

HERE AND THERE: RE-IMAGINING HONG KONG LANDSCAPES

# 極目足下

想·見香港風光

黃進曦 — 九龍群山

WONG CHUN HEI, STEPHEN — KOWLOON MOUNTAIN RANGES



# 還原風景 去蕪存菁 ——與黃進曦 談《九龍群山》

## RESTORING THE LANDSCAPE: ON KOWLOON MOUNTAIN RANGES WITH WONG CHUN HEI

● 吉暝水  
● Grace Gut  
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◎ English Translation by Ting Wing Yan, Vivian

在白畫布上作畫，由無到有，建構風景，對畫家來說是理所當然的事。如若畫布非白布，而是一幀相片。相片上揮筆，改動畫面，重置風景。以繪畫介入攝影，手法既可看成是對相片的「破壞」，又可當作是「二次創作」的「建設」，在藝術家黃進曦眼中更是「還原風景」的方法。

訪問：吉暝水

受訪：黃進曦

在相片上作畫，通過畫筆「還原風景」，這念頭是怎樣產生的？

行山時，我望向密密麻麻的建築，不禁自問到底城市發展有沒有「最佳平衡點」。我曾向做攝影的朋友建議，在對方拍得的城市相片上，用顏料蓋住過度發展的部分，嘗試還原到心目中理想的風景。不過，當年討論完就未有實行。

多年後，機緣來了，你如何在今次展覽實踐「還原風景」？

去年九月，我從山頂盧吉道眺望九龍半島，以鏡頭捕捉尖沙咀一帶的海岸和山脊。焦點鎖定於九龍群山，然後參考歷史照片和舊明信片，規劃一組三幅的作品，分別定格於當下、殖民時代中段，以及開埠初期，從而回溯香港城市發展的變化。相片一式三份打印於畫布，其中兩幅用塑膠彩作畫，在上面分別繪出參考 1950 年及 1864 年九龍半島面貌的風景。

遊歷是你創作常見的題材，但筆下的老香港，你都不會遊歷過，畫起來感覺如何？

展覽《孤高的旅程》所畫的那些地方，我都沒有親身到訪。不過，今次更有遊走於熟悉與陌生之間的另一種遊歷感覺。外國的變化可能未必那麼明顯，但香港發展得實在太快。開埠初年相片的景象荒蕪得好像望向一個陌生到不行的地方，完全無法找到認出拍攝地點的線索。來到 1950 年，鐘樓、訊號塔和半島酒店等建築至今依然屹立，不難對應今日街景，作畫過程就變得好像走進那段時空，在昔日街巷裡穿梭。

