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Visible Voices of the Asylum Seekers – Art of the Vietnamese Refugees in Hong Kong

By 1995, Hong Kong had received 223,302 Vietnamese refugees who risked their lives in a bid for freedom by fleeing their country by boats. The annual new arrivals of these Vietnamese asylum seekers were as high as 34,112 in 1989. They lived in refugee camps with a bleak sense of hope, suffering from pains of loss, crisis of identity and deprivation of privacy and basic materials. With both psychological and physical conditions being stretched to an extreme, inner voices of these asylum seekers were largely unspeakable. Between 1989 and 1991, a 3-year art project funded by UN was conducted in these refugee camps. Over 800 pieces of works done by Vietnamese refugees of all ages were collected. They were their visible voices recorded at the time. This paper examines images selected from this collection in order to let these voices of the asylum seekers be heard again.