

HERE AND THERE: RE-IMAGINING HONG KONG LANDSCAPES

# 極目足下

想・見香港風光

# 維多與利亞的家書： 離島之於我們 意味著什麼？ A LETTER HOME FROM RIA TO VICTOR: WHAT DO THE OUTLYING ISLANDS MEAN TO US?

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維多：

這邊一切都好，勿念。

人在異鄉浪蕩，不必糾纏於陳年老套的慣例與思維，更毋須買誰的帳。人與他人、與地方拉開了距離，彼此隔著幾分客套、些許期待、還留有一股清醒，生活豈不簡單利落？但你總說一方水土養一方人，我城的人與事早已在身上生根。我們的言行與思維莫不漬浸著此地的記憶，根本無法撇清幾代人血肉相連的牽繫。選擇自有其代價，我倒寧願在思念與捨離、記掛與忘卻之間踽踽獨行。

說來好笑，前陣子我夢見我們一面天南地北，一面在東博寮海峽暢泳。就像小時候一樣，你裝模作樣的唸起電影對白，迫著我猜那片段來自什麼電影、又訴說什麼樣的情節。直至踏上甕缸洲吃煎釀三寶時，你對著一望無際的大海說：「盧亨的故事從來不限於腳下這小島，但這小島卻是我們航向四方、連結世界的起點。」我低頭一看，才發現我們竟然變成傳說中半人半魚的盧亨 fig 1。一覺醒來，我總覺得自己確實長出魚尾巴，走在街上雙腿格外的沉重，也生怕尾巴亂擺隨時弄傷旁人。

在這怪夢打亂慣常步伐之際，你的郵包就送到。謝謝你細心打點，吃的、玩的、研讀的、保健的應有盡有，既包羅我素日所好，也寄來我城當下的新鮮物事。我立即給自己泡一壺顏奇香茶莊的黃金桂，翻起國畫家管偉邦剛出版的作品圖錄《山旌見記》。

《山旌見記》系列是國畫家雇船出海遊歷逾 50 座離島的紀錄，也是一次臥遊山光水色的邀約。每一畫冊起始，畫家即標明遊島航線，再仿效《水經注》、《徐霞客遊記》等史地書寫的方式，記述各島嶼的地理形貌與人文風情。一頁頁絹布掀起了浪花、也吹來朵朵白雲，藝術家讓人隨船出發細看螺洲白排聳聳然如昂首雄獅，又在茫茫大海赫然發現一枚枚失落於 Google 地圖的無名島。豔陽薰蒸下，客船逐浪而行，觀眾得以由遠而近追蹤著破邊洲六角岩柱巍巍列隊的陣勢，又見浪濤劈劈啪啪的沖擊著沙塘口崖岸。絹布裝訂成冊重構了藝術家遊島的航程，也讓我重訪往日與你一起行山出海的片段。想來你在現場賞畫時，一定以不同語調連連驚呼：「嘩！香港真係好靚！幾時出去玩下呢？」

不過，隨便在網絡世界搜尋：果洲群島、蒲台島等地名，成千上萬美得發膩、角度又變化多端的照片即時傾瀉而出，一系列水墨山水又有什麼作為？

無可否認，畫家想融會前人的筆墨，精準的描摹大小島嶼的不同形態與神韻，著意渲染出遊船當日的天氣、風向與水流。然而，管偉邦的《山旌見記》系列終究不是真實風景的再現。在他的筆下，萬象世界鉛華盡洗，通通轉化成墨色的濃重輕淡、筆法的拖曳轉折，以至構圖佈局的動靜虛實。於是，濃墨斫拂、枯筆橫拭直劈譜出了甕缸群島的峭壁亂疊；淡墨重重暈染出雲霧晦暗與海面清輕，聊聊幾筆將平緩延綿的東龍島漂浮水上。這

是我們可以記認的香港島嶼，倒也毋庸將之困於某時某日的觀光經驗。藝術家將空間的遊移與時間的流逝轉化為可見的物象，畫面所見的是感知觸動、轉瞬即逝的時光碎片，因水墨筆跡落下形相，邀請觀者隨時開卷暢遊畫家所見所感的島嶼。

