

BACKGROUND INFO:

source: <http://www.asia2000.com.hk/Asia2000/authors/liuheungshing.shtml>

Liu Heung Shing China After Mao

Liu Heung Shing was born in 1951 to mainland Chinese parents living in Hong Kong. Three years later, Liu's family who had little confidence in the education system in Hong Kong at the time, took Liu back to China to receive his early education in the south eastern province of Fujian. Liu came back to Hong Kong in 1961 for secondary school and later emigrated to the US. In 1971, he enrolled in New York City's Hunter College where he studied political science and journalism.

He was first introduced to photography in his final year of university in a course taught by renowned Life magazine photographer Gjon Mili. In 1976, following his graduation from university, he became Mili's apprentice. This brief tutelage deeply influenced the development of Liu's editorial and aesthetic sensibilities.

Liu worked for Time magazine on assignment in China for five years, his first story being the death of Mao Zedong in 1976. Subsequently, he worked for Associated Press (AP) as a foreign correspondent based in Beijing, Los Angeles, New Delhi, Seoul and Moscow.

Liu won the 1989 Picture of the Year competition with a shot from his photographic coverage of the June 4th crackdown in Beijing. In 1990 he was named best spot news photographer by the AP managing editors. Liu and his AP Moscow colleagues won the 1992 Pulitzer Prize for spot news photography for their reportage documenting the collapse of the Soviet Union. Additionally, Liu received the 1991 Overseas Press Club's Eastman Kodak award for his USSR coverage. A book of Liu's Soviet Union work, USSR, Collapse of an Empire, was published by Asia 2000 in 1992.

Liu's photographs have been exhibited around the world. He served as a member of the 1995 jury of the World Press Photo.

Liu was the founder and editor-in-chief of the Chinese magazine called The Chinese published from Hong Kong in 1990's. He now lives in Beijing.

China After Mao was first published in 1983. It records the period from 1976 to 1982, when China was taking its first tentative steps away from the shadow of Mao. Almost twenty years later, the impact of these images remains just as forceful. They serve as a unique record of the extraordinary transitional period that preceded today's China.

TimeOut, Hong Kong:

Developing a Chinese history

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Iconic photojournalist Liu Heung-shing tells Matt Fleming about his new book which puts the tumultuous events of early 20th century China in the frame and available on the Mainland for the first time

When it comes to inspirational photography, Liu Heung-shing is a world leader. The 59-year-old Pulitzer Prize winner used his lens to help tell the story of China in the post-Mao years (including the Tiananmen Square protests) and let his camera do the talking during the collapse of the Soviet Union. But now he is releasing a photo book of pictures by other people – one that will be a first on the shelves in China.

Liu, a former photojournalist who lives in Beijing, met with Time Out as he unveiled The Road to 1911 exhibition at Hong Kong University, which comes ahead of the release of the book, 1911, in China (the English version is called China In Revolution: The Road To 1911).

The book contains more than 300 photographs from the years surrounding the October 10, 1911, Wuchang Uprising, which was a catalyst to the Xinhai Revolution and eventually led to the collapse of the Qing Dynasty and the start of the Republic of China. Marking the centenary, the Hong Kong exhibition, which coincides with HKU's 100th anniversary, displays 86 of the pictures. Starting from September 20, a total of 10 exhibitions will open simultaneously across China, showing 120 photographs.

Liu says it is the first time such an expansive photo book dealing with 'a period dominated, in the Chinese mind, by imperialism' and 'a good deal of humiliation at the hands of foreign national agendas' will be on sale in mainland China. "I feel the West has dealt with its own imperial and post-imperial history," says Liu. "As [Henry] Kissinger mentions in his latest book on China, the events of this period and the sense of victimhood they produced continue to affect China today, and the way it defines its role in the world. There is a legacy here that needs to be addressed. It is easier to present these facts as a visual history. Photography is not judgemental."

Liu was born in Hong Kong, educated here and on the Mainland, and went to university in New York. He apprenticed with legendary Albanian-American photographer Gjon Mili before setting out on a career with Associated Press. From 1978 to 1994 he was posted to China, the USA, India, South Korea and the former Soviet Union.

In 1989 he directed AP's coverage of the Tiananmen Square protests and an image he took of the turmoil was awarded Picture of the Year by the Jury of the School of Journalism at the University of Missouri. In the same year, he was named best photographer by AP. In 1991 he got the Overseas Press Club Award for coverage of the collapse of the Soviet Union and in 1992 he shared the Pulitzer Prize for Spot News Photography with AP staff, for the same coverage.

He says he left AP in 1994 for a sabbatical 'and I never returned'. He later worked for Time Warner and News Corp before going solo in 2006. In 2005, Paris Photo named him as one of the 100 most influential people in contemporary photography.

His photo-books have included 1983's China After Mao (which has just been published on the Mainland after 28 years, earning Liu a Chinese literary prize last month) and China, Portrait of a Country (an epic visual history of the 60 years of the People's Republic). He also co-authored, with Karen Smith, Shanghai, A History in Photographs 1842 to Today – but 1911 could become his masterpiece due to the new (or old, depending on how you look at it) ground it covers.

Liu says that after the Shanghai book, Beijing World Arts Museum asked him to put something together to mark the 1911 centenary. "I said OK," he remembers, "because China is not terribly familiar with photography as a language of history or communication. I also feel that, in terms of the so-called national patriotic education, it is absolutely essential that as China rises, it must embrace that history – even if it is imperialist history. It constitutes a collective memory but one that has been distorted by ideologically-coloured words. That language doesn't gel with the younger generations. They need to see it for themselves."

Liu also says China can't just focus on the present realm of economic reform. It needs to acknowledge its past. "How you accept history and embrace history is important," he says. "For better or for worse, it is what happened. It's China's heritage."

Liu procured the photographs from a range of sources from around the world. "Technically, the backroom work was humungous," he says. "All these images were taken in China by missionaries, military, diplomats, adventurers and travellers. I hope that Chinese people will be surprised, moved, and

gain a new understanding of what happened in this period. This is history you can see.”

Liu thinks the Chinese government should ‘preserve and expand’ its archive of photos of this tumultuous period around 1911. “I think Chinese people are now, relatively speaking, more comfortable within their own skin,” he says. “I don’t want them to keep looking at history as though they are the victim. Even though people before were victims, they mustn’t go on feeling that today. It’s no longer appropriate for the second most powerful nation in the world to keep talking about a 100-year-old humiliation. That, to me, is too abstract. It’s time to move on.”

China In Revolution: The Road to 1911 is published by Hong Kong University Press, priced \$680 (available from October). 1911 is published by Commercial Press and will be available in mainland China. The Road to 1911 exhibition is held at Hong Kong University’s Museum and Art Gallery.

(Most of the covers for these books, which change from country to country, can be seen on Amazon.com under Liu’s name - JBT)