

# Macao 澳門

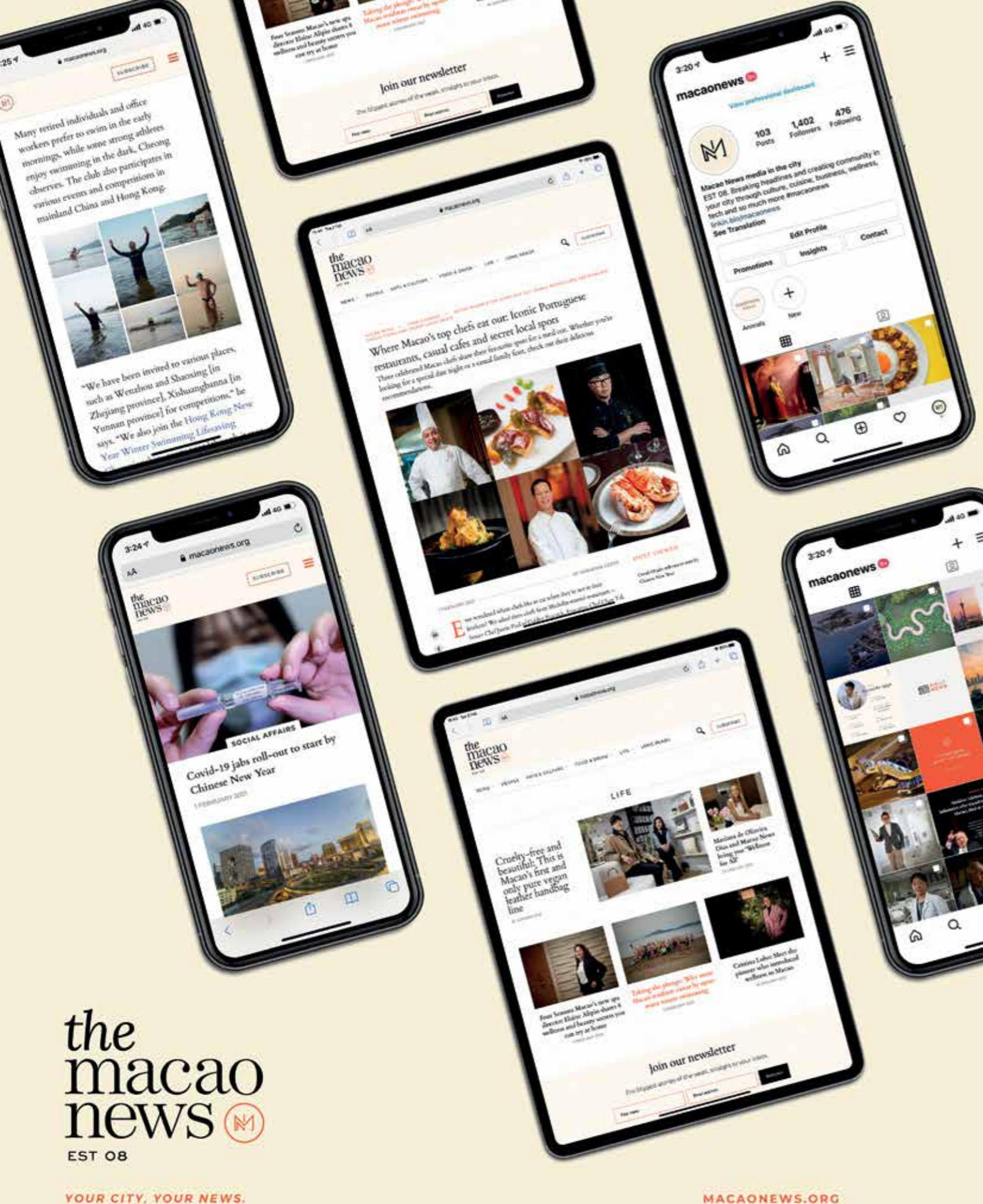
## Going for gold

**Macao's young sports stars prepare for future victories**

**Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng meets officials in the GBA on a four-day tour**

**Two fascinating history exhibitions mesmerise thousands of people**





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### We are the champions

Meet six of the brightest young sports stars to emerge from Macao over the past few years. Each of this sextet has already notched up impressive victories in their chosen sports – but there could be much more to come from them over the coming years. **p.20**



### Whistlestop tour

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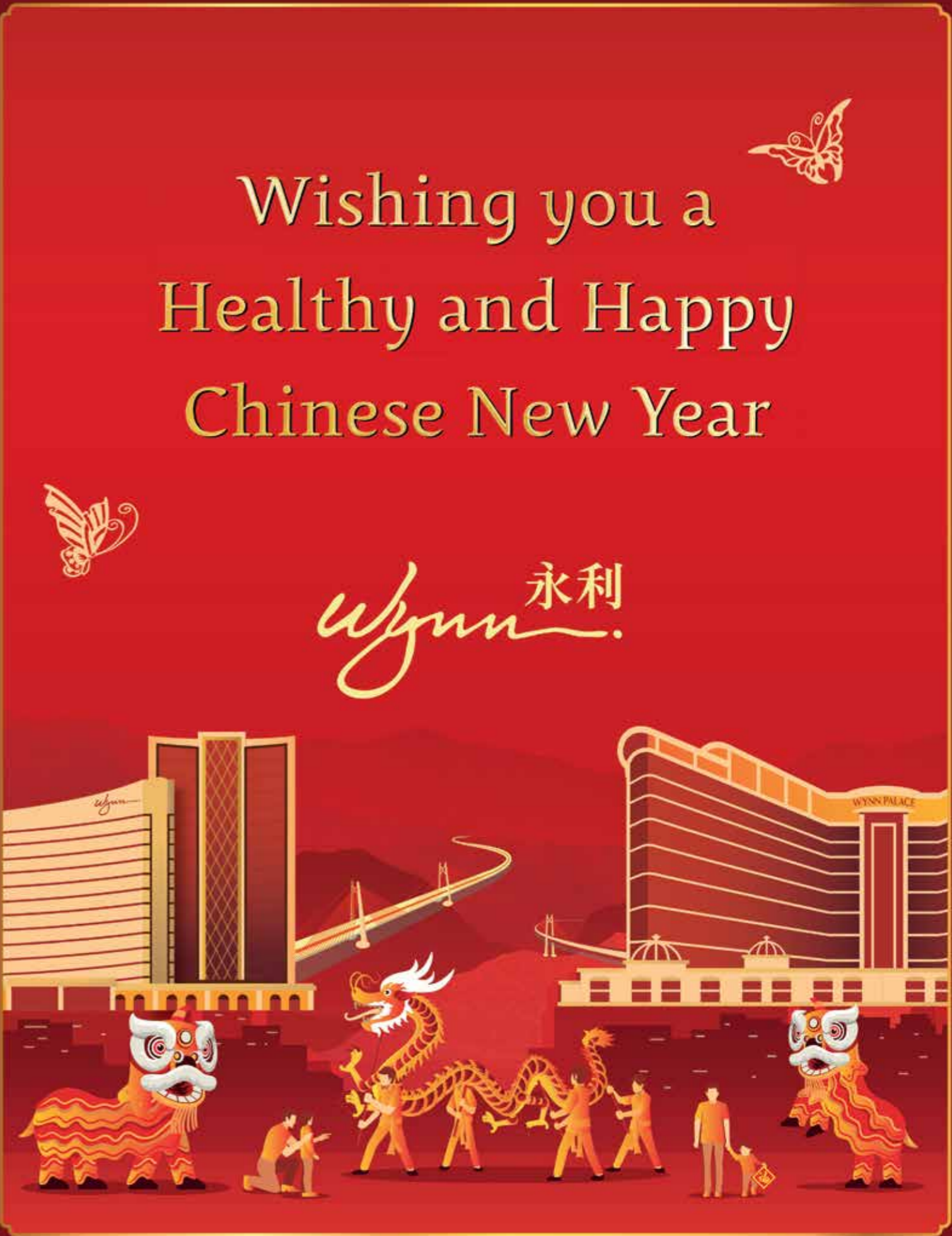
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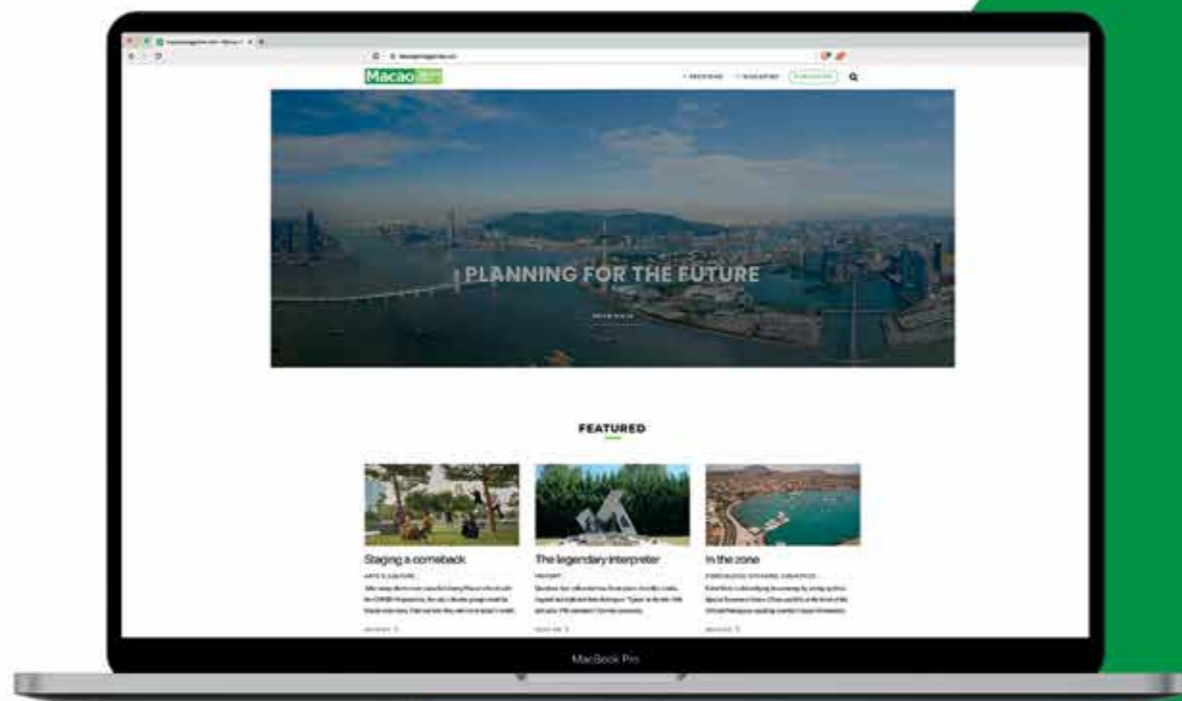
**Cover image** by António Sanmarful



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## From the Editor

### A warm welcome to a new year

As we enter 2021, we hope this year will be better than the last. But rather than focusing on the pandemic, we would like to highlight all the positives in Macao right now – and that includes the incredible talents of its citizens, especially in the realm of sports. In this first issue of the year, we feature six young sports stars who each excel in their chosen disciplines and each come from different backgrounds. They are all bound for glory.

As we say, we are focusing on the positives right now – just like Macao’s Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng, who started the year by visiting the cities of the Greater Bay Area during a four-day tour. Macao is looking to the GBA to accelerate its own development and diversification, and this visit was aimed at giving the Chief Executive ideas on how his city can strengthen economic co-operation and accelerate the development and industrial diversification of Macao. This responds to the needs of the territory to become a zone of entertainment and tourism, as well as a platform between China and the Portuguese-speaking countries. Ho Iat Seng also discussed the pandemic with city leaders.

The Chief Executive, who has been praising the city’s population and services for the way they have behaved in the face

of the pandemic and managed to keep us free from COVID-19 for so long, this year took advantage of Macao’s traditional awards ceremony to demonstrate the government’s thanks to all those who have contributed to security and health control both in the city and abroad. We cover the ceremony in a special piece dedicated to everyone who has shown outstanding bravery in the face of adversity over the past 12 months.

Our first edition of 2021 also highlights two fascinating exhibitions in Macao right now: ‘Stately Demeanour: Costumes of Qing Emperors and Empresses from the Collection of the Palace Museum’ at the Macao Museum of Art and the ‘Memory of the Past’ old postcard exhibition at the Macao Museum. We hear that in the first three weeks of ‘Stately Demeanour’ alone, more than 10,000 locals came through the doors to admire the clothes and accessories from years gone by that adorn the many display cases. Indeed, art and culture is given great prominence in this first edition of the year. As we enter a new 12 months, we must focus on the positives. And, in Macao, when it comes to art, culture, history, events and future economic developments, there’s a wealth of positives to behold.

**Gonçalo César de Sá**  
Editor-in-Chief



POLITICS

# Making greater strides

**Macao's Chief Executive talks about co-operation, bilateral development and the COVID-19 pandemic during his four-day trip to the Greater Bay Area.**

Text Gonçalo César de Sá Photos Government Information Bureau

Co-operation and bilateral development between Macao and cities in the neighbouring Greater Bay Area (GBA) were discussed at length by Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng during a whistlestop tour of the region earlier this month. Ho led a delegation of high-ranking government officials on a four-day working visit to eight GBA cities between 8 and 11 January. He said that the tour sought to define a path for Macao to contribute further to the GBA's development.

Ho met with Li Xi, the Guangdong Provincial Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Secretary, as well as other senior GBA officials, over the four days. Li said during a meeting with the Chief Executive on 9 January at Guangzhou's Zhudao Hotel that he was looking forward to extending Guangdong-Macao co-operation and that further efforts should be made to optimise existing mechanisms and connections between both cities, as well as to advance the development

of the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Co-operation Zone in Hengqin, a free economic zone which will have international standards for market operations, investment and trade rules, and financing systems.

Li also said during the meeting that further efforts should also be made to promote further exchanges among young people in Macao and the GBA, to strengthen joint COVID-19 prevention and control work between the two locations and to introduce a greater number of

policies and measures that benefit people who move between the other cities in the GBA and Macao either to work or to live. Furthermore, he underlined that President Xi Jinping has issued multiple important directives concerning Hengqin's development and Macao-Zhuhai ties to which Ho pointed out that a basic framework for the initiative was ready. Li also said that Guangdong will spare no effort to support Ho's ongoing efforts, based on the 'One Country, Two Systems' principle, to achieve the adequate diversification of Macao's economy and advance the development of the GBA.

The pandemic was also one of the important topics during Ho's tour. During a meeting with Guangdong officials in Guangzhou on 10 January, the Chief Executive expressed his gratitude to the province for supporting Macao in the fight against COVID-19. "Guangdong not only provided Macao with strong assistance in fighting the disease and keeping the food supply stable during the pandemic," he said, "but also has offered enormous support in terms of the resumption – since July – of the flow of people from Guangdong to be able to travel to Macao under the facilitated individual travel scheme." Guangdong has also helped people from Macao travel quarantine-free to the mainland, he added.

"Macao is a safe city in terms of risk from COVID-19," Ho pointed out in the meeting and was adamant that the Macao government would not relax its epidemic-control efforts, despite the success of its measures so far. He also said that the Macao government would further reinforce its efforts to achieve economic recovery and diversification, stepping up public investment in infrastructure to protect city residents' employment prospects.

“

***Guangdong has provided Macao with strong assistance in fighting COVID-19 and keeping the food supply stable during the pandemic.***

– Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng

The GBA covers both the Macao and Hong Kong Special Administrative Regions, as well as nine cities across the Pearl River

Delta, namely Guangzhou, Huizhou, Dongguan, Shenzhen, Jiangmen, Zhuhai, Zhongshan, Foshan and Zhaoqing. It is around 56,000 square kilometres in size – which is about three times the size of the San Francisco Bay Area in the US – and has a combined population of more than 72 million people together with a GDP of more than US\$1.679 billion (MOP 13.41 billion). In terms of area, the biggest cities in the GBA are Zhaoqing, Huizhou, Jiangmen and Guangzhou – and it was in the latter that Ho's delegation visited a pharmaceutical firm during his trip. Macao is looking to diversify its economy and one of its focuses is its Traditional Chinese Medicine industry, so this could be seen as a key fact-finding visit to the largest single herb production company in southern China.

Turn the page for a look at the cities Ho visited during his tour. ►



Ho Iat Seng visits a pharmaceutical company in Guangzhou alongside the Vice Governor of Guangdong, Zhang Xin, and the Mayor of Guangzhou, Wen Guohui; (opposite page) the Chief Executive, along with other officials, meets with the Secretary of the CPC Guangdong Provincial Committee, Li Xi, in Guangzhou

# Working visit to the GBA

Chief Executive Ho lat Seng visited eight cities in the Greater Bay Area during his four-day tour. Here's seven of the locations he travelled to and what topics he discussed with city leaders in each of them.



## ZHAOQING

- Water supply to Macao
- Agriculture
- Traditional Chinese Medicine
- Cultural affairs, tourism and education
- Financial services

Ho lat Seng meets with the Secretary of the CPC Zhaoqing Municipal Committee and the Chairman of the Standing Committee of the Zhaoqing Municipal People's Congress, Mr Fan Zhongjie, in Zhaoqing; (bottom image) Ho visits a local high-tech company in Zhaoqing.



## FOSHAN

- Health
- Tourism and culture
- Gastronomy
- Science and technology
- Traditional Chinese Medicine

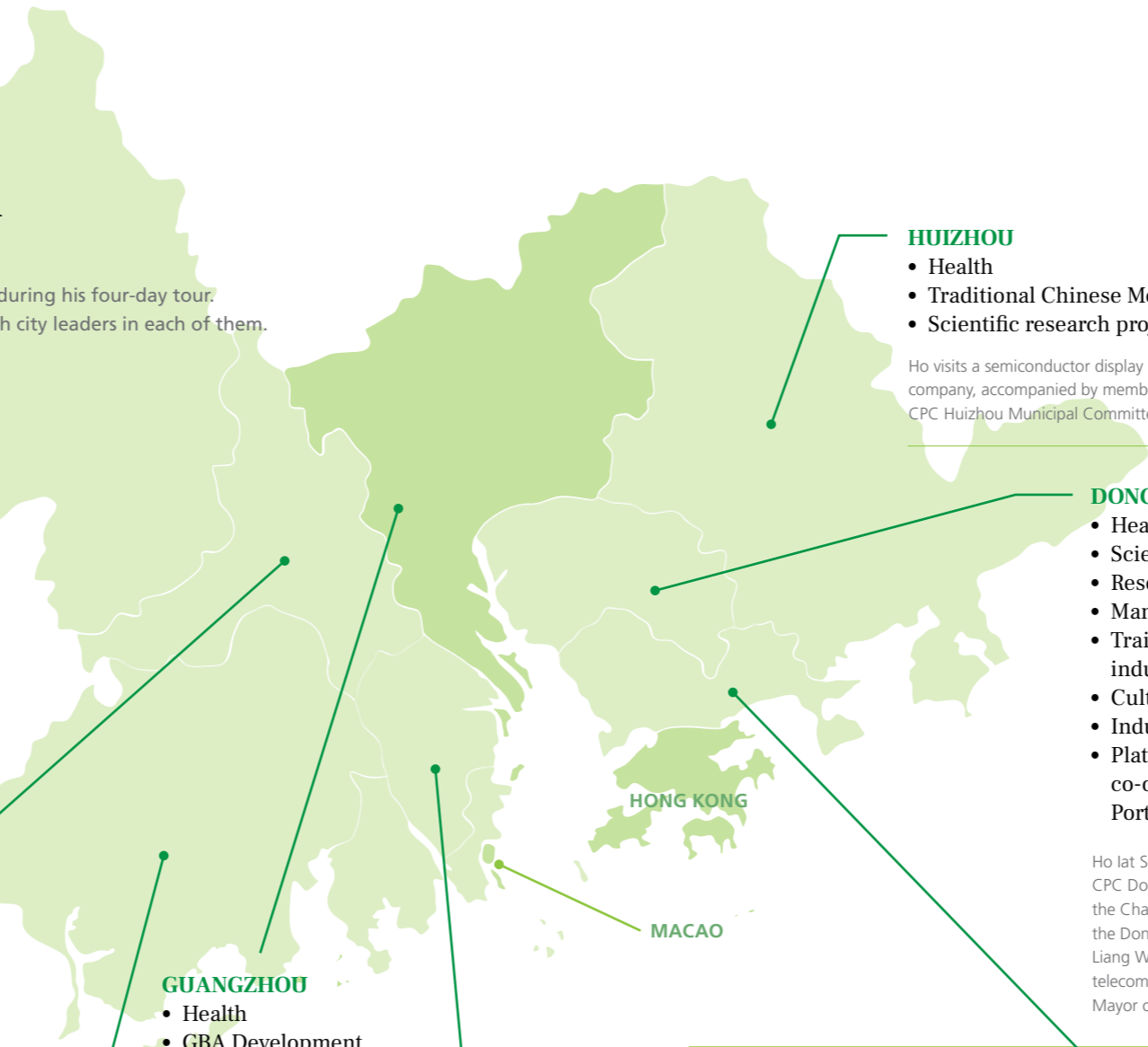
Ho lat Seng meets with Deputy Secretary of the CPC Foshan Municipal Committee and the Secretary of the CPC Shunde District Committee, Guo Wenhai, in Foshan; (bottom image) Ho visits a pharmaceutical company in Foshan.



