





A Social Portrait of Singapore

The Critical Years

新加坡建国初期生活面貌

陆鸿声

Photography by Loke Hong Seng

“ 每个人的生命是个过程。

从广播到摄影是我事业的一个转变。

两者需拥有敏锐的观察，思维与判断能力。

尤以摄影，除了以上条件，更要与时并进，适应科技之创新，器材之运用。

就在这转变的过程中，我看到了新加坡默默地进步，人民生活逐渐安定。。。

陪着岁月同行，胶卷拍摄的历程进步到数码化的科幻空间，不觉50个年头。

这也是为何本人执着于影像的瞬间变化，景与物替代的原因。”

陆鸿声

Life is a process. My move from broadcasting to photography was a turning point in my career. Both endeavours require keen observation, contemplation and judgement. This is especially so in photography, which, in addition to the above abilities, demands a vigorous keeping up with the times, rapid adaptation to fast-changing technology, and an innovative approach to new equipment and usage. It was at the process of this turning point that I witnessed the growth of Singapore and the gradual settlement of its people. Progressing with time, photography has changed from film to digital and is fast-moving towards the realm of science fiction. 50 years have flown past in the blink of an eye. This explains why I am obsessed with the changes in our surroundings – the interrelationship between scenes and objects.



登上舢板，转身拍摄新加坡的第一张相片。 Asia Building and Clifford Pier, Loke's first photograph. 1963



大船冲浪而过，使站在舢板上的我摇晃不定。 Capturing a photograph on a sampan boat. 1965



穿越时空, 加文纳桥。 Cavenagh Bridge. 1965



哥烈码头又称红灯码头，海上交通站。 Clifford Pier. 1965

“ 街头摄影是随意的，不设下任何主题。
走在街上，记得带上相机，看好就拍。
相片取舍是主观的，角度内容决定了内涵和表达方式。
无主题等于无约束，自由闯荡。任何时刻，随遇而安。
从平凡中找主题，会有意料不到的作品。
不抢拍，不强拍，诚挚待人，尊重对方，消除之间的障碍。
把握动向，捕捉瞬间，仅此一张。务必一箭中的。
拍不到，失败！只怪失去先机。
构图要远看细读。不争先，不恐后。”

陆鸿声

Street photography is spontaneous with no predetermined themes. When walking along the streets, don't forget to have your camera prepared and ready. Aim well - shoot! The photographs you make are subjective. Perspectives define character and express intention. The absence of predetermined themes is no restraint. On the contrary, you gain freedom to explore. Go with the flow. Anytime. Finding a theme from the mundane may lead to surprising results. Never rush a shoot. Never force a shoot. Be sincere and respectful to your subjects. Dissolve barriers. Observe the movements - seize the moment. Just one shot. Must not miss. Miss a shot - fail! A missed opportunity. Compose from afar, study the details. This is not a race.

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Introduction

This was a mud-flat, swamp. Today this is a modern city.
Ten years from now, this will be a metropolis. Never fear.
– Lee Kuan Yew

Encountering these images of Loke Hong Seng, taken between 1963 and 1985, has spurred several reactions amongst the various stakeholders who have encountered them. The first reaction is always to the quality of the images: the subject, the inherent compositions that combine to create narrative. The second is time. And how in such a short time given the same familiar spaces, things have changed, and how the bodies within these spaces must encounter these changes. The tenacity of labour is captured at this time, the haggling and trade over water rationing, within the development of the Housing Development Board (HDB) that replaced the “mud-flat swamp”. Juxtapositions are another: trade, lifestyle, education differences, images all ordered chronologically, showing the photographer’s conscious knowledge of the various contradictions and various areas of life. And lastly, the questions to the artist of why he was making these photographs at a time when there was no market nor desire for reproduction of these images as art.

It has been a deep honour to discover and work towards making known the oeuvre of Loke Hong Seng, which consists of 300+ photographic images in his archive. Each image is valuable as at once a grasp of history as well as a demonstration of art photography in composition, style, and technique. It is also valuable in illustrating the history of Singapore in relation to Malaya in the past few decades, its relation to Southeast Asia during this time, and currently to itself through its content and narratives. The images, as rich as they are in tone, texture and well captured in their spontaneous composition, also provide a depth of content in relation to themes of farming, development, trade, shipping, labour, youth, education, etc. in Singapore. The clichéd phrase of “A picture that says a thousand words” describes at any time any one of his photographs. It has been an educational process, this foray into history, and a deep pleasure to have found this significant body of work with images that are timeless and iconic.

Loke Hong Seng was a radio broadcast journalist. His photographic endeavor started with a few images of the then humble skyline of Singapore. Whilst on camera outings with his friends to Kusu Island, he observed a changing skyline, which gave him a sense that things were changing. A little further on, from his little bumboat, he observed a luxury yacht sailing towards Singapore with expatriates, and he knew at that moment that he held in his hand a camera and in his eyes a dedication that together captured two decades of change of Singapore. Within his images, the sea, the trade, and water is a binding recurring reference. In his images, one sees the coastline and the river trade – the development or the demise of the boats and fishermen, and “pollution” is another theme. This extends itself inland to the development board via farms and floods.

Instead of indulging nostalgia, the enthusiastic Loke sought to capture the changing landscape, the labour, and the input, which lead to what he calls “improvements” of lifestyle, such as housing development and eliminating the mud-flats and floods. A lot of the subject of his work captured the Riverfront, Raffles Place & the business district where change occurred, Changi Beach where the boatmen are, and Whampoa & Toa Payoh as areas of housing development change. Loke is descended from “Samsui”, and there are several glimpses into the lives of this people. After this period of eliminating the “mud-flat swamp”, Loke was no longer interested in the landscape as art, though he continued to do commercial work in photography and video.

In addition to the main body of a wide selection of images in this catalogue, there are three essays contributed by Gael Newton, (‘Loke Hong Seng’), Zhuang Wubin (‘Shenti Lixing: The Documenting Practice of Loke Hong Seng’), and Gilles Massot (‘A Singaporean Voice’). Gael Newton frames the photographer’s practice based on her long-standing interest and research in Southeast Asian photography. Zhuang Wubin argues about modern photography in Southeast Asia, offering points about Loke Hong Seng’s body of work within it. Gilles Massot, as lecturer, artist, and expatriate in the 1980s, was invited to contribute his thoughts on how Loke’s images, as taken by a local, is revealing to understanding Massot’s own work that came a decade later.

I would like to thank all the people who have made this work possible, most of all to Bryan Loke, son of Loke Hong Seng, who has provided lifetime support and encouragement to its production. To those who have contributed curatorial and production insights: Zhuang Wubin, Gael Newton, Edward Lean. To the Photographic Society Singapore. And most importantly, to the photographer and artist Loke Hong Seng himself, who through his images and his stories offer new ways of seeing, and thus imagining. I have a deep respect for his lifelong endurance, dedication and belief in the power of the image via the eye and the apparatus.

