

Zhang Lanpo's Epic Landscape—Considering the Visual Strategy of Contemporary Chinese Photography

Qianli Xing

School of Design and Art, Communication University of Zhejiang, Hangzhou 310018, Zhejiang, China

Corresponding author: Qianli Xing (e-mail: fldxing2026@163.com)

ABSTRACT This paper examines the visual strategies and artistic evolution of Zhang Lanpo, a representative figure in contemporary Chinese photography whose “epic landscapes” mark a shift from traditional documentation to a multilayered image world. By analyzing major series including *The Legend of the Giant* and *Rifling*, the study explores how Zhang uses grand physical scale, monochromatic tonal structure, and complex post-production collage to construct image wonders that connect ancient literati sentiment with fragmented twenty-first-century reality. The paper further analyzes Zhang’s reinterpretation of documentary photography, arguing that his practice aligns more closely with the Confucian spirit of social responsibility than with Western objective realism. Through comparison with Wang Qingsong and Joel-Peter Witkin, the study shows that Zhang’s work operates as a form of spiritual archaeology, transforming personal trauma and collective historical consciousness into a visual language of sedimentary memory. His photographic strategy provides a platform for cultural empathy, enabling viewers to navigate tensions between globalized art language and localized historical identity within the cyclical patterns of human civilization.

INDEX TERMS zhang lanpo, contemporary photography, visual strategy, image semiotics, cultural memory

I. THE CONTEXT OF CONTEMPORARY CHINESE PHOTOGRAPHY

A. REPRESENTATIVE SUCCESS OF ZHANG LANPO

The emergence and critical acclaim of Zhang Lanpo represent a watershed moment in the contemporary photography ecology of China. His success is not merely a personal achievement but a systemic reflection of how Chinese photography has transitioned from traditional documentation toward a sophisticated, multilayered “three-dimensional image world”[1]. This evolution is deeply rooted in a complex interplay of artistic concepts, image psychology, and a persistent dialogue between Eastern and Western cultural paradigms. Zhang’s work serves as a primary case study for understanding the broader shifts in how contemporary Chinese artists navigate the tension between globalized art languages and localized historical consciousness. At the heart of Zhang Lanpo’s success is a specific and deliberate visual strategy. This strategy involves the creation of contemporary art and the exploration of modern topics while remaining firmly anchored in the inherent sense of mission and identity found in traditional Chinese art and culture. Unlike earlier movements that might have sought to discard

tradition in favor of Western modernism, Zhang’s approach suggests a “re-traditionalization” of the contemporary. By utilizing grand narrative techniques, Zhang reinterprets the literati’s ‘spiritual sentiments’—specifically the tradition of ‘Jiaoguo Youmin’ (worrying for the nation and people)—through a contemporary monumental lens. While traditional literati art often favored minimalism, Zhang adopts an ‘Epic Literati’ strategy, where the grandiosity of the image serves as a visual manifestation of the intellectual’s heavy social responsibility. This transforms the private reclusion of the ancient scholar into a public, ‘epic’ confrontation with collective history. This creates a visual experience that is both clear and specific in its historical references, yet obscure and detached in its modern execution.

Zhang’s rise to prominence—highlighted by prestigious accolades such as the Golden Winged Bird Best Photography Award at the Dali International Photography Exhibition and the Three Shadows Media Attention Award—underscores a collective psychological shift within the Chinese art community. His work, such as the “*Rifling*” and “*The Legend of the Giant*” series, moves beyond simple representation to construct hidden worlds filled with

complex symbols, metaphors, and intertextual relationships. These series explore profound themes of life and death, power dynamics, and historical conflict, elevating personal or localized anxiety to a universal emotion[2-4].

