

macao

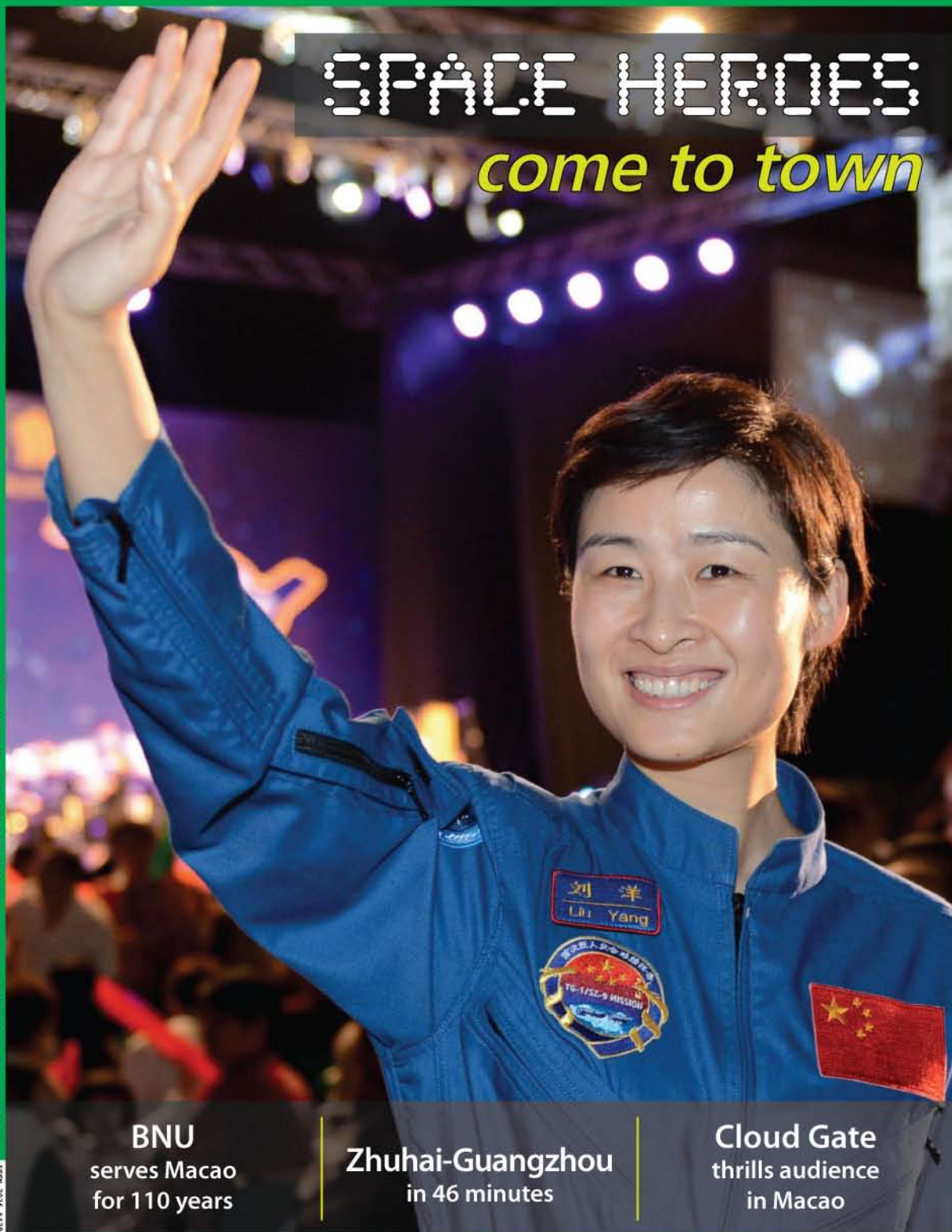
NOVEMBER 2012

Quarterly

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ETERNITY [Yung]

Just as the sun never ceases to rise and set, or the moon to progress through its cycles, so water never ceases to flow, down from the mountains, into the ocean where it foams and ripples, vaporizes and condenses, and again pours down as rain into mountain streams.

This simple and poetic character for eternity - formed around the image of running water with two horizontal strokes denoting foam and ripples - contains the seven fundamental strokes in calligraphy, from which every character in the Chinese language can be made.

From the book "The Spirit of the Chinese Character - Gifts from the Heart" by Barbara Aria with Russell Eng Gon



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Direcção dos Serviços de
Educação e Juventude

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DIRECTOR

Victor Chan Chi Ping

EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Alberto, Au Kam Va

EDITOR

Eva Lei Sao lok

PUBLISHER

Government Information Bureau (GCS) of the Macao SAR
Address: 15/Floor, China Plaza Building,
Avenida da Praia Grande, 762 - 804
Macao, China
Phone: + 853 2833 2886
Fax: + 853 2835 5426
E-mail: info@gcs.gov.mo

PRODUCER AND DISTRIBUTOR

Macaolink News and Information Services, Limited
Address: 10/Floor I, The Macau Square,
43 - 53A, Av. Infante D. Henrique
Macao, China
Phone: + 853 2835 5315
Fax: + 853 2835 5466
E-mail: macaulink@macaulink.com.mo

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Gonçalo César de Sá

CONTRIBUTORS

Allan Salas (photos), António Escobar, Carmo Correia (photos), Catarina Aleixo, Christian Ritter, Eric Tam (photos), Fernando Correia, Filipa Queiróz, Gonçalo L. Pinheiro (photos), Hélder Beja, José Carlos Matias, José Goulão (photos), José S. Morais, Kirsty Ridge (copy editing), Klinger Portella, Louise do Rosário, Luís Almoester (photos), Luo Xunzhi, Manuel Cardoso (photos), Marco Antinossi, Mark O'Neill, Mércia Gonçalves (photos), Ou Nian-le, Patrícia M. Pereira (photos), Pedro Daniel Oliveira, Rafael Bié, Rita Álvarez Tudela (photos), Sacha Matuszak, Thomas Chan, Vanessa Moore, Wong Sang (photos)

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Space Dream

China's first female astronaut encourages Macao students to follow her into space

By Staff Reporter



Astronauts Liu Wang (L.), Jing Haipeng (C.) and Liu Yang (R.)



