

Macao 澳門



Building our Future

Macao's draft urban master plan explained

The Chief Executive pledges to intensify economic recovery efforts

City theatre companies stage a comeback



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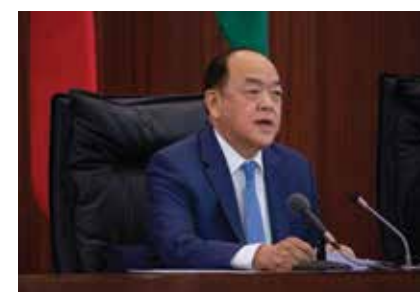
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All part of the master plan

From roads, houses and offices to green spaces and conservation areas – what urban developments will be undertaken in Macao over the next 20 years? Find out as we sift through the government's draft master plan unveiled a few weeks ago. Hear from a raft of experts like Nuno Soares and Joe Chan (pictured) as we break down the document, which just went through a period of public consultation. **p.12**



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From the Editor

Planning Macao's future

Ten months after safety measures to control the spread of COVID-19 were implemented in the city, Macao Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng said during his 2021 Policy Address in November that full economic recovery would only become possible after a vaccine is available. In the same address, he shared the government's plans to ensure the wellbeing of the population as well as how the city proposes to diversify its industry. You can read about all about these initiatives from the address over the following pages.

Also in this issue, we break down the new draft Urban Master Plan that was released in early September. We speak to experts on how they see the plan and the changes it proposes over the next 20 years, from infrastructure schemes to the increase of housing developments across the city. One of the highlights of the plan is the decision to extend the Light Rapid Transit (LRT) between the Taipa Maritime Terminal to the Border Gate – the main entry point for visitors from mainland China – minimising the time spent by tourists commuting to Macao's entertainment hotspots. With the gradual increase of tourists returning to the city, Macao's creative scene is also buzzing.

This year has changed so much in our lives, from the way we work to the way we live. So, also in this issue, we speak to many of Macao's artists, including theatre company directors and actors, as well as talented young musicians. These people have persisted in following their passions during this uncertain year.

Even after shows or concerts have been cancelled, audience numbers have shrunk and budgets have been cut, these artists have persevered and found ways to bring their passions to the stage. And with tourists returning and parts of the economy slowly reviving, the artists of Macao can now perform for bigger audiences once again.

Due to the pandemic and the desire to look back at better times, 2020 has become a year of nostalgia across the world. A study published this year by the journal 'Frontiers' suggests that nostalgia can actually help to combat feelings of loneliness and can be a coping mechanism during times of duress, subconsciously taking us to a 'safe' place where we were once happy and felt loved. Perhaps this is why the recent 'Nostalgia of Macao: Exhibition of Nostalgic Toys in Remembrance of the Innocence of Childhood' felt so special this year. More than 1,000 toys, some dating back 100 years, were shared by the Macao Antique Collectors' Association. In case you missed it, we cover this exhibition and interview the collectors behind it.

This is our last issue of Macao Magazine in 2020. But with a two-decade plan for the city set in motion by the local government and the fact we've been COVID-19 free for months, we in Macao are in a privileged position. There is no lack of local entertainment, restaurant openings or ways to socialise as we approach the end of a difficult year. Most importantly, we are safe. That's worth celebrating.

Gonalo C sar de S 
Editor-in-Chief

Macao Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng (left) and president of the Legislative Assembly Kou Hoi In (right) at the 2021 Policy Address at the Legislative Assembly in Macao



POLITICS

Prioritising the people

Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng pledged to intensify Macao's efforts to revive its economy during his Policy Address for the Fiscal Year 2021. He also said that the protection of residents' lives and health remains a 'top priority'.

Text **Christian Ritter** and **Gonçalo César de Sá**

Macao's Chief Executive stressed that the 'protection of residents' lives and health' continues to be his government's top priority during his Policy Address for the Fiscal Year 2021. Ho Iat Seng also pledged to speed up the city's economic recovery in the wake of COVID-19 during the address on 16 November inside the hemicycle of the Legislative Assembly (AL).

Titled 'Strengthening the Foundation for Consolidation, Tackling Challenges Head On', this was Ho's second policy address at the AL since he took office on 20 December last year. In it, he also acknowledged that 2020 has turned out to be an 'unprecedented and severe test for everyone' and that due to the novel coronavirus crisis, Macao is going through a 'grave recession' where the receipts of the tourism and gaming sectors have 'fallen steeply' while other sectors have also been deeply impacted.

"Small, medium-sized and

big enterprises have all been confronted with different kinds of difficulties and challenges," said the Chief Executive, adding that the government's receipts have 'drastically fallen' and residents have been facing immense pressure as far as their jobs and lives are concerned.



Macao's GDP is expected to shrink by 60.9 per cent in real terms in 2020.

– **Ho Iat Seng**

"The GDP is expected to shrink by 60.9 per cent in real terms in 2020," he continued, forecasting an even deeper drop than the International

Monetary Fund (IMF) did in mid-October when the international organisation predicted Macao's GDP to decline by 52.3 per cent in 2020 compared to the previous year.

At the address, Ho also said that Macao's accomplishments in the fight against COVID-19 'have not come easily'. Macao has been described by observers as one of the safest places on Earth as far as the pandemic is concerned, with only 46 COVID-19 cases – 44 of which were imported – being recorded in the first quarter of this year. All of those people have since recovered.

On the anti-COVID-19 front, Ho said that prevention of a rebound of the epidemic in Macao continues to be his government's priority in tackling the highly infectious disease. He also said that the government would further strengthen regional joint prevention and control efforts, expedite vaccine supplies and prepare for the setting-up of a mobile hospital. The Chief Executive underlined the Macao government's

Macao’s proposed budget for 2021

The Chief Executive unveiled the proposed 2021 budget for the SAR at his policy address. The total was MOP 96.063 billion (US\$12.032 billion), with the largest chunk – MOP 50.4 billion (US\$6.3 billion) – coming from franchise and concessions revenue. He forecasted the total expenditure for 2021 as MOP 95.216 billion (US\$11.926 billion). Here are the 11 government departments and other bodies that will receive the lion’s share of the budget...

Expense Items	MOP
Investments and Development Expenses of the Administration	18.510 billion
Health Bureau	8.626 billion
Education and Youth Affairs Bureau	7.469 billion
Public Security Forces Affairs Bureau of Macao	5.816 billion
Social Affairs Bureau	3.549 billion
Municipal Affairs Bureau	3.068 billion
Transport Bureau	2.752 billion
University of Macau	2.577 billion
Judiciary Police	1.104 billion
Macao Customs Service	1.041 billion
Cultural Affairs Bureau	1.033 billion

continued need to impose an entry ban on foreigners so as to protect the city from COVID-19 risk, pointing out that other countries and regions all over the world have also been implementing similar entry bans.

Economic recovery is a priority

On the economic front, Ho said the Macao government would actively participate in the central government’s dual circulation

strategy that stresses both domestic and external factors in fostering the nation’s economic growth. He also said that the government would further increase the number of public infrastructure investment projects, such as the construction of a fourth bridge between Taipa and the peninsula.

Ho underlined the importance of ensuring the local economy’s ‘adequate economic diversification’ such as by speeding up the

development of a modern financial services industry, the establishment of a bond market, further growth in the traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) industry and promotion of Macao as a safe tourist destination, based on the concept of ‘smart tourism’ – in short, where a destination facilitates access to tourism and hospitality products, services, spaces and experiences through technological tools – and tourism service excellence. Ho also said that the government’s economic diversification drive does not mean that it will have to deliberately undermine its pillar industry – the gaming sector.

The Chief Executive promised that the government’s austerity measures won’t impact its expenditure on social welfare measures, such as the continuation of its annual ‘wealth-sharing’ handout of MOP 10,000 (US\$1,250) for permanent and MOP 6,000 (US\$750) for non-permanent residents. The way the government will give residents its annual ‘wealth-sharing’ handout next year will depend on their views and the development of the pandemic but he reaffirmed that the government would continue sharing the city’s wealth with residents in cash if ‘everybody’ prefers it that way.

During the address, Ho stressed the urgent need to deepen the reform effort and said that his government would accelerate the development of digital governance. The Chief Executive added that patriotic and national security education needed to be further strengthened and announced steps to improve Macao’s national security laws and regulations, as well as the enactment of specific

The Chief Executive answers questions on his policy address at a Legislative Assembly plenary session



Image courtesy of the Government Information Bureau

legislation to protect the SAR’s official secrets.

Ho also underlined the ‘strong support’ that the central government has been providing to the city, adding that Macao has ‘profoundly learnt from and followed the spirit of the important speeches delivered by President Xi Jinping during his visit to Macao in December last year’. “We must take efficient measures to prevent the infiltration and intervention

by external forces,” said Ho, who also underlined his government’s determination to fight corruption.

Praise for subsidy scheme

Following the address, Ho Iat Seng spoke at a special press conference which was held at the Government Headquarters. Here, the Chief Executive underlined that the government’s consumption subsidy scheme has helped boost the local

economy and stabilise employment. The first phase of the scheme, which included an MOP 3,000 (US\$375) consumption smartcard, ran between May and July. The ongoing second phase of the scheme, including an MOP 5,000 (US\$626) top-up to the card, is running between August and next month.

Ho said that the consumption subsidy scheme has ‘obviously’ stimulated consumer spending since its launch in May, adding that

75 per cent of the subsidy has been spent in the ‘cha chaan teng’ – those traditional Hong Kong and Macao-style cafés dotted across the city – sector in particular. When asked about whether the government will roll out a third round of financial support measures for residents and businesses alike, Ho said that it would ‘really’ depend on the development of the pandemic. “If the COVID-19 pandemic stabilises – or COVID-19 vaccines become widely available,” he said, “Macao would be able to welcome tourists from many areas around the world

and its economy would improve, in which case the government would not have to roll out the third round of financial support measures.”

“[But] if local SMEs still have difficulties in running their business next year due to the still serious COVID-19 pandemic,” the Chief Executive continued, “the government would not rule out implementing financial support measures that accurately benefit those in need.”

At the press conference, Ho Iat Seng was asked by reporters about the government’s ongoing

preparations for its bidding process for the granting of future gaming concessions in the run-up to the expiration of the city’s three gaming concessions and three sub-concessions in 2022. Ho had already stated in his policy address that the government would propose amendments to the city’s current gaming industry law next year. Ho said, at the policy address, that the government will hold a public consultation first before drafting amendments to the gaming law.

Ho pointed out that according to the full version of the 2021 Policy

Address, the government plans to submit a bill amending the gaming industry law to the legislature for debate and vote in the fourth quarter of next year, but whether the schedule could be achieved would depend on the outcome of a public consultation which will be held next year. He underlined that the government still has time to prepare for the future gaming concession bidding process, which he described as a ‘complicated’ matter as there are still about two years left before the expiration of the current gaming concessions and

sub-concessions in 2022.

Observers have pointed out that amendments to the current gaming law would be needed to solve the ‘historical issue’ of the current gaming concession and sub-concession model – the gaming industry’s ‘three+three’ system – as the gaming law stipulates that a maximum of three gaming concessions were to be granted.

Hope for a vaccine

The Chief Executive said at the press conference that only after COVID-19 vaccines are available can Macao’s economy and employment situation improve. Ho admitted that, therefore, at least for the time being, it was difficult to tackle Macao’s unemployment issue, which could only be solved by an economic recovery. The unemployment rate reached 4.1 per cent in the July-September period and the underemployment rate – which counts those workers that are part of the city’s labour force and actively seeking work but currently without any – climbed to 4.7 per cent.

Pointing out that certain COVID-19 vaccines are now widely expected to become available in the near future, Ho said that after all of Macao’s residents get vaccinated against the coronavirus, the government would lift its current entry ban on foreigners who then wouldn’t even need to be tested for the virus before entering the city. Ho said that the availability of COVID-19 vaccines was a ‘key factor’ that would change Macao’s current ‘bad’ economy and employment situation. “After [Macao residents] get their COVID-19 vaccination and

develop antibodies,” he said, “the government will dare to reopen [Macao’s tourism] market [to the world].” The Chief Executive added that ‘if all the people’ in Macao get a vaccination, the situation, in terms of the economy and employment, ‘will change, as we won’t need to be scared of tourists who may have been infected with the disease’.

“After Macao residents get their COVID-19 vaccination and develop antibodies, the government will dare to reopen Macao’s tourism market to the world.”

– Ho Iat Seng

Ho Iat Seng delivers his policy address in the Legislative Assembly’s hemicycle



Xinhua News Agency



Ho Iat Seng meets with the press at the Government Headquarters after delivering his policy address

Image courtesy of the Government Information Bureau

Not long for Hong Kong?

At the press conference, the Chief Executive pointed out that according to its standards, the central government would only classify Hong Kong as a COVID-19 low-risk area if no new local cases have been confirmed for 14 consecutive days. He said that only if Hong Kong achieves this situation could Macao lift its 14-day quarantine for arrivals from the neighbouring SAR.

Ho said that the Macao government surely wants Hong Kong visitors but Macao still couldn't offer them quarantine-free entry due to the fact that its COVID-19 epidemic

situation has not yet stabilised. He said he hoped that the Hong Kong government could bring the number of new local cases to zero under its recently rolled out COVID-19 control measures so that the movement of people between the two cities could resume as normal.

Ho also said he hoped that Hong Kong residents who have completed their 14-day quarantine on the mainland will choose to visit Macao for a while before returning to their home SAR, which would be 'a good thing' for Macao. "We welcome them to come to Macao to travel around the city and eat something here before returning to Hong Kong,"

said the Chief Executive. Last year, Hongkongers accounted for 18.6 per cent of Macao's 39.4 million visitor arrivals. According to official data, Macao recorded 4.02 million visitor arrivals in the first nine months of this year, a year-on-year decline of 86.7 per cent. ●

Read more!

Scan the QR code to read an in-depth overview of Macao's major policies for 2021 following Ho Iat Seng's address.



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The entirety of Macao and its waters is covered in the draft urban master plan

SPECIAL FEATURE

Planning for the future

The government's draft urban master plan for the development of Macao over the next 20 years was unveiled in early September. Ahead of next year's final document, we speak with the experts and break down what plans are being proposed for the city by 2040.

Text Cláudia Aranda

In early September, a document was published by Macao’s government that quite literally will change the face of the city over the next 20 years. The long-awaited new Urban Master Plan was released in draft form, kicking off a 60-day public consultation period that started on 4 September and ended on 2 November. It was an important moment in the history of the SAR and, once the public’s views have been digested and the plan is finalised next year, it will define how Macao will develop between now and 2040.

The new draft Urban Master Plan – which we shall call the master plan from here on – was launched by the government during a special press conference. It’s a plan that’s been in the pipeline for almost six years and it proposes that Macao be divided into clearly defined areas such as residential, tourism, green leisure and industrial. It also prioritises habitation and public infrastructure developments, and estimates that by 2040, the city’s population will reach 808,000 from the around 650,000 it stands at now. It also expects the city’s total land area to go up from today’s 32.9 square kilometres to 36.8 and labels percentages of the land to different categories, such as 23 per cent for public infrastructure and 22 per cent for residential purposes.

Ever since it was launched a few weeks ago, experts have praised large parts of it for its forward thinking. Some say that there needs to be more detail in there but they consider it ‘an essential document’ for the future of the SAR, adequately setting the guidelines for the city’s future development. So what lies within the pages of this crucial planning document and what do the experts think about it?

Open plan

One of the most important goals of the master plan is to improve the quality of life for all of Macao’s residents over the coming years. The plan introduces groundbreaking concepts for the city’s future development, such as the division of the Macao SAR into defined areas for residential, tourism, green leisure, industrial and diversified industries purposes, with housing and public infrastructure development having priority. This city-zoning is highlighted as ‘crucial’ by architect and urban planner Nuno Soares, a member of the Architects Association of Macau’s board of directors – a sentiment shared by Alfred Seng Fat Wong, associate professor of the electromechanical engineering department in the University of Macau’s Faculty of Science and Technology.



The master plan proposes that Macao’s land will be divided into eight designated zones. A total of 22 per cent of the land will be for residential use and 23 per cent will be for public infrastructure. A total of 18 per cent will be for ‘ecological conservation’, 13 per cent will be for tourism and entertainment, 10 per cent will be for public facilities, eight per cent will be ‘green areas’, four per cent will be for commercial use and, last but not least, the remaining two per cent will be for industrial use.

Soares is the founder and principal architect at local firm Urban Practice, as well as both the architecture programme co-ordinator at the University of Saint Joseph and founder and director of Macao-based non-profit organisation CURB, which stands for the Centre for Architecture and Urbanism. He emphasises that, in the master plan, ‘there is a principle

of organising the territory into areas’ and that each of these areas ‘will have its existing character reinforced’. “I think it will be greatly advantageous for people to live in neighbourhoods that will have a less generic and more idiosyncratic character,” he says. “This is one of the key strategies of the plan and I believe it’s a good principle.”

Experts have emphasised the relevance of some of the land use principles and spatial distribution announced by the authorities that are intended, amongst other things, to optimise the balance between employment and housing areas. The government has introduced this principle in an attempt to weigh up the development between the peninsula and the islands, as well as to reorganise the city so that residents have fewer transportation needs, thus reducing time consuming trips between home, work and school, and decreasing traffic pressure and the need for parking spaces. The plan also proposes the safeguarding of 21 visual corridors – fixed envelopes of space that must be unobstructed to the sky – to help protect the views of the Historic Centre of Macao as well as to preserve Macao’s ‘mountain, sea and city’ relationship.

The government’s Land, Public Works and Transport Bureau (DSSOPT) entrusted Hong Kong company Ove Arup & Partners with the preparation of the plan, which covers the Macao Peninsula, the islands of Taipa and Coloane, the city’s new landfills, the checkpoint on the artificial island of the Hong



Lining up

Plans to build the eastern section of the LRT

The Light Rapid Transit (LRT) system in Macao – which only started life just under a year ago with the opening of its Taipa Line on 10 December – gets a good airing in the master plan. One interesting detail concerns the construction of the LRT’s East Line, which will be about 7.65 kilometres in length and will encompass six stations and rails, all to be built underground – although a date for the works to begin is yet to be released.

According to the Macao Light Rapid Transit Corporation, the north part of the East Line is set to run from the neighbouring area of the Border Gate, passing through the coastline in front of the Avenida Norte do Hipódromo and the Avenida da Ponte da Amizade to the New Urban Zone A. Extending south along the central greenway of Zone A, the line then crosses the sea and connects with the New Urban Zone E at Taipa. A station here will connect to the existing Taipa Ferry Terminal Station on the Taipa Line. Once the line is completed, the trip between the Border Gate and the Taipa Ferry Terminal is expected to take just 15 minutes, thus reducing the travelling time between Macao’s peninsula and Taipa. The LRT East Line will be built in the form of an underwater tunnel so it’ll be possible to keep it functioning during bad weather. The government estimates that the total number of passengers transported daily by the line may reach up to 80,000 in the future.



document is expected to summarise the views expressed during the consultation. It will also include opinions from the Urban Planning Council (CPU) and a final report will be drafted by the DSSOPT and submitted to Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng by next September.

The master plan establishes the positioning of Macao's urban development not just locally and regionally but nationally too. It looks at the further integration of the city into the Greater Bay Area (GBA) – the 'megapolis' zone in the south of the country that's made up of nine cities and the Macao and Hong Kong SARs – and China as a whole. It also divides the city into 18 planning districts, including in the North, Eastern and Central districts, as well as in the Outer Harbour, Taipa, Cotai, Colane and the University of Macau (UM) New Campus districts. Each one of these zones will have a specific development plan tailored to them in the future.

The plan aims to promote Macao's development in tandem with the GBA and to maximise the geographical advantages of nearby Zhuhai and Hengqin Island – as well as the opportunities offered by the new HZMB – by balancing the development of the city. Four 'belts' of development are assigned to Macao in the plan – the 'Historical Coastal Area' belt, the 'One River, Two Margins Co-operation' belt, the 'Knowledge, Industry, Science' belt and the 'Resilient Green' belt. These belts speak for themselves, however the 'One River, Two Margins' belt is part of plans for deeper co-operation within the GBA. It covers an area where urban developments will be based on transport network expansions for a plethora of reasons including the goal for people to travel between Macao and the main cities in Guangdong province within an hour.

Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HZMB) and the 85 square kilometres of maritime area under the jurisdiction

of Macao. The public consultation on the plan lasted for 60 days and, following this process, the final

Putting the housing in order

The master plan proposes that residential areas will account for 22 per cent of Macao's total land area. This is a five per cent increase from the current 17 per cent and shows how important the issue of housing is for the government over the next 20 years. Macao's population is predicted to rise by more than 150,000 people by 2040 so the proposed increase in housing is intended to satisfy the demand for accommodation by the new population.

Soares labels the plan's drive for more economic and social housing as 'positive'. He also picks up on the way the plan treats housing in the city as a whole and the environment that surrounds the housing zones. He says: "The master plan introduces a general improvement of the urban space, which will bring benefits to different residential areas. We will have more green areas and we will have a better organised transport network. All of this will bring advantages to these residential areas and I think those are aspects that are objectively expressed in the plan and that will contribute to an improvement in the housing field."

