



## Xu Yong

### 18% GRAY / MY FRIENDS

Text by Patricia Eichenbaum Karetzky

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- Xu Yong explores the boundaries of photography, with two series of his blurred images
- Evidence of his keen sensitivity to photography and the realities of Chinese society

It's hard to think of another contemporary Chinese photographer who fully exploits all the possibilities photography has to offer like **Xu Yong**. For his series *18% GRAY* (2009) and *MY FRIENDS* (2020), he constructed a ten-centimetre-long metal ring, which was then affixed between the camera and the lens, causing the camera to lose focus so that the images are blurred. Xu Yong used this method to photograph his close friends and important places from his memories. He portrays, for example, the alleyway in Shanghai where he lived as a child, the Huangpu river, in which the ashes of his grandfather were scattered, and Tiananmen Square in Beijing. This publication is a visual autobiography which at the same time allows Xu Yong to demonstrate his great sensitivity for the realities of Chinese society.

Text in English and Chinese.

Born in Shanghai in 1954, the artist **Xu Yong** graduated from Henan University of Science and Technology in China in 1978 and worked as a photographer for the state-run Beijing Advertising Agency in the 1980s. *Hutong 101 Photos*, which he shot in the late 1980s and published in 1990, creating a wide range of social impacts, is a milestone in Chinese photography. Typical works of Xu Yong include *Xiaofangjia Hutong*, *Solution Scheme*, *This Face*, *Negatives: Scans*, and *18% Grey*. In 1993, the artist initiated and organised the 'Hutong Cultural Tour' to actively publicise and promote the protection of Beijing's hutongs (lanes, or alleys). In 2003, he organised the *Reconstruction 798* public art activity in Beijing and was one of the main initiators of the famous 798 Art District. **Patricia Eichenbaum Karetzky**. Receiving her B.A. from New York University; M.A. from Hunter College and Ph.D., from the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, Patricia Eichenbaum Karetzky is the Oskar Munsterberg Chair of Asian Art at Bard College, New York since 1988 and Adjunct Professor at Lehman College, City College of New York since 1994. Patricia has dual interests in contemporary and medieval Chinese art. She was assistant editor, co-editor, and editor of the *Journal of Chinese Religions* from 1991 to 1998 and has published numerous books and articles on medieval Chinese religious art and a multitude of articles on contemporary art in such journals as *Yishu*, the *Journal of Contemporary Art*, and *Paradoxa*. She has also curated many exhibitions and written catalogues on Chinese contemporary art.