Astronaut Liu Yang after the landing of the Shenzhou 9

China's first female taikonaut (astronaut) captivated the people of Macao recently with her smile and charisma, and told its students to follow her into space.

Liu Yang came with two other taikonauts on 13 August as part of a 42-member delegation of the Tiangong 1/ Shenzhou 9 manned space docking and rendezvous mission. The idea was to share their experiences in space with the government and people of the SAR. They received a very warm reception.

The three returned to Earth in June after nearly 13 days in space. They had achieved China's first manual docking in orbit – a milestone in the country's efforts to build a space station by the end of the decade. The launch, docking and landing were broadcast live on state television and led to an outpouring of national pride.



The astronauts returned to Earth in June after 13 days in space

Female taikonaut steals the show

The next day they held a public meeting, attended by 1000 people, in the Macao Tower, where they gave moving accounts of the flight and the 10 years of meticulous training needed to accomplish it. The star was Liu Yang, who won the hearts of the audience with her warmth and charisma. Most moved were the women in the audience, who saw in Liu Yang a model – someone who has succeeded in a field dominated by men, both in China and overseas.

"After I took on this mission, I had two years to complete the training programme that normally takes three to five years," she said. "I did not oversleep once. I was at my desk at seven every morning, ready for study. I ate lunch and dinner at my desk. To improve my physical condition and adaptability, I had to do additional exercises.

"The hardest thing for a female astronaut is not the study, training or physical challenge but doing the same thing day after day, month after month, year after year, like other astronauts. Doing one

thing for your whole life – that is what it is to be an astronaut," she said.

The pressure had taken its toll, she explained. "Normally, when a person is tired, they fall asleep as soon as their head hits the pillow. But when a person takes on an additional burden, he cannot sleep. There was a period of time when I put extra pressure on myself. Then I could not sleep. My legs were so tired that I could not move them at all. Then I realised that I should not add this extra pressure, and I made some adjustments."

Asked about the special qualities of a female astronaut, she said that, while the body weight and strength of a woman is less than those of a man, it could be compensated for with training. "The female is diligent, meticulous and more patient. She can adapt more easily to living for a long time in a small space."

She described being moved beyond words after the spacecraft went into orbit. "I felt as if I was carrying the banner for Chinese women to the end of the universe. To represent the motherland in space, as well as millions of women, was a great honour."



Visiting the Ruins of St Paul's

Macao visible from space

One of her colleagues, Liu Wang, said that this was not the first time they had passed through Macao: "During our space flight, we flew over Macao many times. Perhaps it is because of its position on the coast or the cloud cover – we could not see it easily. But the old man in the sky chose to arrange it so that I could see the whole of it." His words delighted the audience.

He said that astronauts could lead a normal life, spending time with their families, going shopping, watching films and doing what ordinary people did. "It is only in the period before the mission that we have closed training. This is to ensure concentration and avoid exposure to infectious diseases. It is like the life of a student before an exam. An astronaut's life is not so mysterious."

The delegation head, Niu Hongguang, also gave a report. He said that China was still 20–30 years behind the other two space powers, the United States and Russia, in terms of technology and materials. "An American exploratory vessel is currently on Mars but we have not yet landed on the moon. We

are working as hard as we can to shorten the gap and to develop our own skills. I am confident that by 2018–2020 we will have built a space station. We are preparing to land on the moon in the second half of 2013.

"We have 17 agreements with Europe and Russia and will continue our international co-operation work, in areas such as the space station, space experimental rooms and the training of astronauts," he said.

Inspiring students

The delegation schedule for the three astronauts included a meeting in the multisport pavilion of the Macao Polytechnic Institute, involving 2200 students from 30 secondary schools. The astronauts answered questions from the students during a 90-minute session.

"Every day we spent (in space) was memorable," said Liu Yang. "There is no better way for you to experience the unique environment there than actually being there yourself. I hope you train hard to become fit enough to join our space crew."



Arriving in Macao

They invited on stage a 15-year-old named Lam to talk about his participation in an astronaut experience camp in Beijing last December. Taikonaut Jing Haipeng went on to explain that it had taken him more than 10 years of unrelenting effort to achieve his success as an astronaut. "I'd like all the young people sitting here to follow their dreams

and turn them into reality," he said, before shaking hands with Lam and giving him a small gift. On their final day, the three taikonauts had time for sightseeing and a few hours of relaxation before returning to their lives in Beijing and preparing for their next mission. ■

Photos by Eric Tam and Xinhua

The astronauts with the Macao Chief Executive, Chui Sai On





A cultural show to honor the astronauts



A TEACHER FOREVER

An education administrator speaks fondly of her decades with young students

By Louise do Rosario

Great teachers live forever in our hearts. If you ask someone about their favorite school teacher, they will be able to name one almost immediately. A kind and tolerant teacher can make school days enjoyable and bring happy memories for years to come.



Leong Lai, director of DSEJ of Macao

Leong Lai, director of the Education and Youth Affairs Bureau (DSEJ), knows a lot about teacher-student relations. Having been a school teacher for decades before assuming her current senior post, Leong remains popular with her former students and their parents. On many occasions, they have walked up to her on the street or at social functions and expressed their gratitude for her kindness during their school days. "Some parents have thanked me for not giving up on their children even though the students were naughty at school." "Children might misbehave but they are all good-natured. As a teacher, one needs to have the heart, devotion and patience for them. You mustn't give up too easily. Students instinctively know who is a good or not-so-good teacher; the image of a teacher formed in school days will stay with them forever," she said.

