

HERE AND THERE: RE-IMAGINING HONG KONG LANDSCAPES

極目足下

想・見香港風光

KOON WAI BONG — OUTLYING ISLANDS

管偉邦 — 離島



記在山旴晃 WANDERING AROUND TIMBUKTU

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2017 年，因為香港，我畫了獅子山；及至 2022 年，再因為香港，我沒有畫山，卻畫島。

獅子山早年在一些地方志有記載，但不是什麼名山。唯獨到香港電台電視節目《獅子山下》的出現，此山便與香港人的艱苦奮鬥連結起來；自此，獅子山不再單單是一座山了。可是，今天當我們想到香港，也許不少人仍會想到獅子山的香港精神，但經過了過去幾年的社會、政治變遷，香港人似乎對香港這地有了另一番感覺。

這幾年，香港隨著社會種種事件的發生，有些人選擇離開，飄流遠方；但不論距離多遠，總有不少人像我一樣，開始會對這慚慚陌生的地方反思何謂「香港」？何謂「香港人」？誠然，香港是個移民城市，除了一小撮人是原居民外，大部份都是上世紀中南移的人口。我父母的一代，就是以難民身分遷徙來港的移民；他們大部份都在一窮二白中發奮圖強，逆境求存。然而，到我這個世代，或者我下兩個世代，我們都生活在一定程度的富裕條件之上；故此，我們不用掙扎求存，可以真正生活；同時，我們也不期然少問「價錢」，多問「價值」。尋求價值的過程中，香港人越來越注重生活的意義與平衡，故在工作之餘，亦不忙自娛；這種自娛，不再單單是傾向於消費主義與享樂主義，而是邁向享受生活和精神價值的追求。與此同時，有不少香港人也追問這些價值與自身的關係，尤其在這幾年來文化的種種衝擊下，香港人身份和香港價值的討論慢慢熱熾起來，以致有人會從過去的歷史中搜尋香港的舊文化，有人會從這地的風風雨雨中探索香港的固有價值，有些人會從每日擦身而過、似熟而非的事物中尋回自身的身分…

我所畫的幾座島嶼，遠離煩囂，在海上飄浮沉沉，各自都承載著自己的歷史，承受著外在的風雨，身體都飽受風霜，卻離開了大陸，甘願孑然一身，在困乏與逆境中搏鬥……我問，這不更像今時今日的香港人？

香港共有 263 座島嶼，我不是寫盡每一座島，只是希望藉著我的遊歷，以我個人的經歷去感受各座島嶼的特質，以我個人的筆墨描繪出各座島嶼的性格。

在過去，香港有不少畫家畫過香港的風景。隨著 19 世紀末至 20 世紀初山水畫的發展，中國畫家再沉思「外師造化」或「搜盡奇峰打草稿」的概念，摒棄了「紙上雲山」的手法，走向了「真山真水」的表現，汲取了西方素描的觀念，故不少藝術家帶著紙和筆跑到自然中取景寫生。在上世紀中葉，香港有不少山水畫家也在香港寫生：他們有的在實景前不忘把筆弄墨，在傳統以外的構圖章法與自然的巨山怪石中尋找出筆墨的細膩與精緻；有的則掌握著景致的獨特趣味，並於數分鐘的寫生過程中簡化物象，重組再現，務求營造出一種抽象的意味。我的寫生，就在於這兩者之間徘徊。事實上，每每當我對著實景落筆之先，腦際都會浮現出彭襲明、黃般若、呂壽琨等大家的寫生繪本。那些筆墨精良、造型簡潔、想法新穎的手法，往往能給予我不同的想像空間。可是，我從不重複他們，只是追求他們對景物的開創性與想像力，在活生生的景物中表現出藝術的提煉與筆墨的創造；與此同時，我不會丟失每座島嶼的個性，希望在我筆下的每個島嶼，就正正是「這」座島、「那」座山，凡識者都會過目知之，不單單是「一些」島嶼而已。

