

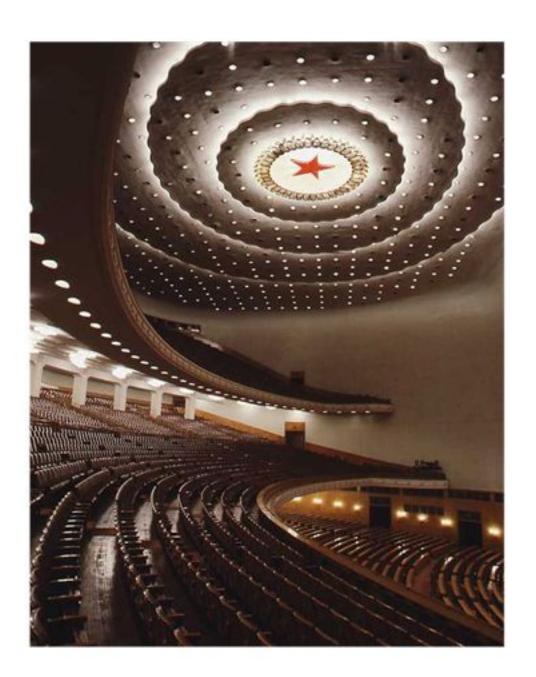
Inside the Great Hall of the People

In 1981, eighty-one-year-old Wu Yinxian was commissioned to shoot "Inside the Great Hall of the People" for a gift wall calendar the Hall was preparing to print. The shoot was part of the Great Hall of the People's "public image campaign," and in all it took two months over a period of three years. Wu strived to depict the grandeur and stateliness of China's bodies of higher government, however in these images of utmost grandeur and stateliness, the ceremonial aspects and nobility of the art of photography transpire. As an effective means of mass propaganda, the essence of these photographs changed once they were printed in a calendar. In a way, photography can be seen as the language of the ideology of the state apparatus: Once the masses have registered the "reflection," they "call out" for an individual sense of belonging, security, honour and submission within the State. In "Inside," this has to do with the atmosphere surrounding the object being photographed, but it is also the product of the Wu Yinxan's sense of political duty and political sensitivity at having been granted the honour of being chosen to photograph the highest governmental spaces of his nation.

Although these photos are the product of the collective unconsciousness of the time, the high quality of the photography work will become more appreciable because they truthfully reflect and exemplify the typical aesthetic criteria of the era and meet the political criteria of mainstream ideology, and express these in an incisive and vivid manner. Looking at "Inside the People's Congress" today, they stand as fine examples of the culmination and closure of social realism in Chinese photography. More importantly, "Inside the Great Hall of the People" raises new questions on authorship, purpose, approach, audience and aesthetic criteria.

