

# 1989-2019: Perspectives on June 4<sup>th</sup> from Hong Kong

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The sheer violence and magnitude of the repression that took place on and after 4 June 1989 shook Hong Kong society to the core as the crackdown forcefully questioned confidence in Hong Kong's political future with the threshold of the handover looming on the horizon. In May and June 1989, the hundreds of thousands of Hong Kong citizens who took repeatedly to the streets to demonstrate against repression of the student movement did so out of feelings of anger, devastation, and anxiety about the political future of Hong Kong, as Joseph Y. Cheng wrote in a 2009 special issue of our journal devoted to June 4<sup>th</sup> on the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the brutal suppression of the movement (Cheng 2009: 92). Since 1997, while the Special Administrative Region operates within the "one country two systems" (*yiguo liangzhi* 一國兩制) framework, June 4<sup>th</sup> continues to stand as a cornerstone in the definition of Hong Kong's identity formation and its complicated relationship vis-à-vis China and the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

Over the last three decades, Hong Kong has been the site of the largest and probably most diverse forms of collective commemoration of the 4 June 1989 massacre. The ebbs and flows of these commemorations have articulated in complex ways with Hong Kong society, politics, and identity.

In contrast with the PRC, the 1989 movement and its bloody aftermath can be discussed openly in Hong Kong, and June 4<sup>th</sup> is still commemorated yearly, most notably during a candlelight vigil in Victoria Park organised by the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China. The nature of this commemoration has long served to define political lines between the pro-establishment camp on the one hand, and on the other,

supporters of full-fledged democracy and free speech who mostly identify with the pan-democrats spectrum. Hong Kong's unique position led to a rich production of research, writing, artworks, and commemorations – one of which is the recently reopened June 4<sup>th</sup> Museum (*Liusi Jinianguan* 六四紀念館), run by the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China.<sup>(1)</sup> These past few years, however, the rise of "localism" (*bentu yishi* 本土意識) and a growing sense of the encroachment of Beijing politics on Hong Kong's core values call for reconsidering June 4<sup>th</sup>'s defining nature in Hong Kong. Particularly since the 2014 Umbrella Movement, June 4<sup>th</sup> commemorations have become a controversial issue within the pan-democrat camp, reigniting a discussion on Hong Kong identity that reveals competing ideologies among different generations of Hongkongers (Fung 2018).

For its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we have invited a number of Hong Kong-based researchers conducting studies on the legacy of the 1989 student movement and its crackdown to share their knowledge. In addition to hosting the world's largest series of protests against the massacre, Hong Kong also offered a safe haven for journalists and researchers to report on the event in 1989. The local art scene also promptly engaged with the topic, inspiring pioneering video artists such as Ellen Pau 鮑藹倫 and May Fung 馮美華, to name just a few. The researchers interviewed below provide us with their perspectives on June 4<sup>th</sup> today, as the mainland's and Hong Kong's political contexts have drastically changed. As Hong Kong-based journalists, media researchers, political scientists, and artists, they share their insights on how the event is covered in the press, remembered, commemorated, and represented in Hong Kong and the PRC 30 years on.

## June 4<sup>th</sup> in a changing global media environment

### Keith Richburg & King-wa Fu

According to your knowledge of the field, how has the journalistic profession changed over the years since 1997, in particular with regard to sensitive topics related to human rights, and June 4<sup>th</sup> in particular?

**Keith Richburg:** There have been many changes in journalism since 1997 – the advent of the digital age and the 24/7 news cycle being the most obvious. But digital media and media websites mean that what journalists write and report is instantly seen all over the world. In the 1990s, when I reported from China (from my base in Hong Kong), I was fairly confident that my stories in *The Washington Post* would most likely not be seen by the authorities in Beijing – my pieces were published in Washington

8,000 miles away. The immediate and instantaneous nature of the web changed that.