Leong's description of her school days brings to mind the loving, dedicated teacher portrayed in classical teacher-student films, like 'To Sir with Love' and 'Goodbye Mr Chips'. "Children are like leaves in a forest, bearing different colours and shapes. Together they form a beautiful forest, making the world a prettier place." Many years have passed since Leong's days as a teacher at primary and secondary schools. She confesses she misses those days. "Sometimes when I pass by my old school, I have a strong urge to go inside as if I still worked there." In her younger days, Leong never thought that education would be her lifelong career. Born into a modest working-class family with eight children, she had to start working to support the family on graduation from secondary school. She tried her hand at various jobs – as a dress-maker, an accountant and a jewellery-seller.

In 1977, Leong enrolled at Saint Joseph College (Colégio Diocesano de São José) to study to become a teacher. "I remembered that my teachers at school were nice people and were respected. So I thought teaching could be a good profession for me," she said.

Studying in Taiwan

A year later, the principal of the college suggested Leong apply for a grant to further her teaching studies in Taipei.

"It was the first time I had been overseas. I was nervous and missed home terribly." Thanks to the Macao alumni based in Taiwan, Leong was soon enjoying her life in Taipei.

In her first year, Leong had to learn Mandarin in a class of 50 students, including around eight overseas Chinese from South Korea, Malaysia and other countries. "Students from Hong Kong and Macao were the worst Mandarin-speakers," she laughs.

On graduation in Taiwan, Leong returned to Macao, even though she was offered a job in Taipei. Her first teaching job was at a Portuguese-Chinese primary school in Coloane (Escola Luso-Chinesa de Coloane). The school was located a long way from the city centre and buses came only every 35 minutes. The students were from families of new immigrants living in the neighbouring low-income areas of Seac Pai Van and Hac Sá. Teachers not only had to teach but also were involved in the welfare of these children from poor families.

With students in Macao (3rd from left) in 1999



Colégio Diocesano de São José in Macao, 1977 (3d row, 2nd from right)

In one instance, the teachers had to raise funds amongst themselves to buy milk powder for a student's struggling family. In another case, Leong went to visit the home of a ten-year-old student one weekend. "He was a smart boy, but his performance in exams fluctuated a great deal. I wanted to find out why.

As I approached his home, he spotted me from a distance and immediately climbed up a tree to hide," she said. He eventually came down, but only after repeated warnings from his father shouting up the tree.

More memorable episodes occurred when Leong taught at a Portuguese-Chinese secondary school between 1985 and 1987. The school, then newly established, was located behind the Ruins of St Paul.

"Some students would touch my watch because they loved watches. A few would even touch my stockings because they liked the smooth texture." Then, there were students who did not attend classes. "They

climbed over the high walls of the school and sneaked out. One parent came looking for her missing son; we eventually found him in a McDonald's," she said. There were other happy moments. "One mother was so grateful for our help that, even though she was very poor, she gave me all that she could afford as gifts - two pears and a box of moon cakes during the mid-autumn festival."



In Coimbra, Portugal, 1995, during the "Queima das Fitas Festival".

Cultural differences

The school was eventually put under one roof along with two other Portuguese schools. Leong was promoted to sit on the board of the new school entity and was in a position to witness the interaction of Portuguese and Chinese cultures among the students. "Much of our time was spent on resolving issues of cultural differences. Portuguese students, for example, were more open; they fondled and kissed openly outside the classrooms. Chinese students did not do that."

Then, there was the question of sex education. "Should we, for example, allow condoms to be sold in vending machines inside the school toilets? After some debate, we turned down the idea."

In 1994-95, Leong was sent to Portugal to study Portuguese. On her return, she became principal of Escola Secundária Luso-Chinesa de Luís Gonzaga Gomes. In 1997, she was promoted to be chief of the Department of Education, DSEJ. "It took me a while to make the transition from being a teacher to an administrator," she confessed.

Current role

At DSEJ, one major priority for Leong is to improve the status and livelihood of teachers. "Teachers should enjoy better rewards, in terms of pensions, medical provision and other benefits. They will also have fewer hours of teaching per week, and the student numbers in classes will be smaller."

"We have to make the profession more attractive to teachers. As from September 2012, we have been providing teachers with a monthly subsidy, ranging from MOP4,800 to 8640 each month, based on a six-grade ranking system."

The professional standards of teachers also need to be improved. Each year, teachers have to complete 30 hours of professional training and their performance is assessed at the end of it. "Our aim is to raise the standards of our education system to meet the needs of the development of Macao into an international leisure and entertainment centre."

DSEJ is also promoting continuing education with a subsidy of MOP5,000 for each qualified Macao resident of 15 years old or above. The scheme started in July 2011 and will end in December 2013. By August 2012, 66,000 applications had been approved. They were for driving lessons, language courses, accounting, health and nutrition classes and other degree courses.

"You can use the fund to study any of the 24,000 courses approved by DSEJ. We want to encourage residents to improve their quality of life through continuing education," she said. So, while Leong is no longer teaching students on the front line, she has set her sights on a more ambitious goal: to help Macao's population enjoy learning at all stages of their life. ■

Photos by Eric Tam



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BNU: Rising to the challenges

By Filipa Queiroz

For over a hundred years, Macao's Banco Nacional Ultramarino (BNU) has nurtured the Portuguese pataca (Macao's legal tender), keeping pace with economic growth and meeting the challenges of a highly competitive environment. The bank's new chief executive officer Pedro Cardoso told us all about it.