曉有意思的是，《山旌見記》系列呈現的遊船經驗已成「過去」，但卻在藝術家難以預期的「未來」與觀者如我等相遇。觀者得以參與藝術家的海島之旅，卻又因應自身的經驗誘發對島嶼、對地方的懷想，由此時間不再是一江東水似的單向流動，而步入了環迴往復的今昔觀照。畫面天遼海濶似從無窮宇宙的視野回望此間。畫家描畫出億萬年時光在海島打滾的痕跡，究其實此刻崖岸正經受著風吹雨打，所謂亘古不變的風景正在我們眼前悄悄的變。再者，畫冊不見人煙、只見若干建築結構，隱然揭示現代文明改造自然的工程。人間百年之於悠悠天地意味著什麼？這系列水墨作品展現了藝術家遊歷的某一剎那，同時也記錄了海島所走過的漫長歲月，其意義正在於以靜止不動的筆墨與觀者一起接近永恒的皮相。遊移於剎那與永恒，我們如何看待自己所擁有的時間？又如何有限的時間選擇自己可以做的事情？

今天我們把不見人煙的狗脾洲、繁華不再的大利島，又或僻處一方的東坪洲，稱為「荒島」，視之為鬧市不可或缺的避世清靜地。曾幾何時，香港島亦不過是一片不毛之地。開埠之初，時任庫政司 R. M. Martin 抱怨：







fig 1 & A

去年，我們一起去大館看有關夏碧泉檔案的藝術展覽，當中那一座盧亭塑像令人印象難忘，大抵就是夢的源由。圖片由 ahtong 提供。

Last year, we went to Tai Kwun to see the art exhibition about Ha Bik Chuen's archive. The statue of Lo Ting was unforgettable and probably the source of this weird dream. Courtesy of ahtong.

fig 2

過去我們對長洲等島嶼的想像大多停留於消閒渡假、抑或經濟發展，種種改造島嶼的構想依然未有脫離荒岩論的窠臼。



fig B

In the past, when we thought about outlying islands, such as Cheung Chau, it was always about vacation or economic development. Nowadays, we still come under the influence of the barren rock discourse and propose different plans to change the outlook of the islands.

香港是一塊荒岩，一無所產、更不能發展什麼…這島嶼面積有限、又佈滿石頭；沒有農業、工業或商貿，再加上人口浮動、島民性好掠奪，期望此地有機會增加財政收益注定落空。<sup>1</sup>

過去「荒岩論者」一直數落香港，指斥此地天氣酷熱、致命的熱帶病肆虐、食水資源短缺、土地又貧瘠得林木不生，並不適宜殖民棲居。諸般先天限制正好理直氣壯的闡明此地必須大興土木，方得以成為現代文明之地。因此，當時人著眼於十年、三十年的經濟發展，急於修築道路、籌劃填海項目、興建水塘、發展植林計劃，力圖改變香港島的面貌。<sup>2</sup> 及至 19 世紀末，R. C. Hurley 及 John Arnold 撰寫香港旅遊指南推銷我城時，談此地風光如畫，更突顯歐式建築、纜車、水塘等現代建置如何克服自然地貌的障礙，反映英國殖民統治遠東的成就。遵循發展現代文明的思維，這些旅遊書寫介紹本地名勝大多聚焦於城市景觀，大嶼山與長洲已屬探險級行程，作者當然更不會提及散落四周海域的偏遠島嶼<sup>3</sup>。諷刺的是，現代文明的建置正正少不了自香港這塊荒岩開採的花崗岩石材。我們如何衡量一座島嶼的價值？難道荒岩註定要備受冷落，抑或如赤蠟角島、欖洲或昂船洲等靜待鏟泥車與打樁機將之改頭換面？

你有否留意到管偉邦創作《山畧見記》系列往往從船上觀察島嶼與大海的關係，卻甚少直接踏足其間作實地考察？或許這就是盧亭浮游汪海所見的景象。對這些逐水而居的族群來說，島嶼不是長住久安的根據地，而是稍作停歇的避風港、與岸上人做交易的補給站。當我們對島嶼的想像不再局限於可用空間的擴張，而是延展至島與島之間的連繫與阻隔，我們會否看到不一樣的生活方式？

記得屈大均在《廣東新語》曾經提及有關盧亭的一則怪事。話說好事之徒將盧亭帶到岸上，又供應衣食讓牠學習人類文明。但這傢伙竟然毫不領情，反而趁機逃離，重返大嶼山、萬山群島一帶海域過其非人生活。<sup>3</sup> 看著國畫家寫出滄海茫茫一孤島，彷彿就是新世代盧亭的鄉愁。你說這半人半魚將何所歸依？


此間濁流滔滔，多多保重！念甚！



Victor,

Everything is fine here. Don't worry.