About what this all means to him, what he accomplished in his life, the artist states,

Images are my life. This is my lifetime.

Audrey Yeo
Yeo Workshop





































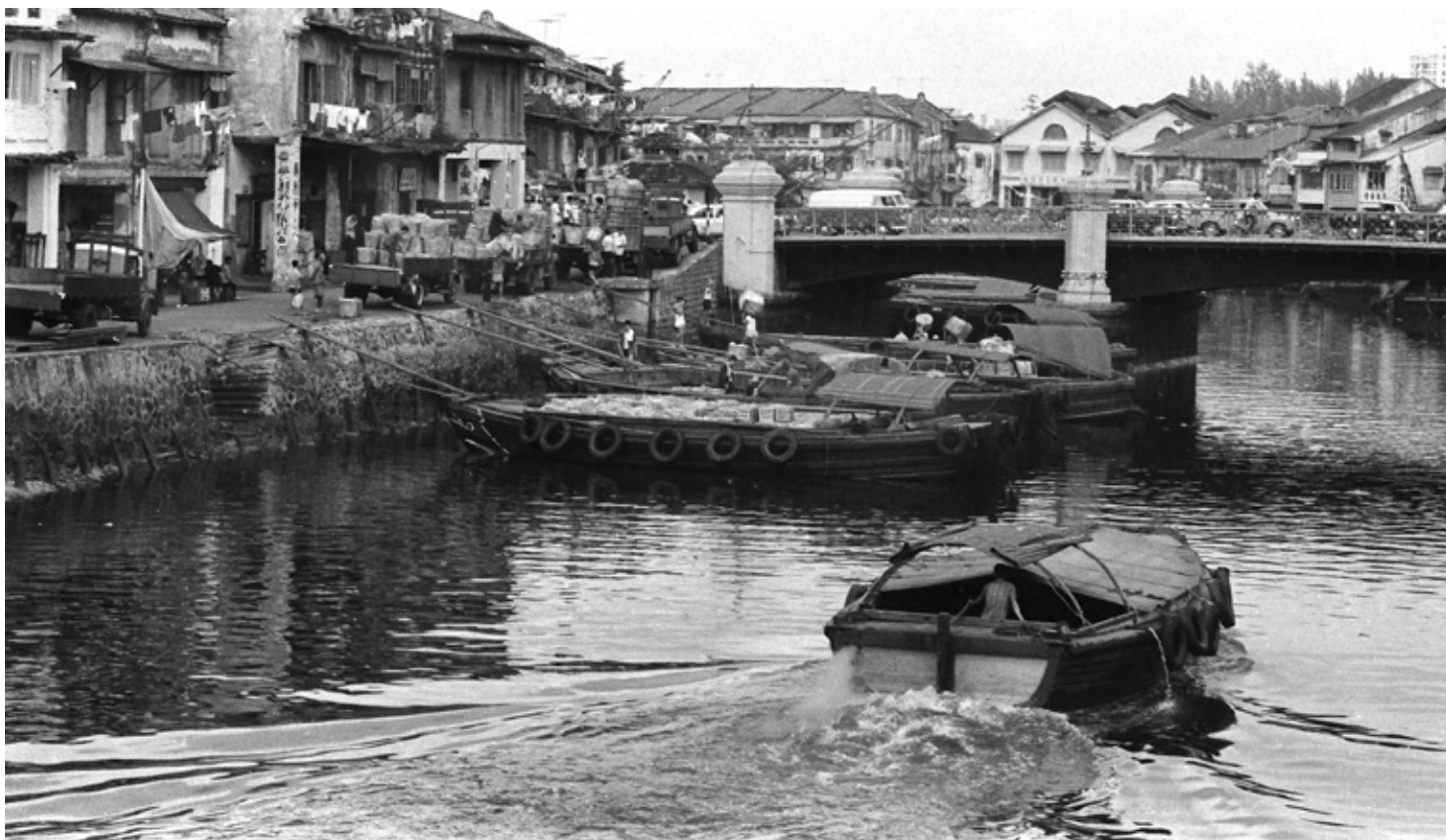
















Loke Hong Seng

With 'The Asian Century' upon us economically and politically, it is not surprising that 21st century curators and collectors locally and internationally have spectacularly embraced and to an extent colonised contemporary Asian photomedia artists. Mid-20th century postwar photojournalists working sporadically in Asia from Henri Cartier-Bresson to the Vietnam reportage of Larry Burrows, maintain the aura of sober documentary photography and continue to be venerated, exhibited, and studied.

It strikes me, however, that the idea of 'The History of the Asian Photographer' is yet to be imagined, let alone started. When that day comes, 20th century modern Asian photographers will emerge as a significant and revealing tradition. But first we have to rediscover them from the most sentimental camera club Pictorialists to the dedicated independent post WWII documentary photographers like Loke Hong Seng and the many as yet not universally known Asian photojournalists.

Loke Hong Seng's body of work over the two decades of his most prolific work from 1963 to 1985 tracks the overlaying of the corporatised Singapore Republic out of the old kampong and colonial entrepot. Loke's aesthetic similarly moves between the old and the new. He shares the Pictorialist photographic society photographer's delight in the moody scene, the quirky byways of urban life with the social investigation of life on the street so vigorously pursued by post WWII photojournalists.

Loke's final overlay in his aesthetic is the decentred vision of the younger generation of edgy 'personal documentary' school photographers of the '60s and '70s. His framing of an old Chinese man in a doorway adjacent to a scrawl of graffiti for example, has the humility of Cartier-Bresson's environmental worker portraits. Indeed many of Loke's industrial images are touched by Cartier-Bresson and the modern photo essay format.

The reward of Loke's body of work is how he explores and extends what is already known as a 'good picture'. For instance, in images of the works in bumboats, a woman selling chickens, a row of shophouses, or the series of a group of workers, Loke gently opens a question for the viewer. Framed at ground level through blurred legs that serve to isolate her, the woman's chicken makes us wonder what she is thinking about. Suddenly she is a person we can relate to. We see a row of shophouses that have a modern housing development looming over them. A bold pattern of cargo nets in the foreground seem ready to smash a row of shops. It is an old dilemma. The old makes way for the new, but who benefits? We see a food cart being pushed with great effort by young and old workers. Will they get to live in the new apartments opposite, drive the new cars, or marry the chic girls crossing the street? Everywhere, old and new lives connect and cross.

