

Scott R. McMaster

Artist's Statement

Scott R. McMaster is an award-winning international artist and researcher whose lens-based and sensory practices span over two decades, delving into the mediated intersections of perception, memory, identity, and the transformative impacts of urban, environmental, and technological forces in a globalized world. Working across photography, pinhole imaging, found film, and macro abstraction, his diverse projects uncover hidden narratives in the accidental, the overlooked, and the ephemeral, inviting viewers to reconsider how human interventions—cultural, economic, and digital—reshape our realities and sense of self.

A core unifying thread in McMaster's work is the exploration of mediation: how tools, devices, and societal structures filter and alter experience. In *The Accidental Self*, a decade-spanning series of unintended smartphone selfies probes the camera app as a contemporary mirror, questioning machine-mediated identity and authorship with humour and criticality. This technological gaze extends to *Hong Kong Obscura*, where lens-less pinhole photography captures alienation during the pandemic in a once-familiar city, rendering the urban landscape unfocused and estranged to echo disrupted belonging.

Memory's fluidity and the fragility of archives form another pivotal strand. *If I Only Had Time / An Unfamiliar Past* unearths and develops decades-old family films discovered amid personal upheaval, juxtaposing rediscovered images with contemporary reflections to challenge perceptions of recollection, family bonds, and identity in the digital age. Drawing on philosophical notions from Derrida and Bergson, the work highlights how new evidence reshapes entrenched narratives of the past.

McMaster's practice frequently engages socio-environmental tensions, particularly in dense urban contexts like Hong Kong. His longstanding *Untitled* series—initiated in the late 1990s—transforms decayed domestic and industrial surfaces into vibrant abstract macro-landscapes, celebrating beauty in neglect and inviting personal projections onto the invisible detritus of human environments. *Our Obsession with Sand* documents the artificial creation of beaches, exposing ecological costs of reshaping nature for leisure. *Bride's Pool Road* intertwines natural splendour with tragedy in a legendary locale, where biodiversity clashes with reckless speed racers and reclaimed wreckage. In *Six in Seven: Hong Kong Labour at Street Level*, street portraits illuminate economic disparities and resilient labour amid unaffordable property markets, revealing power imbalances at ground level.

Celebrated in prestigious venues across Asia, Europe, Canada, and the US—including Kuala Lumpur Portrait Awards, Busan International Photography Festival, Trieste Photo Days, and Singapore Art Week—McMaster's work is augmented by scholarly depth. His Hong Kong Research Grants Council-funded study of precolonial Hakka visual culture and award-winning graduate work on crowdsourcing transnational culture inform a practice that bridges art and inquiry. Ultimately, McMaster's images compel confrontation with the impermanent and marginalized, forging connections between the personal and global in an era of constant flux.