## JIANGMEN

- Healthcare industry
- Financial services
- Information technology
- Youth entrepreneurship
- Transport networks
- Tourism, cultural and creative industries
- Medical services
- Education
- Services for the elderly

Ho lat Seng meets with the Secretary of the CPC Jiangmen Municipal Committee and the Chairman of the Standing Committee of the Jiangmen Municipal People's Congress, Mr Lin Yingwu; (bottom image) Ho visits a well-known manufacturer in a large-scale rail transport company.



## HUIZHOU

- Health
- Traditional Chinese Medicine
- Scientific research projects

Ho visits a semiconductor display production base of a technology company, accompanied by member of the Standing Committee of CPC Huizhou Municipal Committee Wang Kaizhou in Huizhou.



## DONGGUAN

- Health
- Scientific technology development
- Research
- Manufacturing and production
- Training for service and hotel industries
- Cultural affairs and economy
- Industrial sector
- Platform for economic co-operation with the Portuguese-speaking countries

Ho lat Seng meets with the Secretary of the CPC Dongguan Municipal Committee and the Chairman of the Standing Committee of the Dongguan Municipal People's Congress, Liang Weidong; (bottom image) Ho visits a telecommunication company accompanied by Mayor of Dongguan Xiao Yafei in Dongguan.



## ZHONGSHAN

- Health
- Cultural
- Industrial development
- Science and technology
- Cultural affairs, tourism and education
- Biopharmaceutical industry



Ho lat Seng meets with the Secretary of the CPC Zhongshan Municipal Committee and the Chairman of the Standing Committee of the Zhongshan Municipal People's Congress, Mr Lai Zehua; (right-hand image) Ho visits a pharmaceutical company while in Zhongshan

## SHENZHEN

- Health
- Tourism, education and creative industries
- Scientific research
- University laboratories exchanges
- Platform for the economic relations with the Portuguese-speaking countries



Ho lat Seng cordially shakes hands with Deputy Secretary of the CPC Guangdong Provincial Committee and the Secretary of the CPC Shenzhen Municipal Committee, Wang Weizhong; (right-hand image) Ho visits an information and communications technology company accompanied by Vice Mayor of Shenzhen Ai Xuefeng in Shenzhen

POLITICS

# Outstanding bravery

People, teams and organisations in Macao who have worked immensely hard and shown incredible courage during the COVID-19 pandemic are given special awards by the Chief Executive and his government.

Text Matt Fleming Photos Government Information Bureau



Chui Sai On receiving the Decoration of Honour – Grand Lotus award from Ho Iat Seng

In the final days of 2019, the first case of COVID-19 was recorded in China. A few weeks later, Macao experienced its initial brush with the coronavirus. The city's first case was confirmed on 22 January and, from that moment, Macao was part of what became a global pandemic – a pandemic that's still raging across the world right now. It's shocking for many people to think that the first day of COVID-19 in the city was a whole year ago.

But Macao – thanks in no small part to its quick-acting government

– has not suffered the losses that so many countries and territories across the world have done over the past 12 months. In fact, as we went to print, there had only been 47 COVID-19 cases recorded in the city – 45 of them imported from outside the SAR, according to the Health Bureau (SSM) – with not one person dying as a result of catching the virus.

Measures taken by the government since the outbreak include temperature screenings at border checkpoints and entrances

to all public facilities, quarantines for incoming travellers and even border closures at times, including the transport links with Hong Kong. Then there was the cancelling of numerous events last year, the closure of parks and public leisure areas, temporary school and university closures and the strict need for the wearing of facemasks in public alongside the presentation of health declaration forms on entry to public buildings that are still in use today. And the government has also done its best to minimise



Zhong Nanshan receiving the Decoration of Honour – Grand Lotus award from Ho Iat Seng

the economic impacts to the city thanks to all sorts of measures that help both residents and businesses financially. Food and essentials have continued to come in and, if anything, the city’s population has pulled together like never before.

It’s this response by both the government and people of Macao that was at the heart of the Chief Executive’s New Year’s Message on 31 December. In the address, he predicted that the city ‘will certainly win the great battle’ against the pandemic thanks to the ‘constant

strengthening of the public health capacity’ and increased vaccine availability in the market. Ho, who has been Chief Executive since 20 December 2019 – just over a month before COVID-19 cases were recorded in the city – also thanked Macao’s healthcare workers and members of the public security forces in the message, as well as expressing gratitude to all of those people who have been on the frontline in the battle against COVID-19.

Ho underlined during his New Year’s Message that in its

ongoing fight against the virus, the local government has always given priority to residents’ lives and health. He also thanked the central government and ‘fraternal’ provinces and regions for their strong support, as well as underlining the solidarity and co-operation among the city’s population in tackling COVID-19. And he stressed that thanks to its arduous efforts, Macao has achieved ‘positive results’ in fighting the virus. He pointed out that in spite of the pandemic, Macao’s socio-



Medal of Merit – Professions  
Health Bureau, represented by Chan Weng Wa



Medal of Merit – Philanthropy  
Lei Chin Ion



Medal for Community Service  
Lo Iek Long



Medal for Community Service  
Lam Chong



Medal for Community Service  
Leong Iek Hou

economic development has been able to remain stable and the population’s quality of life has made further progress.

So, off the back of Ho’s special message, it’s worth celebrating all of those individuals, organisations and groups who have done incredible work in the drive to keep Macao safe and – for want of a better word – normal over the past year. Of course, everyone has played their part and it’s impossible to single out hundreds of thousands of people – but the government has honoured

some of those individuals and groups who have made the most outstanding contributions at its annual awards ceremony on 22 January at the Macao Cultural Centre. The Chief Executive gave out Decorations of Honour, Medals of Merit, Medals of Distinguished Service and Honorary Titles as the city’s leading figure has done every year since 2001, following recommendations from the Committee of Nomination of Medals and Honorary Titles.

The awards represent exceptional contributions to

Macao’s society during 2020 – and a total of 34 honours were handed out during the ceremony after the honourees were announced on 19 December. In relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, the top award – Decoration of Honour, the Grand Lotus – went to Zhong Nanshan, a leading respiratory disease expert and China’s public face in the fight against the novel coronavirus. He visited Macao last summer to share the mainland’s COVID-19 prevention and control experience and treatments with



**Medal for Bravery**  
Centre for Disease Control and Prevention of the Health Bureau, represented by Lei Pui I



**Medal for Bravery**  
Department of Respiratory Medicine of Conde S Januário Hospital of the Health Bureau, represented by Cheong Tak Hong



**Medal for Bravery**  
Tourism Crisis Management Office, represented by José Daniel Caldeira David



**Medal for Bravery**  
Checkpoint Surveillance Department of the Customs Service of the Macao Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China, represented by Ian Chan U



**Medal for Bravery**  
Infectious Disease Response Ambulance Team of the Fire Services Bureau, represented by Cheong Hou In



**Medal for Bravery**  
Immigration Department of the Public Security Police Force, represented by Ngai Soi Pan



**Medal for Bravery**  
Intelligence and Support Department of the Judiciary Police, represented by Sam Kam Weng



**Medal for Dedication**  
Department of Environmental Hygiene and Licensing of the Municipal Affairs Bureau, represented by Fong Vai Seng



**Medal for Dedication**  
Department of Food Safety of the Municipal Affairs Bureau, represented by Cheong Kuai Tat

the city's medical professionals. He was born in Nanjing in 1936 and is a pulmonologist who earned international fame for managing the SARS outbreak in 2003, leading to him being labelled the 'SARS hero'. Zhong, who was president of the Chinese Medical Association between 2005 and 2010 and is currently the editor-in-chief of the 'Journal of Thoracic Disease', was also awarded the Order of the Republic, China's highest order of honour, in September for his

'outstanding contribution to fighting the COVID-19 epidemic'. Recognising the immense work and bravery that healthcare professionals have gone through this year, the Chief Executive awarded the Macao Health Bureau with the Medal of Merit – Professions and the director of the same bureau, Lei Chin Ion, with the Medal of Merit – Philanthropy. And under the Medal for Distinguished Service – Medal for Community Service, clinical director of the public Conde

S Januário Hospital Centre Lo Iek Long, director of the Health Bureau's Centre for Disease Prevention and Control Lam Chong and co-ordinator of the Control of Communicable Diseases and Surveillance of Diseases Department Leong Iek Hou were honoured for their outstanding performances in their duties at the city's Novel Coronavirus Response and Co-ordination Centre. The Medal of Bravery for distinguished services was awarded to the Centre for Disease Control and

Prevention of the Health Bureau, the Department of Respiratory Medicine of Conde S Januário Hospital of the Health Bureau, the Tourism Crisis Management Office, the Checkpoint Surveillance Department of the Customs Service of Macao, the Infectious Disease Response Ambulance Team of the Fire Services Bureau, the Immigration Department of the Public Security Police Force and the Intelligence and Support Department of the Judiciary

Police. Honorific Titles – Merit were also given to the team sent to Africa for anti-pandemic support work, the team that assisted the return of Macao residents stranded in the Hubei Province via a chartered flight and the team that helped ensure the return of Macao residents stranded on cruise ship Diamond Princess in Japan. All in all, after a tough 2020, these honours represent the entire city's successful fight against COVID-19. ●

## The roll of honour

Other deserving groups and individuals were given awards at the ceremony. Zhong Nanshan wasn't the only recipient of the Decoration of Honour, the Grand Lotus, as this was also received by Macao's former Chief Executive Chui Sai On. The 64-year-old led the Macao government for 10 years from December 2009. Before he was Chief Executive, he was Macao's Secretary of Social Affairs and Culture during the first decade of the establishment of the SAR, between 1999 and 2009.

Also unrelated to the pandemic, former Secretary for Economy and Finance Leong Vai Tac, former Secretary for Public Works and Transport Lau Si Io, former Commissioner-General of the Unitary Police Service and ex-commander of Joint Civil Protection Operations Ma Io Kun, and the Chinese Educators' Association of Macao were all awarded the Golden Lotus Decoration of Honour, which is the second highest honour in Macao. Retired Court of Final Appeal's Portuguese judge Viriato Manuel Pinheiro de Lima and the Bank of China's Macau branch received the Silver Lotus Decoration of Honour, the city's third most important honour.



# Sister of devotion

**Tributes have rolled in since the death of Sister Juliana Devoy last month. Macao has said goodbye to a missionary who ‘led a life of fighting for others’ – principally, fellow women.**

Text **Leonor Machado** Photos **Cheong Kam Ka**

A kind person but most importantly a fighter.” This is how Macao legislator, writer and scholar Agnes Lam describes Macao Sister Mary Juliana Suzanne Devoy, who died aged 83 last month and who will be missed by many in the city. Better known as Juliana Devoy, she was a devoted woman who dedicated her life to helping others. The missionary was known for her incredible work in the realm of women’s rights in Macao, as well as for her aid work for victims of domestic violence. For around 30 years, she headed the Good Shepherd Centre in the city, a Catholic refuge that’s dedicated to the welfare of women and girls, ‘especially those marginalised by society’.

Devoy was born in the US state of Nebraska on 7 February 1937.

The second of seven siblings, she graduated as a missionary novitiate of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd in Los Angeles in 1954 and made her final vows in Angers, France, in 1960. Serving in China was always one of her dreams and she did exactly that, arriving in Hong Kong in 1963 before moving to Macao in 1988. By that time she’d already worked with teenage girls in a residential home in Hong Kong and performed missionary work across Asia. She founded the Good Shepherd Crisis Centre in Macao in 1990 and was its director for many years, as well as its executive co-ordinator for 22 years, right up to her last days.

Although Devoy died on 14 December, her memory will live on in Macao. She was cherished by

many, especially the women she aided over the years – including all those she stayed in touch with and visited regularly. The new director of the Good Shepherd, Debbie Lai, vows to continue Devoy’s ‘work and plans’, ensuring her outstanding legacy of social service to the Macao community won’t be forgotten. ‘Creative’ and ‘a visionary’ are words Lai uses to describe the much-loved sister.

## A great partnership

Lai says she’d seen Devoy’s church services in Macao before but it wasn’t until they met in the street in 1990 that their relationship started to bear fruit. They became friends and worked together for more than 30 years

at the Good Shepherd with the aim of helping as many women as possible. “Sister Juliana fought to start a centre rather than a shelter,” says Lai, “because the intent was to provide shelter as well as to include awareness-raising activities on women’s rights and other issues.” Lai says the two women grew from ‘employer-employee to friends’ before finally becoming ‘mother and daughter’. Devoy even became Lai’s godmother. “Our hearts were connected,” remembers Lai, “because we had the same mindset and mission.”

Devoy and Lai worked on a case soon after the opening of the centre which Lai claims opened the door to a programme that began in 1992 and lasted for 12 years. “I remember,” says Lai, “that there was a lady who sought our help but not for shelter. As a single mother with financial problems, she went to [Catholic relief and development agency] Caritas and [Caritas Macau founder] Father Luis Ruiz redirected her to us, asking if we could teach her sewing skills so she could earn some money working from home.” Lai says that, as a result, a sewing centre was launched by the Good Shepherd. Women earned money by making clothes like Macao and Hong Kong school uniforms. According to Lai, Devoy ‘always fought for those who didn’t have a voice or couldn’t express themselves’.

Marjory Vendramini, president of non-profit organisation Cradle of Hope Association, which manages two children’s homes in Macao – Cradle of Hope and Fountain of Hope – also shares some warm memories of Devoy. “We started

working together when she helped young mothers in need,” she says. “Sometimes the children of the women [from the Good Shepherd] stayed in our association.” Vendramini says that similar ideas and beliefs between the two women led them to ‘dream a lot together’ and their relationship tightened when they planned ways to help children whose parents were unfit but didn’t want to put them up for adoption. “Five years ago,” she recalls, “we created a group and did some talks and promotional activities regarding the adoption law in Macao and related issues.”

“

***Sister Juliana Devoy always fought for those who didn’t have a voice or couldn’t express themselves.***

– Debbie Lai

Vendramini feels this group was paramount in accelerating the process of adoption in Macao. She also says that she exchanged emails about the group with Devoy just weeks before the sister died. “She was an incredible and loving person,” says Vendramini, “with a huge passion. She dedicated her life to others.”

## Fighting human trafficking

Agnes Lam was a young journalist when she first came across Devoy’s work at the start of the 2000s – a time when human trafficking was a fairly unknown issue in Macao. “At the beginning [of Devoy’s time in Macao], she focused on young women who were pregnant or had small children,” says Lam, who adds that the city’s social services were not fully equipped to help victims of trafficking at the time. In 2008, however, both Lam and Devoy were appointed to the government’s Women and Children Affairs Committee. Here, Devoy ‘urged everyone to fight against human trafficking in Macao’.

“She told us about foreign girls in Macao who were forced to go into prostitution,” says Lam, “which made me want to know more and help.” Lam recalls the story of a Mongolian woman who reached out to her. “She didn’t speak Chinese, English or any language I could understand,” she says, “so I sent her to the police. I think that’s when I realised what Sister Juliana had said about human trafficking was right.” Lam believes the missionary was ‘one of the biggest advocates of women’s rights in Macao’, adding that the government ended up ‘taking some steps to improve the situation’.

Lam says that besides raising awareness, one of Devoy’s biggest battles – which she won – was the criminalisation of domestic violence in Macao. The missionary, in 2014, even travelled to Geneva in Switzerland, where she attended the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Sister Devoy was an inspiration to many women in Macao and beyond



and urged the group to ‘exert its influence on the Macao authorities to formulate a just law that not only protects victims but also holds the aggressors responsible for their behaviour’. “Once [domestic violence in Macao] was criminalised,” adds Lam, “it was easier to raise awareness among the population that this isn’t a private matter. It’s a problem that concerns everyone.” That law was approved in 2016.

Agnes Lam also recalls the day when a woman whose husband had purposely burned her with acid sought her help in the matter.

Both women went to Devoy for that help. “Sister Juliana was very upset when she saw the damage,” says Lam, “and she set out to help her.” Together, Devoy and Lam raised MOP 1.6 million (US\$200,000) and the woman was sent to the UK for vital plastic surgery. Lam later discovered Devoy visited the woman every week after her return to Macao. “She led a life of fighting for others,” says Lam.

Sister Juliana Devoy, who spoke both English and Cantonese, left a legacy in Macao. Her work – whether that be with victims of domestic

violence and human trafficking or with the furthering of women’s issues in the city – will be continued by many of her supporters for a long time. In 1997, she was awarded the Medal of Merit – Philanthropy for her work by the then Portuguese-administered Macao government and in 2012, she was given the Medal of Merit – Altruism by the Macao SAR government. But her biggest honour – or, at least, legacy – could be said to be the countless women she helped during her extraordinarily compassionate and devoted life. ●

SPORTS

# On track for success

Meet six of the brightest young sports stars to emerge from Macao over the past few years. Each of this sextet has already notched up impressive victories in their chosen sports – but there could be much more to come from them over the coming years.

Text Fei Pou Lo Photos António Sanmarful

(From left) Au Hoi Ian,  
Wong Sam In, Charles  
Leong, Lei On Kei, Lou Wai  
Kit and Leong On Ieng



Image courtesy of Xinhua/Cheong Kam Ka

Leong celebrates in his car at the end of his epic Grand Prix win

Last year was pretty much a write-off for sports across the globe. That isn't to say that sports didn't take place or weren't – when they did happen – entertaining and hard won but the pandemic, for many, put a dampener on most sporting competitions worldwide. However, there were some successes by Macao's talents, primarily 19-year-old Charles Leong's incredible triumph at the Macau Grand Prix, proving that youth is no barrier to major sporting success.

The truth is that Macao may be small but it boasts an array of young sports stars who could achieve their dreams over the next few years, just like Leong did at the Grand Prix. Here, we meet the sensational driver alongside five other blossoming

talents. These six youngsters – all under 30 years old – are driven by ambition and while some of them say there needs to be improvements for certain sports in the city, on the whole Macao should be proud of tomorrow's exceptionally talented sports stars.

### The dazzling driver

How many times has a teenager won a major adult motor race? Not many. But on 22 November, 19-year-old Charles Leong made history by becoming only the third driver from the city over 67 editions to win the Macau Grand Prix. His triumph followed Macao driver Eduardo de Carvalho's win at the 1954 edition and local talent André

Couto's victory in 2000 – just under a year before Leong was even born. Of course, the 2020 edition was restricted to just local and mainland racers due to pandemic-related travel restrictions limiting foreign participation – and it was also, for the first time ever, a China Formula 4 Championship instead of an FIA Formula 3 event – but the Smart Life Racing team driver's performance was, given his age, nevertheless a remarkable victory.

"I grew up watching the Grand Prix at the Grandstand [in Macao]," says Leong when we meet him after the epic race. "This was a childhood dream. No words can really describe it." Putting his pedal to the metal of his Mygale M14-F4 car at the starting line, Leong says he was confident

from the outset. "I knew the car very well," he says, "plus I'm very familiar with the circuit, so no doubt I had a boost of confidence." This confidence was clear during the race as he always led at a comfortable distance, although the second-placed driver got, as Leong puts it, 'really, really close' at the end.

