Wood to Bronze

點木成銅

Rick Swain

李塑



ABOUT US

Kia Ora (note 1)

Koru-hk.com Contemporary Art Gallery was founded in 2001 and sources contemporary pieces internationally, however we specialize in collecting exceptional New Zealand artwork. Whether your preference is abstract art, painting or sculpture, art for your home or large pieces for a corporate space, you will find a large selection of contemporary art on our web site or in our two [over 7500sq ft area] galleries which are based in Aberdeen, Hong Kong - either on display or in our legendary "backroom". Furthermore, our stunning galleries are available for hire for private exhibitions and/or private/corporate special events.

Koru-hk.com Contemporary Art Gallery is also the place for professional yet down to earth service. We encourage browsing, questions and conversation about our artists and art. We want people to enjoy the experience of collecting art, so strive to make art selection as straightforward as possible. We also offer an art lease program that allows clients to evaluate a piece before purchasing or refreshing their surroundings.

Our art consultants can advise on all matters relating to the collection of art (private and corporate) and are happy to make site visits and proposals. The majority of our clients are architects and designers in Hong Kong, Asia and elsewhere in the world. However, we are very happy to work with private collectors both in and out of Hong Kong.

Koru-hk.com Contemporary Art Gallery provides a full range of associated services including illustrated submissions, commissioning, investment advice, valuations, crating and installation. We also regularly design and publish art catalogues which can be purchased online or at art bookshops. In addition, we provide a much loved "Koru Art Voucher" programme for the gift of art.

Arohanui (note 2)
The team from Koru-hk.com Contemporary Art

Gallery Hours: by appointment

Note 1: Kia Ora In New Zealand Maori means "cheers", "hello", "good day", "good morning", "good afternoon", "good evening"

Note 2: Arohanui "Big love" or "love you" in New Zealand Maori language Wood to Bronze 點木成銅 new work by Rick Swain 李塑新作



The process of 'creating' allows me to escape some of the madness and aggression in our world. Should the finished work portray the calm, balance & simplicity I seek, I am content.

- Rick Swain, 2007

在『創作』的過程中讓我自瘋狂和侵略的世界裡逃脱。我所追尋的沉靜、平衡與簡單即是 我欲從作品表達的意念。

- 李塑,二〇〇七

Wood to Bronze

- new work by Rick Swain

Gentle geometries

Concerning energy

In our secular, urban 'wired' world the sources of nature are sublimated. Tesselated space and manufactured surfaces dominate, literally and metaphorically. In the 'best' downtown architecture corporate offices rise above box boutiques and small sleek restaurants. Within many contemporary steel and glass shrines natural materials, such as wood and stone are anaesthetised, polished to unnatural degrees and then awakened 'naturally', randomly, with mature potted greenery. Such worlds aspire to clocked control, while around them, in perpetual motion, telluric energies flow, sometimes sensed yet often ignored.

Rick Swain's new works in wood and bronze are quiet, purposeful antidotes to urban overload. He comments, "I left the city because I was able to. The absence or divorce from natural sources can be overwhelming."

"I grew up in a making family. My father made and fixed things. My mother sketched and played music. I have made things for as long as I can remember and I enjoy and play music. I initially wanted to be an architect. I completed a NZ Certificate in Engineering and that knowledge has served me well throughout my life; that and a love of nature nurtured in our family."

relations experienced

In the contemplation of nature, its balances and contraries, it is possible to look at abstract works such as these and have access to a sense of what we know and of mystery. Swain's work uses contemplation of experience as its source. Translated into a plastic medium, the forms address experience abstracted in order to keep contemplation open and vital. These works spring from the experiential, the way experience is selected and screened. Recollected through the ebb and flow of memory, these may be moments in which the artist has sensed the uplift of a breeze or an embrace, or the energy of a spiral or circle. These are universal realities, gestures and relations encountered by many.

