

HERE AND THERE: RE-IMAGINING HONG KONG LANDSCAPES

極目足下

想・見香港風光

WONG LAI CHING, FIONA — POK FU LAM

黃麗貞 — 薄扶林



圖片由黃麗貞提供

Courtesy of Wong Lai Ching, Fiona

《黑水》

UNDERCURRENT

● 黃麗貞

● Wong Lai Ching, Fiona

◎ 劉偉娟 英文譯本

◎ English Translation by Lau Wai Kuen, Caddie

友人從日本信樂送我 33 號細目黑泥，燒成後呈現動人的深炭色，十數年間曾用它創作不少作品。

我將泥碾成約一厘米厚的泥板，再用膠刮將表面平整至細滑無瑕，徒手堆起片片小丘，試圖塑造水的感覺。自古以來，陶泥極佳的可塑性令這物料成為模仿高手，但要重塑真實並非易事，只靠日常印象和塑造技術並不足夠。

工作室牆上貼著一張 A3 大小的黑白照，是和朋友遊船河時拍的。我走到船頭，在航行中凝視海面，遠處的水平線稍微彎曲，海面就像載滿水的大碗，水在碗內跌宕，時而前湧，時而後退，產生獨特的節奏感，原來大海無論如何變幻莫測，它底下還是被一種韻律所承托著。由船頭回到船艙坐下，我將下巴擱在船邊，水平大約來到胸膛位置，水面是如此接近，像隨時可被吸入呼出。水之所以成為水，全在於它的動態，攝影能將這變化凝固，讓我對水的狀態更加敏銳。原來浪濤都是由大小形狀不一的三角形組成，每個三角形都會從它的頂峯滑落至水平，等待下一個浪潮再次起動，令我聯想起連綿不斷的山巒，難道不也是由億萬年前地殼俯衝推動而成？此刻看山不動，並非必然，山實水虛，原來同出一轍，大自然的各種現象彷彿互為藍本，實在不可思議。

漸漸，看水成為一種習慣。

2021 年初我登上西高山，從海拔 494 公尺向下望，剛好看到薄扶林，望著香港西南端的出入口，先看見南丫島，然後是長洲、石鼓洲，在消失於煙霧中的遠處，我想像南海、西沙…明明是洶湧的海面，遠望儼如一張時空凝固的名信片，距離竟可令速度幻似停頓，激蕩變為平靜。這是一片極為遼闊的海域，也是我對薄扶林的第一印象。早在 19 世紀初，英國船隻因通商曾往來此地，取水補給，時至今日，巨型貨櫃船依然在這水域絡繹不絕，水和薄扶林歷史，有著奇妙的因緣。