這次創作，我沒有預備什麼前設的概念，只是租了隻船，分了數天出航，任憑自身穿梭於島嶼之間，體會一下人與島的關係。

每一次海航，都從碼頭出發，慢慢遠離城市，慢慢前往茫茫大海，心情就像每天在機場離鄉別井的香港人一樣，所以每次起步總帶著一種惘然的愁緒，懷有一種離別的心情。我不是外向型的人，戶外寫生於我來說只不過是山水創作的一種延伸，藉此經驗去發掘與創作室創作的迥異之處；因此，我會份外留意著每次旅程的體驗，希望藉此與島對話。有趣的是，每次走到那些海上飄浮的小島，不論是風和日麗、藍天碧海，或是風雨欲來、天昏海黑，我心裡都有這種無名的孤單感。儘管船隻是租賃的，我可自由上落島岸，但我觀島，老是喜歡遠遠而眺，隔海而望。在船上，我所觀察的不是島嶼上明媚的風光，或是好玩的景點，而是島嶼在海上孑然一身的狀態——獨個兒流連海上，獨個兒面對風浪。香港的島嶼於東南海域截然不同：東海面對北太平洋，山石風化嚴重，島嶼座座形態獨特，造型變化萬千，讓人



嘖嘖稱奇；西海進入珠三角口，風浪緩和，島嶼形態自然，不少島嶼有屋村小鎮，或與城市有天橋相通；也有些島嶼帶有人工化的痕跡，島形明顯為人工改造，讓人眼前一亮。總括而言，香港眾島座座面貌迥異，山石崖岸處處巖巉嶙峋，六角玄武岩塊塊奇形怪狀，海蝕拱、海蝕洞個個鬼斧神工；這些盡是入畫的材料，但於我而言，寫生的獨特之處在於落筆描寫眼前景物之前，先去感受：眼去望，鼻去嗅，耳去聽，心去感受島嶼間空氣的溫度、大氣的濕度、造化之浩瀚、人類之渺小、岩石屹立萬年的亘古、草木絕處逢生的堅毅、風浪蠶食不斷的無情…這些都加強了我對島嶼的觀察，豐富了我對島嶼的想像。

我筆下所表現的島嶼，向來是選擇性的 —— 它不是純粹的自然再現，也不是脫離現實的抽象表現或筆墨遊戲。李方膺曾說：觸目橫斜千萬朵，賞心只有兩三枝。於我而言，賞梅和看山都是一樣，一山一水在每張紙幅上的呈現都要先經過複雜的取捨過程，儘管自然中有千百樣事物呈現於畫者眼前，但我們往往只會描繪自己賞心的一二，將其型態抽絲剝繭，再加以想象再造，以至蛻變成一幀山水作品。在這數次的寫生中，我也儘量平衡物象的客觀陳述和筆墨的抽象表現，務求在嶙峋巖嶠的山石中見到山水用筆的皴法石法，在鬱郁深邃的密林中見到國畫墨法的濃重淡輕。寫生所攜帶的工具材料，我沒有選擇鉛筆、畫紙，而是毛筆、冊頁；因為於我而言，鉛筆的線性表現往往會教我落於物象的外貌輪廓，毛筆的用筆用墨則叫我跳出了物象造型的框框，儘管我再沒可能盡以古人的皴法石法來表現眼前的景物，但用筆的疾、緩、提、按，與用墨的乾、濕、濃、淡，足以讓我的作品由一幅「風景」蛻變為一幀「山水」。至於寫生的挑戰，往往在於「虛」的處理。張大千曾於《畫說》說過，冬景山水之所以難，正正在於天空的層層渲染，因為過重渲染則無筆法，看之乏味；這好使我留意到島嶼寫景中天空的描繪。天空並不易寫；若老是留白，會失卻實景的真實性；一旦過度渲染，則如一幅水彩素