Banco Nacional Ultramarino (BNU)- Macao



Pedro Cardoso, CEO of BNU

We meet the new chief executive officer at BNU's head office, a piece of history in itself, its distinctive pink and white exterior adorning Avenida Almeida Ribeiro, and now considered one of Macao's noteworthy landmarks.

"BNU has contributed hugely to the pataca fulfilling its role in Macao," says Cardoso. He goes on to say that he firmly believes that both the currency and the issuing bank itself are pretty well established in the territory.

BNU's beginnings

BNU was set up in Lisbon, Portugal, in 1864. Its initial goal was to act as an issuing bank in the Portuguese overseas territories, and to contribute to their economic development. The branch in Macao was opened in 1902, along with that of Guinea Bissau. They followed the establishment of branches in Angola, Cape Verde, São Tomé, Goa and Mozambique.

A hundred and ten years later, however, things looked a little different. The bank was nationalised, and in 2001 became a wholly owned subsidiary of the Portuguese Caixa Geral de Depósitos. The bank remained only in the Special Administrative Region of Macao.

"Throughout the life of Macao, BNU's support to the Macao government has been vital. Through good times and bad – especially during the Sino-Japanese War and World War II – the support has been invaluable," Cardoso recalls.

BNU was the first bank to launch a credit card denominated in pataca (MOP) – the BNU MOP VISA card. As well as promoting the pataca, Cardoso highlights the support given by BNU to the development of the manufacturing industry, "whether it be textiles, toys or other areas". Cardoso says this was particularly evident in the '70s and '80s. The bank has also played an important role in funding local entrepreneurs, financing major infrastructure projects, and – particularly since the liberalisation process – developing the gaming industry.

"In the past, BNU was the financier of many major projects. Nowadays, its relationship with these concerns is more specialised, focusing on various types of service, from Automated Teller Machines (ATMs), points of sale (POS) terminals and cash management, to other areas," explains Pedro Cardoso.

A career of challenges

"I've been lucky enough to work for several different banks, doing a wide variety of roles, and spanning four different countries so far. I must say that this has been the most rewarding experience to date – at least in these first 12 months," BNU's chief executive officer confesses.

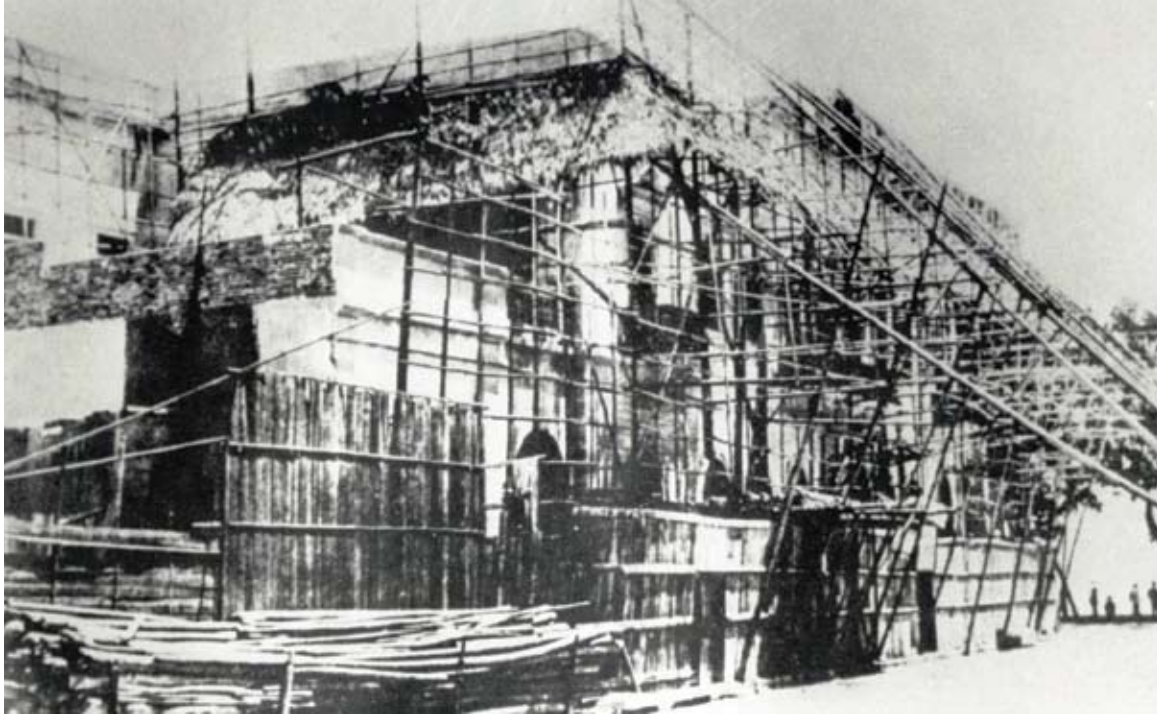
He began his career in Portugal, working for Banco Pinto & Sotto Mayor, where he worked in the international department. He then used his expertise in international capital markets to join a start-up project, which became the Banco Comercial Português (BCP). Here he gained additional experience in planning and marketing, as well as in international affairs. In 1996, he was invited to become the deputy general manager of Banco Comercial Português at their New York branch – his first professional posting outside of Portugal.

After three years, Cardoso returned to Portugal and continued his work at BCP, holding various positions. In 2004 he accepted the role of managing the online bank, Banco Best – a multi-ownership organisation

comprising one of the largest Portuguese economic groups, Grupo Banco Espírito Santo. A year later he joined another bank, Caixa Geral de Depósitos (CGD). His first posting for CGD was in Spain, where he worked for several years, as an executive board member, in a range of roles. Then he moved back to Portugal to become a CGD board member. "I was invited by the Finance minister at the time, to become involved in several different aspects of the bank's work," he tells us.



