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Red Market renewed

Mainland China travel permits granted to non-Chinese permanent residents

Macao witnesses pickleball boom



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COVER IMAGE
Macao’s historic Red Market, closed for two years of renovations, has reopened, preserving its heritage while modernising for the future to serve the community - Photo by Lei Heong Ieong

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A new era of integration begins

Travel between Macao, Hong Kong and the mainland just became a lot easier for foreign permanent residents of the Special Administrative Regions. Macao’s chief executive says the move will benefit all regions within the Greater Bay Area through bringing them closer together.

TEXT Christian Ritter

Last month, China’s immigration authorities announced a new measure to facilitate travel to the mainland for non-Chinese – or foreign – permanent residents of Macao and Hong Kong. This initiative has significantly eased the process for those eager to visit the mainland for business or leisure.

From 10 July, eligible residents from both Special Administrative Regions (SARs) have been able to receive special travel permits granting multiple entries into the mainland within a five-year validity period – with each stay not exceeding 90 days. After completing identification procedures, such as having their fingerprints taken, these permit holders are also allowed to pass through express clearance channels at the border.

The new travel arrangement for foreign permanent residents is a particularly welcome development in Macao’s ‘double celebration’ year of 2024: it’s both the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People’s Republic of China, and the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the Macao Special Administrative Region.

Accelerating integration

The Central Government has repeatedly stressed that integration between the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA)’s nine mainland cities and two SARs is a key part of the country’s overall development plan. As such, convenient cross-border travel for all permanent SAR residents is widely understood to be of utmost importance. As of 30 June, the number of non-Chinese permanent residents in Macao stood at 19,500, according to the Identification Services Bureau.

Macao Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng has expressed his heartfelt thanks to the Central Government for launching the scheme – which he said would benefit the SAR and its people in a myriad of ways.

In a statement released by the Government Information Bureau, Ho noted that the policy promotes people-to-people exchanges, trade and mutually beneficial cooperation between the mainland and Macao. It also offers encouragement to non-Chinese permanent residents to invest, visit relatives, travel and do business in the mainland.

Ho described the move as “an important manifestation” of the country’s broader opening-up strategy. He recognised its benefits would have a ripple effect within the SAR – helping attract overseas talent that will, in turn, enhance Macao’s status as a world centre of tourism and leisure.



Courtesy of National Immigration Administration (NIA)

The chief executive said his government will fully assist with the policy’s implementation. His team would work closely with the mainland’s customs and immigration departments to ensure everything ran smoothly at border checkpoints, from ensuring the right security protocols are in place to adopting any required technology.

The mainland travel permit scheme goes beyond facilitating travel in China for foreign permanent residents from Macao and Hong Kong. It is an important milestone in the two SARs’ amalgamation with the rest of the country and in the development of the GBA – which is of vital importance to the SARs’ futures, and vice versa.

The National Immigration Administration has stated that it will continue to improve immigration management services that support the development of the GBA, and promote Macao and Hong Kong’s integration with the country’s overall development. ●

SOCIAL AFFAIRS

Revitalising the historic Red Market

After two years of renovations, Macao's Red Market has reopened for business. The return of the iconic marketplace offers more than a sleeker, cleaner place to shop. It stands as a testament to Macao's unique ability to balance cultural heritage and progress.

Even in a city filled with iconic buildings, the Red Market stands out thanks to its stately Art Deco design and striking colour

Text **Craig Sauers**

Opening photo **João Monteiro**

Few local buildings have borne witness to as much change as Macao's Red Market.

Since 1936, the iconic building, in its unmistakable shade of fire-engine red, has stood on Avenida do Almirante Lacerda. While Macao has risen around it, the three-storey facility has served the local community with fresh produce and dried goods.

The stretch of sea that once lapped beside the building was reclaimed and apartment complexes were built. Still, the Red Market – the SAR's first indoor fresh market, and the only such building listed as a classified immovable property (cultural heritage) – has continued to keep the community supplied, even as Macao transformed into the bustling multifaceted destination it is today.

In 2022, the market closed for renovations. It reopened two years later with the same vibrant energy it has always radiated. Following this recent revamp, it now stands as a testament to Macao's commitment to preserving its rich heritage while adapting to modern needs.

A BRIEF HISTORY

In 1933, Macao's land commission approved plans to build a new market on a 1,450-square-metre plot on Avenida do Almirante Lacerda. The city's population was growing fast, its economy was changing and a new, more hygienic market was needed to cater to demand.

Architect Júlio Alberto Fernandes Basto drew plans for a three-storey building with a clock tower in the middle and decorative watchtowers on each corner. The exterior would be made from red brick and the entire project would cost 60,000 patacas.



Authorities provided vendors with a temporary location during the two-year renovation process

(Opposite page) Bright, clean and comfortable – the renovated Red Market is ready to continue serving Macao for decades to come

Construction began in 1935 and, a year later, the Almirante Lacerda Municipal Market opened. Better known as the Red Market – so named for its vivid colour – it sits today at the corner of Avenida Horta e Costa, wedged between apartment buildings, cafés and restaurants, a short walk from Mong Ha Fort and the Macao University of Tourism. When it was built, however, it bordered the sea – the perfect offloading point for locally caught seafood and other shipments.

The building was also a beautiful example of the Art Deco movement so popular in Europe and the US in the 1920s and 1930s. Measuring 44 metres

in height and 20 metres in width, the Red Market featured a clean, geometric look and a bold colour, both hallmarks of the style.

It soon became a landmark for the local community. For more than 80 years, the Red Market has served steady streams of shoppers each day. Newer markets were soon built – the Mercado da Horta da Mitra and Mercado Municipal de Coloane both opened for business in their present forms in the 1940s – but the Red Market held a special place in the affections of Macao residents. With the Red Market's impact so clear, it was classified as a Building of Architectural Interest in 1992.

A METICULOUS RENOVATION

In recent years, it became clear that the Red Market needed more than superficial refurbishments.

Operating daily for so many decades, the market had understandably suffered wear and tear. The space became cramped as the number of visitors grew. Structurally, several elements needed to be upgraded to keep the building in good standing.

In early 2022, the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) announced that it would close the market so that it could address such issues before they became bigger problems.

The IAM moved the market's 127 stallholders temporarily to the Provisional Patane Market building – which had not been in use for years after the nearby Patane Market Municipal Complex came into service – and embarked on a two-year renovation project to introduce modern amenities that would keep the Red Market functional and relevant. But the process had to be meticulous in order to retain the market's historical essence.

The renovations left no stone unturned. The IAM team added waterproof sockets and lighting to stalls. They upgraded the power supply, installed air conditioning and put up reinforced glass baffles in front of the fish stalls to prevent water from splashing into the walkways.

The floors were filled in with epoxy-based grouting to prevent leakage and extend their lifespan. Some of the structural columns were enhanced while barrier-free lifts and unloading platforms were built to improve carrying capacity. A new drainage system was installed.



Shoppers were eager to return to the Red Market when it reopened this May



The renovations did more than improve the building's structural integrity. They overhauled the entire shopping experience. The Red Market is now not only a place to buy fresh produce. It also offers a living connection to Macao's social heritage, in a space that both serves the public and attracts tourists.

GETTING BACK TO BUSINESS

When the Red Market reopened at the end of May this year, the nearly 130 vendors selling seafood,

fruits, vegetables and other fresh produce returned to their stalls, bringing with them a familiar hustle and bustle.

There was one new touch hovering above them all. The newly renovated Red Market tower featured a clock for the first time. Leong Wai Man, the head of the Cultural Affairs Bureau, explained that a clock was always part of Basto's plan. It simply had not been installed in the 1930s.

"We looked at some historical documents and there was, in fact, a plan [for a clock]. Of course, it was never realised ... so, we approved of the Municipal Affairs Bureau's suggestion to install a clock," said Leong during a press conference in March.

But of course, the essence of the Red Market – the hubbub of shoppers and traders going about their daily business – is timeless. The new upgrades should allow the market to serve generations to come. Above all, it will stand as a bridge between past and present, living proof of Macao's ability to balance tradition with progress. ●



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SOCIAL AFFAIRS

How Macao unites global flavours

At the inaugural International Cities of Gastronomy Fest, Macao showcased more than global cuisines. The SAR reinforced its strengths as a dining destination and host for major events.

Text **Craig Sauers**
Photos **Macao Government Tourism Office**

Senior government officials, sponsors and partners gathered for the opening ceremony of the 10-day International Cities of Gastronomy Fest

In our interconnected world, food plays a crucial role. It encourages people to explore new destinations through their culinary traditions and drives cultural exchange, bringing people closer together. And as tourism soars to all-time highs, contributing as much as US\$11 trillion (MOP 88 trillion) to the global economy this year according to an estimate by the World Travel & Tourism Council, food will also be an

increasingly valuable resource for host cities and countries.

Macao's recent International Cities of Gastronomy Fest exemplified the unique strengths of cuisine.

Organised by the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO), the festival debuted to resounding success this summer. In its first edition, the event attracted about 107,000 visitors to the Fisherman's Wharf from 14-23 June. Representatives from 29 UNESCO



Top chefs from 26 Cities of Gastronomy presented live cooking demonstrations

(Below) The family-friendly event had plenty to keep the kids entertained

Creative Cities of Gastronomy in 18 countries wowed visitors with their signature dishes, presented cooking demonstrations and folk performances, and discussed how gastronomy can help societies build a more sustainable future.

With Macao embarking on the next stage of its evolution, driven by a diversified approach to tourism, the event encapsulated the SAR's strengths as both a global meeting place and a vibrant culinary destination, reinforcing Macao's golden calling card as an international metropolis.

As MGTO Director Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes explained, the event was more than a commemoration of these milestones, however. The festival played into Macao's strengths as an international exchange platform and was able to leverage gastronomy and creativity to promote preservation, innovation and exchange among Creative Cities of Gastronomy around the world, she said during the opening of the International Cities of Gastronomy Fest.

A FEAST FOR ALL SENSES

This year sees the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the Macao Special Administrative Region and the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China. Sustainable Gastronomy Day also fell on 18 June. That gave the city plenty of reasons to celebrate – the International Cities of Gastronomy Fest delivered.





Cities from around the world showcased their culture and cuisine, with a behind-the-scenes look at how such delicious dishes are made



Spread across 6,500 square metres in the Fisherman's Wharf, a colourful leisure complex in the Outer Harbour area, the 10-day event featured three main components: the International Gastronomy Promenade, City of Gastronomy Showcase, and International Gastronomy Forum.

For attendees, much of the action centred on the International Gastronomy Promenade. Vendors manned 100 different food booths, serving regional delicacies from across Asia – Sarawak-style *laksa* (spicy noodle soup), *pancit molo* (Filipino pork dumpling soup) and Chaoshan specialities.



These booths showcased the best food from five Chinese Creative Cities of Gastronomy (Chengdu, Shunde, Yangzhou, Huai'an and Chaozhou), three Asian Creative Cities of Gastronomy (Phuket, Thailand; Kuching, Malaysia; Iloilo City, Philippines) and some of Macao's favourite restaurants. It also introduced vendors to a new market.

"This [festival was] a very good opportunity for us to highlight our gastronomic dishes here in Macao," said Catherine Taleon, founder of Balay Tablea, an Iloilo-based company that makes

exquisite drinking chocolate blends from Filipino cacao.

The incredible food was complemented by 168 live performances. Portuguese folk music, Thai dance, live shows from local rock band the Cotton Kids and more added extra colour throughout the event.

When guests were not chatting up vendors or catching a live show taking place along Legend Boulevard, they could unwind in the game zone or have a drink at the seaside bar. They could even play an interactive game on MGTO's WeChat account – a fun add-on that attracted tens of thousands of participants.

A STAGE TO FLEX CULINARY MUSCLES

As a bonus to regional cuisines and live shows, visitors also experienced unique flavours from top chefs representing 26 Creative Cities of Gastronomy in other parts of the world and got to see how their signature dishes were created.

On a stage set up in the middle of Legend Boulevard, chefs from Australia, Bolivia, Brazil, Greece, Iran, Italy, Peru and beyond conducted a total of 60 live cooking demonstrations. When their dishes were finished, samples went out to the spectators – giving everyone an opportunity to try exotic flavours they may never have experienced.