New land reclamation areas had already been announced prior to the master plan, however they are also obviously an important part of it. There are five main newly reclaimed land sections in the city, with housing for around 162,000 residents planned on some of the land. The largest piece of land – Zone A, an artificial island of 1.38 square kilometres that's connected to the Macao terminal of the HZMB – is expected to accommodate some 32,000 housing units in the future, with 28,000 of them to be used for public housing.

With all this extra housing comes the headache of making sure that

the density of the residential areas is balanced across the SAR and that traffic problems don't occur as a result of any imbalances. The plan addresses this. According to the government, there are, on average, about 20,000 people per square kilometre in Macao, with the local population mainly concentrated in

The master plan introduces a general improvement of the urban space, which will bring benefits to different residential areas. We will have more green areas and we will have a better organised transport network.

– Nuno Soares

the northern part of the peninsula and in downtown Taipa. But the plan notes that areas like Horta e Costa and Ouidor Arriaga are about 4.5 times more populated than the average and a couple of neighbourhoods like Tamagnini Barbosa, Areia Preta and Iao Hon are up to seven times the average. Notably, these districts are all on the peninsula in northern Macao and yet many of the jobs are in

the entertainment resorts which are in and around Cotai on the island in the south of the city, thus resulting in an urban distribution with 'residential areas in the north and jobs in the south'. The situation creates a daily north to south pendulum traffic movement – but the urban master plan addresses the issue.

Interestingly, the issue of the Zone A land reclamation area and possible traffic problems came up on 4 November during a session where the government briefed lawmakers about the master plan. In the meeting, Secretary for Transport and Public Works Raimundo do Rosário said that the authority aimed for the construction of some 23,000 public housing units to get off the ground by 2024. He admitted that Zone A would be a densely populated area where about 100,000 residents were expected to live, adding that therefore a traffic issue in the area – and its traffic links with the rest of the city – could be expected. He said the government will need to tackle this issue as efficiently as possible.

The construction of the new housing areas is seen as crucial to improving the current imbalance and gradually relieve the high population density in some areas. The housing plans are also entwined with the development of more nearby community and leisure facilities, as well as commercial areas. Soares reminds us that 'density is always a challenge when it comes to housing in Macao'. "We have a large population density and a large housing density," he says, "so we have a lot of people living in a reduced area." He applauds the government for its work in growing the city's housing stock and trying to address the density imbalances but he also wonders whether the authority is planning enough housing. "This 22 per cent includes



everything like roads,” he says, “so this allocated area is actually relatively small. While Macao will have more land available in the future – because there are more landfills yet to be reclaimed – the increase in population means that in the end we will have a housing density similar to the one we currently have. We may actually need even more housing areas than the master plan outlines to address this.”

The master plan says that the use of land in residential areas is expected to be compatible with other purposes, such as commerce and community equipment for collective use. Schools and other educational facilities also come under this, as do cultural and health facilities, to ‘improve the quality of life for citizens and create a livable community’, according to the plan. In fact, commercial areas come hand-in-hand with some of the

housing areas, although the plan does also highlight that the total ratio of commercial areas will increase from the current one per cent to four per cent of the city’s total land area. On top of this, there will also be urban renewal works prioritised in areas with a larger concentration of older buildings and a higher population density, starting with the Tamagnini Barbosa, Areia Preta, Iao Hon, Horta e Costa, San Kiu, Conselheiro Ferreira de Almeida and Ferreira do Amaral neighbourhoods.

In order to create conditions for people to work in the areas where they live – as well as to create more job opportunities overall – the plan also proposes the development of more commercial areas on the Macao Peninsula. This includes plans for commercial zones at the Border Gate, on the artificial island of the HZMB checkpoint, in the Zone A reclaimed area and on the east

side of the Zone B reclaimed area. In addition, more housing areas will be developed in newly reclaimed areas in Taipa and Coloane, such as in the Zone C reclaimed area and in the vicinity of the village of Cheok Ka and Seac Pai Van. In short, all of these plans show the emphasis the government is putting on creating conditions for people to be able to work in the areas in which they live.

The Coloane debate

While the master plan creates ‘non-urban’ areas and doesn’t allow construction in protected areas – such as the hills of Coloane Island, Barra and Penha – the document also shows an increase in the amount of land allocated to construction works in Coloane. For instance, the plan shows that Alto de Coloane – the highest point of Macao at 172.4 metres above

sea level – will see a cluster of residential buildings constructed on its slopes. This includes high-rises as well as standalone housing – and this has raised some concerns across the city. Soares considers that the dimension and density of the area designated for construction is not appropriate for Coloane, which is partially classified as an ecological conservation area.

On a map that defines the use of each plot of Macao’s future 36.8 square kilometres, the Alto de Coloane area appears in yellow, which means it is destined to be a residential area. “It’s probably not yet very detailed,” says Soares, “but what we can see in the master plan consultation document is worrying because it shows a large increase in the construction area, with a typology that is dense and not adjusted to the surrounding urban context.” Soares refers to the proposed expansion in the construction area in Coloane village and Alto de Coloane – however, during a September meeting, Raimundo do Rosário flagged up that detailed plans for the proposed projects, which would address concerns over any negative effects of the schemes, will follow the master plan.

Despite some criticism over certain housing projects in the plan, many people in the city have welcomed its forward-thinking initiative. Soares says that the plan may ‘not have much detail yet’ but it should still be reviewed by residents ‘as a strategic document’. He says that it ‘introduces good principles’ when it comes to shaping the city’s next 20 years of development. Soares, though, also admits that ‘the challenges are huge’ and ‘therefore there is a need to work harder’ in the plan’s detailing to ensure ‘each of these challenges is addressed in an objective way in order to turn them into opportunities and future results’ which would ‘effectively achieve the master plan’s goal’. “The goal is to improve the quality of life in Macao,” he says, “and that can only be achieved by improving the quality of housing.”

Soares and Wong also highlight the creation of industrial zones – which will make up two per cent of all the land use in the city – as ‘another good principle’ in the master plan. In the plan, the government proposes to transfer the various industrial buildings dispersed across the city to a proposed four zones – the Zhuhai-Macao Cross-Border Industrial Zone in Ilha Verde, the northern section of Pac On in Taipa, Coloane’s Concórdia Industrial Park and Ka Ho in Coloane. “This idea of concentrating industrial buildings in four specific locations,” says Soares, “and in trying to reduce the potential conflict between housing and industry, is good. Also, in areas where there is industry in the residential context, the master plan includes the conversion of industrial buildings into residential buildings. We still have to see how this will be done. But it is a good principle to avoid industry in residential areas. It makes sense.”

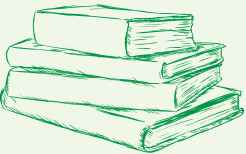
Turn up for the books

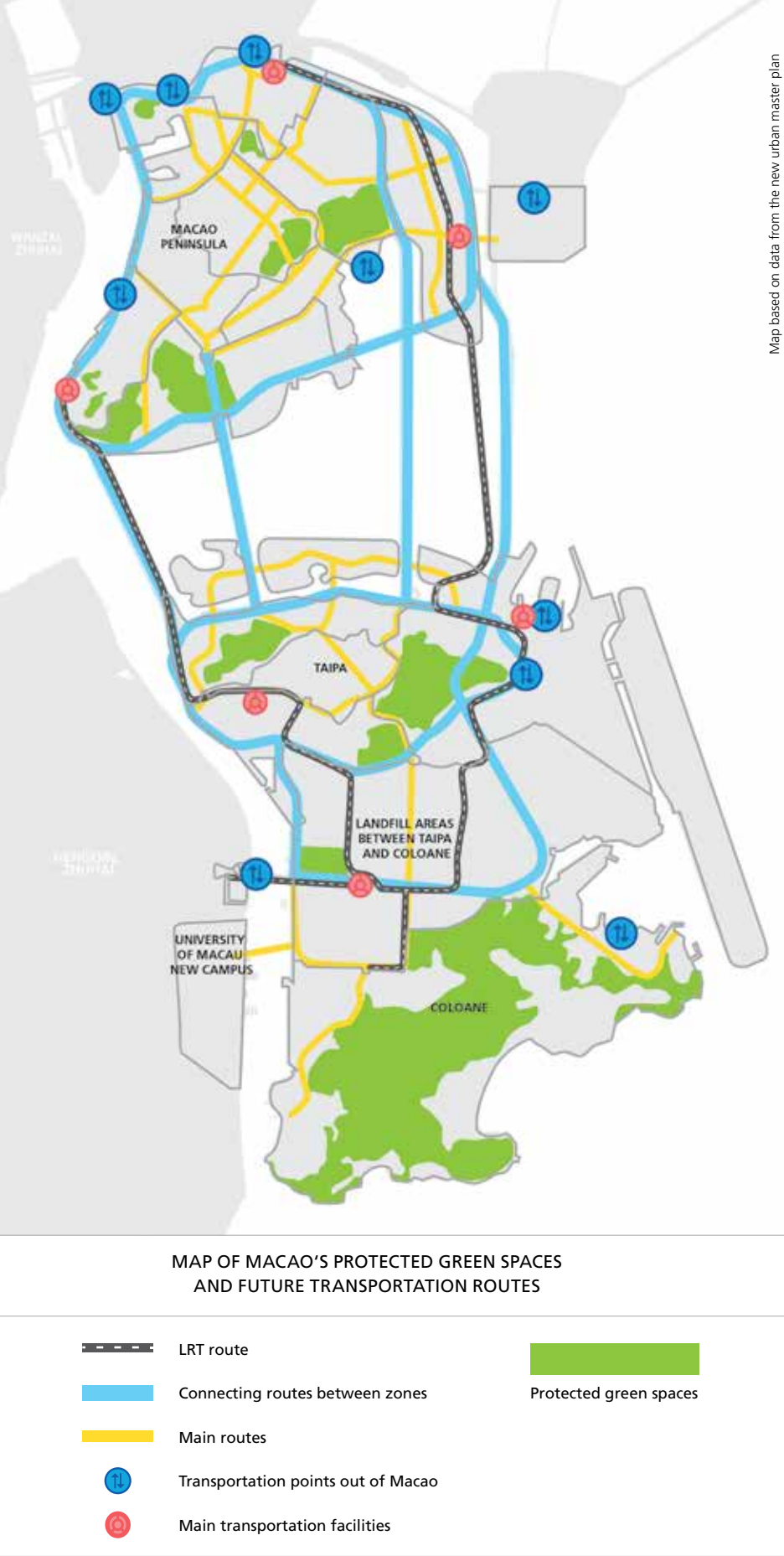
Macao Central Library project
in Tap Seac Square

Proposals for Macao’s Central Library are not detailed in the master plan but this exciting development is nevertheless worth mentioning as it will affect where local residents get their books out from over the coming years.

The government’s Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) has chosen a new location for the Macao Central Library. Under previous plans, a new Central Library was going to open at the Old Court House site in Praia Grande but these plans have now been abandoned and it looks like it could now open on the plot of the former Hotel Estoril in Tap Seac Square. The IC has said that four architectural teams from across Europe have been invited to submit proposals of conceptual design and that the new plot ‘may attain a gross construction area of more than 10,000 square metres, becoming the largest library in Macao’. The IC has also said that it ‘initially considered to adjust the functions’ of the existing library which ‘would mainly store the collection of information about Macao and historical documents, playing its role as a complement to the new Central Library in the future’.

The Central Library was born on 28 September 1895 in St Augustine’s Church and was regularly moved across the city over the following years before finding a home in the Leal Senado Building in 1929. In 1983, it relocated to its current site next to Tap Seac Square – a 1,371 square metre site housing more than 92,000 volumes and providing seating for 271 people – and in 2007, the government announced that a new library would be built. Details of the new plot may mean this project is about to finally open a new chapter.





Going public

The housing topic is undoubtedly one of the main issues in the master plan. But perhaps more complicated is the issue of public infrastructure, which will account for 23 per cent of Macao's total land area over the next 20 years. Public infrastructure covers the facilities, structures, equipment, institutions and services that are essential to the economy and quality of life in a city, such as bridges, roads, water supplies, electric grids, schools, hospitals, courts, parks and beaches. This is why, by 2040, the plan estimates there will be even more land used for public infrastructure than housing.

Natural disaster prevention falls under the category of public infrastructure. It's one of the priorities of the plan and proposed schemes to protect the city in the event of a disaster like a typhoon include revitalising the Inner Harbour area, with some of the docks and piers to be transformed into commercial areas in the future. There are also plans for a natural disaster prevention system to be established in the SAR over the coming years to prevent flooding in the city's low-lying areas.

Other public infrastructure proposals in the master plan include greater investments in the city's public transport network in order to integrate pedestrian mobility, as well as improvements to both the Light Rapid Transit (LRT) and bus systems. The plan also notes that Macao's pedestrian system and its use of 'green transport' will be promoted in the future to encourage a reduction in the use of private transport. Alfred Seng Fat Wong praises a project that's noted in the plan to introduce more sustainable transport over the coming years such as cycling and walking. "The plan is good," he says,

"as it tries to use some human-based transport, like cycling and walking, as well as the LRT, to reduce the amount of vehicles on the roads." Wong adds that the plan 'needs more detail on how it intends to attract people to use a combination of these sustainable transport methods'.

The government aims to improve links between Macao and the GBA, thus allowing traffic movement between the cities within one hour, as part of Macao's regional integration. The plan proposes to reinforce the city's transport system and ensure a permanent connection network at the main border crossing points, such as the 'Gongbei' Border Gate, reclamation land Zone A, the former Cotai checkpoint and the Taipa Ferry Terminal. It outlines the creation of 'transport hubs' or interchanges that link urban, sea and air transportation to allow faster movement from Macao to the surrounding region and also to international destinations.

In order to achieve those goals, all sorts of transport schemes are noted in the master plan, many of which are already well underway. The fourth bridge project between Taipa and the newly reclaimed Zone A is in the document, as is the new LRT East Line which will connect the Pac On area to the Border Gate while passing through the HZMB and all of Zone A. In the plan, the government also aims to increase transport links between the city's international airport - which will itself undergo much expansion - and maritime transport via the Taipa Maritime Terminal, LRT system and HZMB port.

Wong says that Macao's transport infrastructure is 'key for its future development'. The professor underlines the importance of the city's 'cross-boundary transportation networks and facilities' alongside the introduction of innovative

technologies when it comes to facilitating traffic between Macao and the Mainland. "Transportation development is very important if we want to attract people to and from the Greater Bay Area to Macao," he says, adding that the expansion of the city's LRT system over the coming years 'is crucial' to that aim. Wong also praises the fact that Macao will be linked, in the future, to the high-speed rail network in China following the construction of an underwater tunnel to the border post on Hengqin Island as part of the development of the LRT. "The Macao government has given priority to the extension of the LRT system," he says, "but I also hope it will consider extending the LRT lines to Iao Hon and the Inner Harbour once these neighbourhoods are revitalised."

Going green

The environment is also a top priority in the master plan. About eight per cent of 2040's 36.8-square-kilometre total land area will be allocated as green areas and public leisure spaces while a massive 18 per cent of the land area will be used for

ecological conservation purposes. Considering that the local population is expected to reach 808,000 people, the government estimates that there will be at least 3.6 square metres of green space and public leisure areas per capita by 2040. Add the ecological conservation areas to that calculation and these green zones increase to 12 square metres per person.

Where will the bulk of these green zones go, though? According to the plan, the green and public leisure spaces are expected to increase in the northern and eastern areas of Macao's peninsula, as well as in north Taipa and around the Outer Harbour. The plan also reveals that a 41-hectare reclamation area will be created between Areia Preta and the newly reclaimed Zone A. Plans for developments at the Outer Harbour intend to take advantage of Macao's extensive coastline in order to provide the public with leisure areas. As a result, a continuous green space will be created in the extreme south of Macao, with highlights being a 4.8-hectare coastal garden to the south of Nam Van Lake and a 6.2-hectare coastal garden to the south of a new commercial area also



3D rendering of what what Seac Pai Van's housing area will look like in the future

Image courtesy of the Government Information Bureau



in the vicinity. The Nam Van and Sai Van lakes will also interconnect in order to create a new, much larger leisure area.

North Taipa is destined for housing and ecological conservation purposes, combining residential neighbourhoods with the natural landscape. The plan also aims to establish a new commercial area in north Taipa, with a view to promoting a balance between professional occupation and housing, as well as the transformation of the coastal shoreline into a leisure area. Therefore, there will be cycle paths installed in these areas which will form an integral part of the main Taipa cycle path, creating a green and low-carbon community neighbourhood here. For the whole of Macao, the plan encourages the incorporation of ecological principles of low-carbon emissions and recycling in the new development zones.

Coast to coast

Developing Macao’s coastal areas in order to maximise the use of their

green areas while also protecting the local ecosystem is one of the main goals set out in the master plan. Professor and biologist David Gonçalves, who is also the dean of the Institute of Science and Environment at the University of Saint Joseph, supports the government’s drive to create this balance. He identifies some of the main challenges faced by Macao in terms of coastal areas protection and development, saying that one of the SAR’s priorities is to ‘develop systems for effective coastal protection from extreme events such as flooding from storm surge – so frequent in Macao, in particular during typhoons’. He believes that the government’s emphasis on developing Macao’s coastal areas will go some way to developing such protection systems. The plan introduces measures to help solve the severe flooding in low-lying areas caused by disasters like typhoons and rainstorms by proposing the construction of tidal dams, water reservoirs and pumping stations. These measures could prevent flooding, drain areas and also store water. Gonçalves adds that these

measures could also include natural solutions, such as mangrove planting.

Macao’s coastline is 76.7 kilometres in length and the master plan proposes to increase the amount of public leisure areas that lie along it. Gonçalves applauds this move and says there’s a need ‘to turn the city to the water’ – meaning to encourage residents to spend more leisure time next to the sea – ‘by developing leisure areas for the population near the coastline’. He also says, though, that the city must ‘protect natural coastal ecosystems and vulnerable species that inhabit the coastal waters and land, such as birds and marine mammals’. He believes that ‘the restoration of once-abundant coastal ecosystems, such as mangroves’ could serve all these purposes. “Mangrove forests are effective coastal barriers against flooding,” he says. “They are hotspots of biodiversity and they store carbon, thus contributing to the mitigation of global warming. They promote cleaner air and water and are prime areas for the population to enjoy a close contact with nature. So the priority should be

to identify key coastal areas for the protection and restoration of natural ecosystems, both above and underwater.”

Environmentalist Joe Chan also applauds the master plan for the many ways it deals with Macao’s green future on land. But he notes that ‘there are sections mentioning how to boost the economic function of the ocean’ but ‘we can’t see the long-term perspective of marine ecosystem conservation or how to optimise the natural habitat for marine creatures’. He adds: “In some ways, it causes us to worry about the sustainability of ocean conservation [in Macao] in the future.”

Chan does commend the overall plan, though. “Generally speaking,” he says, “the master plan for the next 20 years of urban planning is an initial but essential step in building a sustainable city. I appreciate the government’s point of view when it comes to developing green zones for residents and tourists. And there are some great takeaways, such as Coloane, which, according to the plan, is not going to be completely urbanised in the future. I have worried about that for so long. Also, the way that recycling is treated in the plan, with specific areas for sorting and transporting the recycled materials, is to be praised. Recycling is an urgent problem in Macao and the government is dealing with it urgently. It’s now time to look forward to the next part over the coming months – many more details of specific projects.”

Overall, the master plan has been well received in Macao. Soares calls it an ‘important achievement’ and ‘good starting point’ while also noting that it ‘lacks detail’ and ‘leaves room for improvement’. He also reinforces that it’s just the start of all of these new projects on the horizon and the most important action right now is that the government listens to the public’s comments. “It’s so important that Macao’s citizens took part in the public consultation,” he says. “And now it’s equally important that their comments are understood by the government and the projects, when carried out, reflect the public’s opinion.”

“The main thing we have to say about this master plan,” continues Soares, “is that the government did very well in the sense of having a master plan. The Chief Executive made a commitment before the consultation document was published that the master plan is to be implemented. This is good news. It means that Macao’s urban development in the future will be co-ordinated by a plan.”

So, overall, the government’s master plan has been welcomed in Macao and many people are awaiting the results of the public consultation and then how the projects within the pages of the plan will play out over the next 20 years. One thing is for sure, though: Macao is going to get bigger in terms of size and population. It’s expected that, as a result of this plan, it will also get better, whether that means in terms of housing projects, environmental schemes, transport initiatives or just the beauty of everyday life in this unique Asian city. ●

And there’s more

Here are five tidbits from the pages of the master plan. Go online to find out more...

