

序言

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这部文献搁置了十二年终于编辑出版，算是了却了一桩心事。然而此时，四月影会第一回展这个中国当代文化进程中的重要历史事件，已经过去了四十二年。

1979年4月1日，四月影会“自然·社会·人——艺术摄影展第一回”在北京中山公园兰室开幕，开启了中国当代摄影史的进程，与随后而来的无名画展、星星美展一样，成为中国当代艺术的发端性事件。文献所以搁置，是因为在中国内地鲜有愿意接受它的出版社。这固然有市场原因，但更主要的原因是，四月影会展览，与1978年至1989年之间发生在中国的一系列影响深远的文化事件一样，起初被官方默许甚至肯定，后来又被边缘化、敏感化，成为官方警惕和回避的议题。

四月影会，是70年代北京众多的基于青年聚会的非正式性组织之一。70年代初林彪事件以后，文革进入下半场，社会意识形态壁垒随着国人对文革、对毛泽东本人的质疑开始松动。北京干部子弟非公开的“地下”家庭聚会兴起，“圈子文化”蔓延到年轻工人和回城知青群体，并于70年代末形成潮流。读书、诗歌、摄影、绘画等，各类圈子成员因志趣相投形成聚合，他们身上的理想主义气息，在充满戏剧性变化和张力的国家政治与社会现场形成能量，彼此影响。各圈子的成员间既有交叉关联，又有独立行动。我与四月影会成员是摄影同路人的关系，和其中很多人成了朋友。对他们至深的印象来自中山公园兰室的第一回展。70年代这类青年圈子频繁而多样的活动，其实是一代人的文化运动。对此后来有人

开玩笑说，这是80年代文艺高潮的前戏。回味那段历史，这话说得不错。

以“自然·社会·人”命名的第一回展，是当时轰动京城与文化界的事件。参与者们刚从逆境中走出，面对空前的文化荒芜、尚不确定的社会未来。展览主要发起人王志平在前言中写道：“摄影，作为一种艺术，有它本身特有的语言。是时候了，正像应该用经济手段管理经济一样，也应该用艺术语言来研究艺术。”

历史有巧的是，北京中山公园正是中国摄影史上有重大影响的摄影团体“北京光社”1924年首次作品展览的举办地。这仿佛构成历史遥远的呼应。然而四月影会的三回展览当时均未做专项的文本影像记录，之后也缺乏系统性的资料收集整理工作，以致对它有兴趣的研究者，以及更广泛的读者找寻资料十分困难。这是它迄今没有得到艺术界的充分重视、并将四月影会明确地纳入中国当代艺术脉络展开讨论的原因之一。希望这部文献的出版，能够弥补历史、消除遗憾。

文献的基本资料，源于我和艺术批评家舒阳先生在2009年3月组织“四月影会三十周年纪念研讨会”时的收集。编辑过程中又通过网络和社会查找尽可能地做了补充。我们以尊重史实的客观态度对资料进行事实核查及录取编辑。相信它是到目前为止资料搜集、议题讨论最完整的一部。

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《四月影会》文献分为三册：第一册：现场；第二册：档案；第三册：观点。

“现场”，主要为展览现场图片与当时资料的影印件。以三回展览的先后排序。第一、第二回展辑入资料较多。第一回展的时间点和作品呈

现，不仅在创作意识上对文革宣传图像形式进行了反思与批判，更是回过头，跨越数十年对民国摄影艺术的伸手接续，显示了策划者和参与者对艺术现代性的自觉诉求。这与之之前其中部分成员的“四五”摄影，及之后举办的两届展览意义明显不同。尽管策划组织者一再宣称展览内容回避“政治”，但是无法回避展览本身就是一群年轻摄影人思维觉醒的政治表达。由于是文革后的首个纯民间、自发组织的摄影艺术展，它成为历史的标识。在文本图片结构中，第三回展的资料因所能收集的原因，数量相对较少。

“档案”很特别，是一份基本完整的第一回展作品现场摄影记录，用35毫米底片直接影印贴在稿纸上，共283页。唯一缺失编号第119页。档案照片是作为官方的中国摄影学会，派人在展览举办者不知情的状况下拍摄的。四十余年的稿纸颜色呈黄。这份文件对四月影会的研究十分重要，不仅可以弥补当事人的记忆损失，纠正以往有关第一回展作者与作品数量统计的误差，也说明当时的官方摄影体制与民间四月影会之间的关系。文件由李英杰先生提供。彩印方式还原了时间与物质的痕迹。