Furthermore, Zhang's success reflects the unique "documentary" identity prevalent in Chinese photography. Although his works are highly conceptual and experimental, they are often characterized as "documentary works" (Jishi Photography). This terminology is not a reflection of objective realism in the Western sense, but rather a continuation of the Confucian spirit where the artist views themselves as a traditional intellectual tasked with "worrying about the world". Zhang's ability to blend this sense of social responsibility with a highly subjective, metaphorical aesthetic allows his work to resonate deeply with both local scholars and international audiences. Ultimately, Zhang Lanpo stands as a representative figure because his "epic landscapes" provide a space where viewers can immerse themselves in cultural empathy, using collective psychological cues to hear the echoes of history within a modernized image landscape.

B. DEFINING THE "EPIC STYLE"

The "epic style" that defines Zhang Lanpo's oeuvre is not merely a formalistic choice but a profound visual strategy that reflects the complex ecology of contemporary Chinese photography. This aesthetic is characterized by a deliberate convergence of grand physical dimensions, a monochromatic tonal palette, and intricate post-production collages that collectively construct a "three-dimensional image world"—a term referring to the spatial 'presence' felt by the viewer due to monumental scale and the deep conceptual layering of the imagery. This is not a stereoscopic technicality, but a phenomenological depth where the image functions as an immersive environment. By employing these specific techniques, Zhang moves beyond the traditional boundaries of the photographic medium to create "image wonders"—spectacles that are simultaneously clear and specific in their detail, yet obscure and detached in their overall atmosphere.

A primary pillar of this style is the use of grand dimensions. By producing works on a monumental scale, Zhang forces the viewer into a state of "presence," where the sheer size of the image commands attention and creates an immersive environment. This vastness is essential for housing the "epic complex" and the grand narratives that characterize his work. Complementing this scale is his consistent use of black-and-white tones. This choice serves to strip away the distractions of reality, elevating the subject matter to a metaphysical plane. Unlike desaturated color, which still carries the temperature of the physical world, Zhang's high-contrast monochrome functions as a technical 'excavation' tool. This monochromatic palette heightens the microtextures of 'bones and ashes,' transforming them into 'sedimentary rocks' through the emphasis on structural shadows rather than chromatic surface. This ensures that the 'epic' scale is grounded in the visceral, tactile weight of history's remains.

The most technically complex aspect of Zhang's epic style is his use of post-production collages and compositions. Through these methods, he constructs a "hidden world" filled with a dense array of cultural symbols—beasts, birds, Buddha statues, and political icons—that are far beyond real experience. These images serve as "signifiers and metaphors of the times," deliberately chosen to reflect the artist's "God's perspective" and his cultural ambitions. For instance, in his work *Rifling*, the image of a gun barrel becomes a metaphor for the predetermined routes of human life, while in *The Legend of the Giant*, he uses complex symbols to construct a contemporary *Divine Comedy*.

Ultimately, this epic style functions as a bidirectional metaphorical approach: it personifies abstract cultural issues like history and religion while simultaneously turning human beings into universal symbols. By creating these "epic landscapes," Zhang Lanpo provides a platform for "cultural empathy" and "historical imagination". The ambiguity of the relationships between his symbols lures the viewer into establishing their own logical system, thereby participating in the modernization and recreation of the "epic" itself. This style represents a bridge between the traditional mission of the Chinese intellectual and the experimental nature of contemporary art, aiming to explore the "greasy liquids of human nature" diffused within the sedimentary rocks of civilization.

II. GRAND NARRATIVES AND HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

A. FROM "THE LEGEND OF THE GIANT" TO "RIFLING"

Zhang's artistic practice is characterized by a profound preoccupation with the "Grand Narrative," a conceptual framework that allows him to dismantle and reconstruct the complexities of human history. His work does not merely capture a moment in time; rather, it constructs hidden worlds—meticulously layered environments saturated with the semiotics of religion, politics, and the inevitability of death. By weaving these heavy themes into a cohesive visual language, Zhang challenges the viewer to look beyond the surface of the image and confront the cyclical nature of civilization[5].

