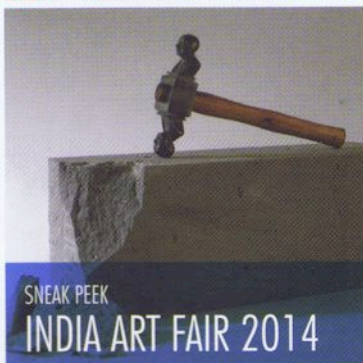


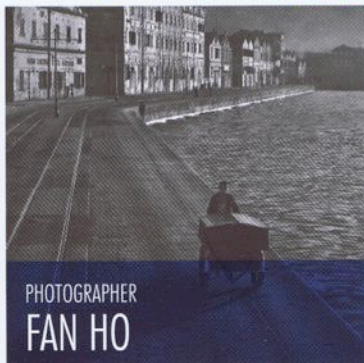


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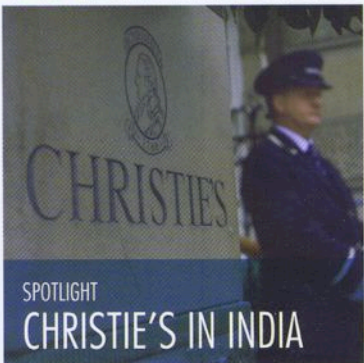
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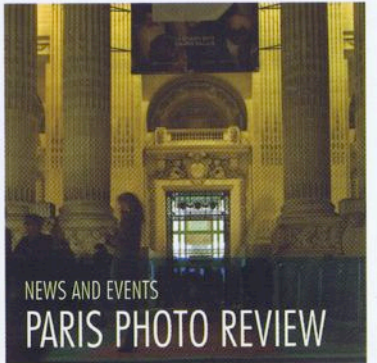
SNEAK PEEK
INDIA ART FAIR 2014



PHOTOGRAPHER
FAN HO



SPOTLIGHT
CHRISTIE'S IN INDIA



NEWS AND EVENTS
PARIS PHOTO REVIEW

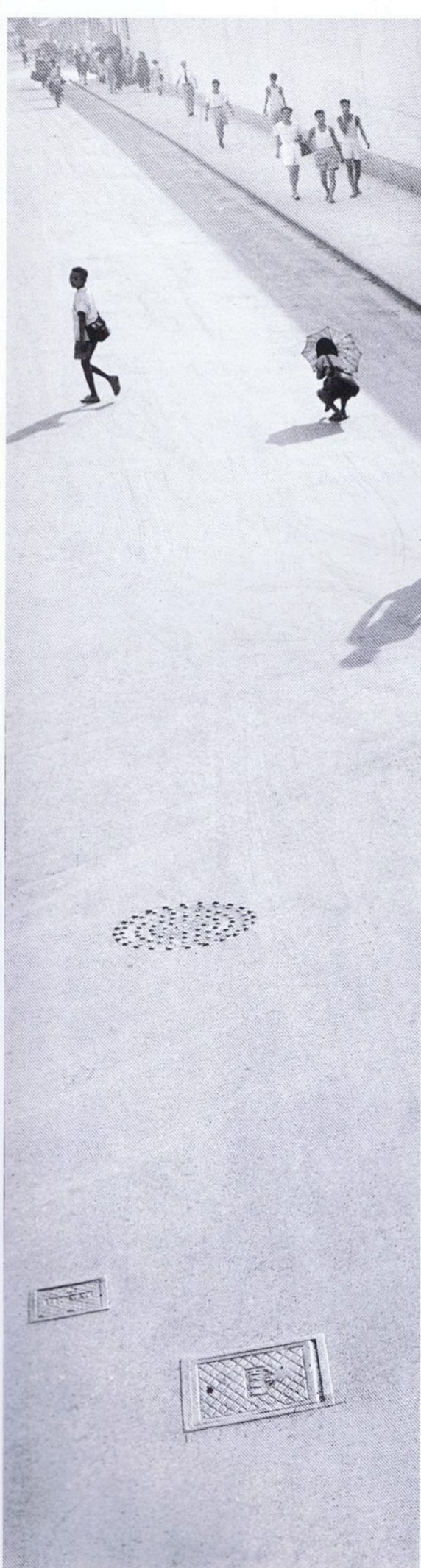
ISSUE 04. WE ARE ALL MIGRANTS.

The Tao of Fan Ho

AI INTERVIEWS FAN HO - ONE OF ASIA'S MOST INFLUENTIAL PHOTOGRAPHERS OF ALL TIME.