Freed from the mimetic, Rick Swain's forms derive from the experiential world and from the nature of the selected medium. The works are gestures about sources (material and emotional), rather than articulations of objects. They are relational plays about presence and absence, the light and the dark. Within the work, apertures or openings may appear to suggest the 'searching gaze' of the artist. In fact, they

involve the individual's ability to see, to experience and understand the necessity for contemplative space. Swain maintains that in contemporary industrial society adequate space is a complex and sometimes anxious matter, often fuelled by an overload of got-to-have 'frills' and billboard stimuli. Reducing that complexity to the essential gesture is part of his editing process. The result is abstraction, non-literal representations that can be experienced and extended by the viewer.

and abstracted

Abstracted, non-literal representation, devoid of sharpness or roughness, is Swain's signature. It signifies that his concerns are not with outer form but with the idea, the essence of things. The work does not turn its back on chaos. It offers a space apart. Swain explores similar territory to the classic twentieth century modernist sculptors as the work of Constantin Brâncu?i, Naun Gabo and Barbara Hepworth. ¹

They too used an engineer-like knowledge of source and structure, focussing on the essential rather than the ephemeral, creating strong yet lyrical works which today legitimately earn that most over-used adjective, spiritual.² Similarly, Swain's gentle geometries, counterplays of rounded volume and space, function both as signifiers and compositional devices.

His most common device is a circular one, used for the symbolism and the natural geometry of the shape. Circles are endless. They are universally used to signify the sun, the earth's core, a protected or consecrated space, an aura, the human head, the cosmic energy of the womb, protecting and nourishing the embryo, and the pelagos, the level ocean believed to have protected the earth at its birth.

Swain uses the circle, serene and simplified, open and closed, to address presence and absence. The inner and outer surfaces of the Origins and Spiral works offer a sense of circular and cyclical energy. Such works can be read variously as a rippling wave; a seed unfurling into nascent life; a crescent moon embracing human tides; the invisible ball of qi (energy) that practitioners of qi gong gather into themselves, or the body of a human or a leaf as it awakens to life or, conversely, folds into an acceptance of senescent decay. Each such gesture involves space.

Through interplays of gesture and space, Embrace, Infinity and the Transition works intimate a sense of aspiration and achievement, vulnerability within strength.³ Like individuals who divest themselves of material possessions, each Transition stands naked. Embrace, like Hepworth's Two Figures (1954-55), is evocative rather than descriptive, just as Infinity is somehow full of hope. Not hope the necessary but exhausting emotion, but the flow of hope. Swain comments that he has not looked at many artists' works. Those that he has looked at, like Hepworth and Len Lye, fill him with wonder and real hope. Through a reduction of ephemera and detail, these works quietly suggest meaning beyond their constituent surfaces. Meaning is, perhaps, essayed in the abstraction(mass and space) but completed in each viewer's response.

flow as opposed to permanence

These are 'outlines' and surfaces, suggestive of movement - as signposted in titles such as Breeze and Spiral. Yet beyond that, the resulting forms function as eyescapes and mindscapes. They may begin with the sculptor's design and practice, his transition from wood to bronze; his choice of materials and progressive acts of reduction and the resulting essay on energy and relationships. But they are comprehended by the viewer who attends and investigates the surfaces and the voids and the changing space accessed with the slightest change of axis. Rich growth rings and grains, and aqueous patinas flow into space and return over painted or polished surfaces only to course on, perpetual.

Each of the Transition works (the serial title alludes to the artist's present movement in media from wood to bronze as well as the actual forms) engage viewers in an unfixed 'world'. Yet, rather than exert or invite any sense of the anxious, each view or movement around the Transition works offers a seamless play of space and form – like the light passing through and simultaneously defining the digits of an open hand, turning this way and that. The Transition works, like Spiral, Breeze and Embrace, are not about change. They are change, calm and calming. It is as though the works and their tranquil contours and surfaces advise against notions of permanence in favour of an evolving awareness or sensibility.

The slightest shift in viewing, like the slightest alteration from version to version in wood or bronze, reflects not only the maker's decisions and abstractions, but also his efforts to draw viewers into contemplation and dialogue. And, as in deep contemplation, all sense of representation or scale is lost, quietly absented. Free of incidental detail, nothing in these forms gives us the measure of an illusory location or limb. Each viewer brings to these geometries their own history of experience and expectations.

Faced with works such as these, it is well to remember that traditional conventions of representation (and much else) accustom us to a relatively fixed way of seeing. Some modern artists push hard against such 'normalising' practices. Some create clamorous works that provoke the viewer and stimulate an unfettered emotional response and speculation.

If in contemporary art speculation is the golden ingredient, then in Swain's sculpture, contemplation is the essential element.