- 1 The master plan proposes to gradually convert the various industrial buildings along Avenida de Venceslau de Morais into office buildings, accommodation and commercial sites. The aim is to reduce the adverse impact of industrial activities on residents living in the area so as to increase their quality of life.
- 2 The government intends to reuse the old Pac On industrial area and incentivise the swap from industrial activity to high technology, making good use of new plans to transform the area. The area serves as a major transport hub in Macao. Following the strategic opportunity brought by the expansion of Macau International Airport and the Taipa Ferry Terminal of Passengers, Pac On is expected to concentrate the main transport facilities and public infrastructures. The land here is intended for public infrastructure and ecological conservation areas.
- 3 According to the master plan, the land plots reclaimed by the authorities near Nam Van Lake will be used to build government and administration buildings.
- 4 Large sports areas are planned for the former canidrome area that used to see greyhound racing in Macao, as well as for reclaimed land Zone A. Also, a new ‘cultural installation’ will be developed on the south side of Zone A and in Lai Chi Vun village.
- 5 The core of tourism and entertainment industries will continue in their current locations – the Cotai and ZAPE areas, as well as in the Inner Harbour, central Taipa and Coloane. Land use in tourist and entertainment areas will become incompatible with industrial purposes. The plan also suggests the creation of a ‘Historic Tourism Belt in the Coastal Zone’ of the Macao Peninsula.

ARTS AND CULTURE

Staging a comeback

Life for Macao's talented theatre companies can be challenging and survival can be tough but the directors and actors behind these troupes say it's worth all the hard work. After many shows were cancelled during Macao's brush with the COVID-19 pandemic, it's time to tread the boards once more...

Text Viviana Cheong



Representatives of local theatre companies create a scene in our grand photo shoot: (from left) Ka Man Ip, Dirks Theatre co-artistic director; May Bo Wu, Dirks Theatre co-artistic director; Johnny Tam, Macau Experimental Theatre artistic director; Koc Kun Hui, Hiu Kok Drama Association artistic director; Joanna Chan, Dream Theater Association director general; Jenny Mok, Comuna de Pedra director; and Ben leong, Hiu Kok Drama Association artistic director

Macao is proud of its theatrical traditions. Over hundreds of years, countless shows and plays have hit the stages across the city, from performances in the native Patuá language – which still take place and are listed as government ‘intangible heritage items’ – to recent expressive dance and contemporary pieces that explore both local and international themes. Cantonese opera has enjoyed a fond place in the city, as have the extravagant Western shows at the Dom Pedro V Theatre, which was built in 1860 and is protected on the UNESCO World Heritage List. But due to the modern age of the internet, glitzy shows in the gaming establishments and – sadly – the COVID-19 pandemic, some theatre groups in Macao have been faced with challenges. What does the future hold for these local groups who just want to keep entertaining the crowds?

Macao is known regionally for its excellent theatrical output over the years. Almost every genre is covered and there’s always been a passion for plays, shows and operas, particularly ones that mesh the East with the West or hold historical value. Take the Dóci Papiacám di Macau drama group, which was founded in 1993. For nearly three decades, this troupe has presented an annual production packed with humour and wit in the Patuá language. After 2000, it added Cantonese into some performances and also introduced multimedia techniques. It has changed with the times and this is indicative of Macao’s theatrical groups. However, this still does not take away the challenges they face in the modern age.

Behind every amateur or professional theatre company in Macao is a team of dedicated, hard-working and passionate thespians who usually try to keep their troupe treading the boards not for money but for the love of performance and community. They receive ample help from the government to do so – groups can receive subsidies from the authority which they can use to hire staff, buy props and generally keep their company afloat. But it’s nevertheless costly to run a group, put on a show, promote a performance, hire a space and organise education workshops – and if the gate receipts go down, then companies eventually must face closure. So what are Macao’s companies doing to survive? We speak to the organisers of five groups about how they keep managing to tread the boards.

The famous troupe

When it comes to staging hundreds of shows in Macao over nearly half a century, one name stands tall: Hiu Kok Drama Association, one of the jewels in the city’s local theatre crown. This troupe has entertained

audiences both at home and across China – even performing in Portugal – ever since it was established in 1975. It’s done so well over the years, it even has its own ‘black box’ experimental theatre base – the Hiu Kok Laboratory, which has regularly staged performances for local crowds since it opened in 1999. When it comes to the performers themselves, more than 60 people make up the acting side of the company and they put on fascinating and exploratory original shows – using original scripts – that are in Cantonese and are often expressive or, at least, contemporary in nature, although the group has also staged some Chinese classics over the years too.

Hiu Kok, which is named after a pseudonym that was used by famous Chinese writer Lu Xun and refers to a bugle that’s used to summon comrades in an army, is an independent and non-profit drama association which doesn’t always act alone. It has continuously been inviting dance troupes from across the globe – from Australia to Costa Rica – to participate in exchange performances in Macao over the years. And it is also responsible for training some of the best stage directors and actors in the city, thanks to its popular courses and workshops. It has hosted successful radio dramas, published plenty of homegrown plays and organised rehearsals for local arts organisations and shows for troupes from across Asia at its 80-seat Laboratory.

A range of contemporary pieces are staged every year by Hiu Kok but there’s always one big annual performance featuring about 20 actors – this year, that will be, in English: ‘I Have A House Dream: 24 Hour Gate Open’. The company’s artistic director Hui Koc Kun – also known as ‘Big Bird’ – says that in recent years, the troupe has introduced ‘serial projects’, which are plays that are run over a number of days or weeks. Box office takings from the serials and the annual performance, says Hui, can be high. “We try to survive on the box office income,” he says. “In fact, we hope we can survive on this income in the coming years. We appreciate the government’s subsidies, of course. They are extremely helpful. But it’s not good to just survive on subsidies, so we try to do as much as we can to stage quality productions and take good box office income as a result.”

Hui says that surviving as an independent theatre association in Macao is challenging, so the group is always looking for new ways to create ‘opportunities’. One such way was launched last year: a three-year performance training project. Basically, writers at Hiu Kok reworked one of their own past productions – ‘Someone in Outlaws of the Marsh’ – adding classic Chinese novel and opera elements. They then took in



Veteran Macao actor Pak Hou Wong passes on his art at a Hiu Kok Drama Association workshop

full-time actors, singers and dancers of all ages and backgrounds from Macao and they are now in the midst of training them for the big production of the show in 2022. “The performers all pay to be trained by us over three years,” says Hui. “To be an actor from Macao is really hard – you usually need long-term work experience overseas and the money to fund that. We’re offering an alternative with this project. We’re helping to train our homegrown actors and actresses here in Macao, with a final product for everyone in the city to see.”

Producer and actor at Hiu Kok, Ben Ieong, agrees that ‘training courses’ featuring workshops are a great way for the group to both support itself financially and to ‘provide opportunities’ for theatre enthusiasts ‘to work in a production and to inspire them to consider performing arts as a career’. He says that the company has teamed up with veteran local actor Pak Hou Wong, who trains people in ‘all aspects of theatre’. Wong, who has worked with many local companies over his years, says: “When I began many years ago, the local theatre industry was mostly supported by enthusiasts who kept their day jobs. They usually worked in a couple of

productions every year and had an insatiable love for theatre. Nowadays, companies can create up to seven productions a year, so some actors have become full-time and must juggle different roles at the same time to keep the wolf from the door. It’s hard for them and the companies but at least at our workshops we can help these actors through tough times.”

‘Tough times’ don’t just apply to actors. Hui says the local theatre scene in Macao has been tough for ‘many years now’. “The entertainment complexes have put on bigger and more glitzy shows every year,” he says, “and this competition does hurt the local theatre scene. And then there’s the internet and more easily accessible TV – I think this has hurt theatre in general worldwide. Plus, there’s been COVID-19 this year, meaning our shows had to stop – and that then meant no income. But, despite this, we remain optimistic. We’re seeing that, after a period of falling box office numbers, people are coming back to our shows. Perhaps the fast food nature of online viewing combined with the new community spirit we have seen and felt during the pandemic means that local community theatre is about to have its day once again.”

The contemporary troupe

Two people who share the sentiment of local theatre about to ‘have its day’ once again are May Bo Wu and Ka Man Ip, the co-artistic directors and driving force behind Dirks Theatre. These two creatives – who were both taught at Macao Conservatory school for theatre before they joined forces in 2009 and created Dirks, a company that stages an array of original and adapted contemporary plays and shows in both English and Cantonese – say that, apart from this year due to COVID-19, they’re seeing audiences growing for their productions. Wu says: “It’s true to say that audience sizes for some theatre productions have been falling over the years but I have seen them grow over the past few. We think that local theatre is entering into some sort of renaissance and we really hope that will be the case worldwide once COVID-19 is over. It could be boom time for local theatre then as people look to spend time together over a local show.”

Dirks performs often in the Black Box Theatre in Macao’s Old Court Building – a popular stage for up-and-coming contemporary companies. Ip says he’s pleased that the company uses the venue and he also thanks the city’s ‘funding departments’ for the ‘helpful subsidies’ the troupe receives. “We’re lucky,” he says, “to have money and a space to perform in so we can explore and create theatre. But there are big obstacles when it comes to our survival. We don’t own a space so creating and rehearsing shows, as well as running workshops, can be costly. Renting a space can often cost too much so we rely on public resources and other companies who have spaces. Thanks to the funding departments and those other companies, however, we do survive and we always hope that Macao’s arts industry will grow and develop sustainably over the coming years.”

Wu believes that performance art should ‘carry resonance’ and also provide ‘a therapeutic experience to the audience’. As a result, Dirks holds two regular government-subsidised workshops that also provide ‘that kind of therapeutic experience’: drumming and the Feldenkrais method, a form of exercise that’s claimed to reorganise connections between the brain and body for improved movement and psychological state. Wu says: “I was surprised that the workshops pulled in such a wide range of people, including teachers, civil servants and social workers. These workshops show we are not just a performance group but we can also hold useful workshops in music and movement. It’s also a good source of audience for our shows. It all helps us to go on and grow.”



May Bo Wu from Dirks Theatre stars in ‘I Take Your Hand in Mine’

Fish Ho

Last year, Dirks teamed up with the Drama Box theatre company from Singapore and presented ‘The Lesson: Macau’ to the Fai Chi Kei community. This was a new type of theatre to hit Macao due to its immersive and interactive qualities. Real audiences showed up and took part in a made-up government public consultation meeting that saw the audiences ‘voting’ on what social or historical monument or area should go and be replaced with new transport links for the future of the city. “This was real interactive theatre,” says Ip, “and the parallels to real Macao life are obvious. But it was great to see real residents expressing their opinions openly with the actors and there was this whole real and unrehearsed feel to the whole thing. We hope to do lots more projects like this in the future. I hope people can come to these shows and reflect on the issues and challenges we all face in the real world.”

The physical theatre troupe

Comuna de Pedra explores the human body and examines social issues through dance, physical theatre work and workshops. Set up in 1996, the company, which has performed its shows across the world, also curates and produces arts projects like exhibitions, festivals and cross-cultural collaborative programmes every year. It has performed pieces in English, Portuguese and Chinese – or with no words at all – and has put on productions in locations across the city, from local theatres and parks to closed-down factories and even outside the Ruins of St Paul’s. There have been interactive improvisations, video arts, puppetry and live bands involved in the shows. In short, this is an expressive group that will go anywhere and do anything to convey messages through performance art.

Jenny Mok, the troupe’s director, says that working with the Macao community is ‘satisfying’. She says that last year, the group interviewed construction workers from the Mainland who work in Macao. Their stories were then portrayed by the group’s actors on stage in Comuna de Pedra’s ‘Migration Series 2019: The Labour and I’ show. Mok says: “One of the workers who had not been involved in performing arts before felt comfortable to tell us about his encounters. When he watched our rehearsals, he was moved to tears. Our theatre often takes on tough social issues which we unpack for the audience.” Mok adds that a show performed with disabled people in Macao in 2018, ‘The World and I’, also unpacked tough social issues for the audience while at the same time helping the disabled ‘express themselves in new ways’. “It is important to hear them in theatre,” says Mok. “They are part of our city.”



Jenny Mok, Comuna de Pedra director, strikes a beautiful pose

Image courtesy of Comuna de Pedra



Patuá way to do it

Dóci Papiacãm di Macau drama group has been performing shows in the local language of Patuá since 1993

Some theatre companies struggle and some thrive. For nearly three decades, Dóci Papiacãm di Macau drama group has been thriving. This troupe has presented an annual production packed with humour and wit in the Patuá language since it was founded in 1993. Co-founder Miguel de Senna Fernandes, a lawyer who has written most of the group’s scripts, directed them all over the years and plans to publish them in Portuguese, English and Chinese, thanks both the government and local audiences for their continuous support. “Every year,” says Senna Fernandes, “the government invites us to perform at the Macao Arts Festival. It has also included Patuá theatre on its inventory of intangible cultural heritage items. It surely shows respect and recognition.” Senna Fernandes adds that the government is supporting the group’s recent application to become a national intangible cultural heritage item for the whole of China. This sort of status helps protect the art as a cultural asset.

Senna Fernandes, a self-taught playwright and director, says that the group’s annual performances have generated interest from younger audiences over the years. “We’ve seen many new faces from the younger generations in the audience,” he says. “In addition, many linguistic professionals from different corners of the world have contacted me about Patuá. I think our annual performances have been a great success.” Senna Fernandes says that the group is ‘trying to preserve our collective memory through annual performances’. “We want to raise awareness of the social and cultural aspects of the language,” he says. “Like other groups, we do meet challenges, though. Our show was cancelled in May because of the pandemic. However, as we don’t have to manage a space, there has not been much economic loss.”

The shows must go on

Three fascinating local theatre performances you just can't miss in Macao over the next couple of months...

Dream Theater Association's 'The Story Vendor' 12 & 22 December in front

of *Taipa Houses-Museum in Avenida da Praia*
So this theatrical show is a little different. Rather than heading to a local theatre, the Dream Theater Association will take a small audience to a 'hawker's car' in Taipa at different times on different dates in November and December. Local tales will be told through a series of puppet shows at the car. The shows are suitable for all the family and it's free admission. For more details and show times, visit fb.com/DreamTheaterAssociation.

Comuna de Pedra's 'Tin Can'

Dates in December TBC at the Tak Chun Macau Art Garden

Welcome to an immersive form of children's theatre that will leave the kids beaming all day. Themed upon concepts of space exploration, 'Tin Can' is a 10-minute immersive theatrical experience. Through lighting, puppets and enchanting music, young audiences in this intimate theatre space will be taken on a journey deep into the cosmos. The dates are yet to be finalised, so find out more at fb.com/ComunaDePedra.

Hiu Kok Drama Association's 'I Have a House Dream: 24-Hour Gate Open'

1-3 January 2021 in the Small Auditorium, Macao Cultural Centre

This sequel to Hiu Hok's 'I Have a House Dream' last year is set to have audiences laughing and crying in equal measure. Where the first story was a tragicomedy that addressed the struggles of Macao residents who want to buy property, this sequel delves deeper into the issue of distance – both physically and mentally – due to the pandemic. For more details, visit fb.com/hiukoktheatre.

“We are proud of our theatre company,” says Mok, “but it can be a challenge to run. It costs a lot to organise and perform a live show. Our outreach and education work – where we train students – can also cost, although we can also make money that way. And audience sizes have been going down over the years, possibly because the younger generations don't seem to be as interested in live physical theatre as they once were. I'm not sure – but we are working incredibly hard as there is a strong future for what we do and, thanks to government subsidies and support, we still see a bright future for the performing arts in Macao.”

The experimental troupe

In January 2008, not-for-profit theatre company Macau Experimental Theatre was founded. Ever since then, it has presented scores of dramas, including pieces staged in the Macao Arts Festival, as well as at small theatres and performance spaces across the city. Nearly all of the troupe's pieces have been performed in Chinese and, as the name suggests, it certainly leans towards the experimental end of the performance spectrum. Former popular self-penned shows include 'One Good Person', 'Martha Does Not Wear a Bra' and 'Egg-sized Cockroaches are Rampant'. The company's artistic director, Johny Tam, says: “When we first launched, we actually had our own small black box theatre for rehearsals and shows. We used to put on seasonal shows. It was a wonderful start.”

Tam, who is also the chief curator of the annual BOK Festival in Macao – a festival dedicated to local theatre that sees shows performed across the city over a couple of weeks usually in August but which was postponed this summer for obvious reasons – says that over the past 12 years, the company, previously known as Horizon Macau, has experienced a number of challenges. He says: “Due to increasingly high rents and a huge workload, we had to readjust our budget in 2015. It meant we had to give up our own black box theatre and use public venues instead – and we stopped working seasonally, focusing on individual productions instead. We've moved our base four times since then. It's not easy but we continue to dig deep, put on quality productions and survive in Macao.”

Macau Experimental Theatre does anything from writing its own pieces to adapting classics or producing the works of local playwrights. Recent original hits include award-winning musical theatre piece 'Mr Shi and His Lover' and much-praised community theatre production 'Migration', which sees actors working closely with some of Macao's Indonesian domestic workers. Tam hopes that future works will see more Asian artists brought in to work

with those from Macao. He also hopes to 'shed light on creative insights and social issues' in Macao. Tam adds that the BOK Festival will also be important to highlight Macao's local theatre expertise and 'help interest new people and younger generations' in theatre. “Through engaging interactions and performances,” he says, “the people who experience festivals like BOK in Macao will discover that they like the theatre.”

The youthful troupe

Forming out of a school theatre group in 2008, the Dream Theater Association has become a major force in Macao's youth and community theatre scene – particularly as the shows and plays in English and Chinese are original, moving and popular with local theatre-goers. Jason Mok, artistic director, and Joanna Chan, director general, say that the company's members 'explore each other's artistic expressions and passions in their work and they also work closely with local community organisations'. They pick out the troupe's work with French theatre company, Le Théâtre de Ajmer,

at the Macao Arts Festival in 2015, as a highlight.

When asked how the company survives in 2020, Chan admits that hard work is the key. “We have been working on a packed schedule to achieve what we want – namely, many shows and workshops at as little cost as possible,” she says. “We have some excellent subsidies from the government, which we are really grateful for, but we also must rely on collaborations with local organisations who can help us financially and with the workload. When we want something done in Macao, we know how to work together!”

Chan continues: “It's hard to run a full-time theatre company in 2020. Although our cultural output is tremendous, we can often be seen as amateur groups, run by passionate amateurs. That's just not true – we are dedicated professionals, running a professional company which is helping to nurture Macao's performers of tomorrow. But we try to rise to every challenge, including the current pandemic. We have not been able to work with young people often and our shows have been cancelled or postponed. It's not an easy time – and that's not just us, that's also those who are paid to help us as freelancers. But, again, we rise to every challenge.”



A production shot of Macau Experimental Theatre's award-winning 'Mr Shi and His Lover'

Image courtesy of Macau Experimental Theatre

Mok says that Dream Theater's youth and community projects are motivation enough for the team to 'rise to the challenges'. He cites 2017 show 'The Victory Shipyard' as a company highlight as it involved shipbuilders in Macao and their stories. "We have done a lot of incredible pieces and will continue to do so," he says. "I feel, in Macao, that as long as young people are encouraged to enjoy and participate in theatre, it will be around for years to come."

Playwright, director and critic Sio Chong Mok is the founder of the Macao Theatre Cultural Institute, a group which promotes theatre critics and review writing in the city, and also owns a library dedicated to Macao's theatrical past. Mok says he understands the challenges that all the theatre companies in the city are faced with. Earlier this year, in the institute's theatre library, promotional materials of many shows that were cancelled due to this year's pandemic were displayed in an exhibition called 'No Where To...' just so they are not forgotten to time. "It is important to record shows so that people can look back on them in the future," says Mok. "I hope that theatre-lovers in Macao appreciate our documenting of the city's shows. As a result, we know a lot about the theatre scene in the city and we understand it is a challenging time for many companies but I believe that soon, the local theatrical output will once again be as tremendous as it's always been."

“

We also rely on collaborations with local organisations who can help us financially and with the workload. When we want something done in Macao, we know how to work together.