Leong says he models himself on 'fast and aggressive' Dutch Formula 1 racer Max Verstappen, as well as Brazilian legend, the late Ayrton Senna, who won the Macau Grand Prix's F3 race in 1983 before moving on to Formula 1 racing glory – a move Leong believes is already out of his reach despite his young age because in racing, time is critical both on and off the track. At his age he should already be in – or at least on his way to – Formula 2. Instead, he is already thinking about Macao's next generation of racing car drivers, hoping some of them will make it to F1. He's even got some upcoming coaching projects with younger talents to help make this happen. "I would like to have a small racing simulator space," he says, "and invite some young local drivers to train [with me]." He adds that even in Formula 4, racing is expensive and some younger drivers 'have budget issues' so Leong's experience in pro-kart racing, F3 and F4 in both Europe and China can be valuable for the city's future racing stars.

"I am the most experienced in Macao at this level," says Leong, "and we need someone with this experience for future racing." He adds this does not only mean in driving but also in career management, including sponsorships. With China's Zhou Guanyu performing well in Formula 2 and one step away from F1, can Macao dream of having someone at that level in the future? "I really

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*I won trophies and I think I was pretty talented growing up but that is not enough.*

– Charles Leong



Charles Leong

hope we will see that," says Leong, "but in the next few years that won't happen." For that to become a reality, a young talent must start at around six years old and then his preparation work must be continuously invested in for at least 14 years, Leong estimates. Even making the grade to F3, he cites, means '10 times the amount' needed for F4 racers. In short, big sponsors are a must.

Leong, who is enrolled at a university in the UK and does his sports management, sports science and psychology degree online in Macao, has had to rely on the financial support of his family during his 10-year-plus racing career so far. "When I was younger, my dad was basically every week on the racetracks with me in Zhuhai and elsewhere in China," he says. "I

was luckier than most kids, who sometimes have to drop out young because their parents can't spend so much money. I won trophies and I think I was pretty talented growing up but that is not enough."

After taking part in nine races in the Formula Masters China competition in 2016, the next year Leong had an impressive debut in the Formula Renault AsiaCup, winning four out of 10 races before taking the title. In 2018, he was fourth in the F3 Asian Championship, sixth in the Formula Renault AsiaCup and even raced three times in the FIA Formula 3 European Championship. He also entered the Macau Grand Prix for the first time but did not finish the race. In 2019, he raced in the FIA Formula 3 Championship and also participated in three F3 Asian

Lei On Kei; (below) The swimmer at the 2015 World Aquatics Championships in Kazan, Russia



Championship Winter Series events. His big success came in the Macau Grand Prix – he finished it for the first time, ending in 19th place. Last year was his most stellar year yet, of course. He focused on the China Formula 4 Championship, notching up five wins, and he obviously won the Macau Grand Prix. Leong says that Macao’s government has financially supported his career in F3 motor racing. His family has too but he thanks the government for its support as a ‘lack of big corporate sponsors has been an obstacle’. He may think that he won’t make it as a top F1 driver but Leong is nevertheless flying the chequered flag for Macao’s young sports stars who are helping to put the city on the sporting map.

**The swimming sensation**

Leong is not the only young local talent making headlines in the city. Swimmer Lei On Kei has also notched up a steady stream of impressive wins. The 29-year-old won a silver medal in the 50-metre women’s breaststroke at the 2012 Asian Swimming Championships – the first individual medal ever scooped at the competition by an athlete from Macao – and she has broken a staggering 22 women’s swimming records in Macao over the years. She’s become a young legend in breaststroke, individual medley and freestyle events. Aside from swimming triumphs, she’s also into her second year of a sports science PhD at the University of Macau.

“What lasts longer and I am more grateful for,” says Lei, “is the mental strength I have got through swimming, like getting up early during summers and winters.” This mental strength, she adds, drives her to do well in her PhD, for instance. She says she’s experimenting with training protocols and testing physiological changes and reactions, and wants to publish science papers in international journals in the future. But up to this point, she’s been a breaststroke specialist – something she’s worked at from the age of 13.

For young athletes, daily training and competitions can often interfere with schoolwork, and time may need to be spent at, for example, an important training centre.

Lei says that in Macao, ‘sports life weighs less than high school, college and a future well-paid job’ with some young talents dropping out of the sport due to the pressures of education. But she says she stuck at it, became a local success and is now studying hard to give herself a decent career. “There are sporting talents in Macao,” she says. “Way more than you and I could imagine. But for so many years, academia has been the first priority in our society and too many talents just sacrifice sports.” She says that over her 20 years in competitive swimming, nothing much has changed in this regard. “When people treat sports as entertainment or leisure activities,” she adds, “athletes can only be leisure sport players.”

Lei says that conditions in Macao are near perfect for athletes as it’s a small city, the distances are short between home and sports venues, incomes are high, education and training fees are affordable and training facilities abound. “Even compared to America, Japan and

China,” she says, “things are ready and developed in Macao.” The challenge, she explains, is for young talents to ‘move from leisure sports to competing at a world-class level’. “In what is mostly a leisurely sports environment,” she says, “it’s a miracle what some local athletes have achieved in international competitions.”

“The pain point,” concludes Lei, “is that the current system for nurturing young athletes needs a systematic, effective plan and well-organised arrangements. Otherwise, parents and kids won’t be sure about their future path and will start to lose motivation. Even so, there are still so many athletes in Macao who are willing and self-motivated to train, taking very high risks and ending up successful.”

**The volleyball victor**

Every two years, Macao ‘commends and encourages excellent local athletes and coaches’ at its Outstanding Athletes awards.

Co-organised by the Sports Bureau and ‘Macao Sports Weekly’, the ceremony has celebrated young local sporting talent for years. In 2015, local volleyball sensation Leong On Ieng was chosen as one of the city’s 10 ‘outstanding athletes’ for the year. And then in 2019, she was selected as the spokesperson for the event. Now 24 years old, Leong has played both indoor and beach volleyball over her 14 years of participation in the sport. She’s captained the University of Macau’s volleyball team, won a plethora of local competitions and even took a silver medal at the 2014 Lusofonia Games for Portuguese-speaking countries in India when the Macao team finished second.

Leong first got into volleyball when she was a 10-year-old pupil at Pui Ching Middle School. She excelled and never looked back. She’s worked hard at the sport over her life so far, however her goal is to represent Macao in the Asian Games beach volleyball competition. “The Asian Games is always the

Image courtesy of Lei On Kei



Peter Wong



Leong On Ieng and team-mate Law Weng Sam at an Asian Beach Games qualifier on Coloane’s Hac Sa Beach in July; (right) the volleyball player poses for us





Lou Wai Kit in his karate gear; (inset) the martial arts expert shows us an impressive kick

highest stage for Macao athletes,” says Leong. “My current goal is the Asian Beach Games, which were due to be held in Sanya, China, in April but have been postponed. When they are rescheduled, I’d love to get a good result. Then I’d like to also participate in the Asian Games soon. That’s my biggest goal.”

If the life of a rising sports star is challenging then volleyball players have it especially hard, according to Leong. Not many people play the sport in Macao, she admits, and there are only a few schools that compete in the game. Plus, she says, there are only a few venues in the city where volleyball can be played. Because there is a shortage of space, she says, teams often can’t train. “There is no place for regular practice,” she says, “which eventually leads to not performing well in competitions. Children may give up quickly if they don’t play well.”

Money is another problem for

volleyball, says Leong, because success in the sport is linked to results. “No results means no funding for more competitions,” she says. “But, in fact, some people practice very hard and only through competition can they gain experience and improve their skills.” Leong suggests that, to improve, Macao players need to be exposed to international competition. “If we stay limited to Macao,” she says, “then no matter how good our athletes are, we won’t have the opportunities to grow or compete at a good level.” Whether or not her dream is one day achieved, Leong is nevertheless a rising star who could be the next big thing in Macao volleyball over the coming years.

### The karate kid

Another local young sports star who has also won an Outstanding Athletes award in Macao is Lou Wai

Kit. The 30-year-old karate sensation won Macao’s only medal in the Asian Karate Championships in 2017 – a bronze in Kazakhstan in the men’s individual 84kg and above weight class. Due to that outstanding performance, he was then given the Outstanding Athletes award and he’s been going from strength to strength in the discipline ever since.

For Lou Wai Kit, the Kazakhstan bronze came after many years of trying and much perseverance. He represented the ‘lotus flower’ team for 12 years, and, before winning, he had participated in no less than four unsuccessful third place fights in the Asian Karate Championships. He says that his eventual victory bore the fruits of ‘dedicating ourselves to training constantly’. Success, he believes, has also seen him adapt. While he fights in the ‘heavyweight’ group, he is usually the lightest among the competing athletes. This means it is harder for him to get his



Au Hoi Ian puts on her cycling helmet

opponents to the ground, so he says that he has compensated with speed – on his feet and with his arms.

Lou Wai Kit has trained under the guidance of local coach Mohammad Reza Rashidnia, an Iranian who has had numerous big successes over almost 50 years practicing the discipline. Before international competitions, Rashidnia organises training camps both in Macao and in Iran. To further develop Macao sports for young talents, Lou Wai Kit believes that student competitions should be strengthened in the city. He also says that support from parents is also important ‘because most parents think that participating in sports is just for play and there’s no future’. “If student competitions can be linked closely to a professional career where athletes can make a living [out of the sport],” he says, “then it would help Macao’s overall sports development.” Lou agrees that it will take a lot of effort

to take Macao’s athletes to the next level. “Right now, Macao is just mainly promoting sports-for-all,” he says. “Even though the city puts a lot of resources into sports, there will be fewer people willing to trade their future for a sports career or for training.”

### The superb cyclist

Au Hoi Ian was faced with a major life decision when she was 18 years old. University or her beloved sport of cycling. She had just finished high school and could have gone straight to university but she chose cycling, putting further education on hold. Au is now 20 years old and she hasn’t looked back since.

Au was drawn to cycling at a young age, mostly because of her father, who is a fan of the pedals. At the age of five, she was already riding a two-wheeled bike. Eight years later, she was practicing with her dad

*I will never forget the moment when the Macao flag was raised up.*

– Au Hoi Ian

across the hills of Coloane and Taipa. Competition began in 2014, when she officially participated in the Macao Cycling League. Sadly, at one point, she had an accident and came home with scratched knees and a bruised ego. She says she considered giving cycling up right there and then. But as soon as she was healed, she was back in the saddle, criss-crossing the green hills of Macao.

And what a comeback it was to be. She joined the Macao training team in November 2016. A few months later – and with plenty of training – she entered the 2017 Asian Track Cycling Championships in New Delhi, India. She fought hard inside the velodrome in the women’s junior scratch race – where all the riders start together and the winner is first over the line after a number of laps – and came away with the bronze medal. It was the first time a Macao woman had ever won a track cycling medal. “I will never forget the moment when the Macao flag was raised up,” she says.

In July of the same year, Au won third place in the women’s scratch race in the Japan Field Cycling Asian Cup. In February 2018, at the Asian Track Cycling Championships in Malaysia, she won third place in the women’s scratch event again. In July of that year, she made another

breakthrough when she won her first silver medal in Japan. She won second place in the women’s junior scratch event of the Japan Track Cup I/II 2018.

Today, Au’s goal is to get more medals in the Asian Track Cycling Championships. Polite and gentle, she is also focused on improving her performances in the international scene. In chasing her two-wheeled dream, she has been supported by the Sports Bureau for high-performance training in Hong Kong, as well as with finances for essentials like equipment. She says that more cycling talents are emerging in Macao all the time and that the city is ‘improving constantly’ when it comes to the sport. In order for it to be a mainstream sport, however, she believes it should be promoted at the school level.

### The Wushu warrior

A martial art with a long history in China, Wushu is not just a complete discipline but also a full-contact sport. And young champion Wong Sam In is one of the hottest talents in Macao right now when it comes to the art. At the Asian Junior Wushu Championship 2019 in Brunei, she won the title in the southern-style boxing youth category – a huge win that was immediately praised by Macao’s government. In all, Wong – a teenager at the time – came back from those championships with two gold and two silver medals.

Wong is now 18 years old. She has been practicing Wushu for 10 years and has already amassed seven gold medals at World and Asian Junior Wushu Championships, plus she was the first local to win a medal in

the China National Youth Games in 2019 when she finished third in the Girls’ Group A Nanquan, a combination of the martial art that’s typical in Guangdong and other southern Chinese provinces. And she now wants to participate in major international competitions, like the World and Asian Wushu Championships or even the Asian Games. “To reach this goal,” she says, “I am preparing myself physically and mentally to qualify.”

Wong fell in love with Wushu in third grade during a demonstration of martial arts that had been organised at her school in Macao as part of New Year celebration activities. As soon as the show was over, she says, she decided to learn the Wushu discipline. In the next year’s summer holidays, she says that her mother sent her and her sister to training at a youth Wushu school. From then on, she admits that she’s never stopped in the sport.

It was not as easy as she imagined at first, though. Wong started practicing for two days a week but soon that went up to five days a week. Training is an exercise of precision of movement and repeating those movements until you’ve reached a natural flow. When you have reached a solid skill base, with an ample set of martial arts movements, you’re expected to develop your own style – which is just what Wong did. With traditional Chinese music in the background, wearing richly adorned costumes – ‘biao yan fu’, as they are known in Mandarin – and with solo routines before judges measuring the precision of movements, Wushu is less ‘martial’ and more ‘art’.

Persistence is important in Wushu, says Wong. Getting a hand or leg movement right can take dozens, sometimes hundreds, of tries. This happens on the training

mat but Wong also watches old Wushu videos and even uses sensors to track and analyse her own movements. Her specialty, Nanquan, features extensive hand techniques and a vocal articulation called ‘fasheng’ – literally meaning ‘release shout’ – which is considered the predecessor of the Japanese and Korean martial art of ‘kiai’.

Wushu has flourished in Macao over the years, according to Wong. She says the government has supported the discipline, as have the Wushu General Association of Macau and Macau’s own Wushu team. She says the city’s athletes have been given ‘the ability to compete in international competitions and even to reach the top three’. At the Asian Junior Wushu Championships in 2019, Macao’s Wushu team came away with seven gold medals and finished second overall. “That was the most astonishing result that we have ever had in these big competitions,” says Wong.

Wong is confident about the future of Wushu as a sport and thinks improving sports medicine to protect athletes from injuries will be critical to its success. “I hope that the government can further enhance their current medical facilities to protect the athletes,” she says. “With a healthy body, athletes will have fewer worries about their physical condition and they can spend more time improving and enhancing their martial arts skills.”

Macao is clearly home to some ambitious, talented and determined young sports stars. And there are plenty of people and organisations to help them step closer to their dreams in the city. For instance, the University of Macau (UM) awards scholarships based on the students’ athletic performance and also provides scholarships for up to

30 student athletes recommended by their high school principals, including the UM Golden Lotus Scholarship, the UM Silver Lotus Scholarship and even a one-time cash prize of MOP 5,000 (US\$626).

One of Macao’s greatest advocates for the development of sporting talent is the director of UM’s Office of Sports Affairs, Grace Chau. She has worked directly with local sports associations and learned that often Macao’s top high school athletes go abroad to further their pursuits. She says UM wants ‘to encourage local athletes to continue contributing to the region

and represent it in championships’. She adds that she’s proud that UM has some top athletes studying there and that the university works with the government to support its sportspeople while also increasing the number of sports scholarships and giving out annual awards. “We want to support the development of our athletes,” she says, “so that young people can see a future in sports. The university gives them a platform to excel in competitions.”

Charles Leong, Lei On Kei, Leong On Ieng, Lou Wai Kit, Au Hoi Ian and Wong Sam In are already six of the best sports stars in Macao and,

due to their youth, they could each go on to even greater achievements in their chosen sports. Each of them has been working hard to make it to the biggest stage they can – for most, that’s the world stage – thanks to their own skills and perseverance but also thanks to support from the government and dedicated trainers and experts around the city. There may yet be a way to go for the development of some sports in town but, for now, there’s plenty to shout about when it comes to the young stars in Macao. For a small city, there are some big opportunities for sporting gold in the future. ●



Wong Sam In strikes a Wushu pose

Macao **ABROAD**

# Golden goal

**Macao's own up-and-coming teenage football star could one day represent the city on an international level. Meet Yuri Pinto as he trains hard at one of Portugal's best youth teams and tries to fulfil his golden potential.**

Text Fei Pou Lo Photos Ana Bento



It's 2016 and a 10-year-old boy plays football in Macao's Taipa Central Park with his friends at night. He flicks the ball up, showing off his silky skills at such a tender age. This kid clearly has plenty of talent and he's not slow in displaying it. Some day he may even represent Macao at international level if he keeps his practice up...

It's now 2021 and a 15-year-old Yuri Pinto plays football with a newer group of friends in the Algarve in Portugal. He shows off the same silky skills and has clearly developed a more mature mind and body over the past five years. He's no longer playing just for fun – he is practicing with his youth team-mates for a side that's currently in Portugal's

Premier League. Pinto is now one of the hottest young footballing properties from Macao as he trains for Portimonense's youth side. He's edging ever closer to playing international football in the not-too-distant future.

Pinto is on the cusp of following in his father's footsteps and becoming a professional football player. His dad, Dani Pinto, represented Macao at international level and, by all accounts, his son has the makings of becoming an even better player. Yuri Pinto was told by his coaches in Macao before he left for Portugal that he could go far in the sport and he has already exceeded expectations. He says he models himself as 'the opposite

of the ng kan iu spirit' – which, in Cantonese, literally means 'it doesn't matter' and in this context refers to losing – because to him, it's all about winning and succeeding as a professional footballer.

Yuri Pinto was born and raised in Macao before he left the city in 2018 to pursue his dream career in the beautiful game. Prior to that he had played for the youth team at Monte Carlo – a club that plays in Macao's top local league. His coach at the club was Paulo Cheng, who nurtured the young star and helped him develop his skills as a hotshot striker. Cheng says that he always believed Yuri Pinto would go far. "Paulo Cheng," says Yuri Pinto, "is someone I will never forget. He will be with

me always as a football player, until I die. He still texts me regularly, asking how my matches have gone and giving me encouragement."

Even though he grew up watching his father play the sport, Yuri Pinto did not fall in love with football at first sight. In fact, his first 'sport' was capoeira, the Brazilian martial art. And he did well too, winning the Asian capoeira title for his age group in Hong Kong at just eight years old. Two years later, however, he started to adore football and joined the youth squad at Benfica de Macau, one of the city's top teams. He shone quickly and even got to represent Macao at regional youth tournaments against Hong Kong and China. He then went on to play for Monte Carlo before the family made a big decision.

Benfica are one of Europe's top teams, let alone Portugal's. So when Yuri Pinto attended a football camp run by the Lisbon-based institution in 2017, he knew he was in good company. And he admits that the feedback from the club after the camp finished was really positive – so much so that in 2018, the family decided to move to Portugal to give the young talent a better opportunity to carve out a glittering career in the sport as he would have a more 'competitive setting' in the European country. He started playing for the youth squad of Vitória Futebol Clube, a team from the city of Setúbal that was once a major force in Portuguese football but these days is performing well in the country's third tier. After one season with them, he tried out at the team that was on top of the nation's Premier League as we went to print – Sporting Clube de Portugal – a club that has produced national stars like Luís Figo, Nani and the one and only Cristiano Ronaldo. He again shone and was selected for

Sporting's pre-season youth team but physical problems meant that he could not make the most of the experience and his father decided it would be better to return to Vitória, where he did another season.

*I feel Macanese, Cabo Verdean and Portuguese all at the same time.*

– Yuri Pinto

Last year, the family decided to move to Portugal's sunny Algarve so Yuri Pinto could be close to an international school and live in an area with many expat families. And the teenager had no problem being signed up to the region's top team, Portimonense, a club struggling at the bottom of the Premier League at the moment. But then COVID-19 hit the world and the youth team stopped playing. Yuri Pinto has only been back in training over the past few months but nevertheless it will only now be a couple of years before he could, if called on, play for the first team in the Premier League. So the

following months are crucial – if he continues to dazzle the coaches then the big dream of major international success is still alive.

Yuri Pinto, who was a forward in Macao but has now adapted as a central midfielder, says he loves playing for these top teams in Portugal. "Compared to Macao," he says, "football here is much more intense. There are kids that are bigger, faster and stronger than you. But as a team [at Portimonense], we are intelligent. We don't have to be so aggressive. It is more important to play with your head." Although he plays with both feet, he favours his left foot – and it's this magical foot that's got him noticed by talent scouts ever since he was 10. But he does admit to being 'frustrated at the lack of competitive spirit' when playing in Macao. "Sometimes a team would lose 10-0," he says, "and in the end the players would go 'ng kan iu', meaning it doesn't matter.



