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André Chan on

Ink Art

at M+ Pavilion

Tiffany Chung, Kingsley Ng,
Claire Lee, Eric Fok
and more...



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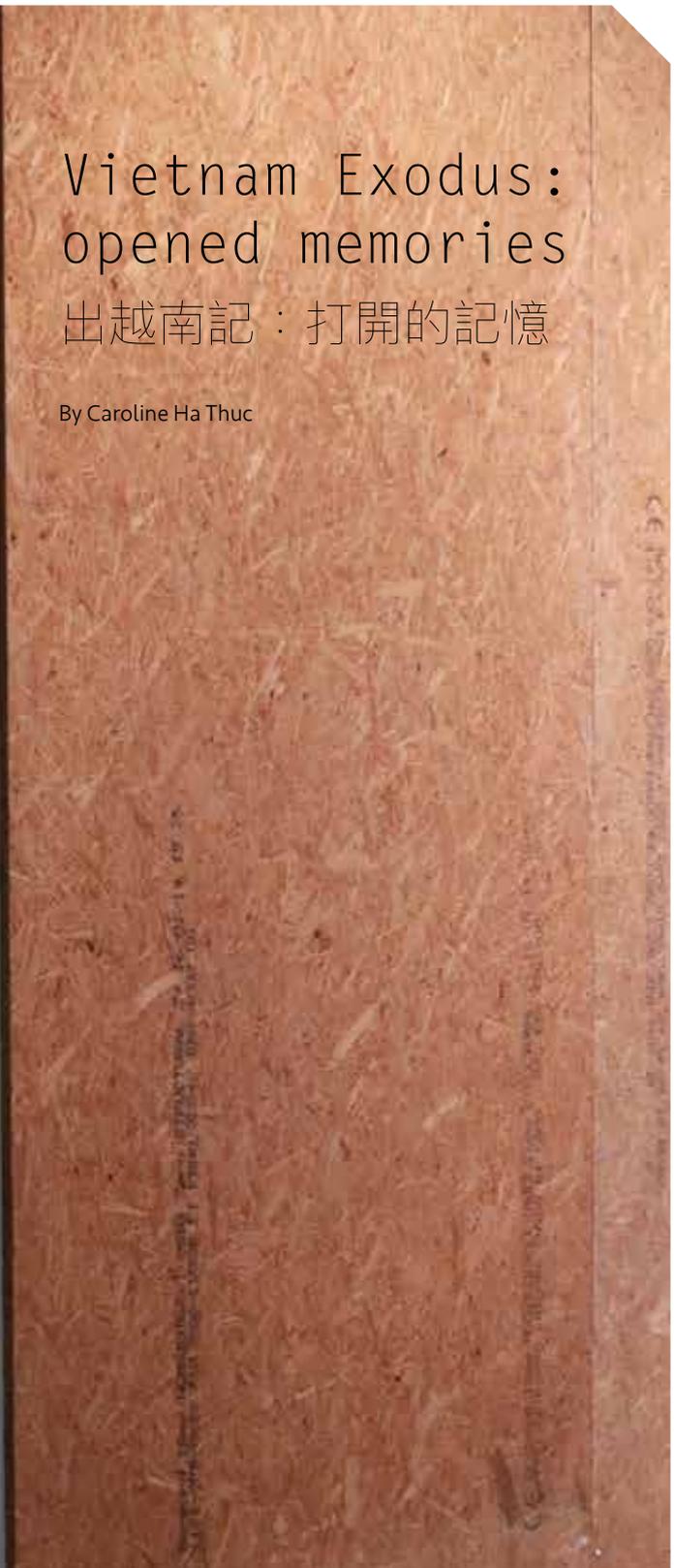
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Vietnam Exodus:
opened memories
出越南記：打開的記憶

By Caroline Ha Thuc





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Tiffany Chung's show at Spring Workshop is an exhibition without any art works. It follows and extends *Vietnam Exodus*, an exhibition dealing with the Vietnamese refugee crisis (1975-2000) during Art Basel Hong Kong in 2016. The artist started this ongoing project in 2009, stopped it the same year, then resumed it in March 2015 when she first came to Hong Kong to conduct her research into local Vietnamese refugees. Since then, she has made three visits to the city to collect archival material and meet the Vietnamese refugee community. The body of work presented at Spring is entirely archival material: photographs, video recordings, newspaper clippings, reports and so on. It offers a compelling historical and social perspective on the topic, and constitutes an essential entry point to the artist's process, based on extensive research. The exhibition also epitomises the inclusive, transdisciplinary approach of the artist, who works at the edge of the academic realm.

