

LUCAS XU

2022 MFA PHOTOGRAPHY
THESIS EXHIBITION



DEPS ARTIST PROFILE SERIES

MAY 6-20, 2022

2022 MFA PHOTOGRAPHY THESIS EXHIBITION

The *2022 MFA Photography Thesis Exhibition* features the thesis works of the MFA candidates in Columbia College Chicago's Photography Department. This exhibition presents photographs, installation, and video works that are representative of the culmination of research and practice these emerging artists have maintained throughout their time in the program.

Participating photographers:

Jes Farnum

Sylvie Harris

Katharine Norton

Emilie Plunkett

Ziru Tang

Fengzhao Xu

Senjie Zhu

The *2022 Photography MFA Thesis Exhibition* is presented in conjunction with the Department of Exhibitions, Performance and Student Spaces (DEPS), and the Photography Department.

LUCAS XU

Sunset in the room is an ongoing project that documents my footsteps following my grandmother's life in her 80's. This series comes from my fear that time is so ruthless and eventually going to take the lustre away from her eyes. And this fear drives me to start photographing my grandmother. The combination of pictures, archives and my written texts shows the presence, the reminiscence, the happiness and the sadness at the same time.

This group of pictures does not only visualize my grandmother's life but also represents every generation that carries its own characteristics, personalities and historical values. My photographs are observations of the relationship between my grandmother and the people in her life. This project explores grandmother's hidden memories by unfolding the stories of her life partner, family members and best friend. *Sunset in the room* is ephemeral but splendid, and it only belongs to the ones who cherish it.



Sunset in the room, #10, 2020, inkjet print



Sunset in the room, #9, 2020, inkjet print



Sunset in the room, #8, 2020, inkjet print



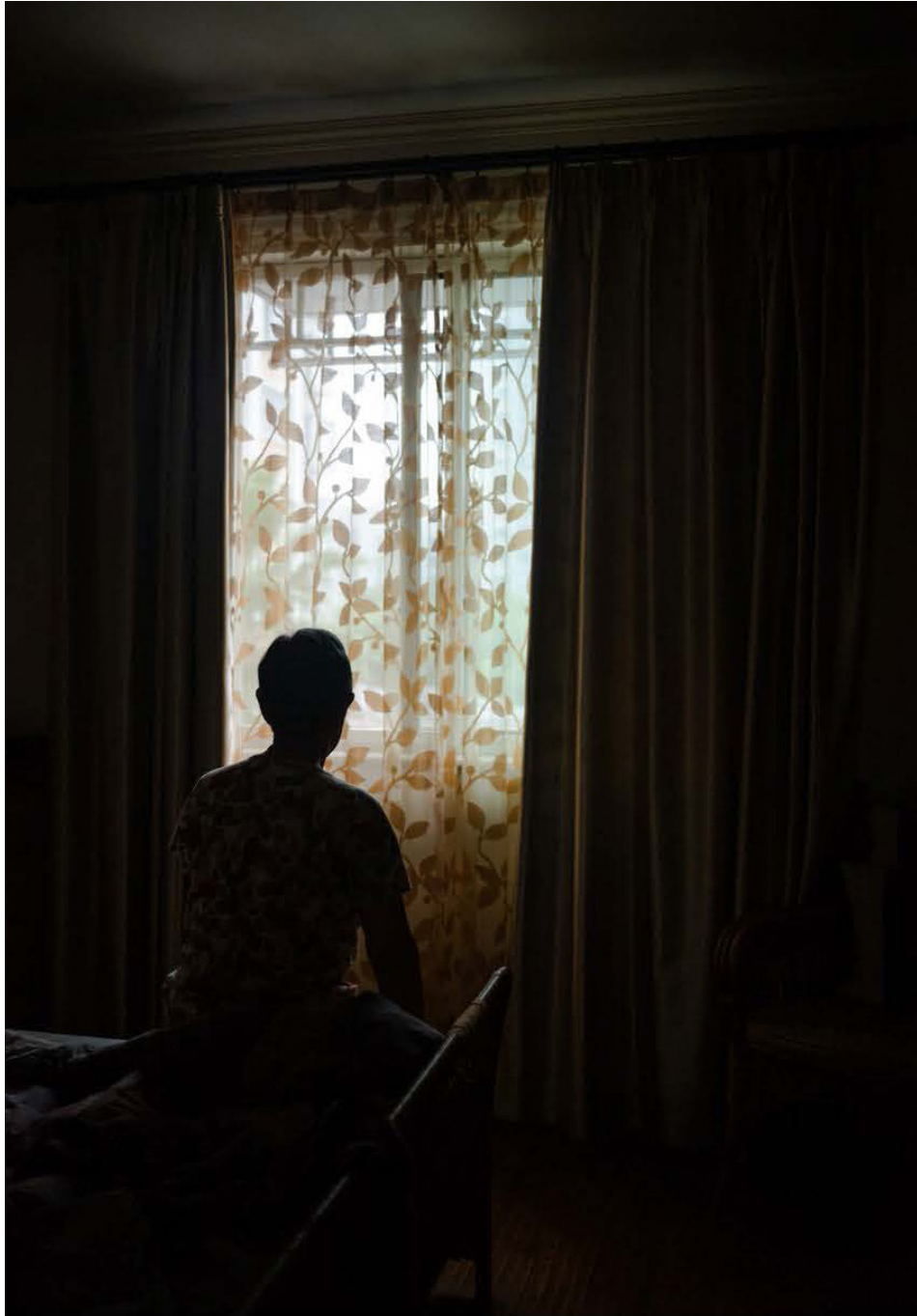
Sunset in the room, #6, 2020, inkjet print



