

**Shirley Read** is an independent curator, writer and oral historian based in London. She also teaches and mentors at every level of photographic practice. She currently curates exhibitions for the Idea Store Canary Wharf during the Photomonth International Photography Festival. Her writing includes the books *Exhibiting Photography*, Focal Press 2008 & 2014, published in English and Chinese and *Photographers and Research: the role of research in contemporary photographic practice*, with Mike Simmons, (Focal Press 2017). She has been interviewing photographers in depth about their lives and work for the Oral History of British Photography (part of the National Sound Archive at the British Library) for over twenty years.

**Val Williams** is a curator and writer and is Professor of the History and Culture of Photography at the University of the Arts London. She is an editor of the Journal of Photography & Culture and member of the Board of Fast Forward, Women in Photography, and co-convenor of its biannual conference. She teaches on the MA Photography course at London College of Communication.

Val has co-curated *Seaside: Photographed*, with Karen Shepherdson which opened in May 2019 in Margate and will tour.

She is currently working with photographer Corinne Silva on an exploration of the work of landscape historian W. G. Hoskins.

“Grace Lau’s photographs of Hastings people, residents and visitors, posed in a recreated late nineteenth century portrait studio full of ‘Chinese’ props bought in junk shops – painted backdrop, ornate chair, patterned carpet, hanging lantern and, of course, panda rug – have become classics of post-colonial image-making. They comment on the ways in which ‘exotic’ Chinese people have been seen and marketed, they substitute a modern seaside town for the Treaty Ports, they juxtapose contemporary ‘types’ with age-old ones, and they question Western notions of ‘the exotic’ then and now. Grace Lau’s photographs help us to understand and unpack Chinese stereotypes – still a relatively neglected area of study – and at the same time they manage to make us smile.”

**Sir Christopher Frayling**  
Professor Emeritus of Cultural History,  
Royal College of Art; Fellow of Churchill  
College, Cambridge; author of *The Yellow  
Peril – the rise of Chinaphobia*.

“Grace Lau’s witty and sympathetic portraits capture the connection between Victorian Britain and Qing China, bringing this little known history to contemporary view.”

**Dr Frances Wood**, Retired Curator of  
Chinese Collections British Library, author  
of over twenty books on Chinese history.

“This is a stunning series of images that really turns on its head notions of “otherness” in photographic portraiture. Who are these passers-by? And why have they chosen to pose? Who we are and what we want to announce about ourselves are usually the key themes in high-street studio photography but these pictures are different. This temporary studio sets up its seaside posers on a stage that at first appears exotic, of another place even. But everything in this studio has come from the local second-hand and antique shops, this stuff is really about this place, and these people have brought a little bit of themselves into a high-street studio that tells an altogether different story about the English seaside. Touching and sometimes funny these intimate pictures make us think about how we look at ourselves and how we look at others. Grace’s remarkable portraits tell us something important about the wonderful fusion that makes up life in the UK today – a celebratory fact worth remembering.”

**Anna Fox**, Professor of Photography,  
University for the Creative Arts, Farnham.

Grace Lau Portraits In a Chinese Studio



## Grace Lau Portraits In a Chinese Studio

PARAKEET BOOKS



**Grace Lau**

Born in London of Chinese parentage, Grace is a practicing photographer, artist, writer and lecturer. She has a MA in Photography & Culture from UAL.

She has exhibited widely, including at the National Portrait Gallery, Tate Britain, Photofusion London and Aberystwyth Arts Centre. Turner Contemporary Margate will include selection of her Chinese Studio portraits in their 2019 exhibition “Resort”.

Published books include *Adults in Wonderland*, Serpents Tail UK, 1997; *Picturing the Chinese: Early Western Photographs and Postcards of China*, Joint Publishing Hong Kong, 2008. Her work is in the collections of the National Portrait Gallery, the Wilson Photography Collection, Sarah and David Kowitz, and Asia Culture Institute, Korea.  
[www.gracelau.co.uk](http://www.gracelau.co.uk)