

# Photographers' work part of Chinese exhibit

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The landscapes of the Pacific Northwest have been shared in a land far away.

Stephen Chalmers is a photographer and an assistant professor of photography and digital media at Washington State University.

Now, the South Hill resident can add "curator" to his resume.

Chalmers gathered the works of five other Northwest photographers to be part of an exhibit in Pingyao, China.

Chalmers, chairman of the Northwest chapter of the Society of Photographic Education, applied for entry into the Pingyao International Photography Festival, the largest exhibit of its kind in China. Then he put out a call to other photographers in the Northwest.

He found Zach Mazur, Jonathan Long, Jian Yang and Steven John Ellis and Brian Goeltzenleuchter. The last two work as a team.

The festival ended Tuesday.

Chalmers says many people think of landscape photography as pictures of nature's beauty.

But that often is misleading, he says, because when photographers get out into nature, it's not always pristine land they see.

"If you hike or go into nature, you'll soon find beer cans," he said.

Chalmers says the exhibit, "Site: Unseen," is a collection of Northwest landscapes in which the artists tried to highlight the act of taking the picture. The collection features 50 photographs – 10 from each

## On the Web

If you would like to see the photographs featured in the "Site: Unseen" exhibit, visit [www.askew-view.com/siteunseen/](http://www.askew-view.com/siteunseen/).

photographer or team.

Altogether, the Pingyao festival featured more than 300 photographers from around the world.

Chalmers says he puts his love of reading true crime novels and newspapers into his photographs.

His collection, "Dump Sites," features the dumpsites of serial killers. He researches the sites and pinpoints them on a map using a global positioning system. He says he has visited more than 200 dumpsites since he began the project.

"As a latecomer who has visited these sites months or years after the event and the associated media coverage," Chalmers said in his artist's statement, "one is immediately struck by the absence of spectacle, the beauty of the sites and their silence and stillness."

Chalmers names his photos for the victims of the crimes and their ages. He says the serial killers have received too much attention, and he wants people to think of the victims when they see his photos.

Mazur's collection, "A Recent History," takes a look at Native American history in the Palouse region.

Mazur visits historical markers of battlefields, such as near Steptoe Butte, or other places of historical significance, turns his back to them and takes a black-and-white

photograph of the surrounding land.

"This not only reflects my deliberate response to the sanitized perspective of the tourist's gaze," Mazur's artist statement said, "but serves as a metaphor for my own questioning of the landmark's historical legitimacy."

Mazur also mentioned that he visited the sacred birthplace of the Nez Perce Indian tribe. The site is marked with an electronic button that, when pushed, plays a recording of a Nez Perce Indian telling the story of the tribe's creation.

A bench and a barbecue are near the site, which, Mazur said, caters to tourists and devalues the significance of the site.

Long takes photos of landscapes at the sites of ecological disasters. His collection of 10 photographs, "The Teton Dam – 30 Years Later," features what the land looks like years after the Southern Idaho dam collapsed in 1976.

"His images are very beautiful and lush," Chalmers said.

Yang takes photographs in the Palouse region to convey the loneliness he felt growing up in China.

His black-and-white landscapes, "The Left Behind," feature objects that aren't necessarily found in the

location of the shoot.

Ellis and Goeltzenleuchter took photographs of a different nature altogether.

"Second Scape" is a collection of photographs taken by the pair's Internet alter egos, or cartoon avatars, inside an animated virtual computer-generated world known as Second Life.