

PRESS RELEASE

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He Chongyue – *The Exempted*

Opening Reception: **12 March 2015, 6 – 10 pm**
Venue: CONTEMPORARY BY ANGELA LI
G/F, 248 Hollywood Road, Sheung Wan, Hong Kong
Exhibition Duration: **12 March 2015 – 11 April 2015**
Website: www.cbal.com.hk

Contemporary by Angela Li is proud to present *The Exempted*, a series of portraits of old peasants by renowned Chinese photographer He Chongyue. He Chongyue, one of the most esteemed contemporary artists in the circle of Chinese photographers today, has had the idea of his project brewing in his mind for a couple of years. He travelled through China, going deep into the country's rural areas and captures with his camera the insignificant and fading people of our time.

"After the Communist Party founded the People's Republic of China in 1949, the political rights of the peasants were finally written into the constitution. However, several decades after the establishment of the 'New China', the rights of the peasants are still violated time and again during major political movements," explained He on why he decided to shoot this portrait series of old peasants. Despite the rapid economic growth brought about by the "Reform and Opening" policy in 1989, as well as the massive scale of globalization and urbanization today, the lives of the peasants who remained at their farms underwent minimal changes. With scars and heavy memories from the past, the peasants become forgotten and excluded from the roaring development and transformations in China – hence He Chongyue named this series "The Exempted".

The younger generation from the countryside gives up farming and flocks into the cities as migrant workers. As the older peasants age, they are no longer the glorified food provider but instead become burdens of the society. The effort they put in their youth earned them nothing but the negligence of the government. The authorities have broken the promise they made in 1985 – "government will provide for the elderly", and are now indoctrinating peasants with ideas such as "good to postpone retirement, we need to take care of ourselves". Witnessing the government's abandonment of the old peasants at the very bottom of the social hierarchy, He is determined to restore their dignity with photography and show it to the world.

In the old, worn-out hut he called home, an elderly who lived a solitary life said, “right now, I’m just waiting to die. I’m only afraid that when that day comes, no one will even know.” To him, perhaps death is not half as frightening as being forgotten. With *The Exempted*, He Chongyue placed their situation under the spotlight for the society to see. He said, “We will all grow old one day. If we treat the old people well now, we are actually treating our future selves well.”

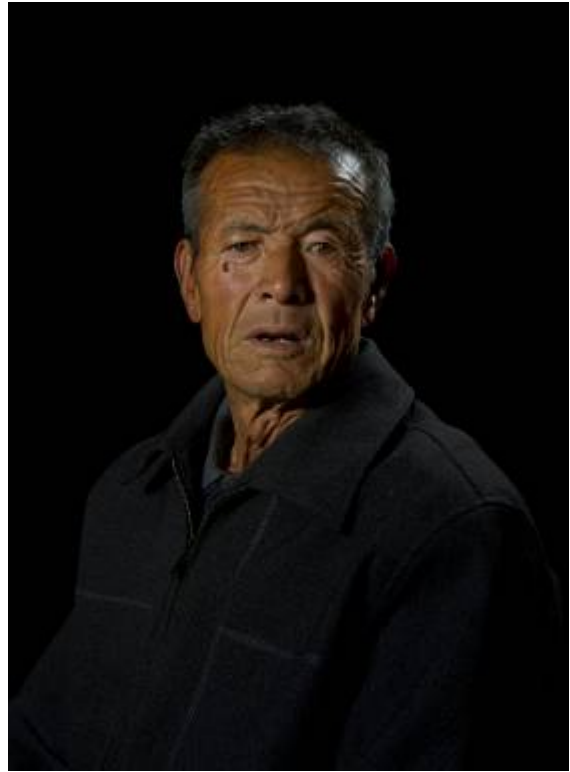
Behind the camera, the old peasants put on their best clothes and staggered towards He Chongyue. Before the camera, they faced the world with dignity and sincerity. As art critic Hai Ze (海則) remarked, “The spirit of the age ought to side with the humanitarian”. He Chongyue strives to document the “dirty laundry” the authorities try to tuck away at all costs; he puts the exempted back into our sight.

Born in Beijing in 1960, He Chongyue started taking photographs and exhibiting in 1984. He concentrated on traditional photography initially and has been pursuing contemporary documentary photography in recent years. He has held solo exhibitions in China, Japan, Spain and the USA, and his works have been collected by Beijing’s Central Academy of Fine Arts Museum as well as Guangdong Museum of Art.