– Joanna Chan, Director general of Dream Theater Association

Treading the boards is always going to be a challenge in the modern world, with all of its modern forms of entertainment. With big glitzy shows on offer in Macao's entertainment resorts coupled with the lure of the internet, cinema and TV, the local theatre companies will probably always face a battle to survive. But Macao is a passionate city with a love for the arts, so with the support of its theatre-going public and its subsidy-giving government, local shows and plays should be an integral part of the city's arts scene for many years to come. There may be times a crisis like COVID-19 pokes its head through the curtains but the show in Macao must – and surely will – always go on. ●

Young actors hit the stage as part of a youth theatre training programme performance organised by the Dream Theater Association



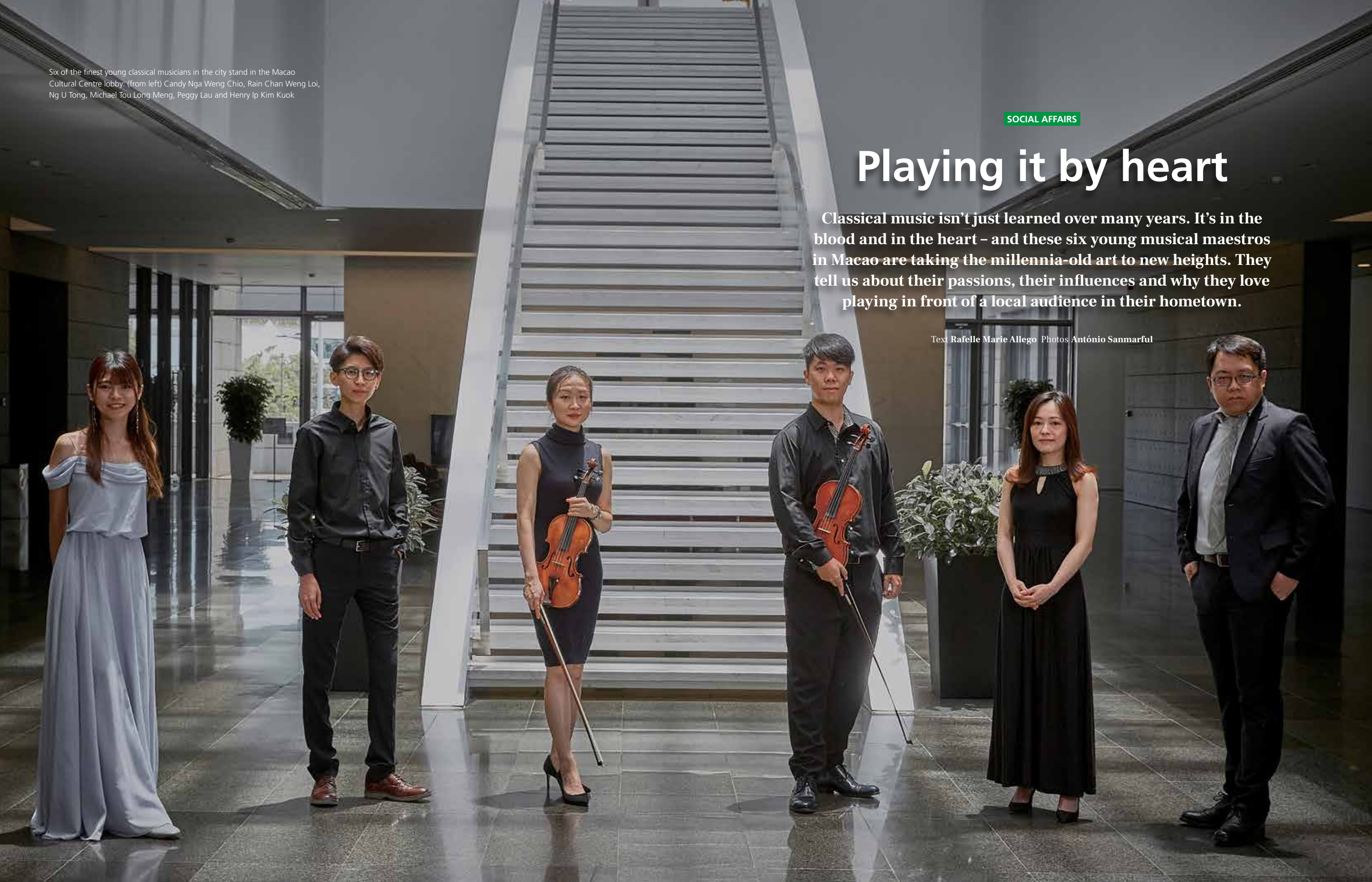
Six of the finest young classical musicians in the city stand in the Macao Cultural Centre lobby: (from left) Candy Nga Weng Chio, Rain Chan Weng Loi, Ng U Tong, Michael Tou Long Meng, Peggy Lau and Henry Ip Kim Kuok

SOCIAL AFFAIRS

Playing it by heart

Classical music isn't just learned over many years. It's in the blood and in the heart – and these six young musical maestros in Macao are taking the millennia-old art to new heights. They tell us about their passions, their influences and why they love playing in front of a local audience in their hometown.

Text: Rafelle Marie Allego | Photos: António Sanmarful



In a world of rock, rap, pop and indie music, it's hard to see where classical fits among the preferences of the younger generations. Orchestras, conductors, cellists, percussion and pianists all seem like a distant remnant of yesterday's music but thanks to the internet and the freedom it gives to unearth centuries-old masterpieces, classical music is enjoying something of a renaissance among the younger generations of late. And that includes learning classical instruments as well as knowing your Tchaikovskys from your Tan Duns.

Macao is no exception. It is well-known that in the West it may have become, over the years, less fashionable to learn a classical guitar than an electric one but in the East, the idea of children learning to play a piano, violin or flute from a young age hasn't really ever gone out of style. Nevertheless, across the whole globe, few children ever show the talent, dedication and hard work that's required to be able to stick with an instrument for years and carry a lasting passion for classical music throughout their teens. Few young people are good enough to end up joining a prominent orchestra and living out a career in one of the toughest musical environments out there today.

Six young talents in Macao are that good, though. This sextet have dedicated themselves to classical music and given themselves a

chance of, one day, international success. For now, however, they have decided to stay at home and perform for the crowds in Macao, all noting that the city is a great place to learn and play this style of music in. Candy Nga Weng Chio, Michael Tou Long Meng, Henry Ip Kim Kuok, Peggy Lau, Rain Chan Weng Loi and Ng U Tong all want to share their passion and spread the joy of classical music. Regulars at different orchestras and concerts – from those organised by the government's Cultural Affairs Bureau in Macao to those held abroad – these young musicians are each taking a musical journey that's unique to them...

The experimental pianist

Practicing her instrument was once 'boring and tough' for Candy Nga Weng Chio. The pianist from Macao, who has a degree in music production from the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, says she lost interest in tickling the ivories during her teenage years. But the 20-year-old says the turning point in her burgeoning career came when she switched piano teachers at high school. "Gradually," she says, "I played better as I put my heart into the music and felt the flow instead of playing the notes like I was a typist." Nga says she then 'delved deeper into herself' while learning and playing, thanks to her new piano instructor. She says: "I then

kept striving to improve but I also found passion in composing."

Nga, on occasion, performs piano works as part of the Macao Youth Symphony Orchestra (MYSO) at the Macao Cultural Centre. She also experienced performing at some of Shanghai's pop student concerts when she finished high school. But, so far, she says that playing with Macao's Sacred Heart Canossian College English section school orchestra overseas at the Singapore Polytechnic a few years back remains her most memorable experience. She recalls that just before the concert began, one of the orchestra leaders said 'there'd been an unanticipated programme change' and Nga would have to 'conduct a new piece'. She says: "I thought it was a joke. But unfortunately he was serious. I had no experience of conducting before that." Nga says she 'was given a crash course on conducting right there and then' and then she just went and did it. "When I look back to that weird pose I conducted in," she admits, "I still can't help but laugh. But it went well!"

Nga is so talented that now she isn't just a classical pianist. She also plays experimental pieces on the piano, as well as pop. And, supported by her family and friends, she has recently been putting more focus on penning her own tunes, with some of them being picked up for local student theatre and film projects. She writes classical

and chamber pieces, as well as piano solos and even music for string quartets or local young pop groups. Currently, she says that she's experimenting with electronic digital instruments (EDI), mixing electronic and classical music styles together. She's also learning jazz, which she finds 'somewhat difficult'. But she admits that she'll 'always come back to classical music' as it is 'fundamental to master if you want to fully understand and master other genres'.

Anyone who wants to see Nga performing outside of a live venue can head to her YouTube channel, 'MW Music'. Here, alongside violinist Michael Tou Long Meng, she showcases her versatility on piano and EDI, as well as highlighting other Macao classical talents. She says she loves writing music for the channel and admits that she sees herself as much as a composer as she is a performer, although she will continue her live piano concerts, such as with the MYSO. "Classical music is infinite and always evolving," says Nga. "What seems new at the moment may become a classic decades later. Music is always worth analysing. There are always secret messages hidden between the notes. I will never give up on music. If I had a message for other young, talented musicians, it would be 'don't simply play – try to create new styles and forms of classical music while making sure you fully enjoy it!'"

Pianist, composer and even a one-time concert conductor Candy Nga Weng Chio





Peggy Lau performs ‘Desperate Measures (Paganini Variations) Op 48’ by Robert Muczynski on the piano at her ‘My Life in Music’ recital at Macao’s Dom Pedro V Theatre in November last year

The charitable pianist

Another prolific young pianist in Macao is Peggy Lau. The 30-year-old is a professional classical musician who has represented her city across the world on her instrument. Her interest in the keys, however, dates back to when she was just six years old. A year later and she says she ‘officially began learning to play the piano’. Ever since those early days, Lau says her parents have been ‘super supportive’ of her career. “They mentally supported me with my studies,” she says, “and they were always there [for me]. I can always rely on them when I’m feeling low.” Around the age of 12 years old, her parents enrolled her into the Macao Conservatory, which provides secondary education as well as having separate schools for music, dance and theatre. Here, she started piano and music theory lessons. After she graduated high school in the city, her parents supported her move to Ohio state in the US to continue her advanced music studies. Later, she earned her master’s degree in piano performance and piano pedagogy, as well as her doctorate in music arts, from Michigan State University.

While in the US, Lau used her musical skills as a force for good. She performed at a number of charity concerts across the country, as well as playing regularly at church fundraisers and at elderly care homes twice a week. “I enjoy playing for a small audience,” she says, “as I feel there’s more intimacy between the performer and the audience. The messages hidden in the music are delivered in a more delicate and personal way as the

performer doesn’t have to project out as they would in a big concert hall. To me, it’s like having a conversation instead of making an announcement.”

In her 20s, Lau played piano on stages big and small across the world, not just in Macao and in the US. She has performed in Spain and in mainland China, for instance. But she says, wherever it is, performing is always a challenge. “It’s about delivering a message,” she explains. “We have to train our body and our mind to operate at the top level during times of pressure and stress. And performing an instrument live is indeed a time of pressure and stress. But we learn the valuable skills to cope with this and, despite the challenge, it is always a rewarding experience to play in front of an audience.”

These days, Lau is a Macao ‘Culture Ambassador’ – one of 25 young people selected by the government with the mission of promoting the city’s ‘cultural knowledge’ and ‘humanistic concepts’. Under this title, she works with local talents on musical productions pertaining to Macao’s history and culture, such as organising intangible musical cultural heritage workshops and gigs throughout the year. She says she loves Macao’s history and she is always trying to find ways to ‘tell Macao’s stories’. She is also a resident fellow of Moon Chun Memorial College at the University of Macau, holding regular classes at the university. As an active musician and teacher, she keeps one motto: ‘constantly learning’. “Constant learning in music and life is so important,” she says. “Life is a beautiful struggle. Learn to give yours meaning.”

The jet-setting violinist

Michael Tou Long Meng has played his violin in many orchestras across three continents over just a handful of years. The 24-year-old has played concerts in China, Singapore, the US, Germany, Italy and Japan, as well as performing on multiple occasions in front of his home crowds in Macao as a member of the MYSO. In fact, his first performance for the MYSO was when he was just 12 years old. He holds a bachelor's degree in violin performance from the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music in the US and he fills his days with constant classical music practice. His passion for the genre holds no bounds.

Tou says that he was always interested in classical music and the violin from a young age but became really passionate about the instrument after he played a Haydn symphony in the youth orchestra. He says he flew to Germany in 2011 and joined a music festival over the summer that was run by the National Youth Orchestra of Germany in order 'to widen my horizons'. He says he was surrounded by 'exceptional young musicians' during the workshops and in the following concerts. "I will never forget the sound of the G strings being played by the violin section during the concert in the Berlin Concert House," he recalls, referring to one of the top concert halls in the German capital. "It sounded so rich and warm." Aside from live performances, when the young musicians rested in the evenings, Tou says they would all dance, drink and play music together. "In the morning,"



Image by Wang Tou Kun

he says, "we all played beautifully as if nothing had happened the previous night. This was a testament to the professionalism of those musicians and the mastery of their instruments. To me, they were even more professional than some big professional orchestras. It left a lasting impression and I have tried to improve ever since those workshops."

Tou says that his family, friends and teachers in Macao always try to attend his performances, whether part of the MYSO or with smaller groups, to show him support. He says he adores performing live – but he nevertheless on occasion 'sips from a bottle of whisky' to calm himself before a gig. "I always get

nervous on stage," he says, "so I have to prepare well before important concerts." And those concerts don't just include classical music. Tou has been branching into pop and experimental too. "I have a great love for pop music," he says. "I believe it can connect with more people than classical music ever can." No matter where he goes and what other interests he gets into, though, Tou says he will always circle back to classical music, be it playing solo, as part of a chamber music ensemble or in big orchestral performances. "I've become focused more on recitals these days," he says "and I have also started learning the viola. This is a new, great challenge."

The virtuoso violinist

Learning an instrument doesn't always mean starting out before you hit secondary school. It may be true that many impresarios like Mozart began their craft when they were barely able to walk properly but it's not a prerequisite of the art. Take Ng U Tong for example. She first discovered the violin at the ripe old age of 13 years old. She had gone with some friends to classical music summer classes to see if anything piqued her interest and she ended up becoming passionately involved with the violin. Within just one year, she was invited to join the MYSO and the rest is history. She's been

playing in orchestras and ensembles around Macao, Asia and the world ever since.

Now 30 years old, Ng – who is a guest violinist of the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra, the Macao Orchestra and the Hong Kong City Chamber Orchestra, as well as a faculty member of the MYSO – says there's nothing more enjoyable than playing a classical music instrument, particularly the violin. "You can simply communicate with others without talking," she explains. "It is one of life's greatest pleasures." Ng has a bachelor's degree in violin performance and a master's degree in music from the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts

and she has performed in front of crowds across the globe, including in Australia, Singapore, Austria, Portugal, Italy, Germany and the US. A few years ago, she was part of a touring Hong Kong jazz-classical crossover multimedia production called 'Hong Kong Episodes'. The show was taken across mainland China and also went to the UK.

According to Ng, by far her most memorable performance, however, was in 2017 at a Youth Music Culture Guangdong week-long event in Guangzhou. "This is when I played with and received guidance from Yo-Yo Ma," she says. Ma is one of the most legendary cellists in the world right now. "Before that youth music week," continues Ng, "I never thought that I would ever get to see and hear Mr Ma perform in person. But for nine consecutive days, we didn't just see and hear him. We actually performed with him in our orchestras and learned from his speech and behaviour. The experience touched me every time. It improved me every day and, as a result, my timbre – the character, texture and colour of my musical sounds – got better. I got to exchange ideas with him. It was magical and he has inspired me to keep growing in my music every single day."

This year has slowed Ng down in her performance schedule, as it has with all of our young classical musicians in this feature. "Because of COVID-19," she says, "many of the performances I was looking forward to this year have been put on hold. But I did manage to be part of a chamber music concert with the MYSO in July in Macao. That felt amazing to be back on stage."



Ng U Tong poses with her violin;
(opposite page) Michael Tou
plays the violin at a recital in
Lou Lim Ieoc Garden



Hopefully, next year will see a full programme of events in Macao and beyond as there are many musicians here who can't wait to perform regularly again! I'm also planning to have a recital again next year. I find that I can be myself when I play a specific composer's music, like Beethoven or Brahms, while I can also explore another side of me in the music of Franck or Piazzolla. I want to share these subtle feelings through my performance. Also, it's fun for my students to see their teacher performing on stage. I guess it helps them enjoy music more." Ng has been able to continue teaching music this year. She instructs children who are new to the MYSO in violin and other instruments. "I get to see these young musicians grow," she says. "I have a lot of experience now when it comes to helping these students of music appreciate and love the art."

The forward-thinking fiddler

The violin must be popular in Macao as a third violinist joins our sextet of young classical musicians in this issue. However, this fiddler is a little different. This expert of the strings is all about the online performances and she's a great believer in mixing classical music with other genres such as pop for the appreciation of the modern audience. Rain Chan Weng Loi is a bit of a pioneer in Macao, performing pop music covers with her violin on YouTube 'in an attempt to better connect with contemporary audiences'. She makes her own eclectic arrangements and then uploads them to her 'TheVioRain' channel, where she's had hundreds

of views. Quality tunes include her takes on Jason Mraz's 'I'm Yours', Tones and I's 'Dance Monkey' with colleague Nate and 'Remember Me' from the 2017 Disney film, 'Coco'. A moving tribute to all of those people on the frontlines who are battling COVID-19 across the world is also on the channel in the more classical form of 'Salut d'Amour' by composer Edward Elgar.

"It's a practical way to learn composing," says Chan of her YouTube music videos. "It isn't just about arranging the songs and playing them. It means I can work on a range of skills, like recording, shooting, editing and mixing. The role of the musician can be much more varied these days and having a YouTube channel is a great way to connect with new audiences and people who would not hear you perform otherwise. I try to make the best videos I can and, every time, I expect to improve. It makes me feel alive." Chan doesn't just do pop. The 28-year-old has also experimented with tango, jazz and rock, as well as with different violin sounds, from acoustic to synthesised electric.

Chan's passion for the violin, which she started learning when she was six years old, eventually overruled her passion for business. She graduated from the University of Macau with a degree in electronic business in 2014 but admits that she has been hooked on classical music and 'expressing herself through her instrument' since she was about 12 years old. So her career went down the musical path instead. And she has always taken whatever chances she's been given to perform, joining many music camps over the years,

like the 2018 Evergreen Symphony Orchestra Music Camp in Taipei. She has performed all over Asia with the Asian Youth Orchestra, including last year when she was part of a concert tour of 11 Asian cities, including Hong Kong, Shanghai, Nanjing, Beijing, Seoul and Tokyo.

“Young musicians like us need to remember that all forms of art are equal, so we can use our skills to connect our art with those who have never listened to classical music before. That's what I do on YouTube.”

– Rain Chan Weng Loi

"I love performing in Asia," she says, "but I hope to have more chances to perform outside Asia too in the future."

Like Ng U Tong, Chan also worked with cellist Yo-Yo Ma at a youth music event in Guangzhou at the end of last year and the start of this one. She too says it was a magical experience

but she also cites the discussions about classical music's connection with modern society as a 'valuable highlight' of the programme. "Music – especially classical music – is not a superior form of art to other more modern forms of art," she says. "That's the sort of message we as classical musicians must remember. We need to remember that all forms of art are equal and then we can use our abilities and skills to connect our art with those who have never listened to classical music before. This is what I try to do on YouTube."

Chan says she has joined Macao musical co-operation platform Worktone – facebook.com/worktone – which features a range of musicians across multiple genres coming together to create unique artistic sounds and styles. Currently, she says, the group is planning to run open jam sessions called 'HEA' – named after a Chinese term that means 'to chill and do nothing' – every two weeks at local coffee shops and will also occasionally do livestream performances. "There are so many crossovers and fusions that are possible in music," says Chan. "Soon, we hope to tour local schools and introduce classical stringed instruments like the violin to the kids. We want young children to hear how classical instruments can complement modern sounds and styles. Sadly, we haven't yet been able to do this tour due to the COVID-19 pandemic but we hope to do it soon. We want to inspire children to pick up an instrument and persist at practicing and learning it otherwise they won't know if they can succeed. After all, unpolished pearls never shine."

The young composer

Think of a composer and you'll most likely think of a grey-haired man in his 70s. This is, of course, not true in most cases but popular culture dictates that to be a successful composer, you need to be old. Macao's Henry Ip Kim Kuok isn't old, though. He's only 34, in fact. And he's a composer who's already had his music played in films, TV dramas and classical music concerts across the world.

Ip's musical journey began when he took his first piano lesson at 10 years old. He learned the instrument and then moved to the clarinet at 13 before joining the wind band at his all-boys school, Yuet Wah College. He began to master a number of instruments and, during his teens, he moved to the UK, where he later gained his degree in musical composition at the University of Salford after studying business for a short while. He returned to Macao after university and has been working as a composer in the city ever since. "In the wind band at Yuet Wah," he says, "most of the students focused on playing in the band. But I gravitated more towards the harmonics behind the music. I found I wasn't so much interested in playing my instruments any more. I wanted to make the music instead."

During his teens, Ip learned how to read full musical scores in Macao and then in the UK. When he wasn't learning about business, he was playing his sister's electric piano, coming up with more and more sophisticated compositions as the years rolled by. "I was just having fun at first," he says, "but soon I started to improvise and compose whole pieces of music. At one point, I had a choice: would I study business or music? I chose music. I changed my major at university to music composition as I felt I had the talent to do well as a composer."

Ip notes that his musical journey has been fraught with challenges but the encouragement he has had from his sister, his teachers, his family and his friends has helped him carry on along what must be a daunting and difficult career path. He also cites his former teacher and contemporary composer Alan Williams

as someone who 'showed much belief in my abilities'. "I might not have completed my studies without his support," Ip admits. Now, Ip says he's in a good place in Macao, working hard on many new compositions. He does not perform often unless he's playing the piano in his church's gospel band – but his music is performed all the time, across the globe. "I've composed for a variety of musicians," he says. "I've created music for musicians to play live at concerts and I've created scores that have been played in dramas, films and documentaries, mostly in the UK, Zhuhai, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macao."

Bringing us full circle, Peggy Lau has played one of Ip's compositions in front of a live audience at Macao's Dom Pedro V Theatre. Alongside another local musician, Chan Chon, Lau performed a new Ip piece in November last year and received much praise as a result. Ip adds that all musicians need to be resilient, using the COVID-19 pandemic as an example. "So many projects have been postponed because of the virus," he says, "but musicians must be resilient. The creativity and determination of a musician is never ending. It won't be long before great concerts will once again be held all over Macao and the world." To conclude, does Ip have any advice for young composers? "Keep working hard," he says. "Be patient and listen to any music you like. And most of all, follow your heart."