描；況且筆法又不易表現，故此寫天成為了我對實景寫生一大探索。至於畫冊，兩頁一開；我喜歡當中一開與一開之間的獨立與聯繫。因為每開一翻，我可視為一個獨立畫面，也可視為與上一開的延伸，也可視為與下一開甚至下數開的開始，變化多端；再者，若一開開的翻下去，景與景之間會構成一種景點的遷移，也透視出時間的痕跡，饒有玩味。

我這組作品，命名《山沓見記》。「沓見」乃遺留於廣府話的古語，二字皆從「九」從「日」，可見與中國古代傳說「羿射九日」有關，可能是指太陽藏身之處，人跡罕至，故借喻為偏僻的角落，所以很適合成為我那些島嶼冊頁的總稱。

我展出的冊頁，不是單單寫生冊，而是我基於寫生的創作。每冊都是由一片片的素絹併合而成，各有不同的大小厚薄，這都是與島形和遊歷的印象有關。例如大小磨刀洲，島形扁長，故以窄長的素絹為之；火藥洲、大小交椅洲、青洲、坪洲等，島嶼小巧，其貌不揚，適合細小的素絹表現；果洲群島，島嶼甚多，外貌多變，山石奇特，有海蝕洞，又有海蝕拱，故冊頁頁數甚多，以至有足夠的篇幅來描寫其貌；甕缸洲，山石巨大而巖

嶠，六角玄武岩甚豐，故以大幅素絹繪之，則能突顯其蒼茫與氣勢…素絹是一種很獨特的物料；有別於紙本，它擁有一種透明性，能讓冊頁在一頁與一頁的翻閱過程中，產生延伸空間的可能性，預視下一頁以至下數頁的圖象，隱約地托闕了打後一、兩頁的空間，加強了頁與頁的聯繫。這種物料的特性有效地結合了冊頁中文字和圖像兩個部份，因為我喜歡在圖像中加插文字，故此我大致把每本冊頁以文字、圖像互相穿插的方式編排，以至在閱讀文字之餘，可以借用絹本的透明性顯示出對應的圖像，更有效地加強了書與畫的結合。

我所書寫的文字，內容是隨意的；有的寫我對某些島嶼的看法，有的寫我對某些島嶼預先做的研究，有的寫我遊歷的過程，有的寫我遊歷的心情。沒有什麼系統，有文化、有歷史、有傳說、有遊記、有座標、有研究資料，大體如雜記般隨心寫寫。在編排圖像方面，我刻意顯露我遊歷的過程，讓人更容易感受到我自身遊歷的經驗。譬如在《果洲群島冊》中，我選擇了當時航行的路徑為圖像的先後編排，每座島嶼的出現次序都如我智能手機中的相片安排一樣（手機是以時序安排圖片的），讓觀者彷彿與我同遊群島一般。又如《坪洲冊》，我則把坪洲繪畫於數片冊頁的同一水平線上，而每頁的島嶼都

由右至左在數個畫面重複出現，尤如動畫一般，暗示出遊歷的時間性。又如《狗髀洲冊》，我在數頁的版面中寫出了兩座島嶼由西至東山石的迥異面貌，觀者可以透過我的眼睛，體察島嶼的質感與立體感……我希望透過不同的畫冊，可以從島嶼的選擇、安排與描繪中呈現出我自身的經歷，讓觀者再次與我同遊於那些島嶼之間，與我穿梭於香港這一地方的時與空。