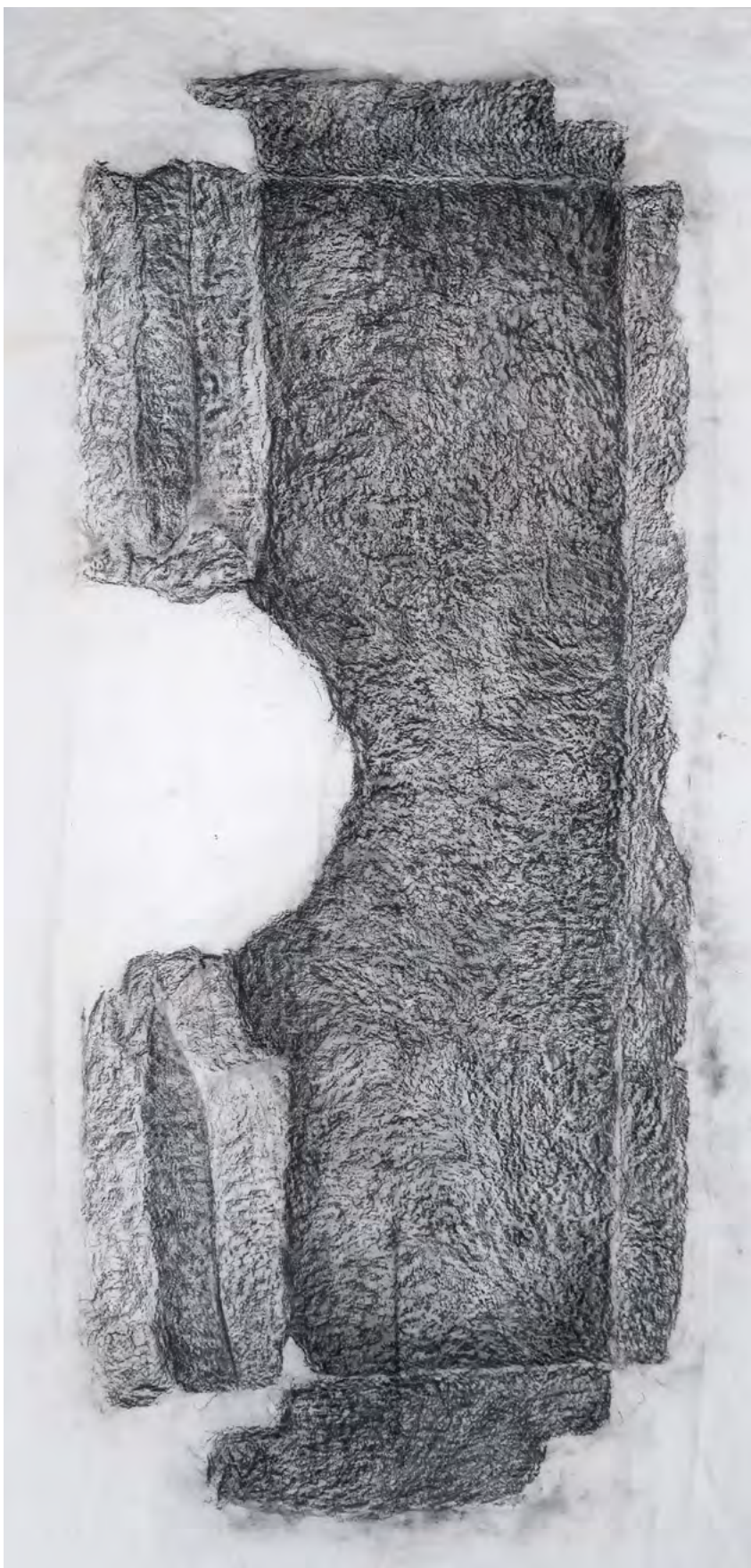
在遼闊的海面向內望，有一塊不規則形狀的小水池，是建於 1863 年的薄扶林水塘，亦是英國水務工程首次在香港的作業。一外一內，天然景觀和文明建設交織成一

幅獨一無二的風景。我從薄扶林水塘道石橋爬到塘邊，坐著細看平靜安穩的塘面，偶然一陣微風，吹皺一池春水，雖然詩人語帶雙關，卻令我想起南宋畫家馬遠的十二水圖，其中「洞庭風細」，「秋水迴波」，以簡單線條將真實帶到另一層次，細訴變化多端的世情。雖然未有科技作為參考，古人早已能用直觀，以文字線條描繪心中風景。眼前微波輕巧細膩，有如薄如蟬翼的絲網跌落枱面產生的紋路。由水波紋產生的圖案，比數學繪圖更為立體、真實，來回有致的線條吸引著我，完全忘卻時間的流逝。

輸水管繞道西面，將淡水帶到城市北面，亦即以前稱的維多利亞城半山一帶，自來水開始在生活中出現，水道像身體的血管，將這座城市的文明帶到新的里程碑。經歷城市規劃和建設，過百年的輸水管道有所耗損既是可惜，卻在所難免。現存的引水管道由最接近水塘的 5 號橋開始，一直向西伸延到今天龍虎山教育中心的 32 號橋為止，中間建成碧珊徑，成為附近居民散步的好去處。

