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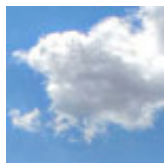
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Art News & Gossip

In the Air – Art+Auction's Gossip Column

February 10, 2012, 5:55 pm

EDITOR'S PICK: Secret Exhibition by Wife of Chinese Dissident

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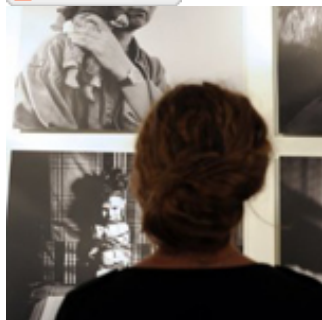
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“The Silent Strength of Liu Xia” An Exhibition of Photographs at The Italian Academy, Columbia University, 1161 Amsterdam Ave., Opening Thursday, February 9, 6-8 pM

Photographs by **Liu Xia**, the Chinese intellectual and wife of the well-known dissident **Liu Xiaobo**, are on a touring exhibition that includes stops in Paris, New York, Madrid, and Hong Kong. Now on display at **Columbia University**, the black and white photos were brought out of the country – quite daringly – by the French academic Guy Sorman, who [exhibited](#) them at the **Musée de Boulogne** on the outskirts of Paris last year.

Liu's husband was awarded the **Nobel Peace Prize** in 2010 while serving an 11-year sentence for drafting a petition calling for multiparty elections in China. She herself has been under house arrest since the fall of 2010, and was only able to release the photos to Sorman and his colleagues one by one, over the course of a year, under the condition that the dates and locations of the exhibitions be kept secret from her. “She gave me permission to show them. But she did not want to know where or when.” [Sorman told reporters](#) Thursday afternoon. “As she is a woman who would never lie, if she is questioned by police she can say that she does not know, and she really doesn't know.”

While some of the pictures in the exhibition include the artist and her husband, they are comprised mostly of shots of children's dolls taken in Liu's home. Referred to by the photographer as “[ugly babies](#),” the dolls are tied back or wrapped in plastic, and generally reflect a bleak, austere tone. Even though the commentary (on poverty and civil repression in contemporary China) is easy to read, the photographs are full of ambiguity and tension. “This is not an anti-Chinese exhibition,” Sorman said of the works, pointing to two overlying

themes in the show: “one, that there is a cultural renaissance, but secondly, the suffocating society. A society which cannot breathe.”



For more information about this event please see our [event listing](#).

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