BNU 1906



Construction of BNU Headquarters -1923

In August of last year Pedro Cardoso was appointed as the new chief executive officer of Banco Nacional Ultramarino (BNU) in Macao. He says he finds the challenge particularly rewarding because Macao is not only “in a phase of very strong economic growth, but it is also particularly multicultural”. Despite being “very well established” in Macao, and “accepted wholeheartedly by the general public and the authorities”, Cardoso believed that the bank needed a change. He says it needed to modernise and aim for a level of growth that was at

a compatible pace with the growth of the economy, as well as with the banking sector.

Simple strategy

“It’s simple,” says Pedro Cardoso. “The idea is to differentiate BNU from the competition through the quality of our service delivery.” The executive says the bank’s sole focus of attention is now the customer, and therefore they must present an impeccable service and approach. In Avenida

BNU -1940



Almeida Ribeiro you can already see the difference. There’s a new automatic queuing system in the waiting area, and new account manager offices are in place. Recently BNU has posted an increase in its customer numbers. In December, it had around 180,000 clients, up by 8 percent from the previous year. As Pedro Cardoso puts it, BNU has around 30 percent of Macao’s population as private customers. Most of these are Chinese, with the second-largest group being Portuguese. Increasing numbers of Westerners are arriving, however, from the United States, Australia, New Zealand and other countries in Asia such as Vietnam and the Philippines.

The bank has 14 branches in Macao, employing 440 people. According to the chief executive officer, the emphasis is on training the staff to pass on the strengths of their products and services to the customers. The sense of a wider social responsibility is going to be maintained, by continuing to support institutions such as Tung Sin Tong and individuals such as students from the University of Macau, by funding scholarships. They will also get involved in other sectors, like sports and culture.

BNU approaches the market in a segmented manner, through four business areas. The first one focuses on large companies, including the main gaming operators and major utility companies in Macao. The second segment is a new one, which is being developed at an incredible pace – focused on small and medium-sized enterprises. Retail banking occupies the third segment. This year the bank launched the new service BNU Advantage, designed to provide support and services to customers who need a dedicated account manager. The final business area is for institutional clients of high net worth, in the private banking sector. Macao is not the only place in Asia where the CGD group is present. Its management includes offices



BNU -1950

of the CGD group in Shanghai and Zhuhai, as well as in India. Pedro Cardoso says the bank has good prospects for long-term stability that can build on past tradition but move forward from that to future endeavours. According to him, the global economic crisis is not currently a major threat. “The CGD Group is present in 23 countries, and the vast majority of its operations are currently in areas of strong economic growth. This applies not just to BNU but also to other organisations that operate across multiple countries,” he says. He adds: “Obviously BNU has a very important role at this stage, due to the different indicators of the CGD group, both in terms of results and in terms of turnover.”

Future prospects

The chief executive officer's appointment is for a three-year term, and he believes that "the transformation process for BNU will be ongoing throughout this period". He refuses to give long-term prognoses, however. "My career and my business and personal life have always been filled with challenges, and I'm expecting my position here to be no different."

Last year the bank posted a profit of MOP 325.3 million – a year-on-year drop of 13 percent. The bank's results were negatively influenced by an increase in credit provisions and a drop in profit margins due to increasing competition in the market. Even so, it recorded a growth in turnover of 13 percent. "It's a

very balanced form of growth," says Pedro Cardoso. "It is rare to achieve balanced growth between loans to customers and customer deposits, yet we managed to achieve this. It's so unlike previous years in Macao's banking sector, where the growth of credits has been three times higher than deposit growth. The contrast with the last two years is particularly apparent," he explained.

The competitive market has had a damaging effect on short-term results. . But the chief executive officer believes competition is a positive thing, pushing companies to deliver a better service to customers and better prices for consumers, whilst always improving on staff skills development. "Competition always acts as an incentive to prove we can overcome any challenges."

Photos by Carmo Correia, Eric Tam and courtesy of Área de Museu e Coleccionismo-CGD-Lisbon



Trials and Tribulations

The unusual history of Macao's local currency

By Staff reporter



BNU note - 1941

The pataca is the official currency of the Macao Special Administrative Region – a fact that nobody disputes. This wasn't always the case, however – as seen in the difficulties the territory encountered on creating its own stable monetary system, even after the pataca had gone into circulation in 1906.

At the end of the 19th century, the Macao economy was based on the value of silver and on the

circulation of a number of local and regional currencies calculated in terms of their equivalent in silver. The variety of denominations and values led to some confusion in day-to-day Macao economics, as people dealt in a mixture of Hong Kong dollars, the payment certificates of British territories in the strait of Malacca (later to become Singapore dollars), a number of different currencies from China's Guangdong

province, and the currency known to the Portuguese as the "Mexican pataca". This latter coin, minted by the Spanish empire and known as the famous "piece of eight", was immortalised in pirate tales because it was part of the cargo of a good many galleons that crossed the Atlantic. It was, in fact, in general use across the Far East. It explains the origin of the name for Macao's official currency today.

Pataca's past

The name pataca, however, had been common since the end of the 17th century, to identify the currencies of other Portuguese overseas territories.

In Brazil, the pataca was a silver coin in a variety of denominations that circulated between 1695 and 1834, initially coined in Portugal and sent to the South American colony, but which was later coined in Brazil itself, at the mints at Pernambuco, Bahia, Rio de Janeiro and Minas Gerais.

In Timor (now Timor Leste or East Timor), the pataca was the Portuguese colony's currency between 1894 and 1959, except for between 1942 and 1945, during the Japanese occupation in the Second World War.