Chung (b.1969) is well known for her cartographic and topographic work pertaining to post-traumatic landscapes, territories' transformations or modernisation, and humanitarian crises. At Spring, two original-size printed reproductions of her cartographic works on the Vietnamese refugees' arrivals and departures, detention centres and camps – the originals were bought by the M+ Museum in 2016 – are displayed on the wall alongside photographs from a variety of sources, including personal photographs given to the artist by refugees and photographs taken recently by Chung showing former sites of refugees camps and detention centres. A few copies of the front page of newspaper *Tap Chi* or *Freedom Magazine*, published by the refugees inside the camp in the 1990s, reveal the highly radicalised atmosphere in the camps during that time (“Kill us all don't send us back”).

In the middle of the documents, Chung introduces text and titles, highlighting important dates and



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是次 Tiffany Chung 於 Spring 工作室舉辦的個展沒有任何藝術作品。展覽沿襲了於2016年在香港巴塞爾藝術展展出的《出越南記》的主題並做了延伸，作品關於越南難民危機（1975–2000）。Chung 於2009年著手此項目，也是在同一年停下，直到2015年三月當她首次來到香港研究本地越南難民時再次啟動。從那之後，她三次到訪香港，收集相關史料文獻並拜訪越南難民社區。此次在 Spring 工作坊的展出全為史料文獻：照片、錄影、簡報和報導等。如此，從歷史層面和社會層面強而有力的審視這個主題，同時也是瞭解藝術家創作過程的必要入口——即基於大量調研。藝術家游走於學術尖端，是此展覽也將其包羅萬象、跨學科的藝術手法完好展現。

Chung（1969年生）以創傷後地貌、領土變遷或現代化和人道主義危機相關的地形圖而聞名。Spring 工作室的牆上展出了兩幅關於越南難民的抵達和離去以及收容所的原始尺寸印刷複製品，原作已於2016年被 M+ 博物館收購。旁邊擺放著各種來源不同的照片，有來自難民贈送的個人相片，還有 Chung 最近拍的難民營和收容所的舊址照。幾份1990年代於難民營內

部創辦的《Tap Chi》報紙和《Freedom》雜誌的頭版影本揭示了那個時代異常激進的氣氛（「把我們全殺光吧，別送我們回去」）。

Chung 在文獻中間部分引入了文字和標題，突出了對於在港越南船民而言一些重要的日期和歷史時刻，如1979年7月聯合國難民事務高級專員公署第一次關於中南半島難民的國際會議；1988年6月香港開始實施的「甄別政策」。同時她也引入了如《從人道主義到矛盾心理到敵對》以及《同情疲勞》等標題。在根莖狀的製圖呈現中，各個事件裡的人與枯燥的事實材料形成對比。藝術家將不計其數的越南難民加以解構，用一個個人物故事揭開主旨，但依舊是用非正式口吻來敘述越南船民。她自身也擁有一段難民經歷，孩童時離開越南去到了美國，隨後以近民族學的方式逐步融入當地越南社區。她拒絕採用正式的採訪，而是耐心的與受訪者建立信任，始終敞開心扉去聆聽這些前難民的故事。

此處確實沒有什麼線性的或特別的故事：她的展品就是將許許多多的聲音聚集起來，她承認自己盡可能的展出所有素材，儘管要安置這些文獻材料難度不小。

moments in the history of the boat people in Hong Kong, such as the first United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) International Conference on Indochinese refugees on July 1979 and the beginning of Hong Kong's screening policy in June 1988, but she also includes titles such as "from humanitarianism through ambivalence to hostility" and "compassion fatigue". In this rhizomatic and cartographic display, the human dimension of the events is constantly opposed to the dry, factual documents. The usual representation of the unknown mass of the Vietnamese refugees is deconstructed, with individual stories making their ways into the grand but still unofficial narrative of the boat people. From her personal experience as a refugee – she left Vietnam for the US as a child – Chung progressively immersed herself in the local Vietnamese community, following a quasi-ethnological approach. Refusing to conduct formal interviews, she took the time to build trust and remain open to the former refugees' stories.