The City of Gastronomy Showcase also provided an important platform for the chefs who took stage. "This was a big opportunity for us," said Giorgia Pongolini of award-winning Bistrot Il Cerchio in the famous Italian food region of Parma, following a cooking demonstration. "We would like to spread [Parma's] culture of food."

Bistrot Il Cerchio's Michelin-acclaimed founder, Roberto Pongolini, later served an exclusive tasting menu at one of the integrated resorts that partnered with MGTO for the event. For diners, it offered a personalised experience they could not get without travelling to Pongolini's restaurant.



Pop-ups like these demonstrate the secondary benefits that an event like the International Cities of Gastronomy Fest can give host destinations. Visiting chefs can reach more audiences in Macao, often in a more intimate setting and affirming the SAR's reputation as a dining hub. The chefs might also experience different local flavours and techniques at the restaurants they visit in Macao.

PROVIDING A PLATFORM FOR DISCOURSE

Some of the most powerful insights from such ambitious events as the International Cities of Gastronomy Fest often occur in sideline discussions. MGTO brought those discussions to the centre stage.

The International Gastronomy Forum, Macao – MGTO's fourth food-focused forum since 2016 – united key industry figures around discussions guided by the

theme of “Holistic Gastronomy: Eat well, live well.”

Delegates from 29 Creative Cities of Gastronomy – and seven Chinese member cities of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) in other fields – came together in panel sessions and a focused exchange meeting. They shared insights, ideas and knowledge that could provide a guiding line as Macao begins to turn its “tourism + gastronomy” vision into a reality.

In the morning session, panellists discussed holistic gastronomy trends and the intersection of wellness and food in Asia. Everything from emerging technology to how Macao's rich culinary heritage and forward-looking approach makes it an ideal setting for the industry to flourish was discussed while in the afternoon panel, the main topics discussed were culinary tourism, the need for collaboration, and driving sustainable change through holistic gastronomy.

With more than 250 participants swapping bold ideas, the forum provided penetrating insights from thought leaders and industry experts alike.

THE POWER AND POTENTIAL OF FOOD

More than simply celebrating global gastronomy, the International Cities of Gastronomy Fest underscored Macao's own rich and diverse culinary heritage.

As a city where Chinese, Portuguese and global traditions have created a vibrant and eclectic food scene, Macao has much to offer as a culinary destination. With its status as a hospitality hub and home to major international events, it is also an ideal host.

This festival brought those strengths into focus. The International Cities of Gastronomy Fest ensured that Macao's rich gastronomic heritage continues to thrive and inspire. ●

Macao's tourism mascot Mak Mak watches over the bustling crowd

(Below) Attendees could opt for exclusive tasting menus or budget-friendly eats – even the odd racecar



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FOOD & DRINK

Son Tak Kong: Shunde cuisine that's not afraid to break with tradition

Septuagenarian chef Sunny Ip Sio Man has been in the restaurant business since he was 12 years old. And a recent Bib Gourmand award is evidence that his respectful approach to culinary innovation is working.



Text **Kenny Fong**
Photos **Lei Heong Jeong**

Sunny Ip Sio Man has built a small empire from the lone restaurant started by his parents in the 1950s

(Opposite page) Stir-fried dace noodles are a popular dish at Son Tak Kong

Neon signage. A shrine dedicated to the Chinese god Guan Gong. Luridly glowing fish tanks. Son Tak Kong has all the hallmarks of a traditional Shunde restaurant – an impression enhanced by the 45-year-old eatery's location on bustling Rua dos Mercadores ('Street of Merchants' in Portuguese), where roast duck vendors rub shoulders with herbalists beneath a medley of colourful shop signs.

Despite its quaint appearance, the establishment

strives to breathe new life into Shun Tak cuisine, the Cantonese style of cooking from Foshan's southern Shunde District. In 2014, Shunde was designated as a UNESCO City of Gastronomy.

Shunde chefs are all about fresh ingredients and authentic flavours, enhanced primarily by very basic seasonings such as salt, oil and sugar. Son Tak Kong's owner, Sunny Ip Sio Man, puts it like this: "The chicken tastes like chicken, and the goose tastes like goose."



The staff of Son Tak Kong turn out Shunde dishes that are beautifully plated and delicious



While the restaurant has always kept a low profile, the fact that it's usually full – and sometimes hosting the odd celebrity – speaks to the quality of its food. This year, Son Tak Kong's excellence was officially recognised with a Bib Gourmand award by the Michelin Guide. Bib Gourmands reward friendly establishments serving good food at great prices. It's not the same thing as a Michelin Star, but it's "most definitely not a consolation prize" (according to the Michelin Guide's website).

Son Tak Kong's new status is evidenced by several Bib Gourmand

posters now adorning its walls. "We are extremely happy to earn recognition," Ip says, acknowledging that the achievement was a collective effort.

WHERE TRADITION AND CHANGE WORK TOGETHER

Son Tak Kong embraces tradition and many Shunde classics, like stir-fried milk (think fluffy clouds of curds made with milk, starch and egg whites) and Daliang-style fried chicken rolls, sit proudly on its menu. But the restaurant isn't afraid to shake things up either.

Take Ip's Shunde-style fish soup. His version contains wattle-necked softshell

turtle, a luxury ingredient you won't find in the dish elsewhere. His glutinous rice dim sum, lo mai gai, is served in a novel way that's reminiscent of a roast chicken (an actual chicken head is included in the presentation). Son Tak Kong's menu also includes seasonal dishes, along with a few non-Shunde offerings like hand-made fish noodles and mapo tofu.

Shunde is Ip's ancestral homeland. And the 71-year-old aims to honour his family's food heritage without clinging too closely to old rules. "We strive to innovate without forgetting our roots," is how he puts it. His parents relocated to Macao in the early 1950s, just before Ip was born. His father promptly opened

the Shunde-style restaurant Chu Kei on the corner of Rua dos Mercadores and Avenida Almeida Ribeiro (also known as San Ma Lo), very near where Son Tak Kong is today. When Ip's dad passed away in 1965, the then-12-year-old was left to juggle studies and running the family business with his mother.

Ip had a short stint as a journalist after leaving high school, enhancing his skillset by studying management during his free time. He returned to the family business after a few years, when his mother fell ill, and set about building a modest eatery empire. Ip expanded his father's original restaurant and established a number of new ones, including Son Tak Kong.

A FOOD BUSINESS THROUGH THE DECADES

Back in the 1960s and 1970s, Ip remembers that most of his diners hailed from Hong Kong. They'd arrive by boat, disembarking from the Inner Harbour's Ponte 16. Then, as travel to and from the mainland began opening up in the 1980s and 1990s, he started welcoming more patrons from around the Pearl River Delta. They journeyed overland, via the Kee Kwan bus station, then made a beeline for Macao's historic centre.

Business boomed until the late 1990s and early 2000s, when Ip says Son Tak Kong was forced to weather blips like the Asian financial crisis and the SARS epidemic. But the restaurant bounced back stronger than ever thanks to China's Individual Travel Scheme, he recalls. Launched in 2003, the scheme enabled a new wave of independent travellers to visit the Special Administrative Regions of Macao and Hong Kong. When the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge opened in 2018, customer numbers jumped again. Ip says most of that wave were older folk, revisiting Macao's historic district as part of a trip down memory lane.

But then came the Covid-19 pandemic, causing Son Tak Kong to switch things up to survive. Ip says he had to reduce his operating hours and pivot towards takeaway meals. "We focused mainly on stir-fried, pan-fried, deep-fried and braised dishes [because they travel well]," he says. Old favourites, the likes of steamed crab with minced meat and sweetened bird's nest with ginger milk pudding, were still on offer as discount meals for two or four people to eat at home. For a few months of 2022, Ip closed the restaurant completely – taking the opportunity to carry out some renovations to the building.

“

We need to strengthen ourselves and work harder. We need to continuously improve, and to tweak our dishes to attract local diners.

– Sunny Ip Sio Man



Posters commemorating the restaurant's Bib Gourmand selection make a fitting backdrop for Sunny Ip Sio Man and the head chef

(Opposite page) Their signature creamy fish soup drew special praise from the Michelin Guide



'WE NEED TO CONTINUOUSLY IMPROVE'

Today, Son Tak Kong employs around 10 staff and still focuses on lunch and dinner services. Ip says his customer base is evenly divided between local, mainland and Hong Kong diners – though notes he'd like to see an increase in locals supporting local businesses. Ip's willing to do his bit to achieve this: "We need to strengthen ourselves and work harder," he acknowledges. "We need to continuously improve, and to tweak our

dishes to attract local diners." Luckily for Ip, he has a son set to take over the business when he eventually retires. He says his son is equally dedicated to growth and progress.

With Son Tak Kong's future secure, diners can look forward to a third generation of the Ip family's take on Shunde cuisine. And now that the restaurant's finally made its way into the spotlight, as shown by the Michelin Guide, there's a good chance the accolades will keep on coming. ●

ARTS & CULTURE

A feast like no other

The annual Feast of Na Tcha pays homage to one of Macao's most revered deities while offering a vibrant portrayal of the historic traditions, values and beliefs that thrive in the SAR today.

Text **Gonçalo César de Sá**
Photos **Macao Government
Tourism Office**

A little girl dressed as a deity holds a baby doll, a nod to Na Tcha as the protector of children

The historic gateway to the country, the vibrant city of Macao is renowned for its unique blend of Chinese and Western cultural influences. Few symbols represent this cultural confluence like the Feast of Na Tcha, an annual festival taking place at a Taoist shrine in the shadows of Macao's most famous heritage sites.

The festival is one of the most significant events on the SAR's annual calendar, a celebration honouring a magical child who became a deity tasked with ensuring justice. This young deity, known as Na Tcha, is believed to possess the power to protect children and communities from harm, making him a highly venerated figure among the local population.

The origins of the festival trace back centuries, and the worship of Na Tcha is deeply embedded in the traditions and beliefs that define Macao. That becomes clear when considering the temples and shrines dedicated to the deity throughout the city.

These spiritual spaces serve as important community hubs year-round. But on the eighteenth day of the fifth lunar month, which this year fell in June, they take on extra meaning as the centre of events during the Feast of Na Tcha.

All day long, the devout visit shrines across Macao to pay their respects and seek Na Tcha's blessings. The most famous of these is, of course, the Na Tcha Temple. The 19th century temple is located in Macao's historic centre, on a hillside behind the Ruins of St Paul's. It is believed to have been built to stop a plague that had been devastating the region at the time.

Today, this compact single-chamber structure – a modest grey-walled building with a flush-gable roof guarded by ceramic animals – is a testament to the enduring significance of the deity in the city's cultural identity. And its location, so close to the long-standing Jesuit relic, reflects Macao's pluralistic heritage. Both buildings are part of the Historic Centre of Macao, named a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2004.

Throughout the festival, the temple buzzes with activity, as worshippers bring offerings of fruits, flowers and incense to the shrine; engage in prayers and rituals; and seek the deity's protection and guidance for themselves and their families. The temple also hosts traditional ceremonies and performances, including Cantonese opera, a can't-miss event for anyone interested in Chinese heritage. The beating heart of the festivities, though, is the grand ritual procession.

Golden dragon guards escort
Na Tcha as the procession
approaches the Ruins of St Paul's





Children dressed as deities watch over on excited crowds along the parade route

Worshippers dressed up as golden dragon guards and celestial beauties lead a parade of hundreds, setting off from the Na Tcha Temple and travelling past Rua do Campo, Avenida de Almeida Ribeiro, Rua dos Mercadores and Senado Square. A statue of Na Tcha is “invited” into a golden palanquin and carried along the streets to the rhythmic beat of gongs and drums. The revelatory energy reaches its crescendo as young children dressed up like Na Tcha are paraded high up on poles, an eye-catching symbol of the community’s deeply held respect for the deity.

As the procession winds its way through the Macao Peninsula, worshippers line the streets, offering prayers and burning incense. The air fills with the crackle of firecrackers and the joyful chants of the devotees. Elsewhere, vehicles travel alongside

lion dancers as they tour Taipa and Coloane with Na Tcha statues in tow, bringing the festival to the whole of Macao.

Beyond the colourful processions, the Feast of Na Tcha features a range of other cultural traditions and rituals. Local vendors set up stalls selling traditional Macao snacks, crafts and other goods. Chinese opera, lion dances and acrobatic displays captivate audiences. These unique rituals are testament to the deep-rooted traditions that define Macao’s identity.

