

Hong Kong Waters

A photo/video/sound project by Andreas Müller-Pohle

水光浮城



Hong Kong Arts Centre Exhibition

Hong Kong Waters, a photo/video/sound project by German media artist Andreas Müller-Pohle, brings two dimensions of Hong Kong together: its vertical urbanity and its horizontal alignment to the water. It is the first comprehensive portrait of Hong Kong seen from the perspective of the water, with never-before captured views of the many water sites this Asian mega-metropolis has to offer.

The exhibition comprises three media: photography, using a half/half underwater technique already applied in a previous work by the artist, The Danube River Project (2005/2006); video, displayed in a variety of visual approaches to the water, from "Coasting", where the recording camera is a plaything of the waves, to "Dark Waves", an intriguing sight of Victoria Harbour at night; and sound, presented in the form of a water-focused audioscape of Hong Kong, composed by Japanese sound artist Shingo Inao.

Hong Kong Waters was realized between January 2009 and December 2010. Hong Kong Arts Centre is the first venue to show this work.

Tse Mingchong, Curator

Hong Kong Waters at Hong Kong Arts Centre, presented by Lumenvisum,
16–29 April 2011, Pao Galleries, 4–5/F, 2 Harbour Road, Wanchai, Hong Kong



"I have admired the photographs of Hong Kong by Mr. Müller-Pohle with great interest. I can highly recommend these pictures from a part of the world which is witnessing the greatest human activity."

Prof. Dr. Paul J. Crutzen
Nobel Laureate in Chemistry, 1995

Hong Kong Arts Centre Interview

Located near the sea, the Arts Centre and our campus in Shau Kei Wan are very fond of the sea view, which provides us with a comfortable environment to work or take a rest in. Due to different city developments and the reclamation of more land, our Centre has witnessed changes along the harbour front over more than three decades. Through the exhibition and an interview, it is interesting to see what perspectives Andreas Müller-Pohle could bring to the Hong Kong audience so as to remind us of the presence of water in Hong Kong in a whole new way.

Q: Hong Kong Arts Centre Program Department

A: Andreas Müller-Pohle

Q: Can you tell us a bit about the concept behind the Hong Kong Waters Project and how it came to Hong Kong?

A: The idea was to portray Hong Kong from a new perspective, the perspective of the water. Hong Kong has more than 700 kilometers of coastline, 260 islands, numerous harbours, bays and rivers, clear-water reservoirs and waterfalls – it is a genuine city of water, but it has never been shown as such. My specific approach to the subject was a “divided view”, a look not only onto the water landscape from above, but also from under the water surface. For this, I used underwater equipment to take pictures half under and half above the water. It’s a method I already used in 2005 and 2006 for a previous work on a European river, the Danube. And why did I bring this to Hong Kong? Because of the water, because Hong Kong is an extremely photogenic city, and because I love to be here.

Q: How does Hong Kong Waters differ from your Danube River Project?

A: I imagine the river as a line and the city as a square. With the Danube, I followed a given path, from source to mouth, just as the

river flows, and I visited each place only once, no matter what the weather or light was. With the Hong Kong project, there was no such given order. I could move in any direction and return to any spot, if necessary. Metaphorically speaking, that's the linear western mode against the non-linear eastern mode. But there are differences which can easily be seen, for example, the Hong Kong pictures show a bigger variety of motifs than the ones from the Danube, and they are all vertical, because the city is vertical.

Q: Apart from the photographs, the installation also comprises video and sound.

A: Yes, video and sound play an important role in this exhibition. When you enter the space, you hear a 3-channel audioscape composed of sound samples taken along the water lines of Hong Kong; this was created in cooperation with Japanese sound artist Shingo Inao. Then, on the upper floor, there is a huge double projection of a video work I call "Coasting", which shows what happens when you entrust the camera to the waves. Other video pieces present views of Victoria Harbour at night or show a cruise to various water spots in Hong Kong.

Q: The Hong Kong Waters project started in 2008 and continued until early this year, through several visits, which makes it more like a research project. Have you observed any changes or other phenomena during your visits to Hong Kong?

A: Well, one of the most visible – and most constant – characteristics of this city is change. Look at the skyline, look at Victoria Harbor and the ongoing process of land reclamation. Living in Berlin, a city that has undergone the most dramatic urban changes since Germany's re-unification, I'm not shocked by this dynamism, but what disturbs me, here and there, is how urban development is being forced by financial interests and powers.

Q: How do you feel about the conservation of the harbour in Hong Kong? Is it different in Germany?