What these new works suggest is that in addition to understanding the various current facts and fictions that pass for knowledge and the new, we have, like Luke Skywalker, to be able to imagine the source.

beyond the city

Out on the Coromandel Peninsula, in the aqueous embrace of Whitianga, once frequented by English ships in search of endless supplies of Kauri, Swain sculpts quietly.⁴ Not about or for novelty, or difference or speculation, but about essence. In a seamless blend of simplicity and sophistication, of imagination and

imaged mass and space. His work, in re-cycled Kauri and bronze, explores the nature of abstraction and its ability to facilitate contemplation. As Linda Tyler, Director of the Centre for New Zealand Art Research and Discovery has observed, Rick Swain works to bring out the inherent quality of his materials in a way which is expressive of Pacific identity.

Swain has indicated that for him, art has socio-cultural significance and a social function. One of its functions is to remember and recall that which is absent – whether it is history, or the unconscious, or form, or the space in which to live and breathe and think.

In our contemporary world the conflict between nature and culture, between historical awareness and the purported universality of art appears to be widening rather than narrowing. Swain's work does not try to comment on this rift but rather focuses our attention on understanding sources. Effective art is a vehicle for perceiving and understanding. It can bring about social change. It can be a metaphor for that, moving us from the known to the unknown, from the present to the future. This sort of metaphoric bridgework involves social and individual responsiveness. Art, like the individual's emotions and understanding, should be not be reduced to being little more than a decorative frill on our quality of life – it should be integral, part of life.

The real challenge facing any artist is the awareness that while nothing comes from nothing, and that while experience is filtered by memory, art should be positive, aware of the past yet free from crippling nostalgia. Art now, as ever, has to be meaningful. It is about origins in a truly positive sense, like a seed, the first stirrings of existence and the acknowledgement of inevitable decay and, by implication, the preciousness of the interval. These are some of the underpinnings apparent in the geometries of Swain's latest body of work.

Dr. Cassandra Fusco

May 2007

¹ Constantin Brâncu?i (1876-1957), Naum Neemia Pevsner Gabo (1890-1977) and Barbara Hepworth (1903-75).

² Consider Brâncu?i's simple ovoid, The Beginning of the World (1920), Gabo's Space X (c1938), Hepworth's globular Pelagos (1948) and any one of Swain's spherical Origins or Spiral works.

³ Compare with Hepworth's Pendour, (1947-1948), Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden.

⁴ Legend has it that Kupe, the Polynesian chief and explorer, landed in the shadow of the 'Long White Cloud' Aotearoa, at Te Whitianga-a-Kupe, the crossing place of Kupe around 950AD. Swain and his partner Ruth love this area and regret its history of deforestation. Timber from Whitianga was New Zealand's first private export. Over a period of 60 years about 500 million feet of kauri timber was milled and sold, and offcuts burned day and night as a beacon for shipping on Buffalo Beach for 40 years. Kauri gum diggers took out 100,000 tons of gum over 50 years, particularly from the area around Coroglen once called Gum Town. The gold rush at Kuaotunu 16km north of Whitianga began in 1889 and lasted about 10 years, although gold was still mined into the 1900s. The estimated worth of gold extracted was about \$32.3 million.

點木成銅

- 李塑新作

流暢的幾何世界

創作源頭

在現今線條築構的都會世界裡,自然資源已被昇華,鑲嵌式空間與粗製濫造的外觀佔有重要地位。繁華的都市中充斥著制式精品店與精巧的餐廳,夾雜在現代鋼鐵和玻璃建物之間,天然材料如木材與石材被人們利用到了無新意,被刨製成不自然的角度,搭配隨意的綠葉盆栽,人們因此侷限於規律的時序當中,因此遺忘了地球的動能與川流不息的領會感受。

李塑最新以木頭、青銅為材料的作品是都市超越現象的一帖良方。他説:「缺乏或脱離天然資源是時勢所驅,因此我選擇遠離城市。」

「我成長於手工之家,父親從事製作和修繕器物的工作,母親則是擅長素描、演奏音樂。從我有記憶起就開始動手做東西,我很喜歡,同時也演奏音樂。最初我想當一名建築師,我取得紐西蘭工程師執照,此知識和家庭培養對自然的愛惜對我一生影響甚多。」

經驗的相連

在自然界的平衡與對立的省思中,可從觀看抽象作品來體驗我們所知與未知的謎。李塑的作品運用經驗與省思為題材。以雕塑的方式呈現,並提出抽象體驗以維持思緒的活絡與開闊。這些作品源自於體驗。穿梭於回憶的潮流,也許是激起藝術家靈感的瞬間片刻。一切看似普通的事物均牽連著許多環節。