From a broader – and related – viewpoint, knowing that your work will be seen instantly by the people you are writing about has made journalists, and especially foreign correspondents, a lot more cautious with their words and phrasing. Specifically, many journalists have chosen to adopt the Chinese government's preferred lexicon. Thus, today Tiananmen Square is rarely called "a massacre" but is more often referred to as an "incident" or a "crackdown." Rarely do reporters venture as far as to say that PLA soldiers "murdered" unarmed protesters in Tiananmen Square. And even the numbers have changed over the years. In the 1990s it was "thousands" killed in Tiananmen Square. Now you are more likely to see references to "hundreds" or "dozens" killed "in and around Tiananmen Square." And the students are

1. See the Museum official blog: <https://64museum.blogspot.com/2019/04/64mreopen-2019.html> (accessed on 20 May 2019).

no longer referred to as “peaceful pro-democracy protestors” and sometimes not even as students – simply “protestors.”

Part of the subtle shift is related to the Beijing government’s clear willingness to punish foreign journalists by withholding visas and denying entry. As China has become economically more powerful, journalists want access – and often that means downplaying the human rights angles. Not in every case – there has been terrific reporting about the forced labour camps in Xinjiang, for example. But many correspondents feel the need to pull punches for access, in my view.

### How have the ways the traditional media talk about and represent events such as June 4<sup>th</sup> changed with the emergence of the social media?

**Keith Richburg:** As I mentioned, with social media, and with the digital age, anything written is immediately posted on Twitter, WeChat, and elsewhere. So some journalists no doubt feel the need to be cautious. But social media have also given journalists an important new window into the way average Chinese, especially young people, think about events like June 4<sup>th</sup>. We can now see (to some extent, notwithstanding censorship) what is posted and re-posted, and what the online conversation is about. Available tools, like The University of Hong Kong’s WeiboScope and WeChatScope (by Dr. King-wa FU, see below) allow journalists to see what terms are being censored, and to monitor the online discussion despite the Great Firewall. This means the memory cannot be fully suppressed despite the heavy-handed attempt of the censors. We now know more about what ordinary Chinese think, via social media, than ever before. And we also see all the clever ways they use to evade the censors.

### How differently is June 4<sup>th</sup> discussed and represented on the mainland and in Hong Kong’s social media?

**King-wa Fu:** June 4<sup>th</sup> is known as one of the most censored events on China’s social media. Citizen Lab and Weiboscope<sup>(2)</sup> have recently published a report to analyse the pattern of online censorship across a variety of social media platforms in the past years.<sup>(3)</sup> But despite the fact that the state has been “signalling” strongly that June 4<sup>th</sup> is not to be discussed publicly and that most Chinese netizens know that their posts will be swiftly censored if they speak out on the subject, a lot of Chinese online users still routinely post to commemorate the 1989 Tiananmen Square Massacre on social media every year in June. In Hong Kong, the social media are primarily free from any systemic content control, and Hong Kong citizens are able to speak of and discuss the Tiananmen Square Crackdown openly both online and offline. The most common “symbol” used on Hong Kong social media would be pictures of the Victoria Park candlelight vigil. People like to share these photos online when attending, mainly via Facebook or WhatsApp. But not on Sina Weibo, as this Chinese platform is not popular in Hong Kong.

### How has the representation of June 4<sup>th</sup> changed in social media over the years both visually and discursively? In which respect has the emergence of new social media platforms such as Weibo or WeChat had an impact on the topics and content, or even on the volume of discussions related to June 4<sup>th</sup>?

**King-wa Fu:** The overall pattern over the years is similar, apart from a small number of posts mentioning current events. We conducted a thematic

content analysis on 1,256 image-attached Sina Weibo posts made on 1-4 June between 2012 and 2018. The posts were generally classified into five categories: 1) Collective narratives and counter-discourse; 2) Remembrance; 3) Condemnation; 4) Citizen reporting; 5) Response to current political suppression.

Around 2014-2015, WeChat became the fastest-growing social media platform and outpaced Weibo amid a large-scale content control on Weibo, i.e., new regulations and crackdowns on “Big-V” users. Many social media users switched from using the public-facing social media platform Weibo to the mainly private messaging system WeChat. Weibo usage volume was then substantially reduced.

It’s closely linked to the change in the overall digital governance environment. Generally speaking, since 2012, a series of online regulations have substantially changed the environment of digital governance, for instance the real name regulation system (2012), the setup of the Cyberspace Administration of China (2014), and finally, the Cybersecurity Law (2017).

