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Title

1980s China in the Eyes of an American Artist and an Art Historian: Two Digital Collections at UC San Diego Library

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1980s China in the Eyes of an American Artist and an Art Historian: Two Digital Collections at UC San Diego Library

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March 13, 2026 at the SCSL Conference, UBC, Vancouver, Canada

1980's China

- Transition from Mao's era to Deng Xiaoping's era
- China's Opening-up and Economic Reform (改革开放)
- Transformations from villages to cities
- Transformations in society
- Restoration of cultural and historical landmarks



https://library.ucsd.edu/dc/object/bb7933212v

Background

- **Carol Shankel Photo Slides**
- Former University of Kansas museum staff member
- Six trips from 1980 to 1988
- 740 slides
- Duke University Library









Background

- Tianjin, Beijing, Nanjing, Zhengzhou, Kaifeng, Anyang, Gongyi, Dengfeng, Luoyang, Xi’an, Guangzhou, Guilin, Yangshuo, Hangzhou, Suzhou, Wuxi, Zhenjiang, Yangzhou, Shanghai, Kunming, Leshan, Chengdu, Chongqing, Dazu, Yangtze River Gorges, Yichang, Wuhan, Hohhot, Datong, Jinan, Tai’an, and Qufu.









Background

- Temples, pagodas, caves, sculptures, historic sites, landscapes, people, and villages.









Background

- **Thea Berggren Photographs**
- Visual artist, photographer, world traveler
- Trip to China in Dec. 1980-Jan. 1981
- Documentary photography
- 916 35mm color negatives
- University of Chicago Library







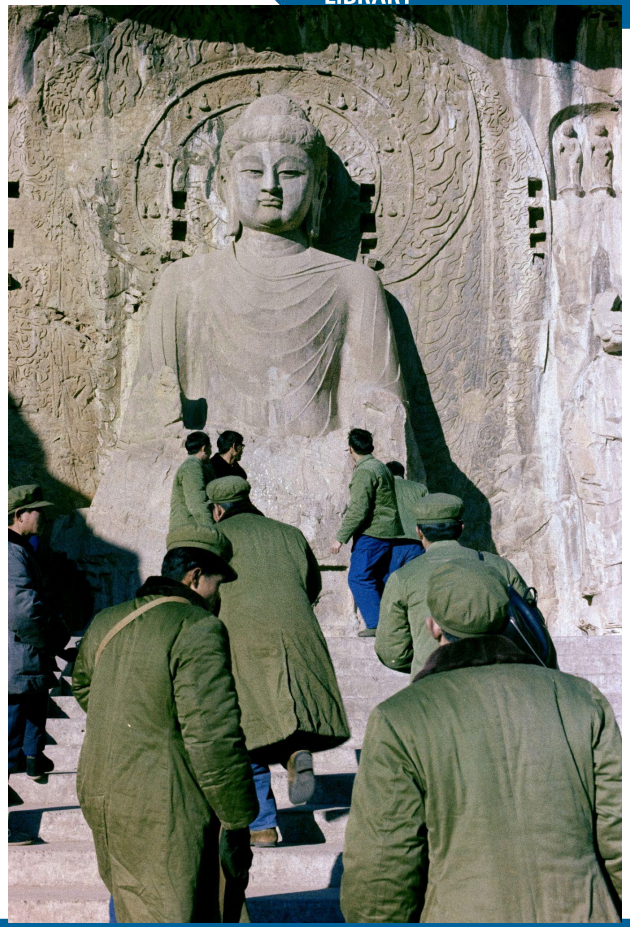
Background

- Guangzhou, Kunming, Chengdu, Xi’an, Luoyang, and Beijing









Background

- Most of the photos spotlighted people and interactions between people and society.











Metadata From Donors to Build on...