There is indeed no linear or unique story to be told: Chung's display is an assemblage of a multitude of voices and she acknowledges that she is showing everything that she can, considering the difficulties of locating these archive materials. On a long table, seven folders containing testimonies and documentation offer very different perspectives on the history of the Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong: UNCHR records, mainly from its headquarters in Geneva, where the artist spent a lot of time; refugees' personal documents; US Voluntary Agency reports; and legal and academic studies. In the personal archives, letters from children expressing their feelings of being rejected by others because of their origins are particularly moving. There is also a folder dedicated to a detailed timeline of the story from 1975 to 2000. Facing this dense documentation, three screens

show film footage from the UNHCR pertaining to the riots that took place in the camps but also to the daily lives of the refugees, Vietnamese returning home or personal histories such as the refugees who got married so they could remain within the camp.

More voices could be also heard in a panel discussion featuring human rights lawyers and former Vietnamese refugees, who shared their experience of spending their youth in Hong Kong detention centres. Every story is different, but they all agreed about their loss of dignity during that time, especially when their names and identities were turned into numbers. Being treated like prisoners was profoundly dehumanising. Today, out of years of habit, most of them continue to use their numbers instead of their names.

According to curator Christina Li, this part of history is little known in Hong Kong, especially for the generation born after the 1980s. She uses the term "amnesia" to describe this hole in Hong Kong history. For her, Chung's project and this exhibition will enable people to reconnect with a part of their own history.

The first wave of refugees arrived in Hong Kong in May 1975, following the end of the Vietnam War and the reunification of the country under the new Communist government. The territory soon became known as a safe haven for asylum seekers, attracting more and more of them. The ethnic cleansing that took place in Vietnam from 1979 triggered another wave of refugees, mainly people of Chinese origin, with a record 55,700 arrivals that year. Bigger camps opened: the Argyle Street Army camp, for example, which opened in 1979, accommodated 20,000 refugees, while the Whitehead camp had a capacity of 28,000. In total, over 25 years, more than 200,000 refugees arrived



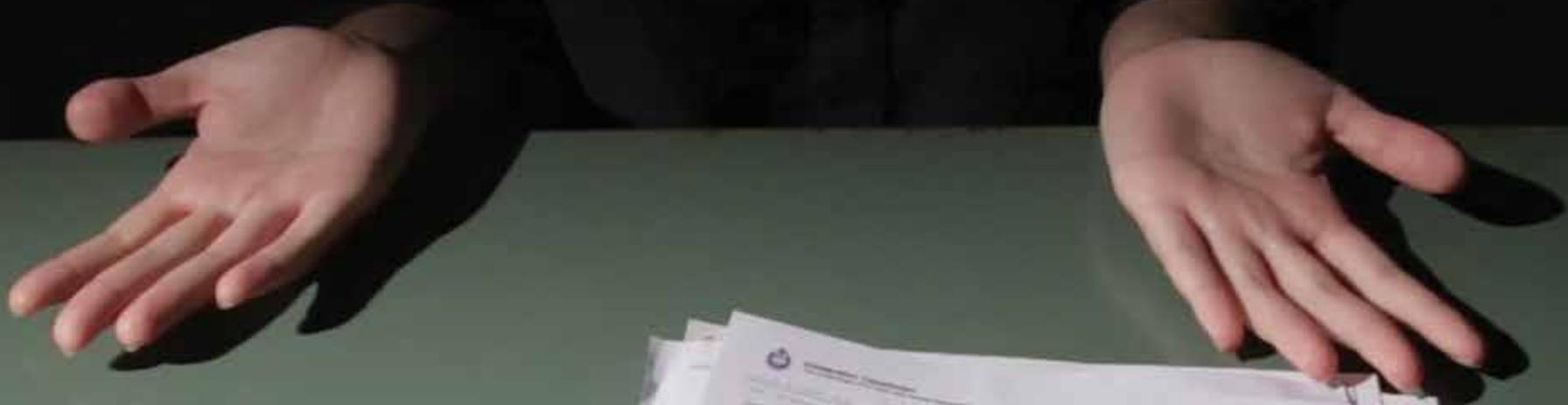
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一個長桌上，7份裝有證據材料和檔案的資料夾為觀眾提供了非常不同的視角來審視香港越南難民的歷史：主要來源於聯合國難民事務高級專員公署總部日內瓦的記錄，她在該地花費了大量時間；難民個人文件；美國支援機構報導；法律和學術研究。在個人檔中有一些孩子們寫的信，訴說了由於出生問題而被他人拒絕給他們心底帶來的切實感受，著實令人不忍。還有一份檔細數了1975年至2000年間的時間線。層層疊疊的材料對面是三塊螢幕，上面放映著源自聯合國難民事務高級專員公署的電影片段。內容包含難民營騷擾、難民的日常生活、返回家鄉的難民以及那些為了留在難民營而結婚的人的個體歷史。

