

# HARBOUR, CITY, SKY

## A Photographic Exhibition of Victoria Harbour

By Edward Stokes

On 26<sup>th</sup> November 2015 the exhibition HARBOUR, CITY, SKY was opened at the Hong Kong Maritime Museum. Organized by Wheelock Properties Limited, the show will be on until 31<sup>st</sup> December. The images explore the beauty and diversity of Victoria Harbour – seen through the eyes of two talented photographers, Rogan Coles and Nicholas Kitto.

The Guest of Honour at the opening was Mrs Carrie Lam, Chief Secretary for Administration, who officiated together with Douglas Woo, Chairman of Wheelock and Company; Edward Stokes, Founder and Publisher of The Photographic Heritage Foundation; Nicholas Brooke, Chairman of the Harbourfront Commission, and Richard Wesley, Director of the Hong Kong Maritime Museum.

At the opening, prizes and certificates were awarded to awardees who entered the “Harbour Sights Wheelock Photography Competition”. With both open and student categories, there were seven awardees in all – for each category, one winner and two runners-up, one voter’s choice award.

The following weekend, Edward Stokes led a photo workshop for sixteen students from the Ng Yuk Secondary School in Sha Tin and Wheelock mentors also attended this Project *WeCan* workshop, a Wheelock CSR initiative based on photographs taken for the exhibition.

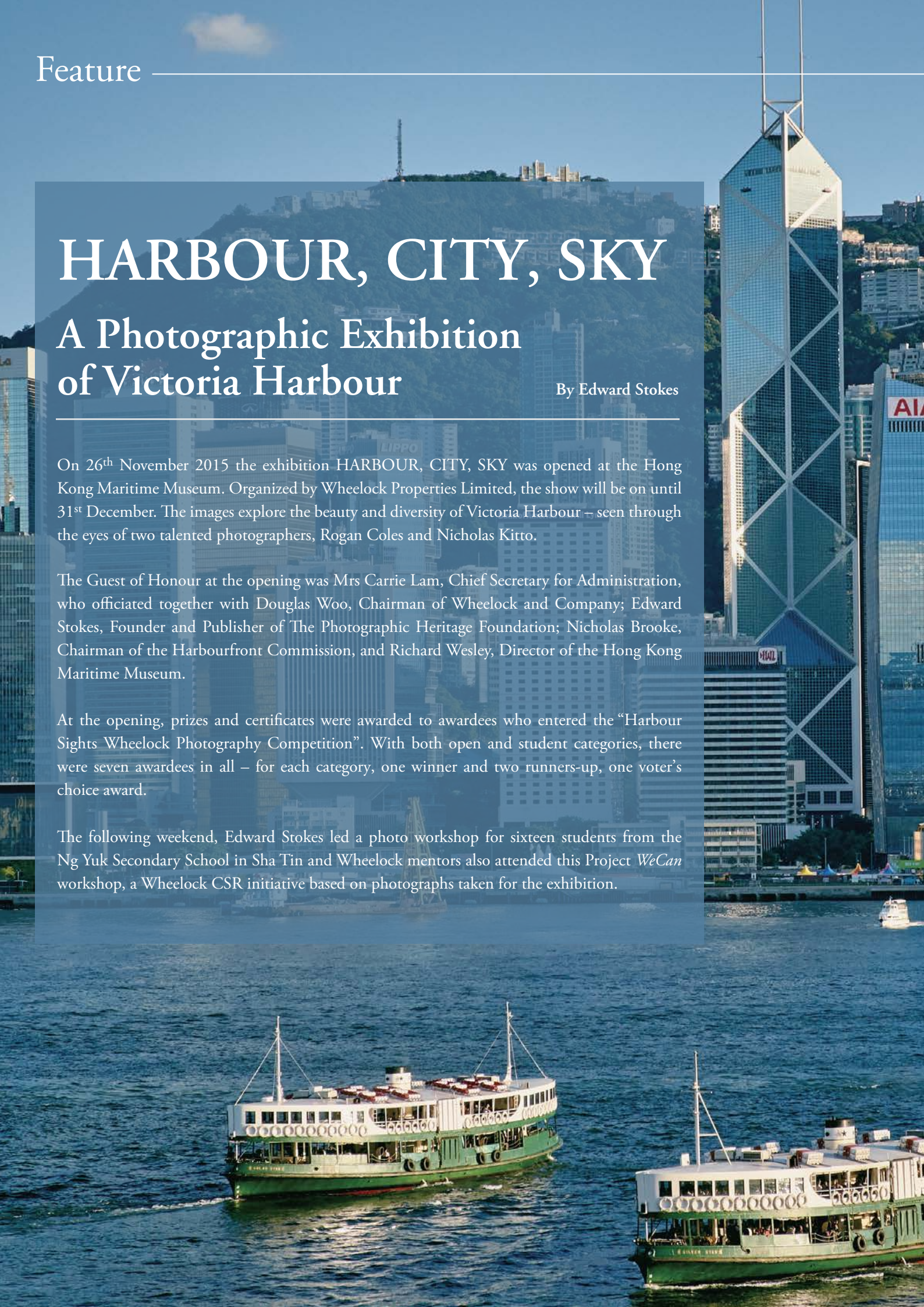


Victoria Harbour, Hong Kong’s original reason for existence, later became a great port and trading city. Today the shipping has moved westwards to Kwai Chung, yet the harbour remains central to the SAR’s prosperity. The harbour is also much more than that, for its scenic grandeur, changes and activities make it Hong Kong’s most loved area: a place of family and personal experiences, events and memories. For the tourists who visit Hong Kong, witnessing the harbour’s life is always a highlight. This exhibition by photographers Rogan Coles and Nicholas Kitto shows all these aspects.