## Journalism, censorship, and enforced amnesia

Louisa Lim

### In a recent talk at the University of Hong Kong,<sup>(4)</sup> you mentioned various obstacles facing journalists reporting on June 4<sup>th</sup>. Are they new, and what is their impact on freedom of the press and free speech in the PRC, Hong Kong, and beyond?

**Louisa Lim:** These obstacles are not new, but they do show the architecture of the state that is required to maintain and sustain censorship of June 4<sup>th</sup>-related material. My research found that three-quarters of foreign correspondents doing anniversary reporting have experienced interference from the state; of that, 60% have been blocked from accessing Tiananmen square, 56% have had their access to sources blocked, and just over a fifth have had sources detained or harassed. There is an impact on press freedom outside China, since the controls limit the stories that foreign journalists can write. That means there are fewer stories about the anniversary, since editors are unwilling to commission stories if the journalist has no access to memory carriers. So over time, we begin to forget about the existence of the Tiananmen movement itself, only remembering the crackdown itself. The problem looks to be very pronounced this year, since many of those who in the past have dared take interviews about June 4<sup>th</sup> have had controls placed upon them earlier than normal or have been detained. In limiting journalists’ freedom to report, the state itself is effectively pre-censoring reports and channelling them towards a single narrative: one that underlines that political participation is dangerous.

2. See <https://weiboscope.jmsc.hku.hk/wsr/> (accessed on 20 May 2019).

3. See “China’s Censored Histories: Commemorating the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Tiananmen Square Massacre,” *Global Voices*, 17 April 2019, <https://globalvoices.org/2019/04/17/chinas-censored-histories-commemorating-the-30th-anniversary-of-the-tiananmen-square-massacre/> (accessed on 20 May 2019).

4. “Tiananmen 30 years on: Trying to remember, Forced to forget,” organised by Hong Kong PEN and the Journalism and Media Studies Centre, The University of Hong Kong, 15 April 2019. See the live recording here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I3npaZs7AMI> (accessed on 20 May 2019).

**In your book *The People's Republic of Amnesia*, you unveiled the processes at work to silence the memory of June 4<sup>th</sup> in the PRC. How did you work on this project, and what can you tell us about your findings?**

**Louisa Lim:** I worked on the book in secrecy, while I was working as a reporter for NPR in Beijing. I never talked about the book at home or in the office, online, or even over the telephone, for fear that my house and communications were bugged. I wrote the book on a laptop that I kept offline and locked in a safe in my bedroom. I discovered that the authorities have been very successful at erasing the memory of the crackdown and the seven weeks of protests – events that happened within living memory – from the collective memory. They have succeeded so absolutely that on at least two occasions, references to June 4<sup>th</sup> slipped into local newspapers because no one working on the paper – not even the censors – recognised the references to June 4<sup>th</sup>, so they didn't censor them. To gauge young people's awareness of the events of 1989, I did a very crude test where I took the picture of Tank Man to university campuses. I asked 100 young people to identify the picture, and only 15 could do it correctly. This to me shows the success of China's campaign of erasure, and that it has somehow managed to clinically pluck these events from people's memory, as well as nipping in the bud any curiosity surrounding it from young people.

## **June 4<sup>th</sup> commemorations and Hong Kong contentious politics**

### **Edmund Cheng and Samson Yuen**

**You have studied the evolution of June 4<sup>th</sup> commemorations in Hong Kong, especially those occurring after the 2014 Umbrella Movement. What do these recent changes mean socially and politically for Hong Kong?**

**Edmund Cheng and Samson Yuen:** The June 4<sup>th</sup> candlelight vigil has been one of the most important political events in Hong Kong. While it has taken place without interruption for 30 years, the past decade has witnessed some remarkable changes in terms of its participation and organisation.

Let us begin with participation. It is first important to note that, until the late 2000s, the candlelight vigil did not have as many participants as in recent years. On average the turnout had been well under 100,000. It was 2009 that saw a dramatic surge in the number of vigil participants. The increase was likely due to several factors: 2009 marked the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the event; the Beijing Olympics and the Sichuan Earthquake in 2008 drew a lot of attention to political issues concerning China, and Hong Kong witnessed the rise of new protest agency and mass mobilisation from 2009 onward (Yuen and Chung 2018).