Rich metadata: Shankel Collection

- 740 Photos taken from total six trips (1980 April, summer of 1982, 1984, 1986, and 1988, and Jan. 1988)
- Metadata on the margin of slide frame
  - Title and date film made into slide
- Itineraries of four trips
- List of locations of all six trips
- An article about 1980's trip
- A compilation: China Omnibus: A Report of the Archaeological Study Tour to Henan Province, May 28–June 18, 1982
- Many photos are landmarks of China
- Metadata work Luo Zhou created
- Photos are not organized in sequential order

Skimpy Metadata: Berggren Collection

- 916 Photos of one trip
- Titles of 35 photos indicated the six locations
- One page summarize the trip:
  - December 1980 admitted to China
  - Documentary photography strives to capture the essence of a moment on film, what are the Chinese like.
- Most photos are people
- Organized film negatives in the sequential orders and provided printout of them

Relate Metadata, Relate Objects 关联数据、顺藤摸瓜

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Look for provenance (Shankel Collection)

- Metadata on the margins of the slides
- Trip itineraries

Relate metadata and objects

- Slides are created from a roll of films
- Follow the order and match with the trip itinerary to determine the location and creation date of photos



Relate Metadata, Relate Objects 关联数据、顺藤摸瓜 (2)

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Itinerary:

- 6/4/1988: train to Shanghai; … Putou Children's Palace [上海市普陀区少年宫]
- 6/5/1988: … Jade Buddha Temple [上海玉佛禅寺] …
- 6/6/1988: Jua Jiao Commune [上海县华漕乡人民政府]; plane to Tokyo

1	ID	Identifier:local2	[Title]	[Dates]	Itinerary Date	Note on Margin data
50						
51	CSH360	10	Shanghai, Children's Palace	JUL88D	1988-06-04	large number, no ink date
52	CSH625	11	Shanghai, City view	JUL88D	1988-06-04 or 05	large number, no ink date
53	CSH398	13	Shanghai, Street laundry	JUL88D	1988-06-04 or 05	large number, no ink date
54	CSH392	15	Shanghai, Buddhist Temple figure	JUL88D	1988-06-05	large number, no ink date
55	CSH622	16	Shanghai, Buddhist Temple	JUL88D	1988-06-05	large number, no ink date
56	CSH627	17	Shanghai, Temple figure	JUL88D	1988-06-05	large number, no ink date
57	CSH394	18	Shanghai, monks	JUL88D	1988-06-05	large number, no ink date
58	CSH395	21	Shanghai, Buddhist Temple sculpture	JUL88D	1988-06-05	large number, no ink date
59	CSH390	22	Shanghai, monks	JUL88D	1988-06-05	large number, no ink date
60	CSH626	25	Shanghai, Welcom sign	JUL88D	1988-06-06	large number, no ink date

Relate Metadata, Relate Objects 关联数据、顺藤摸瓜 (3)

Review photos in groups:

- Small Wild Goose Pagoda, Xi'an https://library.ucsd.edu/dc/object/bb9196039x
- Children, Xi’an https://library.ucsd.edu/dc/object/bb52710642

Relate the itinerary date: 6/9/1986: Small Wild Goose Pagoda

- The twin shows in the photo of the Small Wild Goose Pagoda (小雁塔)
- Date for children taken on the same day





Relate Metadata, Relate Objects 关联数据、顺藤摸瓜 (4)

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Look for provenance (Berggren Collection)

- Six locations
- Titles of 35 exhibition photos

Relate metadata and objects

- Film negative printout are organized in the order and pages are numbered



Relate Metadata, Relate Objects 关联数据、顺藤摸瓜 (5)

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Titles of exhibition photos (from left to right and top to bottom)

- Kunming, Golden Temple
- Kunming, New Year's Eve
- Burma Road Limestone quarry
- Kunming, Foundry workers
- Kunming, Tai Ji in Green Lake Park
- 大量节庆、逛街、市井风情照片







Relate metadata and objects

- Date: Dec. 31 & Jan. 1 in Kunming;
- Visited Foundry 铸造厂 post 元旦
- Visited Green Lake Park 翠湖公园 after Foundry
- Stayed several days in Kunming