Yuri Pinto shows off his powerful left foot; (opposite page) the young talent poses at Portimonense's training ground



Pinto dribbles the ball; (below) the young star lines up alongside the Portimonense youth team; (opposite page) his father Dani Pinto, dressed proudly in a Macao football shirt, joins his son at Portimonense

Well, winning does matter to me. You must win in football.”

When it comes to influences, Yuri Pinto, who excels at both passing and heading the ball, is not inspired by the world’s biggest names like Ronaldo or Messi – he admits he is far more inspired by powerful playmakers like Paul Pogba and Adrien Rabiot from France, who he says are ‘more or less like me’. “I would like to play in England one day,” he says. “There, you never know who is going to win because the small teams are not afraid of the bigger ones. But only God knows if I go or I stay here.” As for playing for Macao, the young star is keeping his options open. He could play for Macao’s international side in the future or he could play for Cabo Verde as his father was born and bred there

or even Portugal, as he has been there a few years already. He admits he ‘feels connected’ to his African family roots. “I feel Macanese, Cabo Verdean and Portuguese all at the same time,” he says.

Dani Pinto, a defender, lived in Cabo Verde – the Portuguese-speaking island nation off the west coast of Africa – for many years before moving to Macao and qualifying to play for the city’s team at international level. He also represented the Cabo Verde national team during his career and played regularly in the top Portuguese league at Académica de Coimbra, which is currently riding high at the top of the nation’s second league. He is obviously proud of his son. He says: “Football is almost a family tradition. My older brother was a pro, as was I and even my younger brother who played for Sporting de Braga. So I really do hope that Yuri becomes much more successful than me.”

Proper competition for Portimonense’s youth team is still some months away and Yuri Pinto



says he can’t wait to get stuck in once again. But he’ll also be focusing on his studies at the international school as football is not his only dream. “I would happily become an orthopaedist,” he says. “My parents say education is important. Lots of kids share my dream in football. You have to want it and be lucky. I really want it, though.”

Paulo Cheng says he’s still one of Yuri Pinto’s biggest fans. “I like to encourage and challenge him to be a professional player,” he says. “Not too many young people in Macao share Yuri’s dream in football. He has a good left strike, good aggressiveness and he has the skills, tactics, fitness and mentality to

be a successful, all-round player. He works hard and believes in himself.” Cheng cautions that ‘making it to the big clubs will depend on the coaches, the timing, the chances, the particular club and Yuri’s performance’ but he adds that ‘going to Europe was the right thing to do as many young players in Macao only want to have fun and do not want to become professional players’.

João Tristão, Yuri Pinto’s current youth team coach at Portimonense, calls the talented teenager ‘respectful, joyful, good-humoured, humble and hard working’. But he highlights that defending is something that needs work to add to the teenager’s already ‘strong

dribbling, passing and shooting’ qualities. “He is good with both feet and combines that with a strong physique,” says Tristão. “He is a player with excellent capacity and ability.”

Will Yuri Pinto make it to the top in Portugal? Will he then go on to even greater heights? And will he ever represent Macao at international level? Only time will tell. “He has to continue working and believing in himself,” concludes Tristão. If he does that then one day, the talented little 10-year-old who used to show off his skills at Taipa Central Park could be the next Ronaldo, Nani or Figo – or, at least, the next Dani Pinto. ●



ARTS AND CULTURE

# Dressed to empress

The Macao Museum of Art showcases some of the most beautiful costumes and accessories that were once worn by China's emperors and empresses.

Text Vivianna Cheong

Outer gowns on display at the MAM's 'Stately Demeanour' exhibition, including (centre) a lined yellow outer gown with satin embroidery of butterflies and peonies that was worn by imperial consorts during the reign of the Emperor Guangxu between 1875 and 1908

Few cultures and countries around the world can match China when it comes to ancient regal costumes. The Egyptians and the Japanese certainly have a special place, as do countries across Europe, such as England, France, Spain and Portugal. These nations all have old paintings that line the walls of galleries and museums showing historical kings and queens adorned in beautiful clothes, with precious stones sewn into them or on crowns that glimmer in the light. However, there's something really quite special about the costumes once worn by China's emperors and empresses.

These old items of regal clothing hold a special place in Macao over the next couple of months as they are being showcased at the Macao Museum of Art (MAM) in a vast exhibition called 'Stately Demeanour: Costumes of Qing Emperors and Empresses from the Collection of the Palace Museum'. The display, which opened on 17 December and is running until 14 March, saw more than 10,000 locals visit it during its first three weeks alone.

The exhibition is co-organised by the MAM and the Palace Museum, which sits within the Forbidden City in Beijing. The display, which showcases about 90 sets of costumes and accessories that were worn by Qing dynasty emperors and empresses, also marks the 21st year of collaboration between the museum and the MAM. Exhibition co-ordinator Irene Hoi Ian Chio says: "We started thinking about the exhibition's theme around three years ago after the

success of the 'Qing palace TV' dramas, which were Chinese TV shows based in the Qing dynasty that had so many viewers hooked. In the past, we have exhibited calligraphy works and paintings from the Ming and Qing dynasties. This time, we wanted to bring some exhibits of daily life to our audience." Chio adds that the exhibits are unique: "Among the exhibits, there are 12 pieces that have never left the Palace Museum before. Plus, this is the MAM's first exhibition that showcases the costumes of emperors and empresses."

## Plenty of drama

The Qing dynasty ruled China from 1644 to 1911 and, ever since, it's been a dynasty that's stayed in the hearts and minds of people across the globe. Over the past few years, TV has done its part to keep it alive on the small screen. For instance, in 2018 two Chinese period dramas drew critical acclaim. The 'Story of Yanxi Palace' was set during the sixth year of the Qianlong Emperor's reign – he was the sixth emperor of the Qing dynasty. And 'Ruyi's Royal Love in the Palace' chronicled the marriage of the Qianlong Emperor and Hoifa-Nara, the Step-Empress. Often, these shows ran fictitious tales about power battles among the Qianlong Emperor's concubines in the 18th century. Both series offered different interpretations of the characters at court with remarkable catfight plotting and fine performances – but what frequently fascinated audiences most was the

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*Some people see the history behind the costumes but some see the motifs they like, such as flowers.*

– Irene Hoi Ian Chio



sumptuously detailed costumes on-screen. Chio says: “Visitors [to the Macao exhibition] are interested because they’ve seen the beautiful details on the TV shows. Among the exhibits are costumes that were actually worn by the real Qianlong Emperor, as well as the Kangxi and Jiaqing emperors too.”

The devil really is in the detail for Chio. She says that the fine details within each costume and accessory have attracted many visitors to the exhibition. And she adds that this influx of interest is helping to develop a new audience for the MAM. “For our previous exhibitions of calligraphy works and paintings from the Ming and Qing dynasties,” she says, “our talks have usually focused on the historical background of the works. They attracted high-brow art lovers or academics. However, this time we’ve gone for the basic elements of the costumes – the colours, motifs and production skills. Due to the variety of the exhibits, we can certainly satisfy visitors’ thirst for deeper understanding of the Qing court costumes and accessories

by introducing their motifs and history. That’s why the exhibition is popular.”

“Different visitors see different things,” continues Chio. “Some visitors see the history behind the exhibits but some see the motifs they like, such as flowers. They realise the embroidery of various flowers and some pay attention to the symbolic meanings behind the costumes. As many visitors have seen these costumes on the TV series, they recognise them and feel intrigued to know about the different meanings within. Even the children who have visited the exhibition have learned about the history of the Kangxi and Qinglong emperors. They can be really interested.”

Chio says that in recent years, the MAM has seen a growing number of young people visiting the facility. She says audience

development has been on the exhibition organisers’ minds. “We want to attract other types of audience to gain a deeper understanding of Chinese art,” she says. “And this exhibition covers the Chinese New Year period, so [displaying] costumes is a good fit.” Chio also notes, though, that maintaining interest from academics is equally important to attracting new types of audience. “As part of the collaboration with the Palace Museum over the past two decades, we’ve exhibited many remarkable works,” she says. “In addition, antique objects need a rest after exhibitions. According to the national regulations, exhibits must be preserved from one to three years after being displayed. So our choices can be limited. We try to strike a balance between audience development and academic interest.”



Winter overcoat in black fox fur worn by the Jiaqing Emperor for ceremonial and sacrificial occasions between 1796 and 1820; (right) bright yellow cotton male dragon robe with satin embroidery of polychrome clouds and golden dragons worn by the Yongzheng Emperor between 1723 and 1735; (opposite page) Irene Hoi Ian Chio

Courtesy of the Palace Museum

### Source materials

Peng Liu, assistant professor of the Faculty of Humanities and Arts at the Macau University of Science and Technology (MUST), says that the pieces on display in the exhibition will surely bring inspiration to art students and academics alike. “From a grand perspective,” he says, “the exhibited costumes and accessories all reflect the Chinese culture and social etiquettes that were prevalent at the time they were made. If you look closer at their production methods, colour combination skills and embroidery,

they are incredible source materials for academic research. I hope there is to be more such high-quality exhibitions in Macao.”

The exhibition is split into five sections – there’s the ‘official’ section and then the ‘festive’, ‘regular’, ‘military and travel’ and ‘leisure’ sections. Its Chinese title comes from a quote from the Qianlong Emperor in the preface of ‘Illustrated Regulations for Ceremonial Paraphernalia of the Qing Dynasty’, published in the 18th century. He says ‘clothing is a manifestation of a dynasty’. As this suggests, the royal costumes and accessories manifest the qualities

of the Qing dynasty, blending the garb and culture of the Han people with the skills of the Manchu people, such as archery and horsemanship. Bow-shaped formal collars, horse hoof-shaped cuffs and saddle-shaped shoulder trims are examples of the Manchu influence. The colours and motifs on the costumes and accessories also represent the wearers’ achievements and status.

In terms of the challenges of putting the exhibition together – especially during a pandemic – Chio says: “As the exhibits are usually made of silk and fabrics, they are sensitive to [different] temperatures.

In addition, unlike calligraphy works and paintings, these costumes can't be folded. Some of them are made out of endangered species, such as coral or the fur of sika deer. Due to the pandemic, as we created this exhibition there were fewer flights available between Beijing and Macao but we nevertheless needed four flights because the exhibits needed a lot of care. It usually takes just two flights for our exhibitions."

### A stitch in time

Official costumes were worn by the emperors and empresses for major occasions like New Year's Days, their birthdays or sacrificial ceremonies. In this section of the exhibition is a bright yellow gauze male court robe with embroidery of polychrome clouds and yellow dragons that was worn by the Qianlong Emperor. The bright yellow is an exclusive colour for emperors and the robe sports 12 imperial symbols that represent his noble qualities. Another exhibition highlight is the winter overcoat in black fox fur that was worn by the Jiaqing Emperor, who reigned between 1796 and 1820. Chio says: "If you adjust the cutting slightly, this overcoat is fabulously trendy." She adds that visitors 'can see the history preceding these costumes' as well as the 'concepts' that became influential afterwards. "For example," she cites, "some of the pieces carry influences from Mongolia. Visitors can also appreciate the fascinating detailed embroidery, such as a tiny piece of moss on a rock or a dragon's claws."

Festive costumes were obviously worn at festive celebrations and banquets. Among the exhibits is a cotton-padded bright yellow satin male dragon robe with embroidery of polychrome clouds and a golden dragon. The robe, which belonged to the Yongzheng Emperor – who reigned between 1723 and 1735 – is an exceptional example of detailed embroidery. Another exhibit that catches the eye here is a court painting that illustrates the same emperor, who is regarded as the most diligent of the rulers in the Qing dynasty, in a festive costume reading a book.

Appearing relatively subtle, regular costumes were worn for more solemn occasions, such as sacrificial and fasting periods, honorary title conferment ceremonies and the anniversaries of the deaths of previous emperors and empresses. The plain colours and self-patterned fabrics set a low key at these occasions – and there are many examples of these regular costumes on display at the exhibition that tell their own stories.

The highlight of the 'military and travel' costume section is surely the armour suit with gold-woven brocade in herringbone patterns and gold plates which was worn by the Xianfeng Emperor, who reigned between 1850 and 1861. This extremely delicate piece is tiered, with the tiers formed by a piece of gold-woven brocade in herringbone patterns. It exudes nobility as it displays black velvet on the trim with cotton padding and uses a light greyish-blue silk for the lining. Another highlight in this section is a painting by Italian and Jesuit artist Giuseppe Castiglione – see

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*I hope there is to be more high-quality exhibitions like this in Macao.*

– Peng Liu

Even the windows are robe-shaped in this fascinating exhibition at the MAM



The Xianfeng Emperor's beautiful armour suit with gold-woven brocade in herringbone patterns and gold plates; (right) an assortment of robes at the exhibition



our story on painters in Macao on p64 for more on this artistic legend – and Chinese court artists named ‘Portrait of Emperor Qianlong Chasing a Deer’. This piece demonstrates Castiglione’s trademark fusion of European and Chinese painting traditions.

Leisure costumes and accessories were worn during an empress or emperor’s down time. These included outer gowns, vests, informal dresses, flowerpot-soled shoes and white jade earrings. The embroidery of the dresses in this section of the exhibition reveals extraordinary craftsmanship and numerous symbolic meanings. Among the pieces is a lined yellow satin

outer gown with embroidery of butterflies and peonies. Butterflies symbolise beauty and longevity, and are widely used in Chinese opera and literature. Peonies suggest wealth. These symbols are often used in costumes that were worn by imperial consorts. There’s also a painting in this section called ‘An Autumn Garden Filled with Joy Featuring Emperor Daoguang’ that depicts the ruler – who reigned between 1820 and 1850 – with some of his family members, including the Xianfeng Emperor as a child. This piece highlights the beautiful costumes and makeup that were worn during this period of Chinese history.

The MAM’s ‘Stately Demeanour’ exhibition excites the imagination.

The exhibits grip you with their attention to detail and craftsmanship, as well as their use of symbols like polychrome clouds, dragons and sea waves. Those historical characters who have so recently been brought to life on TV or in books are almost there inside the stunning clothes they once wore with pride. Every single detail is like a great work in its own right and when you look at a costume or perhaps a court hat – knowing the piece has been worn by an emperor or an empress – it is inevitable that you imagine their height, build and appearance. You imagine how much these rulers went through before and during their reigns. You eventually feel closer to these

important historical characters who oversaw glories and progress from inside some of the most beautiful regal costumes still in existence. ●

### Exhibition details

The ‘Stately Demeanour: Costumes of Qing Emperors and Empresses from the Collection of the Palace Museum’ exhibition is on at the Macao Museum of Art until 14 March. It is open from 10am to 7pm, with last admission at 6.30pm. It’s closed on Mondays and open on public holidays. Visitors must wear facemasks at all times, undergo temperature checks and present their health code at the entrance. For more details, visit [mam.gov.mo](http://mam.gov.mo).

ARTS AND CULTURE

# Keeping you posted

Wander through a wonderful  
world of old postcards at this  
exciting – and interactive – Macao  
Museum exhibition.

Text **Rafelle Marie Allego**

All postcard images courtesy of the **Cultural Affairs Bureau**



Both images on this page by António Sanmarful

Almost everyone has a camera phone these days and access to email. Sending a photo or a message during your travels has never been quicker or easier. But before the dawn of the internet and smartphones, keeping your loved ones up to date during your holidays was a simpler, arguably more beautiful affair. You sent a postcard. These usually rectangular pieces of card combined both a striking image of your destination with your own heartfelt message – and, of course, you didn’t need the excuse of a holiday to send one. Ever since the first one was sent

in 1840, the world fell in love with the postcard.

Today, postcards are, on the whole, seen as a remnant of a not-too-distant past. And they have certainly been collectors’ items for decades. Macao is no different, with a handful of avid collectors in the city and an arsenal of postcards – some dating as far back as the late 19th century and others as recent as the 1990s – that have been kept, looked after and treasured. And now you can see some of these treasured pieces on display at Macao Museum in an exhibition that opened in September and will be running

until 18 April. ‘Memory of the Past’ boasts more than 180 postcards and it’s already seen a steady stream of visitors over the past few months.

Brian Cheang Kin Chio, one of Macao Museum’s curators of the exhibition, says that in addition to postcards with Macao themes and images on display, there are also pieces from Hong Kong and mainland Chinese cities like Beijing, Tianjin, Guangzhou and Shanghai. “Through these postcards,” he says, “we not only hope our audience can see Macao’s charming scenery but also the social and cultural characteristics of its multicultural coexistence.”

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*These postcards  
show important  
images because  
they depict what  
the view of the  
city looked like  
at the end of the  
19th and early  
20th centuries.*

– Brian Cheang Kin Chio



The exhibition is divided into two sections – ‘Macao in the Old Days’ and ‘Today’s Macao’. These sections are further divided, with the former guiding visitors through the city’s ‘Coastal Scenery’, ‘Elegant Architecture’ and ‘Lush Gardens’ in bygone days, while the latter showcases the city’s special features mainly in the 1990s when it was going through great changes. Sections include ‘Interlaced Lanes’, ‘Accessible Transportation’, ‘Recreation and Entertainment’ and ‘Outstanding Talents and Profound Culture’. Cheang says: “Visitors experience each theme to better understand and appreciate Macao from different angles of the city.”

**Team effort**

Many people at the museum and beyond have made this exhibition become a reality. Cheang says that the curatorial team has included curators, writers, photographers, computer programmers and many more. “While preparing the exhibition took a year from conception to operation,” he says, “this has really been in the works for more than 100 years since the publication of these postcards. And in terms of the time taken to accumulate this current collection, it’s been more than 20 years since the Macao Museum was established.”

Cheang says that the oldest postcards on display are six pieces that commemorated the 400th anniversary of the discovery of the route from Europe to India via the Cape of Good Hope by Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama. They date back to 1898 and were originally produced as part of a set of 12. “This collection,” he says, referring to all the postcards on display, “is really the result of years of donations, transfers of historical artifacts from the public sector and purchases locally and abroad.”

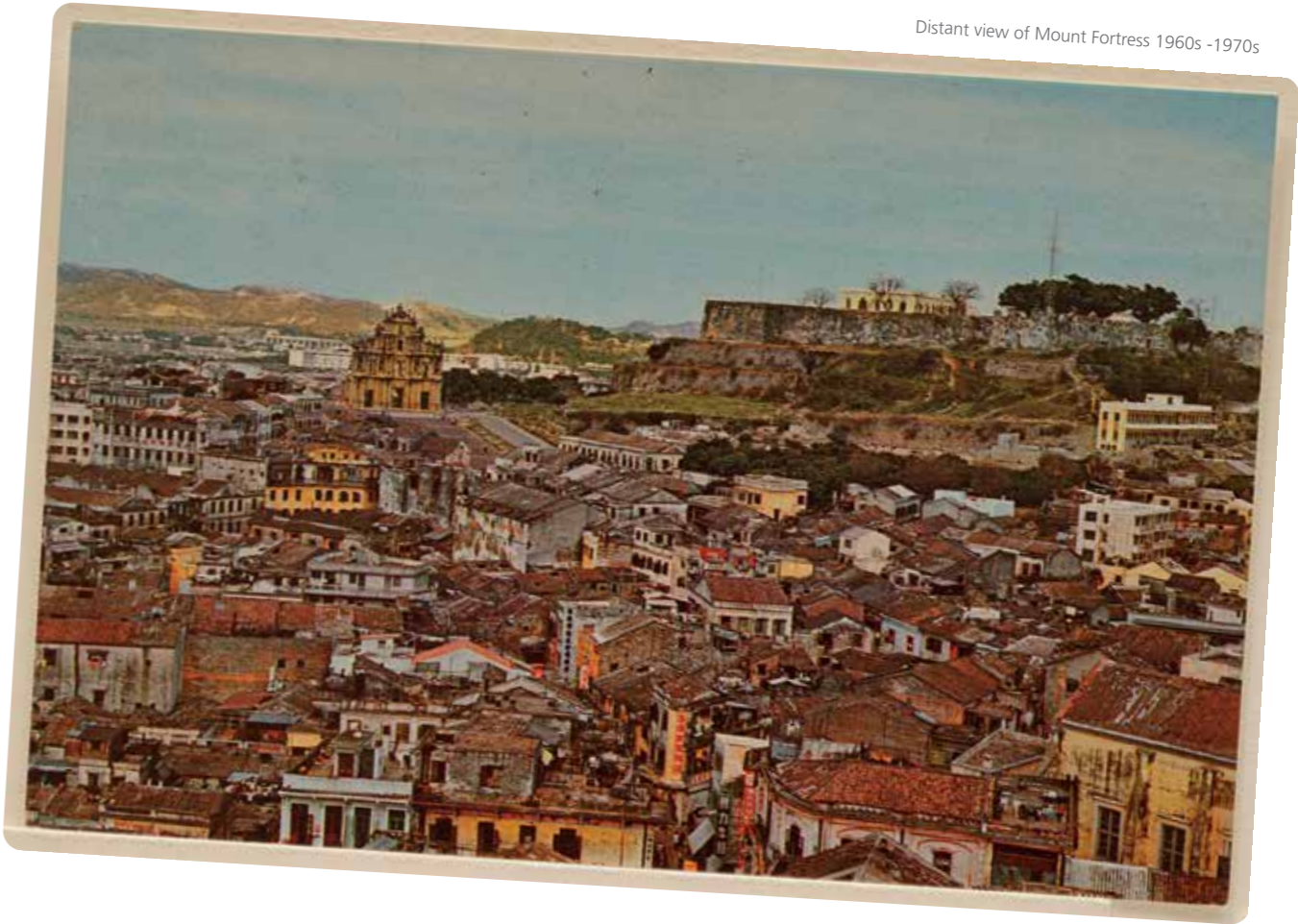
Ho Weng Hong, a 63-year-old local postcard collector who has taken an interest in the exhibition, shares the importance behind preserving these antique pieces. “Macao is a very old city,” he says, “and you can see some churches, temples and buildings are in either Chinese style or Portuguese style. However, with the development of the city, some buildings have been destroyed or have disappeared. Old postcards can document this change, serving an important purpose as the landscape of the city has morphed over the years. Buildings that no longer exist now can still be seen in these postcards.”