By Cai Meng

C print 20 page 60 X 71.2cm edition 1/14 90 X 110cm edition 10





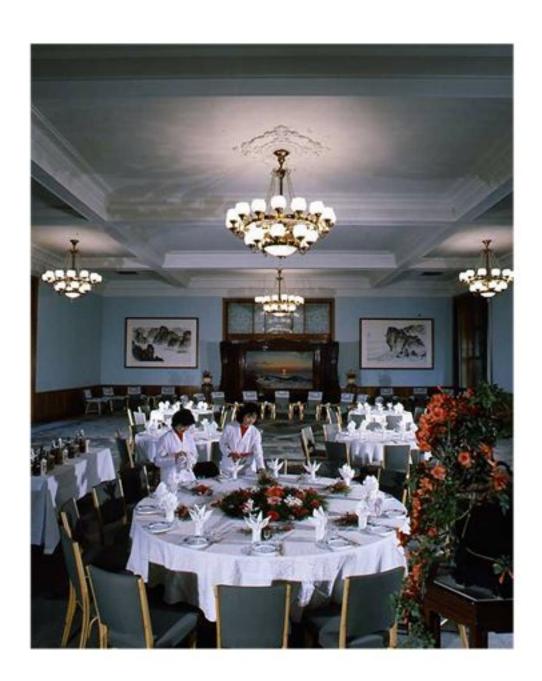


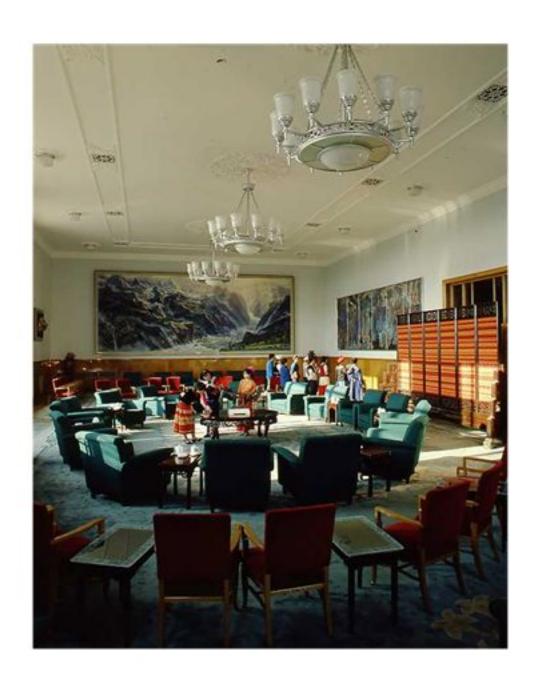


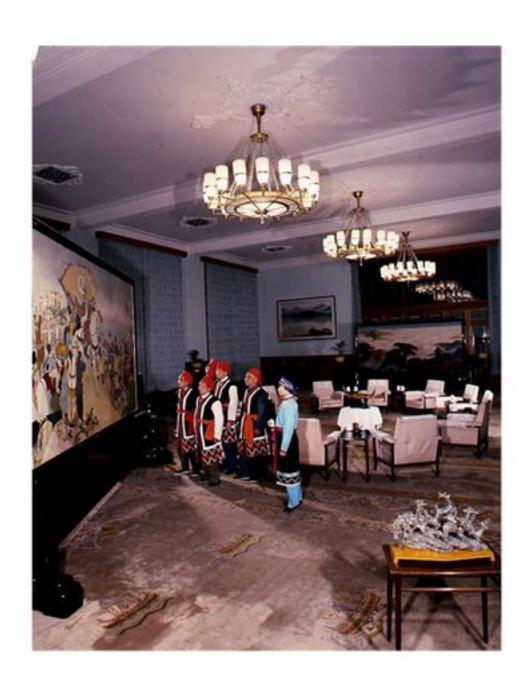


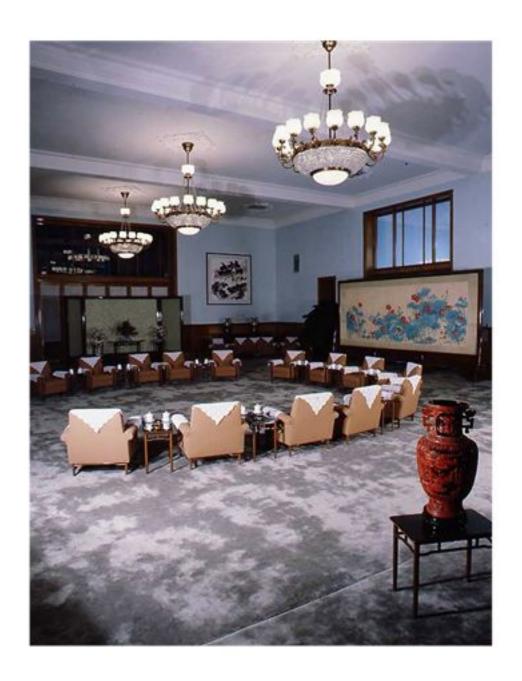








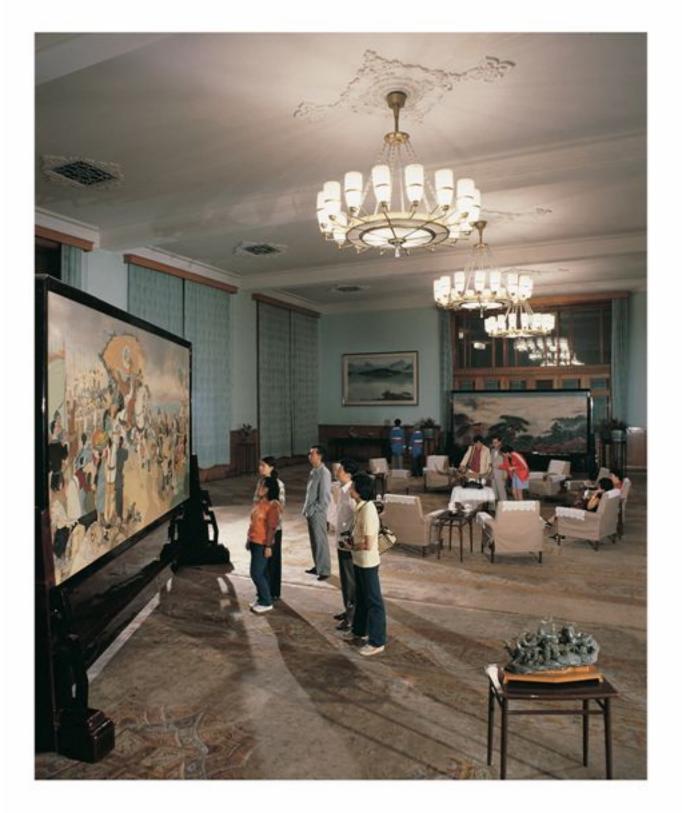






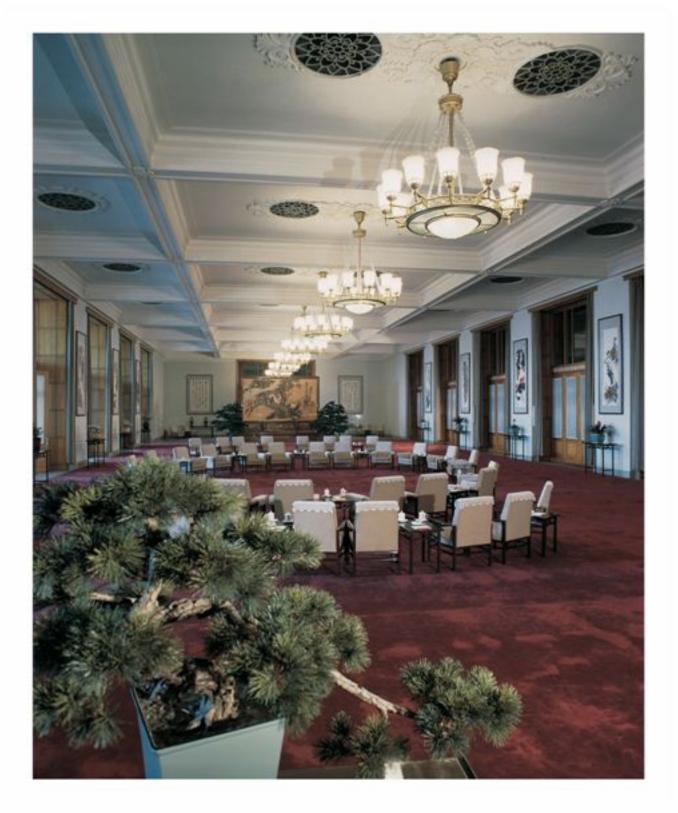












Wu Yinxian

Born in Shuyang county, Jiangsu Province in September 1900
Studied in the Shanghai Fine Arts Junior College, 1919–1921
Taught fine arts in the Shuyang County High School, 1923 – 1927
Employed as painter by the Shanghai Yijing Scene Company, 1928 – 1930,
Photographer of the Shanghai Hongdeng Photo Studio, 1930 -1932
Art Director of the Shanghai Tianyi Film Company, 1932 – 1934
Photographer of the Shanghai Diantong Film Industry Company, Mingxing Film Company, 1935 – 1937
Head of the Film Group of the General Political Department of the Yan'an 8th Route Army, 1938 – 1946
Technical department head and deputy studio director of the North-east Film Studio, 1946 – 1948
Director of the North-east Film Studio, 1949 – 1954
The Deputy Dean of the Beijing Film Academy and also the director of the photography department, 1955 –
1970 Member of the Culture Team of State Council, 1970 – 1974
Advisor of the Film Bureau of the Ministry of Culture, 1977 – 1982

Past away in Beijing on September 1994.

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in Cooperation with TOMO Art Center, Beijing, China.