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# MoCP

Museum of  
Contemporary Photography

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## EXHIBIT AT MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY PHOTOGRAPHY, COLUMBIA COLLEGE CHICAGO, EXPLORES IMPACT OF EMERGING CHINESE INDUSTRIES

Exhibition features works by Polly Braden, Edward Burtynsky, Melanie Jackson, Gary Porter, Rick Romells, John Schmidt, Michael Wolf, Danwen Xing, and Jun Yang

***Made in China***  
Museum of Contemporary Photography  
Columbia College Chicago  
600 S. Michigan  
January 12 through March 4, 2006

**Chicago-** In January of 2006, the Museum of Contemporary Photography (MoCP) will open ***Made in China***, an exhibition organized by MoCP Associate Director Natasha Egan, which explores through photography and video installations China's rapidly changing society and its rising influences as an economic force in the global arena. The exhibition will specifically look at the trend of Western companies moving production to China, and the resulting effects on both Chinese society and communities in the West. Participating artists explore the dense layers of cultural messages, media impressions, and material products emanating from the country whose ancient name literally means *middle (or center) land*. Through a series of subtle juxtapositions, the exhibition *Made in China* asks how history's oldest uninterrupted civilization might again become the "center of the world".

The exhibition begins the exploration of China's rapidly expanding industries with a stark and distant view of Chinese factories, captured by **Edward Burtynsky** (Canada, b. 1955). For decades Burtynsky has sought to generate images that are "metaphors

for the dilemma of our modern existence” by documenting nature transformed by industry. His photographs of both remnant and newly established zones of Chinese industrialization offer rare access to the extreme expressions of Chinese industry. Their unsettling beauty illustrates why Burtynsky is considered one of Canada’s most respected photographers.

The exhibition’s focus then narrows onto the individual, specifically young Chinese girls uprooting themselves from their family farms to work in urban factories. **Melanie Jackson’s** (United Kingdom, b. 1968) multi-video installation, like Burtynsky’s images, critiques unregulated modernism. Three screens follow the stories of two young women who leave their homes in hope of improving their circumstances: one employed in a false eyelash factory in China and the other playing music abroad. **Polly Braden’s** (United Kingdom, b. 1974) documentary stills also follow a young woman, focusing less on her exploitation than on the material prosperity she enjoys as a factory manager and the contrast her lifestyle presents against the humble village she left.

**Michael Wolf** (Germany, b. 1954) provides yet another view of factory workers and the ubiquity of their output through an installation of thousands of used toys, made in China, but bought in flea markets in California and installed with photographic portraits of workers in southern Chinese toy factories. A resident of Hong Kong for over ten years, he seeks through this massive installation in the Museum’s North Gallery to capture the idiosyncratic environment of the factories and the rich individuality of those employed to produce an unending stream of identical toys. **Danwen Xing’s** (China, b. 1967) abstract photographs of piles of recycled computers and electronic trash in China’s Guangdong Province offer a similar perspective on the concentration of man-made objects constantly flowing not only out of China as consumables, but back into China as recyclable raw materials.

In the museum’s Print Study Room is an installation of the award-winning series by reporters **John Schmid** (United States, b. 1961), **Rick Romells** (United States, b. 1950) and photojournalist **Gary Porter** (United States, b. 1950), also titled *Made in China: The New Industrial Revolution* and published in the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel. The captivating story brings the issue of Chinese industrial expansion very close to home by following the ways in which Wisconsin’s economy is being reshaped by China’s manufacturing power and its profound effect on Wisconsin families, companies and communities.

The final artist, **Jun Yang** (China, b. 1975, resides in Vienna) visualizes China’s political and economic development within the international presence of its national flag. His work *HERO –this is WE*, recently seen at the 2005 Venice Biennale, presents two documentary-like videos that simultaneously explore the role of national flags, specifically in the United States and China, as symbols of dominant power.

## **ABOUT THE CURATOR**

Natasha Egan, the museum's Associate Director since 2000, has been the Assistant Curator at the Museum since 1995. She holds an MA in museum studies, an MFA in photography, and a BA in Asian studies. She teaches part-time in the Photography Department at Columbia College and has lectured at numerous institutions and juried art exhibitions nationwide.

## **ABOUT MOCP**

The Museum of Contemporary Photography (MoCP), a resident organization of Columbia College Chicago, is the only museum in the Midwest with an exclusive commitment to the medium of photography. By presenting projects and exhibitions that embrace a wide range of contemporary aesthetics and technologies, the Museum strives to communicate the value and significance of photographic images as expressions of human thought, imagination, and creativity.

## **EXHIBITION SPONSORS**

*Made in China* has been co-presented by the Goethe-Institut Chicago. The exhibitions, presentations, and related programs of the MoCP are sponsored in part by U.S. Bank; the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency; The Mayer and Morris Kaplan Family Foundation; The Henrietta Lange Burk Fund; The Palmer Foundation; the City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs/After School Matters; American Airlines, the official airlines of the MoCP, and our members.

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Image:

Polly Braden

*Ho Ping standing between the two rows she supervises, 2003*

Courtesy the artist