

Portfolio

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Chinese Power

Summary

This project plans to document some energy production sites in China, such as power plants, dams, resource-based cities, solar and wind farms, etc. But due to the fickleness of COVID-19, I have only completed a small part of the project.

Inspiration

My hometown, Shanxi Province, is called "the Hometown of Coal". Since I was young, I have been accustomed to huge industrial buildings and ever-changing landscapes. Moreover, almost all energy companies are state-owned enterprises. They once assumed the role of the government, building hospitals and schools, expropriating large tracts of land, and relocating large numbers of people. Manipulating the landscape is for economic purposes, but behind the economy is politics.

My curiosity is, how did the production and transportation of energy reshape landscapes nationwide? And because these conglomerates are almost 100%



Reference © Victoria Sambunaris



Reference © Mitch Epstein

state-owned, how do they embody the will of the state?

Research

China is the largest energy producer and consumer in the world. In terms of the volume of related engineering projects, Chinese people also have a certain paranoia about immensity. It has the world's largest coal power station, hydropower station, and wind farm. Because the energy production area is far from the energy consumption area, China has built the world's longest gas pipeline and transmission network to transport natural gas and electricity from the West to the East.

I mainly selected some areas in the central and western regions as my destination. These places are important energy bases in China. Shanxi Province and Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region are coal bases. Shaanxi Province has a large amount of coal, oil, and natural gas. There is the world's largest solar farm in Ningxia Province, and there are a series of large hydropower stations on the upper reaches of the Yellow River in Qinghai Province.



In Google Maps, I created many lists of related places, such as coal, oil, natural gas, hydroelectric stations, etc. These pushpins formed my shooting route on the map.



A fact: As long as one reservoir is built, many reservoirs must be built to supplement it. There are 26 large-scale reservoirs and 170 medium-sized reservoirs in the middle and upper reaches of the Yellow River.

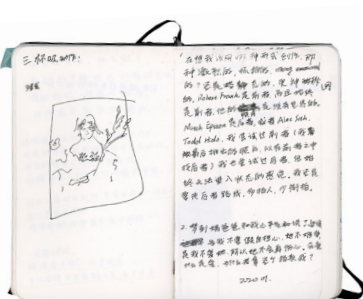
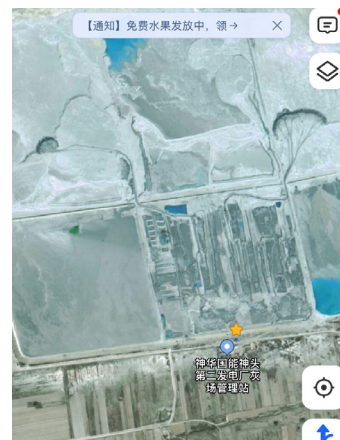
Development

1. For this project, Google Maps played an important role. It is my action guide. When I arrived at an energy production site, I browsed Google Maps, and then I could find much massive manipulation of landscape. I added pushpins on the locations I was interested in and then drove there. Some Google satellite images are also good photos. They are God's perspective, while my photos are human's perspective. The relationship between grand narrative and daily life is also my interest.

2. I bought a second-hand van and converted it into a camper van. Soon after, to stand on the roof to take pictures, I replaced the roof box with a roof rack. Perspective is critical, and new perspectives will bring new discoveries. I often climb to the top of high-rise residential buildings to see what I will find.

3. I brought a GoPro camera, a diary, maps and related literature books. I want to record my travels, which is also part of my work.

4. I planned to shoot this project with a large-format camera that can record more details. But energy companies are so alert to cameras that I had to take many photos with a medium-format camera. In China, energy companies are often ignored. Only when accidents happen cameras will aim at them.



Selected images from the project *Chinese Power*



Wutai County, Shanxi Province



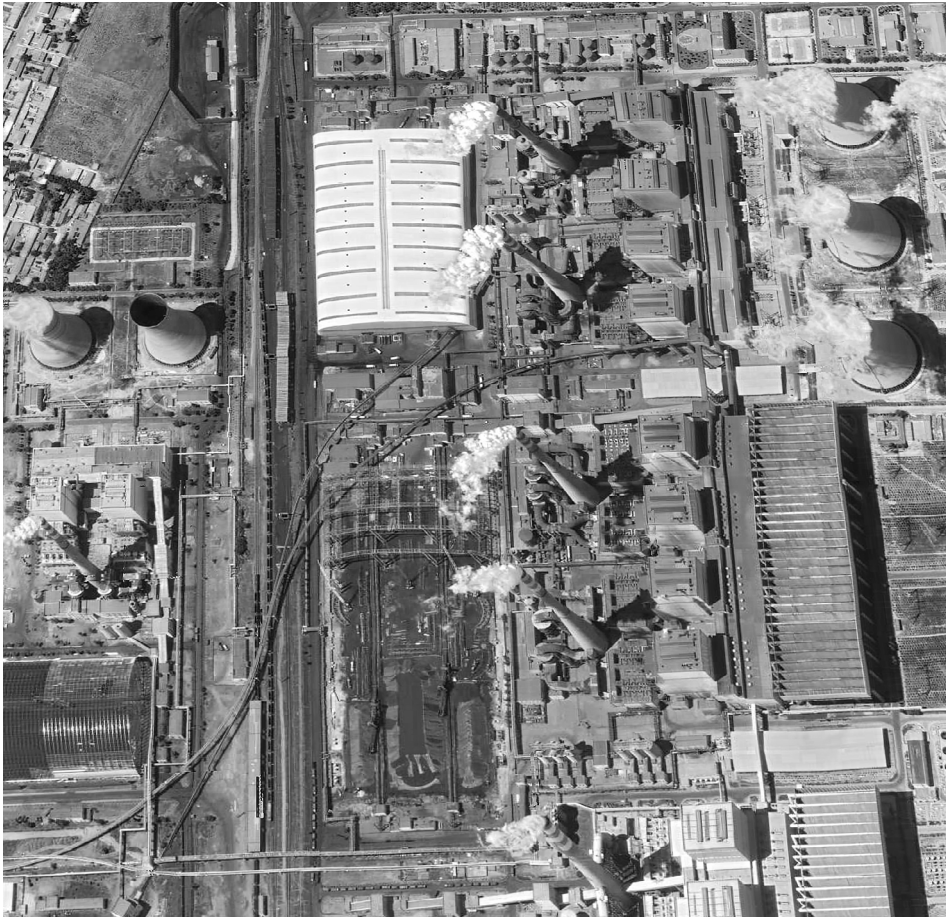
Cetian Reservoir is located in Datong City, Shanxi Province. Shanxi is a province with severe water shortage, but the water from the Cetian Reservoir is often transported to Beijing.