Sunset in the room, #7, 2020, inkjet print



Sunset in the room, #5, 2020, inkjet print



Sunset in the room, #4, 2020, inkjet print



Sunset in the room, #1, 2020, inkjet print

INTERVIEW WITH LUCAS XU

Conducted by Kaylee Fowler and Sierra Delamarter

Kaylee Fowler: You said that this project, *Sunset in the room* comes from a fear of time and its effect on your loved ones; how does this driving factor change the way you approach photography compared to other projects? Is there something about working against fear that is motivating, or debilitating?

Lucas Xu: Yes, so I wasn't able to stay home for too long every time I went back home during the break, but last year I stayed home with my grandmother for a whole year because of the pandemic, which really made me look at this woman and talk to her every day. I didn't know how to photograph her at the beginning because I know her too well, and she wasn't used to me having a tripod and camera around her all the time. I decided to become an observer so I removed all equipment and just talked to her and listened to her. Not like photographing other subjects that I have to go in real fast and try to learn about them as soon as possible. My grandmother gradually accepted the presence of me, my camera and then photographing her all the time. I think making photographs of her is the most motivating thing to work against this fear. One day, I showed all of my pictures to my uncle, grandmother's son, and he was so surprised but appreciated after looking at all those pictures. He said, "I've been trying to figure out a way to document something about her but I couldn't and I am too busy to figure that out, but here it is, these photographs are going to be the memory and everything about her." I thought, well, this is all this project is about, and what this project means to me, to my family and people who have their own grandparents.

Sierra Delamarter: Why is photography your chosen media to indulge your artistic interests?

LX: I think photography has its unique ability to recreate the past, and connect the past, present and future. Taking this project as an example, I collected archival pictures combining with new photographs of my grandmother, which is the bridge I'm trying to build between the past and now. Photography also carries its own language of texture, composition and light that creates this visual indication pulling the audience into the stories. And I started my journey of photography as a street photographer, I love the decisive moments created by the cameras, and it can't be recreated or copied. The photograph becomes history and past right after it was made.

KF: A lot of work about family is expected to be in-the-moment, snapshot type work, not staged or preplanned in any way; how do you approach this type of photography and expectation of setting while also working with a specific goal/project in mind?

LX: So my favorite photobook project about family is Larry Sultan's *Pictures from home*. This book has a major influence on my way of thinking and working. His photographs of his parents are mostly staged and I love how that recreates the moments he wants. I had a hard time at first staging the scene with my grandmother because she gets tired of posing for the camera for too long, but after we worked together for a while, I figured it doesn't have to be that restrictive when staging all these scenes. I started to let her know to hold a position when I figured out it could potentially be a great photograph—so basically these family photographs are in-the-moment but also staged at the same time.



THE DEPS ARTIST PROFILE SERIES

The DEPS Artist Profile Series presented by Columbia College Chicago's Department of Exhibitions, Performance and Student Spaces (DEPS), is a virtual publication on select artists involved with the DEPS Galleries and the Columbia College Chicago community. Our goal with this series is to connect artist and viewer on a deeper level, and to highlight the amazing works and thoughts of our featured artists through interviews, artist biographies, and catalogs of work. Art has always been a way to connect with others, no matter where one may physically be. We hope by presenting the creativity and insights of the people involved in the DEPS Artist Profile Series that viewers may have one more way to stay in touch with, and support the arts community. The DEPS Artist Profile Series is managed by Fine Arts major and DEPS Exhibitions Assistants Kaylee Fowler and Sierra Delamarter. Graphic design is managed by DEPS Exhibitions Assistant Gray Beyer. This program is partially supported by a grant from the Illinois Arts Council Agency.

Learn more at: colum.edu/deps

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