In his seminal series, "The Legend of the Giant," Zhang utilizes a dense array of complex symbols to stage a contemporary iteration of the "Divine Comedy." Much like Dante's journey through the realms of the afterlife, Zhang's "Giant" serves as a metaphorical lens through which we observe the rise and fall of human endeavor. The "Giant" represents the collective ambition of humanity—monumental yet fragile. Through this series, Zhang explores the grand trajectory of human civilization, questioning whether our progress is a linear ascent or a repetitive descent into chaos. The imagery often evokes a sense of ruined grandeur, where religious icons and political relics are juxtaposed to highlight the fleeting nature of earthly power.

"Zhang's work functions as a visual archaeology, unearthing the tensions between individual existence and the

massive structures of history.”

The evolution of his philosophical inquiry reached a critical milestone with “Rifling,” a body of work that garnered international acclaim and was awarded the Golden Winged Bird Best Photography Award in 2023. While “The Legend of the Giant” focused on the broader strokes of civilizational allegory, “Rifling” narrows the scope to the mechanics of power and conflict. The title itself suggests both the internal grooves of a firearm—designed to give a projectile stability and lethal accuracy—and the act of searching or plundering.

In “Rifling,” Zhang continues to delve into historical topics, but with a sharper, more visceral edge. He examines how historical narratives are often forged in the crucible of violence and how the aesthetics of conflict become ingrained in a nation’s identity. The photography in this series is marked by a stark, haunting precision. Visually, Zhang focuses on the cold, metallic interiors of massive firearm barrels and the cross-sections of lead bullets, transforming these literal instruments of violence into abstract, architectural voids. By focusing on these forensic-level details of rifling grooves and ballistic remnants, Zhang forces a confrontation with the “historical ghost” that haunts contemporary society.

Ultimately, the transition from “The Legend of the Giant” to “Rifling” represents a deepening of Zhang’s investigation. He moves from the mythological and allegorical toward a more direct and analytical critique of how history is written, remembered, and repeated. His work remains a testament to the power of photography to serve not just as a document, but as a philosophical treatise on the human condition.

B. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS: ZHANG LANPO VS. WANG QINGSONG

In the realm of contemporary Chinese photography, both Zhang Lanpo and Wang Qingsong stand as monumental figures who utilize the medium to navigate the complexities of “Grand Narratives.” Both artists share a foundational background in painting, a lineage that is evident in their meticulous compositions and the “constructed” nature of their frames. However, despite these structural similarities, their conceptual trajectories diverge sharply, rooted in differing aesthetic influences and philosophical inquiries[6].

1) The Satirical Spectacle: Wang Qingsong

Wang Qingsong’s work is deeply embedded in the legacies of Political Pop and Vulgar Art (Ga-Su) that emerged in the post-1989 Chinese art scene. His approach is characterized by a “maximalist” aesthetic—sprawling, theatrical sets filled with dozens of models and a chaotic abundance of consumer goods. Wang’s critique is direct and confrontational, often using biting humor to lampoon the contradictions of a society caught between traditional values and hyper-capitalist globalization.

A signature element of Wang’s practice is the misappropriation of classic art history. By recreating iconic Western and Chinese masterpieces—such as the Night Revels of Han Xizai or Manet’s Olympia—through a kitsch, commercial-

ized lens, he highlights the erosion of cultural depth. In his world, the grand narrative is a farce, a spectacle of excess where history is flattened into a billboard or a shopping mall.

2) The Existential Archaeology: Zhang Lanpo

In contrast, Zhang Lanpo’s work shuns the brightly colored satire of the pop aesthetic in favor of a darker, more primordial investigation. Rather than focusing on the surface of consumer culture, Zhang delves into what he describes as the “greasy liquids of human nature.” His work is visceral, often dealing with the biological and spiritual remnants of existence—bones, flesh, and religious artifacts—submerged in textures that feel ancient and decaying.

For Zhang, the grand narrative is not a spectacle to be mocked, but a profound evolutionary process. He views history as a relentless, mutual shaping between time and humanity. Where Wang looks at the “now,” Zhang looks at the “eternal.” His compositions are less about the immediate political moment and more about the cyclical patterns of civilization:

The Weight of Time: How human ambition is eventually weathered by history.

The Fluidity of Nature: The “greasy” or visceral elements representing the messy, inescapable reality of our biological selves.