The hike in numbers was sustained for a few years until being rolled back by the emergence of localism around 2012. Promoting ideas of self-determination and political independence, localists have attacked the candlelight vigil and its organisers for invoking nationalistic sentiments despite their pro-democracy orientation. Ensuing controversies, together with newly emerging alternative commemorations held elsewhere, led to a shrinking vigil turnout, especially among young people. Although our onsite surveys in Victoria Park show that there were still "newcomers" (i.e., first-time participants), the proportion of regular participants has been rising, while the

proportion of young participants has declined. This trend was entrenched by the Umbrella Movement in 2014, as the perceived failure of the protest further fragmented the pro-democracy camp and channelled their infighting to what the candlelight vigil means for the pro-democracy movement.

The declining turnout has been accompanied by a concomitant change in the organisational aspect. Although the Alliance remains the leading organiser, the veteran pro-democracy organisation has been fiercely criticised, primarily by the localists, for turning the vigil into a yearly routinised ritual through which it can solicit donations and claim political credit. But the most consequential was the withdrawal of the Hong Kong Federation of Students (HKFS), a leading student organisation originally comprising all student unions of local public-funded universities. A founding member of the Alliance that had been responsible for mobilising young people to the vigil, the HKFS stopped attending the vigil in 2015 and even withdrew from the Alliance in April 2016 – after four student union members voted to quit the HKFS. As a result, many student groups have also stopped attending the vigil.

The withdrawal of these student organisations not only led to the declining number of young participants, but also eroded the vigil's professed commitment to passing on memories to the younger generation. Indeed, participants have showed increasing disagreement with some of the objectives set by the Alliance. According to our onsite surveys, there have been fewer participants who think that Hong Kong people have a responsibility to promote the development of democracy in China, and more participants who think they do not.

**Could you expand more on the question of how the commemoration of June 4<sup>th</sup> impacts Hong Kong's local politics?**

**Edmund Cheng and Samson Yuen:** The June 4<sup>th</sup> commemoration has been a ground for contestation between the pan-democrats, the localists, and pro-Beijing groups. For pro-Beijing groups and politicians, June 4<sup>th</sup> has been a rather "sensitive" question – they seldom challenge the veracity of the historical account for fear of invoking a public backlash; they have attempted to spread a consequential argument, i.e., justifying the crackdown for the greater good, from which the reassertion of Party-state authority was seen as the precondition for China's post-1989 prosperity and strength. But even that argument backfired. Constrained by the moral legitimacy of the commemoration, the most they can do is to avoid talking about it.

For the pan-democrats, the June 4<sup>th</sup> commemoration helps not only to facilitate social mobilisation but also to build up a collective identity. The commemoration serves the duality of creating a moral spectacle and resonating with the local pro-democracy movement. The vigil erects a public stage that serves to highlight the moral worth of civil liberties through ritualistic performances – mourning the deaths, permitting activists' testimonies, and reviving public memories. First, since the stated goals of the vigil (e.g., to seek vindication from the Chinese authorities) are difficult to achieve in the short run, the organisers' more realistic objective is to fortify memories about Tiananmen and pass them on to the younger generation, such that a collective identity concerning the stated goals can be maintained and strengthened. Second, the commemoration is one of the largest and most uninterrupted mass mobilisations in the city. It provides the opportunity for pro-democracy forces to network with supporters, establish linkages with current affairs, and enable resource mobilisation; the vigil fuels the enduring struggle for democracy in China and Hong Kong.

For the localists, the candlelight vigil was a major turf for them to bolster their political influence. They challenge the vigil and the Alliance in two ways. Their first critique is that the vigil promotes a form of Chinese nationalism that has fallen out of sync with the younger generation. As many young people did not experience the Tiananmen events and tend to have a much stronger local identity than Chinese identity, they should not feel any responsibility to attend the vigil. Even if they choose to commemorate the victims, it should be done so out of respect for human rights rather than nationalistic sentiments. The problem with nationalism, they argue, is that it emotionally binds Hong Kong people to the Chinese nation and diverts attention from Hong Kong's struggle for democracy. To focus on local democracy, Hong Kong people should distance themselves from political affairs in the mainland and concentrate their efforts on local issues. Their second critique centres on the form of the vigil. They contend that the vigil has been too ritualistic and full of old-fashioned repertoire. To them, these rituals serve no more than a symbolic purpose and have no actual impact on either the Chinese government or Hong Kong's democratisation progress. Some further argue that both the Alliance and the pro-democracy parties have been taking advantage of the vigil and the Tiananmen victims to gain political currency. Others take issue with the slogan and argue that "seeking vindication" could endorse the Chinese government, thus legitimising the oppressor of Hong Kong's freedom.

