

BEIJING SILVERMINE

北京銀礦 THOMAS SAUVIN | MELINDA GIBSON | LEI LEI

GALERIE PARIS-BEIJING

Hôtel Winssinger, Rue de l'Hôtel des Monnaies 66, 1060 Brussels, Belgique

BEIJING SILVERMINE

A PROJECT BY THOMAS SAUVIN, MELINDA GIBSON AND LEI LEI

Exhibition from September 20th to November 1st 2014

Opening on Saturday September 20th from 6pm

Galerie Paris-Beijing
Hôtel Winssinger, rue de l'Hôtel de Monnaies 66
1060 Brussels

Hundreds of thousands of images – so many moments snapped by strangers are tirelessly salvaged by Thomas Sauvin, following a meeting in the Northern periphery of the capital city, with Xiao Ma, a recycler who collects negatives in order to retrieve the Silver Nitrate. Sauvin, a collector, curator and publisher who has resided in Beijing since 2003 gathers half a million anonymous negatives in 35 mm colour, dating from 1985 to 2005 and ultimately destined for destruction.

Rescuing these snapshots, not only date the period in which digital photography overtook silver photography but also further provide an authentic portrait of the Chinese capital following the Cultural Revolution, at a time of outward-looking reform.

Women proudly posing in front of their first refrigerator, children with Ronald McDonald, notably family photos often showed only a single child, (a policy instituted as of 1979) and adolescents beside portraits of Hollywood stars. Popular imagery symbolized an opening to the world and bears witness to a country in metamorphosis. With Deng Xiaoping in the 1980's, China entered into the capitalist era, and the acquisition of goods was no longer condemned as a "rightist" deviance. At the same time, leisure time became institutionalized, and employees began taking holidays, travelling and taking advantage of their free time. Chinese subjects pose in front of monuments, theme parks and Western masterpieces like of the Mona Lisa.

A strange homogeneity emanates from the diversity of the photographs, which constitute an inestimable archival source and inspiration. The framing, the distance from the subject and the static poses all seem to respond to the same codes. Some might even say that it was the work of a single photographer.

Presented on the second floor, is the debut of Lunar Caustic, a conceptual collaborative reworking of the archive by British artist Melinda Gibson. Between art and chemistry, prints are burned with Hydrochloric Acid and coated with Silver Nitrate, isolating the true essence of the imagery, revealing the unstable, palpable, organic uncontrollable object. Their scientifically charged intervention gives the already digested images a new existence, poetically evolving the tale of destructive innovation and leading to ultimately rebirth. It is down to Gibson's artistic interventions that it is as if these photographs of yesterday are propelled into today's world.

Born in 1985, Melinda Gibson studied Photography at The London College of Communication and is widely regarded for her re-contextualisation and appropriation techniques that examine the evolution of perspectives in Photography.

Presented upstairs in the Hôtel Winssinger, the video installation Recycled was born from an encounter with the Chinese artist Lei Lei. This stroboscopic animation compiles more than 3000 images from the archive, connected to one another by themes, places or similar compositions, and revealing their profound nature in just a few minutes.

Born in 1985, Lei Lei studied animated film at the University of Tsinghua. His film Recycled was the 2013 recipient of the Grand Prize for short, non-narrative animated films in the Holland International Animation Film Festival, as well as in the animated film festival AnifestInternational 2012. He earned a special honor from the jury of the Cyprus Countryside Animafest in 2012 and was selected by the International Animation Festival of Annecy in 2013.

The Beijing Silvermine project paints a positive portrait of a country that is opening up to the world. Through the documentary, sociological: presenting the face of post- socialist China, light-hearted and carefree to the conceptual and poetic provoking of the tale of rebirth. Each part saviours a newfound freedom, and new access to consumer society. Originating from the collaborations between three different but complementary figures, this project twists and turns in its approach to the archived images. It's a view of the quotidian into which the trio induces the poetry of happiness, love and joy.



