



GUO GAI/TASCHEN

Field of dreams: a 1999 satire of the Great Leap Forward, from China: Portrait of a Country

Image conscious

Picturebook of the year

CHINA: Portrait of a Country by LIU HEUNG SHING
Taschen £29.99

In the late 1990s, Liu Heung Shing, a photojournalist born in China but educated in America, toured his native country, listening to the stories of photographers who had lived through Chinese communism, and persuading them to hand over images they'd hidden away rather than risk accusations of straying from the party line. His remarkable portrait of Chinese life from the 1949 revolution to the present day includes extraordinary pictures of young women workers jostling to light Mao Tse-tung's cigarette, disgraced intellectuals branded 'ox-demons' and consigned to an 'ox-shed' for re-education, and a youth waving a bottle of Coke in the Forbidden City, in 1981. Even more startling, however, are two shots from 2005, showing boat-pullers on the Yangtze working naked to protect the few clothes they possess. Welcome to modern China.