Longquan, City on the Move

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These photos were snapped over the course of a semester that I spent teaching in Longquan, a prefecture level city of Lishui in southwestern Zhejiang, China. I began taking photos as a form of note taking and a way to push myself to delve into my surrounding environs. I had struggled early on to connect with my neighbors in Longquan. Being unable to speak the language cultivated feelings of distance between the community and me, a feeling I had never experienced before that semester in China. The camera was an outlet to explore and helped spark conversations with locals.

Like many other burgeoning burgs in China, Longquan is rapidly modernizing. But the city felt like it was unsure of what to do with its past. Longquan is famed for its Celadon, a type of jade-like glazed pottery, as well as its history of swords smiths and bladeware. However, those aspects were treated as secondary topics amid most conversations. Much in the same way an American might view Route 66, Longquan’s tourist locations were often empty, waiting for the first hints of a possible rush from a Golden Week, one of three multi-day holidays in China. Swords and pottery no longer serve as the primary characteristics that once defined the people of Longquan as a community. Instead, I observed in my newfound friends and colleagues greater interest in more Western ideals of marriage, nightlife, and the search for opportunities that come with living in a larger city.

This was only a fragment of time from a city in transition. By the time I left, Longquan was a different place than when I arrived.
honed his photo chops while an HSU undergrad, using black-and-white film to document the campus (and beyond) as he uniquely saw it. Joben also joins a long line of ace cartographers who sharpened their craft bunkered down in the Kosmos Lab. See some of his photography from 2015-16 as well as examples of his tasty mappery at www.jobenpenuliar.com/