### Remembering June 4<sup>th</sup> through performative practices in Hong Kong

wen yau

**Every year during June 4<sup>th</sup> commemorations, as well as during other marches and social movements, performance artists and their practices are particularly visible in Hong Kong. In your opinion, and based on your experience as well as your research, what is the role of performance art in Hong Kong's political arena?**

**wen yau:** First of all, I tend to call the actions presented by artists in protests "performative practices" rather than "performance art." Performance art as an art form has traditions developed in specific historical and cultural contexts. (One troubled example is the term "performance art" being translated into *xingwei yishu* 行為藝術 in Chinese, which literally means "behavioural art," and varies from the so-called Western contexts.) In protests, it may not necessarily be the artists who stage those actions, and the artists may not take these actions as works of art *per se*.

I prefer to use a broader framework of "performative practice" instead of aesthetic performance or "performance art." Performances or performative actions in social movements often serve as the most immediate and direct tools for artists (and/or other participants) to express their feelings using their bodily action and presence at the very location of protest. Some actions (such as the slow walk during the Anti-Express-Rail-Link protest) can also engage a wider public by inviting people to join and raise public awareness of specific issues. Some actions may be spontaneous, some may be rehearsed or planned beforehand, or some are a mixture of both. For me, these actions do not appear out of the blue but evolve into different forms basing on our experiences, memories, and knowledge acquired in the past. For example, the slow walk in the Anti-Express-Rail-Link protest borrowed its form from the highly *ritualised* protests staged by Korean farmers during the WTO

in Hong Kong in 2005: protesters held rice in their hands and knelt down every 26 steps. The slow walk was then appropriated by other activists on various occasions: for example, a group of university students staged a 12-hour slow walk with red roses in their hands to show their support for the dockers' strike in 2013, and a group of high school students presented a slow walk on bare feet, kneeling down every 28 steps for nine rounds at the Admiralty-occupied site during the Umbrella Movement in 2014.

These recurring actions can be seen as repertoires of protest when protesters (re)appropriate certain existing forms. Here, the role of artists is not only to stage "creative" forms of protest by drawing inspirations from the past, but also to critically engage the public in these actions – how we adapt these forms to a specific situation using our bodily actions involves understanding, analysis, and decision-making. Even in spontaneous action – the best example is probably the protesters' impromptu hide-and-seek with the police during the firing of tear gas on 28 September 2014 – protesters are building on the improvisational skills developed in previous protests so as to decide in a split second how to interact with each other and even to cope with life-threatening situations in a tacitly collaborative manner.

**The imagery of June 4<sup>th</sup> has pervaded the whole art field. What is the impact of June 4<sup>th</sup> on the aims, practices, and aesthetics of Hong Kong performance art?**

**wen yau:** I was in middle school in 1989 and we seldom learned anything about contemporary China in school at that time (the Chinese history textbooks end abruptly in the 1940s or even 1910s.) The Tiananmen Square Protest was an enlightenment for me on what was going on in contemporary China (this is true for my generation or even older ones). In the face of the 1997 sovereignty transfer from the United Kingdom to China, the crack-down turned our hope for democracy into fear and remained a trauma that haunted us from time to time afterwards. The tanks, the bloodshed, and the passionate goodwill of and the retaliation against the (student) protesters were all more shocking than anything that we (or my generation at least) had ever witnessed. The shock was so overwhelming that it troubled me for years and years. For me, art-making became a very expressive way to cope with these traumatic feelings (my first work on the June 4<sup>th</sup> incident was a theatrical play I wrote in high school!). Other than that, I have made numerous works related to June 4<sup>th</sup> – not only to commemorate those who lost their lives or freedom, but also to contemplate my troubled cultural identity in relation to a country from which I have felt so alienated since I was young.

