

Sunrise to Sunset

It is moments before dawn. Some passing clouds have cleared away, and a sky of fading indigo promises a brilliant sunrise. Gazing off the Clear Water Bay Peninsula, just above Tseung Kwan O, peaks and ranges frame the mirror-smooth waters of Port Shelter and its islands. Captured by the setting and pre-dawn light, I set up my cameras, preparing to photograph the sun as it rises above Mirs Bay and the Ninepin Islands.

On another occasion, this time on the northeastern Sai Kung Peninsula, I look out from a summit above High Island Reservoir towards the saddle-backed mass of Ma On Shan. Ten kilometres to the west, Ma On Shan frames the late afternoon light. Clouds gather around its summit, and the sun touches distant ranges. Sunset colours streak the sky with brilliant yellows and oranges.

These two experiences, etched in my photographer's memory, immediately came to mind when Wheelock Properties proposed a photographic exhibition based on Tseung Kwan O and its "back garden" – the Clear Water Bay and Sai Kung Peninsula.

Besides "chasing the light", any photographer's delight, the concept encapsulated some of Hong Kong's most spectacular landscapes. The Sai Kung Peninsula is dominated by the distinct 'horse-saddle' ridgeline of Ma On Shan – from where slopes plummet to the narrow neck of Sai Kung peninsula. On the Clear Water Bay Peninsula, High Junk Peak, with its conical summit, is the highest point – with the crescent beaches and coves of Clear Water Bay lying below. And all this is only a very short distance from Tseung Kwan O, and little more from crowded Kowloon and Central.

Subsequent excited discussions with Wheelock staff cemented the idea. We would search out images to present the "Sunrise to Sunset" theme, focusing on the two peninsulas; and we would hold a public photo competition themed on the natural and recreational sides of the region. For the exhibition, the work of two Hong Kong photographers came into our consideration: the images of Mahler Ka and Nicholas Kitto.

Mahler Ka, a Hong Kong natural landscape photographer, has been a hiker for more than thirty years – exploring the territory's most remote parts to capture nature with his cameras. He has published many books, and also photo essays, including his album *Embracing the Tenderness of Natural Scenery* and his hiking guide *Places of Natural Beauty in Hong Kong*.

Hong Kong photographer Nicholas Kitto's passion is to photograph historical buildings and scenes. In 1983 Nick arrived in Hong Kong, and the city has been his family home ever since. He has published photo essays on the beauty of Hong Kong's Declared Monuments, and he takes dramatic, peak-top panoramic images.

I myself am a photographer, writer and publisher. My first local book, Hong Kong's Wild Places, released in 1995, showed the changing relationships between the natural landscape and people. My favourite Hong Kong region, still to fully photograph, is the Sai Kung Peninsula and its ocean islands, each of them a jewel of geology.

Thus Wheelock and I, as the exhibition curator, began developing the show. No image is perfect in all aspects. And combining images together into a coherent whole, which

TSEUNG KWAN O CLEAR WATER BAY AND SAI KUNG

By Edward Stokes



any narrative exhibition requires, demands content and aesthetic judgements. Gradually, with technical testing and image refinement, the show came together. Its sum, we all hoped, would be greater than its parts.

Besides the “Sunrise to Sunset” theme, we wanted the images to highlight Hong Kong’s unique proximity of country and city. This, we believe, the images do. In the opening photos, to the east of Sai Kung Peninsula the sun rises from the empty sea. In others, daylight breaks over Clear Water Bay Peninsula and touches the residential towers of Tseung Kwan O. The day’s light then evolves through strong mid-morning shadows, brilliant light at noon, and richly coloured late afternoon. And all this occurs in wild landscapes, most of them barely a half-hour drive from residential suburbs.

Meanwhile, urged on by the success and photo entry quality of Wheelock Peak Exposure Photo Competition, Wheelock initiated second one-Live it up! Wheelock TKO Photo Competition for images of Tseung Kwan O, Clear

The photographs in this exhibition epitomize Hong Kong’s wonderful proximity of country and city. To the east of the Sai Kung Peninsula, the sun rises over Mirs Bay. Soon after, light breaks over the Clear Water Bay Peninsula and touches the residential towers of Tseung Kwan O. As this exhibition portrays, the day’s light then evolves: through strong mid-morning shadows, brilliant light at noon, and then the richly coloured late afternoon. Until, finally, sunset displays blaze across the sky.

1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8

- 1. Daybreak at South Ninepin Island
- 2. Dawn sea and sky at Port Shelter
- 3. Early morning light frames a liner
- 4. Clear Water Bay cove, early morning
- 5. Mid-afternoon above Rocky Harbour
- 6. Barnacled rocks surround Conic Island
- 7. Sedges glow above High Island Reservoir
- 8. Looking over High Island Reservoir at sunset

Water Bay and Sai Kung region. The competition saw 1,455 entries. Of these, 773 were in the camera category, and 682 in the Instagram category (for smart phones). The competition judges were Nicholas Kitto, Derek Lee, a commercial photographer, and myself.

Once again, amateur Hong Kong photographers delivered some wonderful photos. Inevitably, any photo competition attracts lesser images. But after culling those, and with the very best prints placed out across a large table, Nick, Derek and I spent a memorable afternoon seeking out the winners. With Wheelock staff joining, we shuffled and discussed the images, bringing our photographic expertise and aesthetics to bear on the first, second and final rounds of judging. Impressed we were at the range and quality of the images. United we were in the final winning choices: a detailed view of a rocky cove, with looming clouds lying out to sea; and a superbly timed shot of three men, their feet moving in unison, jogging along a tide-wet beach.

Photography, as the competition clearly showed, is an evolving personal journey – as it has been for Mahler Ka, Nicholas Kitto, Derek Lee and myself. We are all self-taught, as are many of the best professional photographers. A passion for images, not technical jargon, is our stock-in-trade.

So it was with pleasure that, in a photographic partnership with Wheelock Properties, the final aspect of the “Sunrise to Sunset” show was my leading two photo workshops. The first was for Project *WeCan* students from Wheelock Properties’ partner school, Ng Yuk Secondary School, the second for Club Wheelock members. Both were memorable occasions: for Wheelock, for the participants, and for myself. Both saw a “freeing” of minds to explore, to see, and to photograph the great natural beauty of Hong Kong.