The Photographic Society of America (PSA) will have a very special print exhibition at the 2012 PSA International Conference in San Francisco, California this September. Well-known internationally, PSA Cornerstone Member Master Kan Hing-fook, APSA, of Hong Kong, is graciously providing an exhibition of a selection of his world-class salon masterpieces. He has selected 22 large prints (36" x 28") and two of his extra large prints (74" x 29") for the exhibition. He has published several valuable books of his photographs and they will also be on display. The Grand Opening of Master Kan’s Exhibition of Prints will be from 4:30 to 5:30 PM on September 19, 2012, immediately following the Opening Ceremony of the Conference. There will be a Ribbon Cutting Ceremony at the Grand Opening. PSA will also host an International Reception following the opening of the exhibition.

Master Kan Hing-fook, a native of Zhongshan of Guangdong Province, was born in Hong Kong in 1921 and moved to Shanghai in childhood. His classmate, Liu Xucang, was a photography lover and he influenced Master Kan to begin his photographic career in 1938 at the age of 17. In 1942, he began his study of western painting at the Shanghai Fine Arts Academy under master painter Liu Haisu and master sculptor Zhang Chongren. In 1948, he returned to Hong Kong to begin his business career. He continued to pursue his photographic activities and became a senior member of the Photographic Society of Hong Kong. At the age of 30, Master Kan was honored to become a Cornerstone Member of the Photographic Society of America. Cornerstone Membership, which included life membership in the Society, funded the purchase of the Wanamaker building in Philadelphia, which became PSA’s Headquarters for many years. It was a sound investment, with a good return when the building was sold in preparation for the move to Oklahoma City. PSA is very grateful to all of the Cornerstone Members for their foresight and their contributions to the financial health of the Society. Now at 92, Master Kan is the last active Cornerstone Member of PSA.

Master Kan’s early monochromes, taken in Macau and Hong Kong are social documentary works that reflect the hardships of working class life and express his concern for society. The effective use of strong backlighting illustrates his bold and innovative study of light and shadow. In the 1950’s, he turned to photographing landscapes,
many of which became salon masterpieces. The work *Hermitage* was awarded “Best Print of the Year” in 1952 by the Photographic Society of Hong Kong and it also received the Year Cup of the *South China Morning Post*. In 1954, his *Water Palette* received the Gold Medal in the 8th International Salon of Photography of the Photographic Society of Hong Kong. It was an important break-through and made headlines in Hong Kong newspapers, as he was the first Chinese photographer to receive the Gold Medal in a photographic exhibition in Hong Kong. Prior to 1940, Chinese photography remained mostly unknown. When Master Kan won the Gold Medal in the International Exhibition, it spurred the growth of Chinese photography in international
exhibitions. It had a profound influence on other photographers in Hong Kong to achieve a high standard of excellence with their unique style in photographic prints, still evident today. Master Kan’s carefully composed monochrome prints give the viewer a sense of the beauty of the natural landscape. He combines acute observation of the subtle nuances of nature with great technical skill to produce beautiful and captivating images.

In 1962, Kan Hing-fook, along with Cheung Yu-chiu, Lau Wai-kwong, and Young Wing-yau held the first color photographic exhibition The Scenery of Japan in Hong Kong at the annex of St. John’s Cathedral. Many very important exhibitions of Kan Hing-fook’s photography have followed in Hong Kong, Shanghai, Beijing, Macau, Guangzhou, England, Louisiana, and other major cities in China.

Master Kan had studied western art in his teens and was fascinated with how light and shadow affects colors. He found inspiration in the paintings of Monet and van Gogh and began to apply elements of Impressionism to his photography. His Life is but a Dream is reminiscent of the painter Monet’s Water-Lily Pond series and resulted from Master Kan’s study of Impressionism applied to photography.

Master Kan has been photographing for almost three quarters of a century and he is as passionate and dedicated to the art of photography as ever. He has traveled the world in search of his subjects, and continues to travel and photograph, even today. His friends and people from the Chinese photographic community call him an Evergreen Tree in Photographic Circles. He began with monochromes depicting social documentary, moved from the photojournalistic approach to the artistic approach of his monochrome landscapes, and continued to develop his creativity with his introduction of impressionistic works into
his color photography. Always innovative and open to new approaches to art, he began using computer techniques in the 1990’s. With computer software, he has been able to adjust his images to fully express his vision, just as a painter can. His camera and his computer have brought him full circle from his early training as a painter.

The National Cultural Promoting Commission of the Ministry of Culture in China chose Master Kan’s Water Palette, as the classical photographic work in China in the 20th century; a very high honor. PSA is honored to have Water Palette in the PSA Print Collection. It was recently on view in the exhibition Reconsidering The Family of Man, an exhibition of prints from the PSA Print Collection in the main gallery at [Artspace] Untitled in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

In addition to his Cornerstone Membership and APSA in PSA, Master Kan has been honored with prestigious awards from many other leading photographic societies of the world. He was awarded the ARPS by the Royal Photographic Society of Great Britain and later received the FRPS award. Federation Internationale de l’Art Photographique honored him with the EFIAP award. He holds the Hon. FPSHK from the Photographic Society of Hong Kong and Hon. FPSEA from the Photographic Salon Exhibitors Association in recognition of his great artistic attainments, as well as his services and contributions to the photographic circles. In 2009, he was awarded the Life Achievement Award by China Federation of Literary and Arts Circles and Chinese Photographers Association. In 2010, he was awarded the Model Performing Arts Achievement Award by the China Federation of Literary and Arts Circles.

PSA is very grateful to Master Kan Hing-fook for presenting his exhibition at the Conference. PSA also thanks Mr. H. W. Chan, PPSA and Mr. Wong Shiu Gun, FPSA, EPSA for their suggestions and assistance in Hong Kong. We especially appreciate the assistance of Mr. Kan Kwok Ming, Master Kan’s son, for his help with all the necessary arrangements in bringing the exhibition to the Conference. We also thank Mrs. Helen Kan-Kwan, Master Kan’s daughter, for her help with the arrangements in California.

References:
Kan Hing-fook - In Everlasting Pursuit of Absolute Perfection by LO Yan-yan, Assistant Curator I (Contemporary Art), Hong Kong Heritage Museum
Additional information provided by Mr. Kan Kwok Ming, Master Kan’s son