《山沓見記》是我對島嶼的感受 —— 島嶼於洋洋大海中孑然一身的命運是一種，山石於厄運中與環境不斷掙扎是另一種；姑勿論那一種，人們都可尋找島嶼內裡的價值。在展覽中，我將每本冊頁皆安放於展示架上，每架面均安裝有燈箱，可發亮。燈箱的光源，不但增強了素絹的透明感，還讓觀者在翻閱冊頁的過程中，先經驗素絹於一般光源下的透明度，再從往後的頁面中漸漸察覺素絹的透光感，且愈後愈明亮。無庸置疑，這種明亮感會加強了島嶼的悅目性，故每當翻開一頁，素絹會愈顯透明，圖像會愈顯明亮，過程中會彷彿讓觀者一步步進入島嶼的深處，一層層發掘其內在質地；也許，這樣就能尋找出香港此時此地的內在價值。



圖片由管偉邦提供 Courtesy of Koon Wai Bong



I painted Lion Rock for Hong Kong in 2017. Now in 2022, I painted for Hong Kong again; but this time I painted islands instead of mountains.

Lion Rock was mentioned in early gazetteers, but not as a landmark as it is known today. It was not until the broadcast of RTHK series *Below the Lion Rock* that Lion Rock became a synonym of Hong Kong people’s industrious spirit. Since then, Lion Rock has been no longer just a mountain. Even today, the Lion Rock spirit of Hong Kong is what comes to mind when we think of Hong Kong. Nevertheless, after the social and political turmoil of the past few years, it seems Hong Kong people may have a new feeling towards their city.

Following various social incidents that took place during the past few years, some of us chose to leave and drift to faraway places. But no matter how far one has gone, I’m sure just like me, many of us have started to ask ourselves, “what is Hong Kong?” and “what makes one a Hongkonger?” as our city has grown more and more alienating. Doubtlessly, Hong Kong is a city of immigrants, with the majority of our population consisting of migrants from China who moved here during the middle of the 20th century, except for small number of natives who were here since much earlier. My parents were also refugees who had settled in this former colony. Most migrants of the time struggled to make a living and feed their families against dire poverty, whereas the economic conditions of Hong Kong people of my generation, or maybe those of two generations ahead, have improved a great deal. We can afford to enjoy life, and are no longer struggling with poverty. At the same time, we found qualitative values matter more than monetary values. In our quest for values, Hong Kong people have come to place more emphasis on the meaning of life and work-life balance. We have started to entertain ourselves when we get off work. This is not limited to consumerism and material pleasure, but is more about the enjoyment of life and quest for spiritual values. In the process, many of us started to question the relationship between these values and ourselves. Especially during the recent years when Hong Kong identity and Hong Kong values have become a hot topic as we were faced with the challenge of cultures from outside. Some of us unearth Hong Kong culture of bygone days from history; some of us search for intrinsic values of Hong Kong during days of turmoil; while some of us rediscover our own identities among common things around us that we once thought too familiar to even look at.

The islands that I have painted are far removed from the hustle and bustle of urban Hong Kong. They sink and float on top of the ocean, each

bearing its own history and enduring challenges of nature with their weathered and battered bodies. In spite of all these sufferings, they left the continent and willingly undertook this harsh and lonesome journey against all hardships. Don’t they resemble today’s Hongkongers?

There are 263 islands in Hong Kong. I am not painting each and every one of them. I have experienced the unique temperament of these islands during my travels, and I represented their different characters with my brush and ink.

The scenery of Hong Kong has always been a popular motif among local artists for generations. During the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, Chinese landscape artists broke free from the tradition of “fabricating clouds and mountains on paper” (*zhi shang yun shan*) and began to go for representation of “real mountain and real water” (*zhen shan zhen shui*) under the influence of the practice of sketching in Western art, as they revisited the principles of “learning from nature on the outside” (*wai shi zaohua*) and “to look for magnificent mountains and make sketches of them” (*sou jin qifeng da caogao*) from Chinese art history. That was why at the time many artists travelled to the countryside and made sketches. In mid-20th century, many landscape artists in Hong Kong made paintings from life: some sought to achieve subtlety and delicacy in brushwork and application of ink as they portrayed towering mountains and curious rocks in unconventional composition; some captured the unique qualities of the scenery in a matter of minutes, to create a sense of the abstract by simplifying the motifs. My sketches sway between these two tendencies.