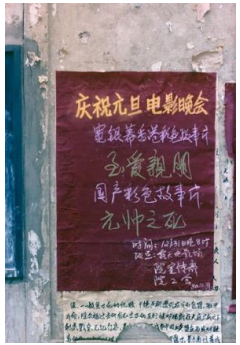


Relate Metadata, Relate Objects 关联数据、顺藤摸瓜 (6)

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Provenance related to travel helped determine:

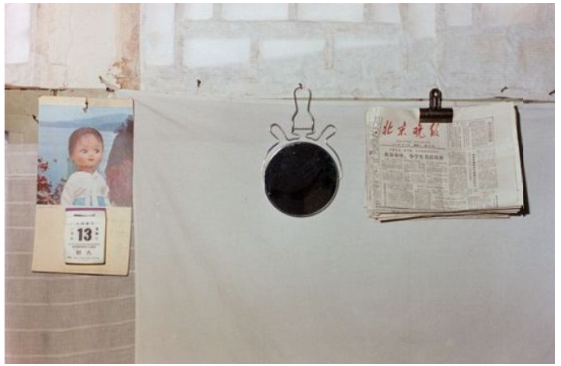
- Travel time: December 1980-January 1981
- Possibly Late December traveled to Guangzhou
- December 31 and January 1 in Kunming
- Leaving Kunming for Chengdu after visiting Green Lake Park
- Birthday celebration in Xi’an in early January
- Leaving Xi’an by train to Luoyang
- Visiting Beijing around January 13











Relate Metadata, Relate Objects 关联数据、顺藤摸瓜 (7)

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December 1980 in Guangzhou & Kunming
Guangzhou, Guangdong Province (广东省广州)
Rough Range: 01_52833_0006.tif-03_52835_0025.tif
- Dongfang Hotel (东方宾馆)
- Visiting a school (参观学校)
- Liuhua Park (流花公园)
- Guangzhou Commodities Fair (Liuhua site) (广州交易会 (流花展馆))
- Attending local opera show (观看地方戏演出)

Kunming, Yunnan Province (云南省昆明)
Rough Range: 03_52835_0026.tif-07_52839_0029.tif
- Buddhist Temple (佛教寺庙)(待考证: 非金殿)
- Park (公园)
- Street Scenes & street vendors during New Year holiday(元旦前后的街景、摊贩等)
- Shops, Clinics (商店、诊所)
- New Year's Eve and New Year Day in Kunming (元旦前夕、元旦)

January 1981 in Kunming, Chengdu, Xi'an, Luoyang, Beijing
Kunming, Yunnan Province (云南省昆明)
Rough Range: 07_52839_0030.tif-11_52843_0009.tif
- Visiting a foundry (参观铸造厂)
- Visiting a TMC pharmacy (参观中药店)
- More shops and street scenes and artisan (商店、街摊、艺工等)
- Residential housing (民居)
- Visiting a university (Yunnan University?) (参观学校 可能是云南大学)
- Visiting Green Lake Park, Huizhong Pavilion, and people's activities at the park (翠湖公园; 会中亭)

Chengdu, Sichuan Province (四川省成都)
Rough Range: 11_52843_0010.tif-13_52845_0009.tif
- Visiting a Buddhist Temple (佛教寺庙及修复)
- Visiting a basket weaving factory (竹篮编织厂)
- Visiting a Shu embroidery (蜀绣)
- Dental clinic (牙医诊所)
- Chengdu Commune (Children's radio exercise, Portraits of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin (成都公社做操的儿童、会议室马恩列斯画像)

Xi'an, Shaanxi Province (陕西省西安)
Rough Range: 13_52845_0009.tif-15_52847_0016.tif
- Huaqing Palance, Huaqing Hot Spring Pool, Decorative water tank of Feishuang Hall (西安华清宫飞霜殿装饰性水缸)
- Museum of Qin Shihuang Terra-cotta Figures of Warriors and Horses (秦始皇兵马俑博物馆)
- Birthday celebration
- Stele Forest or Beilin Museum; Stone carvings in the tomb of Li Shou of the Tang Dynasty (西安碑林博物馆; 唐李寿墓室石刻艺术)
- City Crossroad (十字街头)
- Residential housing
- Train station, train to Lunyang, Scenes of Loess Plateau；Train attendees (西安火车站、火车头、黄土高原、列车员)

Luoyang, Henan Province (河南省洛阳)
Rough Range: 15_52847_0027.tif-18_52850_0018.tif
- Longmen Grottoes (洛阳龙门石窟)
- Ballbearing factory (滚珠轴承厂)
- Day care center (工厂幼儿园?)

