. That is the challenge of this exhibition, and Gao Lei's photo series leave us questioning and wanting to see more. Perhaps that is all a photographer could hope for.



Born in 1965, Gao Lei began his studies in English Language and Literature but eventually transferred to Hydro-mechanics. He invented a Bulk Commodity Container, and technology and invention eventually led him to discover photography as an art form. He then studied photography at the Speos Photographic Institute in France, gave up his inventing, and became a freelance photographer. He moved to Beijing in 2005, after traveling the Sahara and Gaza Strip, where he has won several awards for his work. This is his US debut.