Loke uses many devices familiar with the street photographers of the 1970s using new reflex cameras and lenses that allowed for close-up foreground figures and deep backgrounds. Loke alternates between Hasselblad and Leica R so his images alternate between the considered large format camera and the spontaneously captured image. We see images glimpsed through layers, and people in all directions without the single static, hierarchic compositions of older Pictorialism and photojournalism. Chaos gently reigns, expressing the tumultuous years of destruction and creation.

The reward of Loke's body of work is how he explores and extends what is already known as a "good picture".

Do not be mistaken. These are subtle pictures. There is always another note that changes the initial perception of the scene and counters the clichéd view. Sometimes this experience comes from seeing more shots of the same scene. The touristy image becomes complicated by the sequential images of the same subject, as for example in a series showing a work gang and their overseers in some protracted discussion over lorries full of basket loads of rocks. The series steps beyond the glib image. A child washes clothes in the river, and in the next shot she looks up and smiles at the photographer. A connection is made. In a series about an art class we view a seemingly simple shot of a young Chinese woman posing with quiet dignity by a tree for a young woman artist, watched on by an older woman. Elsewhere two girls are drawing thatched huts. Who are these 'new women'? Are they architects of the new order? Who told them that women could have a life of their own and be artists?

Loke Hong Seng learned of course from the multitude of Chinese photographers profiled in Chinese photo magazines especially those out of Hong Kong. He studied the winning entries in the international competitions in which he was also a winner at times.

Some of these names, we can follow through the Internet, such as Chen Fuli and Chin San Long, who are renowned for their use of montage to create landscapes in the spirit of the Chinese scroll painting, or San Francisco-based Fan Ho, who has moved recently to surreal images made from montaging his earlier negatives. Fantasy, however, has not been Loke's path.

After 1985 the new Singapore seemed to have overridden the old, and Loke's drive to engage with the city's story fell away.

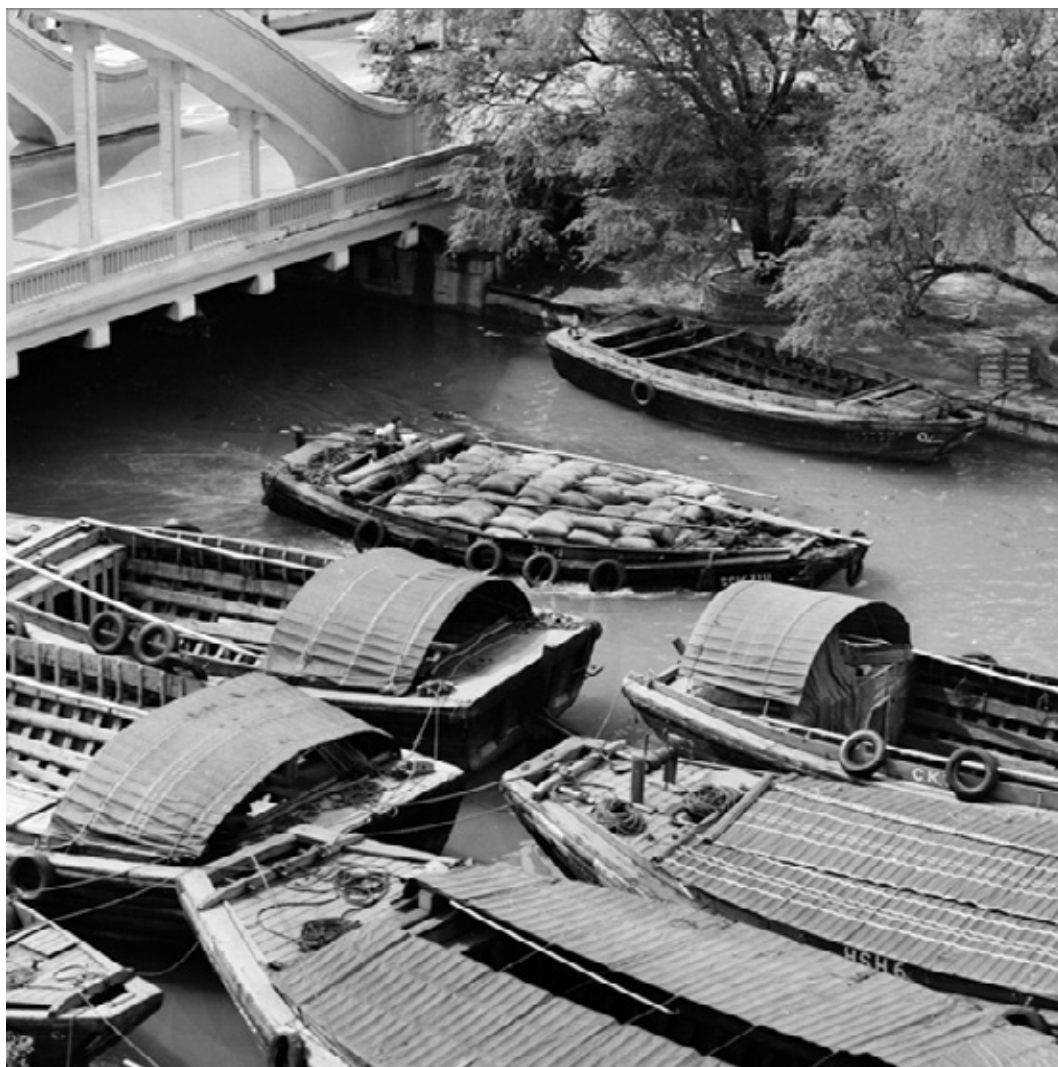
A favourite image for the writer is of the young girls representing different racial communities in Singapore in uniform carrying a banner for a parade. Loke leaves the field to their endeavours in the new age. These young people will hopefully be tempted soon, by exhibitions such as this, to savour the intricate beauties of Loke's work as it becomes better known and appreciated.

Gael Newton

Gael Newton is consultant curator and writer specialising in Southeast Asian photohistory. She was formerly Senior Curator Photography at the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra until late 2014. Her last decade of work there was dedicated to building a collection surveying photography across the Asia-Pacific region. Two exhibitions resulted: *Picture Paradise: Asia-Pacific Photography 1840s – 1940s* and *Garden of the East: Photography in Indonesia 1850s – 1940s* (www.nga.gov.au/pictureparadise, www.nga.gov.au/gardeneast)