Macao has become a hotbed for classical music talents over the years, as our sextet of young musicians proves. Music director and principal conductor of the Macao Orchestra, maestro Lu Jia, agrees. But he tells us that it's 'not important' to be a musician. He says that what matters is 'loving music and never giving up'. Lu highlights Macao's government as greatly supporting the city's young classical musicians, saying that it has 'helped create a welcoming atmosphere and space for local and international talents'. Our sextet are local talents who are well on their way to becoming international talents. Hopefully, many more will follow and help put Macao firmly on the global classical music map. That would hit all the right notes. ●

Composer Henry Ip Kim Kuok has penned scores for films and TV shows across the world



Hoi Yan Lok is one of
Macao's brightest young
talents on the violin

Macao **ABROAD**

Musician abroad

Young violinist Hoi Yan Lok moved to Austria a few years ago to learn from Europe's maestros. He says that classical music is in his blood and he's proud to represent Macao on the world stage.

Text **Rafelle Marie Allego** Photos **António Sanmarful**

There are many talented classical musicians in Macao – but the city may not be the best place in the world for a young Beethoven, Brahms or Bach who wants to make it big on the international stage. Sometimes, an aspiring concert pianist or conductor needs to head to one of the world's traditional music havens for at least a few years to train in their art. One such developing talent who swapped Macao for a European giant in terms of classical music history is Hoi Yan Lok, who moved to Austria in 2014 in order to further his adept skills as a violinist. And now the 24-year-old, who was in Macao for many months this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic before returning to Europe a few weeks ago, is hoping to realise his ambition of becoming a world-famous classical musician from Macao.

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We truly appreciate Macao's government and people promoting classical music. We should never stop working hard to promote it.

– Hoi Yan Lok

The violin is at the centre of Hoi Yan Lok's world



Hoi got an early head start in music. His father taught him the violin when he was just five years old and he progressed to more ‘serious’ lessons around age 11. As the director and full-time president of the Macao Youth Symphony Orchestra (MYSO), as well as the president of the Macao Children’s Choir, his father, Hoi Kin Wa, gave him a musical upbringing that greatly inspired the younger Hoi to pursue a professional career in classical music. “He was the first conductor that I ‘met’,” shares Hoi Yan Lok, “especially when I started playing in the Pui Ching Middle School Symphony Orchestra.”

Hoi began performing with the MYSO in 2007. His father, who also served as the Pui Ching Middle School Symphony Orchestra’s conductor, taught violin during the weekends at MYSO’s centre. While most young talents attended only one of his father’s lessons every Saturday, Hoi would sit in on all of them. “My dad didn’t force me to practice,” he says, “but I got more time to ask him questions and learn.” He then started attending the Junior Music Programme at the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts (HKAPA) every Saturday throughout his high school years between 2008 and 2014. “After I started attending the HKAPA, I started realising how important music had become in my life,” he adds.

Maestro mentors

In those days at the HKAPA, Hoi used to get on a ferry to Hong Kong in the morning and go for a whole day of orchestral, violin and music theory lessons, returning late in the afternoon to Macao. At the HKAPA, he was under the tutorship of the head of its strings department, Professor Michael Ma. Frequenting Hong Kong made him notice its hyper-competitive environment, which Hoi cites as another factor that kept him working hard. He also studied under famous Chinese violinist Professor Zhu Xiongzheng, as well as the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra’s first associate concertmaster, Leung Kin Fung, both who visited Macao every week. He credits all three men for his vast improvement on the violin in those early years.

After high school, Hoi had a choice: stay in Asia or seek new musical experiences abroad. He was, by then, dedicated to a life as a violinist, so he decided to head to Europe, enrolling on a one-year German language course and then a four-year music course at Austria’s Music and Arts Private University of Vienna (MUK), studying under Ukrainian-born Professor Boris Kuschnir. Many people consider Kuschnir one of the world’s best violin teachers,



A close-up of Hoi Yan Lok's violin

who has trained some of the globe’s most successful international performers. In Austria – so often associated with Mozart – Hoi experienced a vastly different attitude towards classical music. With street buskers playing violin or guitar, he observed how music was interwoven into the fabric of Austrian life. “In Vienna,” he says, “classical music is like a daily necessity that can be heard everywhere, from restaurants to public washrooms.”

The Austrian attitude towards classical music contrasts with that of Macao, where it’s often associated with luxury and opulence, according to Hoi. Pop music, as he says, takes up a bigger portion of the local market in Macao – however, he does believe that there’s been a recent increase in classical music interest among teens and children in the city, especially since many study it as an extracurricular activity. “We truly appreciate the government and the community promoting classical music,” says a proud Hoi, “and we should never stop working hard to continue this promotion.”

Homeward bound

Up until this year, Hoi has been performing and improving his skill in Austria. However, he had to hit the pause button in January. Like so many other Macao locals studying abroad, he returned to the city after COVID-19

began spreading across the world. He was quarantined for the first 14 days on arrival in March, amusing himself and his followers on Instagram with funny little snippets of quarantine life. “Everything seemed to freeze in Vienna, with no concerts or schools open,” shares Hoi. Concerts scheduled between January and July were cancelled, as were his own violin exams.

Hoi, who won an array of prizes between 2010 and 2012 at the annual Cultural Affairs Bureau-led Macao Young Musicians Competition, including the ‘Most Potential Award’, left Macao for Vienna at the end of October. “I have to continue and finish my course,” he says determinedly, noting this should’ve been his last year. He says, however, he was unexpectedly fortunate that he was able to return to Macao in March, where it has been safe and he was able to spend time with his family. He’s also grateful this gave him more time to prepare for his recital graduation that was rescheduled for when he returned to Austria but has now been moved to next year due to the ongoing pandemic.

Hoi Kin Wa is clearly proud of his son’s progress on the violin ever since the first day he picked the instrument up. “He was just so fond of music from an early age,” he says, “and he would listen so attentively at home. We tried to provide him a good environment to learn violin from the beginning.” Hoi Kin Wa notes that



MYSO director Hoi Kin Wa and his son Hoi Yan Lok live and breathe classical music

there has been a marked difference in his son's ability since he began learning from the masters in Austria. "He's completely changed since he began his studies in Vienna with a more special, more wonderful sound," says the proud dad. "He has greatly improved."

Leung Kin Fung agrees with Hoi Kin Wa. He says he was at one of his former student's performances before travel restrictions between Hong Kong and Macao were enforced earlier this year. "I heard him playing and it was remarkable," he says. "He put his personality and unique style into his performance. My impression of him as a student was that he was like a sponge, absorbing and digesting everything. He was also a sensitive and flexible student. He takes a lot of whatever you give him and he'll do it right away." Leung notes that Hoi used to research historical performances while developing his own sound. "I would say he is a unique and outstanding young Macao violinist," concludes Leung.

Hoi Yan Lok looks back at his career so far and admits he already has many shows under his bow that have helped shape him as a performer – including gigs in Shanghai, Hong Kong and Taiwan. He also performed a

solo of Mozart's 'Violin Concerto No 5' in Washington DC and New York in the US in 2013 while he was still with the MYSO. He says he hopes to perform in many concerts over the coming years, although he does say it'll be hard to top his first-ever solo performance, which he considers his most memorable. In 2009, when he was 13 years old, he played Bruch's violin concerto at the Macao Cultural Centre under the baton of Leung Kin Fung. "I was very nervous," he says, "and I was scared because I was the youngest soloist in the concert – but when I got on stage, I was overwhelmed with joy!" That feeling, he says, has never changed each time he's performed.

Over the past few months, Hoi kept busy in Macao by coaching younger violin students at the MYSO. He even took part in the 10th Macao Youth Symphony Orchestra Music Festival in August. After eagerly awaiting his return to Europe, he's now back in Austria where he will be finishing his studies and taking every opportunity to do what he loves: play his violin on stage in front of an audience. "If you really love music," he says, "catch every single chance you can get to perform on stage. And then – just enjoy the experience!" ●

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中國人的聲音

慶祝澳門回歸祖國21周年

【澳門中樂團】



“OUBE A VOZ
DOS CHINESES”

CONCERTO DE CELEBRAÇÃO DO
21.º ANIVERSÁRIO DA
TRANSFERÊNCIA DE
MACAU PARA A CHINA



指揮 / Maestro / Conductor
劉沙 Liu Sha

“LISTEN TO
THE VOICE OF
THE CHINESE”

CONCERT TO CELEBRATE
THE 21ST ANNIVERSARY
OF MACAO'S HANDOVER TO CHINA



主要曲目

大合唱：
《我的祖國》
《生產大合唱》

民歌演唱：

《五哥放羊》、《桃花紅杏花白》、
《離情郎》、《山歌好比春江水》

Repertório Principal

Cantata:
“A Minha Pátria”
“Cantata da Produção”

Cancão Popular:

“O Meu Amor é Pastor”, “Flor de Passieiro Vermelho e Flor de Damasco Branco”
“Visitando o Meu Amor”, “As Músicas Populares São Como Água da Nascente”

Main repertoire

Cantata:
“My Motherland”
“Production Cantata”

Folk Song:

“My Lover is Shepherd”, “Red Peach Blossom and White Apricot Blossom”
“Visiting my Lover”, “Folk Song's Just Like Spring Water”

時長：音樂會全長約70分鐘，不設中場休息。
Duração: O concerto tem a duração de cerca de 70 minutos sem intervalo.
Duration: The concert is about 70 minutes without intermission.

主辦單位保留隨時更改原定演出時間、節目及演出者的權利。
A Organização reserva-se o direito de alterar o programa e / ou os artistas.
The Organizer reserves the right to change the programmes and / or performers at any time.

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HISTORY

Toy Story (Free)

Visitors to the Leal Senado Building took a trip down memory lane this autumn at a free Macao exhibition that showcased antique toys – some of which are 100 years old.

Text Rafelle Marie Allego Photos António Sanmarful

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3

Some people may find two grown men in their 60s who still play with toys quite peculiar. But Augusto do Carmo Amante Gomes and Tang Va Hoi don't exactly play with their dinky cars and 70-year-old robots in the strictest sense of the word – they collect them. And, over the past couple of months, these two local men have shared their vast collections with children and big kids in Macao as part of a special toy exhibition.

An antique can be a treasure to one person and junk to another. But many antiques are more than just the sum of their parts: they can hold a wealth of memories too. That was true of Gomes and Tang's pieces in the 'Nostalgia of Macao: Exhibition of Nostalgic Toys in Remembrance of the Innocence of Childhood' exhibition at the Leal Senado Building's gallery exhibition hall, which opened in October and continued until 22 November. Both men say that while a monetary value is attached to the collectible toys which were on display, the nostalgic value of each piece can far outweigh the finances.

The exhibition was co-organised by the city's Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) and the Macao Antique Collectors' Association. Tang and Gomes both represent the association, which was established in 2003 and now has 20 members, with some of them in their 80s. They collect anything from paper money and coins to old photos of Macao – but toys are always hot property due to the nostalgia of childhood. The association was invited by the IAM to showcase their most collectible toys and it took the team about two months to gather up their favourites and set up the displays. Most of the toys dated back to between the 1920s and 80s – although a handful were from the late Qing Dynasty, around the start of the 1900s – and there were five areas that made up the exhibition: toys made from tin, toys made from plastic, toys made from paper, toys for festivities and toys that train the mind.

“

Toys in the 50s and 60s were mostly handmade and not so durable but, to us and many others, they are special.

– Augusto do Carmo Amante Gomes

Gomes, 69, is the association’s president. He says he’s not exactly sure how many items were on display but estimates more than 1,000 pieces, intimating that the association has many more toys that didn’t make it to the shelves. Tang, 65, is the association’s director-general. He says he’s been collecting antiques since the 80s and notes that five association members – including Sam Wai Lon, who provided more than half the toys on display

– personally furnished the exhibition with pieces from their own collections. “We needed to do a lot of research to get things right,” says Tang. For instance, he notes there was a ‘dancing couple’ on display that was made in occupied Japan between 1945 and 1951. “The factory that made this toy only lasted five years,” he says, “but the dolls are still in good condition.”

Gomes says that some would see today’s mass-produced, computer-designed toys as ‘nicer’ than those relics from the past. “Toys in the 50s and 60s were mostly handmade and not so durable,” he says. “But they are special. Also, unlike the tens of thousands of toys made today, factories only made limited toys – which make them expensive now. Not every family could buy these toys.” Gomes says he was lucky enough that his family could afford some toys. A minuscule toy camera he got when he was around nine years old was one special artefact on display from his childhood. It cost MOP 5. “At that time,” he says, “MOP 5 was worth a lot, especially considering that an average worker only earned MOP 70 a month.”

Tang Va Hoi (left) and Augusto do Carmo Amante Gomes share childhood experiences as they check over some of the toys in the exhibition



Toy Story, too

A snapshot of toys that were on display in the exhibition (each number corresponds to a photo in this feature)

- 1 **RACE CAR** This tin race car was made in the 1980s in China. While this piece has some scratches, it is still in full working order as a wind-up toy car.
- 2 **YOYOS THROUGH THE AGES** A variety of yoyos made between the 20s and the 80s were on display. Gomes says that earlier models were made of wood but they weren't so durable. Pictured is a branded yoyo.
- 3 **ICE-CREAM BOY** This ice-cream trolley boy was made mostly out of tin in the 1970s. A vintage wind-up toy, this piece is still in functioning order, says Tang.
- 4 **THE DANCING COUPLE** This 'dancing couple' was made in occupied Japan between 1945 and 1951. As Tang says, this makes the toy a limited, one-of-a-kind item.
- 5 **MINIATURE CAMERA** Purchased for MOP 5 by Gomes in the 1960s, this miniature camera took actual black-and-white photos. He shares that at the time, this antique was worth a lot.
- 6 **TIN CHICKEN** When its head is pressed down, this tin chicken will release plastic eggs from its stomach compartment. It's dated to circa 1980 and was made in China.
- 7 **ROBBY THE ROBOT** This character from the classic 1956 film 'Forbidden Planet' is now a popular collector's item according to Tang. A seven-foot-tall Robby sold for a world record price of US\$5,375,000 at Bonham's in New York in 2017. The Robby that was in this exhibition is only around 15 to 18 inches tall and is battery operated.
- 8 **PAPER BOARD GAME** A popular board game in the 50s and 60s, this sheet of paper served as a play mat of sorts for board game enthusiasts.
- 9 **DINKY RACE CARS** More than 50 toy cars were on display at the exhibition. Tang says they were all made out of tin and were imported from the UK in the 60s. They cost MOP 3 each at the time and were once considered luxury gifts for children.

Tang says that the expense of buying good toys in the mid-20th century forced many people to purchase small pieces that cost just 25 or 50 cents each. He says these were usually 'not so durable'. Both men say that homemade toys were also common in, say, the 50s as few people could afford the foreign-made imported toys from countries like the UK, US, Germany and Japan. They say that one Macao store that used to sell 'foreign high-class toys' was the Lei Yun Kee toy store that once stood in Rua de São Domingos. "At the time," says Gomes, "the economy wasn't that good and many people didn't have the money to buy toys, especially those made in Japan." He says that the scene changed in the 60s and 70s, though, as Hong Kong opened up toy factories and, as a result, prices fell in Macao as quality pieces became more readily available. When China opened up factories in the 70s and 80s, both men recall prices falling further. It was this improved accessibility that forced Lei Yun Kee to close at that time.

A statement from the IAM on the exhibition says: "The purpose [of the event] was to let the younger generations learn about the traditional toys that flourished over the past century and the changes in the development of old toys. It was also to further understand Macao's old folk culture, combining education with entertainment." The statement explains the association is made up of experienced local collectors and it has previously hosted other antiques exhibitions, so it was able to 'provide sufficient and abundant items for the exhibition' and thus 'increase its attraction to visitors'.

How toys have evolved – and how their roles as children's playthings have evolved – over the years was at the heart of the exhibition. Tang and Gomes also attempted to highlight how some collectible toys rise in value over the years. At the same time, they noted the importance of nostalgia. Many adults wandered around the exhibition, they say, with beaming smiles on their faces as their children also enjoyed the displays. "It wasn't really for the children of today," says Gomes. "It was for their parents. They could introduce their children to their own childhood stories and appreciate the value behind these toys. We don't really know the monetary value of many of the toys, anyway." Tang agrees. "In essence," he concludes, "this exhibition was really about the memories." If you missed it, we hope it won't be the last toy exhibition from the association in Macao – we hope there's another to play with in the near future. ●



Monument to João Rodrigues in Sernancelhe



Image courtesy of the District Council of Sernancelhe

HISTORY

The legendary interpreter

Many people know about the incredible work Jesuit priest, traveller, trader, linguist and diplomat João Rodrigues ‘Tçuzu’ did in Japan in the late 16th and early 17th centuries. But there was much more to this incredible interpreter – including his influential missions into China and his absolute dedication to his late-life home of Macao.

Text **Richard Lee**

Millions of tourists stand and marvel at the Ruins of St Paul’s in Macao every year. They learn about the history of the great building that was destroyed by fire during a typhoon in 1835. They take selfies with the remaining façade in the background. What they probably don’t do is research who was buried just behind those iconic ruins. If they did, they’d find out that the body of one of the most talented, important and influential Jesuits in history once lay in St Paul’s Church before that great fire: the body of João Rodrigues ‘Tçuzu’.

More than 200 Jesuits were once buried at the Ruins of St Paul’s – their graves sadly disappearing after the savage fire – but João Rodrigues ‘Tçuzu’ has to be one of the most significant. This Portuguese traveller, scholar, priest, missionary, trader, sailor, warrior, linguist and diplomat helped transform China and Japan in the way these nations worked with the European Jesuits

in the 16th and 17th centuries. His profound knowledge of the people, culture and language of Japan, where he spent 33 years of his life, earned him the moniker of ‘Tçuzu’, a Portuguese transcription of the Japanese word for ‘interpreter’. But he achieved so much more than just his work in Japan, bringing his knowledge and experience to Macao, the city he eventually called home and the city he eventually died in.

Rodrigues was born in 1561 or 1562 in the municipality of Sernancelhe, which is about 100km east of Porto in the north of Portugal. He took his first breaths in the picturesque diocese of Lamego at a time when the European country had been at the forefront of global overseas explorations for at least a century – and had many years ahead of it as a world exploration leader, not least in Asia. Little is known about his early years but we do know that by the age of 14 years old, he had left Portugal on a two-year voyage to

the East that was both arduous and dangerous. He was about to become an important figure in Portugal’s global exploration mission. And during this voyage, Rodrigues first set eyes on Macao.

The first glimpse

Macao was a long way from home for a teenage Rodrigues. For many Portuguese sailors, this city, which was established in 1557, would have seemed like the far end of the world. Rodrigues’ first glimpses of Macao must have filled him with awe and wonder but, sadly, little is known about these first impressions of the city and, indeed, how long he stayed there as he waited for passage on a ship to Japan – his ultimate destination. He probably didn’t have to wait for long as he arrived in Nagasaki in 1577, which was towards the end of Japan’s Sengoku period of near-constant civil war and social upheaval over almost 150 years.



Image courtesy of the District Council of Sernancelhe

The following years in Japan were tough for young Rodrigues. He'd bravely flee for his life from battles, he'd starve almost to death and he'd freeze in the icy lands of the Asian country during winter. But one important thing happened to the young man in Japan that was likely influenced in part by his short time in Macao: he became a Jesuit, a member of the Catholic Society of Jesus which had been founded in 1540 and had been sending missionaries out from Europe across Asia ever since.

Macao had become the Jesuits' base in Asia but Rodrigues is believed to have officially joined the order on 24 December 1580, in Usuki, Japan. Meeting Jesuit missionaries in Macao may have

influenced this decision but it's most likely that he was heavily influenced to join in Japan. Tereza Sena, a researcher at the Macao Polytechnic Institute's Centre of Sino-Western Cultural Studies who has published more than 60 works on the history of Macao, including pieces on Rodrigues, says: "The fact is that we don't know how long Rodrigues was in Macao that first time he visited. The Jesuits were becoming influential at that time in Macao but it is likely that he became acquainted with more Jesuits in Japan and became naturally impressed with their blossoming mission there. Either way, he became a Jesuit and that was the real beginning of Father Rodrigues' story."

Paulo Pinto, communication technician for the Social and Cultural Service Department at the District Council of Sernancelhe, says: "Father João Rodrigues is probably the most well-known person from Sernancelhe, especially one so well regarded beyond national borders. It is a shame we don't know more about him or what made him decide to embark [from Portugal] but there are two possibilities. One is that, like most young men, he moved to Lisbon in order to work on the ships and eventually decided to join one of the crews. The other is that Sernancelhe is home to one of the oldest Jesuit sanctuaries in the country: The Lapa Sanctuary. There are some historians who believe that, despite the fact

Rodrigues only took vows in Macao, he first came across the Jesuits right here at home. While I personally favour the first, I have to admit the second explains his scholarly success. Most young men who were not wealthy or connected somehow to the church would not have known how to read, let alone speak any languages."