Chinese communities have worshipped Na Tcha for centuries, if not millennia. The deity appears in several historic folk tales and works of literature, including *Fengshen Yanyi* (*The Investiture of the Gods*).

While the date of the first festival in Macao remains debated, historical records suggest that it has been



celebrated for centuries, likely evolving over time to reflect the unique cultural and social dynamics of the city. Between these ties and the special practices that occur, this has made the SAR the most exciting destination to experience the festival.

After all, the Feast of Na Tcha is more than a celebration for the local community. Today, it attracts visitors from around the world who come to experience the unique cultural charms that define the city. Whether passive bystanders or active participants, they can gain a

deeper appreciation of the values and traditions and beliefs that have shaped Macao’s unique heritage for so long.

Even in the ever-changing modern world, the Feast of Na Tcha continues to captivate the devout and curious alike with its rich traditions and deep significance to the people of Macao.

For those who witness this festival, the experience will leave a lasting impression, a true celebration of the divine and the cultural diversity that makes Macao such an enriching destination. ●



ARTS & CULTURE

When China met the West

A landmark collaboration between museums across the Greater Bay Area has resulted in Macao’s largest ever exhibition of export paintings – a genre offering glimpses of southern China during the 18th and 19th centuries, tailored for the foreign market.

Text **Vivianna Cheong**

The sprawling exhibition of export paintings includes a mix of portraiture, landscapes, maritime scenes, botanical imagery and more

Amid the bustling trade routes of the 18th and 19th centuries, a unique artistic genre flourished – fusing commerce with creativity. So-called export paintings depicted quintessentially Eastern scenes, yet their artists used Western painting mediums like oil, gouache and watercolour. Some of these artists were, in fact, Westerners living in the mainland, Macao and Hong Kong. Most were local artists working on commissions for customers in Europe and America. Export paintings helped shape Western perceptions of China during this period. But they were also highly influenced by the

West; explicitly created to appeal to foreign tastes. For example, commissions tended to call for a romanticised vision of the East. Streets more orderly and kempt than would likely have been the reality. Landscapes that were almost impossibly ethereal. These paintings were always imbued with motifs from mythology and folklore. Not only did the imagery cater to the West’s fascination with an ‘exotic’ China, it leant into the lucrative trade opportunities that aesthetic provided. Hundreds of fine examples of this work are now on display at the Macao Museum of Art (MAM). The exhibition “Focus: Integration of

Art between China and the West in the 18th-19th Centuries” is the fruit of a major collaboration between museums in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA). The bulk of paintings are on loan from the Guangdong Museum, which staged a very similar exhibition in 2022. In the Macao iteration, additional pieces were sourced from the Macao Museum, Hong Kong Museum of Art (HKMoA) and MAM’s own permanent collection – making it the biggest exhibition of export art ever displayed in Macao. MAM Director Un Sio San describes

the show’s “collaborative spirit” as illustrative of the cultural cooperation currently being fostered within the GBA. “This resonates with the goal behind the alliance of museums,” she noted. In “Focus”, visitors will find portraiture, landscapes, maritime scenes, botanical imagery and more, beautifully portrayed on paper, silk and glass. While some export paintings did stay in China all this time, many have returned from overseas in recent decades. The local government, for example, has been acquiring export paintings that are relevant to Macao from private collectors and galleries around the world.

Un Sio San, director of the Macao Museum of Art, admires a copy of a George Chinnery self-portrait by Canton painter Lam Qua



Lei Heong leong

GEORGE CHINNERY'S IMPACT ON EXPORT ART

The Macao run of “Focus” features works by British painter George Chinnery (1774-1852), who had a major influence on local painters in the export art industry. He spent more than a quarter of a century in the city and is buried in Macao's Old Protestant Cemetery. Chinnery trained at London's Royal Academy Schools before setting sail for India, where he lived for a couple decades as a leading artist within the Anglo-

Indian community. He relocated to Macao in 1825, and spent the final 27 years of his life painting scenes of southern China. While here, Chinnery is believed to have tutored the first Chinese portrait painter ever exhibited in the West: Lam Qua (1801-1860).

Chinnery's own oeuvre, not itself export art, now serves as a historical record of early to mid-19th century Macao, Canton and Hong Kong. Take his 1834 drawing of the Church of Mater Dei, part of St Paul's College, in what's now known as Macao's historic centre. In this piece, Chinnery captured



Image courtesy of Macao Museum of Art

the church, college and its library just three months before they were destroyed by a fire (in January 1835). His drawing is one of very few impressions in existence of what the 17th-century complex looked like before being reduced to the frontispiece that's now famous as the Ruins of St Paul's.

Other Chinnery pieces included in “Focus” depict Tanka people,

a distinct ethnic group who spent centuries living in boats along the coast of Macao. The artist took a special interest in the Tanka community, often painting their sampan homes and women garbed in traditional blue dresses and red headscarves. In the 1840s, a selection of his sensitively executed watercolours depicting Tanka women were even exhibited in the UK.

The Church and Steps of St. Paul, Macao
George Chinnery
(1774-1852)
Ink over pencil on paper
1834-10-18
17.8 x 17.2 cm

Thirteen Hongs
Marciano António Baptista
(1826–1896)
Gouache on paper
c.1855
36 x 60 cm

This year marks the 250th anniversary of Chinnery’s birth and visitors stepping into the “Focus” are welcomed by a portrait of him, painted by his likely Cantonese protégé. Lam Qua was a Chinese pioneer in Western-style oil painting and export art specialist. The portrait – a copy of a self-portrait Chinnery himself painted – reveals Lam Qua’s remarkable grasp of Western

technique: a striking contrast to the traditional ink and *gongbi* artistic styles used by most Chinese artists at the time. Lam Qua and the craftsmen in his workshop worked near the Thirteen Hongs (also known as the Thirteen Factories) along the Pearl River. For almost a hundred years, during the Canton System of Qing China, this was the principal and sole legal site



Image courtesy of Guangdong Museum



Image courtesy of Macao Museum of Art

for Sino-European trade. Along with tea, silk and porcelain, export paintings flowed out of China in exchange for silver and other goods. *A Western Merchant* (1859), one of the most striking pieces from Lam Qua’s workshop in the exhibition, features a young, dark-haired European man in front of

a red curtain and Western-style pillar. “Focus” curator Ng Fong Chao describes the painting as “traditional Western portraiture”. He sees its realistic imagery, vigorous brushstrokes and background as evidence that Chinese artists were able to achieve “superb mastery of Western oil painting.”

Curator Ng Fong Chao encourages people to see the exhibition while they can



Image courtesy of Hong Kong Museum of Art

Portrait of Macao Sampan Girl
George Chinnery (1774–1852)
Watercolour on paper
1825–1852
12.5 x 9.5 cm

CAPTURING THE CUSTOMS OF CANTON

Wallpaper of Street Scenes, meanwhile, is an engrossing gouache painting depicting a fascinating array of activities taking place on one commercial street in Canton – over 200 years ago. Front and centre works a bone-setter, massaging a patient in turquoise trousers. A sedan chair driver dozes outside the clinic, perhaps waiting for the man inside to finish his treatment. Other medicine men work nearby: there’s a street-dentist busy extracting someone’s tooth in the shade of a large parasol, while a traditional herbalist leans on his desk, surrounded by shelves crowded with red-labelled remedies.

The wallpaper also features hawkers selling snacks to hungry passersby and a cobbler diligently mending a pair of shoes (a staple activity in the export art genre). According to Ng, Chinoiserie wallpaper was once very popular with wealthy Europeans and Americans. “It fascinated the Western world with its gorgeous colours, dense composition, superb craft and rich Chinese flair,” he says.

Export paintings stand as a testament to the multifaceted exchanges that characterised the 18th and 19th centuries. These artworks were not just commodities

to be traded, but cultural bridges connecting artists and everyday people across continents. Chinese artists – through their adaptability and skill – learned the West’s aesthetic preferences and painting techniques, while incorporating aspects of their own unique artistic heritage. The pieces were cherished by European and American families, adorning their walls for

generations to come and inspiring dreams of the Orient.

As such, export paintings have left a lasting legacy of mutual influence between the East and West. MAM’s “Focus” exhibition is a unique opportunity to see a truly remarkable selection of work from this genre, which is on display until 15 September. According to Ng, it’s “a chance that may not come again soon.” ●



Image courtesy of Guangdong Museum

Wallpaper of Street Scenes
Anonymous
Gouache on paper
Late 18th century
116 x 151 cm

ARTS & CULTURE

Germano Guilherme is making the stage his own

Doors are opening for the proudly Macanese performer, who recently won season two of the *Midlife, Sing & Shine!* competition. Germano Guilherme tells the magazine about how he reached this point in his career, his upcoming projects, and the honour he feels when promoting Macao's unique culture on stage.



Text **Kenny Fong**
Photos courtesy of
Germano Guilherme

Guilherme earned a near-perfect score with his final performance on *Midlife, Sing & Shine!*

Born and raised in Macao, Germano Guilherme is one of the most celebrated singers to emerge from the city in recent times. Known for his raw passion and intensity, the 36-year-old vocal talent has earned accolades within the Special Administrative Region (SAR) and beyond. In March this year, Guilherme reached a new level of fame by winning the second season of a major reality TV competition beamed across the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA).

The show, *Midlife, Sing & Shine!*, ran for nearly nine months and featured 108 aspiring stars from around Asia. High-profile judges from the Cantopop world, including Jade Kwan, Priscilla Chan and Miriam Yeung, determined their fates: the group was gradually narrowed down to one champion, Guilherme. Nearly 1.74 million people tuned in to watch the final, which was filmed in Hong Kong in front of a live audience.

Guilherme, also known as German Ku, captivated the judges with his renditions of two very different songs, both close to his heart. The first was "Heart is Still Cold", a melancholic early 1990s ballad by Hong Kong pop diva Anita Mui. Guilherme followed that with the triumphant show tune "Feeling Good", made famous by jazz legend Nina Simone in the 1960s. The singer's powerful final performance earned him a near-perfect score of 99 points. Yeung, in particular, was impressed, congratulating Guilherme for "making this stage your own."

A STAR ON THE RISE

While recent years have seen Guilherme make a name for himself in Hong Kong's music industry, the singer's musical roots are firmly in Macao. He got his start here as a teenager, performing theme songs at major sporting fixtures held in the city – including the 2006 Lusofonia Games, the 2007 Asian Indoor Games and the 2009 National Games of China. Of Chinese, Portuguese and Pakistani descent, Guilherme also cherishes his Macanese identity and has learned to speak decent patuá (along with Cantonese, Mandarin, English and Portuguese).

Guilherme vividly remembers the moment he first became interested in music. "I was maybe two or three at the time and watching TV," he reminisces. "By chance, I happened to see this young lady wearing a fruit hat, singing and dancing very happily and skillfully." That young lady was Anita Mui, who remains Guilherme's role model.

Much like Mui, who first rose to fame with Hong Kong's 1982 *New Talent Singing Awards*, Guilherme's big break into the professional music industry came via a televised singing competition. That was the 2009 edition of *Asian Millionstar*. While Guilherme didn't make the top three finalists, he did win a special prize for best stage performance – and earned himself a life-changing contract with Hong Kong broadcaster ATV.

Guilherme's next big gig was on the 2010 sitcom *Hong Kong Go Go Go*, in the role of pharmacy employee Kam. His time with ATV also saw him hone his hosting abilities on the music programme *Starry Starry Night* and children's show *Q&A Lessons*, and perform as a guest on subsequent editions of *Asian Millionstar*.

During his time at ATV, Guilherme was mentored by the Macanese-Hong Kong entertainment personality Maria Cordero, who also helped judge the latest *Midlife, Sing & Shine!* competition. "The most important lesson I've learnt from [Cordero] is to respect others, respect yourself, respect your work and most importantly, respect the stage and your audience members," Guilherme says.

RETURNING TO MUSIC

The performer continued putting Cordero's advice to good use after leaving the now-defunct ATV in 2014 – when he returned to Macao and redirected his career back towards his first love, music. In 2020, Guilherme's first full-length album of original tracks, *Fai*, hit the shelves. The polyglot also applied his language skills to a side hustle working as a multilingual MC. Guilherme has hosted a number of major arts and cultural events, the

latest being this year's Parade of the Year of the Dragon.

