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Capturing a City

An eye for the real Hong Kong

捕捉城市真貌

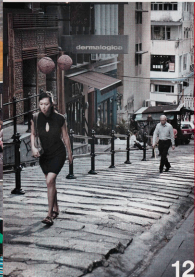
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Capturing a CITY

捕捉城市真貌

Danny Chau's moody photographs of Hong Kong are a hit with tourists. He talks to Vanessa Ko about his art
很多游客喜欢Danny Chau拍摄的香港照片。她的照片散发著香港独有的风情；我们跟他漫谈他的作品。

This waterside restaurant offers views of the Hong Kong Island skyline as well as the Star Ferry, which have been transporting passengers across the harbour for over a century.
在这间位于海边的餐厅，可欣赏到香港岛的天际线景观，更可看见穿梭维港逾一个世纪天星小轮。



As good as Danny Chau is at capturing both the beauty and the grime of Hong Kong, and as much as his pictures look professional, the fine art printer considers photography as strictly a hobby. But when art lovers want to buy his photos, and art dealers want to sell them, what is an amateur to do but oblige?

It is not difficult to understand the demand. Through Chau's lens, we see a real Hong Kong. He translates onto paper all that makes the city unique, sometimes magnified in nostalgia, sometimes heightened in grandiosity, but always captivating.

Chau has professional training, but his greatest asset is the keen eye of a hunter always looking for the "next kill," as he says. He carries a camera at all times to record everyday street scenes. "It might seem mundane, but if you project 20, 30 years ahead, looking back on the bus, cars, clothing, signage – everything changes," Chau says with a sense of wonder. "So to me, it's a record with a lot of sentiment."

This habit of toting a camera has paid off – many of his popular photographs for sale at Picture This gallery were taken on the fly. One of his bestsellers, taken on one of Central's famous ladder streets, showing a woman and man walking up the steps, is just such a shot. "It was one of those fantastic moments. I've been back there many times and you just don't get those magic moments," he says.

As a photographer inclined to taking pictures of people in urban cities, a challenge arises when potential subjects simply do not want to be photographed. But Chau is well-rehearsed in the procedure of stoking a camera in front of strangers without stirring up trouble. The trick: pretend to be a tourist even when you aren't one. "People always worry about what you're going to do with the picture," he admits.

Chau uses Photoshop unabashedly to increase contrast, change the light levels and maybe insert more grime here and there to create a more palpable mood. He even prefers taking pictures of the iconic harbour when visibility is low. "I quite like Hong Kong foggy. Most pictures you see at tourist shops are all sunshine pictures, but I like moody images," he says.

Always on the lookout for something new to photograph, Chau takes pictures every single day. "You've got to keep your eyes open. Hong Kong is a beautiful place to be in," he says. It's a good reminder of something so simple.

Some of Chau's photographs can be purchased through Picture This gallery (tel: 2525 2803).



Pottinger Street, one of several "ladder" streets in Central, is lined with galleries, eateries and haberdashery shops.
砵甸街是位於中區的一條歷史悠久的街道，有講藝廊、餐館和雜貨店。

With a dramatic fresco of white cloud as background, IFC2 – Hong Kong's tallest building – is flanked by IFC1 on the right and the curved Four Seasons.

香港最高的建筑物——国际金融中心二期，以白云作背景，并在国际金融中心一期(右)及四季酒店(左)的陪衬下矗立。



Loud, unsightly roadworks are a ubiquitous feature of the city. Two workers in Tin Hau face the camera amid steel and cables.

嘈杂和碍人往来的道路工程在香港随处可见。照片摄于天后，两名工人置身于钢铁与电缆之中。

这个随身带着照相机的习惯是有原因的，Danny在Picture This Gallery出售的摄影作品中，很多深受欢迎的照片都是即时拍下。他最好卖的作品是在中环「石梯道」所拍，照片中一男一女正往上行，配合得天衣无缝。他说：「这照片拍下最美妙的一瞬间，我曾经多次回去那里，但再找不回那奇妙的一刹那。」

无论Danny Chau多么擅长捕捉香港优美与沧桑之态，无论他的照片水准有多么「专业」，从事美术印刷的他只把摄影视为嗜好、兴趣。然而，当大家人喜欢他的照片，嚷着要买回去，当艺廊商人争相跟他接洽，这位业余爱好者只好照单民意。

难理解Danny的照片为何如此受欢迎。透过他的镜头，我们可以看到香港真实的城市面貌。他把这个城市独特之处统统呈现在照片上，有时故意加强古旧的味道，有时又着重显得浮夸，但无论怎样，总是惹人注目。

他受过专业的训练，但最厉害的地方，正如他自己所说，是一双留人般敏锐的眼睛。总是找到下一个「猎物」。他每天都会随身带着照相机，记录在街头看见的点点滴滴。他说：「这些事物现在看似平凡，但你想20年、30年以后，回顾这些巴士、汽车、服装、标记，一切都会变得不一样。」言词间，Danny流露出珍惜。他说：「于我而言，这些都是充满感情的记录。」

这位摄影师喜欢拍摄市人的生活，但要面对的挑战就是摄影对象根本不想被拍到。幸好，Danny在这方面很有经验，总能在陌生人面前顺利地举机拍下他想要的画面，却不会惹麻烦。诀窍就是：假装你是一名游客，就算你根本不是。他说：「人们常常担心你拍他们干甚么。」

Danny不会以使用图像处理软件Photoshop为耻。相反，他善用软件去增强照片的对比效果和改变光源程度，有时或许还会加插一些点缀营造更明显的气氛。就算是为香港地标拍的维多利亚港，他也喜欢那斜视的角度。他表示：「我还喜欢深海的香港。你在那些以游客为生的店铺里，会看到大部分照片都是阳光普照、天气晴朗，但我更喜欢有「味道」的照片。」

他每天都会拍档，目光常常在寻找新事物中摄影对象。他说：「人要睇开双眼看世界，香港是个美好的地方。」提醒了我们，就是这么简单。

在Picture This Gallery (电话：2525 2803)可以找到Danny Chau的一些摄影作品。■