李塑的作品表現形式來自對世界的體驗和媒材的本質而來,作品是材料的呈現,而不是物件間的連結。在作品中,隙縫和洞孔被視為是藝術家欲表達本身觀感的媒介,事實上,每個人有各自不同的看法、體認、瞭解與省思。李塑表示在當代工業社會裡,經常負荷不必要的裝飾和廣告看板標語的刺激。降低作品的複雜程度使之精簡是他創作的一部分,其所呈現的結果是抽象,一種可親身體驗和自我延伸的非文字表達。

至於抽象化

圓潤或粗糙的非文字抽象表現是李塑的獨特標誌,它表示李塑關心的並非外在形體而是事物的本質與想法,作品沒有棄混亂於不顧,它提供了思考的空間。李塑也探究二十世紀經典現代派雕刻家中相似領域的賈伯、黑普瓦絲等的作品。

他們過度使用工程師般對於來源、結構的知識和過度講究本質,而非現今創造堅硬卻又富有情感的作品之短暫心靈。同樣地,李塑的圓空間及反向運行的流暢幾何學在表達圖像和創作圖案雙雙起了 作用。

圓形是李塑最普遍的設計,他運用象徵主義和形狀的自然幾何。圓是無止盡的,它們常用來表示太陽、地核、受保護或神聖的空間、一種氛圍、人類的頭、子宮的無限能量(保護和養育胚胎)和一片從地球誕生之時便開始保護著這大地的平靜海洋。

李塑使用圓圈、平靜和精簡、開放和閉合來闡述存在與不存在。原點和螺旋作品的內外表面提供 一種圓形、循環能量的感覺。這樣的作品能不同地被解讀成作為起漣漪的波浪;一顆生命萌芽的種子 ;新月所帶來的潮汐;氣所構成的無形球,或人或葉的軀體。各個姿態都包含空間的意念於其中。

透過姿態和空間的互相作用,環繞、無限、轉變的作品暗示一種熱望、成就的感覺和隱藏於力量內的弱點。就像物質慾侵占自身的個體,各個轉變赤裸裸的呈現在眼前。像黑普瓦絲的作品「Two Figures」(1954-55),環繞是一種形象而非記述,而無限是充滿希望。希望不是必需品而是精疲力竭的激情和希望串流。李塑説他未曾看過許多藝術家的作品,而那些他看過的作品像是黑普瓦絲和連恩、李,讓他感到驚嘆和真正的希望。透過短促生命和細節的消減,這些作品輕聲的暗示著真實意念遠遠超過表面所呈現的。或許,意念是在抽象中不斷地粹練但在觀眾的回響中達到完美。

對抗著永恆的思潮

這些外形和表象聯想的姿態彷彿微風和螺旋為標題。除此之外,這引發的形式可當作眼景和心景。他們也許從雕刻家的設計和實做,從木頭到青銅的轉變;材料選擇和精簡作業程序,還有能量及彼此間關係的成果。但照料、研究外觀和空間和與接近主軸的轉換空間的觀看者能理解,完全成長的圓圈、穀物,和含水綠繡湧入空間中,回復色彩鮮麗和精鍊的外觀,只為川流不息。 各個轉變作品(從木頭轉化成青銅)讓觀賞者陷入一個未知的世界,而各種關於轉變作品觀點或動作提供一種空間和形態的連串變化,就像光的穿透,同時也看清手比的數字。 像螺旋、微風和環繞等的轉變作品不只是種變化,它們是改變及平靜,作品的平穩輪廓和外表闡述了永久性的概念:一種逐步成形的體認或感覺。

微小的轉移反應是作家所決定的抽象概念,也是他為引導觀察者進入沉思和交談的努力。當陷入 沉思時,所有表述或平衡的感覺默默消失。沒有伴隨的細節,在這些形式裡沒有不實際或分岐的限度 ,每位觀眾能自由加諸他們個人體驗和期許在這些幾何形體中。

如果在當代藝術中思索是黃金要素, 而在李塑的雕塑裡, 沉思是不可或缺的元素。這些新作品 的啟發是除了理解當前各式各樣被認為是種知識和新知的虛虛實實,我們必需要像路克天行者一樣, 能夠想像根源。

