

Adou

Pace/MacGill

The Chinese photographer Adou's first American show offered a haunting view of a people who live among mountains and tradition. The "Samalada" series shows the spare, uneventful lives of members of the Yi ethnic minority (family with chicken, old man on rock, child and pig in fog) in a barren part of Sichuan Province. The photographs look like battered images of a world beyond time, yet they were taken barely three years ago. They whisper a subtle message about today, and about tomorrow, too.



Adou, *Two Men and Money*, 2006, gelatin silver print mounted to dibond. Image 45 $\frac{1}{8}$ " x 37", paper 54 $\frac{3}{8}$ " x 43 $\frac{3}{4}$ ".

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Adou used outdated film to produce prints in warm graphite or pale tan tones with mottled, streaked surfaces, as soft and blurred as watercolors. The simplest, if sometimes puzzling, scenes—such as one of a man carrying a tentlike plastic umbrella to shelter his goods at market,

or of another stringing an idyllic, painted landscape between bare trees, a photographic backdrop alluding to an easier existence—strike plaintive notes of isolation and melancholy.

The artist has explained that he photographed these people to preserve their way of life under the pressure of globalization, and he hints at the advent of change in his picture of two men carrying forked branches laced with money (all the bills have an image of Mao) in a provincial compensation ritual after a young bride's death. In this picture, titled *Two Men and Money* (2006), one man wears local garments, exotic to western eyes, and the other could have walked out of Old Navy two minutes ago.

Adou's affecting homage to a

cultural memory whose existence is threatened by world events is both lovely and mournful.

— Vicki Goldberg