In 1901, the Lisbon government, in an attempt to streamline the monetary system in Macao, decided to create a specific currency for the territory and gave Banco Nacional Ultramarino (BNU) exclusive rights to issue banknotes with the official name Patacas. BNU is now part of state banking group Caixa Geral de Depósitos and only retains its original name in Macao.

Given the responsibility of being the issuing bank for Macao, BNU – created in 1864 as the issuing bank for the Portuguese colonies at the time – opened its doors in 1902 on Avenida Almeida Ribeiro – the city's main street at the time. It followed the establishment of subsidiaries in Angola and Cape Verde in 1865, in Sao Tome and Principe and India in 1868, and Mozambique in 1877.

After Macao, BNU also opened branches in Guinea-Bissau, in 1903, and in Timor, in 1912.



BNU note -1941

In 1917, after opening branches in the then Portuguese colonies in Africa and the East, BNU started to set up a network of branches in mainland Portugal, Madeira and the Azores.

The first banknotes issued by BNU in Macao – with denominations of one, five, ten, 20, 25, 50 and 100 patacas – were put into circulation on 27 January 1906, and the new currency was declared to be the only legal tender in Macao, with an official exchange rate of one pataca to 450 réis (unit of currency

of the Portuguese monarchy). Banknotes from this first issue – which became known in the BNU archives as the "Old Simple issue" (emissão Antiga-Simples) – were printed in London at Barclay & Fry Ltd, and included printed signatures of the Governor and Deputy Governor of BNU and the handwritten signature of the manager of the Bank's Macao subsidiary. The paper used was of poor quality and only the 100 pataca notes had a watermark.



1924 BNU note



1944 BNU note

Changing people's minds

Making the pataca the only legal tender in Macao and issuing banknotes were far from enough to change the local monetary system. It would take a lot more than this to encourage the Macao population to accept the new currency in shops, factories, warehouses, taverns, exchange houses, and on the streets. Macao people were used to using coins rather than paper money, which they viewed with suspicion and were quickly exchanged for silver coins at very low exchange rates.

Everyday transactions continued as they always had done, using a variety of traditional currencies still in circulation despite the official decrees. The new currency was only used for paying official taxes and expenses such as electricity bills.

A 1914 report from the manager of BNU in Macao outlined the difficulties the pataca was having in being accepted as a currency for general use, noting that

even civil servants were quick to exchange the salaries they were paid in patacas for silver coins. In its first few decades, the pataca also faced competition from traditional Chinese deposit certificates – pangtan – denominated in silver coins. Issued by local private banks and exchanged on demand for silver, they were accepted like banknotes, and were transferable and convertible into their



1919 BNU note

corresponding silver value. Pangtan remained in circulation as the de facto currency until 1944, when they were banned. Local legislation was passed to prohibit the circulation of any other currency but the pataca.

The "certificates" – a currency for wartime

One of the most unusual chapters in Macao's monetary history involved the local issue of "certificates" to replace the usual banknotes. It occurred in response to the exceptional situation the territory faced in the Second World War and to the Japanese occupation of China as well as much of Asia.

Portugal's neutral status during the war meant that Macao escaped an actual Japanese occupation although the commander of the Japanese garrison that occupied a neighbouring Chinese island set himself up in Macao. The island was left practically isolated as a place of neutrality in an occupied Asia.



Printing Stones 1944

The effects of the Japanese invasion of China, which began in 1931 in Manchuria, started to be felt in Macao in 1937 when a large number of refugees moved onto the island. Meanwhile, there was a significant drop in the circulation of foreign currencies, which the local government collected and used to pay for imports.

The war also made it impossible to send banknotes from Portugal to the territory. One of those shipments of patacas was retained in Mozambique and would only be put into circulation in Macao in November 1945, some months after the end of the war.

In an attempt to solve the situation, the authorities at the time decided to set up a money reserve by ordering official treasuries to keep all silver and foreign currencies that made it into the official coffers.

In 1944, after repeated requests from Macao's governor at the time, Gabriel Maurício Teixeira, the then Portuguese Colonies Minister authorised the Macao subsidiary of BNU to issue "certificates" as "the colony's private currency, of a nominal value to be set by the Macao governor."

The Certificates were a provisional solution from the start, and plans were made for them to go out of circulation as soon as communications were re-established and it was possible to supply the territory with banknotes.

Private currency

The "private currency" was printed on locally made paper and, as it was impossible to use the metal plates normally used to print banknotes, two

35-kilogramme blocks of limestone were employed as lithographic stones by local printing company Litografia Sin Chon & Cia.

A currency issue in Macao required exceptional security measures to be put into place to prevent fraud and falsification. This turned into a physical endurance test for the authorities of the time.

The official stipulation was that the certificates had to have a handwritten original signature by the financial services director and manager of the local BNU, Carlos Eugénio de Vasconcelos. In a report addressed to Lisbon headquarters, Vasconcelos said that for several months he had had to sign between 1500 and 2000 certificates a day, and that there were days on which the number of signatures reached 5000.

The exceptional security measures also applied to printing staff, who had to eat and sleep at their place of work whilst being watched by government soldiers while the certificates were being printed.

During breaks in the printing work, the lithographic stones were locked in a room guarded by a Portuguese soldier.

Despite all of these precautions, false certificates quickly appeared in circulation. Most of these forgeries were of poor quality and could be easily identified, but others were only discovered because they were missing inscriptions that were invisible to the naked eye that had been included in the genuine certificates.

The security inscriptions were inspired by a Luís de Camões

poem called "On Never Navigated Seas" (Por Mares Nunca Antes Navegados), a popular and traditional verse from Póvoa de Varzim "go with God" (vai com Deus) and the Greek letter Omega.

The certificates, which were issued in denominations of five, ten, 25, 50, 100 and 500 patacas, had an issue date of 5 February 1944 and remained in circulation until 1947.

