

Art

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Art



Magic Reality, 1962



Different Directions, 1958



Dreamscape, 1962



Ladder Street

the years, but predominantly works in black and white. "Black and white, for me, is a better medium to express my view of the world," he says. "I believe colour is best left to the painters – they can do it better."

The process of superimposing images, or double exposures, is a traditional one born from Ho's half a century experience in the darkroom. Layering two images together can create conflict or synergy between

the images, to give a message or simply to make the viewer smile. "I don't want them to say 'all this is too serious, too heavy,'" says Ho. "That's why some of these images are funny. I deliberately made them lighthearted." The work started back in 2010, when the photographer revisited some of his old negatives of Hong Kong that were never printed. The initial combinations were formed by holding the two negatives together but for the finished pieces Ho relied on modern technology and the help of some friends.



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Though he admits to not being an expert in technology, Ho took on the role of director, imparting his vision to his assistants performing the digital work. "Where I'm living in America I don't have a darkroom," he says, "and my health condition doesn't allow me to work in a darkroom any more, so I just use computers. They help me to express what I want to express." Photoshop allows Ho possibilities beyond those of his long darkroom

experiences, blending his memories of Hong Kong into a new form. "I like to experiment in filmmaking and photography so I try to do something new every time," he says. "I hate to repeat myself. I'm still finding some new ways of seeing. A new approach, a new kind of experimentation." Now in his eighties, Ho's back problems prevent him from going out with his camera. Working with his old negatives is his way of remaining creative and the images in this exhibition and book are testament that he still has his eye. As a final word of advice to younger photographers, Ho stresses the importance of exposing yourself to the arts and of holding on to your old negatives. "When you are young and you take some photographs, at that time you think, wow, that's no good. You put them aside. After you get old and you have lots of experience in life, your judgement changes," he says. "Then you may find some treasures inside your old collection, some diamonds, because it's a different time, a different environment. I searched through my old negatives recently and found something valuable because time changes. You and me and the whole world. Everything changes."

A Hong Kong Memoir
AO Vertical, until Sat Jan 31;
aovertical.com.

Art

Imposing views

Hong Kong photographer **Ho Fan** launches a new exhibition this month with a series of superimposed shots from his archive. Mat Gallagher talks to The Great Master of photography

Hong Kong was an extremely different place 66 years ago when the young Ho Fan moved to the city with his family from Shanghai. Without the unmistakable skyscrapers and architecture of today's photogenic SAR, Hong Kong was, back then, a picture of a little fishing village on its way up. But Ho, armed with a Rolleiflex camera, set out to document it in his own inimitable way. Little did he know that his eye for capturing the fragrant harbour in

all its glory would earn him the title of The Great Master of photography. "At that time, in 1948 and 1949, Hong Kong wasn't as prosperous as it is now," says Ho Fan, talking from his California home ahead of his new exhibition at AO Vertical Art Space. "It was just a city." The exhibition, which runs alongside a similar one at the Modernbrook Gallery in San Francisco, also coincides with Ho's new book, *A Hong Kong Memoir*. All the works are new creations – unprinted negatives of Hong Kong

from Ho's collection, brought to life using layering techniques to form powerful, insightful and often amusing pieces. "Hong Kong is the place I love," he says. "Even though I was born in Shanghai, I studied and worked and grew up in Hong Kong. The city is my home." Despite Ho's self-deprecation for his hearing and command of English, he speaks slowly and clearly. He has worked as a photographer, a filmmaker and a director, and has written several

books. His photography career has seen him win more than 280 awards and display hundreds of exhibitions across the globe of his iconic images and, despite a move to film later in life, he maintains a love of the still image. "I don't think photography is inferior to film," he muses. "They are like sisters, both using the image to express the author's feelings and ideas. Still, photography is about a decisive moment and to pick that moment is a photographer's job." Ho's still images capture the real Hong Kong of the time, the work of a street photographer who observed and captured everyday life as he saw it – the people, places and events, rather than staged or planned pieces. He has never been afraid to experiment in his images, mixing styles and techniques over



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