**Question:** What is the oldest postcard in the world?  
**Answer:** According to the Guinness World Records, the earliest known postcard was sent by a man called Theodore Hook in 1840. He sent the card to his own address in Fulham, London. It depicts a coloured caricature of Post Office scribes sitting around a massive inkwell and may also be the most expensive postcard ever, selling in 2002 for £31,750 (around MOP 337,000) to a buyer in Latvia.



Answers  
on a  
postcard!

Distant view of Mount Fortress 1960s -1970s

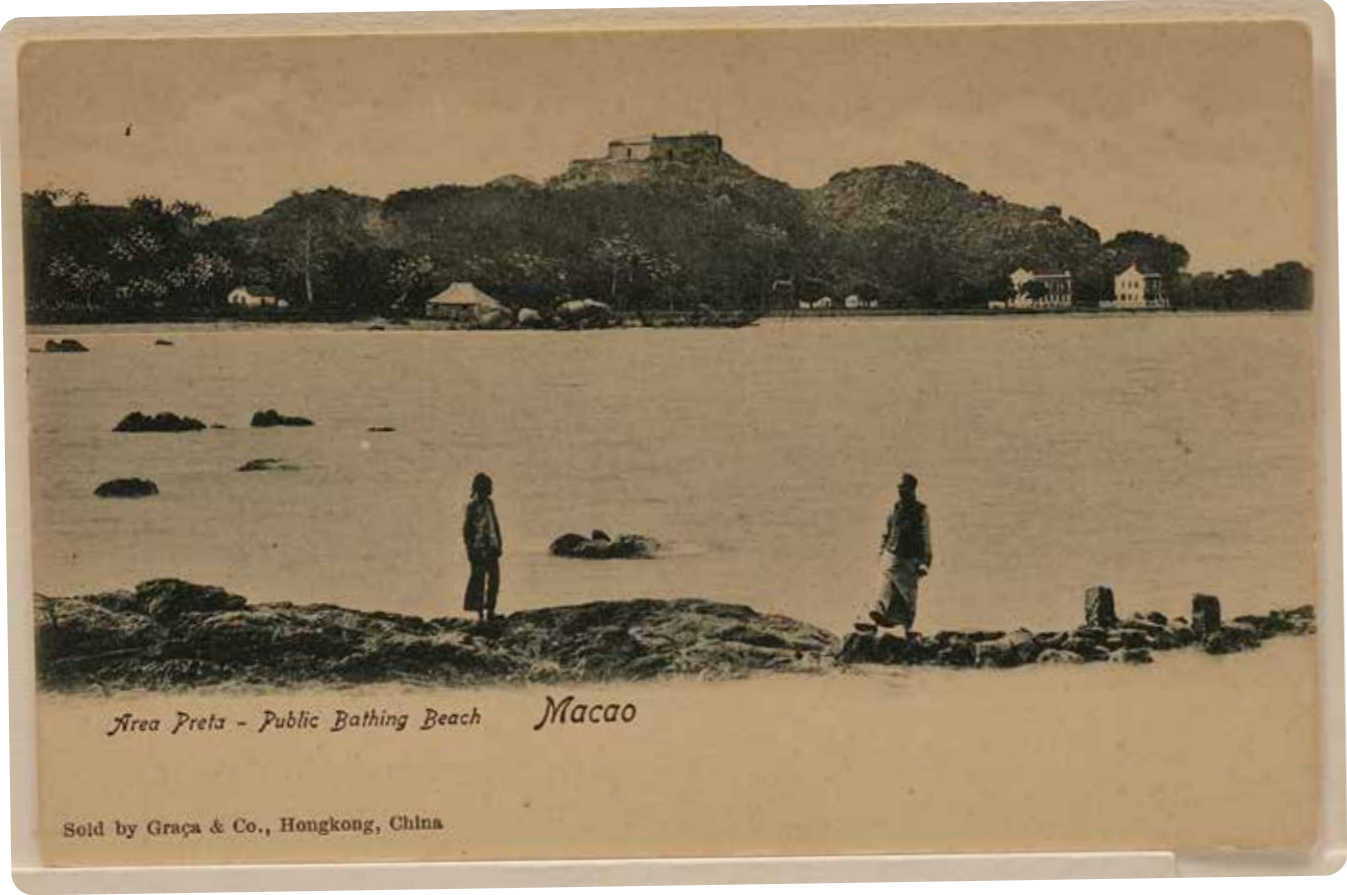


Area of Avenida de Almeida Ribeiro 1960s -1970s



Inner Harbour Terminal 1960s -1970s

The public bathing beach at Areia Preta circa the early 20th century



The view of the Praia Grande circa the early 20th century



Answers  
on a  
postcard!

**Question:** What is the correct term for a postcard collector?

**Answer:** A collector of postcards is called a deltiologist. The word 'deltiology' comes from the Greek for a small writing tablet and describes both the study and collection of postcards. Professor Randall Rhodes from Ohio in the US coined the word in 1945.

### Virtually incredible

For those who can't make it to the exhibition – or for those who do go along but nevertheless want a cool technological experience – the Macao Museum team has launched a '360-degree virtual reality (VR) experience' so you can view the displays from the comfort of your own home. "Today," explains Cheang, "museums worldwide are committed to developing digital and mobile services where VR technology provides visitors with a visual sense of presence and an unrestricted view of three-dimensional spaces." Additionally, says Cheang, this was in line with instructions from the mainland's National Administration of Cultural Heritage urging museums at all levels to actively expand their online services.

It isn't the first time that the museum has created a fantastic digital experience. In 2018, it launched a mobile app for its own 20th anniversary that included both

a VR experience and an augmented reality (AR) display so people could see some of their collections on their phones or laptops without having to go into the building that sits within the walls of Mount Fortress. But this new tech for the postcard exhibition is the first full-on VR platform the museum has ever created – and, incredibly, it only took three weeks to prepare. Cheang says: "The process required technicians to photograph the exhibition and then test [the VR platform] repeatedly to verify the results so the best public viewing experience was ensured."

**Question:** Which postcard sold the most copies worldwide?

**Answer:** Donald McGill's 'Kipling' postcard by a country mile. This piece sold more than six million copies across the globe. McGill was a famous 'saucy postcard' designer from London who specialised in creating controversial scenes in the early to mid-20th century. The 'Kipling' work depicts a man and woman under a tree.



Answers  
on a  
postcard!

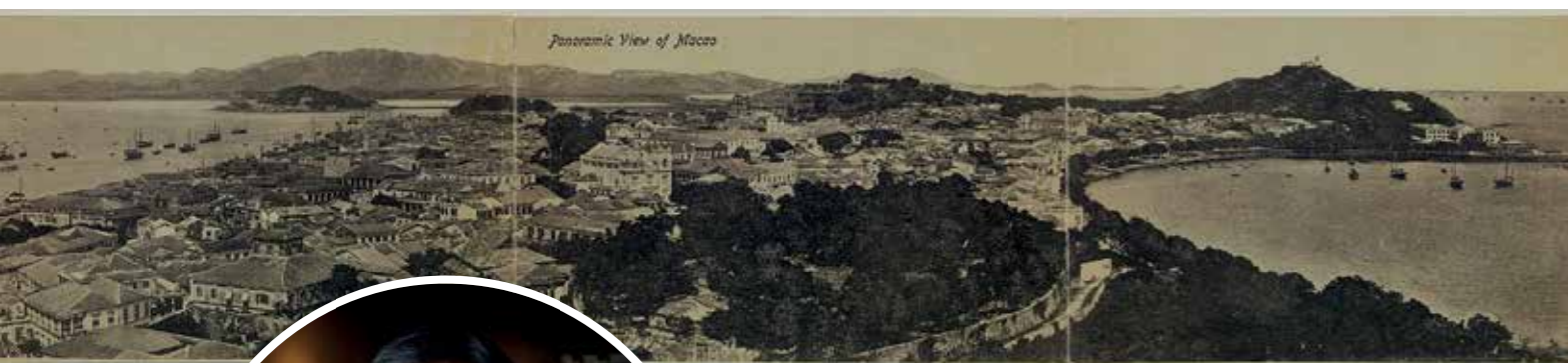


Image by António Sanmarful



A tri-fold postcard showing Macao's cityscape in the late 19th century. Ilha Verde can be seen on the left and the Guia Lighthouse is on the right; (inset) Ho Weng Hong

In the future, Cheang expects that the museum will continue to launch more VR experiences of its exhibitions by making use of the technology that's out there. While some of the more interactive parts of the exhibition – like creating a digital postcard or the educational area – aren't accessible on the VR platform, it's a creative pilot effort that promotes the museum's development through both online and offline approaches.

As we visit the exhibition with Cheang, he points to a panoramic view overlooking Macao and says this is his favourite piece from all the postcards on display. "You can see the early Praia Grande," he says, "as well as the Inner Harbour,

the hills, the iconic churches, the public buildings, the stately homes, the hotels and the fortresses. They are important images because they show what the view of the city looked like at the end of the 19th and early 20th centuries." He also points out how unique the postcard is as it is a tri-fold piece – literally folded twice to create three parts. "This is very different from what you usually get when it comes to a postcard," he notes.

The 'Memory of the Past' exhibition perfectly reflects Macao's role as a place of exchange between different cultures. "Visitors can see the fascinating aspects of Macao in different periods over the past 100 years," says Cheang, "and because of

this, the postcards have earned much praise from visitors." Collector Ho adds: "I think, with postcards, we can replay memories from when we were small and really look into the past." ●

### Exhibition details

The 'Memory of the Past' exhibition is in Macao Museum's third floor gallery until 18 April. It's open at the museum – which is in Mount Fortress just above the Ruins of St Paul's – between 10am and 6pm every day except Mondays. For more details, call the museum on +853 2835 7911 or visit [macaumuseum.gov.mo](http://macaumuseum.gov.mo).

To see the incredible VR experience of the exhibition, scan the QR code:



## Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute All-round Services for You



The Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM) is the department designated by the Macao SAR Government to promote external trade, attract investment, nurture the development of local MICE industry and motivate external economic and trade co-operation between China and Portuguese-speaking Countries. With its "One-stop Service" for Investors, "One-stop Service" for MICE Bidding and Support in Macao, trade promotion events, Portuguese-speaking Countries services, IPIM strives to create better environment for business and investment for local and overseas enterprises, investors, and craft Macao to be an ideal stage for MICE events.

### Macao's Investment Environment

- "One Country, Two Systems", free port and separate customs territory
- Macao is one of the core cities of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, positioned as a "World Centre of Tourism and Leisure", a "Commercial and Trade Co-operation Service Platform between China and Portuguese-speaking Countries", and a "base for exchange and co-operation where Chinese culture is the mainstream and diverse cultures coexist"
- Simple and low taxation system with enterprise profits tax capped at only 12%
- Reaching eight Portuguese-speaking Countries and global market network
- All-round convention and exhibition facilities, well developed internal and external transportation, and the newly launched Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge

### "One-stop Service" for MICE Bidding and Support in Macao and Trade Promotion Activities

Through the "One-stop Service" for MICE Bidding and Support in Macao, IPIM provides all-round supports for professional congress organisers intending to stage events in Macao.

Major trade fairs and exhibitions organised and co-organised by IPIM:

- Macao International Environmental Co-operation Forum & Exhibition
- International Infrastructure Investment and Construction Forum
- Macao Franchise Expo
- Guangdong & Macao Branded Products Fair
- Macao International Trade and Investment Fair
- Portuguese-Speaking Countries Products and Services Exhibition (Macao)

IPIM also partakes in various major trade events and exhibitions in Mainland China, Macao and different parts of the world. In addition, IPIM organises outbound business missions for Macao companies and receives delegations from Mainland and foreign countries, so as to nurture the exchange and collaboration between Macao's business sectors and their counterparts worldwide.

### Services for Lusophone Markets

The Lusophone Markets Economic and Trade Promotion Department of the Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute provides a variety of services, which aim at assisting PSCs enterprises in tapping Mainland markets, as well as helping companies from Mainland China, Macao and other regions which are interested in launching businesses in PSCs. The services include:

- Organising business delegations to visit PSCs
- Staging PSCs markets business promotion events
- Implementing the China-PSC Biz Compass programme as well as online and offline promotion for PSCs enterprises and products
- Portuguese-speaking Countries Food Exhibition Centre
- Economic and Trade Co-operation and Human Resources Portal between China and Portuguese-speaking Countries ([www.platformchinaipim.mo](http://www.platformchinaipim.mo))

### "One-stop Service" for Investors

IPIM offers Investor's "One-Stop" Service, which provides investors with a full range of support and assistance for the implementation process of investor's projects launched in Macao. In addition to appointments, internet and phone calls with investor, IPIM designates personnel to assist from the stage of initial enquiry, conduct comprehensive project follow-up which helps facilitate the implementation of investment project in Macao as well as the proceeding of relevant administrative procedures. Service Fields:

- Information and advice about the investment environment in Macao
- Notary service for company registration
- Follow up assistance in administrative procedures for licence application
- Legal consultation for investment in Macao
- Business support and service information
- Online business matching service platform
- Provide supporting services such as temporary offices

### Representative Offices of IPIM in Mainland China

- Hangzhou Representative Office
- Chengdu Representative Office
- Shenyang Representative Office
- Fuzhou Representative Office
- Guangzhou Representative Office
- Wuhan Representative Office

Major functions and services are:

- "One-stop Service" for Investors and Macao commercial registration facilitation services for mainland investors
- "One-stop Service" for MICE Bidding and Support in Macao, event organising consultation, assistance in hosting MICE events in Macao for mainland enterprises and organisations
- Portuguese-speaking Countries (PSC) business navigation and information on PSC business environment and investments.
- Cross-departmental collaboration under the Secretariat for Economy and Finance, case transferal, policy consultation, document forwarding services. E.g. consultation regarding "China-Portuguese Speaking Countries Co-operation and Development Fund"
- Support for Macao youngsters to have internship, work and start businesses in Mainland China. E.g. "Internship Programme for Macao Students in Mainland China to Work in Mainland Enterprises", "Programme of Macao Interns and Students to have Part-time Jobs at Macao MICE Events"
- Visits to mainland enterprises, chambers of commerce and government departments; Supports for enterprises intending to invest in Macao



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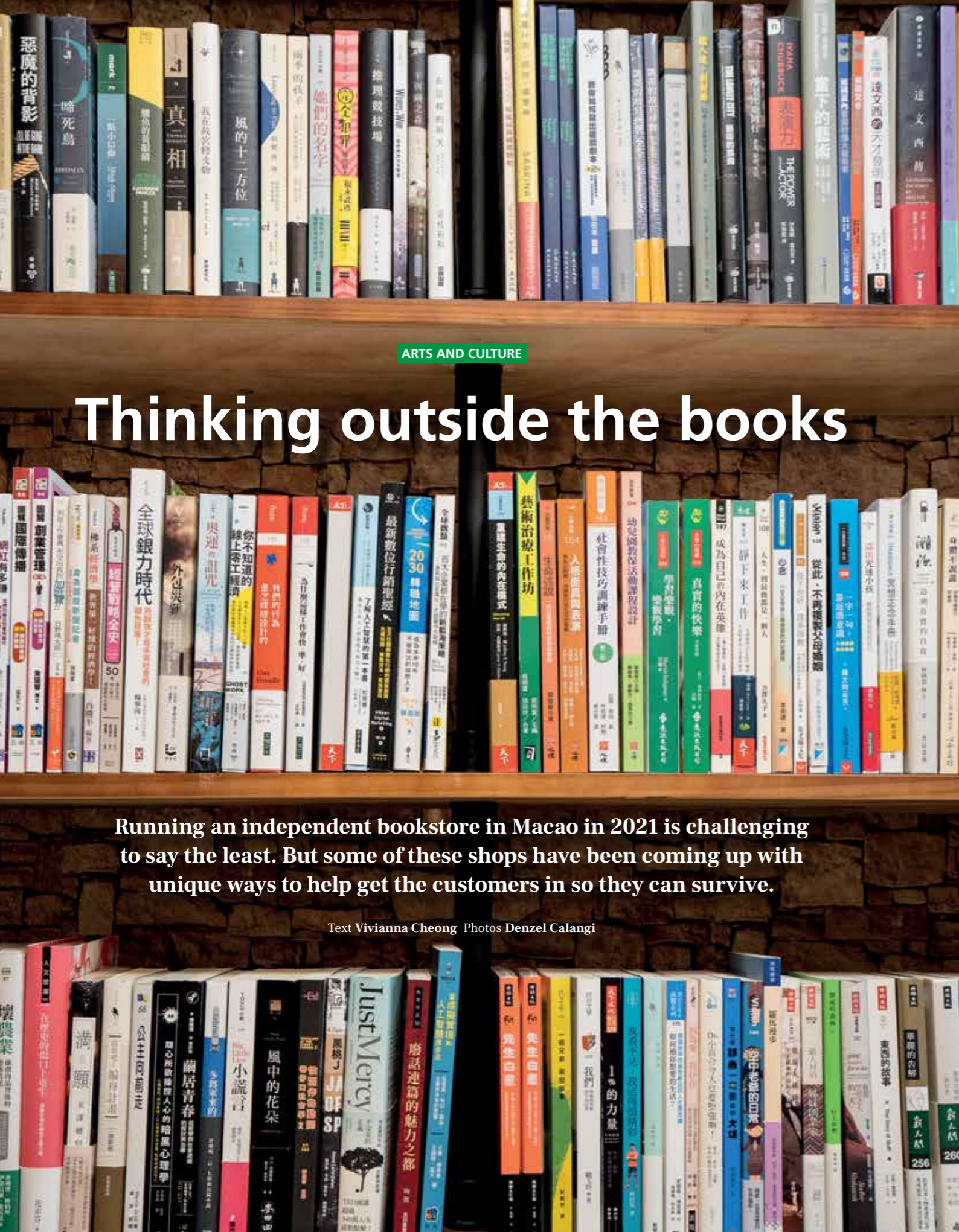
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ARTS AND CULTURE

# Thinking outside the books

Running an independent bookstore in Macao in 2021 is challenging to say the least. But some of these shops have been coming up with unique ways to help get the customers in so they can survive.

Text Vivianna Cheong Photos Denzel Calangi

The COVID-19 pandemic not only took many lives worldwide in 2020 but it also battered economies across the globe. This included retail outlets in practically every country. Plenty of businesses in Macao experienced financial losses too but, for some, the challenges were already written on the wall before COVID-19 ever raised its head. This includes independent bookstores – an age-old niche industry that started its decline in Macao years before the pandemic added further misery.