An unusual footnote in the history of the pataca is that coins only went into circulation alongside banknotes as of 1952, when five, ten and 50 avos (cent), and five pataca coins went into circulation, after being minted in Lisbon at Casa da Moeda.

The five pataca silver coin minted that year was named by the International Numismatic Society

as one of the "Great Historic Silver Coins of the World".

Issuing banks

The history of the pataca cannot be separated from that of BNU. When the Macao Issuance Institute was created in 1980, gaining exclusive responsibility for issuing Macao's coins, BNU became the agent bank for the Macao government and continued to issue banknotes.

On 16 October 1995, via an agreement between Portugal and China to prepare for the sovereignty handover of Macao in 1999, the Macao branch of the Bank of China became the second issuing bank, whilst the official body responsible for currency issuance became the Macao Monetary Authority.

1958 BNU note





1988 BNU note

The banknotes that are currently in circulation in Macao are the 10, 20, 50, 100, 500 and 1000 pataca notes, and the latest banknote issues were carried out by BNU dated 2005 and by the Bank of China dated 2003.

As well as banknotes that are currently in circulation, the two banks have also recently issued commemorative notes. In 2008 the Bank of China issued four million 20 pataca notes to commemorate the Beijing Olympic Games, and this year it launched a 100 pataca note, to commemorate the bank's centenary.

This year BNU and the Bank of China have both issued 10 pataca notes celebrating the Year of the Dragon.

Competition from other currencies

However, despite the undisputed status of the pataca as Macao's official currency, even now the Hong Kong dollar is in general circulation, and in some cases – such as in the casinos, which drive the local economy – it is preferred

because it is an established international currency.

A law passed in 1995 bans Macao retailers from refusing payment in patacas, but cases in which the Hong Kong dollar is explicitly preferred are still frequent.

Due to the predominance of the neighbouring territory's currency, Macao's government departments also accept payments in Hong Kong dollars.

The small geographical size and population of Macao and the comparatively small international profile of its economy make the pataca an essentially local currency, which is difficult to use and exchange outside the confines of the Special Administrative Region.

For exchange purposes the pataca is pegged to the Hong Kong dollar (at a rate of around 103 patacas to 100 Hong Kong dollars).

As well as the Hong Kong dollar, the currency of the People's Republic of China, the yuan, is also in general circulation, and in many cases is preferred in Macao.

Photos by José Goulão and Cortesy of Área de Museu e Coleccionismo – CGD – Lisbon

The pataca tree

Beyond its official role as the currency of the Macao Special Administrative Region, the pataca also has a place in Portugal and Brazil's popular culture through the expression "the pataca tree," (árvore das patacas), as a way of talking about easy money.

But the money tree, or the pataca tree, does actually exist. It is the common name given in Brazil to *Dillenia indica*, a tree originally from India, which can reach a height of 40 metres.

Its association to the money tree is, according to Brazilian folklore, linked to the Portuguese prince D. Pedro, who declared Brazil's independence.

Dillenia indica – which was introduced to South America in the reign of King D. João VI (1816–1826), who transferred the Portuguese court to Brazil – is singular in that its petals close over the centre of its flowers to make its fruit, which means that any object placed in the tree's flower ends up inside the fruit.

The legend of the pataca tree is that D. Pedro placed coins – Brazilian patacas – inside the tree's flowers and then sent the fruit to Portugal with the message that, "in this land money even grows on trees".

Legends aside, it's fair to say that despite the initial difficulties in asserting its (essentially local) influence, the pataca has become an important part of Macao's institutional structure. It is a part of Macao's own identity and autonomy, at one time as a territory under Portuguese administration and now as a Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China. ■



Year of the Dragon - 2012 BNU note

MACAO YEARBOOK 2012

Macao Yearbook 2012 is the regional almanac published by the Government Information Bureau of the Macao Administrative Region (MSAR)



The richly illustrated book aims to provide its readers with a comprehensive and objective record of the progress of Macao's political, economic, social and cultural developments in 2011. The well-edited Yearbook is meant to provide detailed and accurate information, in-depth analysis and concise data to all those who wish to know more about and better understand Macao.

Macao Yearbook 2012, separately published in Chinese, Portuguese and English, can be purchased at major bookshop in Macao at 120 patacas or 120 Hong Kong dollars per copy.

In Hong Kong, the three separate language editions of Macao Yearbook 2012 are on sale at the Commercial Press (HK) Ltd bookshops.



Post Office building in downtown Macao

Joining Hands

Macao Post continues joint stamp issues to boost ties with other postal services

By Pedro Daniel Oliveira

Christmas is fast approaching, but Macao Post, the MSAR's postal system, is not due to issue a festive series of stamps until 2013, when it collaborates with the Greenland postal service.

"Christmas is a very popular tradition in Macao due to the longstanding Portuguese presence. We have therefore decided to issue Christmas-themed stamps for the first time. For this collaboration we chose our counterpart in Greenland because of its associations with the festive season and its famous snow. The provisional date for the issue is 21 October 2013," said the board chairman and postmaster-general of Macao Post, Derby Lau Wai Meng.

Since the creation of the Macao Special Administrative Region in 1999, Macao Post has made joint stamp issues with both China and Hong Kong. The former was to commemorate Beijing's successful bid to host the 2008 Olympic Games, and the latter to mark the

centenary of the Xinhai Revolution, in 2011.

Over the same period, it made two joint stamp issues with China independently – to mark the Shek Wan Ceramics, in 2007; and the 10th Anniversary of the Reunification of Macao with the Motherland, in 2009. It also combined forces with an issue entitled Local Delights, in 2008, and with Aland, Finland, with a series called Church Windows, in 2010.