Culture is extremely important to Guilherme, especially when it comes to preserving his own. For example, he is part of a new wave of Macanese breathing life back into their traditional patuá dialect. Like Macanese people and cuisine, patuá reflects Macao's historically diverse ethnic make-up – a fusion of Portuguese, Chinese, Malay, and Sinhala elements. Guilherme didn't grow up speaking patuá, but he set about learning it as an adult through performing in a local theatre group. Patuá theatre, designated an intangible cultural heritage in Macao, is a distinctly Macanese form of comedy that's gaining popularity as a means of keeping the language and culture alive.

Guilherme participates in educational videos promoting the language, and has sung in it when performing with local band Tuna Macaense at Macanese cultural events. "If I can use what little ability I have to make more people aware of our Macanese culture, then I am more than happy to do my part," he enthuses. The singer says he'd love to release a whole album in patuá some day.

He also considers it an "honour" to promote Macao culture in general overseas. In June, Guilherme performed at an integrated resort's gala master dinner – an event held in

Bangkok, Thailand, to publicise the territory's gastronomic and tourism offerings. "I hope that when people listen to Germano Guilherme's work, they'll not only remember me, they'll also remember an artist who is from Macao," he says.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Since his *Midlife, Sing & Shine!* triumph, new doors are opening for the Macanese artist. He's since performed at a number of major events in Hong Kong, staged by the city's jockey club, Yan Chai Hospital and broadcaster TVB (which screened the show). Guilherme says he's thankful to everyone he met on the competition – from fellow contestants to his trainer, Vivian Koo – for their support, and offers a shout-out to the people who tuned in to watch his performances each week. "In a lengthy televised competition like this, the judges, coaches and even internet users will constantly give you lots of suggestions, meaning you have to constantly improve," Guilherme notes. One thing he acknowledges really having had to work on was an almost too-polished stage persona. "I gave off this aura that everything is practised and rehearsed," he says.

Midlife, Sing & Shine! also led to an invitation to perform at an integrated resort's 20th anniversary celebration event in May. There, he



“I hope that when people listen to Germano Guilherme's work, they'll not only remember me, they'll also remember an artist who is from Macao.”

– Germano Guilherme

sang Katy Perry's hit "Firework" alongside West End singer Kayleigh Stephenson, from the UK. "As a Macao artist, it was a great thing for me to be able to help on such a grand occasion," Guilherme says. "It shows everyone that there are, in fact, great talents, singers and performers in Macao who can make it onto the big stage."

Guilherme is enthusiastic about opportunities emerging in Macao's expanding entertainment sector, thanks to support from the government – which is working hard to transform the city into an internationally recognised hub for performing arts.

Looking ahead, Guilherme has plenty to keep him busy. He says he's eager to collaborate with emerging local artists and explore new genres of music. He also wants to return to a hobby that's been on the backburner lately, due to his musical commitments: documenting his life through video blogging. In addition to that, he's keen to break back into acting. Guilherme knows that sounds like there's a lot on his plate, but insists it's all part of being an artist in this day and age. "A singer today can't focus on one area and should try different industries, like acting, hosting and being a social media influencer," he explains.

As for advice to emerging performers, Guilherme recommends authenticity. "Most importantly, you have to find your own character," he counsels. "You have to recognise the type of person you are, and convey that to your listeners through your music and work. Because being yourself allows them to really know you." ●

ARTS & CULTURE

Macao's living legacy

The Ruins of St Paul's neighbourhood is home to a variety of the city's intangible heritage elements, including traditional herbal tea brewing, incense stick manufacturing and the creation of traditional wedding dresses.



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

When the Macao government added 55 items to its List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2020, it dramatically expanded the original list of 15 elements announced three years earlier. Each of these 70 elements contribute to the more than 450-year-long story of Macao – as well as having a story of their own. And under the government’s protection, these unique handicrafts, artforms, religious festivals and culinary delights will be safeguarded for generations to come.

The Historic Centre of Macao, especially the area surrounding the Ruins of St Paul’s, is teeming with various intangible heritage elements, including the long-standing practices of herbal tea brewing, incense stick manufacturing and the making of elaborate traditional Chinese wedding dresses.

Wong Ping is always happy to guide customers to the right herbal tea for them



TASTE A NEARLY 2,000-YEAR-OLD REMEDY

Just before evening sets in, Wong Ping prepares his stall Man Ka On along Avenida de Almeida Ribeiro for a rush of afterwork customers. A distinctive aroma wafts through the air as he fixes a lightbulb hanging above six glasses filled with various herbal teas.

Establishing his stall in 1985, Wong has been brewing herbal tea for health-conscious Macao residents for nearly 40 years. He learned Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) in his hometown of Shunde, in Guangdong Province, and his wealth of knowledge has made him something of a local expert in herbal tea.

Since setting up shop, Wong has watched the area change yet each street remains very “distinctive”. Wong chose the Ruins of St Paul’s neighbourhood, near Rua da Felicidade, for his stall because of its convenience and popularity – he sees lots of foot traffic every day, which is good for business.



Herbal tea isn't just a matter of taste – the right brew can perk you up, clear your skin or even ease your pain.

(Opposite page) Wong Ping has manned his stall near the Ruins of St Paul's for nearly 40 years.

Because his customers “have night shift work,” he says their health can be affected. “Herbal tea can help in this case.” Wong even served Hong Kong actor Simon Yam herbal tea once, and a production crew borrowed his stall for filming.

The various teas are targeted at specific ailments. For instance, Wong recommends sleepless

night shift workers opt for Heat-Reducing Tea (降火茶).

The sweet-tasting Five-Flower Tea (五花茶) is best for supporting liver function and protecting the eyes. Dampness-Relieving Tea (祛濕茶), meanwhile, is best for detoxifying the digestive system, improving skin conditions, clearing acne and eliminating halitosis.



The medical theories behind herbal tea can be traced to the Eastern Jin dynasty (317-420 CE), when a Taoist herbalist and physician named Ge Hong moved to southern China and began to study herbal treatments for ailments caused by the humid climate in the region. The earliest records of herbal tea remedies can be found in a

clinical first aid manual, *Zhou Hou Bei Ji Fang*, written by Ge Hong more than 1,700 years ago.

While it's difficult to pinpoint exactly when herbal tea shops first appeared in Macao, one of the first was Tai Sing Kung Cha Medicinal that opened near the Ruins of St Paul's more than 200 years ago – and is still open today.

While incense manufacturing is long gone, stores like Tam Kin Hong's ensure worshippers have the supplies they need

AN ANCIENT HANDICRAFT BURNS ON

The narrow Rua dos Ervanários is lined with tiny stores selling everything from toys to jade carvings, and even Macao's own Coca-Cola Museum. This special street is also home to one of Macao's most important incense stores: Tam Kin Hong's Veng Heng Cheong Joss-stick Shop.

Jam-packed with pink, red and yellow incense sticks, the store feels like a relic of the past. Tam explains the message behind the name: "My father is Tam Veng, so part of the name is

taken from his 'Veng'. *Heng* means 'fragrance' and *Cheong* means 'auspicious.'

Tam's family founded the shop in 1968, choosing the prosperous Ruins of St Paul's neighbourhood because it's in the heart of the city with plenty of passersby. The store is also close to a few temples – the Na Tcha Temple, behind the ruins, and the Hong Kung Temple on Rua de Cinco de Outubro – making it convenient for customers to purchase joss sticks before worship.

Tam learned the trade from his parents when he was in middle school. "I started learning how to make incense by going with my mother to the factory." Since then, he'd spend all of his school breaks learning the trade. He later enhanced his techniques by apprenticing with a master incense maker at the age of 17.

Crafting incense sticks, which are usually made from sandalwood or agarwood, by hand is more complicated than

one might imagine. In fact, there are three distinct methods. The first, called *cuoxiang*, requires the artisan to knead a mixture of sawdust, spices and incense powder onto bamboo sticks until they're fully coated.

The second, *linxiang*, sees craftsmen dip a bundle of bamboo sticks into water, then into a mixture of incense powder three times before being left to dry. And the third uses machinery – the most recent development in the trade. "While there are

three ways to make incense, I learned to craft two kinds: *cuoxiang* and *linxiang*. In our store, our incense sticks are *cuoxiang*-made [by artisans in the mainland]."

Incense stick manufacturing in China emerged from the Eastern Zhou dynasty (770-221 BCE) onward, reaching greater heights during the Song dynasty (960-1279 CE). In Macao, the industry thrived during the 20th century, with 17 factories known to have existed by 1910.





From the 1950s to the 1970s, the manufacturing of incense sticks was one of Macao's three main industries – right behind matchsticks and firecrackers. At the industry's height, there were more than 40 incense factories.

Veng Heng Cheong is one of a handful of remaining joss stick shops in Macao. Another is Fábrica de Pivetes Lei Cheong Heng, on Rua do Almirante Sérgio. Tam, who's in his mid-seventies, pledges to keep the tradition going so long as he is in good health.

STITCHING A BEAUTIFUL TRADITION

Just around the corner from Veng Heng Cheong Joss-stick Shop, along Rua dos Mercadores, stands Choi Sang Long Embroidery. With more than 100 years of history, this is one of the few remaining traditional Chinese tailors in Macao that still crafts traditional Chinese wedding dresses (known locally as *kwan kwa*) by hand.

The store's third-generation owner Wong Weng Sou says he can't remember exactly when the store opened, but pulls out a laminated invoice dating all the way back to 1913.



"I only know that it has been more than a hundred years because this shop was opened during my grandfather's generation," he says, adding that his grandfather was originally the master dyer and took ownership of the store 80 years ago.

"*Choi* means 'different colours'; *sang*, 'business'; and *long*, 'prosperity,'" he continues, explaining the store's name. From outside, the shop's display of embroidered red *kwan kwa* captures the attention of brides-to-be. Inside, one can sift through reams and reams of fabric, all protected by special coverings.

In Wong's grandfather's time, the store was a dyehouse. Then in the 1970s, the family changed directions and became a bridal store selling both Western-style formal wear and traditional Chinese dresses.

The traditional bridal ensemble features two pieces – a long skirt known as the *kwan* and an upper gown called the *kwa* with buttons down the front and the handmade, intricate embroidery that takes several months to create. First, tailors measure the client, then cut the fabric, draw patterns, build the structure, refine, and finally hand-stitch the embroidery.

Such intricate hand-stitched embroidery is almost exclusively reserved for wedding garments

(Opposite page)
The manufacture of incense has been developed and passed down over millennia



Each painstakingly hand-stitched element adds a layer of meaning to the garment

(Right) Wu Lai Heng and Wong Weng Sou, the married couple behind Choi Sang Long Embroidery

(Opposite page) Wu takes great pride in the beautiful wedding clothes they produce



The embroidered designs tend to take on symbolic patterns, such as a flying dragon sewn with glistening golden thread alongside a gold or silver phoenix, which together signify eternal love. Often, the skilled tailors also weave clouds, flowers and other patterns into the designs – each with its own meaning. “For example, the flowers represent the blossoming of wealth and honour,” Wong says.

“In the past, we also made beaded gowns and skirts,” he continues. “Nowadays, most of our customers prefer gold and silver thread. In the past two decades, they’ve also asked for three-dimensional designs, enhancing the quality of the dress.” They are worn during the traditional tea ceremony, an important part of Chinese weddings spent with senior family members.

Naturally, the more elaborate the embroidery, the more expensive a dress will be. The dresses aren’t restricted to weddings. “Sometimes on happy occasions, large families will wear traditional clothes to take photos during the New Year,” agrees Wong. “However, this is less common.” One of the only stores left in the city doing traditional Chinese wedding dress embroidery, Choi Sang Long’s clientele includes many locals and even orders from abroad. It is proud to preserve the artform in Macao, and its location near a cakeshop and Che Lee Yuen – a local gold and jewellery store dating back to the 1860s – is a boon for business. “We create such beautiful clothes for brides,” says Wu Lai Heng, Wong’s business partner and wife. “Everyone is happy when they have an unforgettable wedding.” ●





(From left to right)
SON, Macao's longest-running
international school, has come a long
way from its single classroom in 1988

TIS marries top-tier academics with
a strong sports programme and
opportunities to explore arts and tech

As the city's largest international
school, MAC remains dedicated to
fostering good mental health and
well-being for its 1,400 students

Generations brings a Nordic approach
– and aesthetic – to the city's
international schools

SOCIAL AFFAIRS

Discovering the city's global classroom

The city's four international schools each have different strengths. From innovative methods promoting happiness to cutting-edge digital literacy programmes, there's a perfect fit for every child.