Xilamuren Grassland, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region



A coal-fired power station that is under construction, Shanxi Province



The satellite image of Tuoketuo Power Station, the largest coal-fired power station in the world, Inner Mongolia



A village near Tuoketuo Power Station, Inner Mongolia



Nanyao Coal Mine,
Huairan City,
Shanxi Province



The satellite image of the
same location and direction



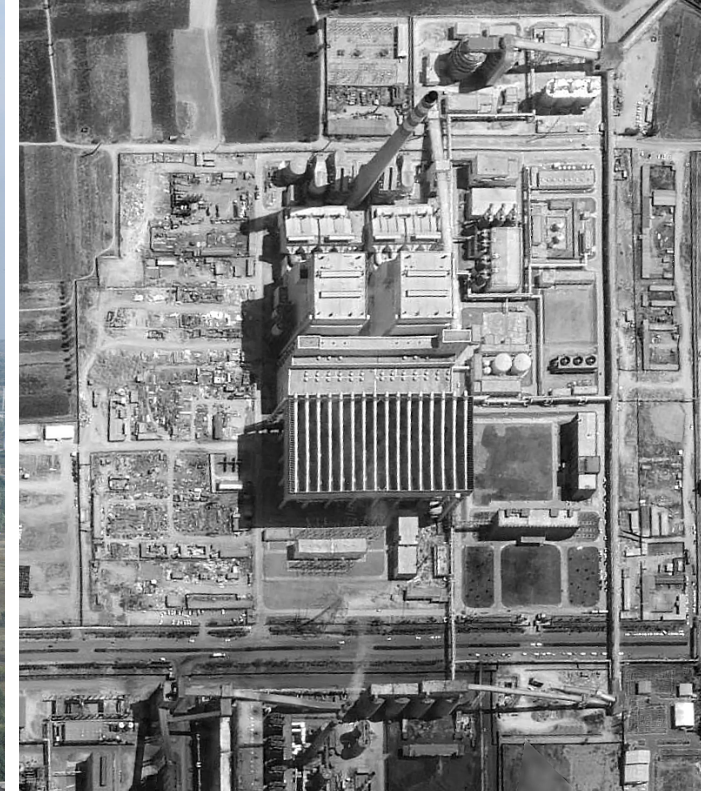
A community of coal workers



Dong Taibao Coal Mine, once the world's largest open-pit coal mine, Shanxi Province



A train full of coal, Shanxi Province. Daqin railway runs more than 100 pairs of trains at the speed of 80 km/h per day, generating a daily transport capacity of 1 million tons coal.



A gangue power plant. Coal gangue is also known as low-calorific coal, which is waste product from the mining and processing of coal. The satellite image of the same location and direction
A tavern near the power plant



Taiyuan City, Shanxi Province



Dismantling for constructing, Shanxi Province

5 Ways of Looking at A Mountain

Summary

Mount Wutai is a sacred mountain in my hometown. The mountain has always been there, but different people saw different mountains at different times. I used photography to explore five different ways of seeing.

Through this project, I hope readers will realize that what you see is based on what you think, which is the basis for understanding others and the world.

Inspiration

Mount Wutai ranked No.1 in four sacred mountains of Chinese Buddhism. I grew up listening to the legend of Mount Wutai. It seems that everyone around me had an unusual experience there. I did some research and found that these kinds of records are countless. I tried to explore how people viewed Mount Wutai when they were looking at it.

Research

There are five chapters in this project.

1. Ennin's perspective

In 838, Japanese monk Ennin came to China to seek Dharma in Mount Wutai, and he recorded his journey in detail (*Ennin's Diary: The Record of a Pilgrimage to China in Search of the Law*). Because he was unwavering in the existence of God, his understanding of time and space was not linear. Inspired by his description, I combined some photos of peaks into a miniature sculpture.