Civilizational Metamorphosis: The way belief systems and political structures rise from and sink back into the earth.

III. CULTURAL METAPHORS AND THE “DOCUMENTARY” IDENTITY

A. THE CAVE METAPHOR

In the visual architecture of Zhang Lanpo’s work, the “cave” serves as more than a mere backdrop; it is a foundational cultural metaphor that anchors his grand narratives. Zhang frequently situates his epic, often unsettling scenes within the confines of a constructed “cave” space, a subterranean theater that strips away the distractions of the modern world to confront the primal essence of the human condition. This spatial choice is a deliberate engagement with the “subconscious of civilization,” tapping into ancient survival memories that are hardwired into the collective human psyche.

Historically and mythologically, the cave is the site of humanity’s first artistic impulses and its earliest shelters. By returning his subjects to this enclosed, dark environment, Zhang subverts Plato’s Allegory of the Cave. While Plato’s cave dwellers are deceived by shadows, Zhang utilizes the cave as a site of ‘primordial clarity’. In his strategy, the ‘outside’ world is the site of fragmented illusion, whereas the constructed cave serves as a sensory-deprivation chamber that strips away modern noise to reveal the raw, essential symbols of power and faith. It represents a closed system where the markers of time and geography are blurred, leav-

ing behind only the raw symbols of our species' journey—power, faith, and the remains of the body.

The cave metaphor is intrinsically linked to collective anxieties regarding death and rebirth. In Zhang's imagery, the cave often feels like a womb or a tomb—sometimes both simultaneously. This duality is central to his exploration of history; for a new era or a new understanding of civilization to be born, the old structures must first undergo a process of decay within the dark. The “greasy liquids” and skeletal remains that frequently populate Zhang's cave scenes act as the biological residue of this transition. The cave becomes a liminal space, a digestive tract of history where the past is processed and the future is gestated[7-8].

Furthermore, Zhang's use of the cave complicates his “documentary” identity. While his images are fastidiously detailed—possessing the clarity and texture of a forensic record—the fact that they are staged within a constructed subterranean world suggests a “documentary of the mind.” He is not documenting an external, objective reality in the forensic sense; rather, he practices a ‘meta-documentary’ approach. By using postproduction collages to ‘record’ the invisible social psyche, Zhang argues that the internal, psychological reality of a civilization is a ‘fact’ more profound than any single unedited frame. This redefines ‘Jishi’ not as a capture of light, but as a rigorous documentation of ethical and historical truth through synthesized allegories. The cave provides the controlled environment necessary for this “spiritual archaeology.”

By isolating his grand narratives within this primordial setting, Zhang forces the viewer into a state of claustrophobic introspection. We are no longer safe observers of history from a distance; we are trapped within the cave alongside the “Giants” and the “Rifling,” compelled to acknowledge the cyclical nature of our anxieties. In Zhang's hands, the cave is a mirror made of stone—a place where we confront the terrifying and beautiful truth that our modern sophistication is but a thin veneer over an ancient, subterranean soul.

B. THE REINTERPRETATION OF “DOCUMENTARY PHOTOGRAPHY”

Zhang and Wang Qingsong often characterize their conceptual works as “documentary”.

The conceptual frameworks of Zhang Lanpo and Wang Qingsong present a fascinating paradox: while their works are meticulously staged, highly stylized, and overtly metaphorical, both artists frequently categorize their practice as a form of “documentary.” To a Western audience accustomed to the “fly-on-the-wall” objectivity of Henri Cartier-Bresson or the forensic detachment of Bernd and Hilla Becher, this may seem like a contradiction. However, in the context of Chinese contemporary art, this reinterpretation is rooted in a unique cultural lineage that prioritizes spiritual truth over optical fact.

1) The Confucian Ethos: Jishi Photography

The Chinese term for documentary photography, “Jishi” (纪实), carries a weight that transcends the mere recording of visual data. It is deeply intertwined with the Confucian tradition and the historical “spiritual sentiment” of the traditional scholar-official (literati). In this tradition, the role of the intellectual—and by extension, the artist—is to act as a witness to the moral and social state of the world.