In fact, whenever I started to sketch in front of an actual scene, sketchbooks by masters such as Peng Ximing, Huang Bore, and Lu Shoukun would come into my mind. Their masterly executed, concisely composed,



and ingenious expressions have offered me ample room for imagination. Nevertheless, I do not aim to repeat what they have done. What I aim to achieve is their innovation and imagination in the presentation of scenery, and their artistic sublimation and creativity with the brush and ink. At the same time, I will keep intact the personalities of each island that I painted; I hope that they will appear as “this” island, or “that” mountain that those who have seen the real thing would instantly recognise, instead of being just “some” islands.

I did not hold any preconception about this project. I just rented a boat, and embarked on several trips during which I allowed myself to roam among islands, and to feel the relationship between humans and islands.

I started at the pier every time I set sail. As my boat went farther and farther from the city into the unknown sea, I felt lost in sadness and the emotion of departure, just like feelings of the Hongkongers who leave us from the airport every day. I am not an outdoor person. For me, to make sketches on site is just part of my landscape painting practice, to take a step further in exploration of what difference it may have compared to painting in the studio. That was why during every journey I would be very conscious of my experience, so as to have dialogues with the islands. What intrigued me was that I felt an inexplicable loneliness every time I set sail towards those small islands, be it a clear sunny day with blue sky and white clouds, or overcast in a mist before an imminent storm. Though I was free to board any island if I had wanted to, as I have chartered the boat, I would actually prefer to look at these islands from afar, across a strip of sea. What I was observing was not how gorgeous the scenery was, or any popular tourist spots on the islands; rather, my focus was on how absolutely alone they were — floating alone on the sea, and facing wind and waves all by themselves. I found that islands off



the eastern and western side of Hong Kong are very differently shaped. As the east side faces the Pacific Ocean, strong impact of the weather has chiseled the islands in a myriad of unique shapes that form a geological spectacle; while on the west side the sea is calm and mild as it enters the Pearl River Delta, islands there retain their natural shapes with clusters of villages and small towns, some are even linked to the city with bridges. Some islands are very eye-catching with their shapes altered by manmade engineering. To conclude, islands in Hong Kong are each uniquely shaped, you can find steep and rugged cliffs along the shorelines, curious hexagonal basalt columns, and magnificent caves and archways formed by erosion. These are all picture-perfect material for landscape painting; but for me, what matters about sketching from life, is to feel with all my senses before I make the first mark on paper: to see, smell, hear, and feel the temperature between the islands, humidity of the air, the greatness of nature as compared to the smallness of humankind, sense of eternity of the rocks that have been standing there for hundreds of millions of years, perseverance of the plants that grow there, cruelty of the force of erosion by wind and waves...

My representation of islands was always selective — it is not just a facsimile of nature, pure abstraction or display of brushwork techniques that are out of touch with reality. “Tens of thousands of blossoms lay across my view, but I have eyes for only two or three branches”, according to Qing dynasty artist Li Fangying. For me, looking at plum blossoms is the same as looking at mountains. Even though thousands of elements from nature appear before the painter’s eyes, the representation of each mountain and each strip of water must necessarily go through a meticulous process of selection. We would only pick one or two elements from the scenery that delights us, extract the gist of their shapes, and turn it into a landscape painting with the addition of our imagination.

During these sketching trips, I have endeavoured to strike a balance between objective portrayal of subjects and abstraction by means of brush and ink, so that traditional texture strokes for painting rocks are visible in the portrayal of rugged rocks and steep cliffs, while gradation of ink from light to heavy, as essential in Chinese painting, is obvious in the depiction of dense forestry.