My research on Performance Art in Hong Kong at Asia Art Archive<sup>(5)</sup> found that a lot of local artists presented their work in 1989 after the June 4<sup>th</sup> incident. This is quite a phenomenon, and some artists shared with me that they had a very strong urge to express their emotions after these feelings of "shock," and performance seemed to be the most immediate and direct means. As Mok Chiu Yu 莫昭如 and Sanmu 三木 (Chen Shisen 陳式森) regularly organised performance events on June 4<sup>th</sup>, these events became a ritual or tradition somehow, and an alternative to the collective candlelight vigils in Victoria Park. A group of 1980-born artists organised the "P-at-riot" (*Bashihou Liusi wenhua jie 80 後六四文化祭80*) project<sup>(6)</sup> in 2009. Some of

5. See <https://aaa.org.hk/en/ideas/ideas/hong-kong-performance-art-research-project> (accessed on 20 May 2019).

6. See <http://p-at-riot.blogspot.com> (accessed on 20 May 2019).



**Photo 1 – Go China**  
 尋找國民系列 – 中國加油  
 (Xunzhao guomin xilie – Zhongguo jiayou, Civil Left/Right series: Go China!) - performance/intervention, Time Square Piazza, Hong Kong, 4/6/2008  
 photo by Tse Yuk Man  
 © Tse Yuk Man, courtesy wen yau



**Photo 2 – Go China - Installation**  
 尋找國民系列 – 中國加油  
 (Xunzhao guomin xilie – Zhongguo jiayou, Civil Left/Right series: Go China!) - installation, From May 4<sup>th</sup> to June 4<sup>th</sup>, Jockey Club Creative Arts Centre, Hong Kong, 4/5-4/6/2009  
 © Cecil Liu, courtesy wen yau

them continued the project and presented “Re-interrogating June 4<sup>th</sup> and Our City” (*Bai shan xian jiang? Zai wen Liusi he wo cheng 拜山先講? – 再問六四和我城*)<sup>(7)</sup> in 2011. As most of the organisers were very young in 1989 and had no personal experience of the Tiananmen Square Protest then, these cross-media projects could approach the topic from a psychological distance or in a less emotional manner, unearth and pass on the forgotten histories of it. Since 2009, Him Lo has initiated “This Generation’s June 4<sup>th</sup>” (*Zhe yi dai de Liusi 這一代的六四*)<sup>(8)</sup> which openly invites artists to present performances on June 3<sup>rd</sup> in the Causeway Bay pedestrian zone every year. These events organised by the younger generation are performative to the extent that they have been seeking to engage the public in a more personal approach by contextualising the Tiananmen Square Protest in the current situation and everyday life in Hong Kong and relating it to the younger generations who have no experience of the 1989 incident. This may also make a contrast to some even younger generations in Hong Kong, who opt not to commemorate the June 4<sup>th</sup> Incident as they do not find any personal connection to it.

**June 4<sup>th</sup> and May 4<sup>th</sup> are often compared or associated with commemorations, including in the arts field. Would you like to tell us more about the relevance of this association in this anniversary year?**

**wen yau:** For me, both May 4<sup>th</sup> and June 4<sup>th</sup> were large-scale movements seeking a better “China” (not necessarily patriotic). I see the May 4<sup>th</sup> Movement as a reform proposed by some intellectuals at the modern turn of China. After the overthrow of the thousands-year-old monarchy, they embraced so-called Western ideas and rejected Chinese traditions in the hope of building a stronger country. Such xenophilic ideology might seem dated nowadays, especially in a post-colonial era. Yet, I respect the spirit of the May 4<sup>th</sup> Movement and sympathise with the pursuits of those intellectuals. They saw the democratic ideals but also overlooked the complexity of politics. Chen Duxiu 陳獨秀 and his fellows advocated scientific thinking, human rights, and democracy in China, yet their dreams still seem far from being realised till now. The notion of a “better China” is a rather relative notion, depending on who is in power.