For Zhang and Wang, the “documentary” impulse is an expression of this humanistic responsibility. They are not documenting what the world looks like in a literal sense, but rather “recording the reality” of the social psyche, the weight of history, and the moral dilemmas of the present era. Their work functions as a modern-day historiography, where the camera is a tool for ethical inquiry rather than scientific observation. By labeling their work as documentary, they align themselves with a long-standing Chinese ethos that views art as a vehicle for social and spiritual reflection.

2) Subjectivity and the Symbolized Record

In Western photography, subjectivity is often seen as the antithesis of the documentary. However, Chinese documentary photography frequently embraces subjective design and symbolization as a means of reaching a deeper, more “authentic” reality. Zhang Lanpo's use of skeletal remains or Wang Qingsong's sprawling, kitsch tableaux are not “fictions” in the eyes of the artists; they are symbolic distillations of truth.

Subverting the Objective:

Unlike the Western “objective record,” which seeks to minimize the photographer's presence, Zhang and Wang lean into the role of the “author.” They believe that a single, candid snapshot cannot capture the immense complexity of China's transition or the gravity of human civilization.

The Humanistic Spirit:

The “documentary” nature of their work lies in the intent. By constructing scenes, they can “document” invisible forces—such as collective anxiety, political power, and the “greasy” erosion of human nature—that a traditional documentary lens might miss.

IV. PHILOSOPHIES OF DEATH AND PAIN

The intersection of mortality and artistic expression often finds its roots in the profound soil of early psychological trauma. For many artists, the confrontation with the “end” is not an intellectual exercise but a visceral haunting that demands a lifelong creative exorcism. By examining the works of American photographer Joel-Peter Witkin and Chinese contemporary artist Zhang Lanpo, we can observe how childhood encounters with sudden death transform into distinct philosophies of pain, redemption, and historical reflection.

A. CHILDHOOD TRAUMA AS CREATIVE CATALYST

The genesis of an artist's preoccupation with the macabre often traces back to a singular, shattering moment of realization. Both Witkin and Zhang experienced such "ruptures" in their youth—witnessing the abrupt transition from life to corpse—which forever altered their aesthetic trajectory.

1) Joel-Peter Witkin: The Ritual of Self-Redemption

For Witkin, the legend of his artistic origin is famously cinematic and gruesome: as a young boy, he witnessed a car accident in which a young girl was decapitated, her head rolling toward him. This literal and metaphorical "severing" became the cornerstone of his dark, baroque imagery.

Witkin does not view the corpse or the deformed body as an object of horror, but as a site of "self-redemption." His photography operates within a quasi-religious framework where physical pain and spiritual torture are explored as necessary precursors to grace. By meticulously staging cadavers, fetuses, and social outcasts in compositions that mirror Renaissance masterpieces, Witkin seeks to "heal" the trauma of the flesh. In his philosophy, the photograph is a transformative altar where the grotesque is sanctified, and the limits of human suffering are tested to find the spark of the divine hidden within the decay.

2) Zhang Lanpo: The Sedimentary Rocks of Civilization

While Witkin's focus is intensely personal, Zhang Lanpo's creative engine is similarly rooted in a specific biographical rupture: as a child, he witnessed the sudden and violent death of a contemporary playmate. This early encounter with the 'corpse'—a silent, abrupt transition from life to object—serves as a bridge to a collective sense of distress. Zhang's work moves away from the individual "self" and toward a macro-perspective of the human condition. To Zhang, death is not merely a biological end but a powerful symbol within a much larger "historical organism."

In his vast, often skeletal compositions, Zhang observes what he calls the "sedimentary rocks" of civilization. He views history as a continuous layering of lives and deaths, where the individual's pain is absorbed into the geological weight of time. His philosophy of death is one of observation rather than just redemption; he uses the imagery of the bone and the ruin to map the trajectory of human progress and its inevitable collapses. Where Witkin looks into the soul through the wound, Zhang looks through the skeleton to see the architecture of an entire era.

