

## Offerings of Devotion: Hong Kong in Paper

Wander the vibrant markets and shopping streets of Hong Kong's older neighbourhoods and you will discover a charming world of paper replicas of everyday items. These replicas are offerings to lost loved ones, and are destined for another world. According to Chinese custom, the dead can bring no belongings with them to the afterlife. Instead, they must rely on the living to provide for them by burning paper replicas of the things they want and need. As the paper withers to ashes and smoke, the offerings pass from this world to the next, where they take their genuine form.

Within this world of paper are offerings of every shape and kind, fit for every possible purpose. With so many designs and styles to choose from, worshippers can find just the right offerings for their loved ones. For a departed grandfather: a pair of slippers, some cigarettes and a songbird. For a beloved mother: a new purse, a favoured dim sum dish, and a portable radio to listen to Cantonese opera. For a former business partner: a gold watch, the latest digital organiser, a briefcase, and a new suit. For a daughter or grandson: a violin to practise, a new badminton racquet, study materials, and perhaps the latest video games. Individually, each offering

## 寄託在紙紮中的香港人情

在香港舊區漫步時，常見紙紮祭品出現於大街小巷。紙紮是後人給先人的祭品，供他們在另一個世界享用。據中國傳統習俗，逝者離開塵世時，帶不走任何財物，必須依靠後人燃燒各樣日常用品的紙紮，滿足他們在陰間的生活所需。隨著彩紙化作飛灰，祭品便會自陽間送到身處另一個國度的先人手中。

在紙紮的花花世界裏，製品的形態和種類五花八門，滿足各式各樣的要求。祭祀者總能從林林總總的設計和款式中找到最切合親人的祭品。仙遊的祖父或要一雙拖鞋、數根香煙和一隻了哥。摯愛的母親該會喜歡一個新錢包、一籠最愛吃的點心和一部便攜式收音機收聽粵劇。前生意夥伴能用上金錶、最新款電子手帳、公事包和新西裝。女兒或孫子會需要小提琴繼續練習，還有羽毛球拍、一些書本，以及最新電子遊戲機。每件祭品都代表著跨越陰陽的

represents an intimate and personal connection that transcends worlds. Collectively, they are a microcosm of Hong Kong that reflects the city's desires, obsessions and beliefs.

These paper offerings are made from colourful paper or card and held together with glue. Elaborate or irregularly shaped designs are made with a bamboo frame wrapped in crepe paper or papier mache. Fancier offerings feature cellophane, beads, metallic card or moulded plastic. Some boast moving parts: bags with functional zippers; umbrellas that open and close; desk fans with spinning blades and rotating heads; retractable fishing rods complete with functioning paper reels. Objects are typically life-size, though anything larger than a piano or a car will be modelled at a more convenient scale (without compromising its final size in the afterlife). Mass-produced designs are common nowadays, but the charming pieces constructed and decorated by hand remain popular. A few papercraft masters still fill custom orders for obscure fancies or exact reproductions of cherished possessions.

Worshipping supplies stores dotted across the city sell premade paper offerings for a modest price, and staff can advise on putting together appropriate and auspicious selections. These little shops also sell incense, ceramic deities, festival decorations and offering stoves. Hawker stalls in street markets and outside of cemeteries sell premade offerings as well. Stationery and variety stores sometimes stock a small selection of items for the dead, alongside products for the living. Funeral parlours offer large and lavish paper replicas to accompany funeral ceremonies.

Hong Kong's style of paper offerings are not like the precise, meticulous replicas made in Taiwan or the mass-produced offerings from Mainland China. On first impression, they appear cartoonish and simple. But, on closer inspection, it becomes clear that they are purposeful interpretations that capture the essence of the object



Above: The Mong Kok branch of Tin Chao Hong  
Worshipping Supplies in Canton Road Street Market

Overleaf: Paper offerings outside the main store of Tin Chao Hong on Queens Road West in Sai Wan. This was the largest paper offerings store in Hong Kong until it recently closed to make way for luxury shops and apartments.

上：廣東道街市天就行香燭紙業旺角分店

次頁：西灣皇后大道西天就行總店外的紙紮品。這裡曾是香港最大的紙紮品商店之一，直到最近不敵名店和豪宅入侵，宣布歇業。



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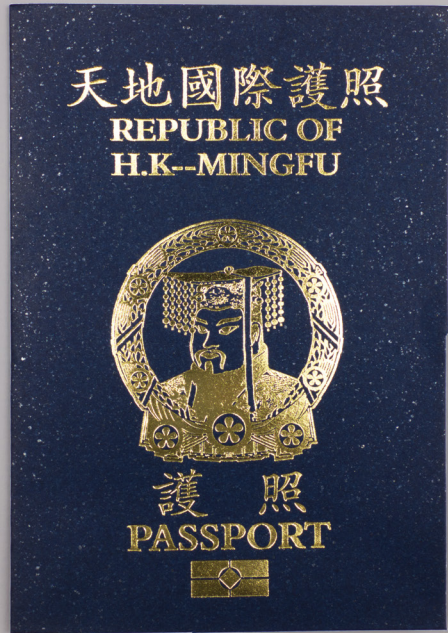


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