

# Gallery 2

## Mimi Tong *Window to the City*



G/2: 01. *Window to the City (Wetlands Detail)* 2009 – 2010  
Single channel 16:9 1080p HD Blu-ray video. Duration: continuous loop  
Edition of 3+1 AP

**My time in Shenzhen just north of Hong Kong on the mainland border,** marked a return sojourn to China as part of a second Chinese residency. I chose to go to Shenzhen because I hadn't been before and due to its proximity to Hong Kong; a city I have visited many times. The plan was to start in Hong Kong, tracing its geographical relationship to Shenzhen.

With recent and first hand experience of several major cities in China, I wanted to cast a wide definition of the built environment. Starting in Hong Kong, I had not fully explored the green terrain in which the city is encapsulated. Staying with family in Tsuen Wan (near the New Territories district and China's border), I soon discover a vast countryside of mountains, reservoirs, wetlands and beaches.

At times when I was walking on bush trails or speeding by on the bus, high-rise buildings framed the countryside as a backdrop. As a visitor, the city's incongruous relationship with its mountainous islands was not alarming. It was a visual reminder of the compact yet diverse nature and texture of the environment. The bird aviary in Hong Kong Park is a memorable example of this observation. Inside the large and elegant arch enclosure, you can inversely view the residential towers peering over the park.

Crossing the border into Shenzhen, I entered a new and unfamiliar cityscape that is less than 30 years old. There are not many visible remnants of the former farming and fishing village. Rapid and continuous urbanisation has transformed the physical and social landscape. Millions of economic migrants from rural areas and neighbouring cities have made and shaped the manufacturing and construction industries to build China's fourth largest economy.

Shenzhen's profile as a successful case study in urban renewal made the process of finding green spaces all the more interesting. From the residency

studio, I was within walking distance of many scenic and tourist sites that could be perceived as both natural and man-made. The 'Window of the World' and 'Splendid China' theme parks are miniature representations of culture expressed through architecture and formal landscaping. In 'Window of the World', replicas of famous monuments and landforms from around the globe can be found. You can have your photo taken under the Eiffel Tower and ride the monorail over the Egyptian Pyramids, all in one convenient location.

Dotted throughout the urban landscape where examples of 'green spaces'. Manicured hedges and trees line every dual carriageway, footpath and roundabout. Potted plants were in shopping malls and museums in vast numbers, as friendly bollards demarcate viewing space. I encountered Shenzhen's green civic pride in daily transits from the heart of the city, to the suburbs and outer fringes.

In the same way the 'Window of the World' theme park is a cultural construct through celebrating scaled replicas, I too have miniaturised parts of Hong Kong and Shenzhen in the space of my photographs. These images illustrate the landscape with knowing limitations. Small yet tactile, they pose as windows onto selected views of these two cities.

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