2. Villager's perspective

I found a book called *Mount Wutai Folk Tales*. Folk tales can be passed down from generation to generation since these stories reflect the way people understand the world, such as the retribution for good and evil or the awe of nature. I went to some legendary places, trying to re-understand them from the villagers' narration.

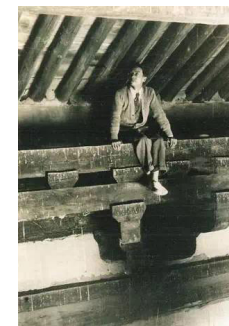
3. Liang Sicheng's perspective

In 1937, the architect Liang Sicheng and his colleagues discovered the Foguang temple in Mount Wutai, which was the first time that a relic of the Tang Dynasty was discovered in China.

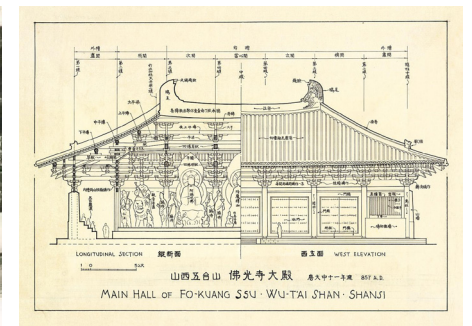
As an architect, Liang made a serious survey of the Foguang temple. Architects always want to see buildings from an omniscient perspective. So I made a collage to show the Foguang temple from Liang's perspective.



Mount Wutai Folktales



Liang Sicheng



Liang Sicheng's hand-drawn draft: the main hall of the Foguang temple

4. Father's perspective

During the Cultural Revolution period (1966-1976), Mount Wutai was considered a symbol of old culture and was abandoned. At that time, my father was serving as a soldier and was stationed in Mount Wutai. As a communist, he believed that all the legends of Mount Wutai were all feudal superstitions.

5. My perspective

In Chapter 5, I try to watch Mount Wutai in the same way as ancient Chinese painters. I pressed a glass plate on the photos because when I was little, my father put a glass plate on my desk and under which he pressed the Chinese landscape paintings he cut out of magazines.

Development

People do not see with their eyes but with their thoughts. By embracing uncertainty in the whole process, I tried to convey that feeling.

I lived in Mount Wutai for a week. But shooting is just the process of obtaining material. I put more energy on how to use the photos.

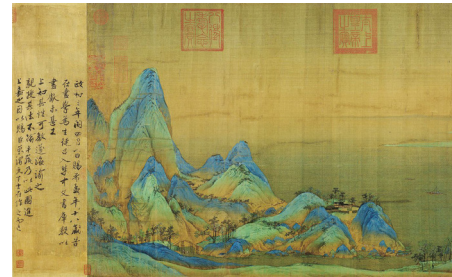
In the beginning, I put ideas first, but slowly, I began to put visuals over ideas. I did some experiments. For example, like my father back then, I made contact sheets. When I made the collage of the Foguang temple, I combined Polaroid photos and photos of old brochures by emulsion lift technique which I think is an excellent way to blend boundaries.



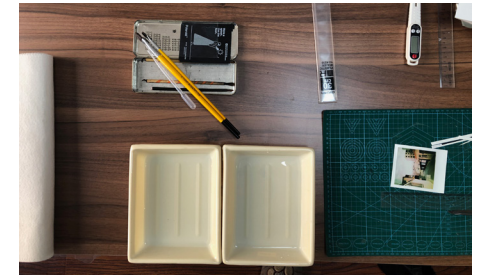
One day, for the convenience of shooting, I lived in a temple on the mountain. Watching the sunrise the next morning, I thought of a sentence from Chuang-Tzu: "Heaven and earth are very beautiful, but they say nothing about their beauty."



In 1937, the architect Liang Sicheng and his colleagues discovered the Foguang Temple, which was the first time that a relic of the Tang Dynasty was discovered in China. One of Liang Sicheng's clues is the Dunhuang fresco "The Representation of Mt. Wutai", which not only depicts Buddhist legends, but also serves as a map.



A panorama of rivers and mountains by Wang ximeng



At home, I tried a variety of photography processes, including emulsion lift technique of Polaroid, contact printing and so on.



