

Macao 澳門

**Infrastructure:
Keeping Macao
moving ahead**

**NEW TECH, SMART
THINKING**

**PORTUGAL LOOKS TO
THE GREATER BAY AREA**



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COVER IMAGE

Ongoing construction work at Macao's fourth bridge. Photo by Cheong Chi Fong

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POLITICS

Charting a steady course

Striking a confident tone, Macao Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng set out the government's strategy in his 2022 policy address to the city's Legislative Assembly.



Text **Christian Ritter**
Photos courtesy
of **Government
Information Bureau**

A steady, stable path to long-term economic recovery is the way forward for Macao, according to the city's Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng, as he outlined the government's strategy for 2022 and beyond in his annual Policy Address to the region's Legislative Assembly in November.

Ho stressed a twin-track approach based on continuing the government's stringent approach to fighting the Covid-19 virus threat while simultaneously boosting Macao's recovery through investment in economic diversification and closer partnership with the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin to guarantee employment and prosperity in the longer term.

While Macao's challenges are far from unique, the city is better placed than many others due to the strong support of China's central

government and the opportunities on offer from the development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, according to the city's leader. Ho also praised the efforts of Macao's own people, whose resilience throughout the difficulties of the past couple of years has ensured social harmony and played a key part in achieving a partial economic recovery in 2021.

Looking ahead, Ho said that 2022 would be better than 2021 for Macao in terms of economic and social development, but complex challenges still need to be overcome, requiring a prudent yet active approach.

A key opportunity for the city, in Ho's view, is Macao's integration into China's national development strategies, which have been outlined in the country's 14th Five-Year Plan, and especially the SAR's participation in the Greater Bay Area programme.

Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng
addresses the Legislative
Assembly



Photo courtesy of Macao Government Tourism Office

Travellers visiting one of Macao's food streets

The issuing of Individual Visit Scheme (IVS) Macao travel permits for all mainland citizens resumed in September last year though currently Chinese visitors must go in person to police service points to apply for the permit; previously applications could be made electronically at self-service kiosks.

Ho believes that the resumption of electronic applications for the IVS travel permit would result in an enormous increase in the number of mainland visitors to Macao.

HENGQIN TO BOOST MACAO DIVERSIFICATION

Chief Executive Ho pledged that the government will promote economic recovery and guarantee employment through a series of policies.

Macao will develop industries to accelerate economic diversification in 2022, while also consolidating and improving industries in which Macao has traditional advantages. This will create a diverse and sustainable industrial structure.

The Macao government aims to develop a comprehensive tourism and leisure industry, combining the different elements of dining, sightseeing, shopping, entertainment, medical services and sports. It will also nurture the “big health” industry starting with the research and manufacturing of Traditional Chinese Medicine, according to Ho.

OPENING UP

Addressing the continuing threat posed by the pandemic, Macao will continue its efforts to raise the rate of Covid-19 vaccination among residents to build up herd immunity and allow the relaxation of entry restrictions.

Ho said that Macao would continue to bar entry to non-resident foreigners since the Chinese mainland would impose mandatory quarantine on arrivals from Macao if the city suffered new local Covid-19 cases following the lifting of the ban.

On average 350,000 people – such as residents, non-resident workers and visitors – travel between Macao and the mainland per day, totalling around 10 million travellers per month.

If the mainland imposed quarantine on all arrivals from Macao it would have an adverse effect on these daily commuters. Consequently, Ho said, whether or not to lift the entry ban on

non-resident foreigners would be a “trade-off”.

Macao carries out its Covid-19 entry and quarantine measures in conjunction with the mainland, but maintains quarantine regulations for arrivals from Hong Kong, the neighbouring Special Administrative Region. Ending quarantine depends on a common synchronised policy being adopted across the three relevant regions – Guangdong province, Hong Kong and Macao.

Macao's target to achieve an 80 per cent Covid-19 vaccination rate – 62 per cent of the population has received both jabs as of 26 November – would allow the city's government to ask the mainland authorities to resume the electronic visa application process for individual mainland citizens to visit Macao, as well as to resume group tours to the city, from selected provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities. These are matters under discussion with the Ministry of Culture and Tourism in Beijing.

In September, China's central government issued a general plan for the development of the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin, which is to be jointly administered by the Macao and Guangdong governments. Given the small size of Macao, this provides a major opportunity for the city's businesses to expand and branch out into other spheres, and is also an innovative approach to the principle of “One Country, Two Systems” in practice.

Ho said that Macao will actively develop the cooperation zone in Hengqin, pledging to speed up the drafting of major policies, including special measures to relax market access in the cooperation zone, as well as compiling categories of authorised items and industries of interest.

MACAO NATIONAL SECURITY LAW UPDATE

Macao introduced national security legislation, the Law on the Defence of National Security, in 2009. This was based on the

requirement of Article 23 of the Macao Basic Law, which applies the “One Country, Two Systems” principle to the city. As a Special Administrative Region, Macao enjoys autonomy on most social and economic issues but the issues of foreign policy, defence and national security are the responsibility of the central government.

The local government plans to amend the 2009 national security law, due to changes in the international landscape and the new requirements on regional security over the past decade. A bill will be introduced into the Legislative Assembly next year for discussion and adoption.

Ho said that with a changed international situation, the adoption of China's 2015 National Security Law and the introduction of Hong Kong's National Security Law last year, Macao has to “move with the times” by updating its own national security legislation.

In his policy address, Chief Executive Ho said Macao will safeguard national security, upgrade the legislation, step up law enforcement and enhance liaison and cooperation with mainland cities.

The amended national security legislation will propose clearer and more precise rules and procedures, adding that the current version of the Law on the Defence of National Security is only written “in a general way”. “Due to the changes in the international landscape, we want the national security law to have more accurate wording,” Ho said.

The chief executive pointed out that Macao has never prosecuted anyone under the local national security law.

On international issues, Macao will also increase cooperation and exchanges with countries and regions along the “Belt and Road” in education, tourism, medical services, sports and culture and fully play its role as a link between China and Portuguese-speaking countries, Ho added.



TECH UPGRADE

One of the key goals of the Macao government is to create a more diverse mix of industries in the city, overcoming its current reliance on gaming and tourism. In another meeting with lawmakers in the Legislative Assembly, Ho said the Concordia Industrial Park in Seac Pai Van will be transformed into a tech industrial park similar to Cyberport in Hong Kong.

“We can make use of this park as a science and tech hub. I hope work for this will progress quickly. When the urban master plan is concluded, we can advance our plans,” Chief Executive Ho said, adding that Macao’s urban development master plan could be approved by the end of this year.

Concordia Industrial Park has hosted a string of new development projects. The Urban Planning Committee was recently asked to consider an increase in building height for 11 land plots occupying 12 hectares in Coloane.

The land plots at the park were initially earmarked for other projects but authorities now plan to develop cutting-edge industries in the area, including Traditional Chinese Medicine and a data centre.

China’s state-owned Nam Yue Group will take over an idle plot in the park to develop the Nam Yue Science and Technology Park. GDS Holdings, which develops and operates high-performance data centres, has also agreed to form a joint venture with a local partner to establish a data centre in the area.

“Macao does not have a real data centre. We are in the planning stage and there is already investment for [this project]. The park project will not just be to set up warehouses or office space, we hope to have a good data centre to ensure the safety of data transfers,” Ho added.

The chief executive said the industrial park would also develop the Traditional Chinese Medicine sector and that there had already been numerous requests for projects in this field.

THE FUTURE OF 5G

Macao’s telecommunications sector is already being prepared for the arrival of 5G networks in the city. While a Telecommunications Law is planned for 2023, licences for 5G operators may be awarded in advance of the legislation.

“Macao’s first wave of 5G licences is set to be released as early as next year,” Ho told city lawmakers. Once the Telecommunications Law is in place – probably in the second half of 2023 – the government will then issue a convergence licence to the 5G operators. The government will also push for full fibre-optic coverage in new public buildings.

Ho added that the government will instruct a third party to assess telecom providers’ existing assets before issuing a 5G licence and that the 5G assets will become government-owned after the completion of the concession period, though it is currently unknown how long these concessions will run for.

In the past year, Macao’s largest telecom operator CTM invested MOP 625 million (US\$78 million) in several projects, among them a 5G mobile network, an increase of MOP 385 million (US\$48 million) compared to the previous 12 months.

(Opposite page) The Cotai Strip

Rendering of the Concordia Industrial Park



GAMING CONCESSIONS MAY BE EXTENDED

While greater diversification remains the government’s chief goal, the gaming industry is still the city’s main economic pillar, employing tens of thousands of people and contributing a significant share of Macao’s GDP. The six existing gaming concessions and sub-concessions are due to expire in June 2022 and the government is also currently revising the legislation that oversees the industry.

Chief Executive Ho reassured the industry that the government would approach the expiration date flexibly. If the legal revision and preparation of future public tenders is not completed on time, the current concessions could be extended.

In 2002, the Macao government granted three casino-operating concessions and another three sub-concessions. The main licences are held by SJM Resorts, S. A., Wynn Resorts (Macau), S.A., and Galaxy Casino, S. A., while Venetian Macau Limited, MGM Grand Paradise, S.A., and Melco Resorts (Macau), S.A. hold the sub-concessions.

The maximum period for gaming concessions is 20 years, although authorities have the power to extend them by up to five years. At this juncture, the extension would be up to three years as previously the SJM Resorts concession, and MGM sub-concession which was due to expire in 2020, was extended to 2022 to align with the others.

Ho said that the extensions could be granted under the existing law, even if the new legislation was not ready by June 2022.

In another speech, Ho reiterated this reassurance: “We will try our best to do our work but we will carry out the tasks step by step to be in tandem with the healthy development of the gaming industry. The six gaming operators are very clear about this – the healthy development [of the sector] – and the government will not get them in trouble.”

Authorities have 180 days to provide a final report on a public consultation on the gaming industry that ended in October. A draft bill must then be submitted to the Legislative Assembly for scrutiny.

“The content of the public consultation is currently being summarised. [...] the law will reveal issues related to the gaming industry, with the nine major directions for the sector clearly defined in the law,” Ho added.



Chief Executive Ho’s address sought to balance the urgent need to combat the effects of the pandemic and continue with efforts for short term recovery with key elements of a longer-term programme designed to take Macao’s development in new directions.

In his speech, Ho recognised that despite the negative social and economic impacts on Macao over the past couple of years, the city’s people remained calm and resilient, preserving social harmony. Macao has also been strongly supported by the central government which also contributed to social and regional stability. However, external factors now demand greater clarity over the precise implementation of national security legislation within the Macao SAR.

Diversification of the economy has been a central goal of government policy for some time and the effects of the pandemic on the gaming and tourism industries reinforces the logic of this shift. Internally this means the promotion of new sectors and start-ups, and providing the physical and digital infrastructure to support them; initiatives such as the Concordia Industrial Park on the one hand and the rolling out of 5G networks on the other should be seen in this light.

Outside the city proper, Macao’s links with the rest of China are decisive, particularly the exciting array of possibilities provided by closer cooperation with the Guangdong government over Hengqin Island and the Greater Bay Area.

Macao has experienced a difficult couple of years but its leadership message conveys a sense of optimism and self-assurance that the city is headed toward a new era of growth and prosperity. ●

Major tasks for the government in 2022

Implementation of the Second Five-Year Plan for Economic and Social Development of the Macao SAR, spanning 2021 to 2025, and of the Master Plan of the Development of the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin.

Establish and secure anti-pandemic mechanisms and promote stable economic recovery

- Prevent imported cases and a rebound of the pandemic
- Increase the vaccination rate among the Macao population
- Increase economic investment, cut taxes, support businesses and stabilise employment
- Implement fiscal policies and increase public investment to expand domestic demand
- Assist local small and medium-sized enterprises to develop in a stable way

Joint construction, administration and benefits for the development of Hengqin

- Uphold the principle of “One Country, Two Systems” and take full advantage of Macao’s access to the “two systems” framework
- Promote greater integration between Macao and Hengqin, via a mechanism of “mutual discussion, joint construction, joint administration, and shared benefits”, set up under the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin
- Expedite major industrial projects to form platforms for science and technology in the city
- Compile a list of industries of interest, and formulate favourable measures supporting their development in the Cooperation Zone
- Introduce tax policies for the Cooperation Zone that are similar to those of Macao, and attract businesses and investment to the Cooperation Zone, including innovative technology companies
- Develop the Cooperation Zone as a new home for Macao residents to live and work
- Facilitate the development of the Macao New Neighbourhood project in Hengqin
- Ensure infrastructure connectivity between Macao and Hengqin, and facilitate boundary-crossing clearance for people, vehicles and goods

Develop various industries to diversify the economy

- Enrich Macao’s attractions as a world centre of tourism and leisure
- Promote an integrated tourism and leisure industry
- Develop a “big health” industry, with Traditional Chinese Medicine research and development
- Boost modern financial services, high and new technology industries, as well as cultural tourism, convention and exhibition, sports, and commercial and trade industries
- Facilitate lawful, orderly and healthy development of the tourism and recreation industry
- Review the issue of gaming concession licences
- Develop a modern financial services industry, expedite science and technology industry, and facilitate professional and market-oriented development of the convention and exhibition industry

Enhance quality of social services and livelihood

- Continue with welfare measures concerning tax-waiver and tax-deduction initiatives, education, healthcare, and social security matters
- Commence construction of housing projects in the New Urban Zone Area A located near the border of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge
- Complete the Tamagnini Barbosa public housing project and launch construction of the superstructure of the Venceslau de Moraes public housing project
- Start superstructure construction for the senior citizens’ housing complex
- Plan land plots for private housing projects
- Construct facilities for the Islands District Medical Complex



Safeguard and sustain national security, and the safety of Macao

- Safeguard national sovereignty, and the nation's security and development interests
- Consolidate the foundation for “patriots governing Macao”
- Enhance laws and institutional safeguards in support of this principle
- Enhance legislation related to national security, and forge ahead with the amendment to the Law on Safeguarding National Security, and legislative work regarding the bill on interception and protection of communications
- Strengthen enforcement of national security law
- Promote the national Constitution and the MSAR Basic Law
- Strengthen the police force with technology
- Collaborate with mainland China and neighbouring regions in crime prevention

Urban planning, to build a smart and liveable city

- Detailed phased urban planning
- Start work on New Urban Zone Area A in 2022, lay down zoning benchmarks for public housing and other facilities in New Urban Zone Area A
- Improve transport network and complete Macao Road Traffic and Transport Planning Study (2021-2030)
- Remodel the Taipa Ferry Terminal to accommodate a new passenger terminal for Macau International Airport
- Open the Ka-Ho Tunnel to traffic
- Complete the planning of reclaimed water facilities and related pipeline networks
- Start the construction of a sewage treatment plant on the artificial island of the Macao checkpoint for the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge
- Improve the land management information system
- Issue the first 5G licences to expedite the development of the 5G network

Public administration reform and strengthen legislation

- Review and optimise powers and accountability systems relative to public officials of various ranks
- Reform the rank system, recruitment, promotion, and transfer of civil servants
- Enhance training in the civil service to cover the Constitution and Macao Basic Law, the Law on Safeguarding National Security, the latest developments in the nation, the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and Macao and Chinese culture
- Enhance the development of e-government
- Optimise supervision of public corporations and autonomous funds
- Work with the Legislative Assembly to complete the drafting of bills respectively on public corporations, talent importation, housing for the ‘sandwich class’, as well as amend the Law on Safeguarding National Security

Enhance education, youth development, cultural and sport affairs, and implement the system for attracting talented people

- Plan to build schools in the New Urban Zone Area A, with open spaces
- Facilitate the development of tertiary education
- Rename the Macao Polytechnic Institute as a University
- Enhance patriotic education among students and other young people
- Support young people to further their studies and take part in the development of the Greater Bay Area
- Start the compilation of the first official city chronicle
- Organise the Macao International Cultural Forum under the theme “Maritime Silk Road”
- Support athletes taking part in the 19th Asian Games
- Prepare to co-organise the 15th National Games in 2025
- Set up mechanisms for the admission to Macao of talented people in key industries, namely “big health”, modern finance, high and new technology, and culture and sport

Promote regional cooperation to integrate Macao into the national development plan

- Strengthen mainland China and regional cooperation
- Facilitate cooperation in key areas of finance, trade, technological innovation, customs clearance, and livelihood issues in the Greater Bay Area
- Establish a “Single Window” integrated customs services with Guangdong to aid the movement of goods between the province and Macao
- Encourage Macao enterprises to participate in major national events
- Expand Macao’s role as a link between China and Portuguese-speaking countries

Foundations for the future

Macao’s ambitious investment in infrastructure is vital to ensure its short-term recovery and take advantage of long-term opportunities.