The photographs – planned and taken especially for this exhibition – have not been seen before. Their range of subjects, documentary impact, compositions and luminous light draw viewers to the harbour’s sights, aiming to embed its scenes in their minds. The exhibition opening occurred on a day of crystal-clear visibility, showing the harbour to its very best – thus reflecting the images taken in the summer months for the show. The images are a ‘day in the life’ of the harbour, from sunrise to end of day.

The exhibition’s title – ‘Harbour, City, Sky’ – reflects the grandeur of the harbour, with waters and the sky framing the foreshore urban districts. The exhibition presents 22 high quality, large format photos of the harbour, showing every aspect of it: foreshores, promenades, views of the city from the harbour, tourist areas, recreation along the foreshore, ships, ferries, and the variety of small craft. Says exhibition curator Edward Stokes, ‘Despite the harbour’s history, and its importance to the economy, tourism and people’s sense of belonging, this is the first photo show to focus on Victoria Harbour.’

This is an odd omission, one that the photos seen with this article reinforce. For it was the harbour, the deepest, most sheltered, and most easily accessible anchorage on China’s coast that led to Hong Kong’s establishment as a trading port and a British colony. Today, profound change has occurred around the harbour – and Hong Kong the Colony is now HKSAR... Yet, without Victoria Harbour, Hong Kong would be – unimaginable.







As the exhibition images show, Victoria Harbour is a multi-faceted gem. As always, cargo ships remain its lifeblood – but passenger ships, now mostly cruise liners, are a major part of its ocean-going traffic. The Pearl River Delta, with its multitude of river lighters, barges and tugs, adds a further dimension. Then there are the ferries! Few other harbours have as many: crabwise, swept by tides, crossing the harbour, heading off to the outlying island ferries, skimming off to Macao and the PRD ports.

Despite these positives, the harbour faces two issues that many believe Hong Kong has mismanaged: well thought out, balanced reclamation, and making the foreshore areas attractive and accessible. Very large reclamations that were initiated in the mid-1990s caused widespread disquiet, with concerns that the grand, wide sweep of the eastern and western harbour reaches would become a mere ‘river’. That was over-stating it, but Hong Kong was wise to act as it then did, to stop further reclamation. At the same time, increasing numbers of people, and the business community, urged making the harbour foreshores much pleasant places for people.

Doing so will benefit tourists and local life alike. Happily, now primarily led by the private developers, the harbour environs are taking on attractive aspects – as some of Rogan Coles’ photos show. Hong Kong’s Harbourfront Commission, an exhibition partner, is urging the process of change forward as fast as the situation allows. Seeking input locally and overseas, and learning from the best aspects of iconic harbours worldwide, the Commission has the long-term objective of leading the creation of a world-class harbourfront. The exhibition’s photos highlight why this is such a valuable task. For, without any doubt, Victoria Harbour is Hong Kong’s single most-memorable feature.

The Project *WeCan* workshop, a Wheelock CSR initiative supporting less privileged students, brought together some of the best aspects of Hong Kong: a group of keen enthusiastic students; a world-class museum; and harbour foreshores that, gradually, are taking on permanent shape and life.

On a day of crystal clear skies, and shimmering blue-green harbour waters, the session began in the Hong Kong Maritime Museum with the students and mentors exploring aspects of the exhibition’s photos – all the elements that turn average images into excellent ones. Later, after a café lunch, the students, led by Edward Stokes toured the revitalized Maritime Museum to Tamar harbour foreshore. Taking their own photos, the students and mentors found fresh ways of capturing everyday, seemingly ordinary subjects: piers and boats, vessels seen across the harbour, the dramatic backdrop of city buildings, the ‘wheel’, foreshore weddings, fitness joggers, recreation along the green Tamar environs – and much more. The very best of Hong Kong’s Victoria Harbour!

The exhibition ‘Harbour, City, Sky’ runs until 31<sup>st</sup> December 2015. The Hong Kong Maritime Museum opening hours are: Monday to Friday, 9.30am to 5.30pm; Saturday, Sunday and public holidays, 10.00am to 7.00pm.

[www.hkmaritimemuseum.org](http://www.hkmaritimemuseum.org)

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1. One Bay East And Mirror Waters
2. Sand Barge Seen From Tsim Sha Tsui
3. Causeway Bay Typhoon Shelter
4. The Aqualuna, Central Harbour
5. Late Afternoon, Tsim Sha Tsui Promenade
6. Container Ship At Anchor
7. Kwun Tong Ferry

