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ARTIST IN CONVERSATION
WITH JEAN DYKSTRA:
Saturday 20 October 2012 4pm
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NOTES TO EDITORS
Publication details: Nadav Kander, Yangtze - The Long River; introduction by Kofi A. Annan; texts by Jean Paul-Tchang and Nadav Kander; graphic design by Tappin Gofton Ltd; German, English; 2010. c. 188 pp., ca. 77 color ill.; 34 x 28 cm; clothbound; ISBN 978-3-7757-2683-2



Nadav Kander

Yangtze - The Long River

October 19 to November 24 2012
Opening reception October 18, 6 – 8pm

NEW YORK, August 13, 2012 — Flowers Gallery is pleased to announce the New York debut of Nadav Kander's Prix Pictet award-winning photographic series, Yangtze —The Long River. For this body of work, Kander traveled the nearly 4,000-mile long Yangtze River, from mouth to source, photographing the landscape and the people living along its shores. Yangtze — The Long River is a body of work that captures the dramatic effects of a nation at the precipice of enormous industrial and economic change and considers the history and folklore of the waterway that runs through the blood of the people. The exhibition will run from October 19th through November 24th, with a reception for the artist on October 18th, from 6-8pm.

Flowing for a distance of 3,988 miles, the Yangtze is the longest river in Asia and the third longest river in the world. Roughly bisecting the country of China from West to East, the edges of this watercourse are home to a population larger than America's. One in every eighteen people on the planet lives along its shores. Over a period of three years, Nadav Kander made five trips to the banks of the Yangtze, traveling up-stream from mouth to source. Using the river as a metaphor for a world in flux, Kander attempted to relate and reflect the implications of modern-day China's incomprehensible and seemingly unnatural pace of development. Kander's China is a country both at the beginning of a new era and at odds with itself. With the accelerated clip at which China's economy continues to grow, this body of work examines how progress can dramatically affect the way the physical world shapes our perception of reality and our understanding of ourselves. Kander says in a statement about this body of work:

"China is a nation that appears to be severing its roots by destroying its past. Demolition and construction were everywhere on such a scale that I was unsure if what I was seeing was being built or destroyed, destroyed or built."

Viewers of this exhibition are taken on a meditative and meandering path beginning at the river's coastal estuary, where thousands of ships leave and enter each day. Imagery of man-made evolutionary progress abounds: the renowned suicide bridges, coalmines and the largest dam in the world – The Three Gorges Dam. Further inland we encounter Chongqing - the fastest-growing urban center on the planet. In the upper areas of the Yangtze, towards its source on the Tibetan Plateau, the dense architecture gives way to the mountains—a sparsely populated area where the stream, in its most glacial form, is mostly broken ice.

The human figures in these pictures are colorful wisps, often overshadowed by the monochromatic elements of industrial infrastructure and a climate that appears muted by humid weather and pollution. In his statement about the work, Kander draws references to John Martin's and Caspar David Friedrich's paintings "...where humans are dwarfed against the might of nature and God" and J.M.W. Turner's paintings, "...where tiny figures are lost in the seething violence of nature suggesting the ultimate defeat of all endeavor, the fallacy of hope." Kander continues, "I felt the smallness of man pitted against huge ideas, the insignificance of man compared to the state." These bright figures, so stunted in size by their encroaching habitats still manage to anchor Kander's compositions, and provoke the viewer's imagination about what the flow of life must be like at a time of accelerated progression. In speaking about his work, Kander relates a friend's personal narrative: A Chinese friend I made whilst working on the project reiterated what many Chinese people feel: "Why do we have to destroy to develop?"...many of us can revisit where we were brought up and it will be much the same—it will remind us of our families and upbringing. In China that is virtually impossible. The scale of development has left most places unrecognizable. "Nothing is the same. We can't revisit where we came from because it no longer exists."

Born in Tel Aviv, Israel in 1961, Nadav Kander currently lives and works in London. His work forms part of some of the major collections in the world. In 2009, Kander received the prestigious Prix Pictet photographic award for a selection of photographs from Yangtze – The Long River. He is a regular contributor to many international publications, including The New York Times Magazine, for whom he photographed 'Obama's People', a portfolio of 54 portraits of the Obama administration.

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