Text **Gonalo C sar de S **
Photos **Cheong Chi Fong**

Taipa reclamation zone

There is often a lively debate in Macao about expenditure on the construction of public infrastructure. The sums may be huge but the potential returns are also immense. Today the discussion takes place at a time when Macao faces not only an immediate need to counter the economic effects of the Covid-19 pandemic but also to lay solid long-term foundations for the city as historic new economic opportunities open up on its doorstep.

At the height of the pandemic, between May 2019 and May 2021, the Macao government invested more than MOP 13.4 billion (US\$1.7 billion) in large infrastructure projects. These are designed not only to improve citizens’ lives but also to take full advantage

of the historic prospects offered by Macao’s involvement in the Greater Bay Area (GBA) development programme.

Overhauling Macao’s transport systems may be the most visible sector to locals and visitors alike but there are also ambitious programmes in public housing, healthcare, environmental protection and the sporting sector, all measures designed to improve the quality of life for the city’s 684,000 inhabitants.

Diversifying the city’s economy has been a long-term goal of the government as well as integrating Macao with other parts of southern China’s Greater Bay Area, a region that will become one of the centres of global innovation and growth in the decades to come. Of increasing importance to Macao is the cooperation with neighbouring Guangdong province, particularly over the joint management of Hengqin Island, which sits just across from Macao.

For a city that occupies just 32.9 square kilometres of land, the transformation of Hengqin provides ample room for expanding business, academic and residential facilities. However, none of these goals can be achieved without modern urban infrastructure.

In the recent past, there were some controversies over the high level of government investment but, as Macao’s economy boomed, existing infrastructure became strained.



“By the end of the first decade of this century, some scholars and politicians were arguing that the government was spending too much money on public works and it was creating inflation. However, everyone in Macao soon realised that public infrastructure was in great need of upgrading, particularly those related to flood-control and transportation both within Macao and between Macao and its neighbours,” said local economist and president of the Institute of European Studies in Macau (IEEM), José Luís de Sales Marques.

For the IEEM president, “public investment in infrastructure is again at a high, this time to boost economic recovery and allow urban growth in the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone in

Hengqin. Public housing, new land reclamations, roads and bridges, and other public infrastructure will provide more and better public benefits for the Macao population as well as for the residents of the Hengqin Cooperation Zone.”

Sales Marques also believes that the construction programme will “contribute to Macao’s economic recovery after the severe crisis due to Covid-19.” Among other benefits, such as employment, the infrastructure itself will add new fixed assets to the city’s economy, a process described by economists as Gross Capital Formation.

Even those who live in Macao do not always realise the huge amount of infrastructure works the government has planned and launched since 2019.

(Opposite page) Map of major infrastructure works carried out between 2019 and 2024

Public housing next to the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge





Extension of the Light Rail Transit into Hengqin

(Opposite page) Fourth Rail bridge currently under construction

Data from the Land, Public Works and Transport Bureau (DSSOPT) show that over the two-year period, the opening of the new express border-crossing point between Macao and Zhuhai at Qingmao, the creation of a public transport hub at Barra – currently under construction – in the southwestern part of the Macao Peninsula, the building of a training centre for athletes in Cotai and the second building phase of the new Coloane prison have been four of the most expensive projects built.

The infrastructure works planned until 2024 have largely kept to schedule, despite the impact of the pandemic and the strict anti-virus measures imposed by the government to protect public health.

According to the DSSOPT, by 2024 the government will complete major projects related to Macao’s transport network, social housing and environmental protection. The 48 large projects currently under construction represent a total investment of MOP 38.13 billion (US\$4.75 billion).

FOURTH BRIDGE AND NEW METRO LINES BY 2024

Two transport projects stand out. The first is the construction of a fourth bridge connecting the Macao Peninsula to Taipa island, which will span 3.1 kilometres. The basic construction costs are MOP 5.27 billion (US\$660 million) with a further MOP 2 billion (US\$250 million) to be spent on the remaining access works.

The new bridge will be ready in 2024, improving traffic flows near Macau International Airport and Taipa Ferry Terminal.

The second major transport project is the expansion of Macao’s Light Rapid Transit (LRT) railway, adding two new LRT lines. The first is the cross-border Hengqin Line that will connect the Lotus Checkpoint Station on Macao’s Cotai side to Hengqin Port Station on Hengqin Island itself. The second is the Seac Pai Van Line on Coloane island which has two stations. One of the stations will be at the public housing estate in Seac Pai Van

and the other at the new Islands District Medical Complex. Both new lines will have transfer points for the existing Taipa Line. These new lines will cost MOP 4.4 billion (US\$550 million).

The LRT’s current Taipa Line has 11 stations and runs 9.3 kilometres from Ocean Station at the Taipa side of Sai Van Bridge to the Taipa Ferry Terminal. The Taipa Line will be connected via the Sai Van Bridge to the new Barra transport hub. There are also plans for a future line that would use an underwater tunnel to connect to the Macao New Urban Zone A, right next to the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge.

Barra station is scheduled for completion in 2023, costing an estimated MOP 1.18 million (US\$147 million). The station will connect to the LRT Taipa Line and will also serve as a public transport interchange hub for the Barra area of the Macao Peninsula, including plans to link it to LRT lines serving the peninsula itself.

Alfred Seng Fat Wong, professor at the Faculty of Science and Technology at the University of Macau and a government transport

adviser, says connecting the LRT Taipa Line to the Macao Peninsula in the future will be a great step.

For Wong, the fourth bridge and LRT lines will lead to fewer private vehicles on the roads and improve travel for people using public transport within Macao. He also welcomes greater opportunities for cross-border travel.

“The new LRT line to Hengqin will be very important for the development of Macao and expansion in the Greater Bay Area and Hengqin Island because a Guangdong fast-train can be taken from Hengqin to Guangzhou and from there to the rest of China,” he says.

“The infrastructure projects in the next year will bring some inconvenience to the public but when they are completed daily life and moving around will be smoother, contributing to the economic development of Macao.”

Christine Choi, president of Board of Directors of the Architects Association of Macau, also emphasises the importance of government investments to solve traffic problems.



“

The infrastructure projects in the next year will bring some inconvenience to the public but when they are completed daily life and moving around will be smoother, contributing to the economic development of Macao.

– Alfred Seng Fat Wong

Aerial image shows CEM energy plant, Macao's second prison and the Ka-Ho tunnels





The Islands District Medical Complex on Cotai will be the second public hospital in the city

(Below) Construction of the Customs building

HEALTHCARE BOOST

Macao’s public healthcare facilities will also receive a major boost from the construction of the Islands District Medical Complex on Cotai, the area of reclaimed land that connects Coloane and Taipa islands.

After discussions with China’s National Health Commission, the Macao government chose to partner with Peking Union Medical College Hospital, which was founded in 1921 by the Rockefeller Foundation and is affiliated with Peking Union Medical College and the Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences.

The public hospital will be operated by the prestigious Peking Union Medical College Hospital and is being built at an estimated cost of MOP 8.9 billion (US\$1.1 billion). It is scheduled to open in 2023 and will become the city’s second public hospital.

According to Macao’s Health Bureau, the new hospital will have around 1,100 beds as well as departments specialising in nuclear medicine, radiotherapy and organ transplants. Other facilities will include a nursing institute, laboratory and residential quarters.

The complex will include the main hospital, a logistics building, administration, multi-use areas and access roads. The three main buildings have a construction area of 276,000 square metres and are located in grounds of 23,000 square metres. The MOP 7.3 billion (US\$908.8 million) construction and engineering contracts for the hospital were awarded to a Chinese consortium in 2019.

Some of the social concerns about environmental protection have also been addressed by the government’s MOP 2.567 billion (US\$321 million) investment in the expansion of the Taipa incineration plant, which is due to be completed by 2024. The Macao administration has been promoting environmental policies to reduce pollution and waste in the territory.

NEW INVESTMENTS STIMULATE RECOVERY

Sales Marques recalls that: “In the past few years, government investments have reached around MOP 12.9 billion (US\$1.5 billion) per year. Those figures refer to public procurement in 2019. Representing only 3.17 per cent of GDP, this did not have a major impact on economic growth that year.”

However, the economist points out that with Macao’s dramatic contraction of GDP in 2020-21 as a result of the pandemic, increased government investment in infrastructure at this point acts as a vital stimulus to the economy overall, a result of the so-called multiplier effect promoted by the late British economist John Maynard Keynes. This investment can play a crucial role in economic recovery.



“With the rapid growth of private developments in Macao, the infrastructure and other supporting facilities were under pressure to meet the rising demands of greater traffic, housing requirements for foreign workers and meeting the daily needs of locals. Today, we can see significant growth of new private construction developments, providing accommodation and activities to attract an enormous amount of tourists,” Choi explains.

For Choi, the priority for Macao must be more Transit Oriented Development, integrating different transport and pedestrian structures into one system in order to provide alternative routes and direct access between points. I hope to see more travel on foot compared with vehicles as more pedestrian tunnels and flyovers will be built.”

Other current construction projects

include a tunnel which will connect Cotai and Ka-Ho village in Coloane, and a pedestrian tunnel under Guia Hill connecting the Outer Harbour area to Flora Garden, a major public park.

There is a strong social component to many of the projects. There are, for example, 16 public social housing projects, most of them under construction or in preparation in the land reclamation New Urban Zone Area A, where the border crossing post of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao bridge is located. The public housing estates will provide approximately 9,000 apartments for lower-income families.

A second waterfront reclamation area of 33 hectares, this time on Taipa island, will also build affordable housing and public amenities. Located between Sai Van and Nobre de Carvalho bridges, the project will cost MOP 816 million (US\$106 million).

“With the implementation of new public works and introduction of new projects already announced in excess of MOP 40 billion (US\$4.9 billion) until 2024, averaging MOP 13.3 billion (US\$1.7 billion) per year, the government is playing the public investment card in a pro-Keynesian way,” Sales Marques believes.

The IEEM president continues: “The investment announced for 2022 by Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng during his Policy Address for 2022 is MOP 18.32 billion (US\$2.3 billion). As the Macao economy has suffered badly from the external shock of Covid-19, leading to a sharp drop in GDP by 56.3 per cent in 2020 and with an economic rebound taking time, 2021 GDP results will be far below expectations, particularly due to severe restrictions on visitors entering the region and the unpredictability of new Covid cases in neighbouring regions and in Macao itself.”

These recent developments have highlighted the structural sensitivity of the Macao economy through its dependence on gaming and tourism. Given these constraints, Macao’s internal growth factors are private and public consumption as well as private and public investment from within the city.

Sales Marques stresses that “it is crucial that besides supporting private consumption with consumer cards and other instruments to improve family incomes, the government must continue to invest strongly in providing public infrastructure. By doing so, it is not only stimulating the economy in the short term but also providing Macao with greater capacity to face the future with more confidence and greater efficiency.”

Despite being faced with the greatest financial and social challenges of its modern history, in the past couple of years Macao has kept its focus firmly on building infrastructure for both recovery and long-term progress. ●

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22



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SOCIAL AFFAIRS

TECH AND THE CITY

Five years after the government proposed a blueprint to create a smarter city, technology has become integral to everyday life, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Text Miguel Luigi Enriquez

caption

When was the last time you left the house without your phone? These days it seems like our mobile devices are more like an extension of ourselves rather than an optional accessory. Banking and payment apps have replaced our physical wallets, we can summon food with a tap of a button, and just try getting into any hotel or public facility without a green QR health code.

Not only have lifestyle apps and mobile payments become commonplace, but the government has also introduced several convenient solutions to better serve the public. Macao residents can now book vaccine appointments, track bus schedules in real-time and see which public car parks have reached capacity.

Macao isn't quite a "smart city" yet, but it's well on its way thanks to such new technologies, which save time, reduce energy consumption, safeguard public health and streamline transactions.

"Environmental initiatives, disaster prevention, public health and transportation. These are the things that directly pertain to common people's lives," says Zhang Du, Dean of the Macau University of Science and Technology (MUST). "These are hallmarks of a smart city."



António Sammarful



Photo courtesy of Johnny Au

Alfred Wong, Director of Smart City Alliance Association of Macao

(Centre) Johnny Au, Director-General of Computer Chamber of Macau

(Bottom) Apps such as the Bus Travelling System and MPay have contributed to making daily life more convenient

LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS

The Macao government's Five Year Development Plan for 2016-2020 set in motion a big-picture plan to improve Macao's urban planning, infrastructure, environmental impact, economic diversification and community wellbeing. According to the document, the implementation of new technological tools, such as big data and artificial intelligence, across different industries are crucial for Macao's growth.

The Director of Smart City Alliance Association of Macao, Alfred Wong, says officials have also adopted a "1 + 3" approach as part of its plan to build a smarter city. At the core of this concept is one smart government supported by three pillars: smart transportation, smart tourism and smart healthcare system.

And in 2017, the government signed a strategic agreement with Alibaba Group to utilise the mainland tech giant's cloud-computing technologies

and help upgrade Macao's IT facilities. "This is a very important infrastructure for Macao if we need to develop a smart city," says Wong.

Look around Macao today, the fruits of this collaboration can be seen across different aspects of life. For instance, residents can create a single online government profile then use it to book services across various departments.

What's more, the Bus Travelling System app from the Transport Bureau enables riders to accurately track the city's buses and plan trips accordingly. The app also provides real-time route updates due to roadwork and denotes full buses.

