

Exhibition

Road to Enigma and Profundity: Guangshe and the Artistic Turn of Photography in the Early 20th Century

Exhibition Dates: December 23, 2023–April 14, 2024

Advisor: Chen Shen

Artistic Directors: Carol Yinghua Lu, Zhou Dengyan

Curatorial Team: Zhai Linfeng, Zhu Qihua, Rory Guan, Na Rongkun, Cao Liyao

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Exhibition Design: Na Rongkun

Exhibition Installation: Fang Yongfa, Gu Tianmiao, Lu Yazhuo, Zhu Yanan

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and other colleagues:

Gao Yuhui, Jia Fengming, Li Ruohong, Li Yuhong, Liu Fei, Liu Haixian, Liu Xinyue, Liu Yixuan, Liu Yuqiang, Wang Guoli, Yan Lixin, Zhan Weihai

*Listed in alphabetical order

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2023.12.23 – 2024.4.14

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in the Early 20th Century

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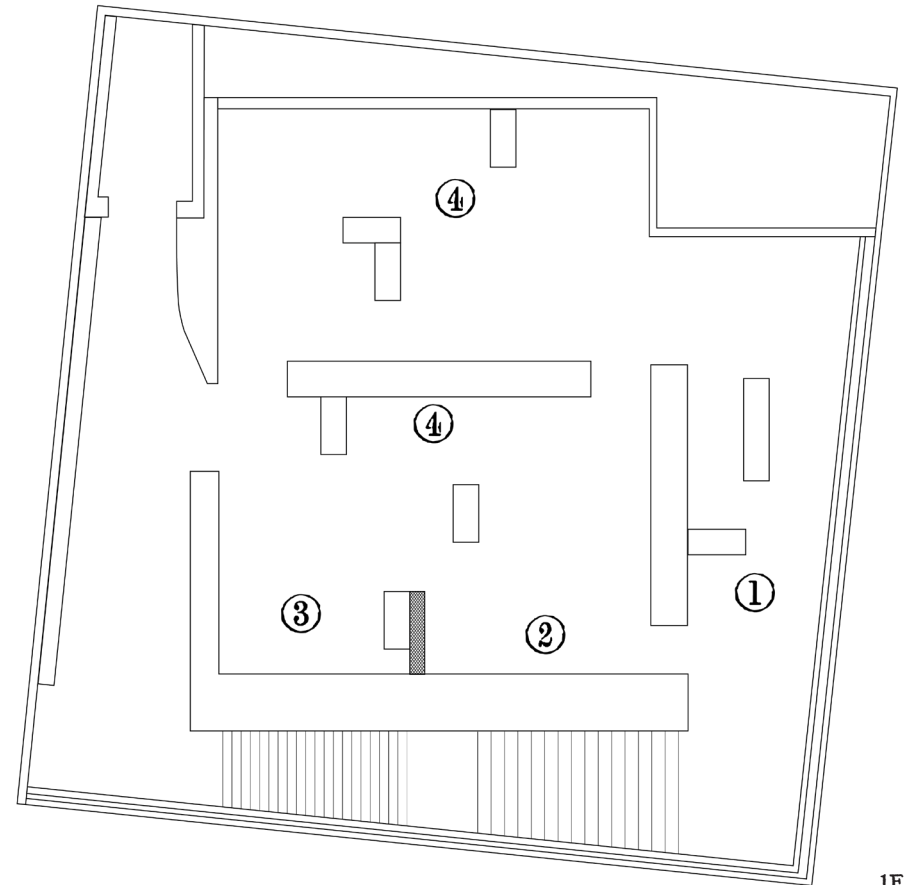
Rory Guan, Na Rongkun, Cao Liyao

Road to Enigma and Profundity:

Guangshe and the Artistic Turn of Photography in the Early 20th Century

This exhibition traces the decade-long practice of the photography society Guangshe (1923–1934). Founded in Beijing a hundred years ago, Guangshe was an art society formed by a group of educated amateur photographers from Peking University. The society's history demonstrates the pioneering artistic explorations of the new intellectual class using photography as a medium and the ideological impetus that drove their artistic orientation during the transition period in modern Chinese history. Part of the rapid and profound cultural changes of this period, it is a remarkable case study of Chinese intellectuals' search for a new order in the face of a double crisis. On the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the founding of Guangshe, we organized the exhibition *Road to Enigma and Profundity*, revolving around works by Guangshe members. In the exhibition, we also make use of a variety of contemporary pictorial publications related to photography, as well as the works of individual photographers who followed their interests in disciplines of humanities or other personal preferences, in an attempt to outline the humanistic and artistic shifts in photography practice in China during the 1920s and 1930s, as well as the bigger picture behind them.

For the first time, *Guangshe and the Artistic Turn of Photography in the Early 20th Century* shows more than 40 original works by 12 members of the Guangshe, the original documents of the founding and publications of Guangshe, more than 20 original works by their contemporaries, and other photographic documents, including European, American, and Japanese photographic almanacs and publications of the early 20th century. In this way, we pay tribute to the artistic pursuits of China's early photographic practitioners. From their practice, we can also see that during the period of China's modern transformation, intellectuals developed a path from photographic practice to connect thought and reality. In order to bring photography into the realm of art, early photographers drew on traditional Chinese literati paintings to abstract real life, exploring the infinite "Tao" by breaking through the concrete "image," and then expanding the aesthetic significance of realistic images. They then extended the aesthetic significance of the realistic images, and thus, were able to carry out artistic explorations full of humanistic connotations in a dynamic manner.



- ① Modern Visions
- ② Photography Societies of the 1920s
- ③ Global Resonance of Pictorialism
- ④ Guangshe