Most of the blame when it comes to the decline of the physical bookstore is laid squarely at the feet of the virtual one. Giant online retailers, coupled with the advent of ebooks, have presented so much cutthroat competition that it looks like the independent bookstore will never win, particularly as the younger generations favour their mobiles, tablets and laptops over that simple pleasure of holding a physical book. Prior to the pandemic, some countries announced a slight revival of the independent bookstore industry but, on the whole, the trend over the past couple of decades has been of slow decline and many closures. And this is even before we mention the pressure from the big physical retail chains – some of them just an hour away in nearby Hong Kong.

Bookshops, however, have upped their games over recent years by offering online sales, packed events and book launch schedules, talks, coffee and cakes, stationery options and even sales of local community souvenirs. In Macao, the trend is no different, as its stores have been doing all they can to survive. But a readership made up of a diverse range of language preferences

alongside the cost of some property rents in the city make Macao arguably one of the toughest places in the world for an independent bookstore to flourish. And now, following a pandemic-stricken 2020, the challenges are many for the handful of surviving stores in the SAR.

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*It's hard for bookshops to survive nowadays but some of Macao's local ones have found their own way to get along, like us.*

– Anson Ng, owner of Pin-to Livros & Musica

But a local indie bookstore's heart beats strong. Dotted modestly around town, these shops are destinations in their own right and they are enjoyed as much by their loyal patrons as they are by casual visitors and tourists. They learned years ago that selling books is not the only way to make money so some of these vendors offer an entire package of goods and services to keep the punters coming back. We speak to five local indie bookstores in Macao to find out how they stay relevant, stay popular and stay in business.

## Tomes and tunes

Pin-to Livros & Musica is just a two-minute walk away from the Ruins of St Paul's, so it's certainly in an excellent spot to attract foot traffic. And it's worth the visit as this store sports books covering a wide range of subjects like the arts, architecture, history and contemporary literature, as well as a plethora of vinyl records. It's all quirky and modern and, despite having, in part, a Portuguese name, most of the books here are in the Chinese language – but there are still reads in Portuguese and English available to buy.

Due to its sophisticated 'n' quirky vibe, Pin-to – which literally means 'where' in Cantonese – has garnered a dedicated local following over the years. It originally opened on the second floor of a tiny building in the busy Largo do Senado in 2003 and grew from there. In the early to mid-2010s, it had become a place of pilgrimage for bookworms who would climb a staircase flanked by two walls covered in local arts event posters on their way in before spending time listening to cool music and browsing the shelves once inside.

In 2017, the bookshop moved to the community area near Praça de Luís de Camões, shying away from the madding crowds but still taking advantage of the footfall due to its proximity to St Paul's. However, owner Anson Ng, a jazz enthusiast and expert, reveals that the tourist footfall was not the reason for the move. On the contrary, he says the old site received more holidaymakers. "It used to be packed with tourists," he says, "but we wanted to reach our target readers – the local community. It



was the right move. We also made many changes to how we operate and it worked. We're here for anyone who wants to pick up something inspiring – but, most of all, we're here for our loyal community.”

Many businesses will cite high rents as their main challenge – and many will have a point – but Ng says that Pin-to's rents don't break the bank. He feels 'thankful' that the shop 'has reached a plateau' of 'relatively low rents' due to 'a supportive landlord who respects our industry'. He also says that 'our supportive readers' bring in enough money for the business to be turning over a decent profit while other bookstores are feeling the pinch. "It's hard for bookshops to survive nowadays," he admits, "but some of Macao's local ones seem to have found their own way to get along, like us. We all have our own characteristics.”

"It's quite funny and ironic that our extra offering is music," continues Ng. "The sales of CDs or records started declining even earlier than books did because of the popularity of online downloading. But we still sell music well. We pick the music we sell based on our own interests, which we believe matches the interests of our customer base. We are doing okay." Ng says that the store has changed with the times, though, as it offers a swift online booking service for recent releases. He also claims that one of the shop's biggest competitors is online bookstore and one of Taiwan's largest internet retailers, books.com.tw, also known as Pok'elai. "A few years ago, when they started to target Hong Kong and Macao readers," he says, "they launched free delivery

to the cities for a while, under some specific terms and conditions. Many booksellers went crazy. But we adapted with our online service through social media and now we try our best to deliver books or music as quickly as possible.”

### Picture books and storytelling

Located just off the busy Avenida do Ouvidor Arriaga, Cuchi-Cuchi Bookhouse is a parent's dream. This small, quirky bookshop that runs weekend storytelling events for kids specialises in Chinese and English children's books, arts and crafts. There are toys for the young ones to play with inside the store and, on the whole, it's just the perfect place for mum and dad to take the tots for some family time. Owner Lily Wong stocks plenty of picture books in the space. She believes these books carry plenty of life lessons for kids. "I used to work in a Hong Kong church as a social worker," she says. "The church used picture books to help young people deal with emotions and learn to respect others. It was magical. Cuchi-Cuchi also does this. It is all about respect for wisdom. I want to spread this message.”

Wong, who grew up in Macao, returned to the city a few years back after spending time as a social worker in Hong Kong. She then decided to do something a little different with her career. She started up a 'book bike', which she would take to local parks in a bid to spread the message of reading. With help from teenage volunteers from a community group, she would ride the bike, laden with tomes, to a park and introduce people to reading, suggesting good books for them.

She says it was 'a great feeling' to 'share the wisdom of reading' with random individuals but it wasn't long before she wanted her own space and also wanted to focus on toddlers, children, parents and young people. So in 2018 she opened Cuchi-Cuchi.

Wong's role at the store aside from owner is storyteller, promoter and store operator all rolled into one. She runs regular storytelling and craft-making sessions for kids which, at the same time, give the parents a chance to browse through the store's picture books and select some of the titles they can take home for the youngsters. "I want to show parents that the story within the pages of each picture book continues beyond these sessions," she says. "You can read a story numerous times and learn different things. If you pick up a book and read it with your kids, they will develop good reading habits. With encouragement, they can also learn how to

concentrate despite the temptation of nearby electronic devices.”

Wong says the pandemic hit her store hard last year. She says it was a 'double whammy' for her as she closed the shop for a while, meaning she wasn't able to sell any books or organise any of her regular storytelling events. But she says that business has picked up over the past few months and her events are again in full flow. "It was hard when we had to close," says Wong, "but now we're doing great again. Sure, bookstores in Macao and across the world have been on the decline for many years now, so if you want a solid business you have to go the extra mile. Cuchi-Cuchi has succeeded because we don't just sell children's books. We put on events and create a community of local families who then support us. We'll be here for a long time yet!"



Young children enjoy a workshop at Cuchi-Cuchi Bookhouse

Image courtesy of Cuchi-Cuchi Bookhouse

### Quirky vibes and a playground

Just a few minutes away from the historical St Lazarus’ Church is a bookstore that delights children and adults alike. Júbilo 31 Books is where design and arts fans head to for a browse or deep thinking session, and young readers hit up for its extensive range of picture books. The indie space takes on an edgy air as it sits alongside quirky coffee shops and vintage stores in this hip neighbourhood. Mainly Chinese language products are on sale, although there are a good few English options too and the store even has a bijou indoor children’s playground for the little ones. The name means ‘joy’ in English and it is indeed a joyful space.

Júbilo 31 is run by a team of three who say they all believe in the power of visuals. One of the owners, freelance graphic designer Chiwai Cheang – better known as ‘CK’ – is a big fan of picture books and he says the store stocks plenty of these for kids and adults. “Everyone should read picture books,” he says. “It is frustrating that picture books are still widely regarded as comics or something for entertainment. They can be hugely educational. Visual images play an important role in our lives. They are everywhere and they convey messages and meanings. In our bookstore, we try to attract readers by connecting picture book visuals with life.”

Last year, under the theme of ‘city and visuals’, the bookshop invited local illustrators and professionals to lead a workshop series called ‘Read A(nd) Painting Collections | City: Past, Present and Future’. Cheang says: “In these workshops, we returned to the



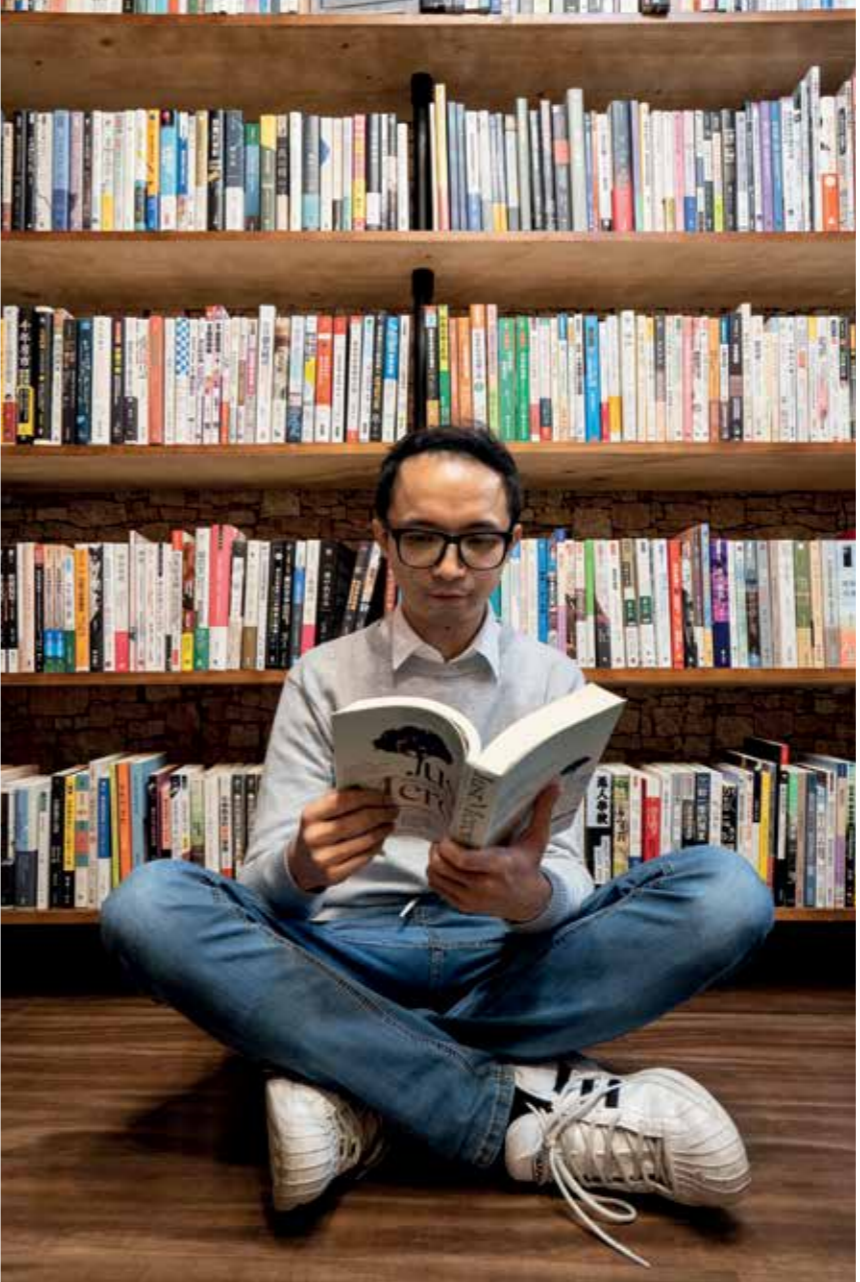
‘Read A(nd) Painting Collections | City: Past, Present and Future’ workshop at Júbilo 31 Books

basic concepts of drawing, reading and illustration, and we presented accessible concepts of a city. The participants gained interest in these concepts and, as a result, started to read more of our books, especially the picture books.”

Cheang says it’s a challenging time for bookstores worldwide but, like with Cuchi-Cuchi, ‘you must go the extra mile’. The workshop series was a great example of this, making book sales as a result, and Cheang says there will be more workshops planned this year. He also notes that Júbilo 31’s ‘plus’ is not actually the books – many of which, for adults, are on design, arts or culture – but the shop’s ‘intellectual concepts’. He says: “Books provide all kinds of wisdom in life. They are not only

references or textbooks that are used as tools. We deliberately avoid selling textbooks.”

The bookshop, according to Cheang, also plays a role in promoting local culture. For instance, the designer once drew a map of local graveyards and sold it to both locals and tourists. This sort of endeavour is another example of ‘going the extra mile’ to survive, he says. Cheang notes that the map ‘drew a lot of attention from tourists from, say, mainland China or Japan’ but ‘hardly any attention from people from Macao’. “Some local people lack enthusiasm and confidence in our local culture,” he says. “They tend to seek excitement and inspiration from the world outside but not within. But Macao



Jeff Lo reading a book at his Slow Tune Book Shop store

is a treasure. I hope to create a connection between our local culture and local people through events and initiatives like the map. Our city is worth this sort of local love and attention.”

### Reading and writing

Literally just down the road from Júbilo 31 – and a far more modest affair – is Slow Tune Book Shop. This

relaxing store in Rua do Pato stocks plenty of Chinese books for all ages, as well as some Macao souvenirs. It also specialises in calligraphic materials and has some much-sought-after stationery brands on the shelves, including Lan Lan Cat from Taiwan. Graphic designer Jeff Lo and his wife – both passionate books, crafts and calligraphy lovers – founded the shop in 2016.

Lo admits that it is difficult

running an indie bookstore. “It is hard,” he says. “We do have passionate readers and customers but we are not talking about a tremendous amount of people. Our location is not perfect. We even once had no visitors in an entire day. It was frustrating.” Lo says he is ‘extremely thankful’ to his loyal customers for their support and he also claims that the store manages to survive because of the events it offers. “We do sell books but we know we have to offer more to survive,” he says. “For instance, we offer calligraphy workshops that are popular among the 20s and 30s age groups. We can charge for these and they don’t just teach the participants calligraphic skills but also give them a chance to relax in our space. In 2019, Taiwanese calligrapher Ya Yeh led an excellent calligraphy workshop and it was full in no time!”

The books on Slow Tune’s shelves are mostly from across Asia, as are the stationery and calligraphic products. “We sell brands from places like Hong Kong, Taiwan and Malaysia,” says Lo. “But now we see a growing number of local brands emerging and some of these are really creative, such as book wraps, bags and handkerchiefs from Forest and cat-themed bags from Osanna Design.” Lo says that he has been planning to create his own products in the shop. However, due to the pandemic, he hasn’t been able to get around to it yet. “Business has obviously been tough due to the pandemic,” he says, “but we are starting to see a healthy upturn and now we’re probably going to be running events again, we hope everything should be good again as we enter 2021.”

Paintings and pages

Universal Gallery & Bookstore is all about both the reads and the arts. Located in the Taipa Houses-Museum No 3 along the tranquil Avenida da Praia, this gallery-and-bookstore offers a wide range of tomes on humanities subjects, social sciences, current affairs and art and design in both Chinese and English. There’s also an exhibition space here that’s used for arts displays and workshops, and there are decorative paintings and locally designed souvenirs for sale throughout the two-storey space.

The shop has only been open since 2019 after owner Ruby Chen got permission to transform the government space into a gallery and bookstore. In the same year, the

gallery featured nine exhibitions from local artists and organisations including one by the Hong Kong Teaching Resources Centre but last year there were much less, of course, due to the pandemic. Chen says that the gallery itself is a source of profit as exhibitors rent the space for a period but she also says that her books sell well, so business is good.

“Our public libraries provide great services, so many people in Macao tend to borrow books instead of buying them,” says Chen. “However, we do see a growing interest in the sale of books published by the government, especially those by the Cultural Institute. They explore local history and culture so we always have some of them in stock here.” Regarding reading habits, Chen says: “Many

local readers do not go to bookshops. It’s not part of their lifestyle. But we hope to keep on offering what we find interesting and we hope that many locals will find us, follow us and come into our store regularly. It is challenging running a bookstore in 2021 but, like the books themselves, we don’t see an end to this industry right now as there are still just too many people out there who prefer the real thing to the virtual one.”

Yuen-yi Lo, an artist, writer and lecturer at the University of Macau, once exhibited her work at Universal. She says that the city’s bookshops are good places for ‘creatives and readers to explore what’s out there’ in a more hands-on way than you can do online. “There are not many independent bookstores in Macao,” she says, “but what we do have is to be treasured.”

Running an indie bookstore in Macao in 2021 is a challenge – there’s no debate in that. The internet and the giant book retailers are an ongoing threat to the future of the industry worldwide, let alone in Macao. But every store in the city is digging deep and trying to offer something new and unique – usually in the form of events – in a bid to keep the readers coming in and buying their wares. The pandemic hasn’t helped but as we enter 2021, each of the store owners we’ve interviewed is optimistic and is already seeing business getting back on track. As locals look to help their nearby independent shops survive this year, perhaps a new chapter is being written for Macao’s bookstores, especially those who think outside of the box and offer something fresh, exciting and immersive. ●



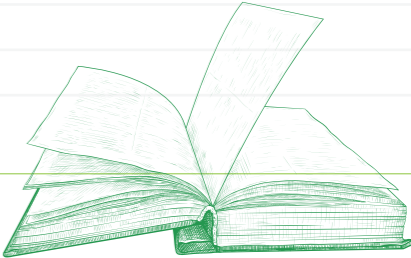
Image courtesy of Universal Gallery & Bookstore

Universal Gallery & Bookstore

The index

Here’s a list of bookstores in Macao and where to find them...

- **Chinese Baptist Press, Macao Bookstore**
    - 📍 3 Rue da Madre Terezina
    - ☎ (853) 2832 3476
    - 🌐 facebook.com/macau.bookstore
    - 📖 Chinese and some English children’s books on sale
  - **Chu San Book Shop**
    - 📍 11E Rua de Sacadura Cabral
    - ☎ (853) 2842 1307
    - 📖 Chinese and a handful of English children’s books on sale
  - **Cuchi-Cuchi Bookhouse**
    - 📍 12 Avenida do Ouvidor Arriaga
    - ☎ (853) 6881 6286
    - 🌐 facebook.com/cuchicuchibookhouse
    - 📖 Chinese and a handful of English picture books on sale
  - **Elite Book Store**
    - 📍 10 Rua da Palha
    - ☎ (853) 2836 5532
    - 📖 Chinese and English books on sale
  - **Livraria Portuguesa**
    - 📍 16-18 Rua de São Domingos
    - ☎ (853) 2835 6537
    - 🌐 facebook.com/portuguesebookshop
    - 📖 Portuguese, English and Chinese books on sale
  - **Livraria São Paulo**
    - 📍 11 Travessa do Bispo
    - ☎ (853) 2832 3957
    - 📖 Chinese, English and Portuguese books on sale, mainly on religion and education
  - **Livraria Seng Kwong**
    - 📍 3-7 Calçada Do Monte
    - ☎ (853) 2837 5570 and
    - 📍 Meng Tak Building, Macao Polytechnic Institute, Rua de Luis Gonzaga Gomes
    - ☎ (853) 8599 3110
    - 🌐 skbooks.com.mo
    - 📖 Chinese and a handful of English books on sale
- **Livraria Uma**
    - 📍 47 Rua De Pedro Coutinho
    - ☎ (853) 2858 1418
    - 🌐 facebook.com/1stbookcentre
    - 📖 Chinese and English books on sale
  - **Museum Shop, Macao Museum of Art**
    - 📍 Avenida Xian Xing Hai
    - ☎ (853) 8797 7243
    - 🌐 mam.gov.mo
    - 📖 Publications in Chinese and English
  - **Plaza Cultural Macau**
    - 📍 32-G Avenida Do Conselheiro Ferreira De Almeida
    - ☎ (853) 2833 8561
    - 🌐 pcmbook.com
    - 📖 Chinese and English books on sale
  - **Pin-to Livros & Musica**
    - 📍 47 Rua de Coelho do Amaral
    - ☎ (853) 2833 0909
    - 🌐 facebook.com/pintolivros
    - 📖 Chinese and a handful of English books on sale
  - **Slow Tune Book Shop**
    - 📍 18 Rua do Pato
    - ☎ (853) 6228 2820
    - 🌐 facebook.com/slowtune
    - 📖 Chinese books on sale
  - **Universal Gallery & Bookstore**
    - 📍 3 Avenida da Praia
    - ☎ (853) 6324 3737
    - 🌐 universal-artspace.com
    - 📖 Chinese and a few English books on sale
  - **Weng Tak Bookstore**
    - 📍 25 Rua de Martinho Montenegro
    - ☎ (853) 6636 5433
    - 📖 Chinese and a handful of English books on sale



# Running the show

**Over the past decade, the Macao Glee Club has grown out of the living room of its founder into a magnificent theatrical beast. Refusing to let the pandemic prevent its performers from treading the boards, its 10th year was its biggest yet – and its organisers are looking forward to even more drama in the future.**

Text **Inara Sim** Photos **Denzel Calangi**



Cast members from the Macao Glee Club strike a theatrical pose

Everyone back to your starting points, let's go one more time, from the top!" calls Emma Seward, founder and director of the Macao Glee Club, at the top of her voice. The kids on stage break into a rendition of 'The Polar Express' – the title track from the Christmas film of the same name – as up to 150 other members of the club, ranging in age from three to 63 years old, make their way down the aisles of the theatre, singing and dancing, before filing up to the stage en masse. It's a glorious sight and testament to how this Macao club has grown in size, strength and ability over the past decade.