For those who drive, the bureau's Traffic Information Station app grants access to traffic cameras all over Macao to help motorists gauge conditions and adjust their journeys as needed. The system also displays the real-time occupancy rates of public car parks to save residents time and energy when looking for a spot.



On the tourism front, the Macao Government Tourism Office's website forecasts foot traffic in popular sightseeing spots, such as the Ruins of Saint Paul's and Old Taipa Village, so tourists can better plan their itineraries.

This service makes use of a combination of big data technology, street cameras, and artificial intelligence to make predictions. The platform currently features 20 attractions and ranks each on a five-tier scale based on congestion levels.

CLEARING A PATH FOR MOBILE PAYMENTS

The private sector has also contributed to Macao's "smart city" potential. The use of mobile payments, in particular, has exploded since 2019. In the first nine months of 2021, the value of mobile payment transactions reached MOP 12.7 billion (US\$1.5 billion), which is more than double the total value of transactions in 2020, according to the Monetary Authority of Macao.

Hitting this milestone took convincing and coordination. Johnny Au, Director-General of Computer Chamber of Macau, says small businesses expressed apprehension about the tech at first: "Especially the retailers, they [were] not willing to develop and invest in [mobile payment] equipment because they may feel that it is inconvenient and it may give them trouble to maintain the hardware and so on."

Last year's consumption card scheme, in which the government distributed MOP 3,000 (US\$373) per resident via MacauPass cards to encourage spending and stimulate the economy, catalysed the shift towards mobile payments, he says.

To make this possible, MacauPass paid to install transaction terminals at shops across the city and, in return, the government chose MacauPass as its exclusive consumption scheme partner. Now, mobile payment machines are ubiquitous and can be used for a variety of electronic payment services.

For the 2021 consumption scheme, the government took it a step further, letting people choose a fund collection method: a MacauPass card, e-wallet apps (including MacauPass' own MPay), or mobile payment services offered by conventional institutions, such as Bank of China and ICBC. Each channel enticed customers to collect the government handout using their respective apps with a series of promotions, cash discounts and prizes.

In another move toward digital payments, the Monetary Authority earlier this year launched SimplePay – a unified payment system that aggregates different online methods, including WeChat Pay and Alipay. “The government played the timing very well in terms of the policy to attract people to use mobile payments,” says Au. “That’s why in these three years there was tremendous change [in this sector].”

HEALTH IN FOCUS

If anything has put Macao’s adoption of technology to the test, it is the ongoing global health crisis. At the dawn of the pandemic in 2020, the region was among the first to implement a “health code” system, which took the form of a simple web app, where residents input their health status and travel history. The website generates a colour-coded QR code, depending on the information provided. These days, most hotels, restaurants and public facilities require visitors to show a “green” code for entry.

The government has continuously added new features to the system since its implementation. When borders reopened with the mainland late last summer, for example, the web app rolled out updates so it could be recognised by the neighbouring Guangdong region. Another round of enhancements displayed vaccination statuses (including the date of inoculation and type of jab) after Macao’s inoculation drive commenced. And when the government mandated several rounds of mass Covid-19 testing earlier this year, the health code played a crucial role in informing residents of their test results.

In November, the Health Bureau called upon public medical institutions to trial a new health code mobile app, which harnesses geolocation. According to Health Bureau Director Alvis Lo, location-tracking remains optional but will help the government with contract tracing efforts in case of a domestically transmitted

infection. Smartphones store personal data locally, and the bureau does not upload the information to its database, assures Lo.

The Macao Government Tourism Office has also upgraded hotel quarantine facilities with technological solutions. At the Treasure Hotel, next to the airport, for example, robots take body temperature, clean facilities, and distribute meals to minimise physical contact between staff and international arrivals. Other medical observation hotels expect to add the same enhancements in the coming months.

However, Zhang, of MUST, hopes more can be done, especially when it comes to preparing for the next pandemic. “Macao needs to have an infectious disease prediction or prevention network,” he suggests, noting that scientists across Guangdong Province are already working on a data-driven system to anticipate future pandemics.

“We need to be prepared. That’s why I think we are currently using some machine-learning approaches, along with data, to try to establish something similar.”

Robot developed by Star Speed Store have been deployed to Treasure Hotel – which quarantines guests returning from high risk countries – are responsible for temperature checks and food deliveries

(Below) UM-developed smart disinfection robot at work in the outpatient department of Kiang Wu Hospital



“The government played the timing very well in terms of the policy to attract people to use mobile payments. That’s why in these three years there was tremendous change [in this sector].”

– Johnny Au

A DIGITAL DIVIDE

In an increasingly digital world, concerns about accessibility and equality remain paramount. Without proper precautions, a “smarter city” could disenfranchise those who have limited access to technology, such as seniors and those with disabilities.

Au, of the Computer Chamber, also serves as the president of the Au Hon Sam Charity Association, which supports seniors. He warns that society should be mindful not to leave anyone behind. “When you are [making] policies on technology, you have to consider minorities as well,” he says.

Wong, of the Smart City Alliance Association, agrees. He says the city needs to establish outreach programmes to teach older residents how to use increasingly indispensable equipment, like computers and smartphones, and navigate ever-growing features.

Some worry a heavier reliance on digital tools could also encroach on privacy. Sharing sensitive data like banking information, health status and location could expose users to a host of vulnerabilities, such as data breaches, identity theft, online scams or surveillance.

Macao’s privacy policies resemble those in Portugal, which are in accordance with European Union legislation. “The purpose of the Macao data privacy legal framework is to ensure that the processing of personal data is carried out transparently and with strict respect for an individual’s privacy,” wrote Macao-based Bruno Nunes, a managing partner at BN Lawyers, in a report for privacy and regulatory research platform DataGuidance.

Wong believes Macao’s privacy laws are “good enough” to alleviate security concerns. Existing regulations do not allow authorities to collect information without the user’s consent unless in special circumstances, such as disease prevention measures.



MACAO 2.0

Macao's next Five Year Development Plan (for 2021-2025), which has just finished the public consultation stage, outlines five key goals for the first half of the decade. Among them, the government describes the "construction of a city with ideal living conditions". No doubt, technology will play an integral part in achieving this ambitious goal.

Macao has already taken steps to position itself as a forward-thinking city on the global stage, providing a platform for like-minded governments and business leaders to converse and collaborate. This month, for instance, Macao hosted its first tech convention: BEYOND Expo. Having taken place at The Venetian Macao, from 2 to 4 December, the in-person event served as the conclusion to the Expo's month-long virtual conference, where Foxconn CEO Terry Gou made an appearance.

From Alibaba to Huawei to ByteDance, BEYOND welcomed over 500 exhibitors from 120 countries to discuss the future of technology, smart city solutions, innovative inventions, green solutions, infrastructure and much more. Organisers hope the event will become a permanent fixture on the city's events calendar and a must-attend conference for industry leaders across the globe.

Meanwhile, Macao Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng recently announced plans to develop Concordia Industrial Park into the city's first science and tech

hub. The proposed infrastructure will cover 120,000 square metres of land in Coloane and house the city's first data centre. He also revealed that Macao's first set of 5G licenses will be issued as early as next year, paving the way for the next generation of telecommunications services.

In the past year alone, telecoms provider CTM has invested nearly MOP 625 million (US\$78 million) to implement local 5G network infrastructure with plans to invest a total of MOP 2 billion (US\$250 million) in the next five years. A 5G network promises higher bandwidth at low latency – meaning faster and more reliable internet connection speeds – which should propel concepts like autonomous cars, virtual reality and remote surgery.

Experts believe Macao has the potential to become a "smart city" in coming years, but needs to prioritise public health and the environment while exploring possible services and solutions. When discussing necessary improvements, Zhang suggests incorporating technology that can improve often overlooked, but crucial areas, such as waste disposal, pollution monitoring and disaster prevention – all particularly important in the face of climate change.

He recommends setting up a dedicated advisory counsel to help government officials make informed decisions related to technology policies. "That is why you need to have a progressive [government] and you need to have plans, otherwise we may not be able to take advantage of the resources we have." ●

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SOCIAL AFFAIRS

Rooted in history: Macao's trees

The Municipal Affairs Bureau has a specialist green areas team dedicated to caring for historic and culturally valuable trees in the city, as well as preserving and promoting its urban greenery.

Text **Rafelle Allego**
Photos **Oswald Vas**

A Bomba ceiba tree – also known as the cotton tree – inside the Lou Lim Ioc Garden

(Left inset) Ng Ian Ian and Cheong Ngou Si (right inset) both work for the Department of Green Areas and Gardens, helping to care for and maintain Macao's urban trees

Today, the majority of the world's population lives in urban areas and by 2050, 68 per cent of humanity will live in towns and cities, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Trees not only add visual beauty but also offer a whole range of other benefits, from producing oxygen, countering carbon emissions to offering shade and, according to US research, in sufficient numbers can reduce urban temperatures by more than 10 degrees celsius. Physical and mental health are also improved when people are close to urban greenery.

Macao's tree population is safeguarded by the Department of Green Areas and Gardens, a specialist group working under the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) which cares for the territory's greenery that covers roughly 33 square kilometres.

Aside from the urban trees spread throughout Macao, the IAM's experts also have a mission to protect specific trees which are classified as ancient or are considered of historic and cultural value. Every year since 2013, the bureau has reviewed and updated the 'List of Old and Valuable Trees of

Macao'. Currently, there are 616 protected ancient trees listed in the Macao peninsula, Taipa and Coloane. Ng Ian Ian and Cheong Ngou Si – who both work for the IAM's Department of Green Areas and Gardens – explain the process by which urban trees in the city are protected, including the ancient ones.

TREE CLASSIFICATION AND PROTECTION

Urban trees in Macao are defined as 'trees planted on urban land outside of mountain forests' and are 'mainly distributed in green belts, streets, recreation areas and parks'. There is also a category of 'slope' trees, which are situated along roadsides, as well as a subcategory of 'Old and Valuable Trees'. Macao has over 66,000 trees, with over 30,000

of those classified as urban trees and over 35,000 slope trees, says Cheong. With assistance from the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC), the IAM also contacts 'owners, holders or occupants' whose private properties have ancient trees on site which the law requires to be conserved.

Urban trees need maintenance and Cheong says the green areas and gardens department regularly inspects and monitors the health of trees. As Ng elaborates, the team rates the health of each old tree and observes their overall condition. The team organises an inspection at least once a year 'to monitor the overall growth status of ancient trees, pests, diseases, and site conditions,' says Ng.





Urban trees inside the Seac Pai Van Park in Macao are cared for by the Municipal Affairs Bureau's Department of Green Areas and Gardens

“If health conditions are critical, we increase the frequency of follow-ups, with people sent every month to monitor the tree’s health and how much danger it might be in.”

Caring for urban trees – which includes ancient trees – is the responsibility of the green areas team of 60 people, consisting of 18 technicians and 42 frontline staff, says Ng. The staff members have varying academic backgrounds in agronomy, horticulture, environmental sciences and forestry. They manage the proper pruning of trees, as well as adding or reinforcing structural support where necessary, applying pesticides if needed, repairing damaged trees and improving soil quality.



ROOTS OF THE MATTER

In March 2013, the IAM published an extensive record on ‘The Charm of Old Trees’. This book, which is available for purchase at the IAM online bookstore, notes that while Coloane island has a large number of old trees, most of the historically noteworthy ones are on the Macao peninsula around Guia Hill and Camões Garden. This year 32 ancient trees were added to the list, with the oldest being a 260-year-old Camphor tree, located inside the defunct Iec Long Firecracker Factory lot in Old Taipa Village.

Ng says the bureau has its own classification system to determine which trees qualify as old or are otherwise valuable. To determine the age, the IAM has three different age designations: First-Class Ancient Trees are those 500 years old or over, Second-Class Ancient Trees are those between 300 and 499 years old,

while Third-Class Ancient Trees are those 100-299 years old.

Trees are also classified by their special historical or cultural significance to Macao. Ng notes that there are four ‘valuable’ trees in Macao that were planted by past and current chief executives of Macao. These are a white jade orchid tree in Comendador Ho Yin Garden, which was planted by former Chief Executive Edmund Ho Hau Wah in 1999, while the latest was a local-variety *Machilus Chinensis* tree planted by Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng at the Taipa Pequena 2000 Circuit nature trail in 2020, adjacent to two others planted by Edmund Ho Hau Wah and Fernando Chui Sai On.

One of the oldest trees in Macao, classified as a First-Class Ancient Tree, is a Jambolan plum tree aged 510 years old located within the small courtyard of the Kun Iam Ancient Temple. At Lou Lim Ioc Garden there is a Second-Class Ancient Tree, a longan tree aged 310 years old.

Photo courtesy of the Municipal Affairs Bureau



(Centre) Macao's 30,000 urban trees – numbering more than 25,000 tree five years ago – are mainly found in green belts, streets, recreational areas and parks

(Right) The 510-year-old Jambolan plum tree in the Kun Iam Ancient Temple courtyard is one of the oldest trees in Macao



TREES TELL TALES... UNTIL THEY CAN'T

While trees are one of Macao's precious natural resources, they also embody the collective history of the city. If every ancient tree could tell its tale, it would reveal a different facet of Macao's rich heritage. With some of Macao's ancient trees, the IAM has unearthed their rich historical backgrounds. For instance, the large Hackberry tree planted in 1851 inside the courtyard of the Sir Robert Ho Tung Library at Largo de Santo Agostinho is 170 years old and is therefore classified as a Third-Class Ancient Tree. The library was originally built in 1894 as a house for Carolina Antonia da Cunha, the widow of a former Portuguese governor, the house was later purchased by Hong Kong businessman and multi-millionaire Sir Robert Ho Tung in 1918.

He bequeathed the house to the Macao government in 1956, which opened it as a public library in 1958. After the city returned to Chinese administration in 1999, MOP 10 million was invested in a modern extension at the back of the main building, with the library reopening in 2006. The library is considered one of the most generous gifts Sir Robert Ho Tung made to Macao. And through all these structural changes and transfer of ownership, the Hackberry tree remained intact.

However, due to pests or diseases, some trees wither and have to be removed. Urban pollution, typhoons and other types of extreme weather can also damage trees. While Ng says that however much they wish there were other solutions aside from cutting down sick trees, the welfare of the surrounding still

The Old and Valuable Trees of Macao'

The Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) has created a thematic site called 'Old and Valuable Trees of Macao' that is accessible to the public through the QR below:



On the website – only available in Chinese and Portuguese – visitors can use a map to locate where First-, Second- and Third-Class Ancient Trees are located throughout the city.

Photo courtesy of the Municipal Affairs Bureau



The Hackberry tree inside the Sir Robert Ho Tung Library courtyard

(Opposite page) A Third-Class Ancient Tree inside Seac Pai Van Park that needed structural support for growth

healthy trees must take priority. For instance, in September 2020, an old tree was found to be infected with brown-root disease at Camoes Garden and had decayed. Since it posed a danger to its immediate surroundings, the green areas and gardens team had to cut the tree down. During Typhoon Hato in 2017, two ancient trees were felled and had to be removed, says Ng.