令人敬佩的三水妇工。 The Admirable Samsui Women. 1970



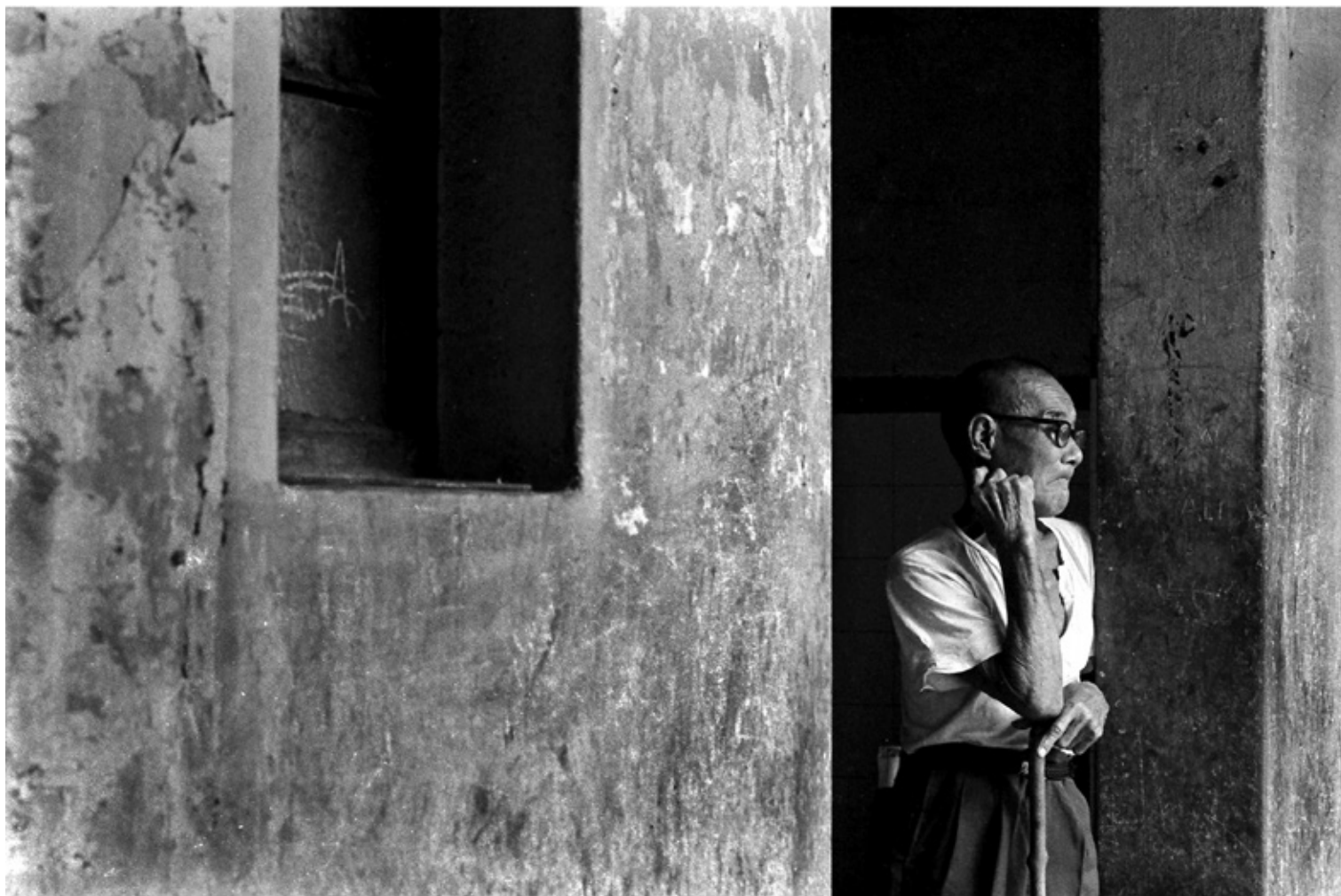
简单的工具，完成艰巨的任务。 Plain Tools, Hard Work. 1969



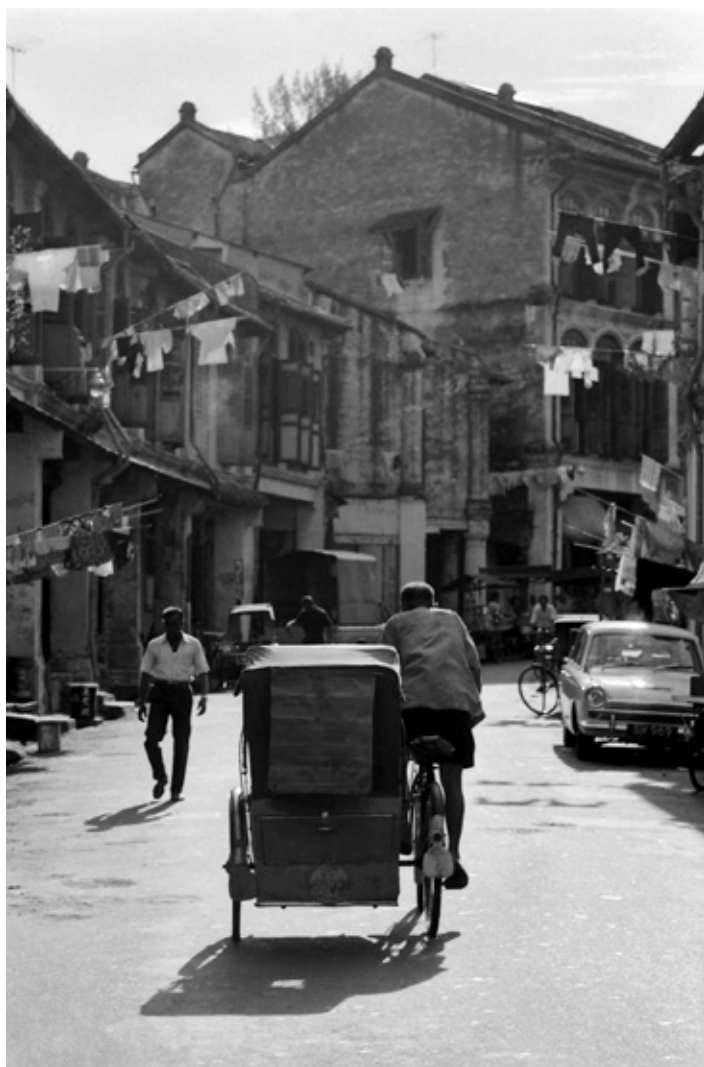












Shenti Lixing: The Documenting Practice of Loke Hong Seng

In Southeast Asia, our understanding of photography is inflicted by the reductive binary of art versus photography. As a counter, I believe that it is more productive to consider photography, or documenting, as an embedded and embodied process.ⁱ Here, I will like to further explore the idea of embodiment, relating it to the idiom of shenti lixing (身体力行) in relation to the idea of documenting as a method. The idiom can be translated as “to earnestly practise what one advocates”. The idea of embodiment appears in shen (身), which can also mean “on a personal level”. The character ti (体) extends the metaphor of embodiment and connotes “to experience”, while li (力) suggests fervour. The word xing (行), as it is, can mean “to act” or “to walk”. In other words, xing evokes both a sense of agency and emancipation, which, alongside the idea of embodiment, drives the documenting process. This is how I will characterise the documenting practice of Singaporean photographer Loke Hong Seng (b. 1943, Singapore), the focus of this essay.