Beijing (北京)
Rough Range: 18_52850_0019.tif-28_52861_0033.tif
- Temple of Heaven (天坛)
- Museum? (参观美术馆?)
- Restaurant (餐馆吃饭的人们、和面、盛饭)
- Tian'anmen Square (天安门广场)
- Forbidden City (紫禁城/故宫)
- Summer Palace (snowing day) (颐和园)
- Visiting a neighborhood (参观西城区西长安街地区百姓民居) (Jan. 14, 1981)
- Visiting Beijing Enamel Factory (参观北京市珐琅厂)
- Badaling Great Wall (八达岭长城)
- Ming Tombs (Shisanling) (十三陵/明陵)
- Goodbye dinner (欢送晚宴)

Make bold guesses, verify carefully 大胆猜测、小心求证

Flower Temple, Kunming (https://library.ucsd.edu/dc/object/bb0526997r)

- Chinese name of the Temple?
- Which Temple in Kunming?

Itinerary: 6/10/1986

- Morning: Dragon's Gate; Flower Temple (Buddhist)
- Afternoon: Yunnan Provincial Museum…

Guess work:

- Dragon's Gate is on Western Hill [昆明西山]
- 华亭寺, 太华寺, 三清阁, 龙门, and 华严寺 are in the same area
- Verification based on photos we have and a lot of online search on photos and descriptions, it's the Huating Temple (华亭寺)



Provide Reference Provide Context 提供参考、提供背景信息

- Citing description or information provided by donor or delegates of KU members
- Citing Baidu, Wikipedia or other reference sources

Taken in a morning of rush hour, The photo shows a man riding a tricycle cart transporting layers of furs. He passes a car, and the cyclists in front of and in the opposite direction are almost all wearing blue clothes, just like him. Carol included this photo and described the scene in the article, "it is 7:30 a.m. in the sprawling port city of Tianjin. The streets, glimmering with the vestiges of yesterday's rain, mirror the dark-blue and gray cotton jackets of flocks of bicycle riders. ... in three chauffeured cars, the KU delegation to the People's Republic of China wades through the seas of cyclists, carts and umbrella-toting pedestrians. A group member winces as the tiny car she rides in squeezes between a mule-drawn cart piled with potatoes and a bicycle cart heaped with animal hides" **(Cited from: Susana Namnum and Carol Shankel, "The Chinese Connection," Kansas Alumni 1980 Fall: 38)** A pedal-powered tricycle cart (or tricycle) is a transportation mode modified from a bicycle, a three-wheeled tricycle equipped with a carriage or flatbed for carrying people or goods. It combines features of a rickshaw and a bicycle. **(Cited from Baidu: Tricycle carts)**



Provide Reference Provide Context 提供参考、提供背景信息（2）

UC San Diego LIBRARY

- Citing description or information provided by donor or delegates of KU members
- Citing Baidu, Wikipedia or other reference sources

拍摄于河南省郑州市博物馆庭院内, 照片中的前两排立像: 花严菩萨(左)、辩积菩萨(中)、狮子吼菩萨(右). 详细描述见英文部分, 引用自Marilyn Gridley的文章. 大海寺唐代佛像于1976年在河南郑州附近的荥阳出土, 现藏于河南郑州博物馆(原郑州市博物馆). 1982年, 堪萨斯大学考古团队在博物馆庭院中进行采访时, Carol拍摄了这组照片. 根据郑州市博物馆在《文物》1980年第3期发表的文章, 这批出土的石刻造像中, 有六件铭文日期为唐长庆年间(820-824年). 在十八尊立像菩萨中, 十一面观音可能为主尊(其头像在花严后面的台沿上, 其躯体不在此照片中). 由于其为密宗造型, 这批菩萨立像被推断为唐长庆年间的密宗佛教雕像, 具有重要的史料价值, 便于研究我国佛教中密宗的演 变与发展. (引自河南省郑州市博物馆, "河南荥阳大海寺出土的石刻造像,"《文物》1980年第3期: 56-66, 102-103, CNKI China Academic Journals)



