

# China through photography

by J. Meijer

*Ruts left on my body  
By the reversed wheels of history.*  
— Cai Kun

China. Everything about it breathes antiquity, mystery, vastness, diversity.

Japanese freelance photographer Hiroji Kubato decided he was going to record this enormous and diverse China, all of it. The result of his efforts is an incredible exhibition of photographs showing all facets of China — the real China.

China has a 4000-year recorded history, a population of more than one billion people, more than 55 minority nationalities, and a land area of 9.6 million square kilometres. And it is virtually unknown to the Western world.

Kubato himself has said, "I knew perfectly well I was being arrogant. I wanted to spend at least five years covering China. . .

I wanted to visit all the provinces."

But Kubato, however arrogant, was successful in his mission. Despite cumbersome Chinese bureaucracy, he travelled to 21 provinces and obtained access to places previously barred to foreigners — the Guilin Mountains; the modern hydroelectric dam on the Yellow River; the New Year's festival at Jokhang Temple in Tibet, where worshippers were allowed for the first time in more than 20 years since the Dalai Lama fled.

From 1979 to 1984 Kubato documented the country by film, recording some of the enormous changes the country has under-



PHOTO BY: Hiroji Kubota

On China: Cormorant Fishing in Drizzle, Guilin

gone in the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution and the death of Mao Tse-Tung. During those six years he took more than 200,000 photos, from which fewer than 100 have been selected for the exhibition.

The photos are very powerful and vivid, not only for their size

— some are murals — but for their diversity. The personality of the subjects is expressed, with the result that the photographs become animate, not inanimate. Of course, just the contents of the photographs alone vary greatly from one another. Perhaps the closest thing that the photos could be compared to would be those photos found in *National Geographic*. Yet this exhibition is much more powerful than an entire syllabus of *Geographic* magazines would ever be.

There are only two drawbacks to the exhibition: that there aren't more photos to be displayed, and that the photos don't have any written description with them. The images are awesome, but there is a desire to know more about what they mean, or when they were taken.

Hiroji Kubota has also written a book, *China: Hiroji Kubato*, which offsets both of these draw-

backs, and a glance at the gallery copy is very worthwhile. (The book is sold for over \$60.00)

The photos are displayed at the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, the last of four stops in the Canadian leg of its international tour. Unfortunately, the exhibit will only be here until January 29, but I strongly recommend everyone to see it while it is still here.

Kubota has said, "People around the world are now focusing on the future of China, which will be closely interrelated with our own. For this reason, we should strive to know and understand China better." His photo collection certainly adds a new dimension to the Western perception of China, and is unquestionably successful in doing what Kubota had hoped: serving as an incentive for people to visit China and see the country with their own eyes.

Art centre director resigns

## Cohn lacks funding

by Lisa Clifford

A recent announcement by Culture and Tourism Minister Brian Young has alarmed many at the Dalhousie Arts Centre. The proposed review of funding prompted the resignation of centre director Murray Farr who complained of a serious lack of funding for many proposed programs.

Dalhousie University has run operations within the Rebecca Cohn for the last eighteen years which is the only such facility in the metro area. The center, however, is heavily subsidized by the

provincial government which provides 70 million annually to operate its academic and community service programs.

Over the last eighteen months the centre has been engaged in negotiations with the government and hope that they will take on the responsibility for its operation. It is reported that they are making "good progress" but unless subsidies are received for 1989-90 the centre may be in a difficult situation.

Many in the community are concerned about the situation and Young has promised that his department is looking into the problem even though they provide no direct funding for the cen-

tre. Says Young, "I've asked the people in cultural affairs and the deputy minister to look at a number of options."

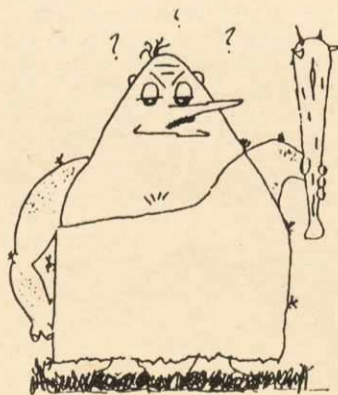
Halifax City Council is also interested in the future of the centre. Ward 1 Alderman Deborah Grant has expressed concern over the fate of the centre.

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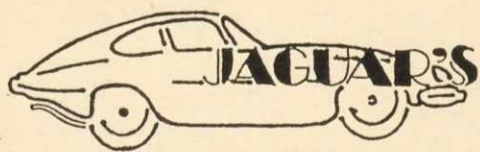
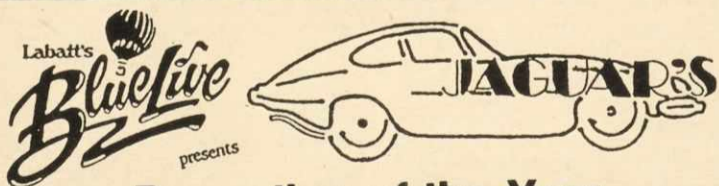
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