"APPROACHING SHADOW", 1954. IMAGE COURTESY OF AO VERTICAL ART SPACE. © FAN HO





Fan Ho

is a self-taught photographer, and his sojourn with the lens started around the age of 14, when his father gifted him his first camera – a twin-lens Rolleiflex. The twin lens Rolleiflex offered him the scope to shoot in square formats, which continues to be his preferred image size. By the age of 18 his family had moved to Hong Kong and that was to become Fan Ho's favourite canvas. Surprised at his own skill as a photographer, Fan Ho captured lonely alleyways, the shimmering water that surrounds Hong Kong, bustling trade, stark buildings, local markets and its people with a rare perseverance. Often referred to as 'the poet with a camera', his images of the metropolis are not just a testament to his artistic abilities but also an important chronicle of Hong Kong's history. He methodically worked with lines, textures, angles, shadows and geometry to cut through the bustle of the stewing commercialisation of Hong Kong to present dramatic black-and-white images of unbelievable depth. Fan Ho has often spoken in interviews nostalgically about how many of the places he shot in Hong Kong remain today only in his memory and in his images.

His art was a heady concoction of classical music, Chinese poetry, Greek tragedies, Shakespearean drama and a good dash of Hemingway - all his favourite indulgences. Perhaps it is this inclination towards powerful, visceral elements that extends itself into his photographs, which are often unparalleled in their lyrical quality. He merged drama with a quiet elegance. He also preferred the ordinary over the elite and then his compositions raised the ordinary far above what one could put a value on. When we asked

him about why street photography was life changing for him, Fan Ho said, 'It is life changing for me because you get to see the drama of life on the background of a great city like Hong Kong. You see, in my second book, I titled the book *The Living Theatre*; I truly believe that our streets are "the living theatre."'

All great artists have a maddening belief in the power of the story. Fan Ho was no different. He wanted to be a writer and wrote stories as a student, and even poems; he progressed to capturing the story through his photographs and later donned many hats in his pursuit of the story. He even tried his hand at acting and worked with the popular Shaw Brothers in films. He went on to become a critically acclaimed film-

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maker. Being a storyteller intrigued him, and the change of reels between film and camera was just an interplay of mediums.

A luminary in the annals of photography, Fan Ho has won over 250 awards; he is a Fellow of the Photographic Society of America, the Royal Photographic Society and the Royal Society of Arts in England, and an Honorary Member of the Photographic Societies of Singapore, Argentina, Brazil, Germany, France, Italy and Belgium. Between 1958 and 1965, 8 years in a row, he consecutively won a spot in the top 10 most influential photographers in the world as listed by the Photographic Society of America. Still undoubtedly recognised as one of Asia's most influential photographers of all time, Fan Ho has always been steadfast in his beliefs on photography. An ardent fan of Henri Cartier-Bresson, he often quotes him.

"SCHOOL IS OVER", 1963.

IMAGE COURTESY OF AO VERTICAL ART SPACE. © FAN HO.



"PATTERN", 1956. IMAGE COURTESY OF AO VERTICAL ART SPACE. © FAN HO.

Cartier-Bresson's two quotes often find mention in his conversations on creative approach.

'To me, photography is the simultaneous recognition, in a fraction of a second, of the significance of an event as well as of a precise organization of forms which give that event its proper expression.'

'To photograph is to hold one's breath, when all faculties converge to capture fleeting reality. It's at that precise moment that mastering an image becomes a great physical and intellectual joy.'



FAN HO.
IMAGE COURTESY: AO
VERTICAL ART SPACE.

His image 'Pattern' feels almost like an ode to Henri Cartier-Bresson's image 'SPAIN. Madrid. 1933'. Cartier-Bresson depicts a rich tapestry of human interaction beneath a stark towering leitmotif of mini-windows of varied sizes on a white wall. 'The Patterns' offers a similar yet distinctly Fan Ho composition.



Another of his iconic images – ‘Approaching Shadow’ (1954) – was one of his early forays into fine art photography. A strikingly minimalistic image catches one’s eye for its Bauhaus sensibilities. Did his love for Brahms or Mahler (classical musicians) fuel this disposition towards composing complex and emotionally charged images with such astonishing simplicity and purity? The image with its sharp shadow crossing the dejected young lady’s feet (Fan Ho’s cousin) epitomises Grecian tragedy as it denotes the inevitability of fading youth. The shadow was put in by Fan Ho in his dark room. This image taken so early in his life is a clear sign of his talent as a photographer and a printer par excellence. His pictures have a certain rhythm of familiar backdrops and locations. He had his

favourites and yet one can imagine him meditating, in wait for the perfect melange of elements. The decisive moment was key! Like a cowboy, as he has referred himself to in an interview with Elizabeth Wang-lee of *leicaliker*, he says that he was not one for fuss (additional lens/ gadgets, etc.), but he waited like a hawk to get his perfect shot. His camera has turned water to silk, to ashen gravel, to abstract splotches and even to shimmering flames. Shadows, mist, fog, light, laughter, sulk, pride – he fused these intangibles with the dexterity of a surgeon creating images that seem effortlessly tuned. He transports you to an era that seems delectable in its shuffle between pathos and piety.



"EAST MEETS WEST", 1963. IMAGE COURTESY OF AO VERTICAL ART SPACE. © FAN HO.