The first permanent Jesuit residence in Macao was built in 1565. By 1594, St Paul's College was founded by Jesuits, earning it the title of the first Western university in East Asia. Macao journalist and historian, João Guedes, says this was 'the first Western university in the Far East' and he notes that Macao had been chosen as a 'stronghold' by the Jesuits during their

'evangelisation of Japan'. American historian and author Michael Cooper, in his acclaimed 1974 book 'Rodrigues the Interpreter: An Early Jesuit in Japan and China', observes that St Paul's College was built 'with the needs of the Japanese mission especially in mind' as the facility could – and, in fact, did – 'provide training facilities for the Japanese clergy'. Cooper notes that 'Rodrigues was about 19 years old when he entered the novitiate' – the period of being a 'novice' in a religious order – in Japan. In 1581, he was 'one of five Portuguese scholastics or students for the priesthood at the college of St Paul in Funai', notes Cooper. He stayed and trained for five years before returning to Macao.

In Macao, Rodrigues became an ordained priest in 1596. It had taken around 14 years for the scholar to complete his studies due to turbulent times between the ruling powers and the Jesuits in Japan and because he'd found his vocation as an interpreter. Rodrigues had shown a great talent for the Japanese language and would have done, as Cooper puts it, 'interpreting work at some time in the 1580s' which would have interrupted his theology studies. His studies were also interrupted in 1591 when he was a key figure as the Jesuits met with Toyotomi Hideyoshi, who was, at that time, effectively the leader and 'second great unifier' of Japan.

A Jesuit embassy met Hideyoshi in the city of Miyako with Rodrigues – who Cooper notes as having become 'something of a celebrity in Miyako' due to his ties with the rulers and his interpretation work – in tow. The meeting started a tumultuous relationship between the Jesuits and Hideyoshi, with

Top to bottom: Tereza Sena (Image courtesy of the Centre of Sino-Western Cultural Studies, Macao Polytechnic Institute); João Guedes (Image courtesy of João Guedes); João Botas (Image courtesy of João Cortesão)



the Jesuit missionaries eventually being effectively expelled and sent back to Macao, mainly because of their different beliefs and growing power. As Cooper notes, however, by October 1592, ‘Rodrigues was the only Jesuit who had official permission to remain anywhere in [Japan]’. Before that, there had been executions of Catholic missionaries but Rodrigues remained in favour with Hideyoshi and they remained friends right up until the Japanese ‘unifier’ died in 1598.

João Botas, journalist, historian, author and former Macao resident who runs the Macau Antigo blog about the city’s storied past, says: “Rodrigues wasn’t just a simple translator. He was much more than

that. He would have arrived in Japan as a 16-year-old boy and very quickly became an expert on the Japanese language, culture and religion. He became an interpreter – a ‘tçuzu’ – who was greatly respected by the Japanese and Chinese authorities. He wrote the first Portuguese-Japanese dictionary and, in Macao – a city where he became the Japan procurator for the Society of Jesus – he also wrote about the art of Japanese tea. He was open-minded and a true diplomat.”

Macao and the trade battle

When Rodrigues was ordained as a priest in Macao in 1596, he had become well-known and respected

in the city, not least because of his work with the Japanese. But his relationship with many fellow Jesuits was about to be tested because of a trade war that involved Macao. In the minds of the Japanese, the Jesuits and the Portuguese traders had become inextricably linked because, as Cooper explains in his book, ‘the Portuguese were not selling their own European products to the Japanese but were merely acting as middlemen in an essentially Asian trade. The Japanese wanted Chinese silk and the Chinese wanted the silver being mined in increasing quantity in Japan’. Enmity between Japan and China barred direct trade so, as Cooper puts it, the missionaries could ‘see considerable

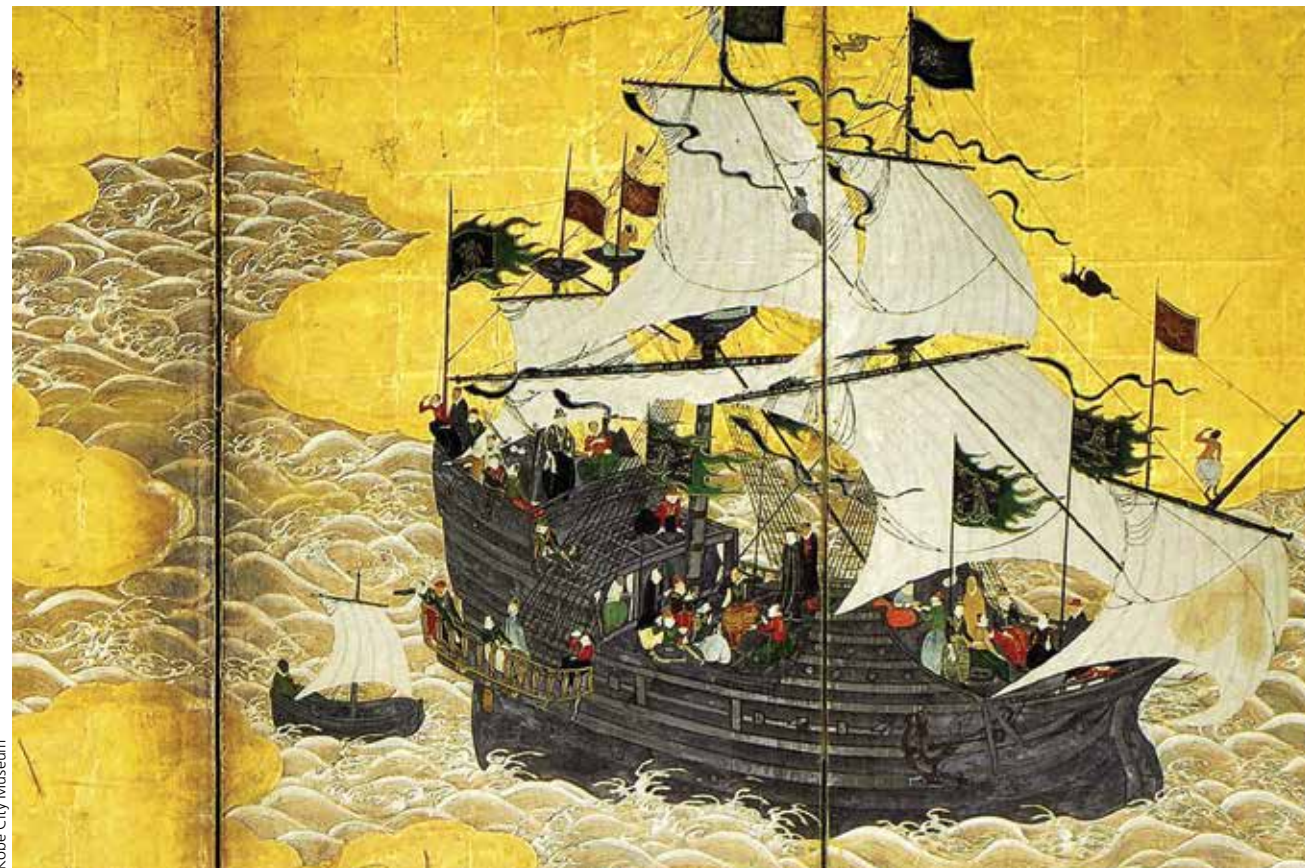
profits to be won by investing in the silk trade between Macao and Nagasaki’. So the Jesuits began profiting from the silk trade.

The trade war raged in the 1590s, with Jesuit buildings in Japan being dismantled in retaliation to the profiting missionaries and Portuguese merchants ceasing all trade at one point in retaliation but by Hideyoshi’s death, the Macao-to-Japan trade route had been restored. Rodrigues had been involved at times in the 1590s but it was in 1601 that he became a central figure because it was in that year that he was appointed as Tokugawa Ieyasu’s ‘personal commercial agent’ in Nagasaki. Ieyasu, the ‘third great unifier’ of Japan, was the founder

of the Tokugawa shogunate, which ruled Japan from 1600 to 1868. In 1601, he announced, as Cooper says, ‘that thenceforth the Portuguese merchants should make their transactions’ through Rodrigues, due to the Jesuit’s influence and the trust the Japanese had in him. It made him both beneficial and dangerous to the Jesuits as he had such a strong say in the annual prices of the silk coming from Macao and could favour either party.

In 1609, a trade ship carrying silk from Macao arrived at Nagasaki. It was commanded by Captain-major André Pessoa, Macao’s acting governor, who had just resolved a riot in the city by having 40 Japanese people who had ‘barricaded

themselves in a house’ killed. News of that incident, plus the impact of new Japanese links with Dutch traders, led to an arrest warrant being issued for Pessoa but he got wind of it, withdrew his ship and then defended it from the Japanese out at sea for three cold days in January. In a final act of defiance outside Nagasaki, he blew it up, killing himself and his crew. Ieyasu’s patience with the Portuguese and the Jesuits had expired. And that meant all of them. According to Guedes, as ‘Rodrigues was the most exposed Western political figure in Japan’, he was among the first Jesuits to be expelled. In Cooper’s words, in March 1609 ‘a junk left Nagasaki taking João Rodrigues to Macao. He was sent into exile after 33 years in Japan’.



Kobe City Museum



Twenty-Six Martyrs Museum in Nagasaki

A painting showing 26 Catholics being crucified in Japan: an action that ultimately led to the expulsion of all Jesuits, including Rodrigues, from the country in 1609. The painting can be seen at the Twenty-Six Martyrs Museum in Nagasaki; (opposite page) A painting of the trade ship from Macao that was attacked and eventually blown up in the waters outside Nagasaki in 1609. The painting is now on display at Kobe City Museum, Japan



Rodrigues' body was buried
in the church of St Paul's

Eric Tam

The China chapters

The success of the Portuguese silk merchants had made Macao an important place in the eyes of the Japanese in the early 1600s. But it was not yet seen as so important by the Chinese. In 1610, a 49-year-old Rodrigues arrived in a city that wanted to elevate itself in the eyes of the Chinese leaders. He understood this ambition and for the next five years he forgot all about his adventures in Japan and turned his hand at learning all he could about China so he could help his fellow Jesuits make inroads into the Middle Kingdom. He was also put in charge of drawing up an annual report on the city for Rome and he regularly taught classes at St Paul's College, instructed sermons, performed parish functions and worked as an attorney.

At the same time, Rodrigues also worked hard on his writing. His 'The

Art of the Japanese Language' book – which is now credited as being the oldest fully extant Japanese grammar work in history – had already been published in Nagasaki between 1604 and 1608. In Macao, he went on to write 'The Short Art of the Japanese Language', which established clear and concise rules in the language and was published in 1620. He also began 'The History of the Japanese Church' in Macao, which is less about the Jesuits and more of a complete overview of Japanese language, history and culture, including much praise for the holiness of Buddhist monks. It was finally translated into English by Michael Cooper in 2001. Other works by Rodrigues included pieces on history, geography, customs, astronomy and even tea.

By 1615, Rodrigues had travelled across China many times, often visiting Christian communities in cities like Beijing, Nanjing and Hangzhou – then known in English

as Peking, Nanking and Hangchow. According to Cooper in his book, Rodrigues 'had plenty of opportunity to observe the work of his fellow Jesuits and it is evident that he was not happy with everything he saw', expressing strong opinions on how Christianity should be taught in China. Back in Macao in 1615, he became a key diplomatic figure between the Jesuits and the Chinese. Since 1603, the Jesuits had been building a recreation area at Ilha Verde – where Rodrigues incidentally lived – in the northwestern part of the peninsula. The Chinese authorities, however, worried that a fort was being constructed – but Rodrigues persuaded them that this was not the case. In June 1622, the lack of fortifications meant the Dutch, who wanted Macao and its silk trade for themselves, invaded but they were thwarted, not least by the Jesuits who had hurriedly bought eight cannons for the city.

Following the attempted Dutch invasion, the Jesuits wanted a fort but the Chinese authorities – for obvious reasons – were still against it. The fact is that the famous Monte Fort, which still sits just above the Ruins of St Paul's, was already under construction and had been used during the invasion but the Chinese did not want this to stay. Rodrigues again became a key diplomatic figure as he travelled into the Mainland and spoke with an important chief justice. Cooper, in his book, notes that Rodrigues spoke 'with such determination against pulling down the walls that the official became annoyed and regarded him as responsible for the non-fulfilment of the order to dismantle the defences'. The fort's walls were eventually saved, with Cooper noting that 'a certain amount of money' changed hands before 'the order for their destruction was rescinded'. That was good news for the Jesuits but for Rodrigues, it was not so good. For the rest of life, his actions would be criticised by some members of the Chinese authorities.

The final years

Despite the criticism, 1622 was not the last year that Rodrigues ventured into the Mainland. In 1630, he accompanied a Portuguese military party and its cannons from Macao to Beijing. As Guedes tells us, at that time the Portuguese art of artillery making was 'way ahead of its time' and he notes that Manuel Tavares Bocarro, a famous cannon-maker, had his main factory in Macao and 'sold his guns across Asia'.

The party wanted to help the Ming Dynasty leaders defend China from the invading Manchu forces – who eventually succeeded and formed the Qing Dynasty – and

did so well they were invited back later in the year. Rodrigues again went along and peeled off with a handful of friends from the group to visit Dengzhou – then known in English as Tengchow. This proved to be a costly decision as he got caught up in a revolt by a part of the Ming Dynasty army. Besieged for a month in the town's fortress, he watched as his Portuguese friends died around him.

***Father Rodrigues
deserved
the Chinese
emperor's
recognition in
his day and he
deserves our
recognition today.***

– Tereza Sena

Rodrigues was 71 years old at that time. As the fortress was being taken, he was forced into doing something no septuagenarian should try. He jumped from the high fortress walls and into the February snow that lay below. He survived, retreated to Beijing and managed to make his way back to Macao by 1633, where he returned to writing 'The History of the Japanese Church'. He never completed the book. He died on 1 August 1633. In a letter dated 4 January 1634, Jesuit priest André Palmeiro wrote that Rodrigues had died because he 'neglected to attend

to a hernia in time'. As Cooper – who once lamented that a 'one-volume biography' could not do Rodrigues' life justice – puts it, 'very possibly the injury had been caused by jumping off the battlements and undergoing other physical hardships during the trek' from Tengchow to Beijing and back to Macao.

Ana Cristina Dias, a University of Macau lecturer who has a PhD in the history of the modern world, quotes other historians in saying that throughout his life, Rodrigues 'played the part of a historian, archeologist and anthropologist' as his written works often focused on 'all aspects of life and man'. She adds that 'above all, he was a brilliant linguist', labelling his book 'The Art of the Japanese Language' as a masterpiece. She says that in Beijing in 1632, he was 'officially honoured by the Chinese Emperor, who granted him a plaque'. "This is of special significance," she says, "because, as far as we know, this was the first time the Chinese referred to a priest as a 'Jesuit' instead of the common 'scholar of the great West'. It goes to show that he was someone well-versed in the language who was respected in the Chinese court and who represented his religious order with great honour."

Botas recounts an interesting story he learned about Rodrigues after his death in Macao: "In October 1644, the Chinese authorities, in order to honour Rodrigues after his death, gave the Jesuits a piece of land in Ilha Verde, which was an actual island at the time, for him to be buried in. A year later, they gave another piece of land on Patera Island to the Jesuits for his burial. As far as I know, there are no records saying that his body was transferred to either of these places so it's most likely that he remained buried at St Paul's. Although he had a more

The Twenty-Six Martyrs Monument on Nishizaka Hill in Nagasaki



Mercia Gonçalves

important role in Japan, he is for sure among Macao's 10 most important historical figures. But I think the large majority of locals in Macao now just don't know anything about him. But James Clavell did when he wrote his famously televised 1975 novel 'Shōgun' and based the character of Martin Alvito on Rodrigues."

Tereza Sena says that Rodrigues' 'adventurous escape by jumping from the fortress at such an advanced age' was both incredible and added yet more weight to the man's legend – a legend that survives today. Sena believes this legend should be safeguarded for future generations in Macao and beyond. "His diplomatic, linguistic and sinological contributions should be taught at schools and at public talks," she says. "His works, including his eulogies, memorials and letters describing Macao's military expeditions in support of the Ming Dynasty, should be on display

at exhibitions. He deserved the emperor's recognition in his day and he deserves our recognition today."

Sena continues: "Father Rodrigues' contributions to China were accounted in Chinese annals and he was certainly a special figure in the history of Macao. Of course, he did not act alone but he had the skills to successfully accomplish missions from Macao into China. Due to his experience as an interpreter in Japan, he was also presumably an influential figure when a team of official translators settled in Macao, probably in 1627. This office, which has naturally undergone adaptations over time, remained until the late 20th century as an important pillar for Macao's Sino-Portuguese relations and aided the city's survival for centuries."

The body of João Rodrigues 'Tçuzu' once lay in front of the St Michael altar inside St Paul's Church before the building became the ruins

that are included on the UNESCO World Heritage List today. Guedes says that this inclusion on the list is the 'best legacy of the universalism of João Rodrigues' after he was 'forever laid to rest inside the church'. 'Tçuzu' was indeed one in a million. It's as if the man – who was believed by some Portuguese people in his day to be up to 250 years old – was capable of anything, from interpretation and diplomacy to scholarly pursuits and extreme physical endurance. Many other stories are attached to him – such as his role in helping to revise the Chinese calendar and his arguments with fellow Jesuits over what religious terminology should be used in mission work in China. In his day, Rodrigues became a key figure in Japan and China, as well as in both Jesuit and Portuguese history. And his name still echoes around Macao, the city he wrote his masterpieces in, the city he helped to defend and the city he eventually called home. ●

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Running coach Vincent Hoi Kam Fai prepares for the city's annual marathon in December by running a 'virtual London Marathon' in October

António Sammarfui



PROMOTIONAL FEATURE

Going the distance

We give you this year's lowdown on the 2020 Galaxy Entertainment Macao International Marathon while also looking at the mind, body and soul benefits of running in the city.

Text Paulo Figueiredo

Macao is strapping on its running shoes and favourite sports shirt. Doves of people from all walks of life – including the writer of this story – are training hard for the 2020 Galaxy Entertainment Macao International Marathon, scheduled to take place on 6 December. Some are even running ‘virtual marathons’ – each modelled on famous races across the world, such as the recent London Marathon – from right here in Macao in preparation for the SAR's big annual race which so far, despite the COVID-19 pandemic, looks to be going ahead.

The Macao International Marathon is an institution in the city. This year is its 39th edition but due to COVID-19, international runners have not been invited. So, for the first time in its recent history, the event will be mostly for local athletes – and those from the Mainland and neighbouring cities and regions – who will be trying to take first place and thousands of patacas in prize money or just running for fun. It is being jointly organised by the government's Sports Bureau alongside the General Association of Athletics of Macau. Back in September, it was announced that the marathon would be going ahead – a move that was quickly celebrated by local athletics teams. After the registration opened on 12 September – online and with hundreds gathering outside the Tap Seac Multisport Complex – the places went quickly. It is expected that 1,400 people will run the full 42.195-kilometre marathon, with 4,800 people doing the 21.0975-kilometre half-marathon and 5,800 in the 4.5-kilometre mini-marathon.

The marathon is title-sponsored by the Galaxy Entertainment Group

(GEG) for the 17th consecutive year. The full and half-marathon races will start at 6am and the mini-marathon race begins at 6.15am from the Olympic Sports Centre Stadium in Taipa. The marathon and half-marathon courses pass by the Governor Nobre de Carvalho Bridge and the World Heritage attraction A-Ma Temple before heading along Sai Van Bridge. Trophies will be awarded to the public entity, private

“

Marathon running motivates you. It builds your patience and determination. It teaches you not to give up easily.

– Miguel Nuno Hong da Conceição

entity, school, sports association or government-registered organisation with the highest number of participants who complete the mini-marathon. Plus, popular activities ‘Join Us and Upload Best Shot to Win Lucky Draw’ and ‘Most Creative Costume Award’ are also expected to be featured in this year's event.

Safety first

At the event launch in September, Sports Bureau president Pun Weng Kun underlined that the marathon

is one of the city's main sporting events of the year that allows participants to ‘test their physical limits and willpower’ and helps them to ‘fill their lives with positive energy’. Ma Iao Hang, General Association of Athletics of Macau president, highlighted that adequate measures by the government have allowed for the pandemic to be controlled in Macao. “Just like in a marathon,” he said, “it was necessary to persist in order to win.” To make sure this ‘sports tradition’ – one of Macao's oldest and biggest athletic events, in terms of participation – goes smoothly during this pandemic year, a 1,000-strong team of workers has been put together for the event, Ma added.

Philip Cheng, GEG director, said at the launch that the marathon helps ‘support Macao in promoting mass sports’. Over the years, he added, the GEG has ‘proactively organised and participated in different sports events with an aim to catalyse the development of economic diversification and facilitate the city's position as a world centre for tourism and leisure’. “I hope,” he said, “that all the runners can exemplify the marathon spirit and bring out their best during the competition.”