"Death, in the hands of these masters, is stripped of its silence and transformed into a loud, visual testimony of what it means to survive."

B. COMPARATIVE SYNTHESIS

The contrast between these two artists highlights the versatility of trauma as a creative engine:

Witkin internalizes the trauma, seeking a private, spiritual reconciliation with the fragility of the body. Zhang external-

izes it, using the specter of death to critique and chronicle the broader movements of human history.

Ultimately, both artists prove that while childhood trauma may be a scar, in the realm of high art, it becomes a lens. They do not merely depict death; they use the "philosophy of pain" to interrogate the very meaning of existence, ensuring that what was once a moment of sudden terror becomes a permanent monument of creative insight.

C. CULTURAL FOUNDATIONS

The profound divergence in the artistic outputs of Joel-Peter Witkin and Zhang Lanpo is not merely a matter of aesthetic preference; rather, it is deeply rooted in their contrasting religious and cultural foundations. While both artists utilize the macabre and the corporeal to explore the human condition, the philosophical "lens" through which they view mortality creates two distinct visual languages—one centered on the singular, sacrificial soul, and the other on a collective, cyclical spiritual consciousness.

1) Witkin: The Sacrificial "God's Eye View"

Joel-Peter Witkin's work is inextricably linked to the Western Judeo-Christian tradition. His approach is often described as being framed from a "God's perspective," a viewpoint that is both judgmental and deeply redemptive. In Witkin's world, the body is a site of individual martyrdom. Drawing inspiration from Renaissance and Baroque religious iconography, he treats his subjects—often the marginalized, the physically deformed, or the deceased—as sacred relics.

His process is an act of individual sacrifice. By meticulously arranging cadavers or body parts in tableaux that mirror classical paintings, Witkin seeks to "redeem" the flesh, elevating the grotesque to the level of the divine. There is a sense of linear morality here: the physical suffering or "brokenness" of the individual is a prerequisite for spiritual transcendence. The viewer is forced into a vertical relationship with the work—looking up toward a celestial standard of beauty that encompasses even the most horrific physical realities. For Witkin, the soul is a singular entity seeking reconciliation with a creator through the medium of the tortured or transformed body.

2) Zhang Lanpo: The Collective Spiritual Tapestry

In contrast, Zhang Lanpo's work operates within the intricate framework of Eastern philosophies, specifically the "Three Teachings" of Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism. Unlike Witkin's focus on the individual's path to God, Zhang's imagery is saturated with collective spiritual emotions. His work does not seek to "judge" the body from a height but rather views it as a transient vessel within an eternal, horizontal flow of energy.

Taoism and Buddhism:

From these traditions, Zhang derives a sense of impermanence and cyclicity. The body is not a final monument

but a part of the “Great Void” or the “Nirvana” process. His compositions often feel like vast, interconnected landscapes of bone and spirit, where the boundaries between one person and the next are blurred.

Confucianism:

This influence manifests in the emphasis on ancestral memory and social ethics. The “emotions” in Zhang’s work are often communal—grief, reverence, and filial piety are woven into the very texture of his subjects.

3) The Intersection of Flesh and Spirit

The divergence can be summarized as a contrast between Redemption and Reincarnation. Witkin uses the camera to grant a singular, eternal dignity to a specific body, mirroring the Christian belief in the resurrection of the flesh. Zhang Lanpo, however, uses his medium to dissolve the ego, presenting the body as a part of a larger, collective history of suffering and enlightenment.

While Witkin’s shadows are heavy with the weight of sin and the hope of grace, Zhang’s atmosphere is thick with the “Qi” (vital energy) that connects the living to the dead. Ultimately, the difference lies in the destination: Witkin looks toward a divine judge, while Zhang looks toward the universal harmony of the cosmos. This cultural bedrock ensures that while their imagery may share a surface-level morbidity, their spiritual echoes resonate in entirely different directions.