猿離都會

在科羅曼德半島之外,在環水四秀的菲蒂昂格,昔日李塑常乘坐英國船探尋無止盡供應的栲櫟 (Kauri),他靜靜地進行雕刻創作。非關新奇、區別或思索,主要為本質的呈現。在連串簡樸和複雜、 想像和大眾、空間的反映中交融,他運用再生栲櫟和青銅創作的作品探索抽象的本質和它促進沉思的 能力。

李塑表示對他而言,藝術具有社會意義和社會作用。其作用當中有一個是回憶和回想缺少的東西,不管是歷史、無意識、形式或是生活、呼吸和思考的空間。

在我們的當代世界裡,衝突存在於自然和文化間及 在歷史體認和藝術的普遍性之間,它似乎有日漸擴大的趨勢。 李塑的作品並無抨擊此裂口之意,而是寧可集中我們的注意於瞭解根源。令人印象深刻的藝術是一種用來察覺和理解的手段,它可能為社會帶來改遷,它可能是一個將我們從已知移向未知、從現在到未來的象徵,這類象徵的架橋工程包含社會和個人的響應。好比個人的情感和理解,藝術不應該降低到只比我們平常生活中不必要的裝飾品高層點,它應該是生活不可或缺的一部分。

對任何一位藝術家,真正的挑戰是體悟當無中生無和記憶粹鍊出的經驗, 藝術應該是正面,明白過去和自鄉情中解脱。現今,藝術必須是意味深長的,它是關於真實感覺的起源,就像一顆種子,初次喚醒的存在感和確認以及不可避免的腐朽與含蓄地保存時間的珍貴,這些均是李塑的最新的幾何作品中的基礎表象。

卡珊娜・賦歌博士

二〇〇七年五月





Transition 2 過渡之二 h 830mm x w 350mm x d 300mm













Spiral 螺旋 h 515mm x w 400mm x d 280mm





Origins 23 原生之廿三 h 560mm x w 380mm x d 250mm





Breeze 3 微風之三 h 990mm x w 375mm x d 265mm





Embrace 擁抱 h 1750mm x w 400mm x d 360mm





Infinity 1 生生不息之一 h 410mm x w 1365mm x d 300mm





Infinity 2 生生不息之二 h 1000mm x w 720mm x d 510mm

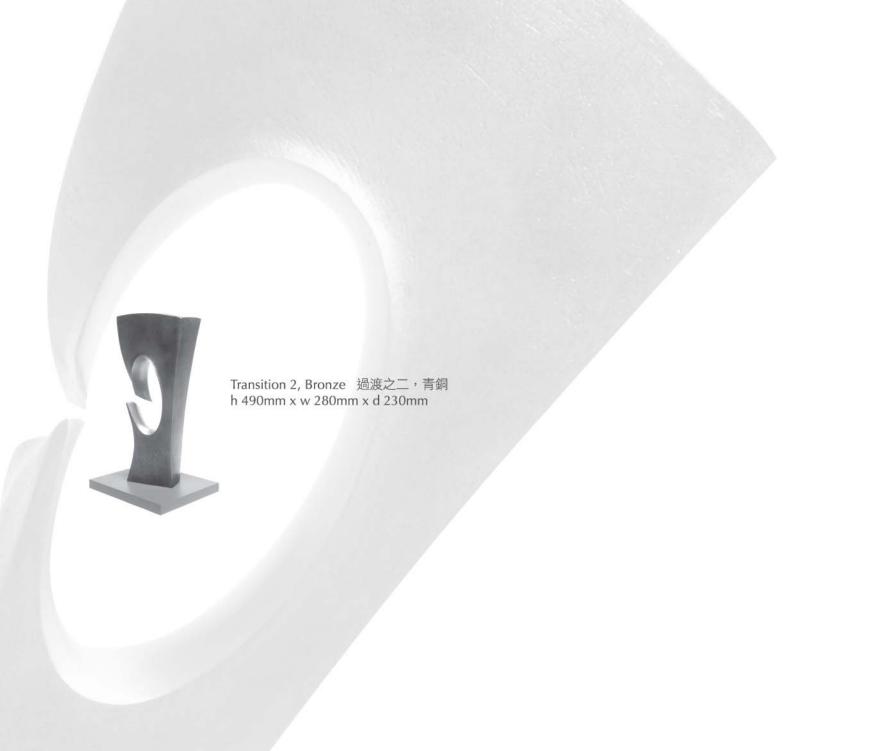




Bronze 銅











Transition 3, Bronze 過渡之三,青銅h 1190mm x w 380mm x d 350mm















Rick Swain - Biography

Born Christchurch New Zealand 1949

Rick Swain began sculpting in the early eighties. The sense of freedom he found in the creation of abstract forms in wood was a welcome alternative to his background in engineering design and photography. Working often with demolition materials, he transforms native and exotic timbers into large sculptural vessels with ceremonial overtones, or abstract sculptures evoking moods as diverse as birth and the shaping force of the wind.

