

Light Hours, Hotam Press Gallery, Vancouver

Amelia Wong-Mersereau

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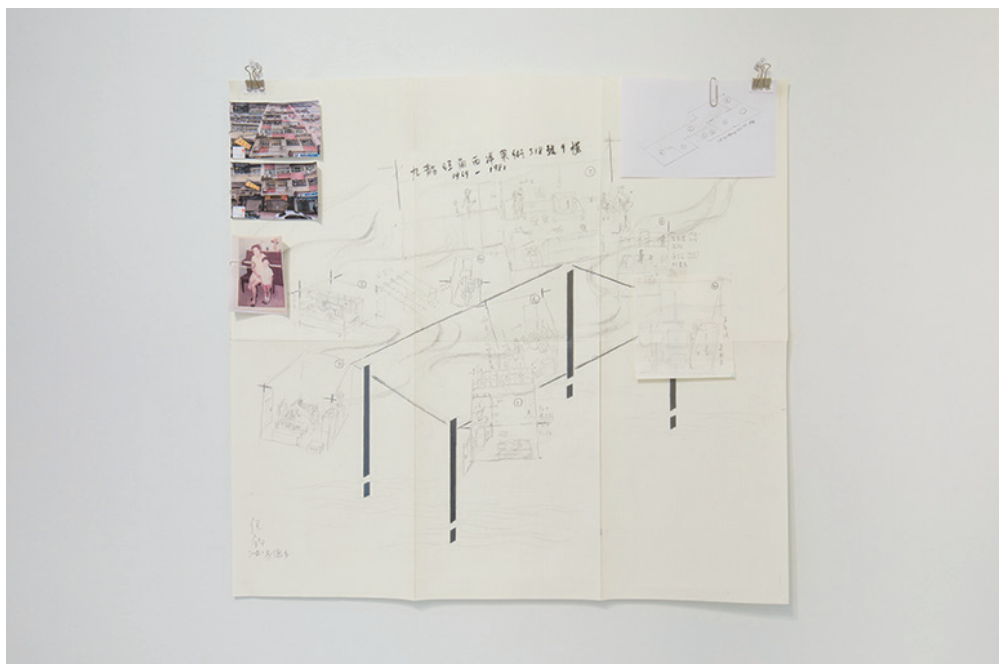
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Light Hours

Light Hours came together in two months through several meetings between the participating artists and the gallery's coordinator, Ho Tam. In much the same spirit as Hotam, the independent press linked to the gallery, *Light Hours* is a carefully and conscientiously organized exhibition about Hong Kong.

All eleven artists in the show are Canadian and are either from Hong Kong or connected to the city in some way. This piqued my interest, as the daughter of a Hong Kong immigrant myself, and Tam agreed to give me a tour of the exhibition on Zoom. *Light Hours* features a surprisingly wide range of works for a relatively small space, including videos, drawings, sculptures, and photographs, with seven of the artists creating new pieces for this exhibition.

The title stems from the ongoing political situation in Hong Kong, the protests from the Anti-Extradition Law Amendment Bill Movement, and the general sentiment of dread around the future of the city and its people. Kai Chan's *Red Star* (2015) appropriately expresses the precarity of this political situation. Using only thread, nails, and a button, Chan's installation evades almost all interpretation, except that the thread is red and forms two explicit stars, and the button is the green of Chinese jade. The connotation of these materials in the context of the exhibition adds to the symbolic weight of the large button that hangs by a thread.

In the exhibition's first room, Dennis Ha also plays on signs and symbols with *Family Resemblance* (2021). A denim shirt is embroidered with the logos of Vancouver businesses that cater to the Hong Kong diaspora. It is a love letter to all the shops, restaurants, and cafés that remind Ha of home. One of the businesses featured, Copa Café, has since closed due to an incident, and so the piece is also a touching testament to and memorializing of these spaces.

Many of the works in *Light Hours* reflect on the spaces that have shaped the artists. For Yam Lau, this exhibition prompted a reflection on his childhood home. Titled *9th Floor, 318 Sai Yeung Choi Street (1969–1981)* (2021), Lau's drawing is haunted with stories and memories. Delicately sketched floorplans are accompanied by photographs and descriptions written in Chinese, creating a wall map similar to one a detective might make. The work is deeply personal, recounting various debacles related to his family and neighbours.

Similarly, Joni Cheung's video installation *A Sunday Afternoon* (2018) speaks volumes about family. What exhibition about Hong Kong would be complete without the presence of mah-jong, our beloved unofficial national game? In *A Sunday Afternoon*, Cheung's hands can be seen shuffling (or "washing") the mah-jong tiles with her mother. Above the portable DVD player screen where this meditative video plays, Cheung's high school student card is framed next to that of her mother's. Activities such as mah-jong or dumping wrapping are useful in bridging the gap between children of Hong Kong immigrants and their elders. In all these ways, *Light Hours* is a touching exhibition, uniting artists to propose what the Hong Kong Canadian identity might be.

Amelia Wong-Mersereau

Dennis Ha

Family Resemblance,
installation view, 2021.

Yam Lau

*9th Floor, 318 Sai Yeung
Choi Street (1969–1981)*,
installation view, 2021.

Photos : Dennis Ha

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