Text **Erico Dias**
Photos **Lei Heong Jeong**

Macao has always been an international city, evolving from a hub for Sino-European trade to a world centre of tourism and leisure. As such, it offers a range of high-quality education options for globally-minded families.

Macao's four international schools boast innovative and challenging curricula. With state-of-the-art facilities, these are places where sporty, creative and

technically minded children can thrive in multicultural environments. Importantly, they also have proven track records in securing placements for their graduates at top universities around the world.

This guide takes readers on a school-by-school tour, providing a comprehensive picture of Macao's international education landscape.

SCHOOL OF THE NATIONS

The longest-running international school in Macao, School of the Nations (SON) had humble beginnings. When it opened in 1988, the school consisted of a single classroom in a modified apartment and just five kindergarten students. In 2008, SON moved into a seven-storey, purpose-built campus in Taipa – equipped with a library, indoor basketball court, outdoor football pitch, indoor gym and theatre. Today, around 650 students are enrolled.

SON has always been known for its innovative approach to education, inspired by the Baha'i faith. Instruction takes place in English and Mandarin, with a curriculum drawing on strengths from both the Chinese and international education systems.

SON was the first school in Macao to use the Cambridge International

system, back in 1994. It has also offered the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme since 2009. For preschoolers, SON runs a special three-year programme focusing on character development, science and maths.

Sixty-six percent of SON students graduating in 2022 went on to universities in the US and Australia. The remaining graduates entered universities in Macao, the mainland, and elsewhere overseas.

According to SON's framework, the school strives to help each student develop noble qualities, advance in understanding of academic and spiritual concepts, and engage in constructive action to improve the world around them. Community service is considered an important part of school life.



THE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF MACAO

Founded in 2002, the International School of Macao (TIS) teaches a Canadian curriculum and is accredited with the province of Alberta's Ministry of Education. More than 50 percent of its teachers hail from Canada. The school is located on the Macau University of Science and Technology's Taipa campus.

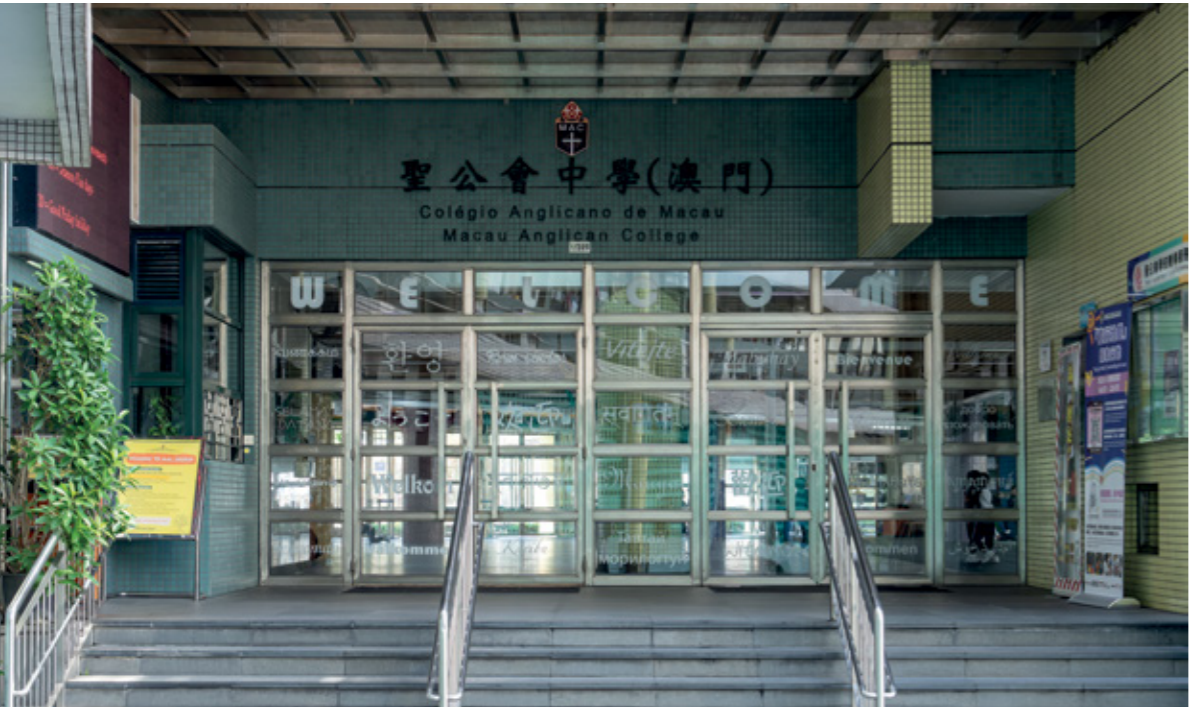
TIS started out with just 58 students. Its roll now exceeds 1,300 pupils, from kindergarteners to grade 12 (the final year of school in the territory). From grade 10 onwards, students are required to complete the Alberta High School Diploma, while the IB Diploma Programme is optional. Over 40 percent of its 2022 graduating class received offers from universities considered to be in the world's top 50 tertiary education institutions, demonstrating the school's commitment to academic excellence.

Last year, the school unveiled its revamped Innovation Lab (formerly known as the Robotics Lab). This state-of-the-art facility gives students hands-on experience in creative and technological fields, including screen printing, woodwork, 3D printing and robotics.

Complimentary to a focus on tech, TIS is an accredited Common Sense School. This means students are actively taught how to make smart and ethical decisions when using digital technology. The school holds an annual Digital Citizenship Week.

TIS is also known for its strong sports programme, with student-athletes participating in a number of local and regional conferences.





MACAU ANGLICAN COLLEGE

The Macau Anglican College (MAC) is run under the auspices of the Anglican Church in Hong Kong. It follows a modified Cambridge International curriculum that complies with local requirements. All MAC students learn Mandarin as well as English, with bilingualism a highly prized pillar of the school's educational offering.

Located in Taipa, MAC opened as a kindergarten and primary school in 2002, then added a secondary programme in 2008. About 1,400 students are currently enrolled, making MAC the largest of the international schools. In 2022, MAC reported a 100 percent pass rate in its Cambridge examinations. A quarter of graduates went on

to study at universities in the UK, 42 percent enrolled in local universities, and most others headed off to higher education programmes in other places around the world.

The school places a strong emphasis on mental health and well-being; all students have ready access to counsellors from Sheng Kung Hui Macau Social Work Coordination Office ('Sheng Kung Hui' is the Cantonese name of the Anglican Church). MAC provides strong support to students with special needs through its Inclusive Education Unit, which opened in 2011.

MAC also offers a range of sporting and arts opportunities to students, including through its school band.



GENERATIONS INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

Generations International School is the newest of Macao's international schools, opening its doors just last year. It currently accepts enrollments up to grade 8, but will eventually provide education for students all the way to grade 12. The main language spoken at Generations is English, followed by Portuguese and then Chinese: it is the only officially trilingual international school in the city.

The school follows a Finnish educational model called SISU. A SISU curriculum aims to foster children's natural curiosity, mental flexibility, creativity and independence, while encouraging personal growth. The school maintains a relatively low teacher-student ratio, with a maximum of 16 students per class – allowing teachers the time and space to focus on each individual's needs. Secondary students can sit exams in either the Cambridge International or IB Diploma Programme.

Adaptation is a core principle at Generations. Each student receives an individualised learning plan and wellness lessons plus access to special education support. Students' happiness is approached as a goal.

Classrooms at the Generations' Coloane campus are Nordic-inspired and modern in aesthetic. The complex includes an auditorium, canteen, library, music room, indoor and outdoor sports courts.

Macao's international schools offer a unique blend of global education standards and locally appropriate cultural integration – catering to the city's diverse student body. Each of these four institutions is equipped to provide the next generation of global citizens with world-class learning environments and opportunities. ●



SPORTS

Pickleball’s found its place in Macao

The fast-paced, curiously named sport has been sweeping the globe in recent years. Now Macao is jumping on board, with its first official pickleball venue opening just last month.

Text **Erico Dias**
Photos courtesy
of **Marco Leung**

Pickleball is one of the fastest growing sports in the US, with China aiming to have ‘100 million pickleball players and 10,000 pickleball courts by 2030’

Imagine playing a game of tennis with a ping pong paddle, on a badminton court. Now, add some badminton-esque rules and a perforated plastic ball. *Voila!* You have pickleball, a sport that’s steadily inspiring a following in Macao. The city got its first dedicated pickleball venue in July, at Fisherman’s Wharf, thanks to efforts by local pickleball proponent Marco Leung.

“Our first goal is to have summer camps with kids and students and spread the sport through the community,” the 29-year-old athlete tells *Macao* magazine. “We hope to have at least 1,000 players by next year.” The former tennis star is one of the city’s few professional pickleball players.

Pickleball emerged in 1965, when an American named Joel Pritchard failed to find a shuttlecock for a game of badminton at his summer home in Washington state. He improvised with ping pong paddles and a wiffle ball, successfully keeping both his own and neighbouring families entertained for the whole summer. Legend has it that Pritchard’s wife named the game ‘pickleball’ because it reminded her of a rowing concept

known as the ‘pickle boat.’ These were boats manned by crews cobbled together from other teams – much like the hodgepodge inception of her husband’s invention, which has slowly evolved into an official sport.

By the mid-1970s, pickleball was being hailed by the media as “America’s newest racquet sport”. Purpose-built paddles and balls entered the market a few decades later, and the US’ first national pickleball tournament was organised by the USA Pickleball Association (USAPA) in 2009.

Over the past few years, the sport has been repeatedly described as the fastest-growing sport in the US. According to a March 2023 report by the Association of Pickleball Professionals, almost 50 million adult Americans played pickleball at least once in the 12 months prior. And the sport is also gaining traction elsewhere. Particularly in China, which is already known for producing the world’s best badminton and table tennis players. The country holds more Olympic medals than any other in both sports, boding well for a bright future in competitive pickleball.

“

The people who join the tournaments are fired up, but what makes it different is how supportive they are when not playing – or after a game. They cheer for you.

– Marco Leung



In fact, the president and founder of the International Pickleball Teaching Professional Association, Seymour Rifkind, said Chinese officials pledged to have 100 million pickleball players and 10,000 pickleball courts by 2030. Leung sees that ambition already. “In China right now, every city is trying to host a pickleball tournament weekly,” the player says. “It’s a lot more amazing than anybody would have thought.”

PICKLEBALL REACHES MACAO

The Macao China Pickleball General Association has been teaching people of all ages to play

pickleball at the University of Macao since 2018. Leung didn’t hear about it until last summer, however, when a friend in Canada recommended pickleball as a fun alternative to tennis. Leung promptly bought two paddles, one for himself and another for his girlfriend.

The couple, who already played tennis together, felt like they were progressing quickly at the new sport. After just one week of practice, they decided to enter a pickleball competition in nearby Shenzhen. It wasn’t a success, Leung admits with a laugh. As he puts it, they got “smashed” by their opponents. Like most racquet sports, pickleball can

be played in singles, doubles and mixed doubles (with a man and woman on each team).

While the basics of pickleball are easy enough for a tennis player to pick up, Leung says it’s the strategy needed to win that’s different. A pickleball court is much tighter, for starters, and the goal is to outmanoeuvre rather than overpower your opponent. In tennis, players often rely on powerful serves and groundstrokes, whereas in pickleball, success hinges on precision and quick reflexes at the net.

‘THEY CHEER FOR YOU’

After his Shenzhen defeat, Leung refocused on tennis to represent Macao in last year’s Asian Games (held in Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province). But it wasn’t his most triumphant performance and, afterwards, Leung decided to exchange his tennis racquet for a pickleball paddle. By the end of 2023, he was regularly travelling to different parts of the mainland for pickleball tournaments. He now competes internationally.

One major reason Leung says he fell in love with the novel sport was its enthusiastic, affirmative atmosphere. “That’s something I’ve



never experienced in my life,” he explains. “The people who join the tournaments are fired up, but what makes it different is how supportive they are when not playing – or after a game. They cheer for you.”

