

Coastline of China

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New photographer Zhang Xiao, the recipient of the second Hou Dengke Documentary photography Award (2009), has used his series China Coastline to present us with his new ideas and attitudes towards photography.

The China Coastline series presents the vast spaces of China from a special angle, displaying a certain unified state through photographs of various scenes scattered across China's coast. This unified state is related to the Chinese people's existence space and the reality. In Zhang's China Coastline, we discover that the coastline is not an abstract geographic concept, but a concrete and vivid concept brought to life through the images and actions of the people along the sea.

Photography has a unique ability to express space, and Zhang Xiao's photography has expanded the conceptual expression of space. Photography is good at capturing the "openness" of space, while Zhang has made attempts at highlighting the "betweenness" of space with photographic methods, arriving at a satisfactory result. In a certain sense, the coastline is a concept of "betweenness." Though the coastline separates the land from the sea, forming the border between the two, in Zhang Xiao's photography, it is more than just a line between land and sea—it has also become a space that connects the land and the sea. Its role as a "between" space is inseparable from the activities of people along the coastline, who move back and forth between land and sea. It would be more accurate to say that the coastline is a zonal concept, one which, because of the activities of people within it, is a scene of continuity between land and sea. It is because of the actions of people that land and sea have become organically connected.

Zhang Xiao's photographs, whether expressive, surreal or realistic, have put the unique charm of this special geographic space on full display. Though on the surface, Zhang's photographs appear to be in a straightforward layout style, it is quite different from the normal photography of this style, which emphasizes "neutral," distanced observation. Instead, it observes reality with warm sentiments. As a result, these photographs are marked by a very human kind of observation, one which observes both the appearance of the natural landscape and man's relationship with nature, rather than a straightforward, all-encompassing, overstretched kind of photography. With this series, we discover that the coastline is a space where people can find freedom, as well as a space where they feel their limitations, a space entangled in a complex array of elements. It is almost like a space where the land and sea engage in a tug-of-war. The sea bears the traces of human activity and intrusion, and the land by the sea also contains man's imaginings and expectations of the sea. The coastline, this space that faces the ceaseless changes of land and sea, is a place that catalyzes humanity, and catalyzes thoughts about space and time.

## 中国海岸线

顾铮

作为第二届侯登科纪实摄影奖(2009年)的获得者,摄影新人张晓以他的《中国海岸线》系列向我们展现了他对于摄影的新的思考和态度。

《中国海岸线》系列从一个特殊的切入点来显示中国的开阔空间,而且通过对分布于中国沿海地区各种场所的摄影,来呈现某种整体性的状态。而这个整体性的状况与中国人的生存空间有关,也与我们所认识的现实有关,同时也呈现了摄影家认识现实的态度。《中国海岸线》通过将海岸线与活动于海水中、海边的人的形象与活动的结合,使得海岸线这个抽象的地理概念变得具体生动。

摄影具有表现空间的特殊能力,而张晓的摄影则将对于空间概念的表现拓展了开来。摄影擅长于拍摄空间的“空”,而他却尝试以摄影的方式把空间这个概念中的“间”加以突出呈现,且取得了可喜的效果。从某种意义上说,海岸线其实就是一个“间”的概念。海岸线虽然把海洋与土地划分开来,成为两者的边界,但在张晓的摄影里,它却不仅仅只是划分大海与大陆的“线”。海岸线也成为了连接陆地与海洋的空间。而它之所以成为这么一种“间”空间,与人在海岸线的活动也即在海洋与陆地这两者间的来往分不开。倒不如说,海岸线其实是一个地带概念,它因为人在海岸线的活动而成为了一种既是海洋也是土地的具有连续性的场所。是人的活动,把大海与土地这两者有机地联系了起来。

张晓的影像,或抒情,或超现实,或写实,充分展示了海岸线这个具有特殊地理性质的空间的特殊魅力。他的摄影,虽然表面看是一种罗列式的点状拍摄,但实际上并不像经常在这类风格的摄影中会出现的那种标榜“中立”的疏离观察,而是始终保持着对于现实的温情观察。因此,他的这些照片是具有人性温度的观察,既观察某种自然景观的样貌,也关注人与自然的关系,而不是以罗列、网罗某种事物为最终目标的拍摄。通过张晓的这个系列作品,我们发现,海岸线是一个让人发现了自由的空间,也是使人感受到自身局限的空间,更是一个交织着各种复杂因素的空间。它好像是一个陆地与海洋展开拉锯的空间。在海中,有人的活动、人的痕迹与入侵的迹象,在海边陆地,也有人对于海洋的具体想像与期待。正是海岸线这么一个同时面对了海洋与陆地的变化多端的地方,也成为了一个激活人性的地方,同时也激活对于空间和时间的思考。