

**WEI LENG TAY**

**"ABRIDGE"**

CURATED BY OLIVIER KRISCHER

17 APRIL – 22 MAY 2021

### **CURATORIAL STATEMENT**

"Abridge" explores how one can think about images of a past in an uncertain present. This project began as a series of encounters with people who migrated from Southern China to Hong Kong in the 1960s-2000s, building on the artist's earlier project "The Other Shore". But as Tay faced the dilemma of what and how to photograph, depict or record in the present, she began to revisit the corpus of images she had made while living in Hong Kong as a professional photographer for over sixteen years from 1999. In that time, the post-colony witnessed significant changes, many of which passed before her lens. However, her camera also recorded corners of everyday life, forgotten and liminal moments, which have similarly been not so much lost as eclipsed. By re-photographing and transforming parts of these images, as artefacts of a past that is present, she creates a process that parallels her initial conversations about displacements across time and space, and tangentially expresses her complex position in this indeterminate landscape. Through photography, video and audio interviews, "Abridge" reflects on longing, anxiety and shifting identities that navigate an entangled geography.

The exhibition comprises three parts that reflect aspects and moments of research as the situation in Hong Kong, and the questions underpinning Tay's process, evolved. The central collection of photographs is a new series of C-type photographic prints made by rephotographing her slides and contact sheets of photographs made in Hong Kong, with her mobile phone. Using her phone registers both shifts in technology and her practice, but also the broader question of the way we see and interact with images, questions highlighted by the role of the camera phone in how we now engage with or experience historic events. Tay uses this now everyday object to physically rediscover her 'professional' images of the past. There is a slippage here between their presence as material artefacts, physical remnants of something not so much lost but eclipsed; we simultaneously read them through our familiarity with the present, seeing echoes of protests and pandemics despite the image's own histories. No longer informing as they once did, if at all, they reflect a past as only so many fragmentary glimpses, rather than a nostalgic whole.

Such an exploration of the role of photography and video in mediating not only the past but also the unfolding history of the present similarly takes on a material form in the work "Live streaming, Prince Edward, 12/11/2019, 23:35:05-6. 25 frames per second, 1920x1080 (2019)". This work comprises 25 individual prints, each representing a single frame from one second of the live-streamed protests Tay was sitting, like many at the time, watching on television as events unfolded simultaneously in the streets in 2019. Here, there is a tension between the suspended time of the photographic instant, and the montage closure between the collected frames. What was taking place in this long second of 'history' – is it any clearer in the freeze frames? Above the television, there sits a barely discernible landscape.

These two bodies of photographic work orbit around Tay's single-channel video, made from video documentation during her earliest research trips in 2018. Inspiring the exhibition title, and the sense of the fragment and the unsaid, here we join a seemingly endless journey across the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau bridge. An engineering marvel, its business case claims to facilitate regional travel and commerce, yet it symbolically unifies the Mainland to these retrieved former colonies. As the road continues, it is unclear if we are moving forwards or backwards, and to what destination? This video registers layers of tension, change, displacement and illusion in the Abridge project: one of the world's most ambitious feats of engineering, floating oddly desolate as it bridges a liminal zone of imminence, across past and present, here and there, like a spectre or angel of history looking on.

Olivier Krischer

### Room one (R-L)



"Article 23 protest II, Causeway Bay, 1/7/2003. Contact sheet, Kodak Portra 400VC negative film, 135mm", 28.125x50cm, Digital c-print on Fujicolor Crystal Archive Paper, 2019.



"Causeway Bay, 2001. Contact sheet, Kodak Tri-X 400 negative film, 120mm", 75x100cm, Digital c-print on Fujicolor Crystal Archive Paper, 2020.



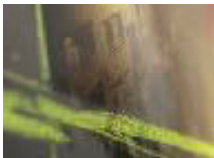
"Article 23 protest III, Causeway Bay, 1/7/2003. Contact sheet, Kodak Portra 400VC negative film, 135mm", 45x60cm, Digital c-print on Fujicolor Crystal Archive Paper, 2020.