"When the health or structural problems of a tree have an impact on the public and are dangerous, we will remove it if it cannot be pruned or treated against pests or diseases, or by adding support to reduce the risk," she explains, adding that the team regularly reviews tree checkup procedures to ensure maintenance is appropriate.

The team also patrols the city, trimming unhealthy parts of trees, says Ng, and following typhoons,

bureau staff inspect urban trees as soon as it is safe to do so. Daily tasks include pruning trees, monitoring soil health, clearing weeds and reinforcing tree trunks and branches.

Cheong and Ng are passionate about safeguarding Macao's urban trees. The team organises Green Week tours of ancient tree sites to educate the public about their history and importance. "I hope that through different promotional activities the public will understand how we work," Ng says, adding the importance of highlighting the role of trees in the ecosystem. "We hope that from the promotional publicity and education, everyone can reach a consensus that the protection of trees should start from the individual."

Given such dedication and expertise, Macao's trees seem destined to enjoy even longer lives for future generations to appreciate. ●



HISTORY

Taipa's living history

Five villas in Taipa represent not only an architectural treasure but also a glimpse into everyday domestic life in old Macao as well as insights into the unique Macanese culture. This year, the Taipa Houses marked 100 years since their first construction in 1921.

Text **Rafelle Allego**
Photos **Denzel Calangi**

Made up of five villas, the Taipa Houses Museum celebrates its centennial year since its completion in 1921

Celebrating the centenary of its original construction as family homes with special events and exhibitions, the Taipa Houses Museum is one of the most colourful heritage sites outside the Historic Centre of Macao. The museum complex offers a fascinating insight to everyday life on Taipa island years ago, and specifically, the rich Macanese culture created from the unique mix of Portuguese, Chinese and other Asian peoples in Macao over several hundred years.

The past 100 years have seen Taipa transform itself from a tranquil island of fishing villages to a key area within

one of the world's most dynamic tourism hubs. The museum provides thousands of visiting tourists with an introduction to the island and city's history. Visitors are naturally attracted to this colourful site, which is within walking distance of the bustle of the Cotai Strip, attracting more than 400,000 visitors in 2019. And while Macao's modern architecture is very diverse, centuries of Portuguese influence have left their architectural mark. Among the remaining Portuguese-style buildings in the city, the five buildings of the Taipa Houses Museum charmingly evoke the memories of a bygone age.



Photo courtesy of the Archives of Macao



Photo courtesy of O Clarim

The Taipa Houses and the church nearby made up a community and at one point, the villas were right next to the shoreline, directly facing Coloane

(Right) Gastão Humberto Barros (1929-2019) was born on Rua do Volong to one of Macao's traditional Macanese families in the São Lázaro neighbourhood

Construction of the houses on Taipa's Avenida da Praia (Beach Avenue) began more than 30 years after the Our Lady of Carmel Church was built in 1885. Visitors today might be surprised to know that the houses were once on the island's shoreline, something hidden by subsequent land reclamation. Designed by Architect Carlos Rebelo de Andrade, the houses were completed in 1921 and became residences for senior Portuguese civil servants in Macao at the time, as well as some Macanese families.

The buildings served as housing for government officials assigned to the Municipality of Ilhas – administering the then separate islands of Taipa and Coloane. The municipal secretaries lived in the fourth villa from the 1940s to 1960s. In the 1950s, a police director lived in the second villa and, at various times during the 1940s, pilots and

two post office telegraphists lived and handled telegrams in the third villa. Later it served as the residence of two major Health Bureau doctors.

One noteworthy personality who resided at the houses was then Deputy Mayor Gastão Humberto Barros, who moved into the fifth villa in 1963. Born in 1929, he started as an administrator for Taipa. Under his management, he began infrastructure projects that connected Taipa and Coloane – the Taipa-Coloane Isthmus – and Governador Nobre de Carvalho Bridge, which linked both islands with the main Macao peninsula. He also saw to completion the Taipa reservoir and the Taipa Sa Kong Municipal Cemetery. Barros was also one of the founders – with support from Fathers Júlio Augusto Massa and Fernando Leal Maciel – of the Macao Catholic weekly paper 'O Clarim' in the late 1970s.

A SCENIC SPOT

In 1976, the coastline, the trees and the villas became officially protected as an area representing Macao's 'historical-cultural relics and scenic interests.' Then the Macao Government Tourism Office refurbished the houses in the 1980s, repairing their exteriors, windows and door frames. The houses were classified by the Macao government as a building complex of architectural value in 1992, according to the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC). With its distinct Portuguese architectural characteristics, such as the triangular door lintel at the entrance and simplified classical elements such as mountain flowers and mouldings, it was acclaimed as one of Macao's top eight heritage sites. The government later renovated the houses and made the complex a museum, which was

opened to the public at the end of 1999. Since then, it has been managed by the IC, with the bureau carrying out a further maintenance and refurbishing project in 2016.

To mark the centenary, this November, the IC put together a number of Paper Cut Light Box DIY Workshops at the 'Exhibitions Gallery' villa at the Taipa Houses. Participants – assisted by instructors – carved images of the Taipa Houses on paper and assembled them into night lamps to create an overlapping light and shadow effect. There were also guided tours for the public to learn about the distinctive features of the Taipa Houses.

(Inset) The Cultural Affairs Bureau held a number of DIY paper cutting light box workshops to celebrate the houses' 100 years



Photo courtesy of the Cultural Affairs Bureau



All five villas have the characteristics of typical Portuguese villas – while the three two-storey houses have encircling porches, all have white decorative mouldings on the exterior walls

THE MACANESE OF BYGONE YEARS

The first of the five villas closest to the adjacent Cross Garden is the ‘Macanese Living Museum’, depicting the typical home lives of its former Macanese occupants. The different rooms have been preserved to reproduce the look and feel of a traditional Macanese home.

Acting as a time capsule of a past era, the house portrays the intermingling of Portuguese and Chinese lifestyles and customs. The Macanese people are descendants of Portuguese ancestors who intermarried with Chinese, Malay

from Southeast Asia and Indian people. The Macanese developed their own language, Patuá, adopted Western religious beliefs but were also influenced by Chinese culture.

The ground floor living room and reading room are connected, each with its own door for easy access. On the living room side are a rosewood rocking chair and chaise longue with satin upholstery made in the early 20th century. Meanwhile, the reading room is furnished with valuable antiques such as a 200-year-old Chinese-style bookshelf and rosewood chairs for guests, among others.

Going up the spiral staircase at the back of the house leads to the first floor where the toilet, a single bedroom and the master bedroom are. The master bedroom has its own connecting living room. Serving a different purpose from the one on the ground floor, the living room on the second storey was used for meeting with close relatives and friends, as well as the children of the household. In the bedroom is a large French Provence-style iron bed, with white draped curtains serving not only as decor but also to keep out mosquitoes. Close to the bed is a small altar as most Macanese were Roman Catholics.

Aside from the first ‘Macanese Living Museum’ house, there are four other villas. These are the ‘Exhibitions Gallery’, ‘Creative Casa’, ‘Nostalgic House’ and ‘House for Receptions’; the last two of the four are generally closed except for special events. Adjacent to the villas is a freshwater wetland that was a large mangrove swamp up until 1998. Now under the care of the Municipal Affairs Bureau, it is home to aquatic plants such as the lotus, water lily, and umbrella plant, among others. At the end of the row of villas, facing the expansive Cotai Strip, is an amphitheatre which is often the go-to venue for special open-air events such as the annual Lusofonia.

The Taipa Houses Museum and its surroundings provide a relaxing and thought-provoking attraction showcasing Macao’s past. Visitors can stroll along the quiet footpaths in the nearby gardens with the overarching trees providing shade, enjoy the architectural beauty of these five villas, and ponder over the 100 years of memories from the city’s rich East-meets-West heritage. ●

The five houses

Taipa Houses Museum is a complex of five houses and each building has its own specific purpose and theme. Each of the five villas has their own opening schedules (all closed Mondays), depending on ongoing events in the area.

EXHIBITIONS GALLERY



Just one storey tall, the house next to the Macanese Living Museum is the Exhibitions Gallery. The space is rented out from time to time as an exhibition area. The most recent was the ‘Connectivities: Living beyond the boundaries – Macao and the Greater Bay Area’, which ran through summer 2021; approximately 14 square metres (150 square feet).

MACANESE LIVING MUSEUM

The two-storey house displays antique furniture and decor, depicting the traditional Macanese lifestyle; approximately 33 square metres (350 square feet).

NOSTALGIC HOUSE

This villa usually houses special exhibitions on the Macanese people and other displays embracing the themes of local culture, life, religion, architecture and cuisine in both the past and present; approximately 14 square metres (150 square feet).

– Open daily from 10 am to 7 pm, with no admittance after 6:30 pm

CREATIVE CASA



The ‘Creative Casa’ is leased out to companies in the cultural and creative industry via public tender. The Universal Gallery & Bookstore currently operates the space, with a shop on the ground floor mainly selling books on humanities, social sciences, art design and local publications. Meanwhile, the first floor is an exhibition area showcasing and selling art from local and foreign artists; approximately 33 square metres (350 square feet).

– Open daily from 10 am to 7 pm

HOUSE FOR RECEPTIONS

Since this building is used as a venue for official banquets, receptions and similar functions, the ‘House for Receptions’ isn’t open to the public. In the past, it has been used for Grand Prix gala dinners; approximately 33 square metres (350 square feet)

From 17 December 2021 to 1 January 2022, the Taipa Houses will hold a lily-themed exhibition, with image and text panels, as well as seminars, floral art demonstrations and workshops. There will also be a floral art and a photography competition.





CULTURE

Artists
in residence

Seven Macao artists created 12 different artworks that express their perspectives on East-meets-West culture, a defining characteristic of the city, using various art forms. The works are now on public show at the newly opened Grand Lisboa Palace Resort Macau.

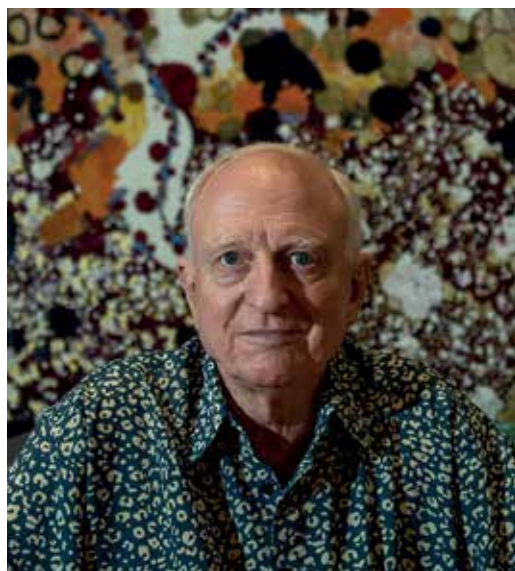


Text **Vivianna Cheong**
Photos courtesy of
**Grand Lisboa Palace
Resort Macau**

For five centuries, Macao has been a meeting place of Europe and Asia, reflected in the city's food, architecture and culture. Macao's unique cultural combination has also been a factor in the creative arts. Seven locally based artists have collaborated in a joint public exhibition of 12 of their artworks at the Grand Lisboa Palace Resort Macau, which opened its first phase in July 2021. The works, which are in various artistic media, were created by seven artists: Eric Fok, Denis Murrell, Cai Guo Jie, Carlos Marreiros, Ambrose So, Konstantin Bessmertny and Ung Vai Meng. The collection showcases works of calligraphy, porcelain, tapestry, oils and mosaics, among others.



(Clockwise from top left) Ung Vai Meng, Eric Fok, Ambrose So, Cai Guo Jie, Denis Murrell, Konstantin Bessmertny, Carlos Marreiros



SHOWCASING VARIOUS TECHNIQUES

Ung Vai Meng, the former director of Macao Museum of Art and president of the Cultural Affairs Bureau, is a maestro combining different crafts in a single piece. His commissioned work *Auspicious Stars Shining Over Macao* celebrates the history and future of Macao, with a mixture of carpentry, metalwork, stonework, ironwork, and paving mosaics.

The art scholar and painter spent almost a year completing this love letter to the city. Using specially created paving stones – the city’s signature paving style originated in Portugal – the work recreates Macao’s iconic landmark, the Ruins of St. Paul’s, in iron. Imported from Portugal, the stones have been halved to lighten them. Carefully put together by the artist, each stone was drilled at the bottom and then mounted securely with steel wires. Some stones are coloured gold and others are inlaid with oyster shells. One of Macao’s alternative Chinese names is *Hou Keng*, meaning ‘oyster mirror’, a reference to the oyster beds surrounding the city’s peninsula coastline.

The gold and blue mosaic is inspired by the historic Hotel Lisboa’s decorative ceiling. There are six fish, with the number six suggesting infinity, according to a Chinese idiom. The combination of the motifs is a fond reminder of Macao’s past. A shining golden star at the top of the work represents Macao’s bright future.



Talking about the city’s future in arts development, the scholar strongly believes: “As long as more people know the value behind art and culture, more people will be able to support it. It’s not about supporting me as an artist, but rather supporting society as a whole to promote these kinds of artistic endeavours. In fact, culture is very important to everyone, including parents, children, and anyone in society. Today, our cultural entrepreneurs and the government are using art and cultural activities to allow our entire cultural ecology to develop healthily. I believe that we can succeed if we continue this way.”

Ung Vai Meng’s *Auspicious Stars Shining Over Macao* combines various creative methods and charts the city’s past and future

GRAND SCALE

Famed for his meticulous ink-drawing brushstrokes on a much smaller scale, artist Eric Fok presents two works of art. *Paradise – Grand Lisboa Palace* marks Fok’s attempt on enlarging his intimate ink drawing to a grander scale and in a new medium. Fok says: “In this artistic creation for Grand Lisboa Palace, I once again challenged myself in terms of the scope and difficulty of painting, and I am also breaking through my own limits.”

The use of metal engraving as a medium recognises Macao’s historic role as a trading port for silver. Visitors can therefore view Fok’s brushstrokes from a different perspective. The golden colour adds a timeless feel to the panoramic view of the hotel, which is drawn with a visual reference to the Grand Trianon from the Palace of Versailles in France.

The second piece by Fok is *Paradise – Ships on the Oriental Coast*, which adapts Fok’s ink on paper drawing style to Portuguese porcelain tiles. The blue shades ooze

tranquility and blend perfectly with the elegant marble wall; however, the dynamism of Old Macao still emerges from Fok’s careful illustration of churches, ships, and people during the Age of Discovery. The piece combines the city’s past and present by depicting the new hotel in the centre.

This commission means a great

deal to the artist, he says: “The Lisboa brand has created a number of unique landmarks of extraordinary significance for the people of Macao. My memory of visiting Hotel Lisboa as a child is still vivid and now my art pieces are part of Grand Lisboa Palace, which means my work will surely become someone else’s memory in the future.”



