

4A CENTRE FOR CONTEMPORARY ASIAN ART PRESENTS

BEIJING SILVERMINE THOMAS SAUVIN EXHIBITION OPENING: SATURDAY 11 JANUARY 2014, 2-4 PM

Beijing Silvermine, courtesy Thomas Sauvin.

Beijing Silvermine at 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art presents, for the first time outside of China, a solo exhibition of photographs from the extraordinary *Beijing Silvermine* archive curated by Thomas Sauvin.

Beijing Silvermine is a unique portrait of the Chinese capital and the life of its inhabitants in the decades following the Cultural Revolution. It is a collection of over 500,000 photographs taken by Chinese amateur photographers, which were destined for destruction at a recycling plant on the outskirts of Beijing.

In 2009, searching online for information about buying and collecting negatives, Beijing-based collector Thomas Sauvin encountered a man by the name of Xiao Ma who stockpiled negatives to recycle for their silver nitrate content and sell to laboratories. Recognising a rare chance to rescue lost memories, Sauvin struck up a deal to buy these photographic negatives by the kilo. This 'silvermine' of anonymous subjects covers a period of roughly 20 years – from 1985 to 2005.

...the pictures are compelling. It is hard not to wonder what became of these smiling families, serious young men and perturbed-looking infants.

— The Guardian, 2013

In the rescue of these snapshots *Beijing Silvermine* allows us to witness the intimate and public lives of ordinary Chinese people during a period of immense social change. These photographs reveal the mundane and extraordinary moments in everyday life that have been rescued from oblivion by collector Thomas Sauvin.

4A's exhibition explores universal themes of love, leisure, birth, youth, and happiness. It gives audiences a rare and incredibly personal insight into the subtle changes – both in domestic settings and in the wider public realm – that the economic opening to the West brought into ordinary Chinese people's lives. Also included in 4A's exhibition are two mesmerising video animations, produced by Beijing-based animator Lei Lei in collaboration with Sauvin, that reveal the surreal imagescape and stupendous depth of the Silvermine.

There is the refrigerator series: as more Chinese households began acquiring refrigerators in the late 1980s, women posed with their new appliances. And the Marilyn Monroe series, showing posters of the blond bombshell inside people's homes...It's about life

— The New York Times, 2013

Beijing Silvermine is an associated event of the Sydney Chinese New Year Festival.

Thomas Sauvin will be visiting Sydney for the exhibition opening, and available for media interview (in English and Chinese) from 6 – 11 January 2014. For all media enquiries, please contact Hannah Skrzynski on Hannah@4a.com.au or 0412 825 586.

Beijing Silvermine exhibition dates at 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art: 11 January – 22 February 2014.

BIOGRAPHIES

Thomas Sauvin is a French photography collector, editor and curator who lives in Beijing. Since 2006 he has worked as a consultant for the UK-based Archive of Modern Conflict (AMC) for whom he collects Chinese work, from contemporary art photography to period publications and anonymous photography. A glimpse into this collection is presented in the photobook *Happy Tonite* published by AMC in 2010. Sauvin has participated in exhibitions including *Photographic Oddities* from the AMC, Caochangdi Photo Festival, Beijing (2012), and more recently his project *Beijing Silvermine* has been presented by Singapore International Photo Festival (2012); *FORMAT* Photo Festival, Derby, UK (2013); *The Salt Yard*, Hong Kong (2013); and *Lianzhou Foto Festival* (2013), China's premier international photography festival, where it received *New Photography Award of the Year*. Sauvin's *Silvermine*, a limited edition five-album set of photographs from his archive, was shortlisted for the *Paris Photo Aperture Foundation First Photobook Award 2013* and was selected by renowned English photographer *Martin Parr* as one of the *Best Photobooks of the Year* for *The British Journal of Photography*.

Lei Lei is a Chinese multimedia animation artist based in Beijing with experience in graphic design, illustration, short cartoons, graffiti and hip-hop. In 2005, while still in school, he founded the design group *Raydesign Studio* and in 2009 received his master's degree in animation from *Tsinghua University*, Beijing. His works have been screened in international festivals and have received numerous awards.

Emiland Guillerme is a French filmmaker and journalist currently based in Rome. Since graduating in journalism from *La Sorbonne* his news stories have appeared in *The New York Times*, *France 2* and *Canal +* among others. His short documentary *Silvermine* (2012) about Thomas Sauvin's project is included in 4A's exhibition.



Beijing Silvermine, courtesy Thomas Sauvin.

BEIJING SILVERMINE IS
AN ASSOCIATED EVENT OF THE
SYDNEY CHINESE NEW YEAR FESTIVAL



EXHIBITION SUPPORTERS



4A CENTRE FOR
CONTEMPORARY
ASIAN ART

181-187 Hay Street Sydney NSW 2000 info@4a.com.au www.4a.com.au
tel: 02 9212 0380 fax: 02 9281 0873
Open 11am-6pm, Tuesday - Saturday, closed public holidays

The Asian Australian Artists Association is supported by



Trade &
Investment
Arts NSW



4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art is an initiative of the Asian Australian Artists Association Inc. We gratefully acknowledge the assistance of the Commonwealth Government through the Australia Council for the Arts, its arts funding and advisory body; the NSW Government through Arts NSW and the City of Sydney, Champions: Kerr and Judith Neilson; Patrons: Daniel and Lyndell Droga; Geoff Ainsworth AM, Grasshopper Bar, Johnson Pilton Walker, John Lam-Po-Tang, Dr Gene Sherman AM and Brian Sherman AM, VisAsia, Adrian Williams; Benefactors: AMP Foundation; Andrew Cameron, ARNDT Fine Art, ARTCELL, Brooke and Steve Aitken, Richard Funston and Kiong Lee, Simon Mordant AO and Catriona Mordant, Vicky Olsson, Lisa Paulsen, Dr Dick Quan, Julia Champaloup and Andrew Rothery, The Sky Foundation, Lucy Hughes Turnbull AO; Friends: Luisa Catanzaro, Ari and Lisa Droga, Choi Ropha Figuera, Julian and Stephanie Grose, Toney Holley Knowles and James Knowles, Annette Larkin, Akira and Tomoko Nakayama, Susan Nathan, The Sky Foundation, Becky Sparks and James Roland, Victoria Taylor, Anna Waldmann, Dr John Yu AC. Media Partner: Vault Magazine.