Documenting as a Method

Son of a Cantonese migrant from China, Loke worked as a broadcaster from 1963 to 1975. In 1965, he started photography as a hobby. In 1966, he joined the Photographic Society of Singapore (PSS), thinking that he would broaden his understanding of the medium at the eminent salon photography club. Loke left two years later, to develop his own style. As a young photographer who wanted to pursue something different, he had nowhere to go.

Echoing the dichotomy I have intimated earlier, Loke recalls:

By the 1960s, the Nanyang painters, led by the likes of Liu and Cheong, were already very famous. Their views shaped the mainstream opinion of visual arts in Singapore. In general, they had little interest in the art of photography.ⁱⁱ Meanwhile, the salon clubs witnessed rapid growth in the same period. There was nothing else in between.ⁱⁱⁱ

By then, Loke had already heard of the term “street photography”. The work of Hong Kong photographer Ho Fan (b. 1937, Hong Kong) offered a useful entry point. While he is now recuperated as a master of street photography, Ho’s work has always circulated within the milieu of salon photography since the 1950s. At the library, Loke also acquainted himself with the idea of the decisive moment propagated by Henri Cartier-Bresson (b. 1908, d. 2004, France). His documenting approach is developed through the mediation of these influences.

Loke elaborates:

Ho Fan often uses light to highlight his subjects. However, when I want to focus on the sense of history or realism in the image, I sometimes look beyond the condition of light. Nevertheless, I do not want to suggest that street photography should not have aesthetics. If there is no sense of salon [pictorial] aesthetic at all, the photograph will not look good. If I can incorporate aesthetics into my work, my photographs will make a stronger imprint.^{iv}

The photographs that we see here are made from 1965 to 1985, after which Loke put aside his documenting work to focus on his commercial studio business. While roaming the streets without any preconceived theme or location in mind, Loke felt an obvious sense of kemerdekaan, or otherwise, liberation. Nevertheless, it was still difficult in the 70s to photograph some people going about their daily routine because they feared that their souls would be stolen.^v Part of the challenge was for Loke to gain their trust. In the process, he also gained empathy for them. This is one reason why documenting is an embodied practice, because, after shooting in a place for some time, he would quite easily develop a kind of gunian (顾念, or “concern”) for the people there.^{vi} Otherwise, there was little to motivate him to make repeated trips to photograph, for instance, the destruction of Malay houses in Geylang Serai, or the construction of public flats at Toa Payoh. These are not photographs that he could send for club competitions (if he bothered to participate at all). Most of the photographs here remain unpublished.^{vii} He did not even print them. He would develop the rolls, mark the frames that he liked and tuck them away. Decades later, from 2003 to 2006, Loke finally decided to scan his work in order to store the work digitally. His son Bryan, who works as a creative director, is crucial in convincing his father to showcase the photographs.

As a whole, we may think of Loke’s documenting practice as an inscription of his identity in a newly independent nation. However, his work is dialectical, as much as it is analytical.^{viii} In the ‘60s and the ‘70s, the Singaporean government deployed parts of the West as “neutral or indeed universal culture” to “deterritorialise – to further

It was still difficult in the '70s to photograph some people going about their daily routine because they feared that their souls would be stolen.

the loss of culture in relation to social and geographical territory – the various immigrant and local cultures as the means to create a society ready for the jump to export-oriented industrialisation”.^{ix} Partially echoing the state, this is how Loke reads his work today. His photographs captured Singapore on the crossroads of transformation, articulating the dilemma of a young country caught between the ways of its recent past, and the promises of her modernising future. Suitably, he pays tribute to the older generation who was sacrificed to the prosperity of today, while emphasising the need of the nation and her people to upgrade and progress.^x The point is not whether we agree with his prognosis or not, but the fact that Loke analyses his work in this manner. It is fitting then that as a Mandarin/Cantonese-speaking Singaporean who learnt English as an acquired language, Loke locates his photographic modernity as a mediated coming-together of the East and West. Encapsulated in his citation of Ho Fan and Cartier-Bresson, and as a historical testimony of the transforming nation it shows that documenting, vis-à-vis the idea of shenti living, can persist within, or even tamper with, the masculine national modernity of the government which resists the primordial and the cultural.^{xi} This is because Loke’s photographs are also seared by the “tiny spark of contingency, of the Here and Now”, which “in the immediacy of that long-forgotten moment the future subsists so eloquently that we, looking back, may rediscover it”.^{xii} If we search for it in Loke’s photographs, we may find a softer, more empathetic and individuated response to the modernisation of Singapore.

- i. In general, I often think of photographic practices as embedded in the milieus that the practitioners operate, shaped by ideas and visuals that circulate locally and globally, and marked by personal desires and creative decisions. This idea is partly shaped by anthropologist Karen Strassler’s deployment of the word “refraction” to refer to the process in which “everyday encounters with photographs entangle widely shared visions with affectively charged personal narratives and memories” in Java, Indonesia. See Karen Strassler, *Refracted Visions: Popular Photography and National Modernity in Java* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010), 23.
- ii. Liu Kang took photographs in his lifetime, but he did not consider it as an artistic medium. In fact, he felt that the camera, as a mechanical device, curtailed the artist’s agency. See Yow Siew Kah, “Liu Kang, Photography and Chinese Modernism,” in Liu Kang: *Colourful Modernist*, ed. Yeo Wei Wei (Singapore: National Art Gallery, 2011), 122, 127.
- iii. Loke Hong Seng, interview by author, Singapore, December 11, 2014. I will like to thank Audrey Yeo and Bryan Loke for facilitating the interviews with the artist.
- iv. Loke Hong Seng, interview by author, Singapore, December 8, 2014.
- v. Loke, December 8. This recalls the superstition in China, noted by Lu Xun in 1924, where some people feared that their spirits could be photographed or even bathed away. See Lu Xun, *Lu Xun Quan Ji: Volume 1*, ed. Wang Haibo (Beijing: Renmin Wenxue Chubanshe, 2005), 192.
- vi. Loke, December 8.

- vii. Loke Hong Seng did publish some photo stories and front-page images on TV Weekly (电视广播周刊) and the Sunday edition of Sin Chew Jit Poh (新洲日报). Most of them are not included in this book.
- viii. Writing about African photography, Okwui Enwezor characterises the shift from the modern to the contemporary as the evolution from depiction to observation, a shift from the dialectical to the analytical. I think the works of specific photographers in Southeast Asia have been active from the ‘50s to the ‘70s, including Loke, neatly problematises Enwezor’s view. It is limiting to see their works only as depictions and not as attempts to observe and analyse what they photographed. See Okwui Enwezor, *Snap Judgments: New Positions in Contemporary African Photography* (New York/Göttingen: International Center of Photography/Steidl Publishers, 2006), 28.
- ix. C. J. W.-L. Wee, *The Asian Modern: Culture, Capitalist Development*, Singapore (Singapore: NUS Press, 2007), 8.
- x. Loke, December 8.
- xi. Wee, *The Asian Modern*, 35–40.
- xii. Walter Benjamin, “A Small History of Photography,” in *One-Way Street and Other Writings*, trans. Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter (London: Verso, 1985), 243.