Eric Fok’s ink on paper drawing style is adapted to Portuguese porcelain tiles in *Paradise – Ships on the Oriental Coast*

(Above) Fok expanded his ink drawing (originally around 3 metres wide and 2 metres high) onto a metal engraving of 5.65 metres wide and 4.15 metres high in *Paradise – Grand Lisboa Palace*

Humility Scroll, sized at 3.68 metres wide and 4.547 metres high, sits in grandeur at the West Lobby entrance, which is opposite the East Asian Games Dome. Created by SJM Holding’s Vice-chairman, Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer Ambrose So, who is also a calligrapher, this piece is made of black brick ceramics with white inscriptions of the 15th chapter of *Yi Jing* (Book of Changes), an ancient Chinese divination manual used during the Western Zhou period (1000-750 BC), the Warring States period (475-221 BC) and early Imperial period (500-200 BC).

The chapter explains the virtue of modesty and the subject matter is articulated through the small seal script (小篆) – the standardised writing style adopted when Emperor Qin Shi Huang unified the six warring states around 220 BC. Framed in hand-painted Portuguese *azulejos* (porcelain tiles), this artwork flows with grace.

Ambrose So revisits a chapter in *Yi Jing* by combining Chinese calligraphy and Portuguese porcelain tiles

(Center) Cai Guo Jie chose to represent *Octagonal Pavilion Library* in this abstract work because of its vibrant colours

(Far right) Denis Murrell combines acrylic and ink with absorbent tissue papers to create *Untitled I*

The black ceramics and the inscription were processed in a high-heat dragon kiln in Zhongshan, Guangdong province. The master overseeing the ceramic heating was the veteran specialist He Zhan Quan, who applied an ancient technique dating back to the Ming and Qing dynasties. One notable feature is the greenish glazing on the word ‘Humility’ (謙), which is a result of *yao bian* (a furnace transmutation that leads to an unpredictable colouring change in the kiln).

ABSTRACT ART

Taiwanese artist Cai Guo Jie, who has been based in Macao for a decade, has contributed a great deal to the local art scene – being the former vice-president of the Art for All Society and a visual art instructor at the Macao Museum of Art. He is now immersing himself in research on intermedia art theory and practice at the China Academy of Art, and he also lectures in various institutions including the School of Arts at Macao Polytechnic Institute,

Macao University of Science and Technology, University of Macau and Macao Institute for Tourism Studies.

For this commission he created two watercolour paintings – *View of Lisbon, Portugal* and *Octagonal Pavilion Library* – the actual library is located in Macao. Respectively, he merged English characters and radicals of Chinese characters into his expressive brushstrokes. The paintings were adapted to tapestry and placed separately in two VIP lobby reception rooms. The process

involved creating a digital copy of the original artwork then choosing yarns that matched watercolour hues and finally the tapestry itself was hand-woven by artisans.

The texture of the woolen tapestry elaborates and amplifies the force of his brushstrokes, while the rich colours (red and orange for Lisbon, and red and green for the local library) imbues a certain warmth against the marble walls in the rooms.

Another reason for using the medium of tapestry was to present

an expansive view of the Portuguese capital and the local library. The library was chosen as a subject due to its sharp colours, enhancing the contrast between the tapestry and the marble wall.

Australian Denis Murrell, who has been working as an artist and educator in Macao for over three decades, once again thrills art-lovers with his unique style – combining acrylic and ink with absorbent tissue papers. His commissioned works, *Untitled I* and *Untitled II*, are placed opposite each other in the West Lobby lounge of the resort, which is closest to Macau International Airport and Taipa Ferry Terminal. The rich palette, his spirited manner and lucid composition make these two pieces visual delights. Murrell absorbs acrylic and various colours of ink with tissue paper, torn by hand with the pieces then pasted on to the canvas.





PLAYFUL TOUCHES

Macao-based Russian artist Konstantin Bessmertny, who also works in Hong Kong, expands his regular use of ambiguity in his two commissioned works – *E. meets W.* and *W. meets E.*, poking fun at western and eastern stereotypes.

These two oil paintings are placed opposite each other at the East Lobby of the resort. Set in a beautiful garden with mountains and clouds stretching further behind, *E. meets W.* shows how the west is seen from an eastern perspective – packed with symbolic figures from the era of the Renaissance and contemporary western art, film, fashion, popular culture, and history. Similarly, the second piece *W. meets E.* portrays how the east is viewed from a western perspective, with symbols from iconic and tourist hotspots, characters from Chinese literature, history, music and politics.

It is worth taking time to take in these scenes and consider their origins. With sharp colours, illogical narrative (such as illustrations of Confucius speaking English, eunuchs playing pool), these pieces juxtapose the stereotypical imagination of western and eastern cultures.

Another artist who also applies a playful touch is the respected award-winning architect and artist Carlos Marreiros. His *Macao Glory* illustrates the evolution of Macao from the 16th century up to the present in two *azulejo* tiles panels. The details are depicted in red (humanity and history) and blue (geography and architecture).

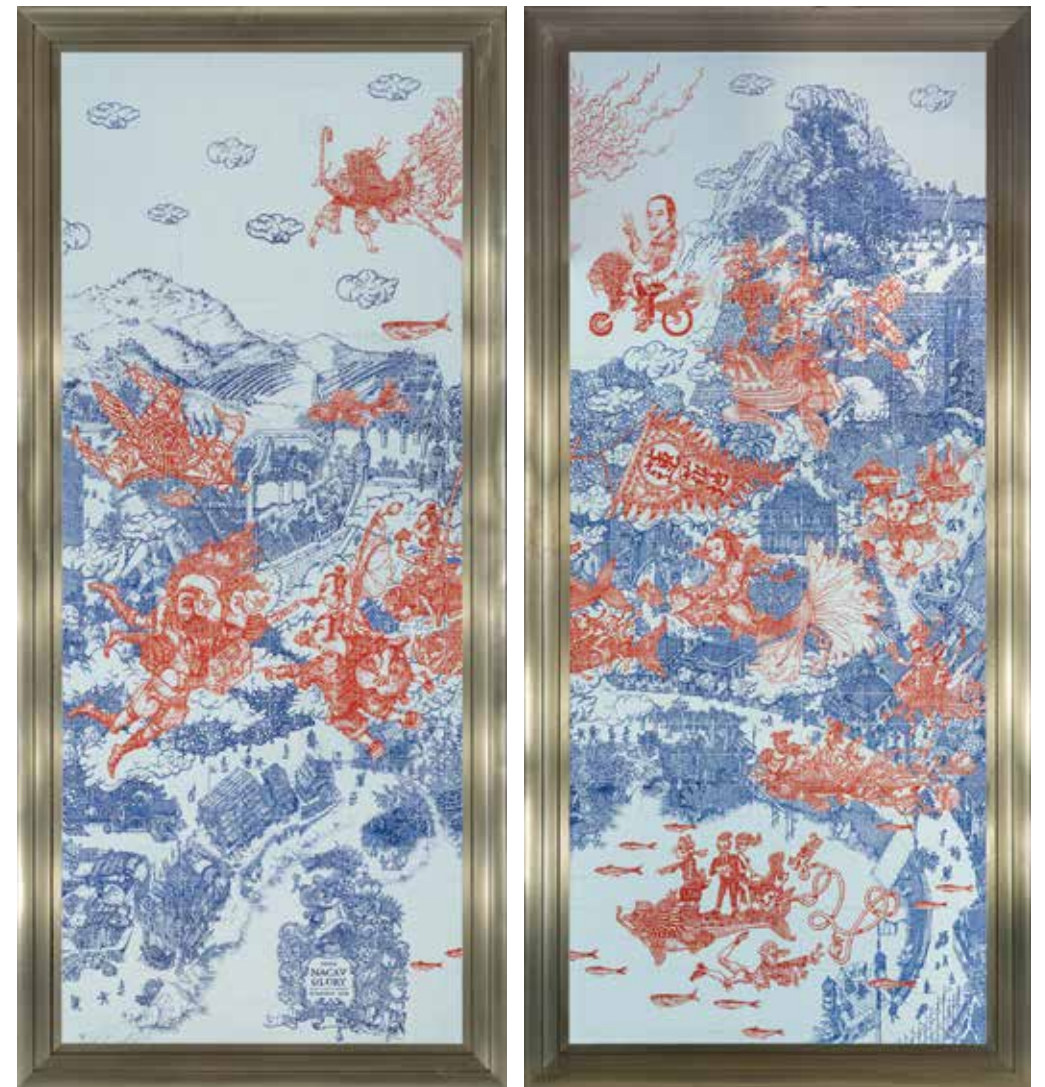
The composition is evocative of traditional Chinese landscape paintings with the major narrative in the middle and further scenery with details stretching at the top and further to the bottom. Viewers should start from the panel on the left. Two parties – western and eastern – are illustrated as part human, part fish or birds in the middle. The western party brings goods to trade with the eastern one. The symbols of fish and birds indicate the inability to communicate between the two cultures. The western figures also come with spaceships,

representing technological influences on the east. At the bottom, viewers can see Macao's old coastline and livelihood (shacks where people lived upstairs and raised pigs downstairs). The characters at the bottom are from various eras – Ming and Qing dynasties as well as contemporary Macao. The combination of eras and symbolic figures portray the city's evolution.

The panel on the right takes a bolder and more playful step in depicting the harmonious cultural exchange. In the middle, one can see historical and mythological figures mingling joyfully, such as a Chinese fairy flying with Cupid, the

deity Nezha on roller-skates instead of his usual wind fire wheels, and Portuguese poet Luís Vaz de Camões exchanging ideas with Chinese landscape painter poet Wu Li. At the bottom, is the coastline at Meia Laranja in the Macao peninsula.

Marreiros shares the goal of his creation: “What I want the audience to see through these two artworks of mine is simple: Macao as a beautiful city as it actually is, a fantastic place to live, with good and beautiful people, a very rich history built throughout centuries of universal embrace between several diverse cultures, the main cultural matrices being the Chinese and the Portuguese.”



Carlos Marreiros's *Macao Glory* is packed with historical motifs from east and west and reinterprets Macao's evolution from a fishing village to a modern city

(Opposite page) Konstantin Bessmertny's *E. meets W.*, along with an accompanying piece *W. meets E.*, pokes fun at eastern and western stereotypes by mixing cultural symbols



A HOPEFUL BEGINNING

Marreiros' other commissioned work, *Serene Dawn of Tomorrow*, draws a graceful close to the public collection. The work juxtaposes traditional Southern Chinese architecture and their Portuguese counterparts, in addition to buildings epitomising the city's rapid urban growth. A river combining everything in the middle suggests a sense of harmony as well as Macao's location on the Pearl River Delta.

The artist has made numerous attempts to work with different shades of colour and perspectives. First he painted the basic contours of the details, then placed an acrylic board on top and applied another layer of acrylic paint. The landscape painting somehow poeticises Macao's cityscape.

On the artistic significance of the resort's initiative, Marreiros notes:

"For me, it was very meaningful to have the opportunity to do these two artworks for decorating these two big lobbies, and it is meaningful precisely because local artists often don't have the chance to do such huge and visible artworks. Therefore, this opportunity was wonderful for local artists because the client trusted us and we fulfilled their desire, in such a way that the response from the visitors and the media were very positive."

This public art collection has brought together many great artists' interpretations of the city's East-meets-West character and allowed them to explore and experiment with new artistic methods and expressions. Visitors and guests at Grand Lisboa Palace can not only enjoy all these remarkable artworks under one roof, but also learn about the city's historical and social changes. ●

Marreiros's *Serene Dawn of Tomorrow* juxtaposes traditional Southern Chinese architecture and their Portuguese counterparts in a colourful landscape

Macao Yearbook 2021 launches e-editions

2021



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APK VERSION

The Chinese, Portuguese and English electronic editions of *Macao Yearbook 2021*, which was compiled by the Government Information Bureau (GCS) of the Macao SAR (MSAR), is now available online.

The *Macao Yearbook* is a comprehensive chronicle. It outlines major events, details of progress achieved, and changes made in the course of Macao's political, economic, social and cultural development with the aim of promoting Macao and providing detailed information and data for all who wish to study and understand Macao.

Published annually since 2002, the trilingual *Macao Yearbook* is divided into four sections: Administrative Priorities of the MSAR Government; Calendar of Events; Review of the MSAR and Appendices.

Facing the unprecedented challenge of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Government implemented decisive measures according to its overall direction of administrative policies – "Fighting the pandemic, safeguarding employment, stabilising the economy, caring for people's livelihoods, implementing reform, and facilitating development". *Macao Yearbook 2021* has fully chronicled these developments.

Since 2016, hard copies of the *Macao Yearbook* have not been printed in response to the growing popularity of online reading and the need for environmental protection. The yearbook is now available digitally only.

Interested readers can access the e-edition of the *Macao Yearbook 2021* on the GCS website (<https://yearbook.gcs.gov.mo>) or scan the respective QR code on this page to download the *Yearbook* app.



Three determined young Macao entrepreneurs are at the forefront of the city's increasingly diverse hospitality industry, building a beer brand that includes local flavours and global ambition.

Text **Vivianna Cheong**
Photos courtesy of
Funny Eye Brewing

(Opposite page) Osmanthus
Pilsener flavoured craft beer



António Sanmarful

Three young Macao entrepreneurs turned adversity into opportunity during the middle of the Covid-19 pandemic by relocating their craft-brewing operations to Macao to produce beer brands designed to appeal to consumers' thirst for local flavours.

Macao's Funny Eye Brewery was set up in June 2021 by business partners, Crystal Kwok (25), Lucas Lio (27) and Alison Tam (26). Sharing a passion for craft beers that began in their student days at the University of Macau, they set up their own company three years ago to brew Funny Eye beers. Despite facing serious obstacles to their brewing operations created by the pandemic, the trio found solutions on their own doorstep.

Initially, Funny Eye beers had been brewed in Hong Kong and first appeared in the Macao market in 2018. The three young entrepreneurs often travelled back and forth between the two cities to oversee operations and arrange deliveries. Once supplies were flowing smoothly, they broadened their business model. They set up the Funny Eye Tasting

Room at the Triangle Coffee Roasters cafe in the Historic Centre of Macao in June 2019 to share their creations with local and visiting beer enthusiasts.

"When we set up a [tasting room] at Triangle, it felt like we had found our footing," recalls Kwok. "During the first three months, business was good – many friends came to support us. In March and April 2020, we welcomed a lot of new customers. Since locals could not travel due to Covid-19, they started looking for fun things to do locally."

But the pandemic also had a devastating impact on business operations and supplies. Suddenly, at the very point when the trio needed to ramp up production to meet this increased demand, they were unable to visit their Hong Kong suppliers.

While others might have given up or been forced out of business, Kwok, Lio and Tam boldly decided to relocate their brewing operations from Hong Kong to Macao. This meant bringing the whole business back to its roots in the city.

“

As brewing a ‘Macao’ beer was our goal, we adjusted the taste to suit local preferences.

– Crystal Kwok

Funny Eye Brewery started with a handmade cart at the Hong Kung Night Market



HOW IT ALL BEGAN

The three Funny Eye founders first met while living in the same residential hall at Cheng Yu Tung college at the University of Macau (UM). Kwok and Tam were roommates, while Lio lived one floor above. Each of the three pursued different courses. Kwok was studying PR and communications, while Tam was specialising in business management. Lio, however, was engaged in studying Chinese literature, something that seems a world away from a brewing business career.

