

Elva Lai

FREEDOM SWIMMERS



ODRADEK

01.12.2017 - 16.12.2017

VERNISSAGE - 30 novembre 2017 / 18h - 21h00



Escape routes of refugees from China to Hong Kong in the 60s.

« Nager vers la Liberté »

De part son origine chinoise continentale, l'hong-kongaise Elva Lai s'intéresse à l'actuel problème de l'immigration.

Cette jeune artiste graduée des départements des Beaux-Arts de l'Université Chinoise de Hong Kong et Leipzig nous confie dans un livre intitulé « Freedom Swimmers » ses réflexions et témoignages au sujet de sa famille. Elle s'y focalise sur son père qui quitta à la nage dans les années 70 sa Chine natale pour s'établir à Hong Kong.

Elle mêle et met en dialogue graphique les archives chinoises familiales avec les récits de réfugiés syriens croisés à Leipzig.

Depuis plus de 2 ans, Elva Lai expose des installations, cartes graphiques narratives et photographies afin de mettre en scène des trajets individuels de migrants laissant ainsi apparaître l'angoisse occasionnée par le déplacement et la perte du monde connu.

Ses recherches et interrogations portent donc sur la problématique des frontières, de la fuite, l'emprisonnement, l'accueil ou l'expulsion.

Les chassés-croisés de témoignages des réfugiés d'époques et de lieux différents nous font participer à cette angoisse de la fuite et de l'errance. Ils nous confrontent à notre propre mode d'existence qui est de plus en plus dépourvu de certitudes.

Elva Lai expose chez ODRADEK des recherches en cours afin de provoquer un questionnement sur l'autre qui aujourd'hui nous arrive de la mer ou par route et que l'on n'a pas toujours envie de rencontrer parce qu'il nous rappelle l'histoire de nos parents fuyant les bombardements des guerres mondiales.

L'errance, l'insécurité tout comme l'angoisse existentielle qui les accompagne constituent la nature cachée de l'homme contemporain.

L'artiste, à sa manière, se charge d'en faire apparaître un pan pour que nous puissions affronter ce qui nous arrive.

Simone Schuiten



Escape route of Abdullah from Syria to Germany in May 2015

Project: FREEDOM SWIMMERS

The Book - The Installation - The Video

This project juxtaposes the escape of Syrian refugees and the history of refugees from China to Hong Kong in- the 60s and 70s. In the framework of this project, the history of Hong Kong "Freedom Swimmers" in the 60s and 70s is presented, and the life of Syrian refugees are presented as illustrations. This juxtaposition hopes to reveal the familiar and the unfamiliar situations that refugees face in different eras and locations. Most importantly, how we could relate ourselves to the refugees by understanding the issues of giving and taking.

