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Three New Shows at SF Camerawork This Summer

Including the first Bay Area showing of the work of Beijing-based contemporary artists RongRong & inri, as well as an exhibition in celebration of LGBT Pride guest curated by David Deitcher and a solo showing of the work of emerging photographer Chris McCaw

June 5 – August 23, 2008

Opening reception: Thursday, June 5, from 5 to 8 p.m.

SAN FRANCISCO – This summer, SF Camerawork presents three new photography exhibitions including ***Ruins to Renewal: Works by RongRong & inri***, the first Bay Area showing of work by this pioneering avant-garde Beijing-based duo; ***Alan B. Stone and the Senses of Place***, a historical exhibition guest curated by celebrated art historian and author David Deitcher that examines the life and work of gay Canadian photographer Alan B. Stone; and ***Sunburn***, a solo exhibition of the work of emerging, local artist Chris McCaw. All events take place at SF Camerawork, the Bay Area's only non profit gallery dedicated to contemporary photography located in the heart of San Francisco's vibrant downtown art scene at 657 Mission Street.

Ruins to Renewal: Works by RongRong & inri

Guest curator Britta Erickson, a well-known expert on contemporary Chinese art, brings together a moving exhibition of the works of renowned contemporary Chinese photographer RongRong and his Japanese wife inri in ***Ruins to Renewal: Works by RongRong & inri***.

“In the long river of time, we are always blank, but the photos are pieces of evidence, memories, and everything.” Chinese photographer RongRong made this statement in reference to a large group of photographs that date from 1994 through 2008 entitled the ***Liu Li Tun*** series. On display at SF Camerawork, this series of photographic works were made around RongRong's former home in the Beijing neighborhood of Liu Li Tun. The photographs document the neighborhood's transformation and destruction, from the artist's daily life with the 1990s avant-garde art

movement, to his collaborations with his Japanese photographer-wife inri, to their creation of the Three Shadows Photography Art Centre in Beijing.

RongRong first garnered critical acclaim for his photographs of China's first wave of avant-garde performance artists living in the Beijing artist colony known ironically as the East Village. Eventually police closed down the East Village colony after a series of extreme endurance and nude performances that attracted the attention of officials (public nudity was illegal, even in a private enclosed space). RongRong then moved to Liu Li Tun, an old neighborhood of traditional courtyard houses and *hutongs* (small alleyways), where he began to create photographs of the daily life in the house he shared with other artists.

RongRong met inri in Tokyo in 1999. Formally trained as a photographer at the Nippon Photography Institute, inri was a successful portrait photographer in Japan before embarking on her partnership with RongRong. Visiting Beijing in 2000, inri was struck by the peaceful world of Liu Li Tun that stood in sharp contrast to her life in Tokyo. The two began a life partnership, creating a home, a family and a shared body of work. Despite not sharing a language initially, the two found a deep spiritual affinity and visual understanding.

Together, RongRong & inri created photographs depicting the nurturing environment of Liu Li Tun and the formative role it played in their life together before it was demolished as part of the city's massive redevelopment program. They also memorialized the destruction of Liu Li Tun in a series of photographs of its ruins, often posing singly or together in many of the images. The poignant and romantic drama that runs as a thread through much of their collaborative oeuvre finds a somber and elegant expression in this series that signifies the end of an era.

Three Shadows, Beijing, their most recent series of works, represents a stage of renewal. It records the process of building the Three Shadows Photography Art Centre, allowing the viewer to witness the results from the point of view of the artists. Founded by RongRong & inri, Three Shadows is the first arts center of its kind in China, with an ambitious mission to promote the development of contemporary Chinese photography.

This exhibition is funded by grants from the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts and the Columbia Foundation.

Alan B. Stone and the Senses of Place

Alan B. Stone and the Senses of Place is a historical exhibition that examines the social and cultural conditions affecting the life and work of Alan B. Stone, a gay photographer who worked prolifically in Montreal, Canada from the 1950s to the 1970s. Celebrated historian and curator David Deitcher, who also grew up in Montreal, presents Stone's work as a means of exploring some of the ways in which people experience, use, and are affected by photographs.

Alan B. Stone (1928-1992) was a commercial photographer who photographed the city of Montreal during the postwar period that historians often refer to as *les années noires* (the dark years) due to the dismal and repressive economic, political, cultural and homophobic atmosphere. This repressive environment is clearly exhibited at SF Camerawork via the display of old news clips related to events such as the arrests of homosexuals in the 1950s and 1960s.