This year's marathon will be unique due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the travel restrictions that are in place in Macao as a result. It means that most of the race winners will hail from Macao or mainland China. The champions are usually from Africa or, at least, from Europe or other parts of Asia but this year will give professional and semi-professional local runners an unprecedented opportunity to grab gold. Of course, for most of the runners, finishing the marathon in a good time is its own reward but some



Last year's marathon in Macao starts with a bang. This year, expect more local runners to take their place at the starting line

local runners will relish this year's unique chance of glory.

The last non-African and non-European male athlete to win the marathon in Macao was Ri Kum Song from North Korea, who triumphed in the men's event in 2007. The last Chinese male athlete to scoop gold was Zhu Ronghua in the 2002 race and the last Chinese female athlete to finish first was Wang Xueqin in 2010. Fifteen of the past 20 men's race winners are from Africa compared to just six African women's race winners. The women's race has mainly been won by runners from China, Ukraine, North Korea and Great Britain over the past two decades.

Last year, the men's marathon winner was Ethiopia's Tefese Delelegn Abebe, who finished the race in two hours, 12 minutes and 53 seconds. The women's race winner was Kenya's Lucy Cheruiyot, who finished in two hours, 31 minutes and 17 seconds. The record-holders are Kenya's Felix Kirwa, who won the 2017

men's marathon in just two hours, 10 minutes and one second, and Bahrain's Eunice Kirwa, who, also in 2017, completed the women's marathon in two hours, 29 minutes and 12 seconds. Another extraordinary run was done by Portugal's former Olympic champion Rosa Mota in last year's race. The then 61-year-old won 2019's 5.2-kilometre mini-marathon for the second year in a row in under 20 minutes.

The practice runs

What makes Macao's marathon so tough? Simply, the heat. Hong Kong's main marathon, for instance, takes place at the end of a usually cool January. But Macao's race is in early December, which can still be pretty warm. And even if it's not, training for the big event can take many weeks, meaning that some Macao runners start training in the middle of summer. Coaches and physiotherapists warn that all

running enthusiasts should take care when training in the city's hot, humid conditions.

And that was the exact message from veteran running coach Vincent Hoi Kam Fai on 4 October, when he led 14 people – the majority being women but one of them being the writer of this story – out to the Taipa seafront to run the 'virtual London Marathon'. It was 27 degrees Celsius and the humidity was high and Hoi was keen that everyone was safe, prepared and well watered due to the hot conditions. Using a smartphone app, he was able to track the distance of the London Marathon – run over 42.195 kilometres – and run it with the team in real time on Macao's roads and trails. Nearly everyone involved used the 'virtual marathon' as a warm up for the real Macao version in December.

The 'virtual London Marathon', which was open to anyone in the world and for the first time ever allowed participants to use a special app where they could log their

run and earn a medal and T-shirt for completing the marathon, actually saw the team, all dressed in green running shirts with the 'Kam's' team-name on the back, running just over seven stretches back and forth along the six-kilometre Taipa seafront. They started with a crucial warm-up and each person was prepared for the heat, with coolers spread along the path and plenty of cold drinks to hand to keep hydrated throughout the race. And then the marathon was run, with everyone finishing it and no casualties. Fun was the name of the game, however it was also a reminder of how difficult it is to run a marathon on a hot Macao day.

Hoi says the 'virtual marathon' was a success and that he's looking forward to the real Macao version. He has been practicing endurance sports, including marathon training, for more than 30 years and he's run several half and full marathons – from Macao and Hong Kong to Taiwan and Japan – over that time with his 'Kam's' team. He says that he sees the popularity of endurance sports growing in Macao, with long distance running becoming a major exercise trend. And he's there to help any novices – he says he once noticed that the majority of new runners lack proper fitness knowledge or exercise techniques, so ever since then he has made guiding them in the art of the long distance run a personal 'passion'. "I feel the need to keep practicing running," he says, "so I can use my experience to continuously refine fitness programmes to help runners and athletes." Hoi adds that there are obvious health benefits to long distance running but says that crucially the sport 'helps to develop persistence in life'.

Another running group in Macao that keeps itself regularly active is the Spirit Running Crew. This team has about 130 members and one of them is 40-year old Miguel Nuno Hong da Conceição, who is preparing for his second marathon in Macao. Having only started running four years ago, he has already finished 18 marathons. Last year, he finished his sixth and last of what's seen as the six major marathons of the world – Tokyo, London, Boston, Berlin, Chicago and New York. This is a huge achievement for a marathon runner, especially one so new to the challenging sport. "Marathon running motivates me," says Conceição. "It builds my patience and determination. It teaches me not to give up easily."

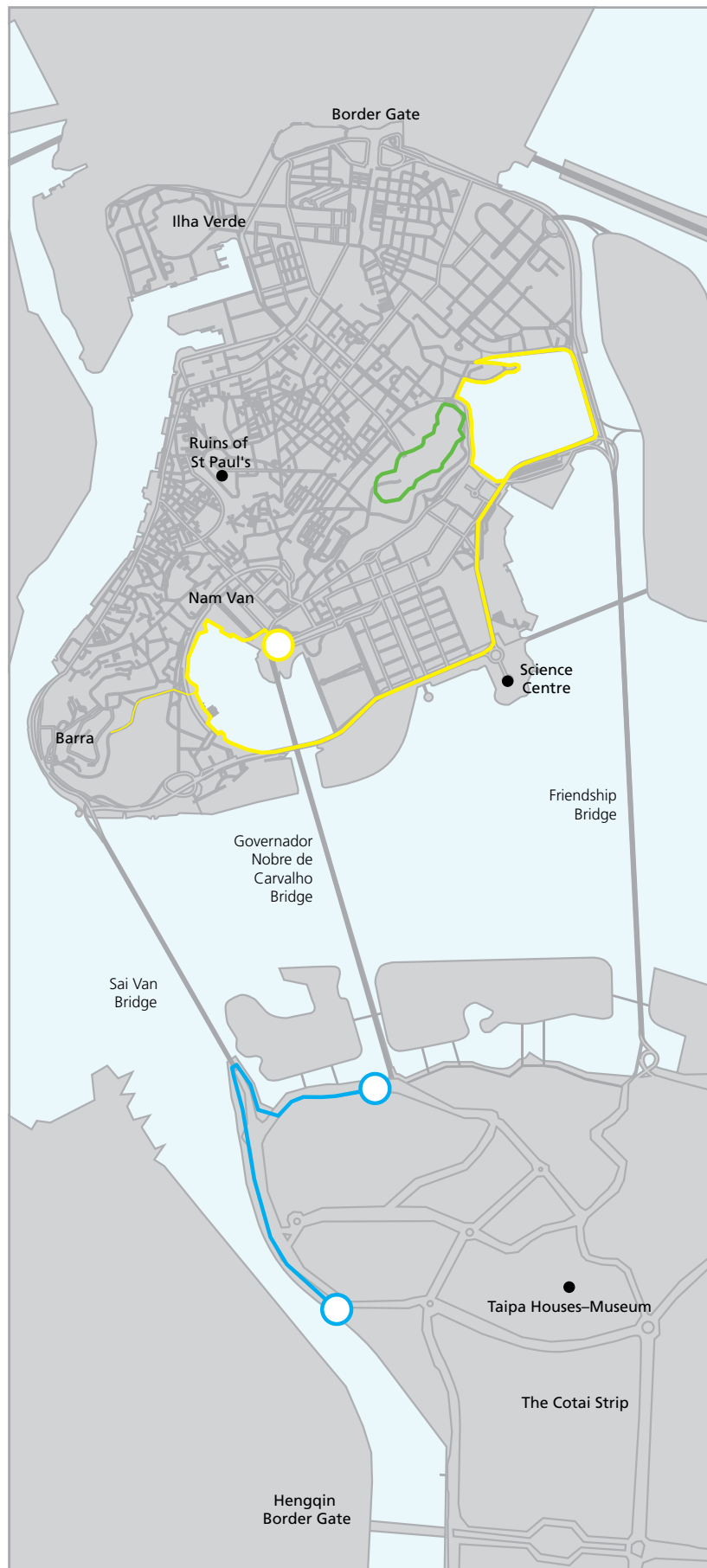
Despite the fact that Macao hasn't had a COVID-19 case for months now, Conceição says he will take precautions during the December marathon – basically, he will keep his distance from all the other runners. He

says that this year's race will be 'special' as it will be the only marathon he has run all year due to the pandemic. "More and more people are practicing running all the time in Macao," he says. "Everyone cares about their body, shape and health. And I think running is the easiest exercise because we can just put on our shoes and go wherever we want."

Making Conceição look like a veteran, Rachel Li has only been running long distances for two years. The PhD student first ran the city's marathon in 2018, opting for the then 'not too difficult' – her words – mini-marathon. Last year, she raised the bar and completed the half-marathon, a feat she is hoping to repeat in December but with, perhaps, a better finishing time. She says: "The most important and happiest thing for me is to run all the way and cross the finish line. That's enough for me!"



Map based on official material created by the Macao government's Sports Bureau



Training days

Three recommended running routes in Macao

1

RUN WITH A VIEW

Taipa Seafront, between Nobre de Carvalho Bridge and the Jockey Club

Catch some awesome views of the Hengqin skyline while running along this totally flat three-kilometre route. Great for novices, this route also boasts a few sports drink vending machines which are perfect for a 'refuel'. Beware of running in the bike lane.

2

A NATURAL MARATHON

Guia Hill

For a hillier run, jog up to Guia Hill and enjoy a circuit that's just under two kilometres in length. Plenty of lush vegetation abounds here and there's hardly any traffic around. Perfect for running laps or if you're doing training intervals.

3

THE FULL COURSE

Sai Van Lake to Reservoir Loop

For those preparing for a half or full marathon, this route is perfect to get plenty of distance under your trainers. Start at Macau Tower and run around Sai Van Lake before heading towards the A-Ma Temple and then around a few avenues before you end up at the 2.5-kilometre Reservoir Loop. This whole route and back to the start is about 15 kilometres. At night, however, watch for both pedestrian and car traffic. Wear reflective gear to be safe.

Li will run with teachers and other PhD colleagues from the City University of Macau. "I'm very happy to see the 2020 Marathon is being held," she says. "I'm very excited." Li took up running to lose weight but in the process she kept exceeding her goals. "I remember, in the beginning, that I spent 30 minutes running two kilometres," she says. "I would get really tired. But, now, two kilometres is a piece of cake for me. Running helps you keep healthy and also gives you time alone to relax and think." Li trains at Taipa Stadium, near to the Olympic Sports Centre Stadium – the place the marathon begins on 6 December. "Macao is a small place but the public facilities, like the Olympic Sports Centre Stadium, are excellent," she says, adding that she often runs at night to avoid the hot, sweaty days. If she's out of energy, she says she walks around Taipa's many hiking trails where she observes that 'more and more people seem to be out running all the time'.

Treading carefully

While long distance running is a sport for any time, anywhere, it is not for anyone, anyhow. Coach Hoi says it's important to keep in mind that in half-marathons the runner can 'appropriately push the pace and intensity threshold', while in full marathons, it should be 'about developing and maintaining enjoyment throughout the process'. As someone who works with beginners at different levels, he says that some people need to acquire appropriate running form and technique while others need to strengthen key muscles such as the core, quads, hamstrings and glutes. "Strength training is extremely important in helping runners build



Coco leong

up solid muscles," he says. "Core muscle training helps to establish a strong core so you get the stability, balance and endurance to run further and more efficiently. For beginners, the key is to progress gradually rather than pushing for an increase in distance or intensity within a short period. When undergoing long distance running, finding and maintaining a steady, consistent pace will help minimise

extreme fatigue and burnouts."

Hoi says that, in preparing for a marathon in December, the runner must undergo the hardest training in September and October, when, due to Macao's steamy climate, the athlete must make sure they are staying completely hydrated. Then, in the few weeks before the 42-kilometre race, muscle fatigue needs to be avoided so the training is less intense. Hoi adds that throughout this period, eating healthy, nutritious meals and avoiding excess, prolonged exposure to intense sunlight is essential. He advises lots of 'stretching, massaging, replenishing fluids and nutrients, and getting plenty of sleep'.

Hoi also says that it's important to listen to your body and allow sufficient time for it to fully rest and recover before participating in training again. "Watch out for signs of injury," he says, "and make sure to get treatment or therapy if you experience any type of pain."



Some members of Macao's Spirit Running Crew will be participating in this year's marathon

Image courtesy of Spirit Running Crew

Preparing for a marathon, he says, actually starts on your plate. During training, he claims, it's important to eat foods such as whole grain pastas, breads, rice and starchy vegetables. Additionally, protein-rich foods such as lean meats, eggs and beans can also be eaten to aid muscle recovery. Junk food should be avoided, he says.

Asked about the benefits of running, Macao physiotherapist Coco Leong quotes UK health promotion consultant, Dr Nick Cavill. "If exercise were a pill," says Dr Cavill, "it would be one of the most cost-effective drugs ever invented." Leong is an athlete and former swimming representative of Macao. She has participated in international, national and local swimming competitions, as well as aquathlon races – where participants run and swim – and track and field events. "Personally," she says, "I am a runner and swimmer. I prefer swimming over running purely because it is pleasant to jump into the pool on a really hot day." Exercising regularly, she says, is proven to prevent major chronic

illnesses such as cardiovascular disease, cancer, type two diabetes and strokes. She says that benefits include 'improving the metabolic rate, boosting the release of feel-good endorphins into the brain, improving sleep quality and reducing chronic pain'.

"Listen to your body and do not overtrain," says Leong. "You know your body more than anyone. Knowing when to rest and when to push through is undoubtedly the most important rule in long distance running training. Pace yourself, start low and gradually progress the intensity and volume of training each week." Leong quotes the '10 per cent rule', which states that the overall running mileage must not increase by more than 10 per cent in a week to allow gradual endurance building.

Leong also reminds athletes to undertake a proper cooling down session after a run. This includes stretching and self-massage, both of which speed up the process of lactic acid removal from the muscles, boosting the body's recovery before the next training session. Failure to cool down properly could

lead to injuries, she cautions. She also reminds runners that staying hydrated is essential but be careful not to over-hydrate to 'avoid the dilution of electrolytes', which can 'lead to dizziness, fatigue and cramping'. Of course, another crucial reminder is to wear appropriate footwear and avoid uneven and slippery surfaces during the run.

British Sikh marathon runner Fauja Singh is believed to be the world's oldest runner to complete a full-length marathon. Nicknamed the 'turbaned tornado', he is 109 years old. It's claimed that he still manages to run 10 to 15 kilometres every day to 'keep his engine going'. This incredible feat, according to Leong, goes to show you are never too old to run a marathon as long as you have regular training. "Your age is not as important as your body condition and fitness level," she says. Whatever your age, background or ability, if you are taking to the track as part of Macao's annual marathon on 6 December, good luck. This writer will see you there. ●

Presented by the **Sports Bureau**



The 'virtual London Marathon' was just a warm-up. Good luck to all participants in the Macao race!

Antonio Sammarfil

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PORTUGUESE-SPEAKING COUNTRIES

In the zone

Cabo Verde is diversifying its economy by setting up three Special Economic Zones – one for maritime, one for IT and one for science – and China could be at the heart of the African country’s major investments. We speak to some of the key figures behind these projects.

Text Paulo Figueiredo

Cabo Verde is one of Africa’s most recent success stories. Due to the Portuguese-speaking country’s booming tourism and services industry, its annual gross domestic product (GDP) – the monetary value of all its goods and services – more than tripled between 2002 and 2018, according to World Bank data. And, up until the recent COVID-19 pandemic that has hit GDPs across the globe, there has been little sign of this archipelago, which lies off the coast of Senegal in northwest Africa, slowing down in its economic success story.

With no oil, gas or other natural resources to hand, Cabo Verde, which is home to almost 550,000 people, has made political stability and good governance its key resource over the past 20 years. This top-down approach coupled with precise planning from the authorities means that today, the nation is up there with some of the top-ranking African countries for both the health and education sectors, according to UN sources. Combined with its ever-growing GDP thanks to its tourism and services industries, Cabo Verde has a bright future ahead of it.

But, of course, this year’s pandemic is no small matter. Cabo Verde’s economy is reliant on tourism for both financial income and employment. So fewer tourists visiting its shores since its first COVID-19 case on 20 March – a foreigner from the UK – means that the economy, for the first time in two decades, is hardly a success story right now. There were around 10,000 active COVID-19 cases as we went to print – with just over 100 deaths since March – and many countries were warning travellers not to fly to the islands which themselves are under certain restrictions like early closing hours for restaurants and bars.

Mindelo, on Cabo Verde's São Vicente Island, is at the heart of the country's new Special Economic Zone for the Maritime Economy



Image courtesy of Cabo Verde's Ministry for Maritime Economy



It is hard to be in the world economy and not to have China as a partner – but it has to be under conditions that are also in Cabo Verde's interest.

– Paulo Veiga

Whenever the pandemic is over, surely Cabo Verde's economy will be on the up again. However, it has outlined one serious challenge that's not unlike Macao's own situation: it needs to broaden its economic base and not just rely on tourism for income. Previous calls for this action have been made and previous efforts have been undertaken but the need for economic diversification is now more urgent than ever. Cue the Special Economic Zones – Chinese-inspired local economic growth models which have been on the cards in Cabo Verde for years but are now on the verge of being rolled out to indeed diversify this beautiful country's economy.

Special treatment

The authorities in Cabo Verde have high hopes for the Special Economic Zones (SEZs). These are areas in a country that are subject to different economic regulations than other regions within the same country. The zones' economic regulations tend to be conducive to – and attract – foreign direct investment, which is basically any investment made by a firm in one country into business interests located in another country. There can be a range of economic advantages for the foreign firm or country, including tax incentives and the chance to pay lower tariffs. SEZs, which first appeared in the late 1950s in industrialised countries, are usually created to facilitate rapid economic growth – including creating jobs, boosting exports, diversifying the economy and building productive capacity – and, in recent years, China has probably been the most successful country for setting up the zones to attract foreign capital. The first four SEZs in China were created in 1979 in Shenzhen, Zhuhai and Shantou in Guangdong province, and in Xiamen in Fujian province.

One Cabo Verde leader who harbours high hopes with the creation of the African country's SEZs – of which there are set to be three in total – is its minister of maritime economy, Paulo Veiga. While his colleagues mostly work in the country's capital city of Praia, he is based in the city of Mindelo on São Vicente Island. During the steamboat era, which started in the 1800s, Mindelo's natural harbour – Porto Grande Bay – was one of West Africa's most important and the city became the country's cultural centre. In fact, many of the archipelago's traditional songs – melancholic 'mornas' and playful 'coladeras' – were first played in Mindelo's often bustling seaside bars. Today, however, the economic importance of the country's second largest city

has been somewhat lost to Praia and also to the major tourist hub of Sal Island. But a new project which will see an 'SEZ for the Maritime Economy' based across São Vicente Island – meaning principally Mindelo and its harbour – aims to restore its past prosperity.

"We know that Cabo Verde is in a strategic position for the maritime economy and sea traffic," says Veiga, who adds that the new SEZ, which focuses on shipping, trading, fishing, shipbuilding and other marine activities, aims to 'integrate the traffic in our region' while the whole island of São Vicente 'becomes a logistics hub for trade with the three continents around us', which are Africa, Europe and South America. Cabo Verde's government approved the general SEZ legislation in March and the next phase, already ongoing, is to create an authority that will run the project. The members of the board will soon be named and tasked with implementing the SEZs plan over three phases in the coming years.

It's already taken much work to get to this point. Veiga says that China has been a key partner in the planning stages of the São Vicente SEZ project because it has created more SEZs than any other country in the world and 'has had more success' in terms of using them for its own industrial and economic growth. During the planning phase for the São Vicente SEZ, a team of around 20 experts from Cabo Verde partnered with a team of Chinese SEZ experts and visited some of the existing SEZ trading hubs in China. These visits helped the Cabo Verde team to develop a masterplan which was ready to go to public consultation in March. But then COVID-19 happened and the plan is yet to be presented to the public.

Once the team has been picked and announced, Veiga foresees the São Vicente SEZ authority going into full speed early next year. One of the first tasks will be to organise an international roadshow for investors and another will be to launch international tenders for infrastructure to be built under public-private partnerships in São Vicente's port area. Projects will include a cruise terminal, a shipyard for building and repairs, a fishing dock and a new industrial zone, as well as associated infrastructure works like roads. Veiga says that if there are major partners 'who want to have a container terminal or a fishing dock', Cabo Verde can grant exploration rights to these companies, helping investors to 'build and explore' the logistics facilities.



Macao at the forefront

Local firm Bringbuys is becoming a key player in Cabo Verde's IT and tech SEZ

Much focus is being placed on Cabo Verde's 'Special Economic Zone for the Maritime Economy' as it's the country's first and so far most developed SEZ on paper. However, two more SEZs are in the pipeline – and the one on Santiago Island, which will be dedicated to IT and communication, has been attracting interest from Macao over the past couple of years. This SEZ could see Cabo Verde turned into an IT and technology hub – which could serve many places in West Africa – and Macao's Bringbuys Web Technology company could be at the forefront of the ambitious project.