As for drawing tools, instead of the pencil and sketch pad, I have chosen the Chinese brush and album leaves format in traditional Chinese painting. For me, pencil lines would drive me to focus on the external appearances of objects, while the effect of brush and ink would free me from the confines of the depiction of shapes. Though I could no longer represent the scenery in front of my eyes with texture strokes as ancient masters did, the quickness, slowness, lifting, and pressing of the brush, and the dryness, wetness, thickness, and thinness of ink application succeeded in turning my otherwise regular landscape drawing into “mountains and waters” (*shanshui*), i.e., Chinese landscape painting. While the challenge of sketching lies mostly in the treatment of “emptiness”. Zhang Daqian opined in his *Hua Shuo* (lit. About Painting) that representation of the sky in layers of light ink is what makes winter landscape tricky, as too much layering would render it reckless and dull. This prompted me to pay more attention to the depiction of the sky in my islandscape paintings. It is never easy to paint the sky. You’d lose the sense of reality if you always leave it empty; but if you over paint it with washes, it would look like a Western watercolour. Also, it is not easy to show brushwork techniques there, so the depiction of the sky has become one of my themes of exploration in this sketching project. In the album leaves format, each fold

contains two opposite facing paintings. I especially like the connection as well as independence between each fold of leaves. It is superbly versatile. As I open a new fold, I can see it not only as a brand-new image, but also the continuation of the previous painting, and the opening to the next one or the next series of paintings. Moreover, it is intriguing if you view the album by opening one fold after another, as the changing of sceneries would create an effect of spatial shifting, and uncover the trace of time.

I name this series *From Here to Timbuktu* [山脊見記 (*shan gala ji*) in Chinese]. The term *gala* [Cantonese transliteration of 脊晃, remote corners] in the Chinese title is an archaic word that is still in use in Cantonese. The two characters are both made up of the parts 九 (nine) and 日 (sun), that connect them with the legend of Hou Yi shooting nine suns. It may be a metaphor of an isolated hiding place that no man has ever been, where the last surviving sun chooses to hide. It is just right for the title of my album series.

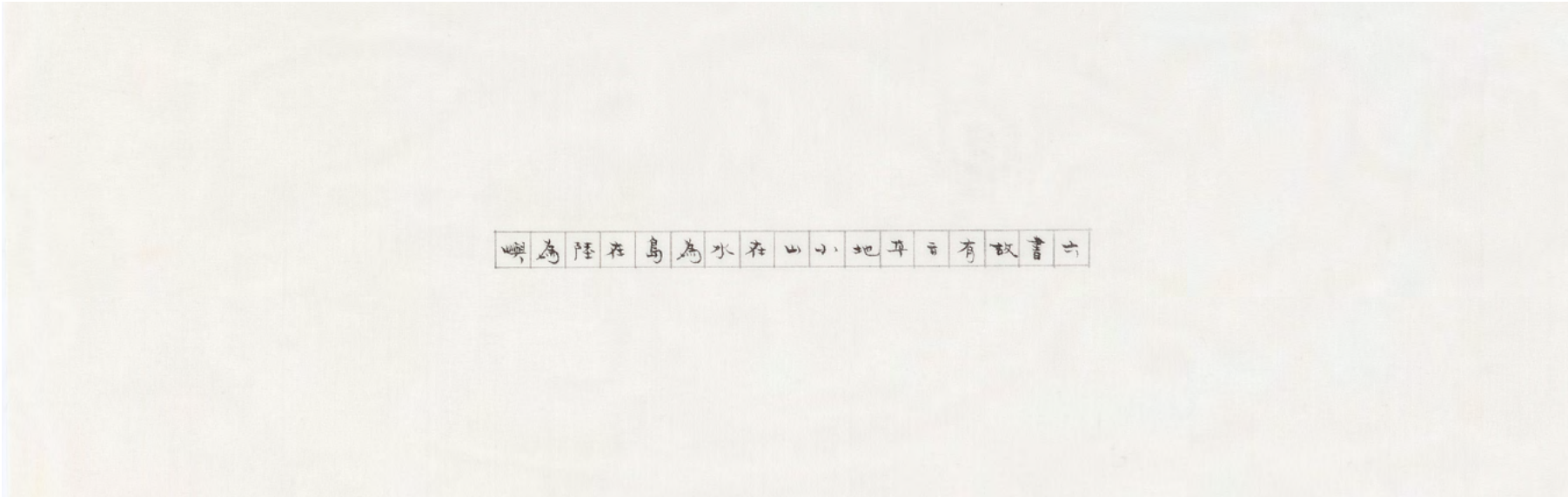
The albums that are exhibited this time are not just sketches of landscape, but a creative work about sketching. Each album is composed of different pieces of plain silks in varied sizes, according to the shapes of the islands and the experience of the trips. For example, I chose long and slender strips of plain silks for Brother’s islands because of their flat and long shapes; Magazine Island, Kau Yi Chau islands, Green Island, Peng Chau etc., small and unremarkable in appearance, are best represented in small pieces of silk. The Ninepin Group consists of many islands of varying and extraordinary shapes; therefore, I have devoted many more leaves to portray the peculiar