“观点”的内容，全部根据四月影会三十周年纪念研讨会的现场发言，以及会前会后对当年相关人员采访的录音录像文件整理。研讨会主要围绕四个议题展开学术讨论：1. 四月影会展览是中国当代摄影的开端；2. 四月影会第一回展是中国当代艺术的发端事件之一；3. 四月影会及其展览的策展理念和学术方向；4. 四月影会内部对摄影本体价值的争论。讨论过程中与会者又增加“四月影会精神”这一议题。研讨会参加者除四月影会主要成员外，还邀请到当时官方摄影体制内的有关成员，《今天》诗刊、无名画会、

星星画会成员，当代艺术学者、摄影学者等共聚一堂。幸运的是还邀请到为第一回展照片题诗、与四月影会失联的著名诗人叶文福先生。研讨会缺席在此之前去世的星期五摄影沙龙代表人物池小宁先生，是个遗憾。会前会后采访对象共二十人，希望提供多元、多层次相互交叉印证的史实与观点。

四月影会活动仅存续三年。依据现有资料能查证到作品的原则统计，四月影会1979年第一回展参展作者53位，作品300余幅；1980年第二回展参展作者151位，作品537幅（组）。1981年第三回展参展人数及作品数迄今没有任何资料记载，组织及参与者均无法提供准确记忆。对三回展览的作品，文献除在第三册“观点”中随访谈文章插入一些第一回展及其相关的图片，以对应谈及的内容，我们避免做主观判断，选择性地呈现。

为何一个如此充满能量，在陡变时代爆发出光焰，事实上制造了一场文革之后摄影观念更新运动，掀开中国摄影新篇章的民间摄影团体，在三年之后即复消失，至今没有重生的能力？是成功抑或失败？读者通过对文献的阅读，结合个人的社会历史经验，也许能得到多视角又大体明晰的问题答案。

作为这部文献的执行编辑，艺术家葛磊先生对资料的补充做出了贡献。

徐勇

2020年11月24日

Preface

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To see this book finally on the verge of publication after being shelved for twelve years, is a load lifted from my mind. Forty-two years have now passed since the first April Photo Society exhibition, an important historical event in the development of Chinese contemporary culture.

When that first exhibition, titled “Nature, Society, and Man,” opened on April 1st 1979 in the Orchid Room in Zhongshan Park, Beijing, so too did the first chapter in the history of contemporary Chinese photography. Like the Wuming (No Name) Group and the Stars Group exhibitions that followed, the first April Photo Society exhibition is considered one of the incipient events of China’s contemporary art movement. And yet, the difficulty of finding a publisher for this book in mainland China kept it shelved for over a decade. Market factors were a concern, of course, but the main reason was that the April Photo Society exhibitions, though initially permitted or even approved by the authorities, were later—like other widely influential cultural events that took place in China between 1978 and 1989—recast as subjects of official vigilance and taboo and thus marginalised.

The April Photo Society was one of many unofficial organizations that grew out of youth gatherings in 1970s Beijing. After the death of Lin Biao in 1971, as the Cultural Revolution entered its second half, more Chinese people began to question both the Cultural Revolution and Mao himself, and social ideological barriers started to come down. As private “underground” house parties became popular with the children of Beijing cadres, “circle culture” was spreading among communities of young workers and “sent-down youth” returnees, and by the

late ’70s had formed a trend. The members of various circles congregated because of shared ideals and interests—reading, poetry, photography, painting and so on. In a political and social scene brimming with dramatic change and tension, they fed off each other’s idealistic energy and influenced each other, functioning in a way that was both interconnected and independent.

My relationship to the members of the April Photo Society is that of a fellow photographer, and I have become friends with many of them. Their first exhibition in Zhongshan Park’s Orchid Room made a profound impression on me. The frequent and varied activities of youth circles of this type during the ’70s were in fact the cultural movement of a generation. Many years later, I heard someone say jokingly that this was the prologue that led to the literary and artistic climax of the ’80s, and thinking back on that period of history, I must agree they had a point.

The opening of first exhibition named “Nature, Society, and Man” caused a sensation in the capital and its cultural circles. The participants were newly emerged from adversity, facing unprecedented cultural devastation and an uncertain social future. As Wang Zhiping, the principal organizer of the exhibition, wrote in his introductory statement, “Photography, as an art form, has its own unique language. It is high time for art to be explored using art language, just as the economy is managed using economic measures.”

Echoes of history could be heard in their chosen venue, as Zhongshan Park also happened to be the site where Beijing Light Society, a photography collective of great importance to the history of Chinese photography, first exhibited their works in 1924. However, none of all three April Photo Society’s exhibitions made specific text and

visual record in that time, nor was there any systematic collecting and collating of materials after the events; as a result, it has been difficult for interested researchers, or any potential readers, to find information about the group's activities. This is partly why the April Photo Society has to date not been given sufficient attention by the art world, and its place in the context of Chinese contemporary art hasn't been clearly defined. My hope is that this publication can fill the gaps in history and wash away regrets.

