

YOSSI MILO GALLERY



For Immediate Release:

Sze Tsung Leong
History Images

April 6 – May 13, 2006

Artist's reception: Thursday, April 6, 6:00 to 8:00 pm

Yossi Milo Gallery is pleased to announce an exhibition of color photographs by Sze Tsung Leong from the series *History Images*. The exhibition will open on Thursday, April 6, and close on Saturday, May 13, with a reception for the artist on Thursday, April 6, from 6:00 to 8:00 pm. This will be Mr. Leong's first solo exhibition at the gallery.

Since 2002, Sze Tsung Leong has been photographing the dynamic urban changes that have transformed the cities of China—revealing a process that ranges from the destruction of traditional neighborhoods, which once formed the unique identities of China's cities, to the mass construction of new urban environments. The dense sedimentation of history, as it has gradually accumulated in the form of buildings and urban fabrics, has become one of the greatest casualties of China's adoption of the market economy.

One image, *Xinjiekou, Xuanwu District, Nanjing* (2004), exemplifies the dismantling of this historical sedimentation by showing three periods of China's history in varying conditions, layered one on top of another like geological strata: the ruins of houses dating from the imperial period occupy the foreground, partially demolished housing blocks from the socialist period stretch across the mid-ground, and new office and residential towers from the latest, capitalist period preside high over the remains of the former two. Collectively the photographs from *History Images* portray the erasure and subsequent absence of history, and the eventual creation of a new history anticipating a future yet to unfold. It is an urban reality caught in the tenuous period after the end of one history and at the beginning of another.

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Photographed with a large-format view camera in cities throughout China—including Beijing, Shanghai, Chongqing, Nanjing, Pingyao, and Xiamen—these highly detailed images portray the immense scale of an urban upheaval overwhelming the minute scale of the individual. The dense concentration of visual information in the photographs reveals the contradictions created by an uncertain and fluctuating environment: traditional buildings in the process of being demolished are juxtaposed against the new urban reality about to replace them; seemingly abandoned buildings on the verge of destruction, or in the midst of construction, reveal clues of inhabitation; historic areas survive more as a result of neglect and isolation rather than intent; and obscured in the midst of expansive, culturally ambivalent spaces, small Chinese script on indistinct signs serves as the only hint that these environments are in China.

While these photographs portray a specific period in the history of China, they also parallel and evoke the experience of cities throughout the world that have been affected by other forms of drastic upheaval: the extensive reconfiguration of Paris in the mid-nineteenth century by Georges-Eugène Haussmann to accommodate the new middle class; the wartime reduction to rubble of European cities; the listless spaces resulting from the postwar suburban attenuation of American cities.

Sze Tsung Leong was born in Mexico City in 1970, and currently lives and works in New York. His work has been exhibited at institutions including the International Center of Photography and Artists Space in New York; the Cisneros Fontanals Art Foundation in Miami; and the Taipei Fine Arts Museum. In summer 2006, his work will be featured in an exhibition at the High Museum of Art in Atlanta. His work is included in the collections of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the High Museum of Art, and the Santa Barbara Museum of Art. Leong is the recipient of fellowships from the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation and the New York State Council on the Arts, and holds degrees from the University of California at Berkeley and Harvard University. In 2006, his book *History Images* will be published by Steidl.

For more information, please contact Alissa Schoenfeld at 212.414.0370 or alissa@yossimilo.com, or visit the gallery's web site at www.yossimilo.com