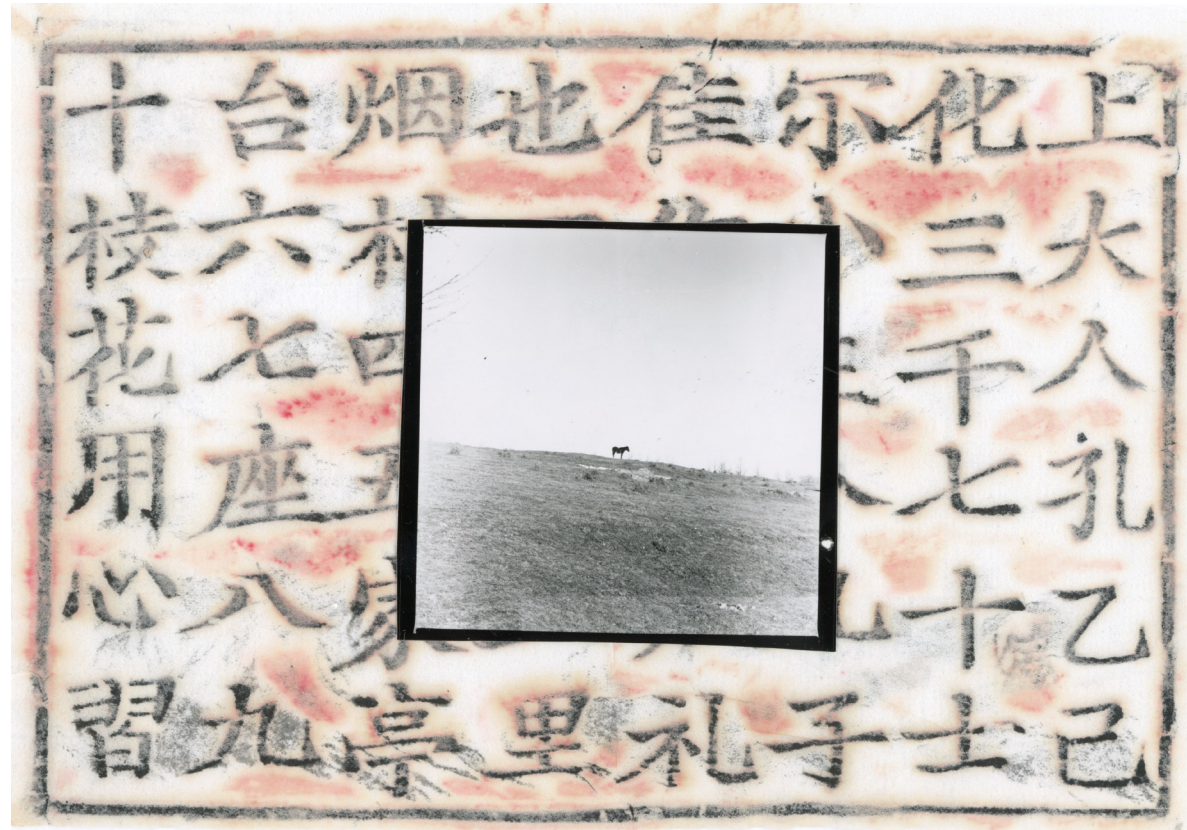
CHAPTER 1

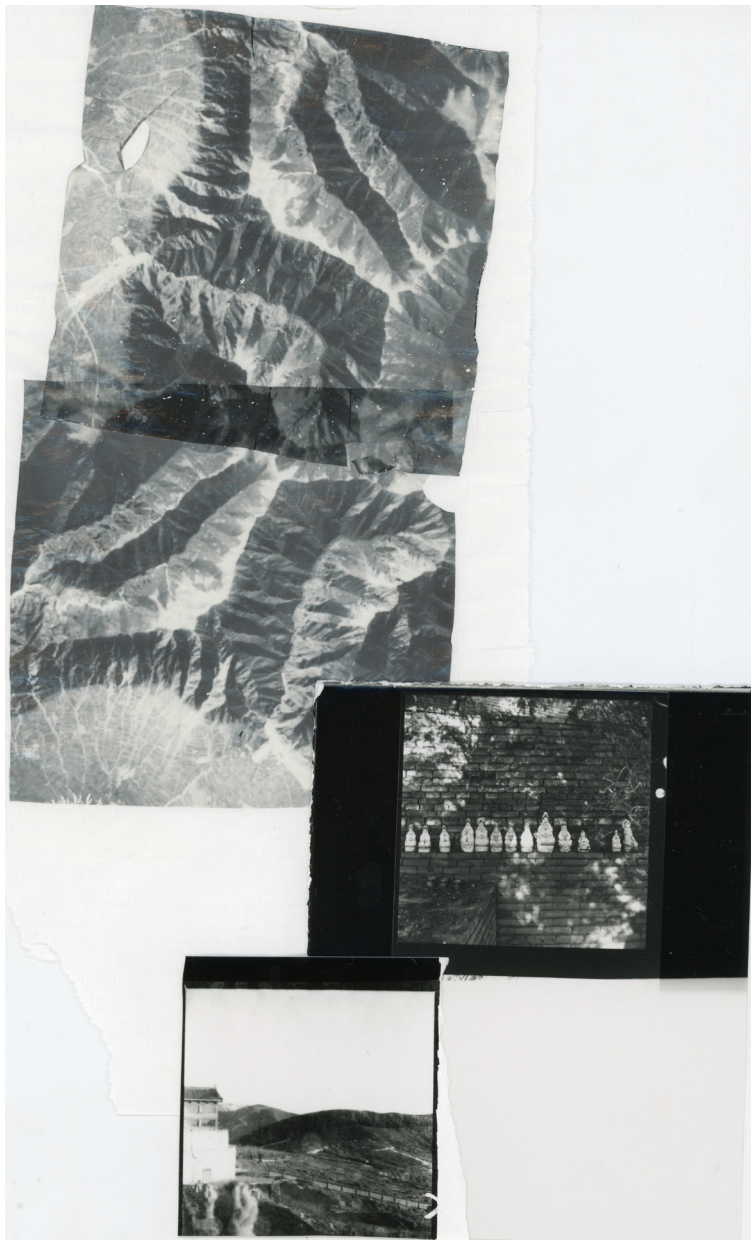
园仁
奇境特深。
不同别处，
树木异花
不觉流泪。
遥望之会，

Looking from a distance, I couldn't help crying.