A: We don't have a directly comparable case in Germany, but on a more general level, we have ecological issues that are similar to the harbour situation in Hong Kong. The German public is quite alert and sensitive to administrative decisions about the environment, and projects like the land reclamation in a beautiful historical harbour landscape as here would probably cause a lot of protest and legal confrontation. As far as I know, not many Hong Kong people cared about the land reclamation when it started, but now they do. And civil protest is indeed the only means to stop the excesses of capitalism.

Q: When you started the project, how did you choose which spots to shoot?

A: I did a lot of research, starting with a catalog of water sources, listing the corresponding geographical locations, collecting photographs on the net that could give me a first impression of what I could expect in a place, including Google Earth and other pictorial services.

Q: How will you continue your project from this?

A: I referred to the river as a line, the city as a square, and the third part would be an island, standing for a circle. I'd like to complete the water projects as a trilogy. But I have not selected an island yet. After doing Part One in Europe and Part Two in Asia, however, Part Three might be in the Caribbean or the South Pacific. But I will come back to Hong Kong as often as I can, and I might do more work here, especially video. There'll always be a "Hong Kong Revisited".

Sample Pictures



Hong Kong Island. From a Boat near Central, 2010



Kowloon. Tsim Sha Tsui, 2009



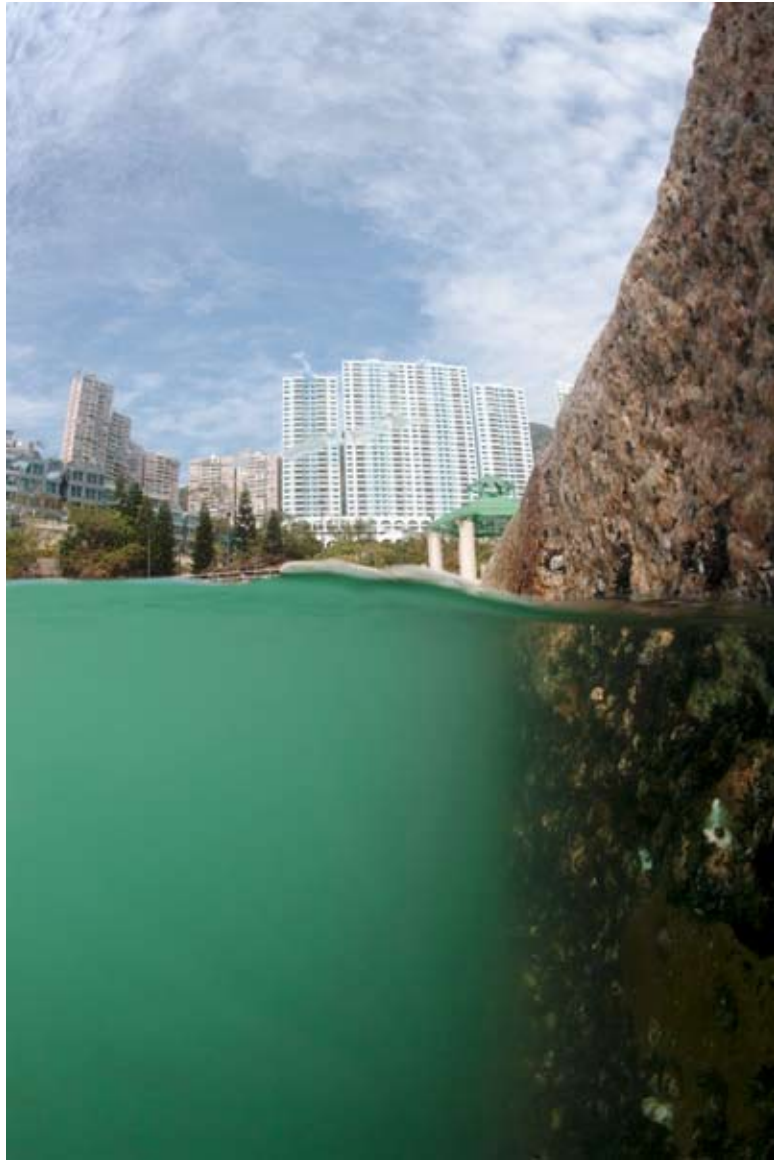
Kowloon. Tsim Sha Tsui, 2009



Kowloon. From a Boat in Kowloon Bay, 2009



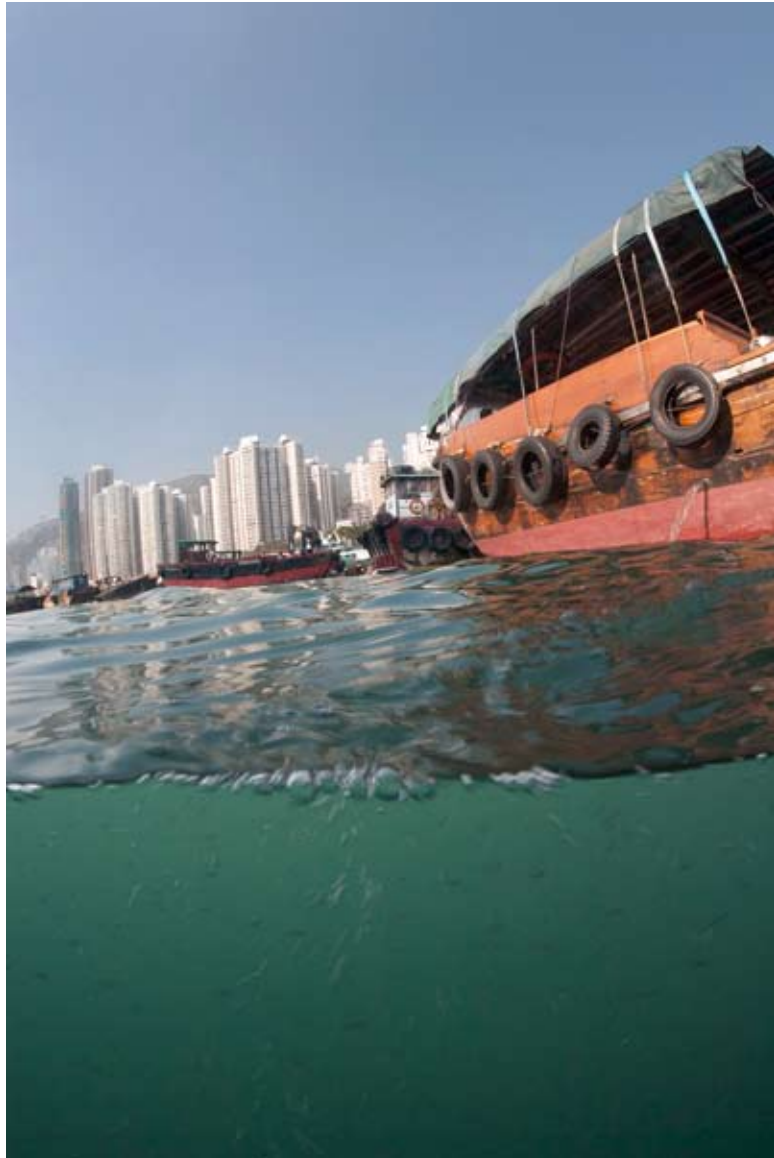
New Territories. Tsing Yi, Rambler Channel, 2009