They started experimenting with craft beers during their studies at UM. In 2018, their instructor, UM resident fellow Tang Yu Ming, assisted their research and business plans as part of an entrepreneurial competition for students. Tang also introduced the trio to some of his former students in Hong Kong – Ken Lo, Mark Mak and Ball Mak – the directors of Mak’s Brewery in Hong Kong.

The start-up team was able to draw upon further academic expertise at UM. Professor Tam Kin Yip of the university’s Faculty of Health Sciences,

advised the Funny Eye team on the beers based on scientific analyses of the various brewing mixes.

The team at Mak’s Brewery taught Lio how to make premium beers. Together with Dr Tang and the Mak directors, Lio opened a bottle shop called My Beer in the Bairro Horta da Mitra neighbourhood of Macao that same year. The shop sold over 100 brands of craft beer, making it one of the most comprehensive craft beer retailers in the city, but the business itself did not thrive.

Soon after, Lio teamed up again with Kwok and Tam to start brewing their own beer commercially, with Lio becoming Brew Master. The three saved MOP 30,000 (US\$3,754), bought ingredients from online shopping site Taobao, constructed a wooden cart by hand and set up a stall at the Hong Kung Night Market. Here they gained feedback directly from potential consumers.

This practical market research was invaluable. Since the Funny Eye partners had originally followed Western-style brewing methods and recipes, customers found the first batch of beers too bitter. The trio went back to the drawing board, concocting new flavours that better reflected Macao’s identity and were more suited to local palates. They returned to the night market soon after. This time, however, they sold their first tea-flavoured beers – these were a hit.

Chief Marketing Officer Crystal Kwok, says it was the city’s East-meets-West culture that inspired the brewers to explore new flavour combinations, in particular drawing upon Macao people’s long-standing love for aromatic Chinese teas. “As brewing a ‘Macao’ beer was our goal, we adjusted the taste to suit local preferences,” she explains. “We decided to add floral and tea

flavours – jasmine, chrysanthemum, pu’er [fermented black tea] and rose. The response to our tea series was positive; many customers found it intriguing.”

The trio then developed six varieties of craft beer: Lychee Black Tea Pale Ale, Osmanthus Pilsener, Rose Ale, Passion Fruit Cider, Lucky Cat IPA, and Funny Dog Pale Ale.

With growing demand in their home city and winning flavours, Funny Eye was faced with the practical problem of finding an affordable site for its own brewery in Macao. The shift was full of risks.

“We had to take our chances, just like we did in 2018 [at the Hong Kung Night Market],” says Kwok. “We spent almost half a year looking for a location since rents were high and we needed a longer-term contract due to our brewing gear.”

The Funny Eye founders finally found the perfect location: an industrial building on Avenida de Venceslau de Moraes. They invested a total of MOP 3 million (US\$375,473) from earlier profits, support from the Macao government’s Small- and Medium-sized Enterprises Aid Scheme and prize money from entrepreneurial competitions (such as the Qianhai Guangdong - Hong Kong - Macao Youth Innovation and Entrepreneurship Competition 2019, where they won third prize worth RMB100,000).

The company already employs five other full-time staff in addition to the trio and an additional six part-time workers. Chief Executive Alison Tam says the new brewery will enable the company to expand dramatically, increasing production ten-fold, from 10,000 to 100,000 cans a month. “Now, we produce around 10,000 cans a month for around 50 restaurants and bars,” she says, adding that they have to ‘knock on doors’ metaphorically, since craft beer is still a nascent industry in Macao.

“But many local [restaurant and bar] owners are willing to give young people like us opportunities. We’d love to create a



António Sanmarful

new series of bottled beers and sell it in supermarkets.”

In addition to working with grocery stores, bottle shops, and bars in Macao, the trio has set their sights on expanding internationally, starting with the Greater Bay Area, comprising Macao, Hong Kong and nine major cities in China’s Guangdong province.

HISTORIC HOME

Those longing for locally brewed craft beer in a quintessentially Macao setting, need only head to the Funny Eye Tasting Room, a cosy and casual 15-seat space shared with the owners of Triangle Coffee Roaster in the city’s UNESCO historical centre.

Set alongside the charming heritage sites of Macao’s Senado Square, Monte Fort and the Ruins of St Paul’s, the Funny Eye Tasting Room can be found behind the ruins, among a series of cobbled streets flanked by cafés, bars, restaurants and eateries.

Funny Eye Brewery moved their brewing operations from Hong Kong to Macao in 2021

Guests can enjoy coffee from noon to 8 pm, before the cafe switches to craft beer in the evenings until 2 am. It's an ideal spot to take a break from sightseeing or business meetings, and yet still stay immersed in Macao's special atmosphere of heritage and contemporary subcultures.

Keeping with their desire for experimentation and collaboration, the trio also serves other regional brews alongside their own. For instance, visitors can try the Wan Kwai Porter or Longan Pale Ale from Mak's Brewery in Hong Kong, as well as three beer-cocktails. The Funny Eye Tasting Room also offers Macao-inspired gastropub snacks, such as hash browns with crab, beef cubes with cheese sauce, fried chicken cartilage, and crispy popcorn chicken with sweet-and-sour sauce.

AN HOMAGE TO MACAO

Every aspect of the Funny Eye business reflects its "Made in Macao" ethos. The company worked with a local designer to create the brand's logo: a trippy eye gazing at a star. They hired Kenneth Ho of WWAVE Design, who was "passionate" about the logo concept, which aims to inspire people to explore new paths and reach for the stars.

"When we started our business, some friends and family members didn't support us. They thought there was no market for craft beer because nobody had done it," explains Kwok. "They encouraged us to look for jobs as civil servants or work at hotels. We hope to encourage people to find some sparkle in their lives instead

of [settling]. That's why our name is Funny Eye, and our logo is an eye gazing at a star."

For Kwok, craft beer is not simply a refreshment or a great way to bring people together. It's also a means of sharing the city's culture with the world. "We hope we can communicate more about Macao's local subcultures – graffiti, coffee and music – through [craft beer]."

While Funny Eye's future achievements may depend on its expansion beyond Macao, its fundamental recipe for success has been formulated entirely within Macao – a heady blend of academic expertise, government support and cultural sensibility combined with the intoxicating effects of youthful energy and enterprise. ●



Funny Eye craft beers include floral and tea flavours to suit Macao's taste preferences

Plan your visit

Visitors to Macao can enjoy Funny Eye's craft beers in the city's historic centre. The Funny Eye Tasting Room, close to the iconic Ruins of St Paul's, is open daily from 8 pm to 2 am.



Steven Tai, the owner of Shamrock garment factory and eponymous fashion label, Steven Tai Limited, says beauty comes in all forms

BUSINESS

Seamless succession

After inheriting Macao's longest-running clothing factory, local Steven Tai showcased his genre-defying, body-positive brand at fashion weeks in London, New York, Paris and Milan. And now, he's supporting budding designers in Macao.



Text **Erico Dias**
Photos courtesy of
Steven Tai

Steven Tai and his mother, Alice Choi, in Canada during a summer break

(Insets) In the early 2000s, Shamrock factory worked with two of the world's biggest sportswear brands, Adidas and Umbro

(Opposite page) Tai graduated from the University of British Columbia with a business degree before shifting his sights to fashion

In 2012, Steven Tai had what he would call his “big break.” At just 28 years old, the fashion designer debuted his Spring/Summer 2013 collection at the Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week in Berlin. Tai’s designs were based on the idea of “celebrating ‘social outcasts,’” nerds and geeks, he says.

“It was so surreal,” Tai recalls. “It was as if I was suddenly experiencing [a scene] that I only ever expected to see on television.” Following his debut on the big stage, Tai returned to his family’s garment factory in Macao to prepare collections for other upcoming fashion shows.

The factory – which his grandfather named “Shamrock” after the lucky Irish clover because

it symbolises faith, hope and love – traces its history to the 1980s when the clothing factory opened along Av. Coronel Mesquita. One of Macao’s oldest and last-remaining garment factories, Shamrock has seen many fashion seasons, trends, styles and clients.

Alice Choi, Tai’s mother, opened the factory over 40 years ago in an era of oversized blazers, baggy jeans and bubble skirts. But unlike many other clothing factories at the time, Shamrock focused on performance-driven sportswear, producing lines for major international clients such as Adidas.

Born in Macao in 1984, Tai recalls growing up in a rapidly changing city while his mother worked around the clock, running



Oswald Vas

the factory. There was a toy store and video arcade nearby, which he visited often as a child while studying at Pui Ching Middle School until fourth grade.

Tai understood from an early age that garment manufacturing was a way of life for his family. His grandfather, Charles Choi, moved from Shanghai to Hong Kong to look for new opportunities. He opened a knitwear factory called Orlando Stars in the early 1970s, while the rest of the family lived in Shanghai. Over time, Choi managed to bring six of his seven adult children to Hong Kong – all except Tai’s mother.

“My mom was in Shanghai waiting for my dad since he had to handle some paperwork,” Tai says. “By the time he was ready,

Hong Kong would not accept any more people for a while. I think it’s because of policy changes in the early 1980s and too many people flooded in.”

Instead of Hong Kong, Tai’s grandfather sent Alice Choi, a secondary school mathematics teacher in Shanghai at the time, to Macao because it seemed like a good place to start a business, and the city was still accepting immigrants.

Tai’s mother set up Shamrock and started a T-shirt and sportswear business. “My mom struggled that first year – my grandfather was really tough on her because he wanted his children to be the best in whatever they were doing,” Tai says.

Tai’s grandfather pressured Choi to get the business on its feet,

sending her a few smaller clients to help. Working day and night, Choi managed to break even. And though she did not make a profit the first year, they saw this as progress.

About eight years later, Choi had a lucky break. Adidas and Umbro, two of the world’s biggest sportswear brands, came knocking on her door. At the time, Macao’s manufacturing industry was growing rapidly and the city had earned a reputation for its high-quality garment factories. “Each factory around the world had a reputation for the type and quality of garment it makes,” Tai recalls. “And Adidas and Umbro liked the way our factory produced garments; to this day, we have a very systematic way of making clothing with great care.”

FROM MACAO TO MILAN

A few years before the handover of Macao from Portuguese to Chinese administration, Tai's parents took him to Canada for the summer. When summer ended, Tai returned to Macao, and his parents gave him a choice: he could stay in Macao or move to Canada. "I had a bad day at school that day," he recalls. "So I said, 'I'll move to Canada.' It was my decision and, still today, I think it was crazy for a nine-year-old to decide that."

In 1993, Tai relocated to Vancouver with his father, and studied at Edith Cavell School, then attended Prince of Wales secondary school. While he wasn't one of the hardest-working students – he spent most of his time playing video games and watching films – Tai loved creative fields. He taught himself to play the guitar and enjoyed photography.

At 16, Tai realised he'd need to improve his grades to get into the University of British Columbia (UBC), so he put his head down and studied. Tai graduated from UBC in 2007 with a business degree but eventually shifted his sights to fashion. "I've always liked the idea of making crazy clothes," Tai says. "Like the ones you see on the runway, who would wear that? But at the same time, it was a business opportunity."

He applied to one of the most acclaimed fashion colleges, Central Saint Martins in London, which changed everything. In fashion school, Tai encountered a highly competitive atmosphere. The ambitious designer pursued different internships every winter to improve his craft, gaining experience under designers at Viktor & Rolf,

Puma by Hussein Chalayan MBE and Bless (a design house with locations in Paris and Berlin). After graduating in 2011, Tai landed an internship with Stella McCartney.

That same year, he had an opportunity to take part in the Hyères Fashion Competition for emerging designers in the south of France, where Japanese fashion legend Yohji Yamamoto – one of Tai's major influences – was a judge. Tai was a finalist and took home the Chloé award in recognition of his innovation and creative excellence.

In 2012, Tai asked his mother if he could take over the factory and she agreed. Choi was ready to slow down, though she continues to help out to this day. That same year, Tai had an opportunity to present 25 looks at Berlin Fashion Week. With the deadline just a month away, Tai hired a few interns to help him complete the mammoth task. "I had interns when I was an intern," Tai laughs.

After showcasing his work in Berlin, *Vogue Italy* invited Tai to work on a project with a company in New York. Since Tai's internship at Stella McCartney was coming to an end, Tai wanted to "strike while the iron was hot," he says. Given the interest in his designs, Tai officially established his brand in London, then returned to Macao to produce his collections at the Shamrock factory.

"My brand's garments are experimental, and I treat making a garment like I'm making a work of art," Tai says, adding that he specialises in fabric manipulation and unconventional cuts. He loves fashion and design because he gets "obsessive" when manipulating fabrics in such a detailed way. "Finally, the vision just clicks in my head."

From 2012 to 2015, Tai attended various fashion competitions and was sponsored to travel to New York, Milan, Athens, Zagreb and Toronto. In 2016, Tai fulfilled his dream to showcase his designs

at London Fashion Week, one of the most prestigious fashion events on the calendar. From then on, things "only got crazier," he says. Paris Fashion Week invited Tai to join the show – the pinnacle of any designer's career.

"I met a lot of Chinese designers who all came to Paris to sell their collections," Tai says, adding that he too started selling his looks in Paris after the show rather than opening a standalone boutique. The designers he met in France told him about Shanghai Fashion Week, which Tai joined from 2017 to 2019.

In the meantime, he also attended London Fashion Week in 2018, which was "one of the most memorable experiences" for Tai. For the autumn-winter show, Tai collaborated with ILMxlab, the studio behind the special effects in the *Star Wars* films. The tech-savvy team helped share elements of Macao – the iconic pavement in Senado Square, neon restaurant signs, the city's skyline – with visitors through an augmented reality experience. It was a successful experiment that Tai "will never forget".

“
My brand's
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I'm making a
work of art.”

– Steven Tai

(Opposite page) Tai says his most memorable experience was London Fashion Week 2018

Tai says he can be obsessive and "nerdy" when it comes to the finer details of making clothes



All photos on this page courtesy of Steven Tai

Oswald Vas



BUILDING A RUNWAY IN MACAO

For Tai, who by now was running Shamrock, shifting the factory away from client work to produce his own collections made sense. “My mom understood, and she wasn’t sentimental about the prestige of brand names. Clients change over 40 years of business,” he says.

But around 2018, Tai started to feel burnt out, even dozing off while working on the company’s finances. The following year, he hit the breaks on his brand, ceased production and transitioned back to client work. This time, he focused the factory’s energy on creating high-fashion womenswear for clients rather than sportswear.

Having seen Tai’s garments worldwide, clients began approaching Tai for everything from consulting to full-scale production services. For example, British DJ and model Harley Viera Newton orders feminine clothes with a vintage touch for HVN. Many big names such as the Duchess of Cambridge Kate Middleton, English singer-songwriter Dua Lipa and pop superstar Ariana Grande have worn HVN’s clothes – and Tai felt immensely proud when he spotted an image of Jennifer Lawrence wearing a dress he designed for HVN.

“A lot of people liked our techniques and way of making clothes,” Tai says, adding that his designs are “nerdy”. That may reflect his personality: Tai always saw himself as an outsider in Canada and the UK but never felt down about that. He always surrounded himself with other “weirdos”, he says, and never pretended to be someone he was not.