Leverage Knowledge of Colleagues 求助于博学的老 师们

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Jim Cheng answered on this one: recognizing the story: 照片中是位于北京大学未名湖中心湖心岛上鲁斯亭梁上的苏式彩绘. 图中一书生头戴软角幞头, 身着汉服, 于室内燃烛抚琴; 室外一女子伫立聆听, 描绘的是汉代司马相如琴挑卓文君的典故.



Guoqing Li answered on this one: recognizing the characters: 照片中是四川省大足北山石刻第101号龛内的三尊坐佛像. 这是根据旁边刻有“孝经”两字、标号为第102号龛及其紧挨着的第103号龛的古文孝经碑推断的.



Utilize AI Tools 利用人工智能工具

Asked ChatGPT and confirmed: 照片从位于天津市和平区南京路上的天津友 谊宾馆拍摄的; A comments to the photo Luo Zhou shared on X also confirmed it



Asked 百度识图 and confirmed: 照片拍摄于广东省广州市越秀公园附近的广州 兰圃, 该公园原为广州植物标本园. 照片中是一处刻有"說雨"门匾的岩石洞.



Utilize AI Tools 利用人工智能工具（2）

通过百度识图确定是西安碑林李寿石椁上的人物浅浮雕
左侧柄剑将军左边一位，右侧柄剑三将军中间一位
https://www.sohu.com/a/357184945_772510
由此确定Berggren参观了西安碑林





通过百度识图确定是人民1078型蒸汽机车火车头
人民型蒸汽机车成为20世纪60年代中国铁路的干线客运用主型机车，适用于长途运行。截至1966年该型机车停产。
https://zh.wikipedia.org/zh-cn/%E4%BA%BA%E6%B0%91%E5%9E%8B%E8%92%B8%E6%B1%BD%E6%A9%9F%E8%BB%8A





Utilize AI Tools for Batch 利用人工智能工具批量生 产

Learned from Haiqing Lin of UCB from AI Tool and AI Prompt he developed

Developed by UCSD Library IT specialist:

- Determined what data elements needed to be output in what format
- Selected a sample photos for testing

Collaborated in a team work for the iterative fine-tuning and testing

- Developing AI prompts
- Adding Chinese titles and descriptions
- Adding DAMS controlled terms



Utilize AI Tools for Batch 利用人工智能工具批量生 产

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Test and fine-tune the metadata output:
-title and description in both Chinese and English
-subject headings with reasoning and uncertainty



Title	Title (Chinese)	Date	Description	Description (Chinese)
Children performing group calisthenics exercises in a schoolyard	儿童在校园中做集体广播体操	December 1980 – January 1981	A group of children performs synchronized stretching exercises in an outdoor paved courtyard, bending sideways with arms extended overhead. The children wear heavy padded winter jackets, mostly in navy blue, along with caps and layered clothing. Some girls wear floral-patterned coats and red hair bows. A brick wall is visible in the background. The exercise appears to be radio calisthenics (广播体操), a standard daily practice in Chinese schools.	一群儿童在室外铺砌的院子里进行集体伸展运动，身体侧弯，双臂举过头顶。孩子们穿着厚实的冬季棉衣，多为深蓝色，戴着帽子，衣着多层。部分女孩穿着碎花棉衣，扎红色头花。背景可见一面砖墙。该活动似为广播体操，是中国学校的日常集体锻炼项目。