That scene was at a rehearsal for the Macao Glee Club's spectacular Christmas show that took place at the city's Parisian Theatre last month. It was a performance that celebrated the troupe's 10th anniversary – a marvellous achievement after Seward set it up in 2010 'with the purpose of introducing kids and adults to the wonderful world of performing arts'. Over the years, the club has run regular workshops, classes and shows in Macao, helping to develop local talents and prepare them for the arts industry in the city and beyond.

Much like its American TV show namesake 'Glee', the Macao troupe grew out of humble beginnings. "I literally started with three kids," admits Seward. "Two of them were mine and we were working in our front living room. We were new to

Macao and I realised the city offered good ballet and hip-hop classes but there was nothing in between. No jazz. No musical theatre. No contemporary classes. I've lived my life as a dancer, so I wanted to show that avenue to my kids. I wanted to show them how much fun it can be."

“

***Glee has really set the benchmark in Macao for kids who want to perform.***

– Joel Fesalbon

Seward is an acclaimed director, producer and choreographer who has worked with some of the world's biggest names in music and theatre. In her native UK, Europe, Australia and Asia, she's worked for MTV, performed concerts with the likes of Whitney Houston and Elton John, choreographed the Hong Kong Rugby Sevens' opening ceremony and has even worked on theatre shows with celebrated Chinese director Zhang Yimou. But starting a club for young people was a whole new venture for her and her family. After a few informal living room



Macau Glee Club's founder, Emma Seward

classes, she turned to her husband Tomos Griffiths – until recently the executive creative director for gaming operator Sands China – for his help in organising a show at the Sands Theatre. “It just snowballed overnight,” she says. “We arranged an audition and my neighbour Gail Wallace’s teenage children brought all their friends along. Once we did that first show, we suddenly had 120 kids signing up for classes.”

The club needed a name. At the time, TV series ‘Glee’ had popularised musical theatre and the ‘show choir’ concept to a new generation of kids and teens, so Seward says the name felt like a no-brainer. “We were all addicted to that show,” she says. “It was the perfect name for what we wanted to do.” The club then grew quickly and with support from partners and sponsors, its popularity hasn’t wavered since those early days.

Today, the club is made up of local kids who hail from more than 20 different countries and, of course, Macao – a reflection of the cultural diversity in the city. Three of its first starry-eyed students have gone on to dance professionally and now even teach their own classes at the club. “We were 13 or 14 when we joined Glee,” says one of them, Ruperto Abelgas. “We were already breakdancing, so seeing another side of it – the performance side –



A dancer performs in front of the cast at the club's ‘Made in Macau: Rock Thru the Ages’ show in June 2018 at The Parisian Macao Theatre

was really good for us. After a few years, Emma saw our crew dancing together and gave us the opportunity to start teaching hip-hop classes.” Fellow Glee alum and now teacher, Joel Fesalbon, agrees. “She pushed us more and more, and made us better,” he says. “Glee has really set the benchmark in Macao for kids who want to perform.”

The club’s success is highlighted every year when a handful of Glee’s young performers compete in the Dance World Cup (DWC) and often bring home gold medals in their respective categories. Then there are other successes like former Glee member Enzo Hilaire becoming a finalist in France’s ‘The Voice Kids’

talent show last year, João Constancia becoming a member of popular BoybandPH in the Philippines and Trae Robin acting in top Australian movies and on TV. And COVID-19 has failed to stop the show going on – quite the reverse, in fact. Through the pandemic last year, the club not only kept on rolling but even expanded its schedule. “We decided to do summer workshops,” says Griffiths, “which would never have been possible in other years as so many people are usually away over the summer. With COVID-19 keeping us all here in Macao, people were looking for things to do – and we were able to give that to them.”

Seward also had more personal

### MEET THE CAST

**Orlando Vas,**  
22 years old



Having recently returned from studying music overseas, Orlando Vas has rejoined the club he was once a member of after a 10-year hiatus. “Glee really gave me the chance to explore different styles of music,” he says, “and helped me discover my passion for opera. It really leaves me speechless to be back here and on stage again with Glee after so many years.”

### MEET THE CAST

**Carina Shestakova Tavares,**  
11 years old



Carina Shestakova Tavares joined Glee in 2019 and is currently enrolled in six of the club's classes. She is a talented young dancer. "I really want to be a dancer or an actress when I get older," she says. "Glee really helps to develop my skills in both areas. It's not only fun but the training we receive is amazing."

time to devote to the young performers last year as the travel restrictions which were put in place limited her work commitments outside the region. "It really allowed me to be able to teach more and to be totally engaged with all my classes," she says. Griffiths, a world-renowned performer and former Phantom of the Opera star in the UK's West End, joined his wife at the helm of the club last year. He adds: "We're living through a global pandemic. It's a difficult and tough time. There's been a lot of negativity around, so it's been great to have something positive for the kids to focus on. We've got to try and keep things as normal as possible

for them, which luckily we've been able to do in Macao."

Glee represents different things to different people. Some kids will forge a career out of singing and dancing while others simply revel in the new friendships and community atmosphere. Abby Barry, whose daughters Harper and Marlee both attend the club's classes, says it's about more than just dance. "The teachers are so passionate and really bring the essence of joy that dance represents," she says. "But it's not just the technical side of dance that they've been learning about. It's experiencing the warmth of friendships, the skill of

collaborating as a team member and receiving encouragement from their peers which has helped build their self confidence as performers and individuals."

It's also given some young – and young-at-heart – talents the chance to perform on stage together. Mila Just and her daughter Sofiya joined the club last year. For the mum, it was a chance to get back into the pastime she loves and, as an added bonus, she could do it together with her daughter. "As an adult," she says, "it's not that easy to find dance classes in Macao. I think it's amazing that Glee is now offering adult classes – it doesn't matter what

your age, your background or your experience is – they give everyone the opportunity to dance."

So what does the future hold for the club as it enters its second decade? "When the borders open we would love to get guest teachers in to run workshops," says Griffiths, "like West End and Broadway stars who are experts in their fields." Seward adds: "We'll keep it fresh and exciting. We'd also love to have more local kids join. Everyone is welcome! Most importantly, though, we'll keep giving them these performance opportunities and moments on stage, which is truly the best way to learn." ●

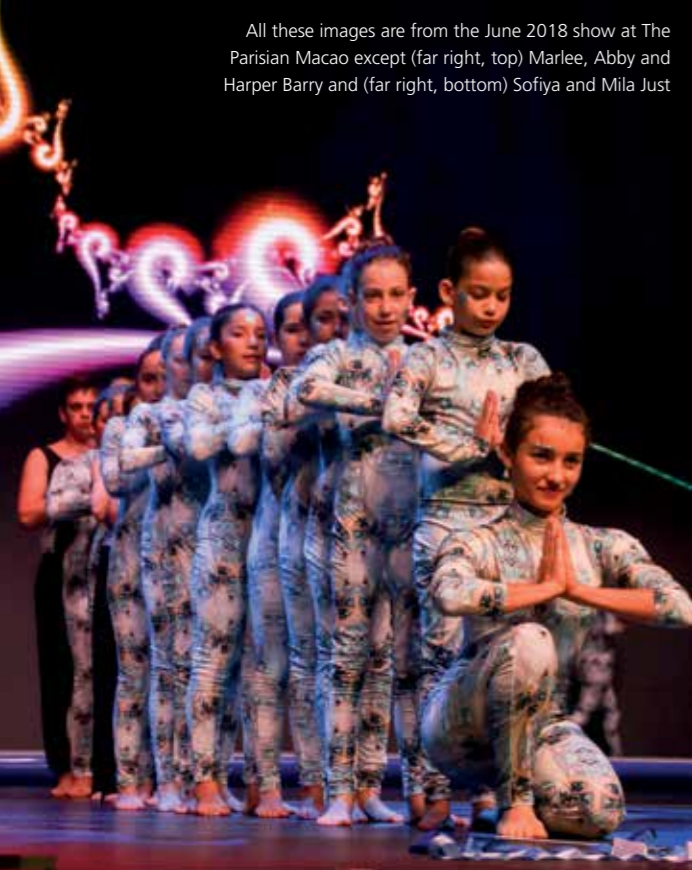
### MEET THE CAST

**Ines Choi,**  
seven years old



This little girl may be new to Glee but her love for the club has grown quickly. "Dancing in Glee is so cool," she says. "You get to do cartwheels and solos. I've never done drama before but the acting and singing classes are so much fun. It really feels like I'm in a movie!"

All these images are from the June 2018 show at The Parisian Macao except (far right, top) Marlee, Abby and Harper Barry and (far right, bottom) Sofiya and Mila Just





# State of the art

**Many painters – whether born and bred in the city or residing here later in life – have lived, worked and created beautiful pieces of art in Macao. We choose the 16 most recognisable painting talents from over hundreds of years of art history.**

Text Aaina Bhargava

For more than 450 years, Macao has seen many great painters – whether born locally or moving here from lands afar – setting up their easels on its shores, depicting the city in all its complexity and documenting its rich history. The SAR’s heritage, location and diversity have allowed for countless cultural exchanges to occur over the years and it has often been a hotbed of artists who have seen Macao as a haven, a space for transition or even escape – but mainly a beautiful place to capture on canvas. Over the years, the city has cultivated its own notable art scene with painters creating works that reflect the city itself in terms of redefining identity.

It would be easy to say that Macao’s most famous artists have all hailed from across the world and moved to the city for a period but in reality, the bedrock of Macao’s ever-changing styles, influences and

works are just as much Chinese as they are foreign. Maria Margarida Saraiva, who works with the art promotion and education group at the Macao Museum of Art, under the Department of Exhibitions and Museums, says: “Since Macao’s administration was Portuguese until 1999, the majority of the documentation available – at least for public collections – is written in Portuguese. For this reason, it may seem to us that foreign artists [like] Giuseppe Castiglione, George Chinnery, Auguste Borget, Marciano António Baptista and George Smirnoff are more relevant than other Chinese artists whose histories are lesser known.”

Saraiva says that alongside those Macao greats, there are as many Chinese painters over the years in the city who have equally influenced the scene. “They were developing their work in different

timeframes,” she says, “reporting to different art traditions and therefore producing a diverse body of works which influenced, more or less, the local art [scene], certainly in very different ways.” Although there are many painters who were born and raised or at least lived in Macao for a period of time and who played a significant role in shaping its art history, here’s our list of the city’s 16 most recognisable – right up to the present day...



**Giuseppe Castiglione**  
Painter and architect,  
born 1688 in Italy,  
died in 1766

Known for his hybrid painting style fusing Eastern and Western traditional techniques, Castiglione’s Jesuit background took him from Milan to China in the 18th century, by way of Macao. This is where he was exposed to

GIUSEPPE CASTIGLIONE

*‘The Qianlong Emperor in Ceremonial Armour on Horseback’*  
1758

Chinese art and first developed his signature style through infusing Chinese materials like silk with Western painting techniques he had already learned under the tutelage of Andrea Pozzo, a famous member of the Society of Jesus. Castiglione joined the society at the age of 19, primarily doing wall paintings at Jesuit churches, which he continued during his short but critical time in Macao. Upon reaching China, he adopted a Chinese name, Lang Shining. His distinctive style caught the attention of the Qianlong Emperor and he became a respected painter of his court.



2

**George Chinnery**  
*Painter and illustrator, born 1774 in England, died in 1852*

Perhaps Macao's best known painter, Chinnery left London in 1801 and headed east until settling in Macao in 1825. Along the way, he painted scenes in British-occupied India and in Hong Kong but perhaps his best works were created in Macao, where he stayed until his death in 1852. He readily found work in Macao painting portraits of Western businessmen and expatriates, as well as Chinese merchants. One of the first people to depict life at that time in Macao, Chinnery painted landscapes in addition to his portraits and drawings of local people engaged in their daily activities. He became a big influence in Macao in his day and undoubtedly influenced future generations of painters in the city and further afield.



3

**Auguste Borget**  
*Painter and illustrator, born in 1808 in France, died in 1877*

Borget was a French artist and painter, who



like many of his contemporaries made his way around the world as an artist documenting scenes of the time, including in Hong Kong and Macao. It was in Macao – where he lived for eight months – that he encountered Chinnery and his work, probably learning from him in the process. It was believed that Borget's work improved after meeting the artist, particularly in the area of figurative drawing and painting, of which Chinnery was a master. The influence of Chinnery's simplistic caricature-like figures is felt in Borget's scenes of Macao life.

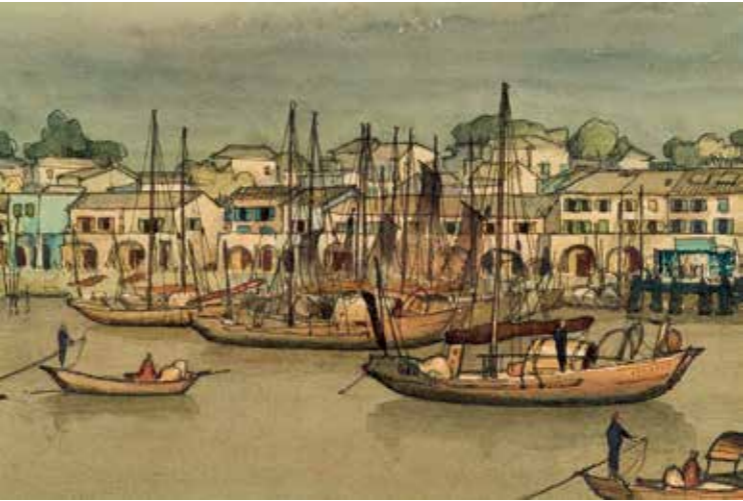
His art series on the A-Ma Temple – a structure he described as the 'best architecture ever seen' – became a highlight among all his works.



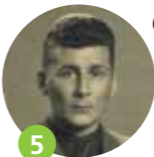
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**Marciano António Baptista**  
*Painter and illustrator, born in 1826 in Macao, died in 1896*

Baptista is regarded as one of Macao's best 19th century painters and is another talent who benefitted from Chinnery's tutelage. Born in Macao, he served as an apprentice to Chinnery from



a young age. Nineteenth century English landscape tradition is deeply evident in Baptista's work, who became best known for his tranquil watercolour paintings of the incredible scenery around the city, as well as for his paintings of street scenes and historical drawings. This translates into his depictions of Hong Kong, where he lived for the second half of his life. A multifaceted artist, he even picked up photography towards the end of the century and, years after his death, his paintings became truly celebrated.



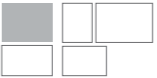
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**George Vitalievich Smirnov**  
*Painter and architect, born in 1903 in Russia, died in 1947*

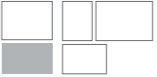
Hailing from Vladivostok in Siberia, George Smirnov fled his hometown at the age of 12 due to the Russian Revolution and ended up in Harbin in China. As a result of the impending Japanese invasion during the Second World War, he was forced to leave China and ultimately made his way to Macao in 1944. An architect-cum-painter, Smirnov was resourceful

and relied heavily on selling his paintings, teaching the art to local women and designing theatrical sets in order to make a living. Although his time in Macao was brief, his ephemeral watercolours of landscapes and landmarks around the city cemented his status as an important artist in Macao at the time. He was also commissioned by the then Mayor of Macao, Pedro José Lobo, to paint the city from a range of different perspectives. He tragically committed suicide in Hong Kong in 1947.

**GEORGE CHINNERY**  
*'Sampans and Tanka Boats off Macao'*  
mid-19th century



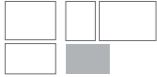
**AUGUSTE BORGET**  
*'A-Ma Temple'*  
1840



**GEORGE VITALIEVICH SMIRNOFF**  
*'Guia Lighthouse'*  
1945



**LUÍS DEMÉE**  
*'Macao Inner Harbour'*  
1959



**MARCIANO ANTÓNIO BAPTISTA**  
*'The Fort of D Maria II'*  
circa 1875

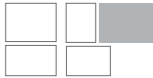


Image courtesy of the Macao Museum of Art

Image courtesy of the Macao Museum of Art

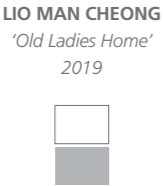
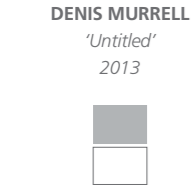


Image courtesy of Denis Murrell



**Luís Demée**  
*Painter, born in 1929 in Macao, died in 2014*  
Once dubbed the ‘greatest visual artist in Macao’, Luís Demée was taught by his master and friend George Smirnoff during the 1940s. He honed his contemporary painting skills after that and held his first solo exhibition in Macao in 1951. Just two years later, he was studying the medium at the Lisbon School of Fine Arts in Portugal. He went on to both study and teach in different countries over many years. Demée initially drew buildings and streets in Macao but his passion soon became the city’s port and the sea. His painting became abstract too, so there are many works out there that incorporate these themes in a contemporary style. He won a plethora of arts awards and his watercolours and abstract scenes were celebrated across the world before his death in Portugal in 2014, aged 85 years old.

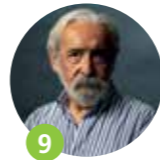


**Mio Pang Fei**  
*Painter and installation artist, born in 1936 in Shanghai, died last year*  
Macao lost a contemporary painting pioneer on 13 November when Mio Pang Fei died aged 84. Enthusiasts of his extensive body of works have been in mourning since. Truly essential to the development of contemporary art in Macao – he represented the city at the 2015 Venice Biennale – Mio has been described as laying ‘a cornerstone for contemporary arts’ in the SAR. Born in Shanghai, the artist arrived in Macao in 1982, where he later nurtured young talents at the

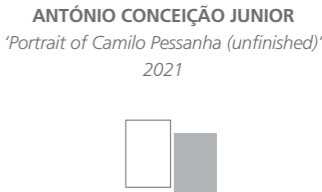
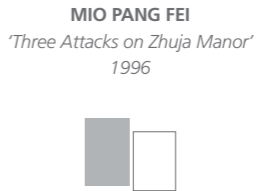
Macao Polytechnic Institute. In the city, he found the freedom to develop what became known as his trademark style – a fusion of Chinese calligraphy and Western abstraction, termed ‘neo-orientalism’, one that he infused in his paintings and installation art around town. He reminded people through his works to exit from Western perspectives of the East when they look at local art.



**Denis Murrell**  
*Painter, born in 1947 in Australia*  
Vibrant and colourful, many of Murrell’s paintings boast a distinctive look. A result of blending acrylic paint, ink and tissue paper – a technique the artist chanced upon after accidentally spilling paint and wiping it up with toilet paper in 1991 – these unique pieces have become cherished in Macao. A resident of the city since 1989, the Australia-born artist regards himself as a ‘Macao artist’ as he’s developed his signature aesthetic in the city after revitalising his painting career. Murrell’s love for art began with abstract painting as a teenager, which he always preferred to conventional styles such as landscapes or figurative works. In addition to his own practice, he teaches art, nurturing a whole new generation of potential Murrells.



**António Conceição Junior**  
*Painter, illustrator, writer, photographer and designer, born in 1951 in Macao*  
Perhaps one of the most prolific and multifaceted artists in the city,



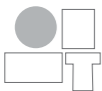
**Lio Man Cheong**  
*Painter, born in 1951 in Zhuhai*  
Lio is one of the most celebrated painters living in Macao today. He has designed award-winning postage stamps in the city and exhibited his works across the globe. He’s also designed marketing materials for street advertisements and taught art in schools to young talents. But he’s mostly known for his incredible watercolours and oil works, where light and colour play in harmony and themes of space, memory and time are explored. Lio, who has lived in Macao since he was a young boy, regularly exhibits in the city alongside teaching and influencing its next generation of young painters.