Tai’s mother, Alice, encouraged him to embrace individuality from a young age. “This started with my mom,” he says. “She’s a bit on the bigger side, and when I was young, I remember feeling sad that shopping was a stressful experience for her because she could never find clothes to fit her.”

Tai says “unconventional beauty” is the key to his designs, which are loose, comfortable and flattering for women of any size. The designer also partakes in many initiatives to spread body positivity and embrace all forms of beauty.

In 2018, Tai partnered with charity, *Changing Faces*, to create the “Portrait Positive Project” and invited 16 diverse women to model for a photoshoot with famous British fashion photographer John “Rankin”

Waddell. “It was really meaningful, and the women were so amazing,” Tai says. “They’re always putting themselves out there, and the project celebrates everyone for who they are.”

It’s important to Tai to spread a message that fashion should be inclusive and beauty comes in myriad forms. As part of this ethos, Tai loves sharing his fashion experience with Macao students and helping budding designers through mentorship, teaching and advice.

“Designers can come to me for advice or just ask for a specific kind of fabric,” he says. “I am happy to share the industry contacts and help them enter the international market.”

Though the fashion industry is competitive, Tai says his mother and mentor taught him the value of hard work and preparation: “Success equals preparation and preparation [equals] opportunity,” he recalls his mother saying. “If you’re not willing to prepare, you can’t be successful.”

Lately, Tai has been considering a new direction for his brand. “I want to approach fashion less like a commodity and more as a creative expression,” he says. Tai feels inspired by Nicole McLaughlin, a New York-based designer who creates sustainable products that first began as a hobby.

McLaughlin creates items like beanies made of tennis balls, a vest made of waffles, shorts made of Hariibo candy packets, bikinis from tiny camera pouches and many other unique products. Tai adds: “I wish to find a way to communicate my thoughts or feelings via objects through [the medium] of clothes making.” ●

Tai and Rankin pose with models for the “Portrait Positive Project”

(Opposite page) Steven Tai’s campaign images shot by Kin Chan





Q&A

Adding a new chapter in Sino-Portuguese relations

A childhood gift from a Chinese diplomat in Africa sparked Ana Menezes Cordeiro's interest in China; now as Portugal's most senior female diplomat in the country she works to cement modern relations between two historic trading partners.

Text **Gonçalo César de Sá**
Photos **Chen Hao Sheng**

Portugal's Consul General in Guangzhou Ana Menezes Cordeiro has been fascinated by China ever since she was a child

Ana Menezes Cordeiro was appointed Portugal's Consul General in Guangzhou in September. One of three Portuguese consulates in China – the others being in Macao and Shanghai, alongside the embassy in Beijing – its area of jurisdiction covers Guangdong, Hainan, Hunan, Fujian and the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, with a total population of 294 million people. Portugal and the People's Republic of China established diplomatic relations in 1979 and took this relationship a step further with an all-round strategic partnership agreement signed in 2005 in Lisbon.

The multi-lingual, German-born diplomat has traveled the globe, serving her country in France and Brazil and also as a diplomatic adjoint to the Portuguese Prime Minister between 2003-2005. She has published a book about the Western Mediterranean Dialogue titled *O Diálogo 5+5 e a copresidência Portuguesa* in 2018. Now she is the first Portuguese female diplomatic head of mission in China. How does

she plan to promote Portuguese-Chinese links in one of the world's most dynamic economic regions?

The Portuguese Consulate General in Guangzhou is located in the city where trade between Portugal and China started in the 16th century. How do you feel about being a diplomat in this city and what do you expect to find in the region?

Guangzhou is a very modern, innovative and extremely impressive city, with many high-rise buildings and contemporary infrastructure. It's also a very green city and a very pleasant place to live.

Portugal decided to “return” to Guangzhou in the 21st century, with the re-opening of this consulate in 2018. It turns a new page in the Sino-Portuguese relationship in southern China. My main priority is to make Portugal's presence in this region stronger and increasingly visible.

Being a diplomat anywhere in China is fascinating, but being a Portuguese diplomat in Canton is particularly inspiring.

With a population of around 14 million, Guangzhou is one of the largest cities in China

**What is the main role of the Consulate?
How many Portuguese nationals are there in southern China?**

Our consulate's fundamental function is to assist and provide services to nationals from our home country. It's true that we have a small Portuguese community in southern China. But in the Guangzhou consulate, we oversee five Chinese provinces – about nine times the entire size of Portugal.

Clearly economic and trade links are a major priority. Guangdong is one of the most dynamic and important trading provinces in China and our consulate has been actively working to increase economic and trade exchange between Portugal and southern China, as well as to promote contacts between companies and entrepreneurs from both sides and assist them in deepening their mutual understanding and enhancing further cooperation.

We also attach great importance to bilateral cooperation in the fields of education, language, culture, health, science and technology.

With the creation of the Greater Bay Area development programme, do you believe that Portugal and its entrepreneurs might have new business opportunities in the region?

The GBA represents a great opportunity to develop and reinforce investment and trade between Portugal and South China. With four major cities at its core – Hong Kong, Macao, Shenzhen and Guangzhou – the Greater Bay Area is one of the world's most dynamic areas, offering many opportunities for companies and investors. I hope Portuguese companies can contribute to technological innovation in the GBA.

Beyond traditional products, such as food and beverage, copper, ornamental stone such as marble, granite and quartz, paper, automobile components, textiles or cork (Portuguese products in these sectors

are extraordinary and some, such as cork, are unique), we also focus on bringing Portuguese experience and expertise into areas such as tourism, the pharmaceutical sector, providing components for Artificial Intelligence and smart cities, E-commerce, logistical operations support, software service platforms, high technology and green industries.

Given the partnership between Guangdong and Macao for managing Hengqin Island, do you think you can also promote the zone to Portuguese companies and business people?

Certainly. According to the general plan of China's central authorities, the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone will develop new industries that promote Macao's economic diversification. Scientific-technological research and development and high-level manufacturing will be promoted. The idea is also to attract talent from outside China. I believe that this project presents an opportunity to strengthen our presence in



Bao Zhonghui

the region. The consulate and the AICEP [Portugal's trade and investment agency] delegation in Guangzhou are also available to help Portuguese entrepreneurs and investors.

My first trip outside of Guangzhou was to visit Zhuhai to meet with the dynamic Commercial Association of Zhuhai-Macao Cross-Border Import, Export and Retail Industry, with whom I discussed the Hengqin project. This has the potential to be an excellent platform for importing Portuguese products. We already have a Portuguese restaurant in Zhuhai, for example.

What are you doing to promote Portugal's economic potential in southern China?

We have been involved in investment and trade fairs, to present Portuguese brands, products, corporations, and expertise. We also meet with entrepreneurs from both countries to connect them and to further cooperation and encourage exchanges between both sides. Here are some specific examples:

- Portugal Global – Trade & Investment Agency (AICEP) has launched a campaign entitled “Tales of Portugal” (Contos de Portugal) to promote the Portuguese food sector in China, focusing on E-commerce platforms. The campaign will run until April 2022. The programme includes 29 digital influencers and activities in Guangzhou and also in Beijing and Shanghai. China has been the world's largest online sales market for the past eight years and according to official data, in 2020, the total transaction volume of online sales in China reached 11.76 trillion yuan (1.6 trillion euros). The influencers will promote the “best Portuguese products available in China”, through social networks such as Weibo, WeChat, Yizhibo and Xiaohongshu. AICEP estimates that the campaign will reach more than 5.5 million consumers and industry professionals over the next six months.

- We are also doing promotional work with Guangzhou's top supermarkets, to make products more visible to potential customers, through promotions such as "Portuguese corners".
- We are accompanying the introduction of a famous Portuguese fashion brand in Guangzhou. This project will be an important catalyst for the "Portugal trademark" in the region.
- We are supporting a national software company for the packaging industry, which is being developed in one of the largest companies in the area.
- A Portuguese automation company is currently developing a project in an automobile factory in Foshan.

We also have a number of initiatives planned for the upcoming year to promote Portuguese culture and language, depending on pandemic conditions and restrictions.

Which Guangdong sectors are particularly attractive to Portuguese business people and vice-versa?

Guangdong is one of the most important trading provinces in China and it is also home to the production centres and head-offices of a wide-range of Chinese and foreign corporations. Most of the Portuguese companies in Guangdong are based in Guangzhou and Shenzhen, and are engaged in food, wine, consultation, finance, and import/export businesses.

We believe that engineering and software could also be key areas to boost economic relations between Portugal and southern China, given the recognition that Portugal has won in these areas in other parts of the world.

Naturally there are also opportunities for the food and beverage sector to expand and bring the excellence and quality of Portuguese products to this region. New technologies are also a significant sector in Guangdong. Portugal could become a privileged partner in this field.

Does Portugal's trade and investment agency AICEP have any representation in Guangdong? What do they do?

Yes. In Guangdong, AICEP encourages Chinese companies to invest in Portugal but it also contributes to the success of Portuguese companies inside southern China, including their exports.

Additionally, AICEP works as a business matchmaker. This helps Chinese entrepreneurs find the best business partner for Portuguese products or services. AICEP has a global network that supports foreign companies to find the Portuguese brand, sector, product or service that they are looking for.

In the investment field, AICEP also provides support and consultancy services, and coordinates contacts with Portuguese firms involved in investment.

Portugal's trading links with China are the longest-lasting of any Western nation, dating back 500 years. What does the future hold for Sino-Portuguese relations?

Portugal and China are two very historic countries, with a friendly and mutually respectful relationship. We have strengthened this relationship and deepened areas of exchange and cooperation, particularly since the signing of the global strategic partnership in 2005. Bilateral trade between our two countries was worth more than MOP55.1 billion (US\$6.9 billion) by 2020.

This partnership is comprehensive, covering not just trade, investment and commercial ties but also areas that promote common understanding between our two countries, such as language learning, cultural exchanges, tourism and education.

When did you first become interested in Asian and Chinese political and diplomatic affairs?

I've been fascinated by China since I was a child. In the 1980s, I lived in [the west African state of] Guinea-Bissau, where my father was Portuguese ambassador, and the then Chinese ambassador gave me a stuffed toy panda and told me that one day I would visit and work in China. It took me 40 years to get here – but I still have the panda! Some time ago, I read the book *L'Histoire du monde se fait en Asie* [The history of the world is being made in Asia] written by the French historian Pierre Grosser and became even more convinced that to understand the 21st century it is essential to know and understand Asia and, in particular, China. I couldn't be more motivated about my appointment as Consul General in Guangzhou. ●



CULTURE

Family fragrances

Eighty years after his grandfather established a family incense business, Keng Si Wong and his partner Kim Chen's Veng Lei Laboratory are making handmade fragrances for a new generation.



Text **Erico Dias**
Photos **António Sanmarful**

A photographed memory lane of Veng Lei Paper that was opened by Keng's grandfather back in 1942

(Opposite page) Traditional handmade incense made by the two young entrepreneurs, Keng Si Wong and Kim Chen at Veng Lei Laboratory

Thirty-six years is a long time to wait to re-open a family business. But that's how long it took for one young Macao entrepreneur and his Taiwanese girlfriend. Keng Si Wong and his girlfriend, Kim Chen, opened the doors of their incense shop, Veng Lei Laboratory, in May of this year, reviving a historic local brand established by his grandfather almost 80 years ago.

The Veng Lei business was first opened in 1942 by Keng's late grandfather Chan Lai. For 43 years the shop served Macao residents, producing and selling traditional incense and joss paper, the paper items burned as offerings to Chinese deities and for family ancestors. The business was originally located in a shophouse on Rua da Praia do Manduco, near Macao's inner harbour area, where local fishermen would board the hundreds of fishing boats moored there.

Zaak Wai Yin, Keng's late grandmother, told him that those going out to sea would burn joss paper as offerings to ensure their safe return to shore. "At that time, the shop had so many people coming in to buy joss paper – the business was really booming."



Kim Chen (left) and Keng Si Wong (right), the two creators that brought back and modernised Veng Lei after its closure for 36 years

(Opposite page) Cone incenses created with a beautiful aroma can also be used as an insecticide

His grandfather, Chan Lai, was born in 1900. He learnt the arts of joss paper and incense production from an early age before opening Veng Lei Paper. This was truly a family business. Chan moved his wife and seven children into the living area above the shop and the whole family pitched in and helped run the business over the course of four decades, according to Keng.

The incense industry has been recognised by Macao's Cultural Affairs Bureau as one of three historic manufacturing sectors, together with the match and firecracker industries, and therefore classified as part of the city's 'Intangible Cultural Heritage.' For much of the 20th century, incense manufacturing was a key economic pillar of Macao. The Bureau noted that the production of incense peaked between the 1950s and the 1970s, when there were more than 40 local incense factories.

However, the gradual contraction of the local fishing industry, new competition from incense manufacturers in mainland China, combined with

pressure on rental space, all resulted in the decline of the traditional incense industry in Macao in the 1970s and 80s.

Sadly, Veng Lei Paper closed down in 1985 when the government reclaimed the rented shop to redevelop the area. It was a momentous change for Keng's family members, who had to leave the family business behind and pursue new career paths.

"My uncles and aunts all went to work in other places after the shop closed down," he explains. "They're all creative individuals – they practise calligraphy, sculpture, writing, or Chinese paintings of flowers or dragons and phoenixes."

Keng's grandfather passed away in 1988 before Keng was born, but his grandmother told Keng many stories about him and Veng Lei Paper. By reopening the family business, Keng says he hopes to revive some of its traditions, while at the same time modernising the production and marketing of the incense and its everyday uses to attract younger customers.

THE YOUNG INCENSE-MAKERS

Keng was born in Macao in 1993 and his partner, Chen, in Taiwan in 1995. They met each other as students in the same art programme at Kun Shan University in southwestern Taiwan. After they graduated in 2017, Chen continued her studies at the Beijing Film Academy, while Keng moved on to Taipei University of Arts.

When they completed their graduate studies, Keng met his girlfriend in Beijing as he worked in the film industry and Chen at an advertising company. Just as the pandemic worsened in 2020, both decided they were in need of a new adventure. Keng, harking back to the stories of the family business, broached the idea of re-opening his grandparents' old incense business. The idea quickly took root. Just five days later, the couple arrived in Macao and began planning their own business.

Keng's grandmother, Zaak Wai Yin – who lived to be a centenarian – had already passed on to him the tricks of the trade. She had shared with him a trove of historic resources that she had stored for nearly 70 years, including electricity bills, delivery notes and business registrations, as well as original joss papers and incense sticks from the old shop.

She had also given Keng practical training. During his childhood, his grandmother and mother taught him how to make joss sticks, or sacrificial incense. Although he and Chen both needed to learn the art of hexiang (合香 in Chinese), or fragrant incense.

"The basic skills required to make both sacrificial incense and hexiang are the same," Keng explains but, particularly since the latter aims to benefit health: "there's a difference when learning hexiang because you get a deeper understanding of herbs and flowers."

