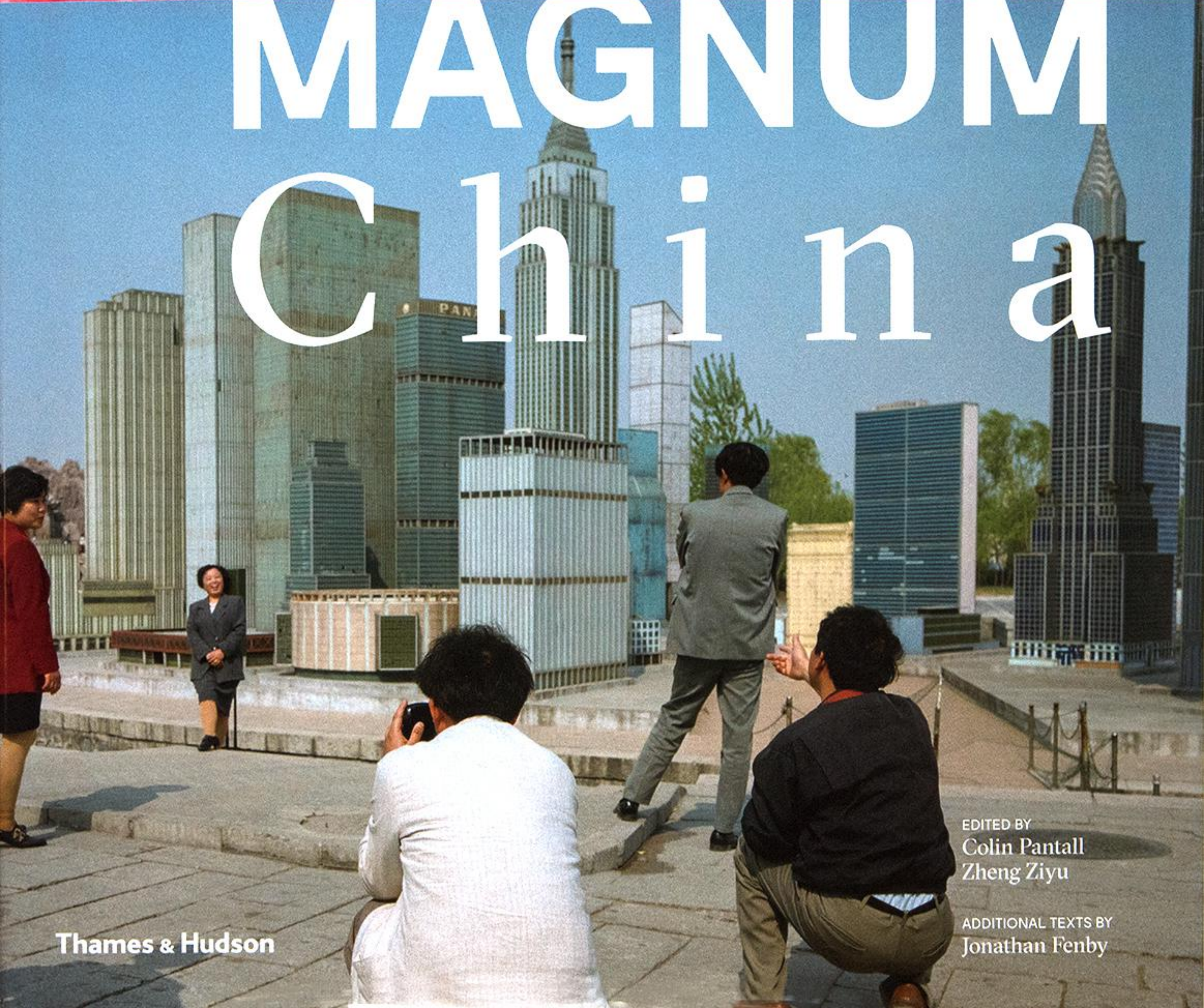




# MAGNUM China



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# Martin Parr Hong Kong

## Luxury

'This project was commissioned by the Blindspot Gallery,' says Martin Parr. 'Galleries don't usually commission work but they said, come and do your interpretation of Hong Kong. I went for twelve days, with everything carefully planned.' Working in this way, with cultural commissions – which are increasingly making up a large part of Parr's working life – he was able to receive money up front, while the commercial gallery received a set of prints and later published a book and put on a show to help recoup their costs.

Parr had photographed in Hong Kong before, but usually working independently on self-initiated shoots. For this 2013 commission he was accompanied by a fixer who would help gain access to locations and translate for Parr, smoothing his path as he travelled from shopping mall to racecourse to leisure park. The result is pictures that reveal the intensity of Hong Kong, with the stamp of Parr's colour and wit.

The brief to put together a portfolio of images for the gallery was a challenge for Parr, but one he was familiar with. And even though his days were timetabled, there was still an element of chance in what he found. 'It's a jigsaw,' he says. 'You try to put together the pieces. You're open to whatever you come across, but because it's Hong Kong it's very familiar.'

The commission was about Parr using his photographic knowledge to build up a convincing visual narrative of Hong Kong life. But in addition to the familiar images of food, leisure and gambling, he continued his explorations into luxury and the impact that increased wealth and consumption have had on the world, something he believes has been largely ignored in photography.