Image courtesy of António Conceição Junior

Image courtesy of the Macao Museum of Art



**UNG VAI MENG**  
'The Last Song'  
1989



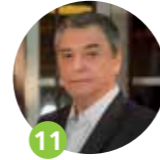
**KONSTANTIN BESSMERTNY**  
'Koh Phangan Full Moon Party was Canceled'  
2020



**FORTES PAKEONG SEQUEIRA**  
'An Unawakened Dream'  
2013



**CARLOS MARREIROS**  
'Come and Guide us, Archangel, to the Nebula /  
From Beyond Flimsy, Shiny!'  
1993



### Carlos Marreiros

*Painter, illustrator and architect,  
born in 1957 in Macao*

A celebrated and award-winning architect in Macao, Marreiros represented the city at the 55th Venice Biennale with his artistic piece 'Pato.Men'.

Aside from his urban planning work, his paintings and drawings have been exhibited around town and won many plaudits over the years. Highly intricate and meticulously rendered, his captivating pieces often combine bright colours, text and layered imagery, producing a visual commentary. He has also completed a series of paintings inspired by his sketchbooks which document his travels and inspirations. The content of Marreiros' work often reflects the artist's ideal of Western and Chinese cultures existing in harmony – a microcosm of today's Macao.



### Ung Vai Meng

*Painter and illustrator, born in 1958 in Macao*

Ung Vai Meng came from humble beginnings in Macao but studied drawing and watercolour painting under the late Kam Cheong Leng. After winning a grant from the government to study fine arts in Portugal, Ung Vai Meng further developed his signature style of painting. Rich colours, abstract figures and motifs and sophisticated compositions – his charged canvases emanate energy. Ung, who has held many solo exhibitions both locally and across the world, has been recognised for his cultural contributions to the city by Macao's government and is also the former president of the Cultural Affairs Bureau.



### Konstantin Bessmertny

*Painter and mixed media artist, born in 1964  
in the former USSR*

Bessmertny is perhaps the best known contemporary artist living in Macao today.

In fact, he's been described as one of the most distinguished artists working in Asia right now. Originally from Blagoveshchensk in the former USSR, the painter, who moved to Macao in 1992, characterises the city as a haven of sorts for artists – he says that 'for many, Macao was and is a place to transit through' but 'for me, as an artist, it became a place to escape from the rat race'. Looking at this list, that rings true for many artists. Rigorously trained in fine arts for nine years in the former USSR, Bessmertny paintings – among the other media he works with – seamlessly combine high technical skill and satire. References from history, philosophy and pop culture regularly feature in his work. "I'm inspired by the classics – philosophy, arts and education – but I am a contemporary artist and I like to experiment with things [like] technology and new media," concludes Bessmertny.

## French connection

Alice Kok is a current Macao artist who deserves a special mention in our feature



Alice Kok, a mixed media artist who was born in Macao in 1978, is worthy of a place in this feature as she is not quite a painter but nevertheless one of

today's best-known artists in the city. She moved from her hometown to France in 1998 before returning in 2006 and going on to be celebrated for her local works. Kok literally learned her art in France and honed it in Macao, representing the city at 2011's 54th Venice Biennale with her work 'Passing-Green Island'. Photography, installation, film, drawing – the artist's work ranges in medium but is always conceptual, often incorporating the tenets of Buddhism and meditation into her pieces, as well as notions of multiculturalism. She does sometimes incorporate painting techniques into her varied works which almost always encourages the viewer to stop and think. Kok, who is also an art curator, teacher and writer, held an exhibition that explored the intricacies of cross-cultural identities and dynamics at the Art For All Society Macau gallery. It finished last month.



'Pictogram'  
2018

Image courtesy of Alice Kok



### Fortes Pakeong Sequeira

Painter, illustrator, designer and musician, born in 1978 in Macao

The literal 'rockstar' of the Macanese art world, Sequeira is a multi-talented creative.

He had an often troubled youth in the city and in Hong Kong, where he spent a short time in jail and was involved with gangsters, but he later put all this behind him back in Macao. He was once a graphic designer and this influence is evident in his drawings and paintings which often feature heavy print graphics, sometimes resembling graffiti and street art aesthetics. With a passion for Macao – his mother is of mixed Sino-Portuguese lineage and his father is Chinese – Fortes aims to promote the city and its culture through his work. He does so often by engaging with both space and site through live painting.



### Peggy Chan

Painter, photographer and mixed media artist, born in the 1980s in Macao

Chan was born and raised in Macao and, despite now living in Hong Kong, she is nevertheless celebrated as a talent as much in her hometown as her current one. Her works span a range of mediums including paintings, photographs, videos and installations, and they often engage with the complex relationship between nature, urbanity and the self. Her painting-based and photographic works frequently use the cyanotype printing process – which creates an alluring cyan-blue print – allowing her pieces to be touched by sunlight and time. Chan has said she associates the colour blue with childhood memories of architectural elements in Macao.



### Eric Fok

Painter, born in 1990 in Macao

Fok, who is based in Macao, still has his career ahead of him. Despite this, though, he's already built up an incredible reputation, particularly for his unique maps that are dyed with tea to give them an antique look. These maps represent a combination of tradition and modernity and fuse elements from different periods in history. Incredibly intricate, it's recommended to use a magnifying glass while viewing these works so no details go amiss. Fascinated by history, Fok, whose 'Paradise' series was showcased at a special exhibition in Bologna, Italy, in 2013, believes that by properly understanding the past can we confront the present and imagine the future. ●

PEGGY CHAN  
'Open the Window'  
2016



ERIC FOK  
'2047.49'  
2020



## Capsule Formation & Asymbiotic Seed Germination

### 被膜型態

### 與 無菌播種

Sculptures by 藝術作品展

Chan Un Man 陳遠問 | Eloi Scarva



EXHIBITION PERIOD 展期

14 January – 27 February 2021

二〇二一年一月十四日至二月二十七日

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# The digital revolution

**E-commerce and digital payments in Portuguese-speaking countries and Macao are booming right now as a result of the pandemic. But what does this mean for the future economic development of these nations and for Macao's place at the heart of the Lusophone world?**

Text Fei Pou Lo

There's no denying it – 2020 was a boom year for e-commerce across the globe. With billions of people worldwide unable to do their shopping at the local store due to the raging COVID-19 pandemic, buying products online became the new norm for countless households. Some countries have reported more than a 30 per cent rise in e-commerce from 2019 to last year and other commentators say that online shopping globally rose by more than 15 per cent. In mainland China, for instance, revenue in the e-commerce market has been projected by consumer data company Statista to reach US\$1.26 trillion (MOP 10 trillion) by the end of this year before rising to US\$1.64 trillion (MOP 13 trillion) in 2025, growing at an annual average of 6.7 per cent over the next five years.

The world's Portuguese-speaking countries (PSCs) were no different last year, with data showing that consumers spent more time – and money – shopping online. Brazil, for instance, should be home to 115 million online shoppers by the end of this year – nearly 10 per cent more than last year – according to Statista. The data company also projects a 4.4 per cent growth in Portugal's e-shoppers this year, up to 5.3 million people, which is more than half of the 10 million-plus population. The data all indicates that last year's pandemic-led e-commerce boom was just the beginning of this digital revolution.

As for Macao, according to online data portal DataReportal's 'Digital:2020 Macau' report just under a year ago, there were 540,400 internet users in the city last January

out of a population of almost 650,000 – a 2.2 per cent rise from the previous year. Internet penetration in the SAR stood at 84 per cent in the same month, claimed the report. Even before the sharp rise in the global digital economy, Macao was already positioning itself to become a link between all the PSCs when it comes to e-commerce.

## Alibaba in Brazil

Chinese multinational technology company Alibaba, which specialises in e-commerce and technology, is one of the biggest players in the world. In Brazil – South America's largest economy – online retail service Aliexpress, a business-to-consumer subsidiary of Alibaba, is expecting to profit from the country's recent e-commerce boom. Yan Di,

general manager of Aliexpress in Brazil, told a leading business magazine in the country late last year that the Chinese company is investing in improving its service – particularly in logistics and delivery – and started chartering three weekly flights to bring products in from China to Brazil that reduced the average delivery time between the two countries from three months to one. Yan told the magazine: “China is the future of Brazil in terms of e-commerce.”

For Aliexpress, 2020 was the best year of its Brazilian operation over the past decade, with increases of up to 130 per cent in some categories. According to a semiannual survey in Brazil which serves as a compass for the sector, e-commerce in the country grew by 47 per cent in the first half of last year, with 7.3 million people buying online for the first time, bringing the nation’s total of online shoppers to 41 million out of a population of more than 212 million. By the end of last year, predicts the survey – as the results are yet to be counted – e-commerce’s share in total retail sales could double to 10 per cent from 2019’s five per cent.

In Portugal, according to a study by the country’s Digital Economy Association (ACEPI), 57 per cent of internet users made online purchases last year – a six per cent rise on the previous year. About 60 per cent of online shoppers claimed to have increased the value of their purchases, says ACEPI, and 73 per cent of online shoppers made, on average, more than three to five online purchases every month.

The study predicts that e-commerce will have reached 110.6 billion Euros (MOP 1.075 trillion) in Portugal by the end of last year. That’s 20 billion Euros (MOP 194 billion) more than in 2019.

Riding the wave of the e-commerce boom is Portuguese entrepreneur and billionaire José Neves, the founder of global luxury fashion online platform Farfetch. Under a deal sealed last year, Farfetch will receive a US\$1.1 billion (MOP 8.8 billion) investment

from Alibaba and Swiss watch and jewellery group Richemont, which will help it expand in the fast-growing online luxury goods market in China. Before the deal, the group already had the backing of another Chinese internet retail giant, Tencent. The company is listed on the London Stock Exchange but has much of its technology infrastructure and marketing in Portugal. After the deal, Neves told a financial newspaper that Farfetch will benefit from Chinese travellers



The co-founder of IdeiaLab, Sara Fakir

Image by Vanessa Rodrigues, courtesy of futuroscriativos.org

who are unable to go shopping in Europe during the pandemic. He said: “COVID-19 is spurring the repatriation of sales to China and we believe that online will take a very big share of that.”

### M-ozambique

Prior to the pandemic, Portugal and Brazil already boasted well-established online outlets and e-payment systems. But they’re not the only PSCs who are taking advantage of the boom. African PSCs are also taking big strides towards implementing e-payment systems with, in particular,

mobile commerce – also known as m-commerce, the buying and selling of goods and services through smartphones and tablets – growing steadily over the past few years. M-Pesa is widely considered Africa’s most successful mobile money service and the region’s largest fintech platform, even for people who do not have bank accounts or only have limited access to banking services. According to Vodafone, whose Kenyan associate Safaricom developed the service, M-Pesa now allows more than 41.5 million people to send and receive money, make bill payments, receive salaries and get short-term loans

straight from their mobile phones. Portuguese-speaking Mozambique is one of seven African countries where it is available.

In Mozambique’s capital, Maputo, digital activist Sara Fakir has been promoting e-business for more than 10 years through IdeiaLab, the centre she co-founded with Tatiana Pereira. She says that the dynamic around fintech is ‘immense’. Other than Safaricom, mobile network operators have been developing their own payment systems and banks are promoting transition to online platforms. FSDMoc – The Financial Sector Deepening Moçambique, a facility for financial sector development in the country, is focusing on expanding levels of inclusion. There’s even a fairly new Mozambique Fintech Association. Fakir says that the Bank of Mozambique is working on regulations to ‘boost initiatives’ in the nation’s fintech industry while more locals shop online. “E-commerce is growing fast in the country,” she says, “especially as a result of the pandemic.”

IdeiaLab has itself been gaining increased attention of late in Africa. Last year, it was selected out of more than 22,000 applicants by the Jack Ma Foundation – set up by the Alibaba founder – for its Africa’s Business Heroes programme. The company made it to the final 50 but was not picked as one of the 10 winners. It was the only PSC company to be selected for the programme that evaluates leadership and vision, the ability to translate ideas into robust business models



Jack Ma

Xinhua

and the commitment to creating a positive impact on communities. One of the projects that IdeiaLab fostered was Biscate, which has become Mozambique's most popular e-marketplace for jobseekers.

Mozambique is indeed on the rise when it comes to its digital economy but it's still got a way to go to fulfil its potential. In a joint report published at the end of last year by Google and the International Finance Corporation (IFC) called 'e-Conomy Africa 2020', Mozambique is cited as one of the African countries that requires 'some major amendments' to its digital economy regulation 'framework'. Comparatively, Kenya and South Africa appear to have the most comprehensive regulations in place. The report shows that the internet economy in Africa has the potential to reach 5.2 per cent of the continent's GDP by 2025, contributing nearly US\$180 billion (MOP 1.4 trillion) to its economy.

The report also finds that internet penetration is a key factor in Africa's overall economic expansion, standing at 40 per cent of its population today. A 10 per cent increase in mobile internet penetration can increase GDP per capita by 2.5 percent in Africa, the report estimates, and it also predicts that increasing its internet penetration to 75 percent could create 44 million new jobs. It also points to Africa's 'rapid urbanisation', citing Portuguese-speaking Angola as one of the countries that will see the proportion of its urban residents increase to more than 80 per cent of its total population by 2050.

In Angola, a locally developed app for car-hailing, Kubinga, is now expanding its services into areas like food shopping deliveries and payments. While it only allows for e-payments between users of the popular Uber-style app, it is breaking new ground and addressing the lack of services in the country like M-Pesa is doing. BayQi, Otchitanda and O Soba are some of the most popular and widely used online shopping sites in Angola.

While new services and sites are stimulating the digital economy in Africa, efforts are also ongoing to expand its infrastructure, including in unexpected ways. In May, Google's sister company Loon signed a deal with Vodafone Mozambique to float its balloons that carry internet relay equipment in the stratosphere 20 kilometres above the country. What it means in effect is a floating network of cellphone towers that offer 4G connectivity supporting data, voice, SMS and mobile financial services like M-Pesa. According to the company, the balloons will be over the Cabo Delgado and Niassa provinces that have 'proven hard to cover in the past due to their vast and logistically challenging geographical areas'. At the time, Vodacom Group's chief executive Shameel Joosub said the effort 'is even more pertinent' in the face of the pandemic so that 'more Mozambicans will now have access to healthcare information'.

### Macao on the lookout

In April, Macao's Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng unveiled the city's 'lines of government action' document

for the financial year. In it, the city's continuing role as a connection with the PSCs was highlighted, as well as its dedication to open new avenues for their development, including e-commerce platforms. The document also noted that digital trade between China and the PSCs, as well as cross-border e-commerce, will be developed so that the city is part of the national trade value chain. It set the broad goal of building 'an international hub for trade between China and the PSCs which will contribute to Macao's good performance as a platform for trade activities between the parties'.

On the occasion of the 15th anniversary of Macao's Forum for Economic and Trade Co-operation between China and Portuguese-Speaking Countries – also known as Forum Macao – in 2018, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) was commissioned by the forum to review the digital landscape between mainland China, Macao and the African PSCs. The academy was also tasked with making recommendations for the future. CASS created a report in response last year, with one of its recommendations being for the forum to promote digital trade among its member countries.

Pedro Theotónio, head of the treasury at Macao's Banco Nacional Ultramarino (BNU), believes the city has an opportunity that can't be missed when it comes to working with the PSCs in the realm of the digital economy. He says that Macao's financial sector is already preparing. "Customers' habits are changing fast," he says, "both in

Kubinga, a mobile phone app for car-hailing in Angola



All images on this page courtesy of Loon



Loon balloon floating in the stratosphere; (top) close-up of a Loon balloon on the ground



Pedro Theotónio

terms of payments and shopping habits. E-money is considered by many as the precursor for digital currencies.” He continues: “Macao could take advantage of these developments by working with specialists and adopting breakthrough technology and attract companies or technologies to roll over their programmes in Macao.”

Theotónio says Macao could play a particular role in digital payment and e-commerce innovation with

China and the PSCs by giving incentives and creating guidelines and rules for the establishment of e-payment and e-commerce platforms, playing an active role in China’s plans to make the electronic-Renminbi (e-RMB) a global reference currency on trade and cross-border payment systems. He cites Ireland as a good comparison as the European country ‘has pursued a policy of attracting foreign financial services technology firms, including

Mastercard, Fidelity, Apple, IBM, Google Payments and Facebook’s payments business’.

“Macao has some advantages by being a small jurisdiction which could easily adapt to the new trends,” says Theotónio. While e-currency’s advantages include increasing the traceability of transactions, he does caution that ‘it can increase consumption and uncontrolled spending’. For Macao, he says that a big challenge is Hong Kong’s

financial and logistical might but ‘during evolutionary and disruptive times, Macao should take steps towards getting some advantage in order to emerge as a new player in this new digital and cashless era’.



***Customers’ habits are changing fast, both in terms of payments and shopping habits. E-money is considered by many as the precursor for digital currencies.***

– Pedro Theotónio

Theotónio says that the BNU is investing in improving its online banking platform, while also signing agreements with major e-payment wallets used in Macao, such as MPay and AliPay. It is also launching, he says, its own e-wallet system, which is where an electronic device, online service or software programme allows one party to make electronic transactions with another party bartering digital currency units for goods and services. He also sees Macao’s potential in e-commerce,

given its strategic positioning within the Greater Bay Area (GBA), close to the South Asian countries, the Hengqin Free Trade Zone, Guangdong and other big mainland markets. While Macao shares language and links to the PSCs, the BNU is part of Portugal’s state-owned banking corporation Caixa Geral de Depósitos, which is present in all the PSCs, so it is in a privileged position to facilitate trade between these countries and consumers in the GBA.

In December, Chinese State Councillor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi said the ‘Digital Silk Road’ would be a priority for the next stage of the Belt and Road Initiative, a Beijing plan to boost its role in international trade routes by financing infrastructure investments in countries across the world. He said China and its partners were co-operating on e-commerce, digital traffic

corridors, cross-border optical cable information channels and China-Asia information ports. PSCs like Portugal, Brazil, Angola and Mozambique are among China’s strategic partners.

E-commerce and digital payments are indeed booming right now in Macao, the PSCs and globally, bringing new opportunities for all in the online realm. This is indeed good news for new digital industries and for consumers too – plus, Macao, when it comes to the PSCs, is in a position to be at the heart of new innovations, thanks to Forum Macao and banks like the BNU who have a well-established presence in the PSCs. With innovations like those balloons going up over Mozambique and with the pandemic speeding up the use of e-commerce and digital payments everywhere, the world could soon be a much different place, both on and offline. ●



The MPay mobile phone app

ZOOM

# Bird's eye views

Text **Matt Fleming** Images **Lou Lam Kit**, courtesy of the **Government Information Bureau**

Macao is beautiful from the ground. But it becomes a magical city from the air. At the turn of the year, the Government Information Bureau published a set of incredible aerial photographs by Lou Lam Kit, some of which were taken by a camera attached to a drone. We've chosen some of the best shots here for our readers to appreciate. There's no two ways about it: Macao really is a city of immense beauty when viewed from the skies above. ●

Work can be seen in full swing for the new Zone C urban reclamation zone in this image. The zone sits off the current shoreline, parallel with Avenida do Oceano, in Taipa.



View of the Macao peninsula's northernmost area. Can you spot the Canidrome in Nossa Senhora de Fátima, which used to be a popular greyhound racing stadium?



The Taipa Grande Trail is a wonderful hiking route that circles the mountainside just east of Taipa village. This is the view of South Taipa from the trail.



In the centre of this image is the new Zone A reclamation area. A total of 28,000 public housing units are planned for this area, helping to meet the city's local accommodation needs.



The iconic Grand Lisboa shines on the right of this vista over St Lazarus' Parish. If you look closely, you can see the historic Guia Fortress and Lighthouse in the far centre.



This may look like a mirror image but it's not. Instead, it shows Macao in all of her glory.



The Macau Science Centre stands out as its silver sides majestically catch the light in this magical image of the Macao peninsula's southern shoreline.





An impressive panorama of the Macao Peninsula's urban landscape. Marvel at the waters between Macao and Taipa, as well as the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge in the background.



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GRAND LISBOA  
Macao

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WHERE CULINARY ARTISTRY IS MATCHED WITH THE FINEST WINES



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\*\*\*  
米芝蓮三星

8  
THE  
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大廚  
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