THOMAS SAUVIN

Exhibitions:

September 2011, Beijing Silvermine, Dali Photo Festival, China
Avril 2012, Photographic Oddities from the AMC, Caochangdi Photo Festival, Beijing
October 2012, Beijing Silvermine, Singapore International Photo Festival
March 2013, Beijing Silvermine, FORMAT Photo festival, Derby
June 2013, Beijing Silvermine, Salt Yard, Hong Kong
November 2013, International Photo Festival, Lianzhou
January 2014, Beijing Silvermine, 4A Center for Contemporary Asian Art, Sydney
January 2014, Beijing Silvermine, Museum of Contemporary Photography, Chicago

Publications:

Beijing Silvermine, published by The Archive of Modern Conflict, May 2013
Nominated for the fifth cycle of the Prix Pictet
Nominated for Best photobook 2013 at the 6th International Fotobook Festival, Kassel
Shortlisted for the Paris Photo Aperture Foundation First Photobook Award 2013



Thomas Sauvin, Beijing Silvermine 02



Thomas Sauvin, Beijing Silvermine 01



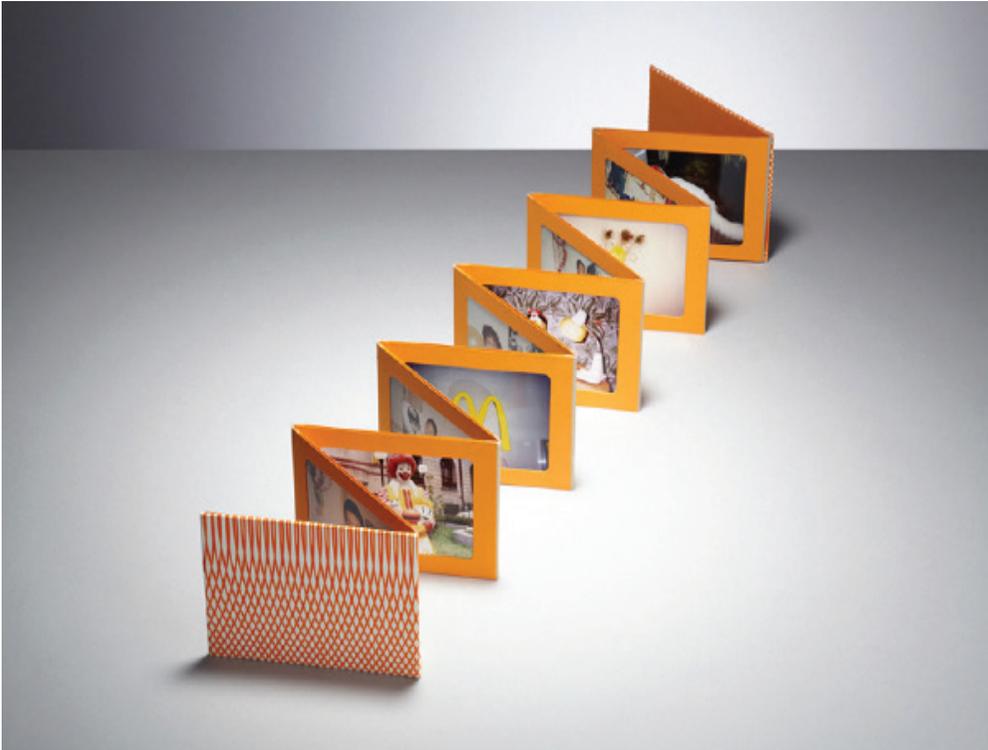
Lunar Caustic series, by Melinda Gibson



Melinda Gibson, Lunar Caustic, Untitled 2 photography and mixed media , 2014



Melinda Gibson, Lunar Caustic, Untitled 8, photography and mixed media , 2014



Beijing Silvermine Albums



Beijing Silvermine, Exhibition view, Lianzhou Photo Festival, 2013



Thomas Sauvin, Beijing Silvermine 03



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