In 2018, trade and investment promotion organisation Cabo Verde TradeInvest met with the Bringbuys team in China to discuss the creation of the technology hub which would include a cloud computing centre, an offshore data centre, training institutes and company incubators. Also in 2018 in Lisbon, a deal to create the tech hub was signed by the Macao firm and TradeInvest, which has said that the project involves an investment of between US\$20 million (MOP 160 million) and US\$40 million (MOP 320 million).

Bringbuys is a technology startup founded by Macao entrepreneur Vincent Zhou. It was one of the first projects to be based at the Inno Valley HQ in the Hengqin Free Trade Area for startups from Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao. The company's technology hub project in Cabo Verde is being rolled out over the next few years. Zhou says that Cabo Verde is an 'attractive country for investors', praising the authorities' flexibility and efforts to help develop Bringbuys' business as well as its own companies and SEZs. Zhou says that his company is working hand-in-hand with Cabo Verde's government in both drafting a business plan for its part in creating the tech hub and in lending its expertise to the creation of the IT SEZ. He says he sees 'a high possibility for major IT investments to happen in Cabo Verde' because of its government's 'efforts and support'. He also says that it's now 'necessary to attract other major IT companies' to invest in this SEZ in Cabo Verde.

The model city

Shenzhen’s rise from fishing village to ‘model’ Special Economic Zone has been praised by China’s President

On the subject of SEZs, one city not too far from the shores of Macao was praised by the Chinese President on 14 October. Xi Jinping travelled to Shenzhen to mark the 40th anniversary of the establishment of the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone, which has been hailed as a model for development and boosting international trade.

According to the President, Shenzhen’s GDP was RMB 270 million when its SEZ was created in 1980. At an annual growth rate of 20.7 per cent, it reached RMB 2.7 trillion (US\$400 billion) last year. The SEZ’s total imports and exports climbed from RMB 119 million in 1980 to RMB 2.85 trillion (US\$431.5 billion) last year, an average annual growth rate of 26.1 percent. Shenzhen is home to leading tech companies such as telecoms giant Huawei and technology conglomerate Tencent.

Pointing to the valuable experience from the development of SEZs in China, including Shenzhen, Xi highlighted several key success factors, including making the rule of law an important guarantee through strict law enforcement, judicial impartiality and universal law-abiding. The Chinese President hailed Shenzhen as an ‘engine’ for the development of the GBA.



Veiga notes that investors from Europe and Asia have already shown interest in projects within the new SEZ. He says that some Chinese companies have ‘expressed interest and visited the site’. The government used some international business forums last year – in Europe, the US and Cabo Verde – to increase awareness about the São Vicente project. Veiga says at these forums there was ‘a lot of interest and companies wanting to be part’ of the SEZ when it officially launches following public consultation. Of course, he recognises ‘the uncertainties related to the pandemic’ will now make planning more difficult but he nevertheless expects the project to be ‘a success’ as São Vicente offers a unique combination of strategic location and proximity to major international maritime routes in a politically stable area. “This SEZ did not happen by chance,” he says. “It happened because major players across the world expressed an interest to invest here and transform the country in a logistics hub.”

Catching China’s eye

The maritime SEZ project has been on the cards for a few years. It was first presented to the Chinese government by Cabo Verde Prime Minister José Ulisses de Pina Correia e Silva during Forum Macao’s 2016 Ministerial Conference. The following year, during a two-day visit to São Vicente, Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi declared his country’s willingness to co-operate in the development of SEZs. According to a China Ministry for Foreign Affairs transcript from Wang Yi’s 2017 talks in Cabo Verde, his counterpart Luís Filipe Tavares said, at the time, that his country ‘especially hopes’

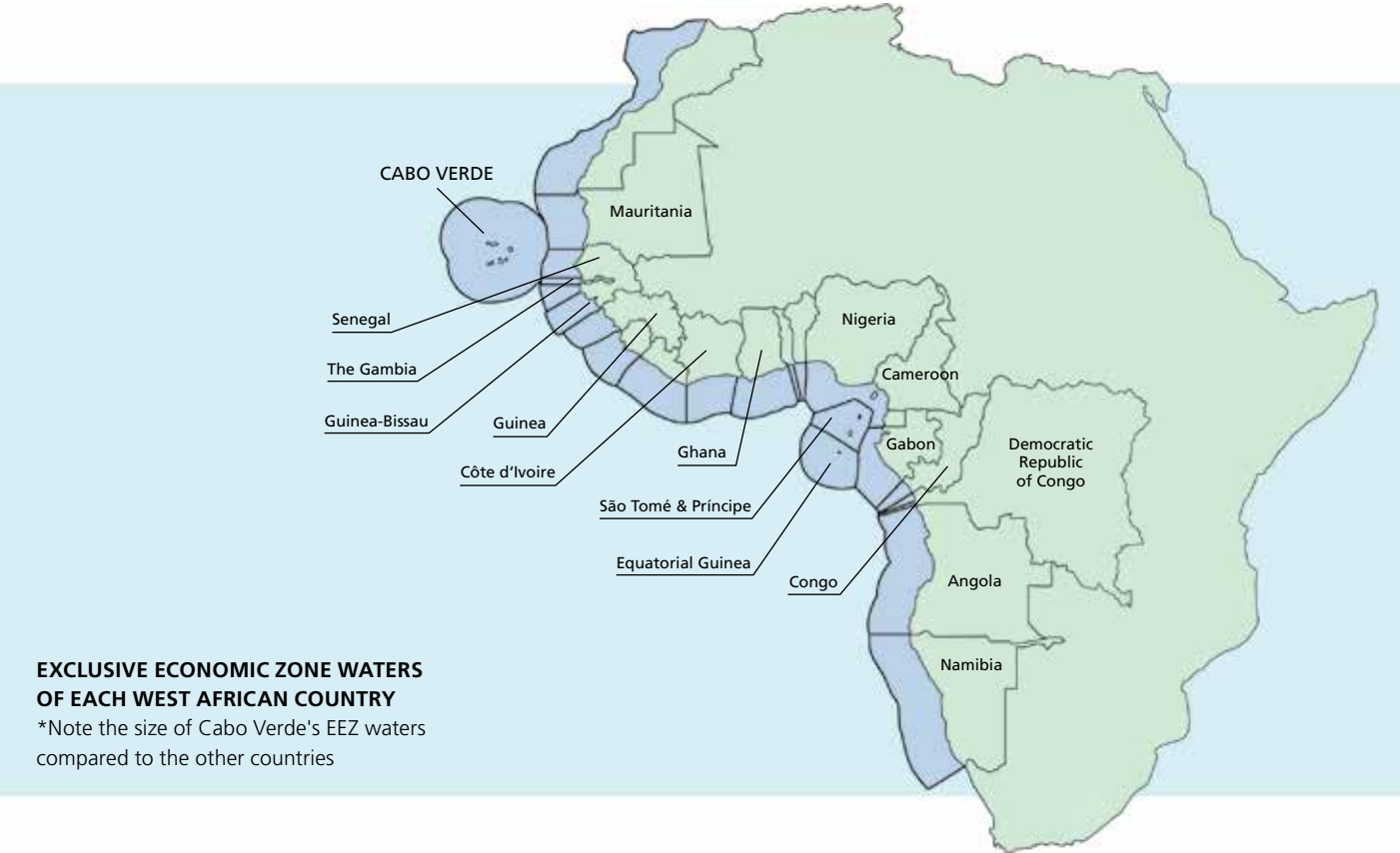
to become China’s ‘strategic co-operative partner’ when it comes to its maritime economy. He said this was a priority for his government and also highlighted a desire to integrate the São Vicente SEZ into China’s Belt and Road Initiative, a Beijing plan to boost its role in international trade routes by financing infrastructure investments in countries across the world. Wang Yi said that Cabo Verde ‘is a natural extension of the Belt and Road Initiative, especially the Maritime Silk Road’ and welcomed the country’s willingness to actively participate in the initiative.

Veiga is confident that Chinese investors will come to São Vicente and that the island could receive, over time, large-scale infrastructure investments connected with the Belt and Road Initiative. “We think the conditions are in place for Chinese companies to invest in the SEZ,” he says. “It is hard to be in the world economy and not to have China as a partner – but it has to be under conditions that are also in Cabo Verde’s interest.”

There’s no doubt about it: the global tourism industry has been hit hard this year. And its recovery is intimately dependent on how the pandemic evolves over the coming days, weeks, months and even years. With this in mind,

Veiga says that SEZs are ‘more important and urgent’ than ever. “Our economy is very dependent on tourism,” he says, “and the forecast for this sector is that it will remain constrained over the next two to three years.” He underlines that Cabo Verde’s government ‘has made a bet on the maritime economy’ in order to diversify. “Diversification is always a cultural change,” he says, “and we have to do it as soon as possible and have an economy which is more resilient to external impacts and changes that are taking place in the world.”

While the São Vicente SEZ will be the first and most important of its kind, it’s not the only one that’s planned in Cabo Verde. The SEZ legislation that was approved in March foresees the creation of two others: one on Cabo Verde’s largest island, Santiago, which will be dedicated to information and communication technologies, and another on the island of Fogo. This SEZ will be dedicated to science – specifically volcano research, which is handy as there’s an active volcano in the middle of Fogo. Both SEZs are set to be exciting projects that should start over the next couple of years but the São Vicente initiative is providing the trailblazing role before these other two can learn from it and be created more swiftly and efficiently.





Mindelo was once Cabo Verde's cultural centre.
It could climb to these heights once again in the future

Tapping into the GBA

Cabo Verde might be small in size but it's always been big on ambition. And, fortunately, it's surrounded by plenty of sea. So it's only logical that much of the country's development strategy concerns the oceans. Nuno Furtado, the country's permanent representative to Forum Macao – officially the Forum for Economic and Trade Co-operation between China and the Portuguese-speaking Countries – underlines the size of Cabo Verde's 'Exclusive Economic Zone' (EEZ), which is the 'sea zone' around a country that carries special rights for that country regarding the exploration and use of marine resources. Furtado says that Cabo Verde's EEZ is around 800,000 square kilometres in size, which is the biggest EEZ in West Africa.

Furtado says that Cabo Verde's SEZs are 'without doubt strategic' and 'for the development of the country'. He says that the country's 'strategic location' in the Atlantic Ocean is a 'determining factor' for potential investors. He adds that the maritime activities that are earmarked for the São Vicente zone will be 'attractive to Chinese companies that have a high level of experience of SEZs'. He also confirms that 'there is interest' already in the maritime SEZ from specific companies, although he doesn't reveal any further details.

Cabo Verde's objectives with its SEZs aren't a million

miles away from China's objectives with the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) project. The GBA, which consists of nine Chinese cities alongside Macao and Hong Kong, aims to deepen co-operation between the 11 locations, facilitate in-depth integration across the region and promote co-ordinated regional economic development, resulting in an international first-class bay area that's ideal for living, working and visiting. Both the GBA project and Cabo Verde's SEZs are well underway. Furtado says that there are SEZs in the GBA that could interlink with the São Vicente project 'with a view to creating an international logistics and maritime platform'. He says the Cabo Verde authorities 'will identify large companies' in the GBA and then aim to 'promote investment opportunities' to them.

"China is a strategic partner for us," concludes Furtado, adding that by 'taking advantage of the Macao platform in its relationship between China and the Portuguese-speaking countries', Cabo Verde's Macao Forum delegation will be in a good position to meet and potentially take part in attracting Chinese investors to the country's SEZs. To this end, expect much more dialogue over the coming months between the African country and China in relation to the three proposed SEZs. Pandemic or not, Cabo Verde is on the road to economic diversification and further growth and China could be there every step of the way along this journey. ●



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ZOOM

Paintings from PSCs

Text **Rafelle Marie Allego**

Artwork reproductions
courtesy of the Macau Military Club

Art enthusiasts from across Macao descended on the city's Military Club between the end of September and 2 November to catch the fifth annual 'Meeting Bridges' exhibition in the club's Comendador Ho Yin Gallery. In case you missed it, we've chosen our favourite paintings from the exhibition in this special edition of Zoom. The exhibition featured the works of artists from Macao and the eight Portuguese-speaking countries: Angola, Brazil, Cabo Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Portugal, São Tomé and Príncipe and Timor-Leste. A total of 27 contemporary pieces were on display, each using different techniques and expressions to represent the cultures, histories and lives of the Lusophone world.



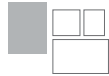
MOZAMBIQUE
SUZY BILA
'A Talk with God' (2020);
canvas with acrylic
(100 cm x 100 cm)

SÃO TOMÉ AND PRÍNCIPE
EVA TOMÉ
'Kianga (Sunlight)' (2019);
canvas with acrylic
(100 cm x 100 cm)

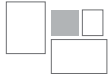
MACAO
VICTOR HUGO MARREIROS
'The Travels of Mendes Pinto' (2020);
canvas with mixed media and digital art
(120 cm x 120 cm)



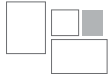
CABO VERDE
TUTU SOUSA
'Celebration' (2017);
canvas with acrylic
(100 cm x 70 cm)



ANGOLA
CRISTIANO MANGOVO
'Stoppage 3' (2020);
canvas with acrylic
(70 cm x 70 cm)



PORTUGAL
FERNANDO DIREITO
'Untitled' (2000);
canvas with acrylic
(81 cm x 65 cm)



BRAZIL
JAYR PENY
'Threesome Meeting' (2020);
canvas with acrylic
(30 cm x 39 cm)





CONGRATULATIONS ON THE 21ST ANNIVERSARY OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF MACAU SAR

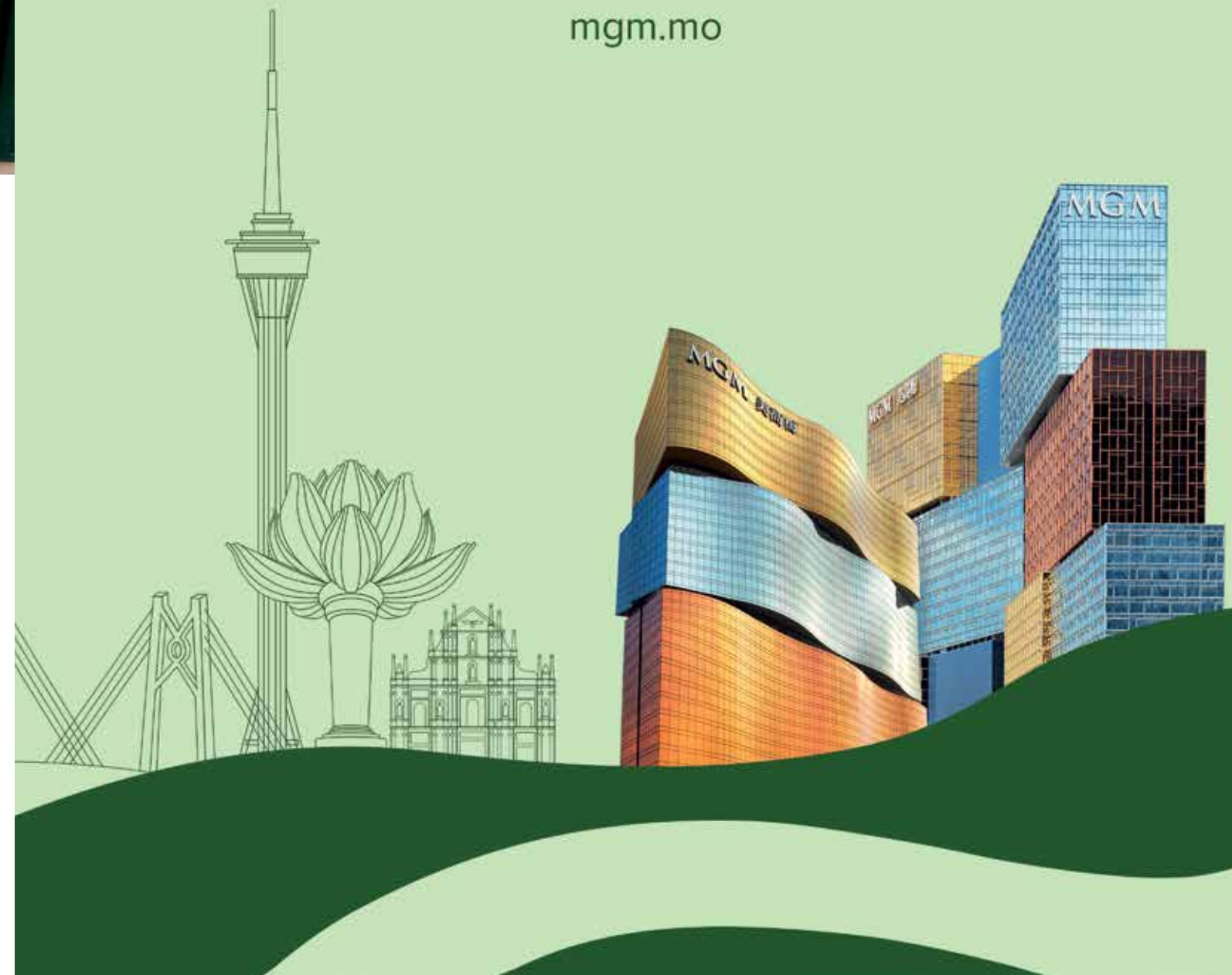
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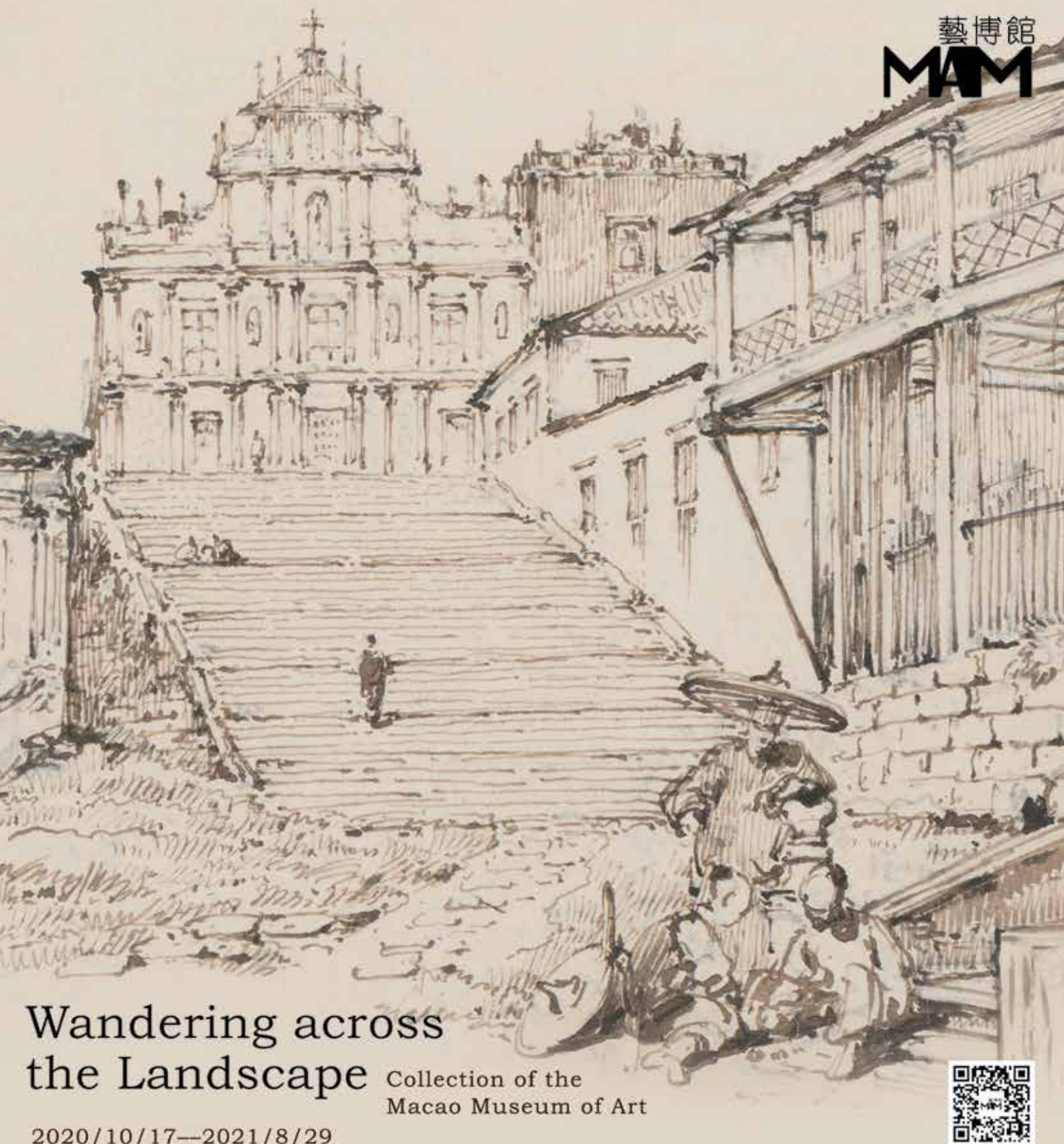


GUINEA-BISSAU
SIDNEY CERQUEIRA
'My World' (2020);
canvas with acrylic
(140 cm x 100 cm)



TIMOR-LESTE
DULCE MARTINS
'Alchemies' (2012);
canvas with oil
(80 cm x 120 cm)





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