在一場由人權律師和前越南難民組成的專題談論會上我們聽到了更多聲音。前難民們分享了在香港收容所渡過年輕時代的經歷。每個故事都各不相同，但大家一致認同在那段時間裡自己失去了尊嚴，尤其當自己的名字和身份變由數字來替代。如此被當作犯人般的對待方式極大抹殺了人性。由於多年成習，如今他們中的大部分人繼續沿用這些數字來代替名字。

策展人李綺敏表示，很少香港人知道這段歷史，尤其是80年代後出生的人。她用「健忘症」來形容這段香港歷史的漏洞。她認為，Chung的項目和此次展覽將幫助香港人重新連接這段歷史。

第一波難民潮在1975年5月來到香港，時逢越戰結束，新共產政府統一並統治越南。不久香港便成為了尋求庇護者的安全港灣，越來越多人來到此處。越南自1979年開始種族清洗後引發了另一波難民潮，其中大部分人有中國血統。那一年記錄的抵達人數為55,700。規模更大的營地打開了門：比如亞皆老街的軍營在1979年開放並收容了2萬難民，而白石營則容納了28000人。25年多來總共有超過20萬難民抵達香港，而全球越南難民總數大約為200萬。從起初的自由和人道主義，香港的政策自80年代後變得強硬起來，在難民營內部實行了驅逐出境和更嚴厲的規定。1982年香港正式通過「禁閉式難民營」政策：難民不再能自由出入或外出找工作，而是像囚犯一樣被監禁。1988年起實行的甄別政策將政治難民和經濟移民區分開。



in Hong Kong among a global total of about two million. Liberal and humanitarian at the beginning, Hong Kong policies became harder from the 80s, favouring deportations and tougher rules inside the camps. In 1982 Hong Kong adopted a “closed camp” policy: the refugees were no longer able to move freely or get jobs outside, but were confined like prisoners. From 1988, the screening policy sought to differentiate between political refugees and economic migrants.

Life inside the camps was very harsh. Sophia Suk-mun Law, author of the book *The Invisible Citizens of Hong Kong: Art and Stories of Vietnamese Boatpeople* (2014), says that because the camps were closed, the Hong Kong people knew little about what was happening inside; for security reasons there were few reports about life in them. What people in Hong Kong remember about these 25 years is only the riots, she adds, which were usually caused by refugees’ protests against forced repatriation.

Pillar Point in Tuen Mun was the last Hong Kong camp to close, in 2000, but even if the era of the boat people now belongs to history, for many refugees the trauma remains vivid. The children who grew up inside the camps are now adults but many have been transformed by their traumatic experiences. There is still discrimination against Vietnamese people who wish to enter Hong Kong, and some issues have not been solved, such as the stateless status of some former refugees.