VENG LEI 2.0

Located in Edificio Va Un, Rua das Estalagens, Chen says that they chose the new address for two reasons. Firstly, because of a Taiwanese custom of favouring locations with a certain orientation that is thought to be good for business. "We liked that it had an L-shaped area where people can see and enter the shop from two sides. That was a big part of the decision."



Secondly, Chen says she fell in love with the shop's historic neighbourhood. "This street is really old, and still sells handmade products, such as shoes, tools, and fabric. Since we are reviving an old brand and want to bring back that same spirit of tradition, we thought it was a perfect spot."

The couple started with a pop-up shop for 12 days near the future store site, selling joss paper and incense sticks and creating a buzz among locals about the shop. Once they moved in, the two got to work making the shop their own under the Veng Lei Laboratory brand. The store had previously been a pet bird shop, and the pair repurposed old materials that had been left behind.

"There were hundreds of birdcages and a few bird cups [a tiny cup made of glass used by birds to drink water]," says Chen. "We loved them and wanted to preserve the items, so we cleaned them and used them as lamps in our store."

Keng and Chen hand-make their own incense in-house, sometimes ending their day at 1 am. It's hard work, but it allows them the freedom to customise the aromatic properties of their incense. "If customers prefer a floral smell, for example, then we can add in rose. It's adding something special to it, and making it more memorable," explains Chen.

Veng Lei has a collection of four signature incense types: traditional, floral and fruity, sage tea and one called "algorithm", a blend of traditional scents and any other fragrance notes someone

might want to add, such as grass or fruit.

Chen says their inspiration for scents has come from movies, novels or personal experiences. Veng Lei's creations are a modern departure from classical Chinese incense aromas, such as agarwood and sandalwood, though the store sells these too.

The two brainstorm every day, to create products that chime with modern sensibilities; for example, crafting incense designed to help sleep or mindfulness. According to Chen, their product lines are the result of joint collaboration.

"Sometimes, he'll come up with a concept and I think of how we can make it happen. It's like when we used to make films together [as students]; he'd write the script and I'd set the scene."

Veng Lei Laboratory also offers workshops for all age groups, teaching students how to make their own incense, making a paste from the blend of fragrance powders and water, and shaping them into their final form. "The whole process takes about two hours, but the customers seem to enjoy it," laughs Chen.

This reflects the overall ethos of Veng Lei Laboratory. Nothing is rushed; everything is done with care, love in tribute to a family tradition and as a modern revival of an important part of Macao's cultural heritage. It's a place that reminds its customers to stop and smell the roses – or in its case, the rose-scented incense. ■

Keng's favourite incense stick, the traditional incense burning on an official Veng Lei Laboratory incense holder

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CULTURE

When the dragon meets the phoenix:

A Chinese teahouse in Macao

A Chinese teahouse that has been around since the early 1930s, Tai Long Fong has been the gathering point for many of the city's local Cantonese opera fans, giving hope to the art form's revival among the younger generation.

Text **Rafelle Allego**
Photos **Cheong Kam Ka**

Cantonese opera singers over the years are framed on the walls within Tai Long Fong, including Chan Mo Lin herself

(Opposite page) A local bastion of traditional Chinese teahouse experience and Cantonese opera, Tai Long Fong has been in business since the early 1930s, although it was called Dak Loi Cha Lau until 1977



Tai Long Fong is one of the few remaining traditional Chinese teahouses in the city and a time capsule of the 'golden age' of Macao's tea culture. Tucked away in the backstreets, the three-storey building has been in business since the early 1930s, though it was called Dak Loi Cha Lau until 1977, when an entrepreneur named Chan You purchased the restaurant with friends and transformed it into Tai Long Fong.

Inside the teahouse, antique wooden round tables and mirrored columns create a retro atmosphere that's enhanced by nods to Cantonese opera, with vibrant lanterns hanging above a small stage in the corner. For instance, large portraits of local Cantonese opera actors popular in the 80s like Chu

Zhan Wa dot the walls. There is also a golden plaque of the great diva Fong Yim-Fun who transformed Cantonese opera in the 50s and originated a unique singing method called the Fong style in Cantonese opera.

When Chan You's daughter Chan Mo Lin – who was then in her 20s – took over in 1983, she inherited a dwindling business which needed a new strategy. Inspired by her own love of Cantonese opera, she established the Tai Long Fong Cantonese Opera Association and introduced performances at the teahouse. "At the beginning, Cantonese opera seemed as easy as singing karaoke," says Chan. "But over time, I started gaining more knowledge about it and my interest grew."



“

Fans enjoy [listening] to classics such as *Princess Cheungping* and *Romance of the Phoenix Chamber*.

– Chan Mo Lin

The teahouse used to open all three storeys with a dim sum trolley distributing the day's dishes on each floor. After the financial crisis and Typhoon Hagupit in 2008, however, the restaurant had fewer customers and gradually closed the upper floors. These days, Chan opens the ground floor daily and the first floor for mahjong gatherings.

Still, customers can experience this traditional art form in the afternoons from 3 pm to 7 pm, when musicians play their instruments – hammered dulcimer, erhu and double-reed pipes – for Cantonese opera enthusiasts, a blend of both regulars and newcomers. “Fans enjoy the performances. They like to listen to classics such as *Princess*

Cheungping and *Romance of the Phoenix Chamber*,” says Chan, who sometimes joins in on stage. “And performers like to try out new songs to develop their vocal skills.”

KEEPING TRADITION ALIVE

Aside from the Cantonese opera performances, Tai Long Fong also embraces tradition through its food and tea. In his mid-70s, Chef So Yun has developed a range of personalised recipes, from his famed crispy duck (fried taro and duck) to the “money” chicken (grilled ham and chicken liver).

A regular destination for yum cha, the teahouse's dim sum menu is particularly popular. Jumbo chicken buns, steamed black-bean buns stuffed with red-bean paste, and siu

mai (steamed dumplings) tend to be crowd-pleasers. “In the old days, siu mai were made of minced fish, but now they're usually made with pork and shrimp,” notes Chan. “But we still offer the traditional option.”

As for tea, Tai Long Fong has updated its menu over time to keep pace with modern tastes. “We used to serve tea with cha zong [a Chinese porcelain teacup with a lid], because customers loved to sit here for a long time with a brew,” says Chan. The teahouse offers a wide selection of tea leaves, including pu'er (fermented black tea), shoumei (white tea) and shui xian (oolong), with prices ranging up to MOP 50 a pot. “Now, times have changed,” says Chan. “People lead fast-paced lives so we are not that fastidious about our tea brewing anymore.”

THE MUSIC CONTINUES

Similarly, the Cantonese opera scene has also changed over the years. While Macao's traditional teahouses used to be less popular among younger generations, this seems to be changing. When UNESCO inscribed Cantonese opera onto its Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2009, young people took notice. This interest – mostly concentrated on young mainland Chinese tourists who visit Macao – has encouraged Chan. “Generally, young tourists from the mainland come for photos and enjoy Cantonese opera,” she says. “Peking opera might be a thing in the north, but Cantonese opera culture on the mainland is relatively strong, so they have more interest in the art form.”

While Tai Long Fong may harken back to yesteryear, some younger fans are intrigued by its everyday appearance, authenticity and characterful ambience. “I found Tai Long Fong by chance when I was walking down Rua de Cinco de Outubro,” says 25-year-old Cheong Wai Cheng.

(Far left) Chan Mo Lin took over the business in 1983 from her father and still manages Tai Long Fong today

(Below) Tai Long Fong serves a dim sum menu popular among the locals, with adjustments made over time to suit modern tastes





“I thought it was very interesting that there are still teahouses for Chinese opera. And I like this old-style building very much. Although I don’t know much about Chinese opera, I enjoyed the vibe from the audience and performers who are totally involved in their act.”

While Chan admits that local youngsters don’t have the same level of interest in Cantonese opera as youngsters from the mainland, she believes it is something that can be nurtured. “It’s a generational cultural difference,” she says. “They don’t

understand Cantonese opera and understanding can only be achieved by educating them.”

With this in mind, she says she would like to invite younger people to perform on stage through locally organised events, while also inviting children from the mainland aged 5 to 12 who are learning to perform. “Many youngsters from the mainland and Macao have started to learn the art form,” she says. “And they come here to find out more. It’s a good omen for the future.” ●

A group of musicians and singers perform Cantonese opera from 3 pm to 7 pm daily

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ZOOM

F4 Racing: Macao's very own Leong takes Grand Prix honours

The SJM Formula 4 Macau Grand Prix, the racing event's premier event, saw local driver Charles Leong Hon Chio successfully defend his MGP championship title.

Photos Government Information Bureau

Macao racing driver Charles Leong Hon Chio made history at the 68th Macao Grand Prix by successfully defending his title won at last year's event. He became the first Macao driver to win the championship for the second time.

The annual Macau Grand Prix went ahead successfully, despite Covid-19 and related travel restrictions, running from 19 to 21 November. Macao Sports Bureau President Pun Weng Kun said that this year's three-day event – costing MOP 170 million (US\$21.3 million) and receiving MOP 33 million (US\$4.1 million) in sponsorship

revenue – drew 56,000 spectators, more than attended in 2020.

Pun noted that besides Formula 1 races, only a few international Grand Prix events went ahead this year. Macao hosted two Grand Prix races during the two-year pandemic period, which was highly appreciated by the motor-racing community. However, this year only drivers from Macao, mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan took part.

The main race of the 68th MGP, the SJM Formula 4 Macau Grand Prix, was a China Formula 4 Championship instead of the more traditional FIA Formula 3 event. ●

- ① The three-day programme featured six races on the 6.2-kilometre Guia Circuit, culminating in the SJM Formula 4 Macau Grand Prix
- ② Charles Leong Hon Chio (with helmet), winner of the 2020 Formula 4 Macau Grand Prix, driving for Theodore Smart Life Racing
- ③ Only 20 years old, Leong has already won the 2017 Chinese F4 Championship and also competed in the Formula 3 Macau Grand Prix events in 2018 and 2019, then winning in both 2020 and 2021 F4 races



- ④ Driving for Theodore Smart Life Racing, Leong took home the trophy again, after completing the 12-lap course in a time of 00:30:11.640
- ⑤ Leong is the first Macao driver in all 68 competitions to win a Macau Grand Prix twice. Leong is the most recent Macao driver to win a MGP, the first was André Couto's Formula 3 victory in 2000
- ⑥ Macao Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng awards the winners of the Formula 4 Macau Grand Prix of the 68th Macau Grand Prix. Leong came first (centre), followed by Macao's Andy Chang Wing Chung (left) and then mainland China's Li Si Cheng (far right) in third place
- ⑦ Gleaming with pride, Leong holds up his 68th Macau Grand Prix trophy.





8

- 8 There were close calls when Leong could have lost the lead. For instance, on one occasion, Chang drew close to Leong in the first lap on the run to the Lisboa, but the latter held firm and retained the lead
- 9 Sixteen drivers participated in the SJM Formula 4 Macau Grand Prix race, from Macao, Hong Kong, Taiwan and mainland China
- 10 This year's three-day event drew about 56,000 spectators, an increase over 2020's attendance



9



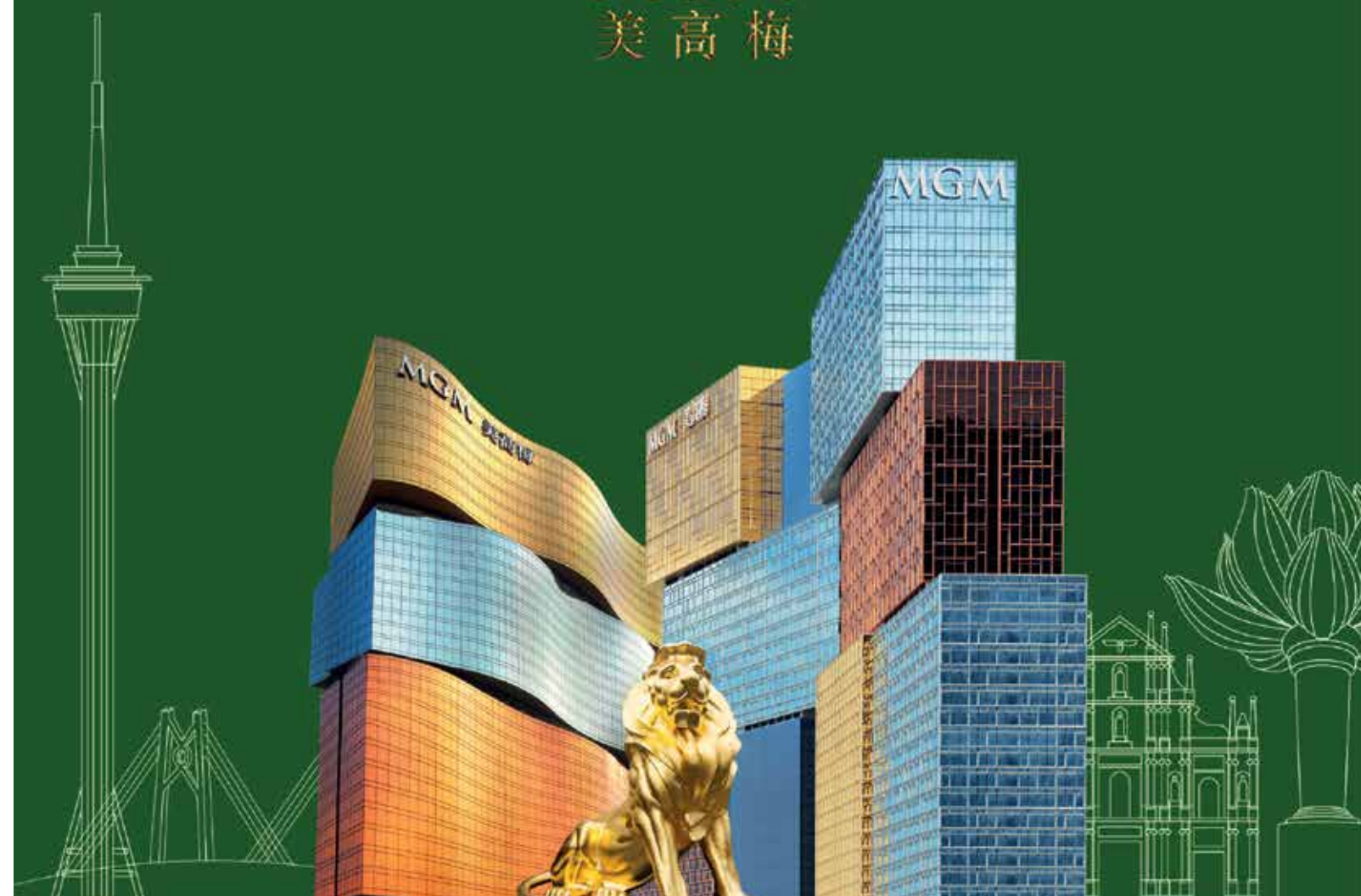
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11 The 68th Macau Grand Prix Opening Ceremony and a racing-car exhibition were launched on 13 November at Tap Seac Square, to promote the MGP

12 The 68th Macau Grand Prix Family Carnival was also held at the Tap Seac Square, allowing families to experience a mini-racetrack and try other interactive games



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