早前《孤高的旅程》對著電腦螢幕寫生，今次參考歷史相片做創作，處理上有何變化？

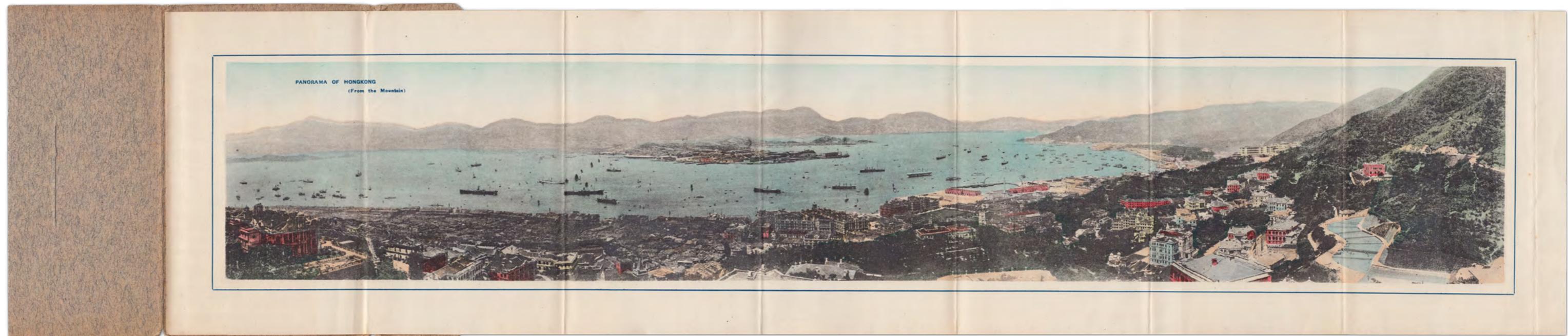
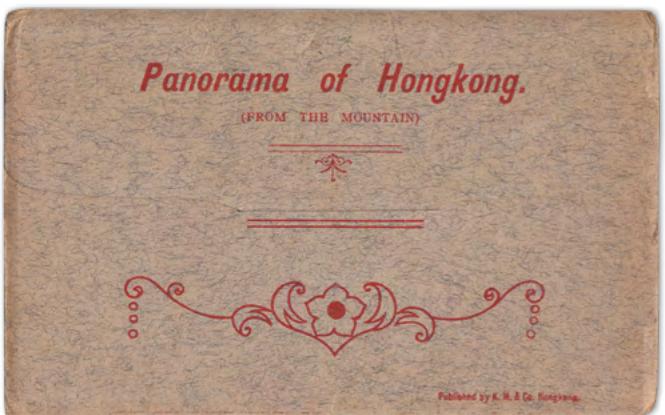
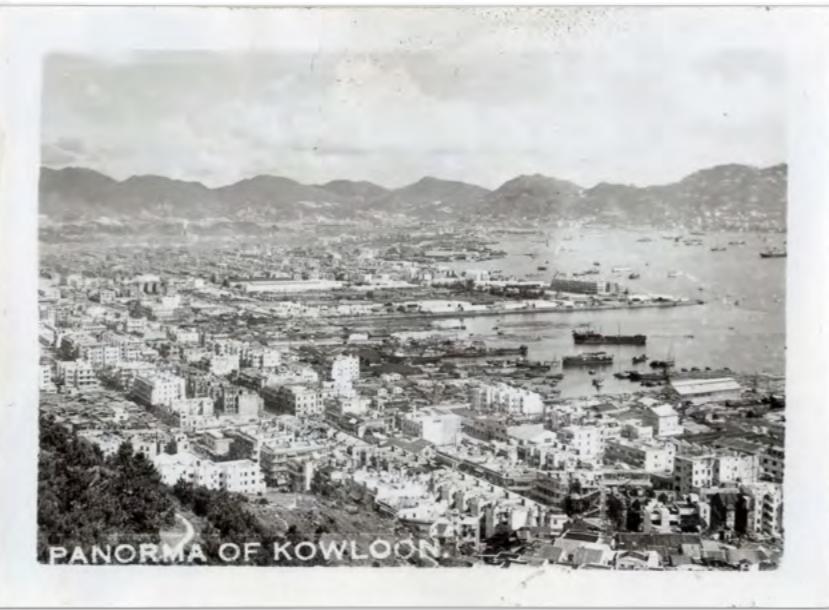
今次做法比較陌生。以往都是「建立」的思維，而今次考慮的是以遮蓋作為方法。我攤開老照片，對著畫布，每每下筆之前都要思考，保留什麼、改動什麼。雖說以遮蓋去建構畫面，但我沒有用顏料將整張相片覆蓋，例如：天空未有加筆改動；山脊亦只輕輕點綴，加強光影。因為天和山本來就存在，所以沒有「還原」的需要。我亦刻意保留高樓大廈的淡印，鋪下線索，引發觀眾好奇心。顏料不單有厚度，材質亦較光亮，觀眾細心看就會發現畫筆加工的痕跡：你發現我遮蓋什麼，就會知道城市發展改變了什麼。

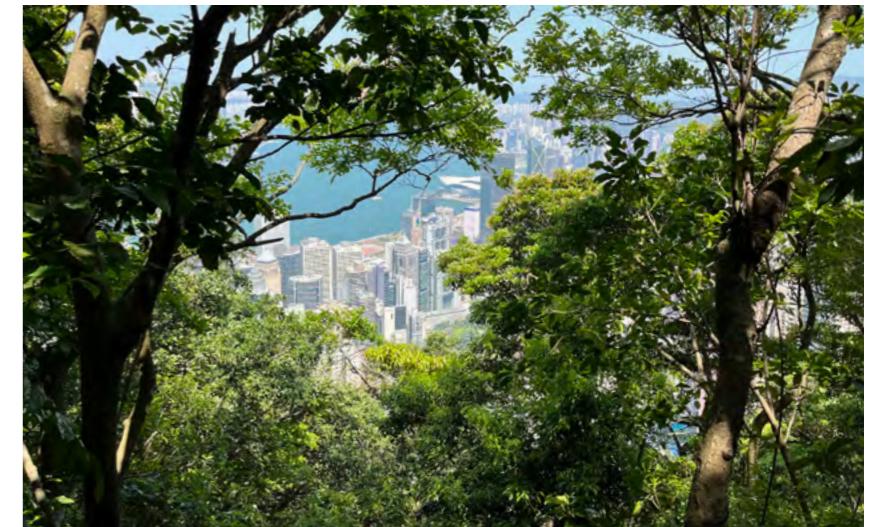
通過人手和肉眼參考歷史相片去重構畫面，跟現實總難免有落差，當中會否也涉及主觀判斷呢？