Wandering in a foreign country, one need not be entangled with age-old conventions and ways of thinking, nor show respect for anyone. Aren't our lives simpler once we distance ourselves from others and our place, putting a little courtesy and anticipation between us and everything with a clear mind? Still, you always say that our place of origin nurtures us. People and things in our city have already grown roots in our bodies. With our words, behaviour and ways of thinking soaked with memories in our city, there is no way to get rid of these flesh-and-blood ties. Every choice comes with its price. I would rather walk alone, alternating between longing and abandoning, remembering and forgetting.

It is funny. I dreamed a while ago that we were swimming in the East Lamma Channel, chatting aimlessly. Just like when we were kids, you read out some movie dialogues pretentiously, forcing me to guess what movie they were from and what kind of scenes they were about. When we stepped onto the island of Ung Kong Chau to eat three fried stuff treasures, you looked at the boundless sea and said, 'The story of Lo Ting is never limited to this small island under our feet. This island, however, is the departure point of our voyage outward to connect with the world.' I looked down and saw us transformed into the legendary creature Lo Ting, half-human, half-fish . When I woke up, I kept thinking that I had indeed grown a fishtail. My legs were extra heavy walking down the street, and I was afraid that my wagging tail might hurt someone else.

Your package arrived in the mail at the time when this strange dream disrupted my usual pace. Thank you for your meticulous arrangement, providing me with things to eat, play with, read, and keep my health. These are all stuff that I like, as well as new things from our city. I quickly brewed myself a pot of Huangjin Gui from Ngan Ki Heung Tea Company and began leafing through the ink artist Koon Wai Bong's catalogue, *From Here to Timbuktu* Series.

*From Here to Timbuktu* series is a record of the artist's trips to 50-odd outlying islands in a hired boat, as well as an invitation to us to travel among the mountains and water. The painter marked his routes to the islands at the beginning of each album and described each island's geographical

features and traditional customs, following geographical writing in the likes of *Commentary on the Water Classic* and *Xu Xiake's Travels*. Pieces of plain silk make waves and bring white clouds to our eyes. The artist allows us to follow his boat to see Castle Rock towering like a lion and discover unnamed islands unknown to Google Maps in the vast sea. Under a bright sun, the boat chased the waves, allowing the audience to follow the majestic formation of the hexagonal rock pillars on Po Pin Chau, and see the waves crashing against the cliffs of Bluff Island. The silk-bound album reconstructs the artist's voyage to the islands and allows me to revisit the old days when we hiked and sailed to the sea together. Surely you must have exclaimed in many tones while viewing the paintings in person, "Wow! Hong Kong is so beautiful. When do we go out and have some fun?"


A casual search of the names of places such as the Ninepin Islands and Po Toi Island on the internet, however, instantly brings up thousands of photographs with exquisite beauty and various angles. What can a series of Chinese ink landscape paintings do?


It is undeniable that the painter wanted to incorporate the ink and brushwork of his predecessors to accurately depict the varying forms of islands, large and small, while emphasising the weather, wind and current on the day of the cruise. Koon Wai Bong's *Timbuktu* series, however, is not a representation of the landscape in reality after all. Under his brush, the facades of the world are washed away and transformed into the intensity and lightness of ink, the dragging and turning of the brushwork, as well as the composition's motion, stasis, concreteness and abstractness. In this way, the pecking of heavy ink and criss-crossing of dry brushstrokes create the chaotic overlay of the cliffs of Ung Kong Islands, while layers of pale ink shaded the darkness of the clouds and the lightness of the sea, bringing out the gentle and continuous Tung Lung Island floating on the water in a few brushstrokes. These are islands of Hong Kong we can recognise, and there is no need to confine them to a sightseeing experience at a particular time and date. The artist transformed the movement of space and the passage of time into visible objects. What we see in the painting are fleeting fragments of time activating our perceptions, as the ink and brushstrokes leave behind an image that invites the viewer to open the scroll at any time to visit the island as seen and felt by the artist.


What is interesting is that the boat trip experience presented in the *Timbuktu* series has become 'the past', but it encounters viewers like me


in a future that could not be anticipated by the artist. The viewers can then participate in the artist's journey to the islands and induce their feeling towards the islands and the place in response to their own experiences. In this sense, time no longer flows unidirectionally like a river, but is transformed into a circulating view of the present and the past. The paintings show wide-open skies and seas, as if the view comes from the infinite universe, looking back at this place. The painter depicts the traces of time rolling over the islands for hundreds of millions of years. The shores and cliffs are, in fact, now being battered by wind and rain. The so-called permanent and unchanging landscape changes quietly before our eyes. In addition, the album shows no people, but only some architectural structures, revealing covertly modern civilisation's project to transform nature. What do a hundred years of human life mean to this expansive world? Besides showing a moment of the artist's travels, this series of ink paintings also recorded the ages experienced by the islands. Its significance is that the audience is allowed to approach the appearance of eternity through still ink and brushstrokes. Moving between a single moment and eternity, how do we see the time we possess? How do we choose what we can do in our limited time?