The trees and flowers here are different from other places, and the environment is very deep.

Ennin. *The Record of a Pilgrimage to China in Search of the Law*







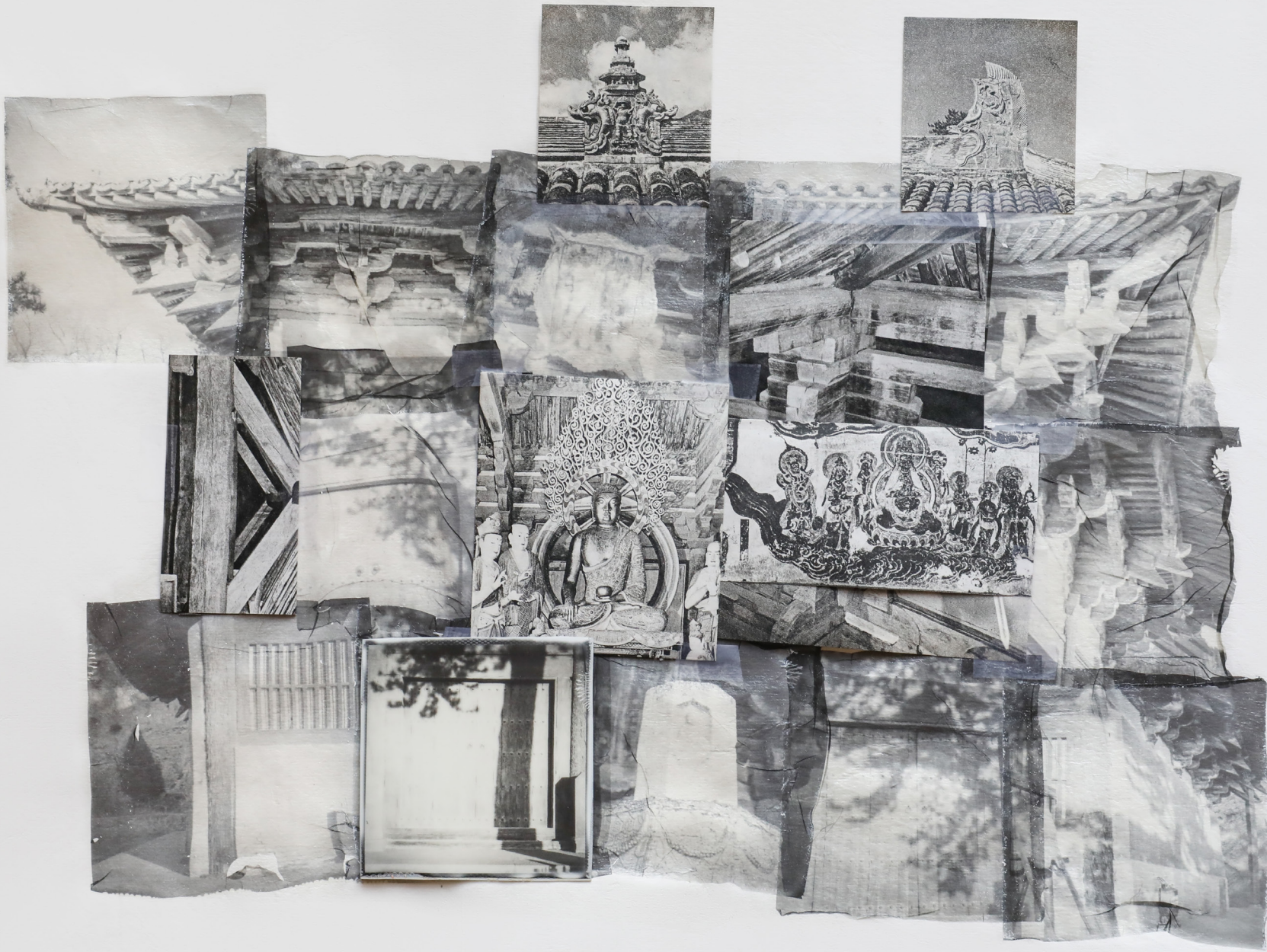
佛陀波利朝圣
五台山时，遇
到一老者，问
其是否取来「
佛顶尊胜陀罗
尼经」，随后
老者不见。佛
陀波利随之明
白这是大觉点
化，便返国取
好经书。

