

## REVIEWS: *New Hampshire*

### ELIZABETH GILL LUI: OPEN HEARTS OPEN DOORS

Lamont Gallery • Phillips Exeter Academy • Exeter, NH • [exeter.edu](http://exeter.edu) • Through March 1, 2014

China's enthusiasm for modernization has resulted in seventy-five percent of Beijing's old city being razed; thus, hundreds of Ming dynasty homes have been destroyed. Redevelopment without a clear vision for preservation for future generations concerns fine art photographer Elizabeth Gill Lui and is the subject of *Open Hearts Open Doors*.

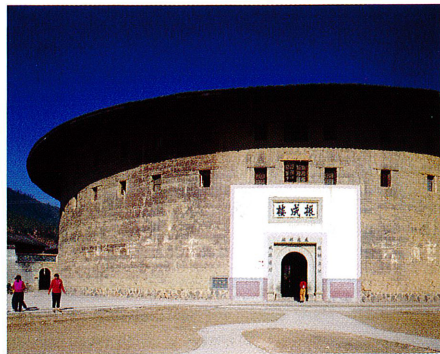
Lui's poignant photographs show China undergoing dramatic change that affects vernacular buildings and homes. Mega high-rises overshadow temples originally built to celebrate beauty and naturalism. Homes that once nurtured families and ancient traditions are torn down or turned into quasi-billboards, spray-painted with nationalistic slogans.

*Boy and Hot Wheels* illustrates this cultural tug-of-war, depicting a child riding a big plastic tricycle in the courtyard of a home with beautifully restored Chinese murals on its outer wall. The home's beautiful mountainous view is blemished with huge electrical towers

rising above the trees. It's one of the 50 photographs in this exhibition that might make one squirm—far from the exotic, nature-infused images of China that so many people adore.

Some of Lui's photographs do offer elegant views with an emphasis on Chinese architecture, its graceful curves and organic beauty, as in *Hakka Round House* or *Westlake & Lotus*. Still there's the underlying tension and question, what will become of these buildings—particularly those abandoned? We know that China is neither particularly nostalgic nor fond of "ruins."

Lui made these photographs in 1995 and 2006 when she was a visiting artist at the Chinese University of Hong Kong in the department of architecture. They are exhibited with



Elizabeth Gill Lui, *Hakka Round House*, photograph, 32 x 36".

wall text in English and traditional Mandarin, making this show even more multicultural and accessible. There's an accompanying book, *Open Hearts Open Doors*, published by Four Stops Press (of which Lui is a founder), that offers insights on China

from various thought leaders, preservationists, environmentalists, and architects, such as I.M. Pei. Like Lui, their overriding concern is that in China's rush to become a major player in the modern, global economy, it will lose its distinctive monuments of age-old traditions and ancient culture to become homogenized with the rest of the world.

—Debbie Hagan