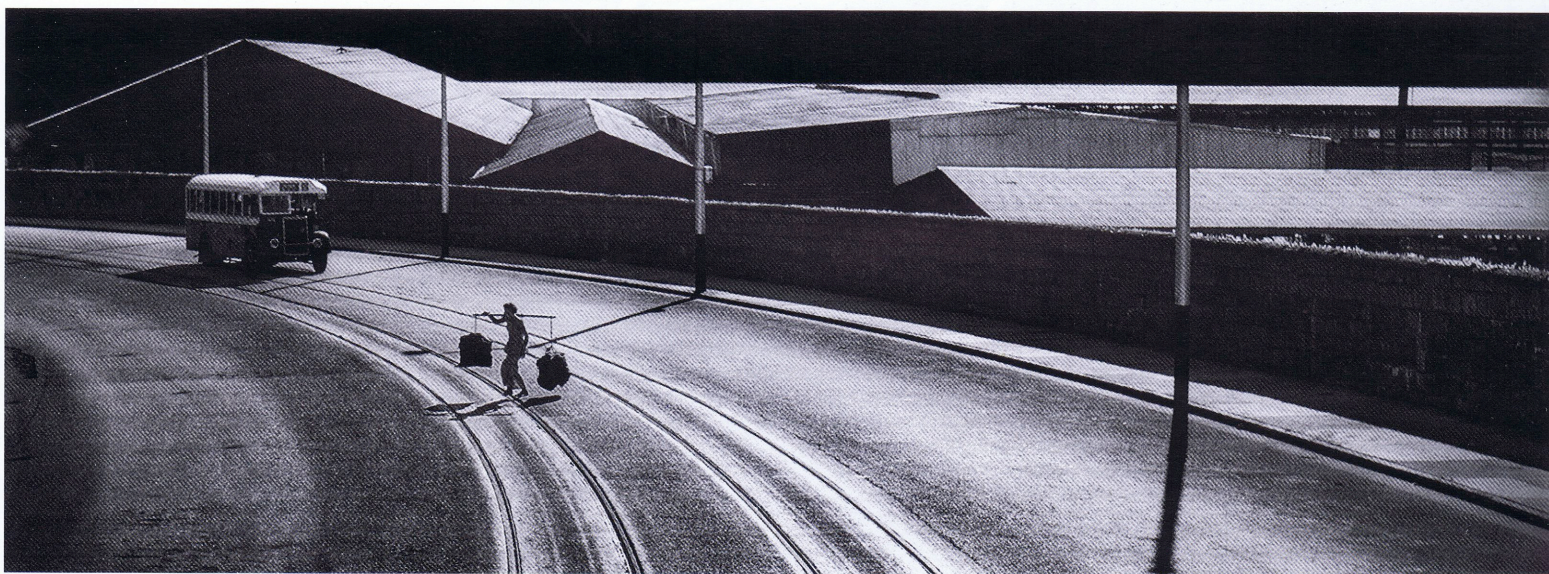
In closing we asked him about his first true love in art. Was it poetry, drama, film, sculpture, literature, art, music? Fan Ho said, 'All ... they are all important and inspirational to my work.'



"AS EVENING HURRIES", 1955. IMAGE COURTESY OF AO VERTICAL ART SPACE.A © FAN HO.

'Ho Fan is a voyeur; he watches and waits. The result of his patience is the creation of compelling images of a time and place that no longer exist. But beyond the physical space, Ho captures the mood and the atmosphere, that which is visceral and timeless. These early vintage photographs, developed and printed by HO, are a document of his relentless search for beauty, which was hidden amongst the overcrowded chaos of everyday life in Hong Kong of the 1950's and early 1960's.'

— MARK PINSUKANJANA, FOUNDER OF MODERNBOOK GALLERY



"LINES AND FORMS", 1959. IMAGE COURTESY OF AO VERTICAL ART SPACE. © FAN HO.



"SUN RAYS", 1959. IMAGE COURTESY OF AO VERTICAL ART SPACE. © FAN HO.

'Salon photography has its roots in Hong Kong. Salons were societies for photographers exhibiting the artists' work and creating a network for artists. Salons were not unified in one style but in general salon photography tended to focus on traditional photographic rules. The golden rule, one-third-proportion, texture and lighting, sensitivity for composition, and technical skills were highly appreciated. All this carried the intention to create beauty and atmosphere, very often emphasized by a dramatic title with references to Chinese poetry and literature. In contrast there was also 'contemporary photography' which didn't follow aesthetic rules as tightly but preferred a more expressionist personal approach that came across [as] more natural. Ho Fan's oeuvre swung between these 2 schools. However most street scenes shot from the hip adapted a more loose contemporary approach and focused on the humanistic portrayal of his subjects.'

– SARAH GREENE, AO VERTICAL ART SOACE, HONG KONG.



"CONTROVERSY", 1956.
IMAGE COURTESY OF AO
VERTICAL ART SPACE. © FAN HO.