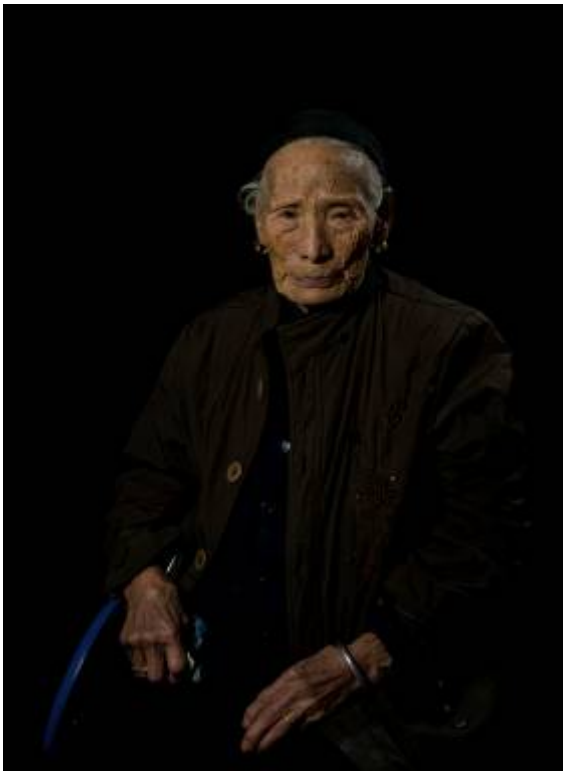
Selected Works in the Exhibition



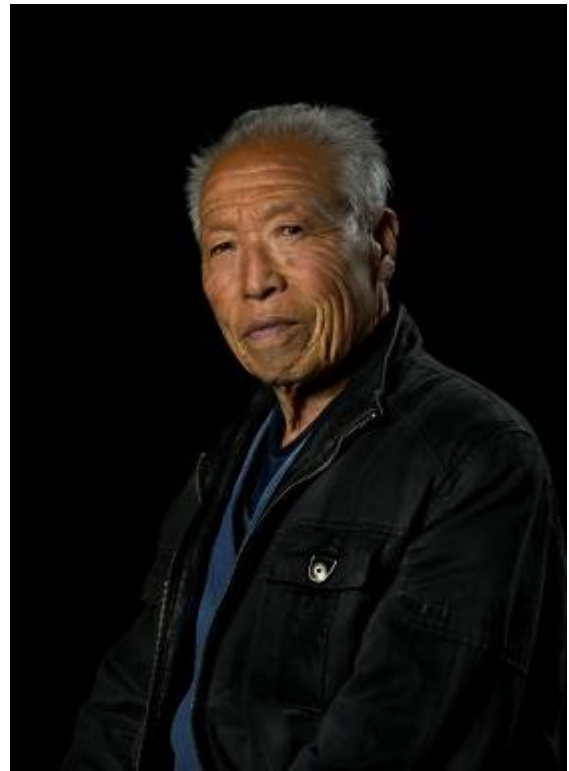
He Chongyue, *The Exempted* #75
Photograph, 2014, 150 x 120 cm, Edition of 6



He Chongyue, *The Exempted* #32
Photograph, 2014, 150 x 120 cm, Edition of 6



He Chongyue, *The Exempted* #76
Photograph, 2014, 150 x 120 cm, Edition of 6



He Chongyue, *The Exempted* #50
Photograph, 2014, 150 x 120 cm, Edition of 6

About *Contemporary by Angela Li* art gallery

Founded in 2008, **Contemporary by Angela Li** has been dedicated to the promotion of contemporary and avant-garde artists from China, Hong Kong and around the world. The gallery has held successful exhibitions for Chen Jiagang, Chen Wenling , Li Hongbo, Mo Yi, Tony Oursler, Georgia Ruseel, Shi Jindian, Peter Steinhauer, Martin Wehmer, Nancy Chu Woo and Ye Funa, to name but a few. In January 2013, the gallery moved to a bigger space at the trendiest part of Hollywood Road, with 2000 square feet of newly renovated exhibition space. The gallery shall continue to hold quality exhibitions for local and international audiences.



Contemporary by Angela Li

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Opening Hours : Mon – Sat 10.00 am – 6.30 pm
Sun & Public Holidays Closed