



Minimalistic Ming art

# Revisiting Ming Art



**T**he Ming Dynasty is synonymous with the familiar blue and white dragon-cloud motif vase, which was one of the era's most popular trade items. Less well known is the fact that Ming furniture was treasured for its precious wood, simple design and superb craftsmanship. Artist Qin Yifeng is a collector and researcher of Ming-dynasty wooden furniture, of which he makes unique photography works.

This exhibition explores Qin's works from multiple aspects including furniture material, historical context and aesthetic form. Through his photography he is subversively viewing the "negative" as "positive," by using negative film images to bring to view the intricate qualities of Ming-era craftsmanship. For more than 30 years, the artist has

gradually developed a style of pureness, his solemn and tranquil use of color creating different variations of formal aesthetics, spatial relationships and mood atmospheres.

The piece "2013/10/23, 12:20, Cloudy" is a good example of this series. A broken part of Ming furniture looms up from the base of the frame, distinctive wood grain around the obvious joint is captured using a technique to compress the depth of the image, bringing the lines in the photo an original, pure flatness. This compression brings a compact quality to the negative film images, resulting in a stillness that is loaded with energy.

This technique is unique to Qin, a new viewpoint and method for seeing things in reality. The different shades of black throughout the series allude to different techniques

used to make the Ming-era furniture. It could be said that this photography exhibition is rarified, looking to a previous time in Chinese history. However, this is the appeal and the reason you'd take time to sit and actually *look* at the photos on display, not just wander around the room and casually gaze at the works.

The intrigue in Qin's exhibition is like staring into the sky at night and noticing some new stars you'd never seen before. It's like looking through history and discovering something new. It's learning that negative isn't always bad and that black has many shades that aren't always noticed.

**\* Misha Maruma, [cn.create.org](http://cn.create.org)**

Qin Yifeng at Yuz Museum, Sunday, December 3, [www.yuzmshanghai.org](http://www.yuzmshanghai.org)



See more art reviews at [www.cityweekend.com.cn/shanghai](http://www.cityweekend.com.cn/shanghai)