

# **Chinese Youth Identities In Cao Fei's Contemporary Photography**

The dynamic and ever-evolving landscape of Chinese society has given rise to a new generation of young people whose identities are shaped by a unique blend of tradition and modernity. Cao Fei, a renowned Chinese artist, has captured the essence of these complex identities in her captivating photography, offering a profound glimpse into the lives and aspirations of Chinese youth.

## **The Cultural Revolution and Its Lingering Effects**



## Chinese youth identities in Cao Fei's contemporary photography by Betty J. Ownsbey

★★★★☆ 4.7 out of 5

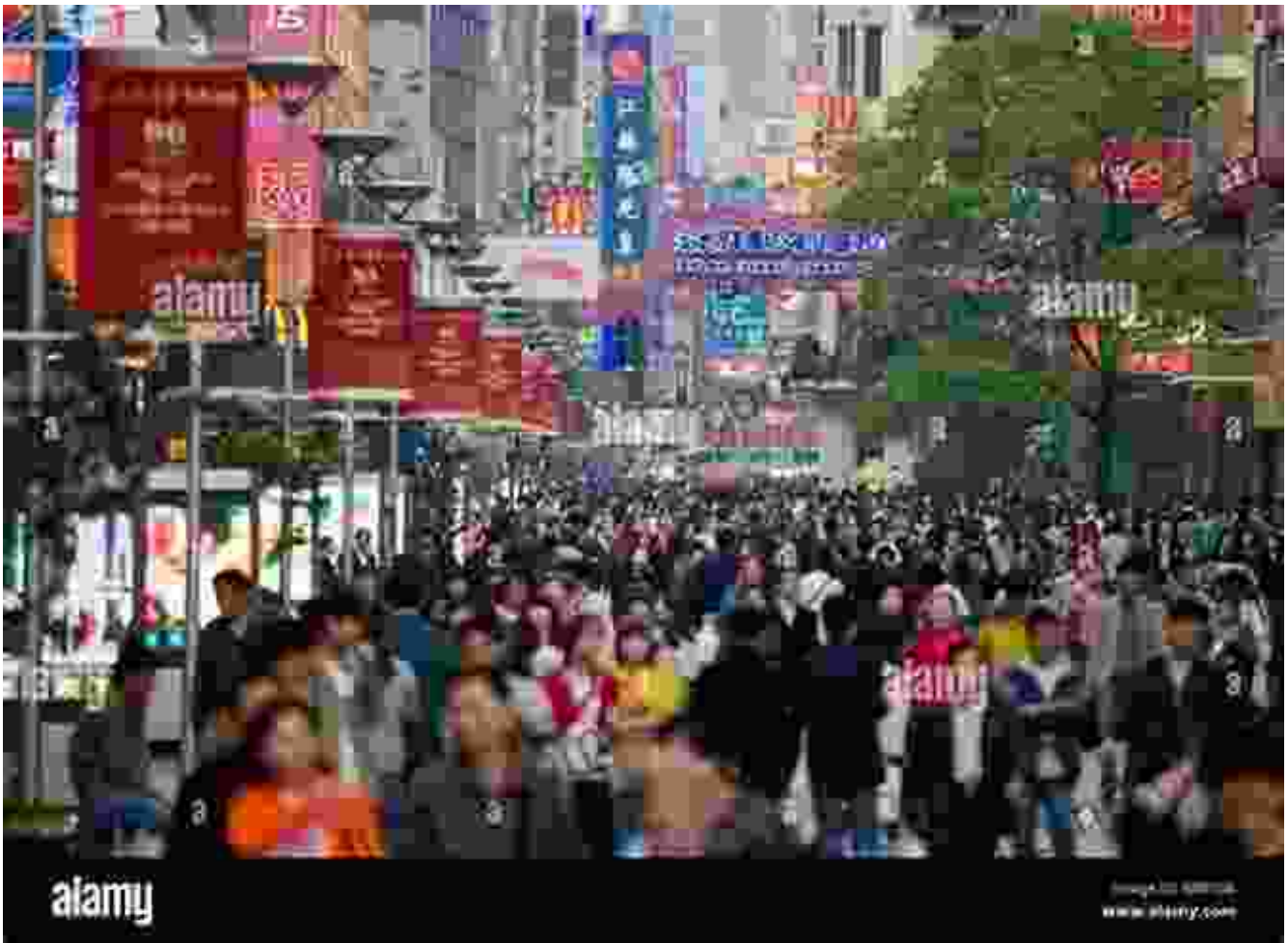
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The Cultural Revolution, a tumultuous period in Chinese history that lasted from 1966 to 1976, left an enduring mark on Chinese youth. Cao Fei's photographs often evoke the lingering effects of this era, capturing the tension between the idealized revolutionary past and the realities of modern China.

In "RMB City" (2009), a series of photographs taken in an abandoned factory, young people dressed in red, reminiscent of the uniforms worn during the Cultural Revolution, engage in playful games and rituals. These images suggest a yearning for the camaraderie and collective spirit of that era, while also hinting at the disillusionment that followed its end.

## **Urbanization and its Impact**



The rapid urbanization of China in recent decades has profoundly impacted the lives of young people. Millions have migrated from rural areas to major cities in search of education, employment, and a better life.

Cao Fei's photographs capture the vibrant and often chaotic urban spaces inhabited by Chinese youth. In "Useless Landscapes" (2004), a series of photographs taken in Beijing, young people navigate the sprawling city, their faces etched with a mix of excitement and uncertainty.

These images reflect the challenges and opportunities that urbanization presents to young people. They suggest that while cities offer new possibilities, they also require a sense of resilience and adaptability.

## Globalization and the Digital Age



Globalization and the advent of the digital age have further shaped the identities of Chinese youth. They have access to unprecedented information and cultural influences from around the world, which is reflected in their evolving tastes, values, and aspirations.

In "New Grid System" (2015), a series of photographs taken in Shenzhen, Cao Fei explores the impact of technology on young people's lives. The images depict young people interacting with virtual reality headsets, drones, and other digital devices, suggesting that the digital realm has become an integral part of their identities.

Cao Fei's photography offers a compelling and nuanced exploration of the complex identities of Chinese youth. Through her lens, we see the lingering effects of the Cultural Revolution, the impact of urbanization, and the shaping influence of globalization and the digital age.

Her photographs capture the hopes, dreams, and challenges faced by this generation of young people. They provide a valuable window into the future of Chinese society and the ways in which young people are navigating the complexities of a rapidly changing world.



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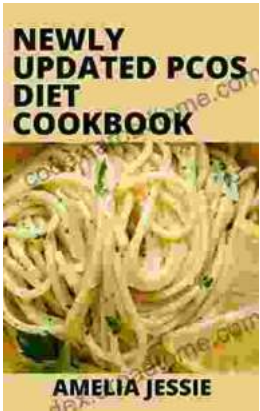
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