"My current works are increasingly simple in form. I am using variations in the density of natural colour, some added colour, and the surface texture provided by tool marks to create visual and textural boundaries"

Rick's unique works reflect his love of human and natural forms and his deep understanding of this warm organic medium. His works are to be found in private, corporate, and government collections in New Zealand and throughout the World.

SELECTED COLLECTIONS

Miaoli National Wood Sculpture Museum, Taiwan
Archbishop of Canterbury
The Treasury Department, New Zealand Government
Caltex Oil NZ Ltd
Groome Poyry Ltd (International timber consultants)
Glaxo Smith Kline
Consolidated Metal Industries
Fletcher Challenge Ltd

SELECTED COMMISSIONS

Four Seasons Hotel, Hong Kong
Shangari-La Hotel, Beijin and Shanghai, China
Le Méridien Cyberport Hotel, Hong Kong
Hong Kong Hotel, Hong Kong
"5 Years Architecture Silver Jubilee Award" Owens Corning, New Zealand
"Millennium Sculpture Project" NZ Sugar Co Ltd, New Zealand
"M. S. Buffalo Figurehead" Whitianga Historical Society, New Zealand
Gift for Archbishop of Canterbury, Bishop of Auckland, New Zealand
New Zealand Pharmacy Marketing Award, Stevens
New Zealand Timber Industry Federation Annual Awards
Devenport Yatch Club/ Borough Council Centennial Trophy, New Zealand
City of Sails Yachting Trophy, New Zealand

李塑-個人履歷

1949年出生於 基督城, 紐西蘭

李塑的雕刻創作始於80年初期。他的木雕抽象形式創作深受其工程設計和攝影學習背景的影響。他經常選用已毀壞的素材,使這些奇特的木料轉換而成巨大的船體雕塑並泛著儀式般的光輝,又或者其抽象的雕塑意象召喚著誕生與風阻般充滿力量的多樣面貌。

"我的最新作品是以越趨簡單的形式呈現。 在天然的色澤中、以及在一些增加的顏色和使用工具使作品表面呈現紋理的創造中去營造視覺和質地的界限"

李塑獨特的創作反映了他對人和自然形式的熱愛以及對生物的深刻理解。 他的作品在紐西蘭政府以及諸多私人機構所珍藏。

作品 珍藏(節錄)

苗栗木雕博物館,臺灣 坎特伯雷大教堂 財政部,紐西蘭 加士德石油有限公司,紐西蘭 Groome Poyry 有限公司(國際木材顧問) Glaxo Smith Kline Consolidated Metal Industries Fletcher Challenge Ltd

作品 委售(節錄)

TH & E\AIPS/

四季飯店,香港 香格里拉飯店,北京,上海 數碼港艾美酒店,香港

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Devenport Yatch俱樂部理事會,紐西蘭

城市快艇--風帆城市,紐西蘭

Catalogue designed and published by:
Koru-hk.com Contemporary Art Gallery
Exhibition supported by:
New Zealand Consulate-General in Hong Kong New Zealand Trade & Enterprise in Hong Kong
Photography:
Rick Swain
Translation:
Angela Chen, Page One Taipei
目錄設計及印刷
Koru.hk.com現代 藝廊
展覽支持:
紐西蘭駐香港總領事舘 香港紐西蘭商務署
圖片攝影:
李塑
翻譯:
陳微微,台北Pageone國際書店





ISBN 978-988-98744-6-9



TIN WAN HILL ROAD 田灣山道 TIN WAN STREET 田灣街 KA WO STREET 嘉禾街 SHEK PAI WAN ROAD 石排灣道 From POK FU LAM 薄扶林 TANG FUNG STREET 登豐街 TIN WAN PRAYA ROAD 田灣海傍道 ABERDEEN PRAYA ROAD 香港仔海傍道 ABERDEEN WHOLESALE FISH MARKET 香港仔魚類批發市場 HING WAI CENTRE 興偉工業中心

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