This project began back in 2009, with materials basically collected by myself and art critic Shu Yang while organizing the April Photo Society 30th Anniversary Symposium, held in March of that year. During the editing process we searched both online and off, and added to these materials as much as we possibly could. We have verified, recorded and selected materials with the intent of objectivity and respect for historical facts. I believe this to be the most complete collection of documentary materials and discourse on the topic produced to date.

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The documentation included in *April Photo Society* has been divided into three volumes: Volume I: On the Scene; Volume II: A Document; Volume III: Perspectives.

“On the Scene” consists mainly of exhibition photos and photocopies of materials at that time. The three exhibitions are presented in chronological order, with the first and second exhibition documented most extensively. While the first exhibition's timing and presentation were, in a creative sense, a reflection and criticism of Cultural Revolution propaganda imagery, it also reached back several decades to pick up the torch of photographic art from the Republic of China era (1912–1949), giving a clear signal that the organizers and partic-

ipants were in pursuit of artistic modernity. The first exhibition revealed a departure from the photographs of the 1976 “April 5th Tiananmen Incident” that some members were known for, and was also markedly different from the two exhibitions that followed. Despite repeated statements by the organizers that the exhibited works avoided “politics,” but it is impossible to avoid recognizing now that the exhibition itself was a political expression of the awakening minds of a group of young photographers. It was the first purely non-governmental, self-organized photographic art exhibition after the Cultural Revolution, and thus is now seen as a historical marker. As we were not able to collect as many materials relating to the third exhibitions, they account for a relatively small proportion of text and image.

- “A Document” reproduces a very special document: a near-complete photographic record of the first exhibition. Photos of the exhibited works, taken on site, were directly contact printed from 35mm negatives and stuck onto manuscript paper—283 pages in total. Forty-odd years have yellowed the paper, but only a single page, number 119, is missing. These archival photographs were taken by a member of the China Photographic Society (an official body, later renamed the China Photographers Association). This document would be vital to any study of the April Photo Society, able to fill in gaps in the memories of involved parties or correct errors in the statistics of authors and works in the first exhibition, and also to illustrate the relationship, at that time, between the official photography establishment and a grassroots collective like April Photo Society. We used color printing, to better capture the traces of time on matter.

The content of “Perspectives” is based on transcripts of talks given at the April

Photo Society 30th Anniversary Symposium, and audio and video recordings of interviews conducted with symposium attendees. The symposium focused on the following four topics: 1) The April Photo Society exhibitions were the beginning of Chinese contemporary photography; 2) The first April Photo Society exhibition was one of the earliest Chinese contemporary art events; 3) The curatorial philosophy and academic direction of the April Photo Society and its exhibitions; 4) Internal debate within the April Photo Society regarding the ontological value of photography. During the course of discussions, participants added the topic of “April Photo Society Spirit.” In addition to key members of the April Photo Society, we invited guests who were members of official photography organizations and thus part of “the system” at that time, as well as representatives of *Jintian (Today)* magazine, the No Name Group and the Stars Group, and scholars of contemporary art and photography. We were fortunate to welcome renowned poet Mr. Ye Wenfu, who wrote poetic interpretations of artworks for the first exhibition, but had lost touch with April Photo Society members for many years. The absence of Mr. Chi Xiaoning, host of the “Friday Salon,” who passed away a few years previously, was keenly felt. A total of 20 interviewees were interviewed prior to or after the symposium. Our aim was to provide a multi-layered narrative, weaving together diverse viewpoints and recollections to cross-corroborate historical facts.

The April Photo Society was last for three years. From available materials, we can verify that the first exhibition in 1979 showed over 300 works by 53 photographers, and the second exhibition in 1980 showed 537 works by 151 photographers. No record has been found of the number of participants and works included in the third

exhibition in 1981, and none of the organizers or participants can accurately recall. As regards the exhibited works, some images from the first exhibition have been used to illustrate the interview texts in the third volume, but other than that we have avoided subjective judgements and selective presentation of works.

A grassroots photography collective that blazed into being in an era of unpredictable change, bursting with energy—the April Photo Society launched a post-Cultural Revolution movement to renew the concept of photography, and a whole new chapter for photography in China. So why did it disappear after only three years, never to be resurrected? Was it a success or a failure? Through studying the documentation collected here, combined with personal social and historical experience, readers may find some multi-perspective, but generally clear, answers to these questions.

Mr Ge Lei, an artist and executive editor of this publication, also contributed to the gathering of documentary materials.

Xu Yong
November 24th, 2020