Zhuang Wubin

Zhuang Wubin (b. 1978, Singapore) is a writer focusing on the photographic practices of Southeast Asia. A 2010 recipient of the research grant from Prince Claus Fund (Amsterdam), Zhuang is an editorial board member of *Trans-Asia Photography Review*, a journal published by the Hampshire College and the University of Michigan Scholarly Publication Office. In 2013, Galeri Soemardja at Institute Technology of Bandung, Indonesia, invited Zhuang for a curatorial residency. He has curated photography related exhibitions at the Esplanade, Singapore, Institute of Contemporary Arts Singapore, Musée du Quai Branly, Paris, and the International Orange Photo Festival 2010 at Changsha, China.

































A Singaporean voice

Like it or not, social media has become an (almost!) unavoidable part of contemporary life. Little did I expect to come across further confirmation of this observation when going to Balestier Plaza to meet with 70-year-old Loke Hong Seng. The plan was to interview him in relation to some forthcoming exhibitions that would present his photographic work for the first time to the public. As we sat around coffee talking about the proposals, a story emerged that closely followed the evolution of Singaporean society over the last five decades, from the good old days of analogue technology to today's digital world. His was the story of a Singaporean viewpoint that had steadily travelled through the decades, a perspective that had been revived by social media, in time to be part of the Republic's jubilee celebrations.

What made my encounter with Loke particularly interesting was that he stopped photographing the life and times of Singapore just as I started pursuing my own visual journey. His work spans two decades, from 1963 to 1985. Looking at a selection of images, I could see how he had captured the emergence of a brand new world in the midst of vernacular architecture and colonial buildings. Arriving in Singapore in 1981, I could only see how this transformation had already profoundly affected the cityscape. To the newly arrived French country boy, the skyscrapers of Shenton Way were intimidating towering structures, the HDB towns a disorientating urban experience, and the shopping centres of Orchard Road wondrous mazes. Meanwhile the remaining traces of a still recent past in Chinatown or Jalan Besar offered a fascinating world that spoke to my heart and soul. In 1984, the possibility of an article on Singapore for a French magazine prompted me to start shooting in black and white, and I kept on going until the early '90s. In Loke's opinion, however, too few of these traces were left for him to carry on with this photographic work. He had captured the emergence of a new world; I caught the disappearance of the old one. The story behind his personal choices and evolution was one I was eager to hear.

Loke's photographs do indeed tell many stories. From street scenes to shipyards and kampongs, from construction sites to beach scenes and soulful portraits, they speak of his love for the people around him. Framed by a strong sense of composition, they tell us about hard work and simple pleasures, the lot of most of his fellow citizens in these years of nation building. Still, I didn't expect to learn that the start of his artistic career was actually as a storyteller, or more precisely as the writer-producer of a weekly radio drama show. His father had come to Singapore with his wife and his mother of Samsui origin in 1930. His older brother was born in 1933. He was born under Japanese occupation in 1943. His enterprising father had started a machinery company, and after the war the family became relatively well off, sufficiently so for him to complete his education in Chinese. In 1963, the young man came across an exciting job opportunity: announcer for a Chinese radio programme. With no experience in that line, Loke was put in charge of Mandarin and Cantonese radio drama shows for which he had to write stories, produce the recording and telecast on air. These new skills in photography had to be learnt without formal training. Calling upon his inborn ingeniousness and sense of observation, he could master them swiftly. This aptitude for self-learning served him well later when he became a professional photographer in 1975, switched to video in 1982 and finally moved to digital platforms.

The time had come for these images to go out and have a life of their own, which they do today with this book.

In order to find the inspiration for his stories, Loke adopted the habit of going out for long walks, and in 1965 he started using his brother's camera. His attention was at first focused on the life of his fellow citizens, in particular the coolies around the river and surrounding Chinatown. In 1966 he joined the Singapore Photographic Society and made the major purchase of a Leicaflex and its lens, at that time an impressive investment of \$1900. He also looked at improving his technique and composition by buying Chinese books and magazines from Hong Kong, through which he developed his understanding of the different types of image-making from pictorial to documentary. His interest in photography was slowly but surely going beyond the simple amateurish approach. Most importantly he had become aware of the potential of photography to record the process of urbanisation that was inexorably transforming the country. His lens turned to subjects such as the growth of Toa Payoh New Town in 1968, the rising UOB Centre overlooking the river in 1975, or the kampong houses replaced by HDBs in Eunos in the early '80s. A clear pictorial approach was also adopted in the framing of fishing scenes along Changi beach and other rural scenes in the 1970s.

By 1985, Loke's professional work was focusing on videography, and the transformation of the city was so complete in his eyes that he stopped shooting. For forty years the images remained dormant in his studio. Then in 2006, while scanning images for a customer, he thought of doing the same for himself. But the images, which had yet to be exhibited, had to wait a while longer before reaching the public eye. And what else but the social media in the form of Facebook could play that part? In 2013, Loke started a Facebook page featuring some of his black and white photographs. The reaction was immediate. The Photographic Society invited him as a speaker, and the Facebook audience was fascinated. The time had come for these images to go out and have a life of their own, which they do today with this book. From the views of the radio broadcaster of the '60s to today's digital images, this Singaporean's perspective has found a new expression that fits the 21st century with clarity and insight.