去年開始，我到訪水道不下十數次，在不同季節時份散步、觀察、搜集、記錄，好讓自己進入一種歷史的想像。據文獻記載，渡槽內藏一條直徑十英吋的陶瓷輸水管，在山坡偶然能看到外露柴燒喉管的痕跡。渡槽表面鋪有約 40 厘米寬、150 厘米長、15 厘米厚的花崗岩石塊，石面滿佈斧鑿痕跡，石塊邊緣接口之間成梯級狀，防止垃圾跌入水道之中。這些大石塊除了是香港礦物史和工業史的重要佐證外，還是非常美麗的藝術品，我帶備宣紙和石墨條，繳請友人一起拓印，以身體來感知前人的經歷，像要將香港建設者的勞動痕跡記錄下來。細密的鑿痕，經過拓印出現黑白反差，產生出人意表的動感。將十數張拓印拼掛在工作室，有種宏偉的感覺，細碎的表面好像蠢蠢欲動的水面，這些前人留下的活動痕跡彷彿依然活著。

有次我用電筒照向石板裂口處，依稀看到流水，將耳朵貼近，還聽到涓涓水響。最喜歡黃昏漫步，天色漸暗，碧珊徑只剩我一人，感覺像輕輕行走於水上，百年的古老管道，依然輸送著今天的流水，它盛載著的，不單是流水，還有歷史和時間。記得一次在檔案署看見 1910





年這樣的一篇紀錄：政府要求薄扶林道居民將屋後榕樹砍下，以免樹根對水管做成破壞。翻閱過百年的文件，我再次陷入對故人舊事的迷思和想像。

英國畫家 William Harrell 於 1817 年在瀑布灣的水彩寫生，成為第一幅對香港景貌的描述。我選擇用直接的手捏方法，以陶泥忠實地重塑所見之水，在造物過程中，交織著自己對香港水域的感情，和那暗管內藏風景的想像，嘗試拼砌出香港歷史的重要拼圖。常說香港是金融城市、魅力之都，這種虛幻形容華而不實，或許我們已經忘記香港最初是如何被看見的。我認為對一個地方的感情，並非建立於其經濟價值之上，而是一種由直觀感知作基礎的全面投入。

1816 年，英國博物學家 Clarke Abel 在其著作《1816 和 1817 年中國內地旅行與往返航行記事》對香港島西南有這樣的描述：

從船上，這島嶼最為顯著的是自中心冒起的、高聳的圓錐狀山丘，還有一道美麗的瀑布從平滑的藍色岩石滾入大海。

我從不同文本收集對香港開埠前後的描述，用西班牙黑泥漿小心翼翼地填滿一段段香港印象的鏡面反白字體，移印到手掐成水模樣的黑泥表面，稍乾後，用小鐵羹在表面壓平磨光，將移印字體也一併磨嵌入黑泥之中。燒至攝氏 1260 度，黑泥呈現出非凡的深炭色，銀灰色的字體在其上若隱若現。我想營造水光的感覺，用極細號水磨砂紙在泥面上來回打磨，不料也將文字一併磨掉！眼前的文字逐漸消失，像在提醒我記憶是何等的脆弱。我用膠水沿著依稀可見的文字輪廓重新書寫，然後貼上銀箔，一段段薄扶林歷史又慢慢重現於閃爍之中。在陶瓷之水上來回撫摸，用指節骨輕輕敲打，噹噹作響，這種如鋼的質感，沉實的顏色，像是在說：這段堅實的歷史，不可抹殺。

This no. 33 fine black clay sent to me by a friend from Shigaraki, Japan — reveals a beautiful shade of deep charcoal after firing. For more than a decade, I have used it to create many beloved artworks.

With a rolling pin, I flatten the black clay into a slab about 1 cm thick, then use a plastic spatula to give the surface a silky-smooth finish. I attempt to emulate the texture of water by pinching the surface of the clay into little knobs. Since ancient times, pottery clay has been a master of emulation due to its incredible plasticity. Yet moulding the reality is never an easy task; it is not enough to rely merely on daily impressions and technical skill.