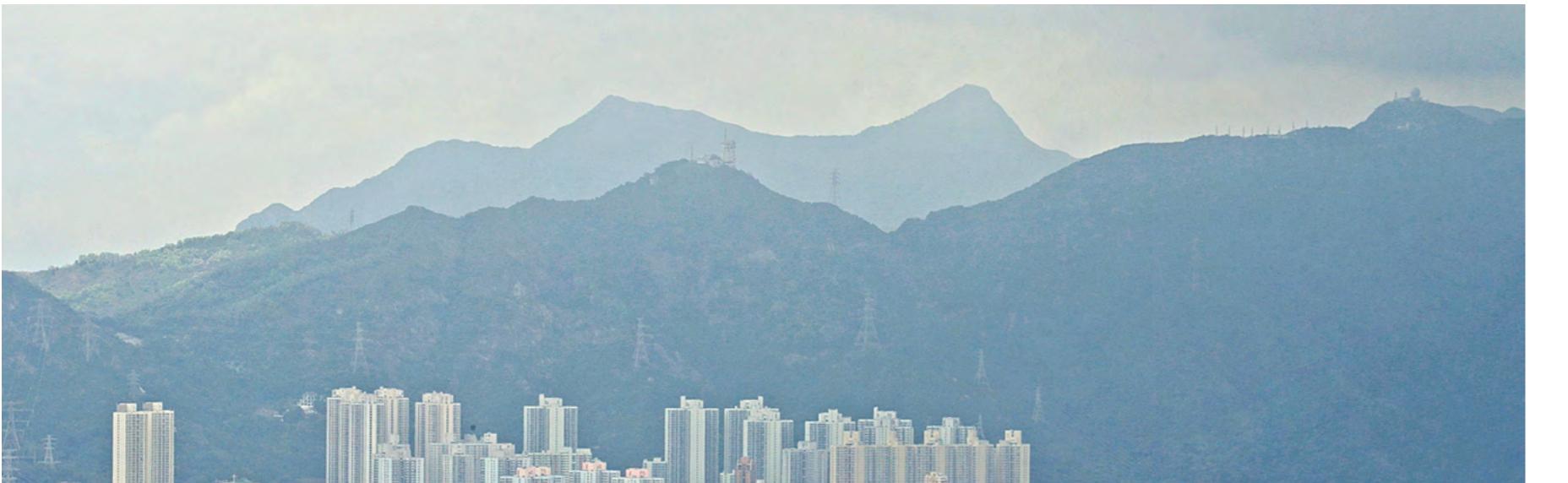
就像訊號塔位於半島酒店旁邊，如實繪畫的話，訊號塔就會落在畫的邊緣，甚至擠出畫外。基於構圖考慮，我將訊號塔搬到半島酒店後方，好讓地標能夠清晰呈現。又如 2021 年那幅，M+ 大樓幕牆上也沒有投映過今次展覽的主視覺。



想像，但又帶幾分真確。在莊嚴的畫框烘托下，所繪之畫面顯得仿似歷史記錄。三幅畫作特意用深色木框裝裱，模仿城市展覽館的古畫，增添歷史感。歷史感的框架裡面，盛載的內容又不全然史實。藝術家視作「還原風景」手法，最終沒有真正成功「還原」某個時空的九龍群山。又或者，風景映入眼簾之後形成的記憶，從來都不是完全客觀的影像。在打印相片上加顏料，在現有風景上減建築，消化歷史相片取捨剪裁而成的風景畫。與其說是「還原」，不如話近於去蕪存菁的過程。虛實交融的畫面，記載藝術家透過創作實踐不可能的可能——可能，畫框內尚能任由狂想飛翔，繪畫心中理想的風景。







Painting on a white canvas and constructing landscapes from nothing might be natural to a painter. But what if the white canvas is replaced by a photograph? The brushstroke on the photograph changes the image and resets the landscape. Painting onto a photograph could be seen as "destruction", but at the same time, "construction" in the form of secondary creation. To artist Wong Chun Hei, it is even a way to restore the landscape.