Gilles Massot

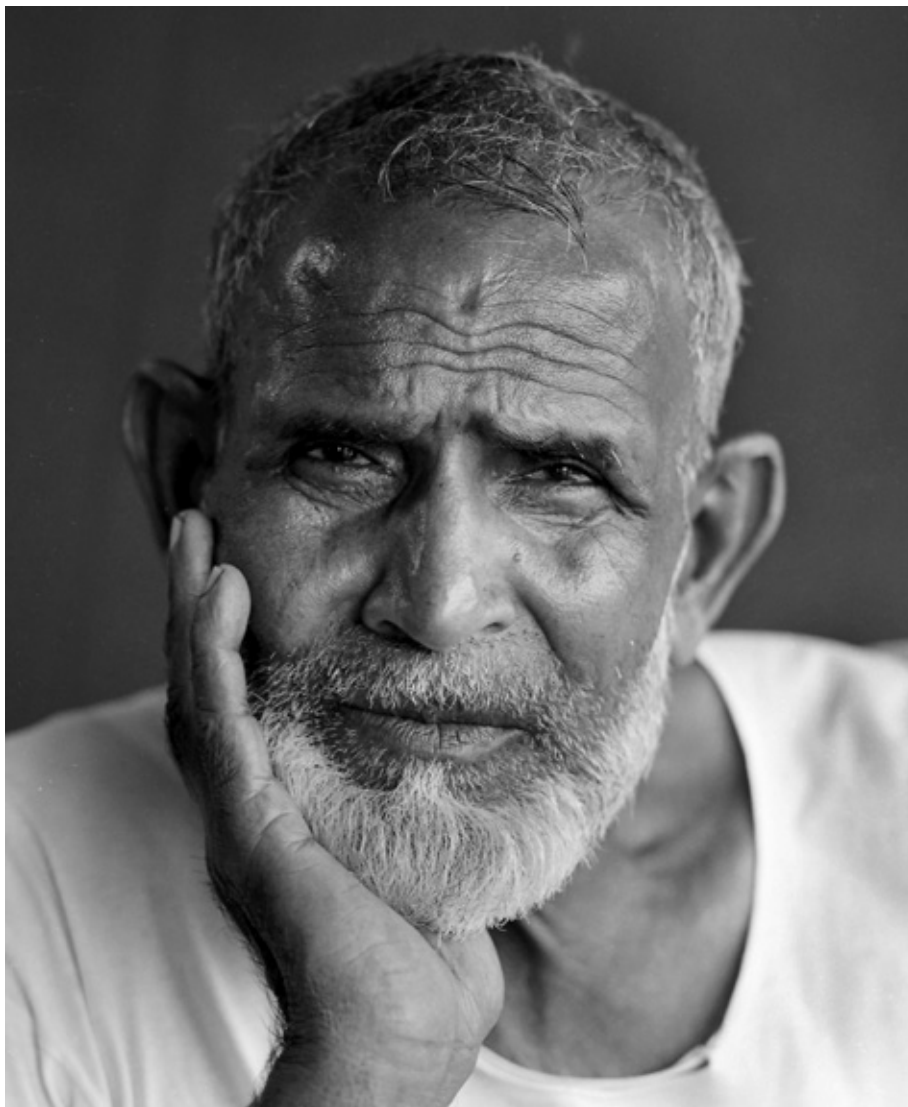
Gilles Massot (b. 1955, Aix en Provence, France) studied architecture and photography in Marseille, France, and has been living and working in Singapore since 1981. Through the 1980s he was involved in a string of seminal arts events in his adopted homeland of Singapore, including the first editions of the Festival of Arts Fringe and the 1987 Ying Yang Festival. The 1990s saw him travel extensively across Asia, a way of living that resulted in a number of exhibitions on Asian cultures and cities. With the new century his focus shifted onto academia and research with the book "Bintan, phoenix of the Malay Archipelago" published in 2003. In 2006 he completed his MA with a body of work dealing with the apparition of the photographic idea in the 18th century. Since then, his work mostly focuses on the theory of photography and the phenomenon of "recording" it initiated. He currently works on Jules Itier who produced the first existing photographs of Singapore, Philippines, China and Vietnam in 1844–45. In 2007, he was appointed artist for the commissioned public art at the Buona Vista Station, Circle Line, as part of LTA Integrated Art Programme. His work is part of many private and public collections, including the collections of the Singapore Art Museum and the Maison Européenne de la Photographie in Paris. He currently teaches at LASALLE College of the Arts, Singapore. He is also a lecturer in photo history at the Nanyang Technological University and a member of the artist collective, The Artists Village. He is a recipient of the French cultural award Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres.