Location	Location Reasoning	Subject Headings	FAST Topic Headings	Local Keywords	Uncertainty
Beijing, Luoyang, or Xi'an (low confidence)	The heavy padded winter clothing and caps indicate a cold climate, consistent with northern cities such as Beijing, Luoyang, or Xi'an during December–January. No signage or distinctive architectural features allow further narrowing.	Physical education and training--China; Children--China; Schools--China; Stretching exercises--China; Clothing and dress--China--History--20th century	Radio gymnastic exercises|Children|Stretching exercises|School children|Physical education and training|Courtyards	radio calisthenics, guangbo ticao, schoolyard exercises, padded jackets, children's clothing	Exact city cannot be determined from the image. Whether this is a school courtyard or another communal space is assumed from context but not confirmed by signage. The specific exercise routine (radio calisthenics vs. another form) is inferred from the synchronized posture but cannot be confirmed.

Batch Output of Metadata for Berggren Collection

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Filename	Title	Title (Chinese)	Date	Description	Description (Chinese)	Inscriptions	Location	Location Reasoning	Subject Headings	FAST Topic Headings	Local Keywords	Uncertainty
01_52833_0006.webp	Foreign traveler and train attendant standing beside a train car	外国游客与列车员在火车车厢旁的合影	December 1980 – January 1981	A foreign male traveler wearing a plaid shirt and tan vest smiles while standing with his arm around a Chinese train attendant. The attendant wears a dark blue uniform, a cap featuring a red star with a railway emblem, and a chest badge indicating her role. They are standing next to the exterior door of a blue and white train car marked with the number "8".	一名身穿格子衬衫和浅棕色马甲的外国男性游客微笑着，用手臂揽着一名中国列车员。列车员身穿深蓝色制服，头戴带有红星和铁路标志的帽子，胸前佩戴着标明其身份的胸章。他们站在一节标有数字"8"的蓝白相间的火车车厢外门旁。	On chest badge: 列 [railway emblem] 员 / [Liè (emblem) yuán] / [Train attendant]; 广 0124 / [Guǎng 0124] / [Guang (abbreviation for Guangzhou) 0124]. On sign above door: 8. On uniform cap: [railway emblem inside red star].	Guangzhou (low confidence)	The train attendant's chest badge includes the character "广" (Guǎng), which is the standard abbreviation for the Guangzhou Railway Bureau. While this strongly associates the train with Guangzhou, the photograph could technically have been taken at any station along the train's route.	Railroad travel--China; Train attendants--China; Visitors, Foreign--China; Uniforms--China; Railroads--Employees--China	Railroad travel|Train attendants|Visitors, Foreign|Tourists|Uniforms|Railroad trains	train attendant, tourist, train car, railway uniform, Guangzhou Railway Bureau, lièchēyuán	The exact city location is uncertain. While the badge indicates a Guangzhou Railway Bureau employee, the photograph was taken next to a train which could have been stopped at any station along its route.
01_52833_0007.webp	Female train attendant standing beside a passenger train	站在客运列车旁的女列车员	December 1980 – January 1981	A female train attendant stands on a platform next to a blue and white passenger train car. She wears a dark blue uniform jacket, a white collared shirt with a pink patterned tie, and a matching blue cap featuring a red star with the Chinese railway emblem. Her red chest badge identifies her role and employee number.	一名女列车员站在月台上，身旁是一节蓝白相间的客运列车车厢。她身穿深蓝色制服外套，内搭带领白衬衫和粉色图案领带，头戴配套的蓝色帽子，帽子上有一颗带有中国铁路标志的红星。她胸前的红色胸牌标明了她的职务和员工编号。	Badge on left chest: 列车员 广0124 [Lièchēyuán Guǎng 0124] / [Train attendant Guang 0124]	Guangzhou (high confidence)	The attendant's badge includes the character "广" (Guang), which designates the Guangzhou Railway Bureau. Because Guangzhou is one of the known cities in the itinerary, this photograph was likely taken at a station there or on a train originating from the city.	Railroads--Employees--China; Train attendants--China; Uniforms--China--History--20th century; Railroad travel--China; Women--China	Train attendants|Railroads--Employees|Railroad travel|Women employees|Uniforms	train attendant, railway worker, uniform, Guangzhou Railway Bureau, passenger train, liecheyuan	The exact railway station is not visible; the location is inferred from the Guangzhou Railway Bureau designation on her uniform badge.