'The whole evidence of the explosion of consumerism and wealth needs to be addressed,' he states. 'There's shopping, nightlife, all the things that are connected to the modern Chinese life, the modern consumerism and the modern wealth that has been generated. It's everywhere we go. I photographed a lot of the mainlanders shopping down Canton Road in Hong Kong. I photographed the mainlanders coming off the station, and I felt the tension the Hong Kong people felt towards this invasion by the mainlanders.'

Parr's images of mainland Chinese shopping are pictures of luxury, a theme that he has focused on over the last twenty years, but here there is an added frisson that is apparent in pictures of people who are visibly wealthy, who wear that wealth like a second skin. 'This new relationship is quite fragile,' Parr notes. 'It's not an easy relationship to explore.'

So we see people on Hong Kong's Canton Road, outside the Armani store, queuing at the Louis Vuitton store. It's a sight that is replicated in London, New York, Paris and Rome, but this is Hong Kong and there is a political undertone in the images of the coldness of expression that extreme wealth sometimes brings.

In the wider body of work that Parr produced for Blindspot Gallery, these images are tempered by photographs of Hong Kong at rest and at play, in all its densely packed and diverse glory.



ABOVE Hong Kong, 2013.  
Canton Road.

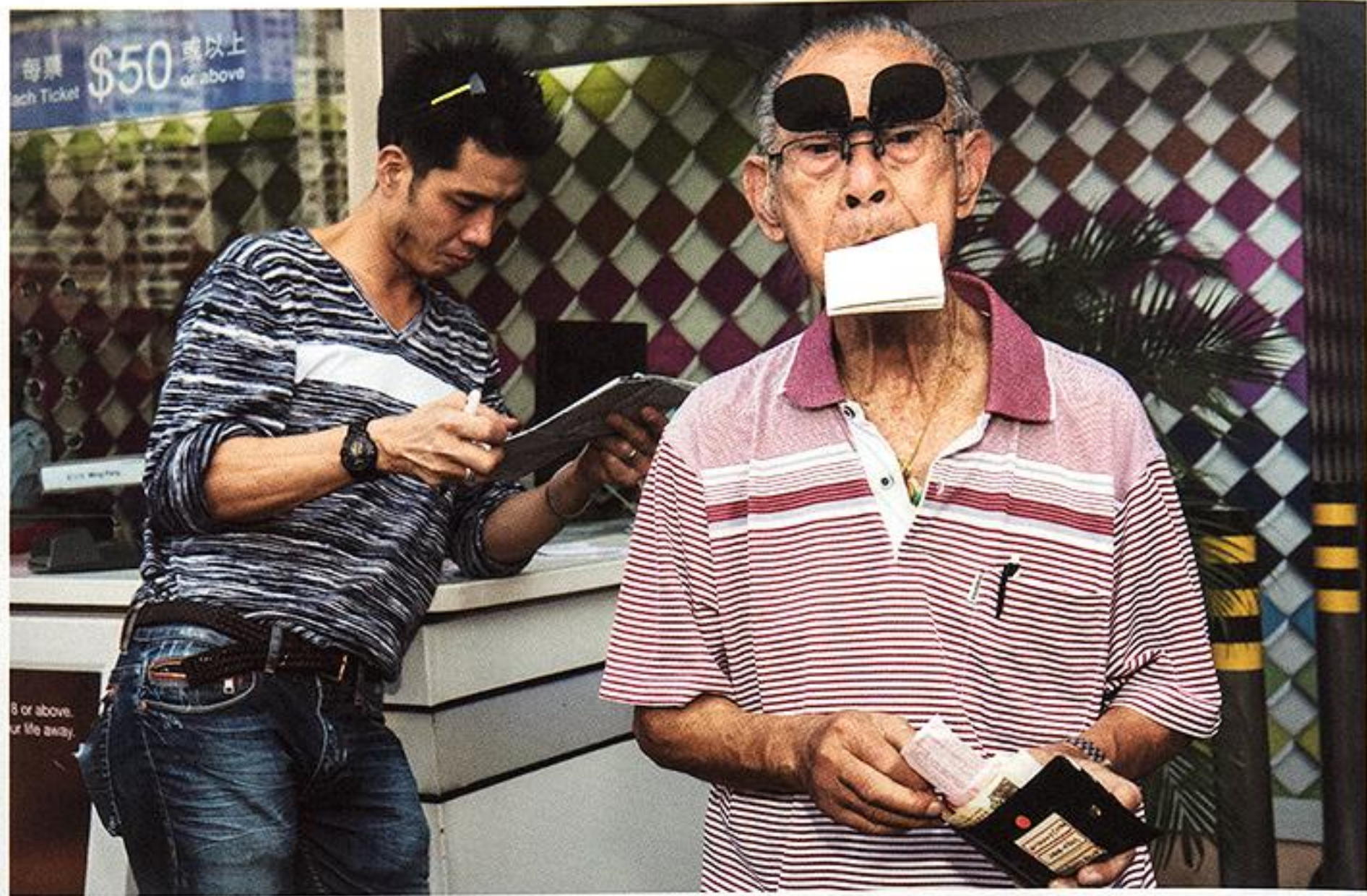


ABOVE AND OPPOSITE Hong Kong, 2013.  
Canton Road.





LEFT Hong Kong, 2013.  
Happy Valley Racecourse.



TOP Hong Kong, 2013.  
Happy Valley Racecourse.

ABOVE Hong Kong, 2013.  
Ocean Park.



ABOVE Hong Kong, 2013.  
Gay Floatilla, Lamma Island.