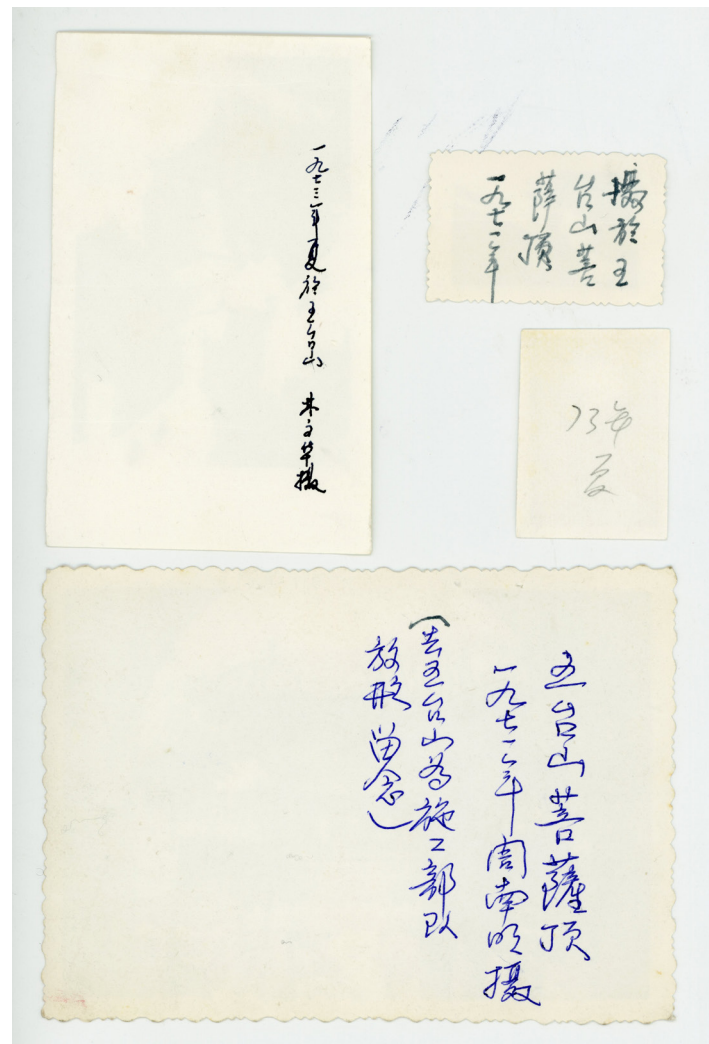
Buddha Pala arrived on Mount Wutai to pay obeisance to Manjusri. He met an older man who asked him if he had brought a sutra. Then the older man disappeared. Pala knew the older man was a manifested body of Manjusri, so he returned to obtain the sutra.



五台山菩薩頂卷丹花
五七年攝







CHAPTER 4

父亲的青年时代，五台山是一个被打倒旧世界。作为部队的电影放映员，他曾和战友把屏幕挂在寺院前的山门上，放映革命影片。

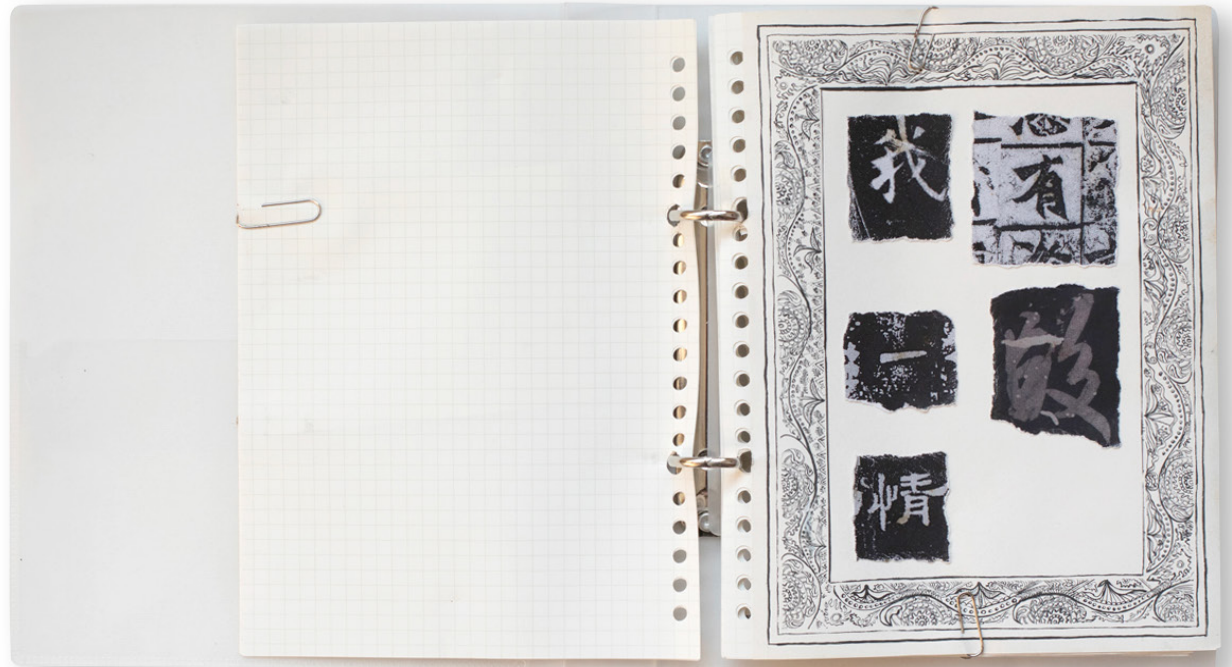
In my father's youth, Mount Wutai was an ensemble of the old world that has been overthrown. As a movie projectionist in an army, he and his comrades hung the screen on the gate of temples to show war movies.



CHAPTER 5

五峰耸出，
顶无林木，
有如垒土
之台，故
曰五台。

The five peaks are steep, but their tops are flat, like five platforms, so it's called the mountain of five platforms, Mount Wutai.



Once I Had A Relationship

This is a handmade photo book I made several years ago. After breaking up with my girlfriend. It's a cure for me.

