

Post Magazine ^{08.05.22}

GET THE PICTURE

Hedda Morrison's
post-war Hong Kong

PANDEMIC PARADISE:
THAILAND'S KOH
PHANGAN

THE RISING TIDE OF
ONLINE CHILD SEXUAL
ABUSE IN THE PHILIPPINES

SCMP

08.05

Post Magazine



FEATURES

10 EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

Arriving in 1946, Hedda Morrison may have spent only six months in post-war Hong Kong, but the German-born photographer captured the city in all its grimy glory.

14 MAKING MONSTERS

The online sexual abuse of children in the Philippines – often committed by their parents or other family members and paid for by Western paedophiles – has become its own “pandemic” during Covid-19.

Above: German photographer Hedda Hammer, near Beijing in 1941. The photo was taken by her future husband, Alastair Morrison.

Cover: optimism, despite the trials of the times, characterised most who lived in post-war Hong Kong.

The Chinese scales or *ching* in this photograph indicate that this woman worked as a hawker. Picture: Hedda Morrison



Eye of the beholder

Arriving in 1946, Hedda Morrison may have spent only six months in post-war Hong Kong, but the German-born photographer captured the city in all its grimy glory.

BY EDWARD STOKES
PHOTO COPYRIGHT PRESIDENT AND FELLOWS OF HARVARD COLLEGE

On September 21, 1946, German-born photographer Hedwig Marie “Hedda” Morrison arrived with her husband in Hong Kong, aboard the *Hanyang*, after spending 13 years in Beijing, where she had found an affinity with the Chinese. The couple would remain in the colony for only six months, but Morrison would leave behind a unique and wide-ranging photographic record.

Morrison was known for her lifelong gritty resolve, much like that mirrored in a stoic shopkeeper she had photographed in Hong Kong (next page, top left), a woman little older than Morrison herself.

That September afternoon, after making landfall at Waglan, the *Hanyang* had threaded the narrow gap at Lei Yue Mun. To port and starboard, respectively, were Shau Kei Wan’s fishing junk anchorage and a

war-denuded Devil’s Peak. Morrison would later take detailed, almost topographical, photos of both places.

As the *Hanyang* proceeded up-harbour that day, Morrison’s gaze took in Quarry Bay and Swire’s Taikoo Dockyard, then Causeway Bay, onto HMS Tamar, where above the naval base stood Victoria Barracks – the site today of the Asia Society Hong Kong Center.

Nearing Central, the *Hanyang* slowed, and the endless vibrations felt from propeller revolutions eased. The war had left Central, as well as Kowloon across the harbour, hollowed out. Morrison’s studies would show decay, the damage of conflict, but do not give any sense of outright devastation.

Nonetheless, life for many in Hong Kong was dire. In 1946, the government was providing daily rations for 25,000 people. In 1947, some 9,000 children were homeless. Amid the rapidly increasing population, such statistics found human meaning in Morrison’s images

Left: run-down tenements in Wan Chai, warships, a sunken ship (centre left), and Kellett Island (right). **Above:** the Sheung Wan waterfront, with passenger-cargo vessels, junks and sampans.



of grimy, homeless families, of ragged, sleeping street dwellers. But throughout, she managed to capture a broader aesthetic of the city at that time and place.

The September sun was sinking over Lantau Island as the Hanyang nosed up to her midstream mooring. The engines went astern, then stilled. Near the shore, mast tops of a sunken ship were visible, as seen in Morrison's photo (this page) taken from the Hanyang, dramatically framed by a swung-out lifeboat.

Directly ashore, lay the workaday promenade, or "praya", where hawkers and labourers made their rice-bowl earnings. Their futures at the time were uncertain, but Hong Kong's recovery was under way. The post-war populace's resilience would fuel a resurgence that would turn the British colony into one of Asia's richest, and eventually, most dynamic port cities. ■

Photos taken by Hedda Morrison will be shown at the "Recovery, Resilience, Resurgence" exhibition, which is presented by the Asia Society Hong Kong Center, originated by the Photographic Heritage Foundation, and curated by Edward Stokes. The exhibition runs until June 6 at the Chantal Miller Gallery, Asia Society Hong Kong Center, 9 Justice Drive, Admiralty. Admission is free. For more information, visit asiasociety.org/hong-kong.

This is an accredited event celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the Establishment of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.



Opposite page, clockwise from top left: a woman's apparently determined optimism speaks of the times; the ribs of cargo workers reflect hunger and hardship; the view from Shau Kei Wan to the Taikoo Dockyard; the Japanese monument on a summit on Hong Kong Island was dynamited in February 1947; a dry dock at the Taikoo Dockyard.

This page, clockwise from top left: the tram system survived the war; post-war Hong Kong had great poverty – and many street sleepers; the Hanyang is moored off Central on September 21, 1946; a boy wearing rough winter clothing sleeps on hessian sacking.