He admits that another big draw is the prize money. His biggest haul so far was 12,000 yuan, for winning the China Pickleball Tournament in Langfang, Hebei Province, in April.

In Langfang, Leung beat Asia’s number one pickleball player – Neilson Chen, from Taiwan. “All I said to myself was there’s nothing to lose,” he recalls.

Members of Leung’s WeChat group get together weekly to play pickleball

(Opposite page) Leung switched from tennis to pickleball last year, enjoying the positive atmosphere at competitions

“

Pickleball does not require a specific height or weight, all that matters is you enjoy the game.

– Marco Leung



An exhibition match played during the launch of Macao's first pickleball court at the Fisherman's Wharf

(Opposite page) Leung travels almost every week to different parts of China to compete against pickleball pros

A SPORT ON THE RISE

Leung soon felt compelled to share his love for the sport with the rest of Macao. So, he started at the International School of Macao (TIS), his own alma mater. Leung now holds weekly pickleball sessions for students at its campus, and hopes

these will eventually morph into inter-school competitions.

Another way Leung is growing the sport is through a dedicated WeChat group, which has ballooned from 40 to around 220 members over the past seven months. The members – all active players – are as young as 10 and as old as 65. Leung

is quick to recount a match he lost to a 59-year-old player in Korea earlier this year. “The guy beat me easily,” he says. “His reactions, skills and strategies were so good, which clearly shows that pickleball is for all ages.” Members of the WeChat group get together for two hours each week to practise, with Leung supplying all the necessary equipment. Prior to the city's new pickleball court opening up, they'd train at local schools' courts.

In March this year, Leung and fellow pickleball enthusiasts Ben Ngai and Tenny Li started searching Macao for a suitable space to build a proper pickleball court. It was a struggle to find somewhere with enough space and a high enough ceiling for the right price, but they finally settled on a defunct outdoor parking lot at Fisherman's Wharf. It was perfect, Leung says, with changing rooms, showers, free parking and food all conveniently nearby.

The trio transformed the parking lot into a four-court pickleball haven, painted bright blue. With the facility finally up and running, Leung anticipates a surge of interest in the sport. He's planning to host some novelty events – the likes of singles nights and pet-friendly tournaments – to encourage people to pick up a paddle, and is more than willing to help newbies hone their skills. Everyone is welcome: “Pickleball does not require a specific height or weight, all that matters is you enjoy the game,” the passionate pickleball advocate promises. ●



SOCIAL AFFAIRS

Where to find off-the-beaten-track Macao? Try Mong Ha

Underrated yet brimming with charms, this northern neighbourhood sees few tourists. And that makes it one of the best places for intrepid visitors to get a taste of the ‘real’ Macao.

Text and Photos **Amanda Saxton**

What does the average visitor do on a trip to Macao? For sure they’ll make a beeline for the Ruins of St Paul’s, the centuries-old church and beloved symbol of the city. From there, the Old Town’s twisting cobblestone alleyways offer up plenty of historic architecture and fresh-baked egg tarts. It’s also an easy stroll to A-Ma Temple, where one can inhale the evocative incense of an ancient hillside shrine. Many travellers also head south to soak in the relaxed coastal vibes of Coloane Village.

These are all charming, important destinations. The catch? Everyone who visits Macao knows about them. If you want to avoid the masses and experience an off-the-beaten-track side of the city, the government says “head north” – to a district known as Mong Ha.

One of the very first settlements on Macao Peninsula, much of Mong Ha remains residential today. But in between the looming apartment blocks, centuries-old temples rub shoulders with striking feats of Portuguese Modernism. A boutique museum celebrates China’s most consequential composer. Locals buy their fresh produce at Macao’s oldest wet market. There’s even an old fortress hidden in what could be mistaken for a mini jungle.

This article offers a guided tour of Mong Ha, based on the useful tourism map published by Macao’s Cultural Affairs Bureau. Locals may also find something new to explore.

The historic Kun Iam Temple (also known as Pou Chai Temple) is one of the city’s three oldest temples



FORMER CIVIL SERVANTS' HOMES

Much of Mong Ha's charm lies in the surprise pops of colour encountered between what are, admittedly, fairly drab apartment blocks. For example, there's a series of former civil servants' quarters that shine like jewels along Avenida do Almirante Lacerda, Rua de Francisco Xavier Pereira, Avenida do Coronel Mesquita and Avenida do Conselheiro Ferreira de Almeida.

Built in the flamboyant Português Suave style and painted an almost luminescent minty green, many of these villas have been (or are in the process of being) transformed into artistic and cultural spaces. Venture within to check out what's on display.

Even the villas that aren't yet open to the public make for fun photo opportunities. Their character façades and mid-century Macao colour schemes make you feel like you're on a film set.

The brilliant mint green of the former civil servants' homes is characteristic of the Português Suave style

(Opposite page, left) The Former Municipal Cattle Stable caters to artists rather than livestock these days

(Opposite page, right) A statue marks the portion of the old stable that now serves as a kennel

FORMER MUNICIPAL CATTLE STABLE

Decidedly urban Macao is the last place you'd expect to encounter a roving bovine. And yet, a street sign in Mong Ha expressly forbids cattle from using certain roads. The sign is a throwback to a time when incoming animals were quarantined on Avenida do Almirante Lacerda, in a picturesque ochre complex topped with terracotta tiles that was built in the early 1900s.

Indeed, some roads back then were cattle-friendly: drovers used to herd their charges between the Inner Harbour (where they'd arrive by boat from the mainland), the quarantine zone, the former municipal slaughterhouse in Barra. All in the name of supplying Macao with fresh meat. In 1987,



these services all relocated to a new purpose-built facility in Ilha Verde. The old quarantine zone, known as the Former Municipal Cattle Stable, now serves a very different purpose. Much of the complex is devoted to art exhibitions and workshops. It's a place where up-and-coming artists have a chance to display their work in what's since been transformed into a spacious gallery. It's where you go to get a handle on Macao's edgier creative side. Fittingly, the exhibition space goes by the name of Ox Warehouse. But another animal can often be heard while perusing the artwork, seemingly from very nearby. That is because there is another side to the old stable. Since 1948, part of the complex has housed the Macao Municipal Kennel. That Art Deco-style building offers a wide range of services for the city's canine population, including a shelter. Dog lovers may enjoy adding a stopover here after checking out an exhibition. You'll recognise it by the white statue of a boy embracing his beloved hound out front.





XIAN XINGHAI MEMORIAL MUSEUM

Famed for his *Yellow River Cantata* and hailed as the ‘People’s Composer’, Xian Xinghai is the focus of one of Macao’s most enchanting museums – housed in a pair of converted civil servants’ apartments. Xian was born in Macao, in 1905, and spent the first six years of his short but incredibly productive life here. He died of lung disease at age 40, in Moscow, then part of the Soviet Union.

The Xian Xinghai Memorial Museum, which opened in 2019, brims with the musician’s personal artefacts (including a precious violin), manuscripts, photographs and carefully curated snippets of his life. Visitors learn that Xian moved from Macao to Singapore to the mainland, where he studied music at Peking University and the newly established National Conservatory of Music (now Shanghai Conservatory of Music). Also that, in 1934, he was the first Chinese student to enrol at the senior composition class of the Conservatoire de Paris.

The composer returned to China in 1935 during Japan’s occupation of Manchuria. During this period, he toured the country with the Shanghai Drama Salvation Society, composing patriotic songs to bring hope to his countrymen. He went to Moscow in 1940, initially working on the score of a documentary. The war thwarted his return to China and Xian wound up spending extended periods in what are now Mongolia and Kazakhstan, where his health broke down due to overwork and malnutrition. Tragically, Xian never made it back to Chinese soil.



The Xian Xinghai Memorial Museum offers fascinating insights into this Macao-born national hero, who created lasting legacies in the face of frequent ill health, poverty and geo-political upheaval.

MONG HA HILL AND FORTRESS

Mong Ha is not all bustling streets and tall buildings. In fact, it is home to one of Macao’s most serene green spaces: Mong Ha Hill. The nature park of over 38,000 square metres boasts rare orchids and butterflies, a playground and a natural rock cave. There’s also a paved nature trail where you’re seldom likely to encounter another human being.

Climbing all the way to the top, past a Roman-style fountain square, is well worth the effort for a panoramic view of the city. In the mid-19th century, João Maria Ferreira do Amaral was the Portuguese governor of Macao. He recognised the strategic importance and potential defensive value of this particular vista. It inspired him to initiate the construction of a sizable fort atop the hill in 1849, which was completed under a later governor, José Rodrigues Coelho do Amaral, in 1866.

The resulting 650-square-metre complex was surrounded by stone walls and home to 10 canons – with an artillery range that could reach the Border Gate, over 900 metres away. When the fortress was operational, it contained munitions warehouses and a military barracks for Portuguese soldiers from Africa.

The fortress was demilitarised in 1976. Today, the site is well maintained

and provides an interesting glimpse into Macao’s military history. Two canons remain on Mong Ha Hill, one at its summit and the other near the Roman fountain.

THE MACAO UNIVERSITY OF TOURISM’S STUDENT-RUN INN AND RESTAURANT

Perched part-way up Mong Ha Hill, the Macao University of Tourism is the territory’s pre-eminent university to study hospitality and leisure management. It also welcomes visitors, who can – if they wish – spend the night at its teaching hotel, the 20-room Pousada de Mong Ha.

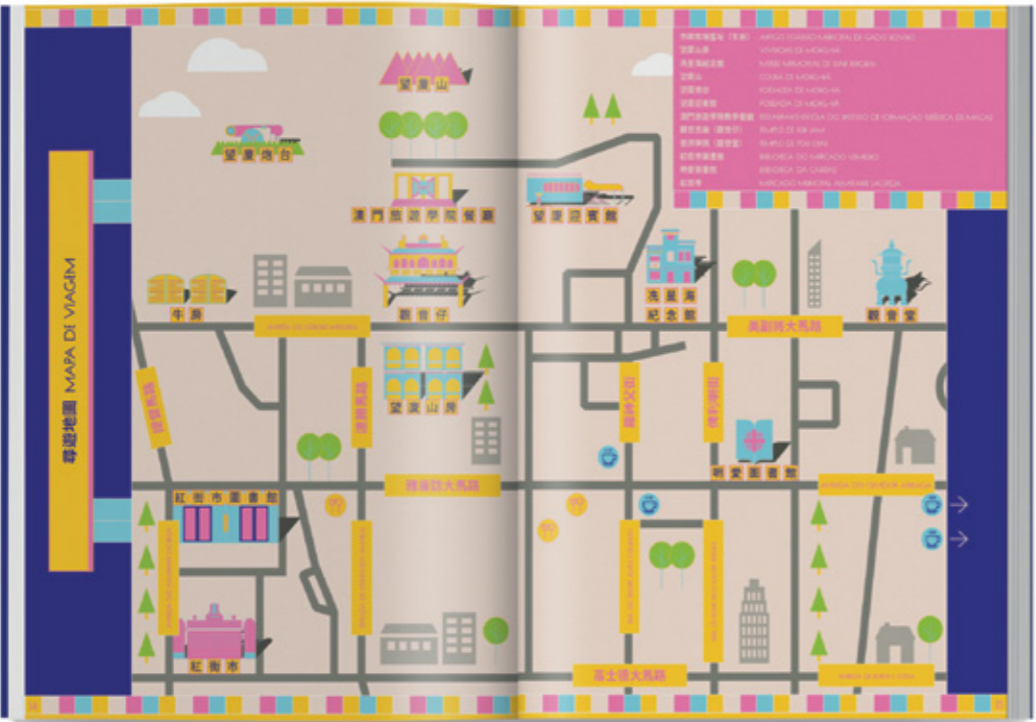
Formerly a military barracks, the boutique *pousada* (Portuguese for ‘inn’) oozes character. Specifically, the East-meets-West flavour unique to Macao. Expect plenty of mosaics.