This A3-sized black and white photograph, hanging on the wall of my studio, was taken during a boating trip with friends. I remember walking to the bow of the yacht and gazing out at the sea. The distant horizon curved gently, like the rim of a giant bowl. The water in the bowl sloshed forwards, then backwards, over and over in a unique rhythm. Despite its capricious nature, the sea is always sustained by a certain cadence. Returning to the cabin, I sat down and rested my chin on the side of the yacht. The waves outside were at the level of my chest, and I felt almost close enough to the water to inhale it. The essence of water, I realised, stems from its state of perpetual motion. Yet I could use photography to freeze the flow of water and capture it as individual moments, thereby gaining a sharper understanding of the states of water. The waves are formed by triangles of various sizes and shapes, each one rising to its peak, then sliding back to the sea await the next crest. The sea waves resemble an endless mountain range. After all, were mountains not formed by the collision of tectonic plates millions of years ago? The sturdiness of mountains is rather deceptive. Mountains appear solid just as water appears ephemeral, yet in reality the two exist along the same principle. How amazing that these different types of natural phenomena should use each other as a blueprint of sorts.

Since that trip, I have slowly grown into the habit of water watching.

At the beginning of 2021, I went on a hike at High West. At the peak, standing at a height of 494 feet above sea level, I looked down at Pok Fu Lam, the southwestern entrance of Hong Kong. First Lamma Island, then Cheung Chau and Shek Kwu Chau — all disappeared into the foggy distance. I found myself imagining the South China Sea and Paracel Islands beyond... The harsh waves of these open waters, viewed from afar, looked as static as a picture on

a postcard. It was distance that calmed the restless turbulence of the sea. The view of this vast waterway formed my first impression of Pok Fu Lam. As early as the turn of the 19th century, British merchant ships had already travelled here for supplies of fresh water and provisions. Today, the waterway is still a busy shipping lane for large container vessels. From past to present, the movement of water has been closely interwoven with the narrative of Pok Fu Lam.

Looking away from the sea, I spotted a small, irregularly shaped pond, which became the next destination of my journey. This was the Pok Fu Lam Reservoir built in 1863, the first construction of British water works in Hong Kong. The reservoir, an amalgamation of natural resources and man-made infrastructure, is a unique spectacle reflecting both the natural beauty of Hong Kong and the legacy of modern civilisation. I walked along the masonry bridge, then climbed up to the edge of the reservoir and gazed at its calm surface. From time to time, ‘a light breeze blew ripples across this pool of spring water.’ This line, from a lyric poem by the Five Dynasties poet Feng Yansi, was intended to be a pun, yet the poetic imagery reminded me of the Southern Song painter Ma Yuan’s *Twelve Scenes of Water*. In particular, his paintings *Light Breeze over Lake Dongting* and *Waving Surface of the Autumn Flood* use the simplest of brush strokes to create a sense of realism and evoke the various passions of the ever-changing world. Despite the lack of modern technology, poets and artists from the past were able to depict the landscapes of their imagination by drawing on the intuition of language and art. The ripples of water across the Pok Fu Lam Reservoir were soft and light as gossamer wings, their texture so much more tangible and expressive than any mathematical graphs could ever be. These subtle lines of water, moving back and forth, absorbed my full attention and made me forget the passage of time.

Making a detour around the west of the island, a water main transports fresh water from the reservoir to the north of Hong Kong Island, which used to be known as the Mid-Levels of Victoria City. Conduits are like the capillaries of the modern city, and the beginning of tap water supply marked a milestone in Hong Kong’s development. Well over a century old, the water main, a testimony of Hong Kong’s urban development, has sadly yet inevitably worn down over time. The existing conduit runs from Bridge No. 5, located nearest to the reservoir, and extends westwards up to Bridge No. 32 at the present-day Lung Fu Shan Environmental Education Centre. Pik Shan Path, built over the conduit, is a popular walking trail for nearby residents.

