

ARTIST

Ka-Man Tse

TITLE

Untitled

DATE

2017

DIMENSIONS

22" H x 28" W

MEDIUM

Inkjet Prints

CATALOGUE NUMBER

2019.060

CURRENT LOCATION

NA 17

KA-MAN TSE**BIRTHPLACE**

Kowloon, Hong Kong

GENDER

Female

CULTURAL HERITAGE

Chinese-American

LIGHT WORK RELATIONSHIP

Artist-in-Residence, 2019

ESSAYS

Some people's words are tangled And tongue-tied And words have seven types of ambiguity They speak obscurely Pointing west But heading east—from Xi Xi's *What I'm Thinking of Is Not Written Words* Right now, it is impossible to write about the movement in Hong Kong, or even write through it. The only way to write is to write from within it. Every photograph of the movement feels immediately historical and, in that way, we are always writing from a kind of futurity. The city's affectations and its diaspora coexist on a field. It means going to sleep every night and waking up heartbroken all over again. Yet the soul survives. In Wong Kar-Wai's film *2046*, only the future can reveal the secrets spoken into a tree from 1962 British colonial Hong Kong. Praxis establishes what it means to "be water," to build the community you want to see here. Ka-Man and I embraced each other before she left Hong Kong after weeks of protests that began in June. We were tired of crying inside, but the immense desire for self-determination continually inspired us. Reality superseded our expectations of the present. Later, Ka-Man told me she was expecting a child with her partner Cheryl. As I write this, the expectation is the child could come at this moment, or the one after that. Ka-Man's portrait of Cheryl would fit into a series that she has been working on since 2004. Her *narrow distances* (2018)—named after a phrase in Ken Chen's poem, "Long-Distance Love, Can It Work?"—comprises a series of portraits of queer friends in Hong Kong interspersed with tender compositions of the city. Two lines in the poem read, "Slippery in your hands, my heart shudders like a gasping fish. / You have such beautiful hands." The intimacy of her works draws out whole universes of possibility, of collective care, and serious irreverence for understanding any grand narrative. Ka-Man told me it was completely acceptable to describe her sense of being lost right now. This bewilderment and love collates the collection published here. This is a portrait of a present. In the only two images directly from the streets, hands clutch white towels, and hands clutch hands. Evidentiary respite, they operate as relics of an indeterminate time. Two children and an adult examine barnacles affixed to seaside boulders—rock bodies, inscribed by water, baring their history for passers-by. With everyday material, a world-building project emerges that doesn't require trading one visibility for another. A pair of loved ones embraces against the backdrop of the famous Hong Kong skyline, the surface informing their touch a combination of shirt and skin. A black-shirted friend looks back up at the photographer on a stony path into the wilderness. Searching images from before June 2019 bleed into searching for images of Hong Kong at a time of necessary change. It's not just the relationship between photographer and photographed that you see, but the relationship between person and environment, person and themselves. In the thick of it all, the question isn't what it means to have a child or not, but what kind of world can hold this child? I am drowning in my own sentiments, struggling to turn these connections between clues into words. One of Ka-Man's students, Sara Muñoz Ledo Rodríguez, used these words in her own film: flying like I am in a dream, or like I am a kite. I feel like a kite. My mom notices and she asks me, "Where did you go, mi nena?" And she hugs me, just like the people who fly kites pull them in when they are flying too far. Hands caress something invisible, cast into the water, into the dark. Ka-Man took these images at Tai Mei Tuk while watching an older woman lightly jerk a clear fishing wire on Sharp Island. Like gasping fish, we search for some way to breathe in deep, to remember we have wind inside ourselves. Another image, recreated with a friend in Sai Kung, shows just a hand tossing the invisible line into the ocean. Documenting the protests ultimately leaves one feeling inadequate. Vignettes on an historical process come in extended conversations, in learning how to be together, in consenting to be together. This process is what has always informed Ka-Man's work. Before heading to her Light Work residency, Ka-Man spent her last Sunday protesting in Sheung Wan. Ritually, she gave away her gear—goggles, saline solution, long umbrella, and face masks. Arriving in Syracuse, Ka-

Man sat alone in her room, between two time zones. Hera Chan Hera Chan is a curator and writer based in Kowloon, Hong Kong. Ka-Man Tse lives in Brooklyn, NY, and completed her residency at Light Work in August 20