The Vietnamese refugee community has recently been at the core of several art works exhibited in Hong Kong. In particular, last June Floating Project collective held a solo exhibition by Vietnamese video artist Vicky Do featuring *From Now On*, a 30-minute documentary based on a her long-term investigation into the current lives of former Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong. Through a

series of interviews, the film tackles the issue of their integration after leaving the camps, asking sensitive questions about identity and marginalisation, and indirectly challenging Hong Kong’s refugee policies. Last September at Duddell’s, as part of an ifva programme independent film director Fai Wan showed *2 or 2 things about the bridge*, a documentary film from 2014 tackling the issue of a group of people living under flyovers in Sham Shui Po, among whom many are former Vietnamese refugees living in a limbo with no identity papers, and therefore no rights and no welfare.

Beyond the historical context, the subject relates to the situation of today’s refugees and controversies about current integration policies. Chung’s *Vietnam Exodus Project* is part of a wider series, *the unwanted populations*, which focuses in particular on the Syrian refugee crisis in the context of the artist’s investigations of post-traumatic landscapes.

Chung constantly asks herself how an artist can respond to such a complex topic, as she tries different strategies to engage the audience in an alternative process of knowledge production. Working on the fringes of academia, she extends art into a collective platform where she shares all her resources freely and openly. The artist almost disappears behind her subject while the audience need to actively make their way through a subjective journey between micro-histories and official narratives, sensitive experiences and history. The knowledge produced becomes critical and tangible, and thus alive.

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Installation view of *A Collective Present*, 2017. Courtesy the artists and Spring Workshop.

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The Unwanted Population: The Vietnam Exodus Project (2009/2014 - restarted in 2015 - ongoing) by Tiffany Chung, Hong Kong Chapter, 2017. Installation view at Spring Workshop. Courtesy of the artist.

4
Still image from *km 0 – Son’s story* by Tiffany Chung, 2017. Courtesy the artist and Spring Workshop.

5
Don’t Ask by Vicky Do, Video still. Courtesy the artist.

難民營中的生活非常嚴酷。《香港的隱形人：越南船民的藝術和故事》（2014）的作者羅淑敏說，這是因為隨著難民營的關閉香港人鮮少知道裡面發生了什麼。處於保安原因，關於難民生活的報導也少之又少。這25年來香港人所記得的只有騷亂，她補充道，而這些騷亂大多是出於難民對強行遣返的抗議。

位於屯門的望後石是香港於2000年關閉的最後一個難民營，然而即使船民時代已成歷史，對許多難民來說創傷依舊歷歷在目。在難民營中長大的孩子如今已成年，他們中的眾人因這些慘痛經歷而改變。想要去香港的越南人如今依舊受到歧視，一些問題如前難民的無國籍身份等還未得到解決。

最近越南難民社區成為了香港數個藝術展的核心。尤其是去年六月句點藝術群體舉辦的越南錄影作品藝術家社薇的個展「From Now On」（從現在起）。這部30分鐘的紀錄片內容基於她就香港前越南難民的當下生活的長期調查。紀錄片通過一系列訪談揭示他們離開難民營後的融入問題，提出了關於身份、邊緣化等敏感問題並間接質疑了香港的難民政策。去

年九月，獨立電影導演Fai Wan在都爹利會館展出了一部2014年拍攝的紀錄片《2 or 2 things about the bridge》，聚焦居住在深水埗天橋下的一群人，其中不少人是前越南難民，他們生活窘迫，沒有身份證明，因而也就喪失了各種權利和福利。

在歷史框架之外，展覽主題還涉及當下難民的狀況以及現融入政策的各種爭議。Chung的《出越南記》專案只是《多餘人口》這一龐大系列的其中一部分。後者基於藝術家對創傷後心境的深入調查，著重聚焦敘利亞難民危機。

Chung時常問自己，一個藝術家怎麼才能回應一個如此複雜的話題。為此她嘗試了各種不同策略讓觀眾參與到知識生成的交錯過程中。在學術界邊緣工作，她將藝術發展為一個集成平臺，在那裡她可以自由分享所有資源。在她的主題背後藝術家幾乎消失不見，而觀眾則需要被動出發去經歷一場遊走在微歷史、官方敘述及敏感經歷和歷史之間的旅程。如此所產生的知識變得關鍵而切實，因而栩栩如生。