Pousada de Mong Ha is renowned for its authentic charms and enthusiastic staff

(Opposite page, top) One of Xian Xinghai’s violins is held in the collection of his namesake museum

(Opposite page, bottom) One of the remaining cannons still overlooks Macao from the fortress atop Mong Ha Hill





The Cultural Affairs Bureau tourism map offers a guide to Mong Ha in Portuguese and Chinese

(Opposite page) Red Market is hard to miss with its striking red brickwork and imposing Art Deco style

If you're not looking for a place to stay, perhaps you're after a bite to eat. The university is also home to a one Michelin-star teaching restaurant. It's a great place to sample Macanese cuisine and Portuguese wine. Saturday's Macanese buffet is particularly popular here, often accompanied by live music.

Hospitality students make up the bulk of staff at both the inn and restaurant.

KUN IAM TCHAI TEMPLE

Kun Iam, the Goddess of Mercy, is one of the most popular deities in Chinese folk religion and she is especially beloved in Macao.

Many temples around the territory have been named in her honour, including two on the same Mong Ha street: Avenida do Coronel Mesquita.

The smaller and more rustic of the pair is Kun Iam Tchai Temple, understood to have been constructed by a Chinese shepherd in the 1820s. This temple is striking for the towering twin banyan trees growing in its courtyard.

KUN IAM TONG TEMPLE (POU CHAI TEMPLE)

One of Macao's oldest and largest temples, the Kun Iam Tong Temple is also called Pou Chai. It consists of three pavilions,

each dedicated to a different god (namely, Kun Iam, Tai Hong Pou and Cheong Sau). The current structure is believed to have been built in the early 1600s, with significant renovations completed in 1818 and 1858.

The Kun Iam Tong Temple has played host to a number of important people and events in Macao's history. In 1844, its picturesque garden was where representatives from China and the US signed the Treaty of Wanghia. The treaty was one of China's unequal treaties between Qing dynasty rulers and various foreign powers; Wanghia is another name for Mong Ha.

Fast forward a hundred years, and the Cantonese artist Gao Jianfu – associated with the Lingnan School – could be found living in the Kun Iam Tong Temple. Gao fled the mainland in 1938, during World War II, and took up residence in the place of worship, from where he taught painting techniques to locals.

Each year, on the 26th day of the first lunar month, Kun Iam worshippers descend upon the temple for a local Chinese folk custom known as the Opening of Kun Iam's Treasury. It entails asking Kun Iam for good luck, at a time when it's believed the deity's treasury is open.





Caritas Library is among the newest in Macao, opened in 2003

(Opposite page) The last of these iconic cylindrical mailboxes now resides in Red Market Library

THE RED MARKET

This brightly coloured market and its iconic clock tower are well known by everyone in Macao. Most locals have perused stalls within the walls of the 88-year-old building at some point in their lives – it is the oldest market in Macao, after all. The Red Market was hailed as a beacon of sanitation when it first opened in 1936.

The market recently reopened after a lengthy period of refurbishment. It again sells an

impressive array of vegetables, meat and seafood across its three levels. Here's the perfect opportunity to see Macao people going about an important part of their daily lives – food shopping – and to gain an appreciation of the quality fresh produce on offer in the city.

Street food and flower vendors also peddle their fragrant offerings just outside its walls. Fancy a steaming bowl of wonton soup, or rice noodles with beef brisket? This is where you'll find some of the tastiest dishes in Macao.

THE CARITAS AND RED MARKET LIBRARIES

A library may not be a typical tourist attraction, but these two – just a few hundred metres from each other – offer interesting windows into local life. Both are so well-used by the Mong Ha community that they could be described as Macao institutions.

The multi-functional Caritas Library is a haven for not only readers, but musicians. It features four piano rooms, a band room where musos can come to jam, and a space to practise dance. It also sells second-hand books.

The other library is a former post office, located around the corner from its namesake market. Step inside to witness people of all ages reading books, working diligently on computers or flicking through the day's newspapers.

As a nod to its original function, the Red Market Library boasts one of Macao's few remaining cylindrical mail boxes – painted fire engine crimson. It is still in operation, why not use it to send a few postcards off to friends and family overseas, telling them of your adventures in Macao? ●



GREATER BAY AREA

A new cultural icon in the Greater Bay Area

The new Zhuhai Jinwan Civic Art Centre exemplifies the GBA's commitment to innovative, sustainable architecture, partnering again with Zaha Hadid Architects to build on the region's growing reputation for bold, forward-thinking design.



CAT-OPTOGRAM STUDIO

Text **Gonalo C sar de S **

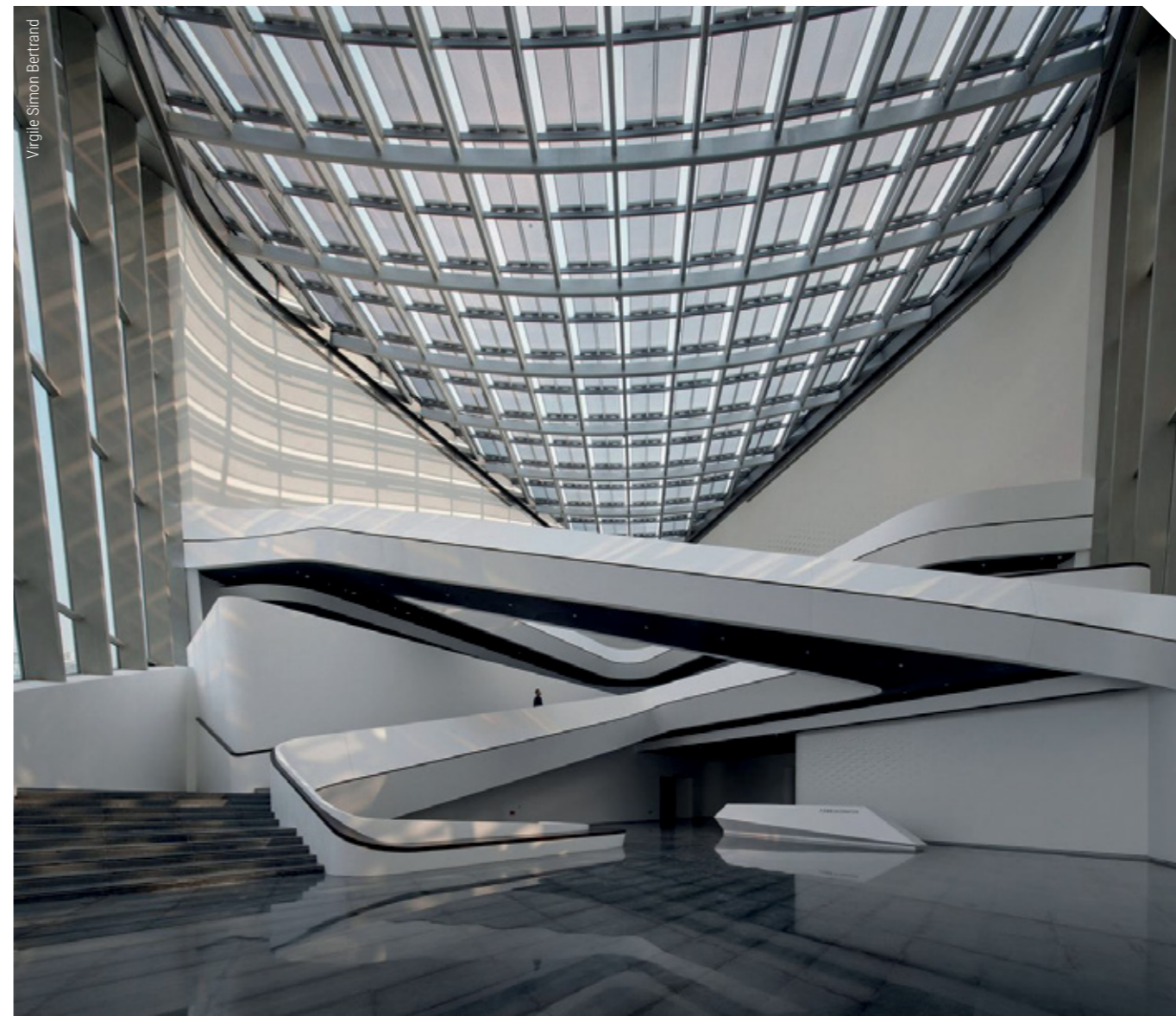
Sustainability and beauty shape every element of the art centre's design, from the artificial lake acting as a 'sponge' for rainwater to the lattice-work steel roof maximising control over natural lighting

Nine months after opening its doors to the public, the Zhuhai Jinwan Civic Art Centre stands as testament to the Greater Bay Area's commitment to architectural innovation, cultural enrichment and sustainable design. Shaped to suggest a chevron of migratory birds, the four-venue complex was designed by Zaha Hadid Architects (ZHA).

The new art centre was built in the middle of an artificial lake which acts as an integral part of Zhuhai's 'sponge city' initiative, capturing rainwater and naturally filtering out

contaminants with aquatic flora and fauna. A number of footbridges and tunnels allow visitors to access its 1,200-seat grand theatre, 500-seat black box theatre, art museum and science centre. Each venue occupies its own wing, radiating out from the central plaza and sheltered beneath angular, latticed canopies made of steel. Natural lighting, solar shading and thermal insulation are key features of the overall design, which the architects aimed to make as environmentally sound as possible.

Designed as a hub of contemporary creativity, the Civic



Virgile Simon Bertrand

Art Centre is located at the heart of Jinwan district's Western Ecological New Town and just 28 kilometres from Macao's Gongbei Checkpoint. The fact that the new art centre was dreamed up by the late Iraqi-British architect Zaha Hadid's namesake firm anchors it as a sibling structure to some of the most ambitious, strikingly designed buildings in China.

Hadid's first project in the country was the Guangzhou Opera House, conceived as two boulders washed down the Pearl River. Inside, it invokes the sensation

you've stepped into a giant oyster shell. Hadid, who died in 2016, won an international competition to design the opera house in 2002. It opened to the public in 2010.

Zhuhai has always punched above its weight, and with this new centre, Macao's immediate neighbour solidifies its status as a cultural regional hub that emerged in 2016 with the construction of the Zhuhai Opera House, designed by architect Chen Keisho as two shells representing the Sun and the Moon, located on an island at Xiangzhou close to Macao.



Sleeping Panda

Hadid's London-based team has gone on to design eight more buildings for the GBA. Macao's share comprises the neo-futurist Morpheus Hotel, with its eye-catching exoskeleton; and W Macau – a hotel that opened a couple months before the Zhuhai Jinwan Civic Art Centre. In neighbouring Hong Kong, her firm was behind the asymmetrical Jockey Club Innovation Tower that houses the Hong Kong Polytechnic University's School of Design – where lucky students find inspiration for their own creations everyday.

Currently under construction, the firm also designed Hong Kong's curvaceous commercial skyscraper The Henderson and the XRL Topside Development, towering above West Kowloon Station's high-speed rail terminus. Each incorporates green space and design elements that reduce energy consumption, with The Henderson earning the highest rating from the country's Green Building Rating Programme. Both projects are set to become landmark features in Hong Kong's skyline.

The GBA's tech hub, Shenzhen, also has two ZHA constructions in the works which are expected to be completed in 2025 and 2027. Moving into the rest of the mainland, ZHA is behind even more architectural triumphs, including Beijing's Galaxy and Leeza SOHO towers, as well as the capital's Daxing International Airport.

Macao-born architect Carlos Marreiros has long admired the innovative architectural work of the late Zaha Hadid. "Hadid's innovative designs have exerted a significant influence across China, where they are studied extensively in universities and research centres. Her bold, cutting-edge approach has cultivated a devoted following among both practitioners and the newer generation of investors and developers. Without the support and backing of these public and private stakeholders, Hadid's visionary projects would not have come to fruition," he told the Macao magazine.

"Hadid's work was beloved by property developers, due to its spectacularity, originality, and a contemporaneity that announces the future." According to him, developers and investors were attracted to projects they felt confident would become "immediately iconic" – something all but guaranteed with a ZHA design.

From the Guangzhou Opera House to the Civic Art Centre, the Greater Bay Area has become a hotbed for bold, forward-thinking architecture. As Macao-born architect Carlos Marreiros noted, Hadid's designs have cultivated a dedicated following among both practitioners and investors across China. ●



Guo Zhong Hua

The Guangzhou Opera House, first conceived by Zaha Hadid in 2002, kicked off a series of innovative structures in the country from the acclaimed architect and her firm

(Opposite page)
Chen Keisho's striking opera house in Zhuhai shows that ZHA, while influential, aren't the only ones turning out bold architecture

ZOOM

Macao's art scene takes to the streets

Guide to Street Art in Macau – the newly published book by Filipa Simões – serves as an introduction to the many uplifting and impressive works of art painted on buildings across Macao.