At first, I just looked at her photos, and then I decided to make a photo book to express my feelings. Somehow, I began to "damage" some of the photos. I smeared on them, drew on them, and collaged them, all of which became the outlet of my feelings.

The cover of this photo book is a collage. I cut my favourite words from calligraphy copybooks to form the title of this photo book. I believe that calligraphy is the most lyrical art.

Because of its crudeness, this photobook kept some openness, allowing me to make some changes afterwards, so maybe the making of this book has no end. It has a continuous comforting effect on me.

Thanks for photography.

This small and very private project became a starting point for my rethinking of photography. Photography is a kind of artistic language, and there are no rules. It can express many things beyond words, such as atmosphere, emotions, feelings. Photography can create a parallel universe that is slightly larger than the world seen by our eyes.

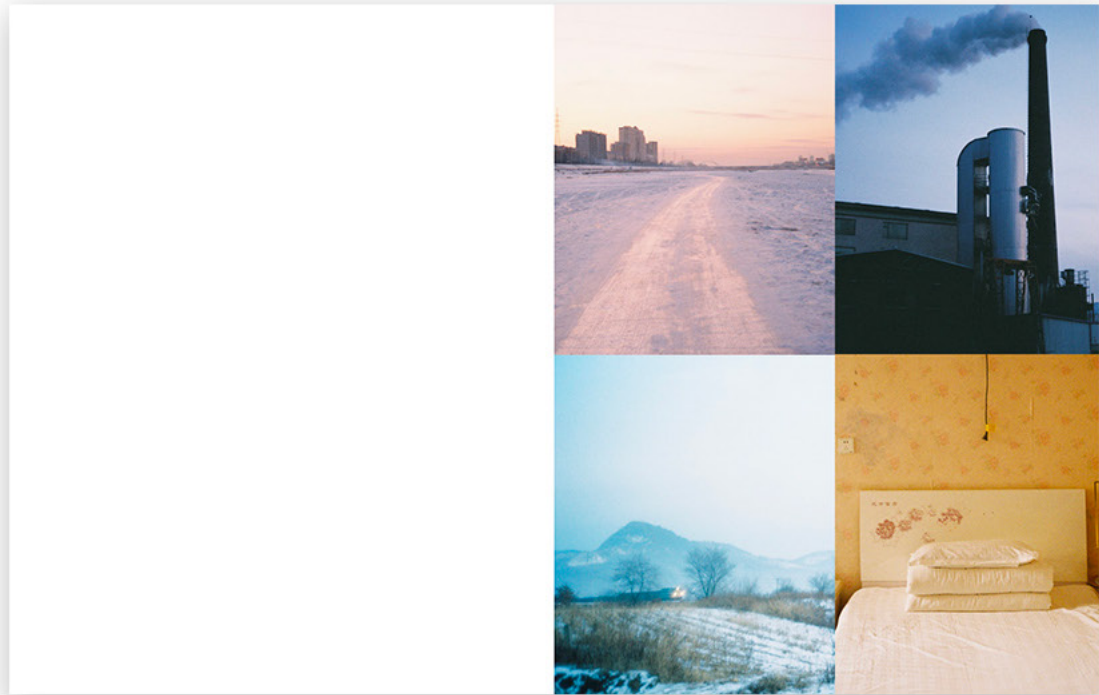
Selected images from the photobook *Once I had a relationship*