01_52833_0008.webp	Passenger train window with lace curtains and Kowloon destination sign	带有蕾丝窗帘和九龙目的地标志的客运列车车窗	December 1980 – January 1981	An exterior close-up view of a blue passenger train car window. Inside, delicate lace curtains patterned with flowers and bamboo are drawn closed, partially obscuring the interior luggage racks and lighting. Below the right side of the window, a destination sign reads "九龙 JIULONG" (Kowloon). Reflections of the station platform are visible on the window glass.	蓝色客运列车车窗的外部特写。车厢内，拉上的精致蕾丝窗帘带有花卉和竹子图案，部分遮挡了内部的行李架和灯光。车窗右下方的一个目的地标志上写着"九龙 JIULONG"。车窗玻璃上可见车站站台的倒影。	九龙 JIULONG [Jiǔlóng] / [Kowloon] (on destination sign below the right side of the window).	Guangzhou (high confidence)	The train car displays a destination sign for "Jiulong" (Kowloon, Hong Kong). Given the collection's scope, this photograph was highly likely taken at the railway station in Guangzhou, the primary mainland terminus for trains traveling to Kowloon.	Railroad passenger cars--China--Guangzhou; Railroad travel--China; Signs and signboards--China	Railroad passenger cars|Railroad travel|Railroads|Signs and signboards|Windows	train window, lace curtains, Jiulong, Kowloon, destination sign, passenger train	
01_52833_0009.webp	Train window and destination plaque for the Kowloon Express	火车车窗与九龙特快列车指示牌	December 1980 – January 1981	A close-up view of the exterior of a blue passenger train car. The window features drawn sheer white lace curtains decorated with floral and bamboo patterns. Below the window, a metal destination plaque reads "JIULONG" (Kowloon) and "特快" (Express). Reflections of interior lighting are visible on the window glass.	蓝色客运火车车厢外部的特写视图。车窗上拉着饰有花卉和竹子图案的白色透明蕾丝窗帘。车窗下方有一块金属指示牌，上面写着"九龙"（JIULONG）和"特快"。车窗玻璃上可以看到内部灯光的反光。	Plaque below train window: 九龙 JIULONG 特快 [Jiǔlóng tèkuài] / [Kowloon Express]	Guangzhou (high confidence)	The train plaque indicates it is the "Jiulong" (Kowloon) Express. Given the donor's itinerary included Guangzhou, this is almost certainly the Guangzhou-Kowloon through train photographed at a railway station in Guangzhou.	Railroad passenger cars--China; Railroad trains--China; Signs and signboards--China; Railroad travel--China	Railroad passenger cars|Railroad trains|Railroad travel|Signs and signboards	train window, lace curtains, destination plaque, Kowloon Express, Jiulong, train car exterior	The exact railway station cannot be visually confirmed from the tight crop, though it is highly likely located in Guangzhou based on the train's route and the photographer's itinerary.
01_52833_0010.webp	Exterior view of train window and destination	开往广州的特快列车车窗和目的地指	December 1980 – January 1981	A close-up view of the exterior of a passenger train car. A rectangular window features a white lace curtain with a floral and bamboo design. Below	载客列车车厢外部的近景。矩形车窗上挂着带有花卉和竹子图案的白色蕾丝窗帘。车窗下方有一块指示牌，上面用中文	特快 广州 GUANGZHOU [Tèkuài Guǎngzhōu / Express Guangzhou]. Sign plate	Indeterminate	The photograph is a tight close-up of a train car exterior. While the destination sign reads "Guangzhou," there is no	Railroad trains--China; Signs and signboards--China	Railroad trains|Railroad passenger cars|Signs and	destination sign, lace curtain, window, express train	The specific railway station or city where the photograph was taken cannot be

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