Text **Erico Dias**

Photos **David Lopo/CURB Archive**

① **P.I.B.G. [Macao], 2017**
Largo do Matadouro

② Book author Filipa Simões stands next to artwork by **Alex Face [Thailand], 2017**
54 Travessa de Francisco António

The streets of Macao have become a canvas for creativity, with street art adding splashes of colour and whimsy to an already rich cityscape. Filipa Simões' recently published book, *Guide to Street Art in Macau*, celebrates these vibrant murals by local and international artists – work you won't find in any gallery.

Simões, a Portugal-born design professor at the University of Saint Joseph, said her goal was to “strengthen and acknowledge the city's urban culture” through

shining a spotlight on its street art. She hopes it will inspire locals, visitors and other artists to explore the city in search of what are often well-hidden treasures.

The book contains photos of 56 murals painted by street artists hailing from places as far away as Australia, the US and France. Of course, artists from Macao, Hong Kong and the mainland are also represented – including local duo AAFK, otherwise known as Anny and Filipe Wong.

This creative couple say that finding spaces that welcome street art can be tricky in densely populated Macao. However, they persevere in the belief their work helps beautify the city and inspire people. AAFK always ask permission from local businesses, building owners or government departments before embarking on a new project.

Indeed, Simões says that for street artists to thrive in the small city, these kinds of negotiations are par for the course – and tend to result in a win-win outcome. Murals often become attractions in themselves, boosting foot traffic in their surroundings and customers for nearby stores.

“This balance between the artist’s message and the promoters’ interest has been fruitful, but not defining of the local street art scene,” Simões says.

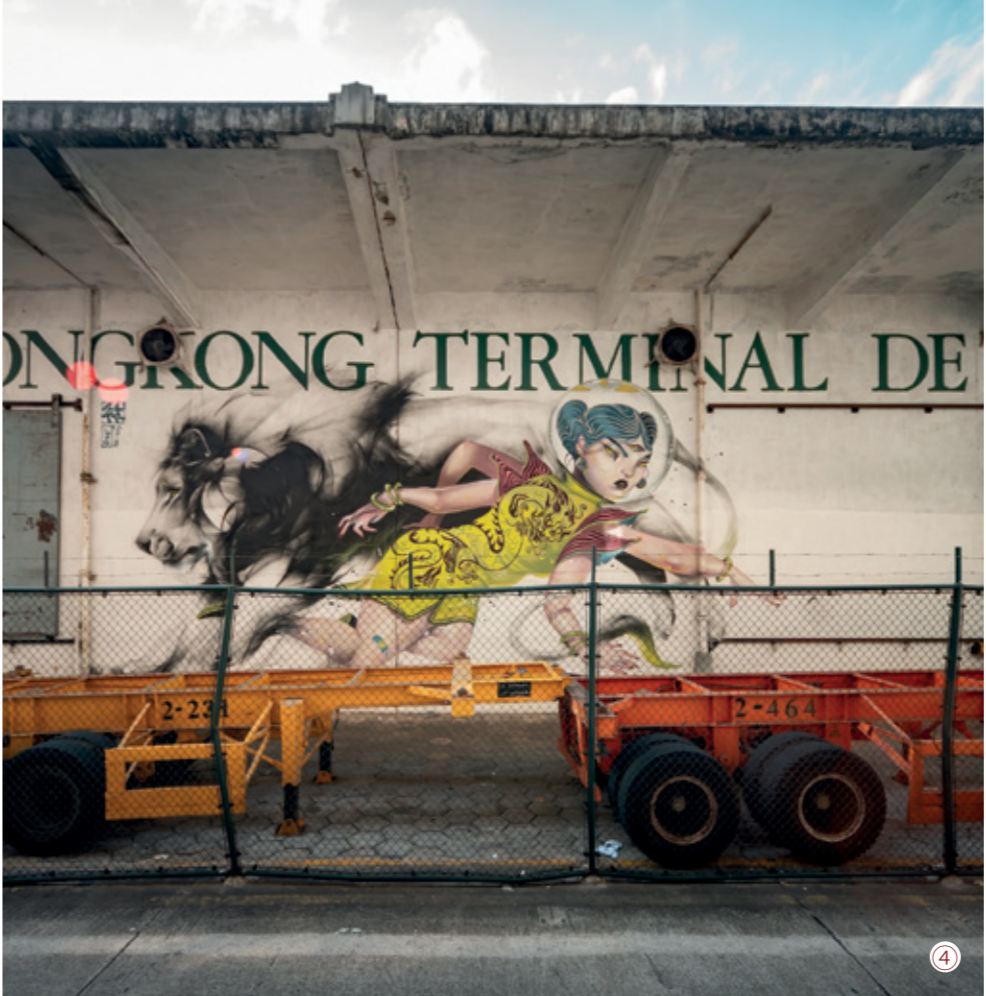
The genre is gaining more mainstream appreciation in Macao thanks to support from initiatives like the annual !Outloud Street Art Festival, which promotes both art and dance. Simões’ *Guide to Street Art in Macau* should help it reach an even larger audience. ●

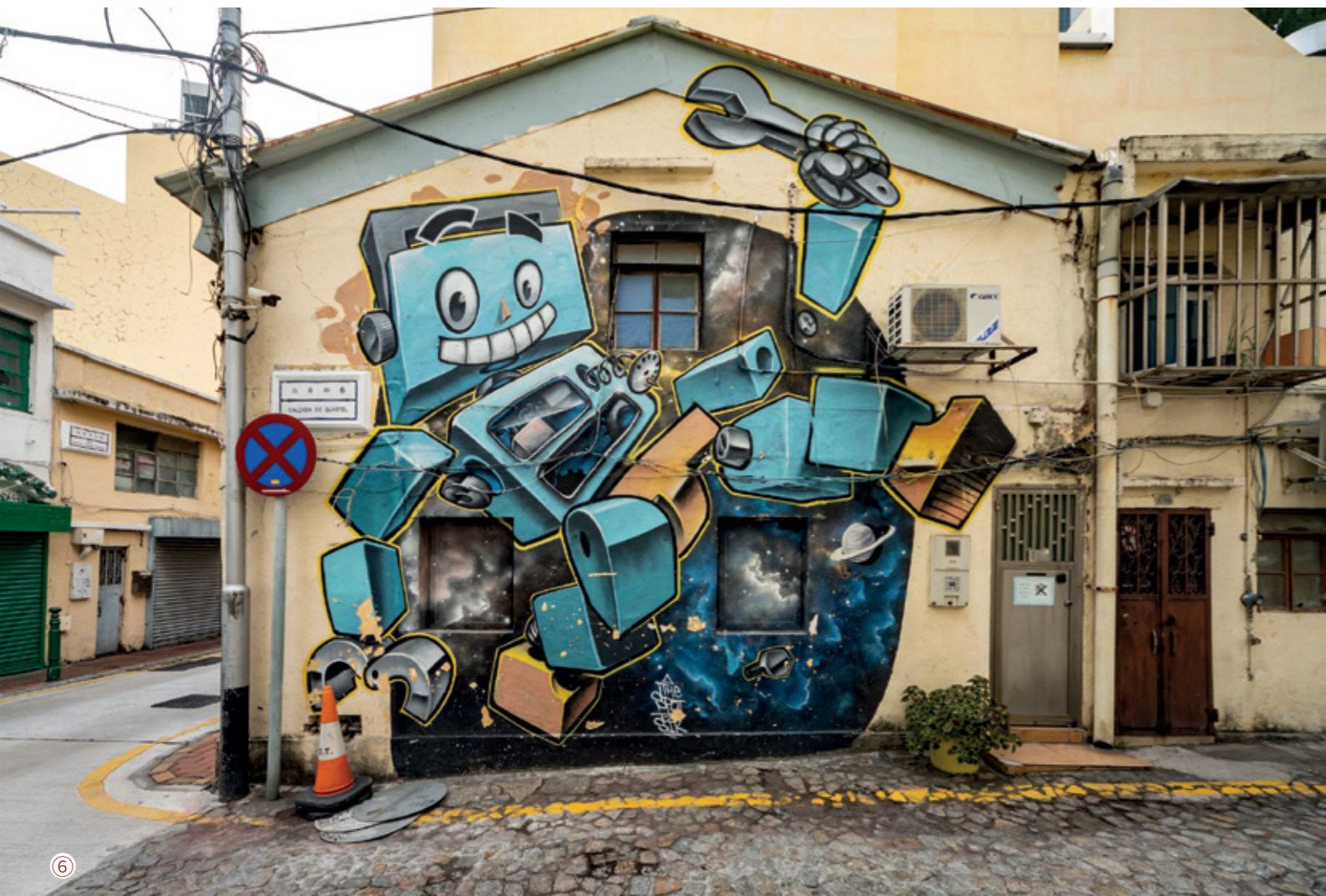


③ **ANHZ [Macao], 2018**
Terminal Marítimo Macao-Hong Kong
Ponte No. 5A do Porto Interior, Rua da Escola Náutica

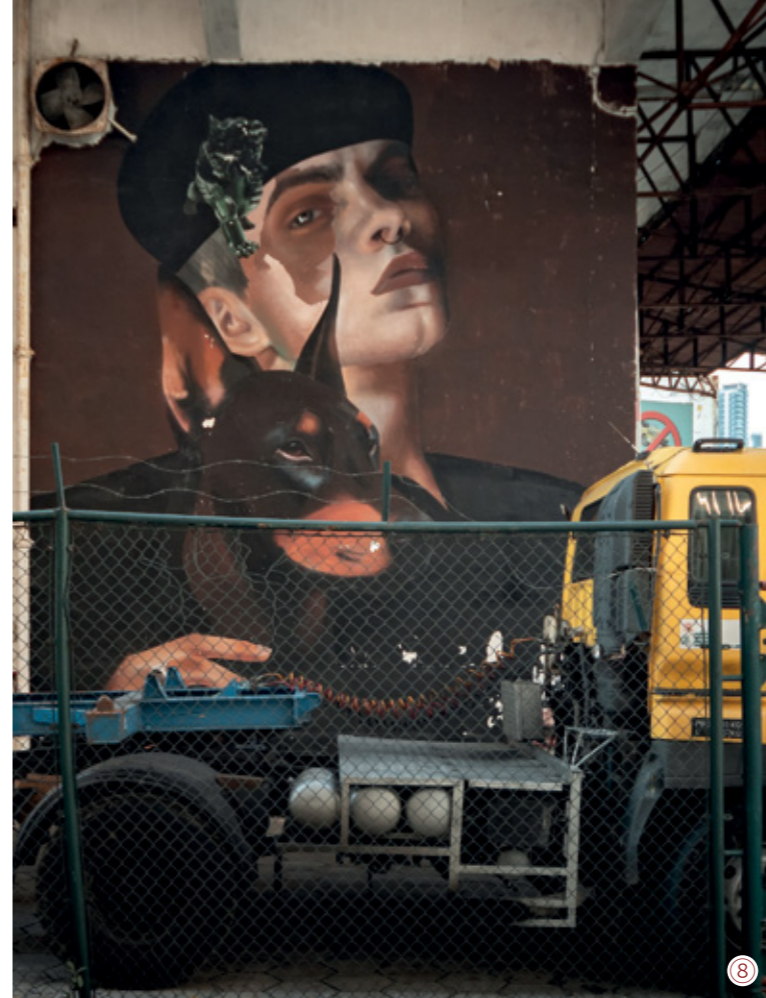
④ **Lauren YS [USA], SATR [China], 2018**
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⑤ **Vitorino Vong, Jane Ieng [Macao], 2020**
Travessa da Assunção





⑥



⑧



⑦



⑨

- ⑥ **SIK13 [China], 2018**
Calçada do Quartel
- ⑦ **Royal Dog [South Korea], 2017**
Travessa dos Tréns
- ⑧ **Lisa King [Australia], 2018**
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- ⑨ **P.I.B.G. [Macao], 2020**
Rua da Rosa



⑩ Beerpitch [Thailand], 2018
Travessa do Cais

⑪ Bordalo II [Portugal], 2023
Estaleiros Lai Chi Vun



⑪

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