

Penny Leong Browne / ARTIST'S STATEMENT

The Stone House Digital Photo Series (2000)

The photographs were taken during a trip to my father's ancestral village, Sun Gok Tong, Zhongsan, located in the southern province of Guangdong in China.

There I discovered the Stone House where my father was born. This place was completely foreign to me, yet to my subconscious, fed through memories, family anecdotes, was deeply familiar.

The full series of twelve photographs (nine are printed here) were taken with one of the first digital cameras on the market. The idiosyncratic nature of the camera's new technology produced interesting effects of light interacting with colour and precise spatial relations within the frame, facilitated by the process of visualization of a composition directly on a screen versus through the traditional camera lens.

The Casio digital camera that I used was deficient in focusing capabilities but had the ability to zoom right into an object, producing immediate compositions that would have been more challenging to take with a regular 35 mm camera (eg., lighting requirements in a dark interior space). I found the technology gave me both control and freedom in manipulating the frame around the chosen objects.

The result is low resolution images of a place that is defined in my psyche through the interplay of memory, imagination, and fantasy. Perhaps what makes these photographs intriguing is the high tech recording of a geographical place that remains low tech, almost Medieval in its stone architecture and village routines (sweeping of the road, wild dogs, and wagon of firewood). My father's ancestral

home which has been unoccupied for many years serves solely as a living shrine to both the departed living and the departed dead. The Stone House is locked in time, as poignantly illustrated by one of the photographs titled, "Calendar": the page left flipped to a day many years ago when there were once my blood kin who cooked, slept, and breathed life into the Stone House.