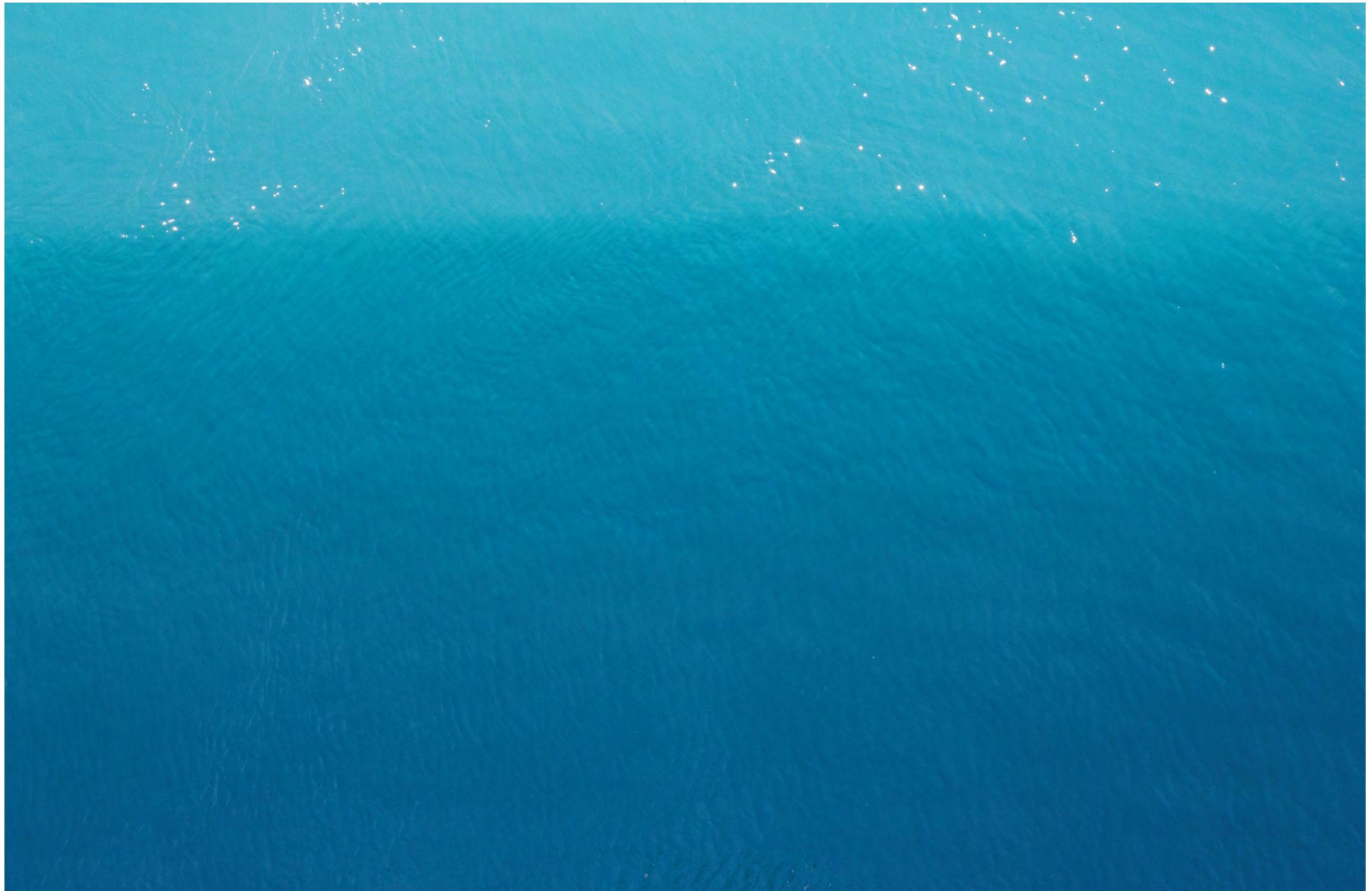


The Book

FREEDOM SWIMMERS
Elva Lai, 2017

BOOK DESIGN Rita Sabbo
ISBN 978-3-00-057299-9

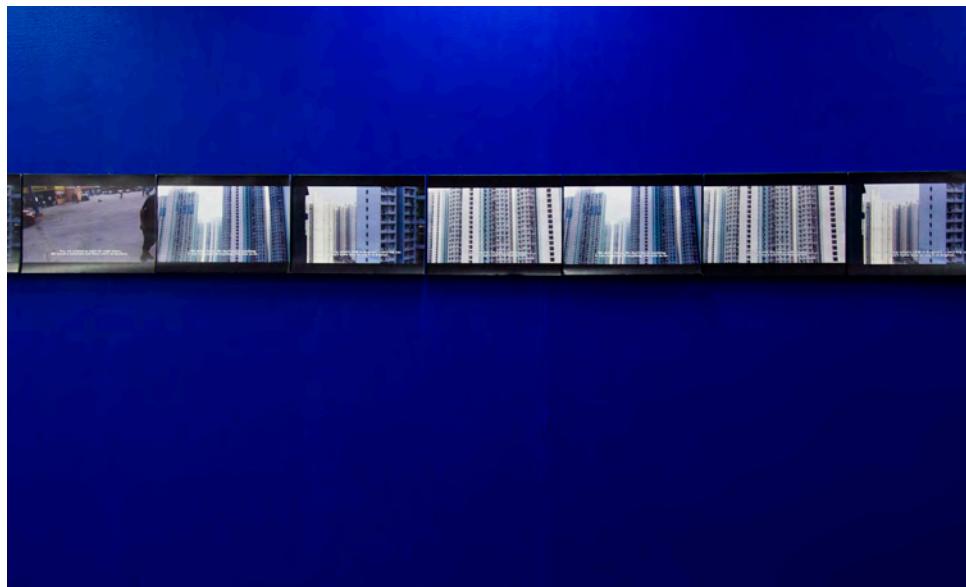
PRINT RUN 20 in 4/4 color
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A short trip to Athens in 2017. The Mediterranean Sea



