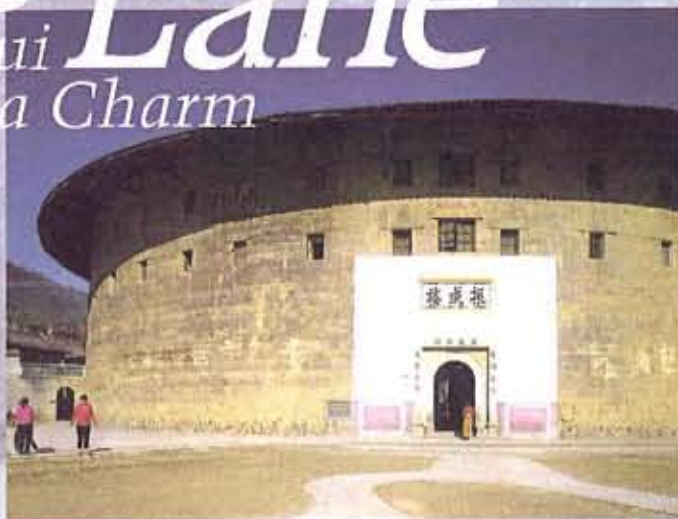
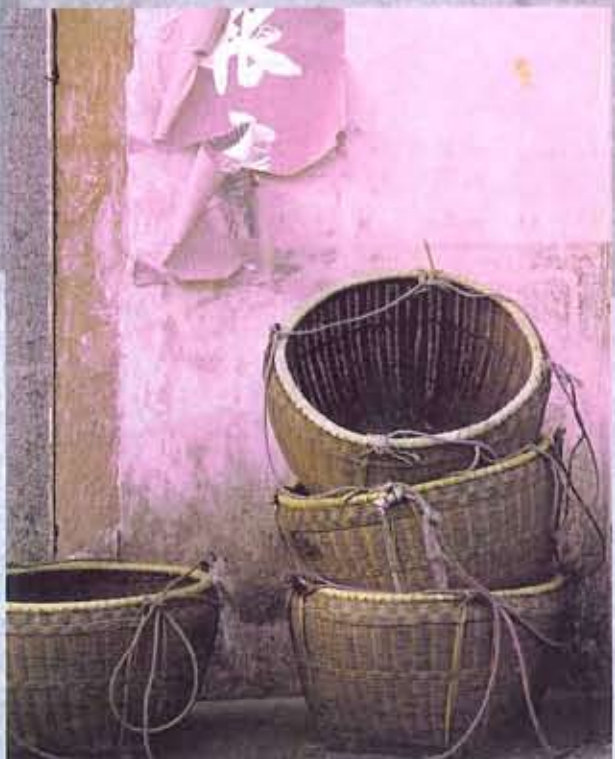


# Memory Lane

Elizabeth Gill Lui  
Three's a Charm



These are the images of China from another time: A glimpse into an ancestral hall. A misty view across a pond, with a temple as the focal point. A sampan docked alongside a village home. Untainted by commercial tourism, these rural areas in the heart of China were documented over the course of six visits within a 10-year period by Los Angeles-based photographer Elizabeth Gill Lui. Her eye responds to commonplace surroundings with freshness, melancholy and a strong sense of composition and geometry. She aims to record a way of life without preconceptions or prejudice, and the result of her most recent endeavours was "Three's a Charm", an exhibition held at the UMA G and Sau Wah Fong Galleries.

As artist-in-residence at the Chinese University of Hong Kong's Department of Architecture the past semester, Lui considers herself very fortunate to be able to see and photograph those parts of China most unaffected by the rapid development engulfing the country's urban areas. "Pure China is very raw," explains Lui. "It is about the people who are indigenous. I am interested in how people live organically, and how they relate to the earth. Preserving culture should not be for entertainment or tourism. All of it has its place



Curator Wallace Chang of UMA G states in his introduction to the exhibition: "In the previous century, China has undergone an unprecedented mutation for the last two decades, an irreversible change more thorough than the Industrial Revolution. When this modernisation revolution is taking roots on the Eastern earth to compete with Western counterparts, a pair of American eyes is attracted, to observe with perseverance in rural China for over ten years, to frame the real traditions and to record how the vernacular architecture carries real life and reflects the very humanity. In her photographic world, Elizabeth has blurred the presumed nationalities of China and America; instead she has constructed a common ground of our cultures – the ordinary beauty."

An architectural photography graduate from Harvard University's Graduate School of Design, Lui has published two acclaimed books. *Closed Mondays* documents a series of 20th century museums, all photographed on Mondays when the institutions were closed to the public. "It was the architecture of museums as an art form," she says. "I shot 60 museums over a ten-year period." Her other book is *Building Diplomacy*, which documents American embassies in 50 countries around the world. Along the way, she was granted access to some highly restricted facilities. Lui's daughter, an independent filmmaker, worked with her on the project. "I had private funding with permission from the US State Department," recalls Lui. "The permission-seeking process itself took over a year during the Clinton administration, and I went to Washington DC six or seven times."

Although Lui has achieved success working as a fulltime artist, it has been a struggle all the way. She believes in the US the academic world controls a lot of the money that funds the work of artists. The dilemma Hong Kong artists face seems to mirror Lui's experience – artists who want to contribute to culture find they lack the financial support to do so. "Art in the US is either at the extreme of academia or it is for pop culture and made for the consumer," she says. "Artists need the support of a patron who will pay the rent. The cultivation of a life needs to be supported. I believe that if you have the drive to do creative work, you will eventually get the support you need."