V. CONCLUSION

The artistic practice of Zhang Lanpo represents a transformative milestone in contemporary Chinese photography, marking a decisive shift from traditional linear documentation toward the construction of a sophisticated “three-dimensional image world”. Through his deliberate “epic style,” Zhang utilizes grand physical dimensions, a monochromatic palette, and complex post-production collages to create “image wonders” that bridge the gap between ancient literati sentiments and the fragmented reality of the 21st century. This visual strategy is not merely a formalistic preference but a profound “re-traditionalization” of the contemporary, allowing the artist to navigate the tensions between globalized art languages and a localized historical consciousness. Zhang’s work, particularly in seminal series such as *The Legend of the Giant* and *Rifling*, functions as a form of “spiritual archaeology”. By employing dense cultural symbols and the foundational metaphor of the “cave,” he situates his narratives within the “subconscious of civilization”. This approach allows him to dismantle and reconstruct the complexities of human history, exploring the cyclical patterns of power, faith, and mortality. Unlike the satirical spectacles of contemporaries like Wang Qingsong, Zhang’s work delves into the “greasy liquids of human nature,” viewing history as a primordial evolutionary process where individual ambition is eventually weathered into the “sedimentary rocks” of time. Furthermore, Zhang’s practice

prompts a significant reinterpretation of “documentary photography” (Jishi) within the Chinese context. By aligning his work with the Confucian spirit of social responsibility, he prioritizes ethical inquiry and internal psychological reality over Western objective realism. Ultimately, Zhang Lanpo’s “epic landscapes” provide a vital platform for cultural empathy. By transforming personal trauma and historical conflict into a universal visual language, Zhang ensures that the echoes of history remain audible within the modernized image landscape, offering a permanent monument of creative insight into the human condition.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Qianli Xing designed, collected and analyzed the data, and drafted the manuscript. Qianli Xing conducted the study, critically revised the manuscript for important intellectual content, and gave final approval of the version to be published. Qianli Xing participated fully in the work, take public responsibility for appropriate portions of the content, and agreed to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The author declares no conflict of interest.

FUNDING

This research received no external funding.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Not applicable.

REFERENCES

- [1] G. Cressman, “Reclaiming, remembering, and reinventing the land in Lorraine Gilbert’s photography,” *British Journal of Canadian Studies*, vol. 37, no. 2, 2025, DOI: 10.3828/bjcs.2025.14.
- [2] M. M. Hassan, “The Impact of AI on Transforming Concepts in Contemporary Photography,” *Art, Media: Journal of Art & Media Studies*, no. 36, 2025, DOI: 10.25038/am.v0i28.613.
- [3] M. Kanellopoulos, “Identity Information in Object-Level Descriptions: Towards Inclusive Cataloguing Contemporary Photography,” 2025, DOI: 10.32920/26064148.v1.
- [4] A. Stakle, “The contested terrain: Photography education in an era of technological and epistemological flux,” *Philosophy of Photography*, vol. 16, no. 2, 2025, DOI: 10.1386/pop_00117_1.
- [5] R. R. R. Putra, “HOPE IN CONTEMPORARY PHOTOGRAPHY: THE PORTRAIT OF SELLERS OF GOODS AND SERVICES DURING A PANDEMIC,” *Matalensa: Journal of Photography and Media*, vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 80, 2024, DOI: 10.26887/matalensa.v4i2.4169.
- [6] U. Planning, “Revealing the Community’s Interpretation of Place: Integrated Digital Support to Embed Photovoice Into Placemaking Processes,” 2024.
- [7] Juan Martín Prada, “AI-based generative image production systems in the artistic problematisation of the past: the thematisation of memory and temporality in “AI art”,” *AI & SOCIETY*, vol. 40, no. 5, pp. 3271-3282, 2025, DOI: 10.1007/s00146-024-02163-z.
- [8] W. I. Plińska, “Reimagining Saint Sebastian: Renaissance and Mannerist Influences in the Contemporary Photography of Krzysztof Marchlak,” *Arts* (2076-0752), vol. 14, no. 6, 2025, DOI: 10.3390/arts14060161.