**Interviewer: Grace Gut**

Interviewee: Wong Chun Hei

**How did the idea of restoring landscape by painting on photographs come about?**

When I hike and see forests of buildings, I cannot help but ask myself if there is a perfect balance in urban development. I once suggested to a photographer friend to cover overdeveloped parts of the city with paint on their photographs in an attempt to restore an ideal landscape. We discussed but had yet to realise the idea.

**Your opportunity finally came. How did you realise the restoration of landscape in this exhibition?**

Last September, I looked out over the Kowloon Peninsula from Lugard Road on the Peak and captured the coastline and mountain ridges in the Tsim Sha Tsui area with a camera. I focused on the Kowloon Mountain Ranges and planned a set of three paintings with reference to old photographs and postcards. They show stages of urban development in Hong Kong respectively at present, during the mid-colonial period, and early in the city's founding, to review how changes took place. The photograph was printed onto three canvases, two were further covered with acrylic paint to illustrate the scenery of the Kowloon Peninsula in 1950 and 1864.

**Travel is a recurring theme in your work, but how did it feel to paint an old Hong Kong that you have never travelled to?**

I have not visited the places painted in the exhibition, *A Grand Tour in Google Earth*, either. However, this time it feels different, like a journey between the familiar and the strange. The changes may be less evident in other countries, but Hong Kong is developing fast. Photographs from early colonial period show a scenery so deserted it could not be less strange to me. There was no clue at all as to where the photograph was taken. However, looking at the images from 1950s, the still-standing clock tower, signal tower

and the Peninsula made the scenery easily recognisable. Painting it was like a journey back in time, allowing me to wander the old streets in that era.

**In *A Grand Tour in Google Earth* you sketched from a computer monitor, but this time you painted with reference to historical pictures. What is different in your treatment of the photographs?**

The approach taken this time was less familiar to me. I used to think about building up layers, yet this time I used covering as my means. Looking at the old photographs and the canvas, I had to plan every brushstroke and decide what to keep and alter. Even though I constructed the scene by covering the original image, I did not cover the whole photograph with paint. For example, I did not alter the sky and only highlighted the mountain ridges lightly. The atmosphere and mountains were originally there; thus, there is no need to restore them. I also deliberately kept traces of the skyscrapers as a clue to trigger the viewers' curiosity. The paint is thick and glossy, allowing the viewers to discover traces of the brushwork when they look closely. Looking at what I covered, you can see what urban development has changed.

**Discrepancies are inevitable in reconstructing landscapes only based on historical photographs. Does your process involve subjective judgment?**

For example, since the signal tower is located next to the Peninsula, if I were to paint it accurately, it would fall on the edge of the painting or will even be squeezed out of it. Therefore, I moved the signal tower behind the Peninsula for composition. As with the image in 2021, the key visual for this exhibition was not projected onto the M+ building either.

Imaginative but with a touch of authenticity. Accentuated by solemn frames, the paintings seem like historical records. The artist deliberately chose dark wooden frames to imitate classical works housed in the city's museum, adding a sense of history. Yet, within the framework of history, the content of the paintings is not entirely accurate. What the artist sees as a restoration of the landscape is ultimately not a successful restoration of the Kowloon Mountain Ranges in a specific time and place, or perhaps memories formed by the scenic view are never an utterly objective image. The artist added paint to printed photographs and subtracted buildings from current landscapes as a way to interpret historical photographs and re-create landscape paintings. This process might be more akin to distillation rather than restoration. Nevertheless, reality woven with imagination marks the artist's attempt to realise the impossible, and yet it makes running wild in ideal landscapes within the frames possible.

《九龍群山》

KOWLOON MOUNTAIN RANGES

塑膠彩、數碼照片布本

Acrylic, digital photo printed on canvas

一組三件繪畫作品

A set of 3 paintings

68 × 120 cm 每件 each

2022