Selected images from the photobook *Yanji City*



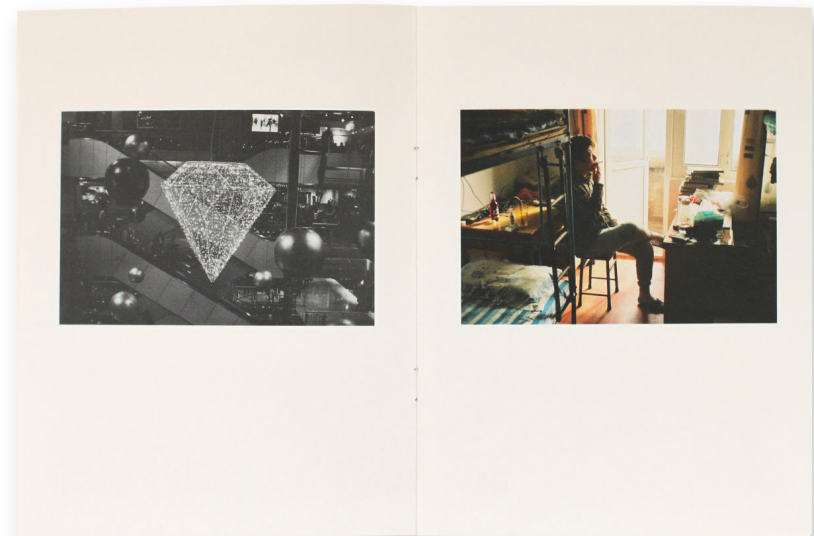
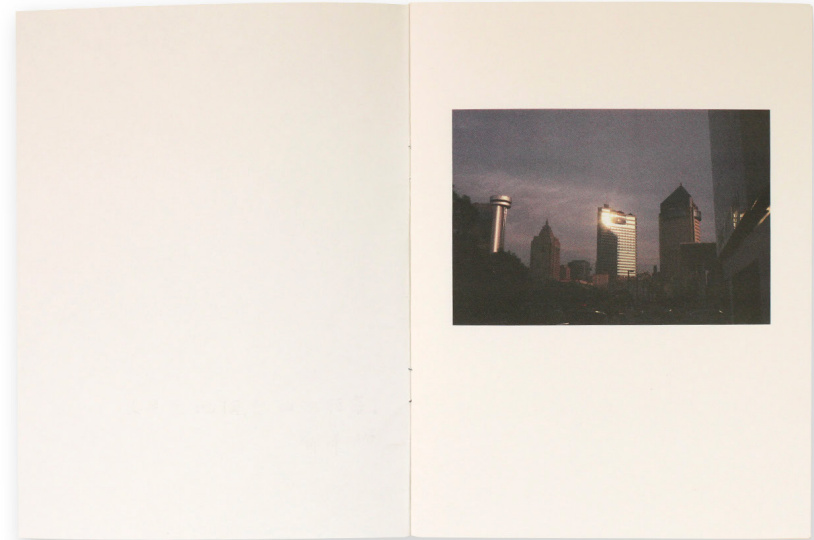
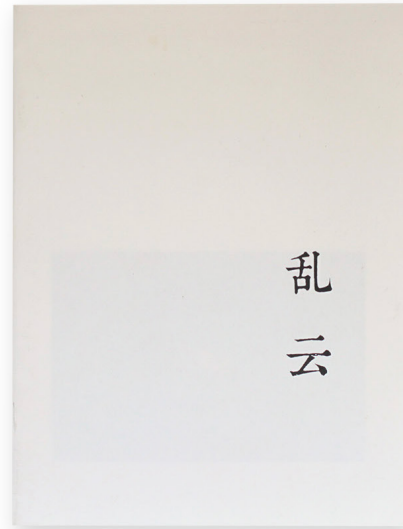
“Scattered Clouds” Series of Photobooks

Before graduating from university, I made a photo book with photos of my daily life and named it "Scattered Clouds". After that, whether at work, in travel, or in daily life, I always carried a small camera, Rollei 35 or Olympus μ 2. Without thinking too much about it, I just took pictures of what I was interested in. Gradually, the camera seems to become an extension of my body. Over the years, I have only made a few photo books with those photos, but more ideas about photography books stay in my mind. I will continue to do so as they are relics of my life.

Selected images from the photobook *Yanji City*



Selected images from the photobook *Scattered Clouds*



Selected images from the photobook *Shanxi Province*



Other Works

Magazine works

[1 The light of northeast China](#)

This is a cover feature about Shenyang, a city in the northeast of China. Shenyang has been China's largest heavy industry center for decades in the last century. As the industry went into trouble, the city's development also tended to stagnate. I went to this city during the coldest winter to walk, to watch, and to talk with some creators there.

In this cover feature, I wrote an article about my city research, and I interviewed three artists: documentary director Wang Bing, Zhuo Kailuo and painter Yu Aijun. I am in charge of interviewing, writing and taking pictures.

[2 Forgotten Great Wall](#)

In 2019, Xu Xiaoxiao embarked on a journey of 25,000 kilometers to document the lives of the people along the foot of the Great Wall of China. I interviewed her about this project and her photography career.

[3 Looking for Light Along with the Dark](#)

Xiong Liang is a painter and a pioneering Chinese picture books author. He was shortlisted for the Hans Christian Andersen Award for illustration in 2018. I interviewed him about his creation.

[4 The Chinese Photobook](#)

The Chinese Photobook, whose authors are Martin Parr and the Dutch "artist-duo" WassinkLundgren, surveys more than a century of China's rich photo-book publishing history. In this feature, we try to weave various knowledge points into a network and make those photo books the narrator of history. I was the editor and in charge of some writing.

[5 The Netherlands](#)

The Outlook Magazine issue 162, 163 are all about Holland. As an editor, I am responsible for the architectural part. I sorted out the history and current situation of Dutch architecture. We interviewed Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas, Winy Maas and related scholar Ole Bouman.

[6 The Cover Feature of Dong Qichang](#)

Dong Qichang was a Chinese painter of the later period of the Ming dynasty. For this feature, I drove a car along the route of his life. I am in charge of writing and taking photos.

[7 The Interview With Liang Shaoji](#)

Liang Shaoji is best known for using the silkworm as both the subject matter and material of his practice. In this report, I interviewed him, took photos of him, and shot a short video about him. ([the English-subtitled version](#))

*I reorganized some of my magazine works (6,7) and put them on WeChat, the most popular social media in China today. I added more pictures and some videos, trying to tell stories from different dimensions.

Personal projects

I have a great curiosity about the world, and I like to be on the road.

[1 Yanji City](#)

In ancient times, China was only a regional concept without clear boundaries. With Han culture and the Central Plains as the center, China developed national systems and moral systems. Although China has a clear, long border today, the border areas are always out of sight. I have a plan to travel to the frontiers of China. The first stop is Yanji City, a small town in northeast China.

[2 "Notes of A Fantasis" series](#)

I tried to record some of my journeys in the form of video diaries. I named them the "Notes of A Fantasis" series.

[Diary 1, Diary2, Diary3, Diary4](#)