In 2009, I was invited to participate in “From May Fourth to June Fourth: Exhibition and Performance Art Festival” (*Cong Wusi dao Liusi: Xingwei yishu ji xingwei yiwai shiyizhan 從五四到六四: 行為藝術及行為以外視藝展*), which was a rather loosely-organised project without a very rigid curatorial framework. In the exhibition, I presented a video installation documenting a performance I staged a year before on June 4<sup>th</sup> in Times Square Plaza, Hong Kong. In my performance, I wore an iconic black I-heart-HK T-shirt, drawing a map of China on it and slowly writing “from 1911 to 2009” in white. I also invited the audience to put red paint on me as I chanted “China, Add Oil” (*Zhongguo jiayou 中國加油*), a slogan that was used widely in propaganda during the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. The performance itself was part of an intervention at Times Square Plaza about the controversy surrounding the over-management of that privately-owned public space. The video was shown on an old-fashioned TV on a white pedestal, and a bunch of white flowers as well as a mirror were placed next to it. The T-shirt as a remnant of my performance was also hung up next to the video. I saw both my performance and this installation piece as more than a commemoration of the June 4<sup>th</sup> incident (or even the May 4<sup>th</sup> movement). It was my response to how economic growth seemed to override democracy and freedom nowadays, our loss of Hong Kong identity within China (bear in mind the “China fever” during the Beijing Olympics and the number of people in Hong Kong identifying themselves as Chinese reaching its post-handover peak at that time), and our ignorance and miscomprehension of such complex situations.

The situation in Hong Kong has changed so much since 2009. As the Beijing government is tightening its grip on Hong Kong, Macao, and even Taiwan in recent years, I think we need to learn more about history instead of merely chanting empty slogans commemorating both movements every year (or every few years). The binary opposition between Hong Kong and China tends to make things so oversimplified that it dumbs things down to

7. See [http://wooferten.blogspot.com/2011/06/blog-post\\_21.html](http://wooferten.blogspot.com/2011/06/blog-post_21.html) (accessed on 20 May 2019).  
 8. See <https://www.facebook.com/%E9%80%99%E4%B8%80%E4%BB%A3%E7%9A%84%E5%85%AD%E5%98%9B-118677504835578/> (accessed on 20 May 2019).

a love-hate relationship and hence populist mobilisation. As an antidote to such antagonism, I think we should also put Hong Kong and China on a bigger global map so as to understand and critically analyse the dynamics of world politics, and to broaden our imagination about what is meant by a better "China," what kind of social change we aspire to, and how we envision achieving that change, not only locally but also globally.

## Biographies

■ Edmund W. Cheng is an associate professor at the Department of Public Policy at the City University of Hong Kong. His research interests include contentious politics, political sociology, public opinion, Hong Kong politics, and Global China.

■ King-wa Fu is an associate professor at the Journalism and Media Studies Centre (JMCS), The University of Hong Kong. His research includes political participation and media use, computational media studies, health and the media, and the younger generation's Internet use.

■ Louisa Lim is a senior lecturer in Audiovisual Journalism at the University of Melbourne. She is the author of *The People's Republic of Amnesia: Tiananmen Revisited*. She is an award-winning journalist who reported from China for a decade for NPR and the BBC, and she co-hosts the Little Red Podcast which won the 2018 Australian Podcast Awards News & Current affairs category.

■ Keith B. Richburg is a professor of practice at The University of Hong Kong and director of the Journalism and Media Studies Centre. Before joining HKU, he spent more than 30 years with *The Washington Post*, serving as bureau chief in Southeast Asia, Africa, Paris, Beijing, and Hong Kong, where he covered the 1997 handover.

■ wen yau is a cross-media artist, researcher, curator, and writer focusing on performance/live art and social practices. She worked as researcher at the Asia Art Archive (2005-2012) and obtained a PhD at the Academy of Visual Arts, Hong Kong Baptist University, with a thesis entitled *Performing Identities: Performative Practices in Post-Handover Hong Kong Art and Activism*.

■ Samson Yuen is an assistant professor at the Department of Political Science of Lingnan University. Trained as a political scientist, he studies state power, civil society, contentious politics, and local governance in authoritarian and hybrid regimes, with a specialisation in the Greater China region.

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