建筑工地的印度茶摊。 A Teh Tarik Stall on Tampines Construction Site. 1972



印度茶摊主。 Teh Tarik Stall Owner. 1972

















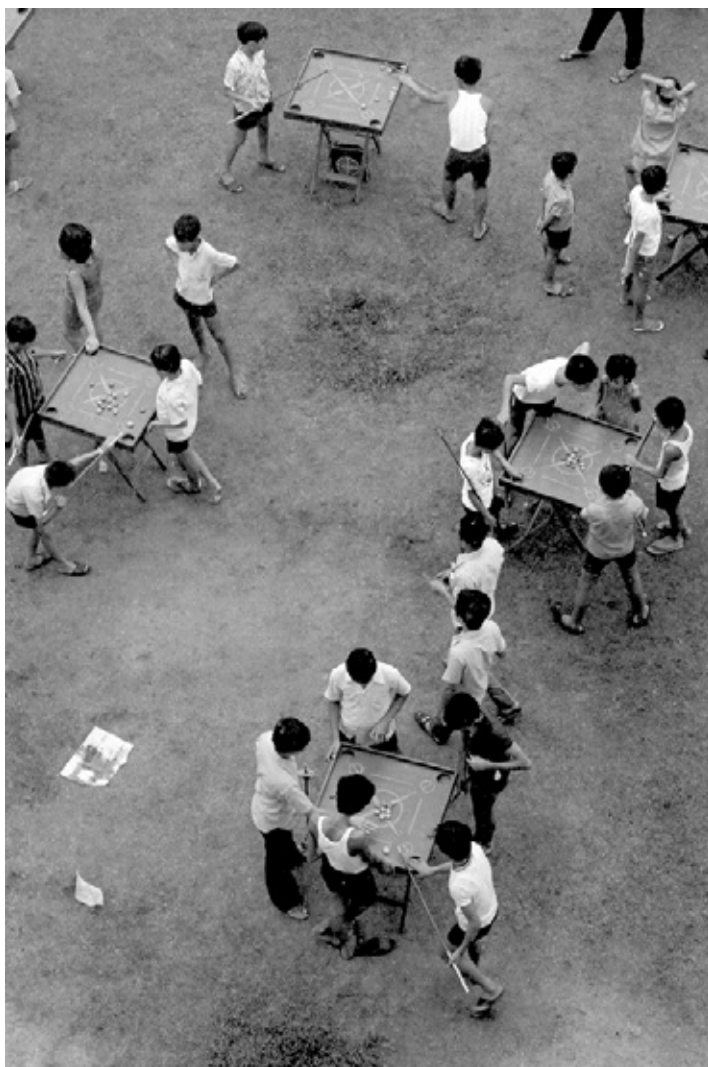




虽然是非买不可，仍需讨价还价。 Bargaining. 1970

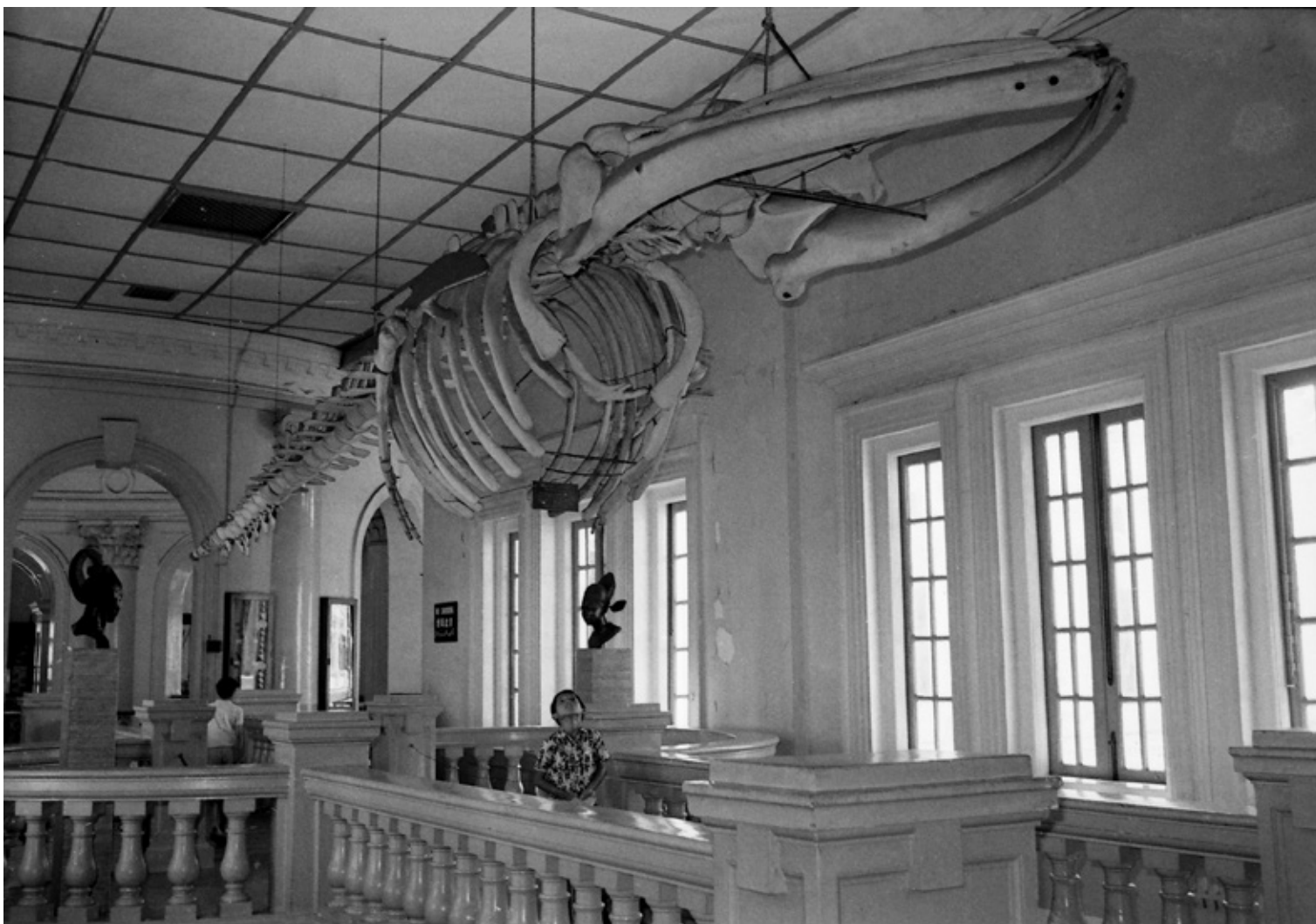




















南艺户外写生。 Painting Lesson. 1970





Biography

Loke Hong Seng (b.1943, Singapore) is a fine art photographer who specialised in shooting street portraits of Singapore during the period from 1963 to 1985.

A member of Singapore's pioneer generation, he graduated from Chung Cheng High School in 1960, and in 1965 joined the Singapore Broadcasting Corporation as an announcer where he produced numerous Radio Dramas in Mandarin and Cantonese. It was at about this time, that he began taking amateur photographs with his older brother's Topcon camera. Loke's passion for the craft grew steadily, and soon he acquired and used several cameras including a Topcon, an Afga folded 6X9 and a Rolleicord 6X6.

In 1968 Loke joined the Photographic Society of Singapore (PSS) and exchanged ideas with talented photographers such as Quah Shang Wei, Doctor Wee, Yip Cheng Fen, Tan Lip Seng, Foo Tee Jun, David Tay, Goh Kim Hui, Benedict Toh, Royston, Henry Lee, Ho Kok Kin, and Francis Tan, amongst numerous others. Together with his friends, he upgraded his equipment and began shooting with a Leicaflex 35mm camera.

While taking pictorial salon photos, Loke made a conscious decision to fuse his salon style with realistic images of everyday life for a more distinctive presentation.

In 1973, Loke received the Golden Award from the 3rd Singapore Photo Art Photography Society. In 1974, he contributed a work that was selected at the Photokina Exhibition in Cologne, Germany, and received



Broadcasting 1966

the *One World for All* UNESCO Award. He also exhibited at the Unesco Headquarters in Paris in 1975 with a work entitled *Human Settlement*.

From 1982, Loke began to digitize and edit his collection of negatives, slides and photographs. It was during that time he developed an interest in video as a medium and became a professional videographer.

In recent years, he has contributed to several talks, seminars, presentations and exhibitions, and his photograph was selected as the main feature of Clifford Pier's 80th Anniversary photo contribution.

He conducted a talk at the Photographic Society of Singapore (PSS) in 2013, which was featured in *Life Behind the Lens* at the Arnoldii Arts Club in Gillman Barracks in 2014 (moderated by photo writer Zhuang Wubin). Loke also gave a presentation of his work to the lecturers at the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts in 2014. In April 2015, he was invited to be the keynote speaker for Nikon's *Iconography 2015* seminar at Hwa Chong Secondary School.

Exhibitions for the artist include group presentations at the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts entitled *Vernacula_As Seen Through Art, Film & Photography*, 24 April – 19 May 2015; *The World Around Us* at the Singapore American Club from 1 May – 30 June 2015; a solo exhibition entitled *A Social Portrait of Singapore* at Yeo Workshop at Gillman Barracks, 3 July – 6 September 2015; a public display of *Pioneers: Modern Singapore* at Raffles Place Green, 1 July – 30 August; a solo exhibition entitled *Trade at the River's Edge* at UOB Art Gallery, 4 – 14 August 2015.



Self-portrait 1969



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陆鸿声

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**A Social Portrait of Singapore,
The Critical Years. Photography
by Loke Hong Seng.**

新加坡建国初期生活面貌。陆鸿声



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For exhibition information, please contact Yeo Workshop, Gillman Barracks.

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