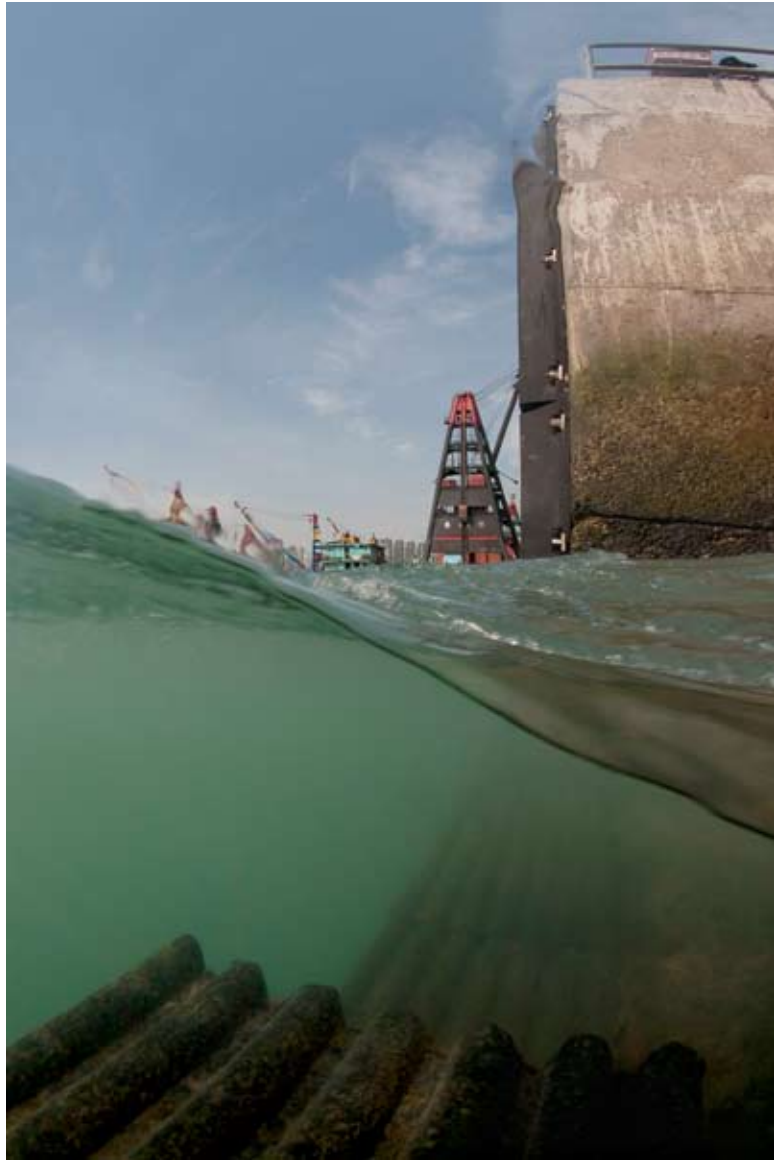
Hong Kong Island. Repulse Bay, 2009



Kowloon. From a Boat in Victoria Harbour, 2009



Hong Kong Island. Ap Lei Chau, 2009



Kowloon. West Kowloon, 2009



New Territories. From a Boat near Lantau Island, 2009



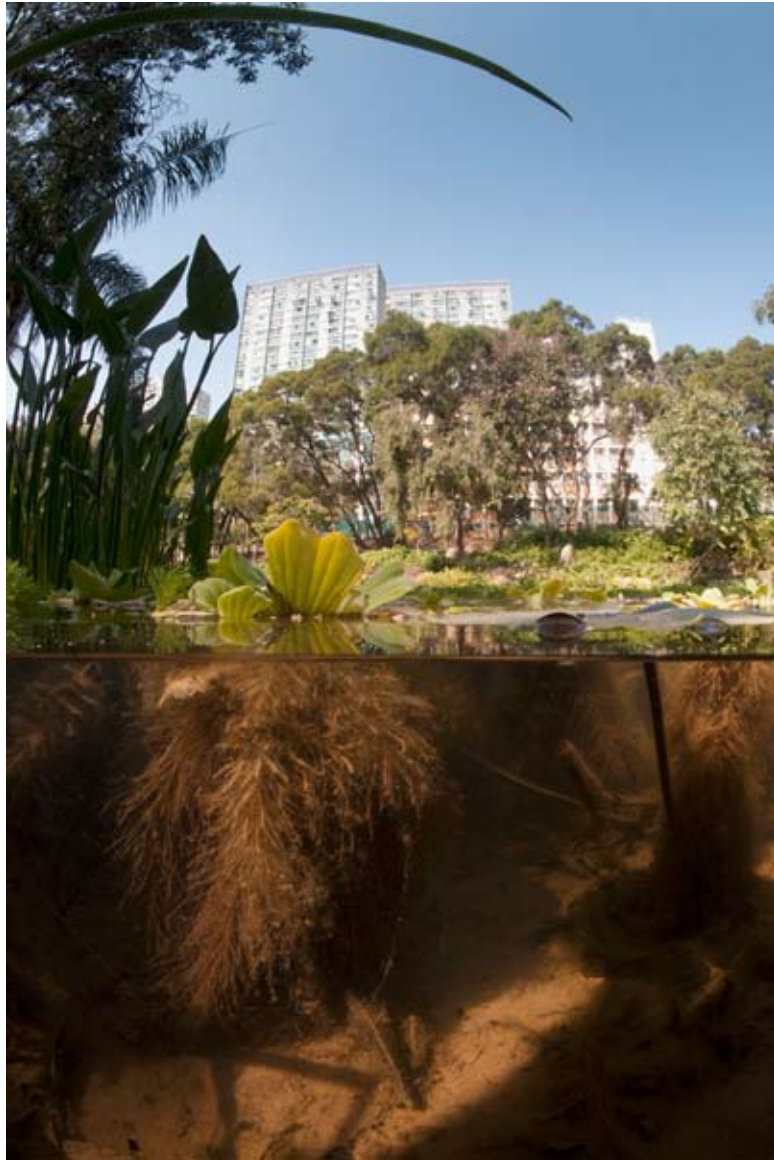
New Territories. Lantau Island, 2009



New Territories. Tsuen Wan, Shing Mun Valley, 2009



Hong Kong Island. From a Boat in Stanley Bay, 2010



New Territories. Tsuen Wan, Shing Mun Valley, 2009



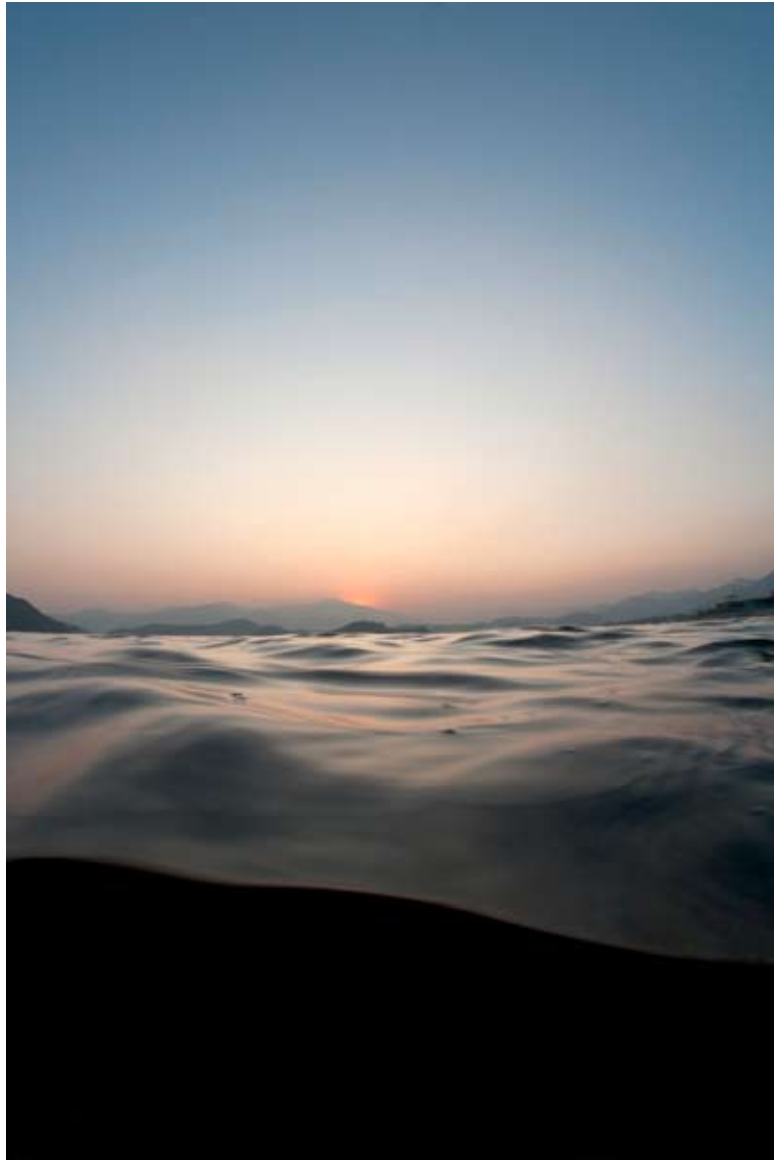
New Territories. Tsing Yi, Rambler Channel, 2009



New Territories. Ng Tung Chai Waterfalls, 2009



New Territories. From a Boat near Pak Wan, 2009



New Territories. Plover Cove Reservoir Dam, 2009

Project Partners





Kowloon. Roof Pool of Harbour Grand Kowloon, 2009

Info

Media

Photography: 70 pigment prints, 120 x 80 cm and 90 x 60 cm each

Video: 5 video projections/monitor presentations, 5–10 min each

Audio: 3-channel soundtrack, 10:36 min

Exhibitions in 2011

Lumervisum, Hong Kong, February 2011 (Preview)

Hong Kong Arts Centre, Hong Kong, 16–29 April 2011

Lumervisum @ JCCAC L-0, Hong Kong, 22 June – 12 July 2011

M.R. Gallery, Beijing, 12 November – 5 December 2011

Other venues on request. Please contact us for rental details.

Books

There are two books planned for this year:

“Hong Kong Waters”, the project monograph including all images, by fall 2011

“Hong Kong is a Drug”, the artist’s diary from his trips to Hong Kong, by this summer

Contact

Andreas Müller-Pohle, Riverproject.net, Zimmerstr. 23, 10969 Berlin

Phone +49-30-25 29 29 65, hongkong@equivalence.com

Hong Kong Curator

Tse Ming-Chong, tsemingchong@yahoo.com.hk