The Installation - The Net, 2017, wire baskets, blue color on wall, 53cm x 279cm.



Freedom swimmers, 2017, 18 blocks of paper, 27cm x 27cm (each block)

"Freedom swimmers"

Through her roots in mainland China, the Hong Kong artist Elva Lai is interested in the very contemporary issue of immigration.

Graduated from the Fine Arts department of the Chinese University in Hong Kong as well as the Fine Arts Academy of Leipzig, This young artist published "Freedom Swimmers", a book in which she shares her thoughts and testimonies about her family. The focus is on her father, who left his native China in the 70's, swimming to Hong Kong to settle there.

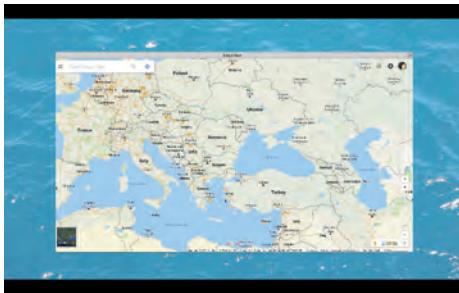
She creates a graphic dialogue in which she merges elements of her family's Chinese archives and stories by Syrian refugees she met in Leipzig. Since two years, Elva Lai exposes installations, narrative graphic maps and pictures, staging the individual experiences of migrants and the anxiety caused by deracination and the loss of their familiar world.

Her research and questioning deal with the problem of borders, flight, imprisonment, hospitality or rejection. The intertwining of testimonies by refugees from different areas and periods involves us in the anxiety of flight and wandering.

At ODRADEK, Elva Lai exhibits her ongoing research in order to bring us questioning about 'the other' who comes to us by land or sea and whom we are not always eager to meet, because he reminds us of our own parents, fleeing bombings of the World Wars. The wandering, insecurity as well as the existential anxiety they bring with them are all features of the hidden nature of contemporary man.

The artist reveals part of this hidden nature to help us deal with current events.

Simone Schuiten



The Video

Dear Abdullah, 2017

Duration: 13:22

Dimension: 1920 × 1080

Elva LAI was born in 1989 in Huizhou, China and moved to Hong Kong with her family at the age of 8.

Elva received her Master of Fine Arts (M.F.A.) and Bachelor of Fine Arts (B.F.A) at the Chinese University of Hong Kong in 2013 and 2015 respectively. She also studied at School of Arts at Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, USA in 2012. She is Meisterschülerin of the Hochschule für Grafik und Buchkunst zu Leipzig (Academy of Fine Arts Leipzig) and studying in the Class of Installation and Space. Her work examines the instabilities inherent in the modality of photography and searches for sensitivities of photographic representation. She was awarded the Hong Kong Human Rights Art Prize in 2013 and Freeman Creative Prize in 2015. She presented her project in conferences Capital & Communication: Visualising Chinese Borders in the 21st Century at the Manchester Metropolitan University, England and Seminar "Über die Grenze", at the Institut für Theorie, the Academy of Fine Arts Leipzig in 2016. She is the winner of The Landskrona Foto and Fröfabriken Creative Space Residency 2016 and participated in the Landskrona Foto Festival 2017 in Sweden.



Photo by Jonas Westring, 2016

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Photographies Elva Lai

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