Many of the photographs in the exhibition depict Montreal as it looked during the 1950s and 1960s (when Deitcher was a child growing up there), including the old city and its then bustling port; of suburban neighborhoods where seasonal hockey rinks attracted young people during the long winter months; and of youth at a bucolic Boy Scouts summer camp. Stone's discrete point of view suggests surveillance, pictures taken on the sly, as if collecting evidence of some unidentified crime. He identified the nature of that offense in the early 1950s when he took a picture of a metal sign bolted to the trunk of a tree in suburban Lachine Park. In French and English, the sign on the tree reads: "PERSONS OF GOOD EDUCATION AND MORALS ARE INVITED TO THIS PARK."

Despite this suffocating atmosphere, Stone set up the Mark One Studio in the basement of the home he shared with his mother and created and marketed male physique photographs throughout the 1950s and 60s, a time that became known as the golden age of beefcake photography. The photographs made under the Mark One name portray how, in a pre-Stonewall era, the experience of the closet not only shaped homosexual artists' lives, it also determined the aesthetic forms of their work.

Alan B. Stone and the Senses of Place includes photographs printed from the original negatives held by Archives Gaies de Québec, photographs on loan from the Centre d'histoire du Montréal, photographs on loan from The Magazine in San Francisco as well as a series of ephemeral objects lent to the exhibition by private collectors.

David Deitcher is the author of *Dear Friends: American Photographs of Men Together, 1840-1918* and curator of the exhibition by the same name that appeared at the International Center of Photography in New York. He also was the editor of *The Question of Equality: Lesbian and Gay Politics in America Since Stonewall*. As an accomplished writer and critic, David Deitcher's essays have appeared in *Artforum*, *Art in America*, *Parkett*, the *Village Voice*, and other periodicals, as well as in numerous anthologies and monographs. Since 2003 he has been on the faculty of the International Center of Photography/Bard College Program in Advanced Photographic Studies.

Sunburn

SF Camerawork presents a solo exhibition of the work of emerging, San Francisco-based photographer Chris McCaw as part of its New Works Program. In his series, *Sunburn*, McCaw turns the subject of his work, the sun, into an active participant in the printmaking process, creating fascinating prints that are literally burned by the path of the sun. The body of work was the result of a happy accident. Intending to create an all night exposure of the stars while camping, McCaw failed to wake up before sunrise. He discovered that while the night's exposure had been destroyed, an interesting phenomenon had occurred on the film base, which had a hole burnt through it from the intense rays of the rising sun.

The exhibition at SF Camerawork displays McCaw's most recent images that are made by putting paper, in place of film, in his camera's film holder. Each paper negative, due to varying sky conditions and length of exposure, is scorched by the sun to differing degrees, sometimes burning completely through the paper base. McCaw uses both an 8"x10" view camera and a home made 16"x20" camera to create the paper negatives. As a result of the intense sun exposure, the sky reacts in an effect called solarization, which turns the paper negative into a positive. When developed, the paper negatives become actual one-of-a-kind prints.

This exhibition is funded by a grant from the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts.

All exhibitions are on view Tuesdays – Saturdays 12-5 p.m. at SF Camerawork, 657 Mission St., Second Floor. Admission is \$5.00; \$2.00 for students and seniors; free to Camerawork members. For more information, the public should visit www.sfcamerawork.org or call 415.512.2020.

About SF Camerawork

Founded in 1974, SF Camerawork encourages emerging and mid-career artists to explore new directions in photography and related media by fostering creative forms of expression that push existing boundaries. Throughout its history, SF Camerawork has nurtured artists, mentored youth and helped make San Francisco a destination for the exploration of photography as an artist's medium. Its exhibitions are nationally recognized as a focal point for innovation, a pacesetter for new trends in the medium and a launching pad for the careers of young artists. With three galleries and an education center at its new centrally located facility, SF Camerawork is the only non-profit organization in the Bay Area with an exhibition space and educational programs focused exclusively on contemporary photography and related visual image media. It is an accessible venue for people to view exhibitions, meet artists, participate in educational programs, peruse photographic publications, and gather for lectures, screenings, portfolio reviews, and discussions.

JPG images can be requested electronically. Please contact Nina Sazevich, Public Relations, at (415) 752-2483 or nina911@pacbell.net.

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