

## New exhibition documents China's youth culture



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The larger the topic a photographer chooses to take on, the more that photographer must concentrate on the details of the nuances of life. A new exhibition now on display at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts entitled "Between Love and Duty: Chinese Youth Culture" by photographer Rian Dundon accomplishes exactly that. The 2007 winner of the Tierney Fellowship awarded by the Department of Photography and Imaging, Dundon lived in China from the fall of 2005 through March of 2008. During that time, he

moved past the clichés of China that fill American society.

"I went there because I was living in NYC at the time and frustrated with my life here," the photographer said. "I had an offer to go teach English in a small town in Hunan Province and I saw it as an opportunity to immerse myself and make a new body of work. My first impressions were that China is very different from the way it is perceived and presented in the West," he added.

The 16 large-scale black and white photographs give the viewer an intimate look into the lives of young Chinese. This is the first generation to come of age since the one child family planning law took effect in 1979. While China has emerged as a global player and an economic powerhouse, a whole generation of children without siblings has grown up. The images we see give us a glimpse into the lives of these young people and the challenges they face both to conform as well as to express their individuality.

"Almost everyone in my photographs is someone I spent a  
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long time with. They are all close friends, people who I was engaging with beyond the act of taking photos. Young people were very receptive to me as a foreigner. They wanted to tell their stories," Dundon said about the process of working on this project. "I think a lot of young people feel lost in this 'New China,' passed over almost by the speed of progress. It's hard to keep up and there are a lot of demands and expectations for these kids. At the same time, they just want to live life but they are bound to certain traditions and demands from their parents. Intimacy is what I'm always striving for in photography."

And that is what we find more than anything: intimacy. We see these young men and

women in their bedrooms, hanging out with each other and trying to make their way in a country that is moving forward at a breakneck speed while all the time looking backward as well. To immerse oneself into a foreign culture and to commit to photographing a culture is a difficult challenge for any artist. But the images that Dundon has on display show a keen photographic eye and a great gift for storytelling. If you can't make it to Beijing for the Olympics this summer, seeing this exhibition is not a bad substitute.

*"Between Love and Duty: Chinese Youth Culture" is on display from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. weekdays and from noon to 5 p.m. Saturdays in the Gulf + Western Gallery at 721 Broadway in Manhattan. The exhibition is open to the public and admission is free. For further information, call (212) 998-1930 or visit [www.photo.tisch.nyu.edu](http://www.photo.tisch.nyu.edu).*