Today we call the uninhabited Kau Pei Chau, the no longer busy Tai Lei Island, and the secluded Tung Ping Chau 'desert islands', seeing them as an indispensable escape from the bustling city. Once upon a time, Hong Kong Island was just a stretch of barren land. At the beginning of the foundation of Hong Kong, the then Colonial Treasurer R. M. Martin complained:

"Hong Kong is a barren rock producing nothing, not leading to any place [...]. The limited size, and rocky nature of the island; the absence of agriculture, manufactures or commerce, and the fluctuating and predatory character of the population, forbid the hope of an income being raised." 

Those in support of the talk of 'barren rock' had continued their criticism of Hong Kong as a place unsuitable for colonial settlement for its hot weather, deadly tropical diseases, shortage of water resources, and infertile land. These inherent limitations justified the need to pile up construction projects to make this land a place for modern civilisation. Therefore, with a view to economic development in the next ten and thirty years, people were eager to build roads, plan reclamation projects, construct reservoirs, and develop forestation projects to change the look of Hong Kong Island. 

By the end of the 19th century, when R. C. Hurley and John Arnold wrote a Hong Kong guidebook to promote the city, they described the place as picturesque, while highlighting how European buildings, cable cars, reservoirs, and other modern structures overcame the natural landscape, thus reflecting the achievements of British colonial rule in the Far East. Following the mindset of modern civilisation development, most of these travel writing focused on the cityscape, while Lantau Island and Cheung Chau were seen as adventures, and the authors certainly did not mention the remote islands scattered around the sea . The irony is that the construction of modern civilisation was built on the granite mined from this barren rock called Hong Kong. How do we measure the value of an island? Is a barren rock meant to be left alone, or does it have to wait for its transformation by excavators and pile drivers like Chek Lap Kok Island, Lam Chau or Stonecutters Island?

Did you notice that Koon Wai Bong's *Timbuktu* series often observes the relationship between the islands and the sea from a boat but seldom steps into their realm directly for fieldwork? This, perhaps, is what Lo Ting sees while floating and swimming around the oceans. For these communities living in the water, islands act not as a base for permanent residence but rather as a shelter for temporary stops and a supply station to trade with people on the shore. When our imagination of islands is no longer limited to the expansion of available space and extends instead to the connection and obstruction between islands, will we see a different way of life? I remember that Qu Dajun wrote about a strange occurrence with Lo Ting in *New Accounts of Guangdong (Guangdong Xinyu)*. A busybody brought Lo Ting onto the shore, providing her with food and clothing so that she could learn about human civilisation. Lo Ting, however, did not appreciate the opportunity and took the chance to escape back to the waters around Lantau Island and Wanshan Archipelago to continue living its inhuman life.  Viewing a lonely island in the vast sea under the brushstrokes of the Chinese painting artist, it seems to be the nostalgia of a new generation of Lo Ting. Where do you think this half-human, half-fish will return to?

Take good care of yourself in this world of turbid torrents. Miss you much.

維多與利亞的家書：

離島之於我們意味著什麼？

A Letter Home from Ria to Victor:

What do the Outlying Islands

Mean to Us?

- 1 Robert Montgomery Martin,  
“Report on the Island of Hong  
Kong,” in *The British Colonies:  
Their History, Extent, Condition, and  
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Publishing Co., 1851), 11–12.
- 2 C. Michael Guilford, “A Look Back:  
Civil Engineering in Hong Kong  
1841–1941”, *Journal of the Hong  
Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic  
Society*, vol. 37, 1998, 81–101.
- 3 屈大均：《廣東新語》，〈鱗語〉，  
卷二十二（香港：中華書局，1974  
年），頁 550。  
Qu Dajun, “Linyu”, in *Guangdong  
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- 4 本文以家書的形式回應國畫家管偉  
邦的作品，文中的角色「維多」與  
「利亞」來自另一參展藝術家梁嘉  
賢的畫作《維多利亞的細碼束衣》，  
借以勾連起觀看太平山與離島兩種  
風景的不同思考。  
This article is a creative response to  
the works of the ink artist Koon Wai  
Bong in the form of a letter home.  
The characters, Victor and Ria, are  
taken from the painting *Victoria's  
Small-sized Girdle* from another  
participating artist Leung Ka Yin,  
Joey to highlight different thinking  
modes between viewing the Victoria  
Peak and the outlying islands.