

DANZIGER

On Rivington

Christopher Anderson
Approximate Joy
September 13 – October 20, 2018.
Opening reception: September 13, 6:30 - 8 pm.

“I have seen the future and it is now and it is China. There is no need for the past. It can be erased. A new happiness is being constructed, an approximation of joy, better than the real thing.”

- Christopher Anderson -

Danziger Gallery is pleased to open our fall season with the first American solo show of photographs by Christopher Anderson. Born in Canada in 1970, Anderson grew up in the West Texas town of Abilene before roaming the world and finally settling in Barcelona. He first gained recognition for his photography in 1999 when his images of the rescue of Haitian boat refugees won him the Robert Capa Gold Medal. One of the founders of the photography agency VII, in 2005 he joined the renowned Magnum collective where he has proved to be one of its bright stars.

Anderson's photographs of men and women on the streets of Shanghai and Shenzhen, China, taken over the last two years picture a world that is unknown to most Westerners. Shenzhen, China's Silicon Valley, barely existed thirty years ago but today has some twenty million inhabitants. Shanghai, China's biggest city, has a population of over 24 million and in its waterfront Pudong district rises like an architectural rendering of the future. Between the smog, air pollution, and constant development, a grey/blue light hangs over much of these cities providing an almost surreal or theatrical illumination to Anderson's portraits. Whatever our preconceptions, Anderson presents an up to date image of the reality that is modern urban China.

Working almost invisibly, and focusing in on tight close-ups that exclude all context except the unusual light on the faces of his subjects, what first struck Anderson was that people around the world have begun to look and act the same. Yet in the face of this observation he felt compelled to wonder "Who are these individual people? What do they dream about? What truth do these pictures convey? What does the photographer project onto the resulting image?" Mysterious, sensual, and visceral, Anderson's China pictures are a noteworthy addition to the genre of street photography of Walker Evans, Harry Callahan, and P.L. DiCorcia that captures people unaware of being photographed as it seeks a psychological truth in the faces and expressions of its subjects.

As Sarah Greenough noted writing about Harry Callahan's "Women Lost in Thought" series:

"By separating the women from their background, and by focusing only on their faces, Callahan entered the psychological realm and addressed the introspection, loneliness, and isolation of the individual in modern urban life. Moreover, his refusal to project any kind of narrative or literary interpretation, his respect for his subjects, and his recognition of their need for

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privacy and reflection in a crowded city also elicits a sense of empathy and kinship. He was at once removed and detached, a dispassionate observer of this modern spectacle, and also one of them."

As with Callahan, Anderson's exploration of the human condition takes place within a rigid conceptual framework, yet his photographs also deal with a pictorial representation of a rapidly changing culture. In a medium that is so often a complicit one, there is both a beauty and a shock to seeing people's outer details so nakedly exposed while posing unanswered questions about their inner lives.

The book "Approximate Joy" is published by Stanley/Barker and will be released on September 4th.