After that first hike, I revisited the conduit over a dozen times. I brought my historical imagination into play as I strolled along the path during different seasons, making notes and observations. According to historical documents, a ceramic pipe with a ten-inch radius is installed inside the aqueduct. Sometimes the marks on the exposed wood-fired pipe could be seen from the hillside. The aqueduct is covered with granite plates, each of which is approximately 40 cm by 150 cm in width and length and 15 cm in height. Scarred with chisel marks, the granite plates are fitted together in an interlocking structure to prevent dirt from falling into the conduit. Apart from bearing witness to the geological and industrial history of Hong Kong, these rocks are in fact very beautiful. On some of these trips, I brought along Chinese rice paper and graphite sticks, and invited my friends to join me in making stone rubbings. Our aim was to physically experience what our predecessors had gone through while preserving the traces of the labourers who had built Hong Kong. The tonal contrast of black and white, formed by rubbing the paper against the closely grained chisel marks, creates a surprising sense of commotion. I have hung up more than a dozen of the rubbings in my studio, and the effect is quite spectacular. The rough marks on the rocks, resembling choppy sea waves, bring to life the labours of the past.

One evening, pointing my torch towards a crack on a granite plate, I could see the water running underneath, and even heard the sound of its mellow trickle when I put my ear close. Dusk was my favourite time of the day for these walks. As the daylight gradually faded, I would find myself alone on Pik Shan Path. I felt like I was walking lightly on water. The century-old pipe, still in use today, carries not only water but the imprint of history and time. At the office of the Government Records Service, I read an archival record dating from 1910: that year, the colonial government required the residents of Pok Fu Lam Road to cut down Chinese banyan trees behind their houses to prevent tree roots from damaging the pipe. Flipping through historical documents over a hundred years old, I once again fell into a reverie about people and stories from the past.

The first artistic depiction of Hong Kong scenery was a watercolour landscape of Waterfall Bay by British painter William Havell in 1817. Now I, too, am pinching the pottery clay to faithfully depict the water I saw at Pok Fu Lam. Into the clay I mould my affection for the waters of Hong Kong, as well as my imagination of the conduit’s interior. Through my art, I hope to fit an important piece into the puzzle of Hong Kong’s history. Hong Kong is often described as a financial

hub, a charming metropolis, but these descriptions are illusory and unrealistic. Perhaps we have forgotten how this city caught the eye of the world in the first place. I believe that one’s affection for a place is not based on its economic value, but instead draws on the emotion and intuition of lived experiences.

British naturalist Clarke Abel once described the southwest of Hong Kong Island in his book *Narrative of a Journey in the Interior of China, and of a Voyage to and From That Country, in the Years 1816 and 1817*:

“As seen from the ship, this island was chiefly remarkable for its high conical mountains, rising in the centre, and for a beautiful cascade which rolled over a fine blue rock into the sea.”

From various historical sources, I have collected writings on first impressions of Hong Kong before and during the establishment of colonial rule. With care, I print these paragraphs of text, in horizontally mirrored and reversed type, onto a slab of Spanish black clay, the surface of which is pinched to imitate the undulation of gentle waves. As the clay dries and hardens, I burnish the surface with a small metal spoon and further ground the text into the black clay. After firing at the temperature of 1,260 degrees Celsius, the clay transforms into a ceramic of extraordinary charcoal colour, on which the silvery grey text is faintly discernible. I want to show how light is reflected from the water, and use ultra-fine water sandpaper to polish the clay surface back and forth, but the text is also polished off! The words in front of me gradually disappear, as if reminding me how fragile memory is. I use glue to rewrite along the faint outline of the text, then affix the silver foil, and the history of Pok Fu Lam slowly reappears in the flickering. Running my hand over the ceramic waterscape, I rap its surface with my knuckles. The sculpture chimes with bell-like clarity. Embedded within the steely texture and muted colour of the artwork is a timely message: this authentic piece of history must not be erased.

《黑水》

UNDERCURRENT

日本高溫黑泥、天然泥土及金屬鉑

Japanese black stoneware clay, natural clay & metal leaf

裝置 Installation

尺寸不定 Dimension variable

2022



大英 香港經 示為
歷司存

招人候票承接在蒲湖林建造水櫃一個並水井一個

其水櫃內一個要用石砌成

約裝得八十萬加倫大

另一個要裝得三十萬加倫大

造法照上

方建看井人住屋一間

並建造動水筒

可以隨時開閉並買注水男經

如有欲知其章程法度者

可到量地官寫字樓觀看便妥

其票准於唐人十一月十三日截收特示

一千八百六十年庚申年 月 日 示