rocks, and caves and archways formed by erosion on these islands. The magnificence and strong presence of Ung Kong Islands with its huge rugged rocks and abundance of basalt columns can only be contained by a large format of silk. Plain silk is a unique material. Unlike paper, its translucent nature opens up the possibility of spatial continuity as the viewer flips through the leaves of the album, through which the next images would show through the translucent silk. It opens up the space of the next leaf or two, and strengthens the link between one leaf and the next. This unique material unites the text and images of the albums. I relish inserting text into images, and that is why these albums are generally arranged with text among images. The connection between Chinese calligraphy and painting is reinforced as the viewer reads the text while simultaneously seeing corresponding images through the silk.

My writing in these albums is rather casual. It contains my views on certain islands, my research on some of the islands before the trip, record of my journey, and my feelings about them. I include elements of culture, history, legends, my own travels, coordinates, and research material in the style of an anecdotal essay without following any system. For instance, in *From Here to the Ninepin Group* album, the images come in the same order as during my journey, just like how photographs are chronologically arranged on my smart phone, so that it would be like taking viewers along with me on the journey. In the *From Here to Peng Chau* album, I draw the same island on few leaves, but place them on the same horizon. And the island would appear repeatedly on a number of images from right to left. This animation-like effect suggest the temporality of my travels. In the *From Here to Kau Pei Chau*

album, I portrayed the diverse appearances of mountains and rocks in these two islands as viewed from the west to the east. Viewers can feel the texture and three-dimensionality of these islands through my eyes. I hope to invite viewers to once again set sail among these islands, to travel through space and time of Hong Kong, through my experience as represented in my selection of islands, arrangement of images, and scenic portrayal in these albums.

From Here to Timbuktu embodies my feelings towards these islands, including an island’s loneliness amid the immense ocean, rocks’ struggles against harsh natural environment and ill fate, from which viewers can always find intrinsic values of these islands. In the exhibition, each album is placed on an illuminated display station. The light from the lightbox highlights the translucency of the plain silk, as viewers first experience with texture of plain silk under normal lighting when they begin to flip open the leaves of the album, and then they would feel how translucent the silk can be, when it gets brighter and brighter as viewers go on flipping the album towards the end. This brightness would enhance the pleasure of viewing, as the images get brighter page by page, it would be as if viewers are led deeper and deeper into the islands. They would discover the nature of these islands layer by layer, and hence eventually see the intrinsic value of Hong Kong, the here and now.



《山脊見記》

FROM HERE TO TIMBUKTU

裝置：水墨絹本冊頁及燈箱

Installation: ink-on-silk album leaves & lightbox

一組八件作品 A set of 8 works

尺寸不定 Dimension variable

2022



《山脊見記：蒲台群島》
FROM HERE TO PO TOI ISLANDS