"Article 23 protest I, Causeway Bay, 1/7/2003. Contact sheet, Kodak Portra 400VC negative film, 135mm", 45x60cm, Digital c-print on Fujicolor Crystal Archive Paper, 2019.



"Grocery store, Tung Lo Wan Road, date unknown. Kodak E100VS slide film, 120mm", 80x60cm Digital c-print on Fujicolor Crystal Archive Paper, 2020.



"Ming Yuen West Street III, 2010. Kodak E100VS slide film, 120mm", 37.5x50cm Digital c-print on Fujicolor Crystal Archive Paper, 2020.



"Office crowd, Queen's Road Central, 2003. Kodak E100VS slide film, 135mm", 180x240cm, UV Inkjet print on vinyl, 2020.



"Queen's Road Central II, 2003. Kodak E100VS slide film, 135mm", 80x60cm, Digital c-print on Fujicolor Crystal Archive Paper, 2020.



"Students, Queen's Road Central, 2003. Kodak E100VS slide film, 135mm", 37.5x50cm, Digital c-print on Fujicolor Crystal Archive Paper, 2020.

### Centre (L-R)



"View from Kai Yuen Street, date unknown. Fujifilm RVP100F slide film (Kodak E100VS slide film discontinued), 120mm", 90x120cm, 2019.



"Bus ride, Hong Kong to Zhuhai, 28/1/2019", Single channel 16:9 video, colour, stereo sound, 36 min 38 sec, Wood and diffusion filter screen, 2021.

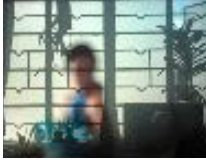


"Missing sign, Kai Yuen Lane, date unknown. Fujifilm RVP100F slide film (Kodak E100VS slide film discontinued), 120mm", 75x100cm, Digital c-print on Fujicolor Crystal Archive Paper, 2019.



"Immigration Department, Wanchai, 1999. Fujifilm RMS slide film, 135mm", 37.5x50cm, Digital c-print on Fujicolor Crystal Archive Paper, 2020.

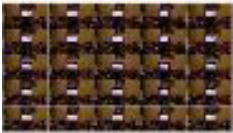
### Room two (R-L)



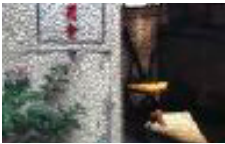
"Untitled (The Other Shore), Lohas Park, 2015. Fujifilm RVP100F slide film (Kodak E100VS slide film discontinued), 120mm", 45x60cm, Digital c-print on Fujicolor Crystal Archive Paper, 2020.



"Lei Yue Mun, 1999. Kodak E100VS slide film, 135mm", 37.5x50cm, Digital c-print on Fujicolor Crystal Archive Paper, 2020.



"Live streaming, Prince Edward, 12/11/2019, 23:35:05-6. 25 frames per second, 1920x1080", 14.06x25cm, 25 Archival pigment prints, 2019.

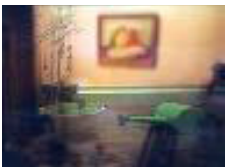


"Residents' office, Upper Kai Yuen Lane, 2008. Kodak E100VS slide film, 120mm", 45x60cm, Digital c-print on Fujicolor Crystal Archive Paper, 2020.



"A boy at Repulse Bay Beach during SARS, Repulse Bay, 2003. Kodak E100VS slide film, 135mm", 75x100cm, Digital c-print on Fujicolor Crystal Archive Paper, 2019.

### Front window (L-R)



"Neighbour, Upper Kai Yuen Lane II, 2008. Kodak E100VS slide film, 120mm", 37.5x50cm, Digital c-print on Fujicolor Crystal Archive Paper, 2020.



"Barney Cheng fashion show, 2000. Fujifilm RMS slide film, 135mm", 60x80cm, Digital c-print on Fujicolor Crystal Archive Paper, 2020.