There are plans for a number of stamp issues for 2013, including Lunar Year of the Snake, Centenary of the Macao Chamber of Commerce, 20th Anniversary of the Promulgation of the Macao Basic Law, Beliefs and Customs – Na Tcha, and Literature and its Characters – The Romance of the Three Kingdoms II.

The final issue of 2012, entitled Literature and its Characters – The Peony Pavilion, was launched on 30 November.



Postmaster-general of Macao Post, Derby Lau Wai Meng

Rare Collections

One of the biggest collections of Macao stamps in the world is housed at the Macao Communications Museum, which belongs to Macao Post.

Part of this collection, acquired by Macao Post in the 1980s, is on public display in the Philately Gallery. Amongst them are some of the rarest and oldest examples of Macao postal memorabilia.

The collection includes stamps, stamp blocks, and letters, amassed by collector and doctor José Correia Nunes, who lived in Macao for over 30 years.

In 2007 a delegation from Macao Post went in search of more stamps from Macao. The party was headed by the then director, Carlos Roldão Lopes, and included the current director, Derby Lau, and two other philately (stamp collection) specialists – Macao-born Hong Kong resident, Choi Cheong Tou, and Portugal's Luís Frazão. They travelled to Denver, in the United States, to look at a stamp collection and negotiate its acquisition from the family of US collector Frederic R. Mayer (1928–2007).

"The contents of his Macao collection covered the postal history of Macao from 1796 to 1990, including circulated envelopes, postcards and stamps. The items from the Pre-Adhesive Period (before the first issue of Macao stamps) included mail from private-ship services, the Portuguese mail service, private mail services, the British mail service, the Hong Kong Adhesive Period, and inbound mail. Items from the Macao Adhesive Period included content dating from 1884 to 1990.

"The acquisition deal did not go ahead due to the high price sought, but if the collection had been bought it would certainly have filled some gaps in our collection in Macao," said Derby Lau Wai Meng.

The collection was then sold to an unnamed collector. Luís Frazão believes that it was sold as a whole collection. If it had been sold piecemeal, there would have been news about the current whereabouts of some of the individual specimens that he saw himself in Denver.





Manuel José da Rosa

Extraordinary collectors

Manuel José da Rosa and Choi Cheong Tou are two prestigious collectors of stamps from Macao, who have worked for several decades in the world of stamp collecting.

Macao-born Manuel José da Rosa, who has been collecting stamps for around 40 years, is the foreign-language secretary of the Macao Philatelic Club.

He describes himself as a stamp collector, gatherer and seller. He has an enviable collection, which he keeps permanently organised and set up for exhibitions: "I have around a million stamps, half of which are from Macao."

His collection includes all of the D. Carlos I (King of Portugal) stamps from 1898, which were designed and engraved by Eugénio Mouchon. They include a variety of printing errors, imperforate errors, and

printing-paper glitches, as well as stamps with and without gum.

Rosa also has D. Carlos I stamps from later issues, such as specimens from 1911, with an overprint lithographed in Macao, in red and white. "There were diagonal bipartite stamps in circulation, due to a lack of stamps during the First World War," he explained.

This collector estimates that the first series of D. Carlos I stamps may be worth around 2000 patacas in the current market.

"The rarest ones with a diagonal overprint, and which are in one piece, can cost around 5000 patacas. In this series, Rosa has a 5 Avos stamp overprinted as 10 Avos (its face value became 10 Avos) with a black band, which may be worth up to 100,000 patacas. "This stamp may actually be a proof, meaning it was never put into circulation," he explained.



História Postal de Macau (1884-1999) by Luís Virgílio de Brito Frazão

He also has the complete set of imperforate die proofs of the printed stamps for the 400th Anniversary of Vasco da Gama. Each proof has a handwritten die number at the top, printed on copperplate at Waterlow & Sons Ltd in 1898. Vasco da Gama was the Portuguese navigator and explorer who discovered the maritime route from Europe to India at the end of the 15th century. Rosa has a letter dating from the Japanese occupation of Hong Kong, bearing the "Padrões" 10 Avos postage stamp issued in 1934 and the "Império Colonial Português" 5 Avos pair issued in 1938. The letter was sent by C. Collaco, of the Macao Military Guild (now the Military Club), to Mrs Irene Collaço, at Hankow Road, Kowloon in Hong Kong, with exit stamps in Portuguese from Macao Post, dated 10 May 1942, and a reception stamp in Japanese from the Hong Kong Post Office, for 28 May 1942.

His collection also includes a strip of five Macao Scenic Issue stamps, featuring the Portas do Cerco (the old border gate) in blue. The stamps were issued and printed by the National Printing House of Porto, in Portugal, in 1950, with a face value of 1

pataca each. "Blue is synonymous with grief to the Chinese. For that reason these stamps of Portas do Cerco were banned and never circulated in Macao. The colour was then replaced with brown. Each of these blue stamps may now be worth 800 patacas," said Manuel José da Rosa.

He has been awarded prizes at a number of international competitions, for stamps or postcards from Macao, specifically in India, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, China, Portugal, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the United States.

Choi was born in April 1933, in Macao. He has been collecting stamps and postal-history memorabilia since 1942.

"I have exhibited my collections 119 times, covering the globe, including at the Fédération Internationale de Philatélie, the Inter-Asian Philatelic Federation, as well as in Europe, the USA, and Hong Kong. Throughout the years I have won many medals with my Macao stamp collections, including the Grand Award (8 times), Prix D'honneur (7 times), Platinum Medal (once), Large Gold Medal (4 times), Gold Medal (46 times), Large Vermeil Medal (20 times), and others," explained Choi.



The oldest Macao stamp issued in 1884

He is also a member of several philatelic organisations, including Clube Filatélico de Macau, the Royal Philatelic Society of London, the American Association of Philatelic Exhibitions, the Collectors' Club of New York, the China Stamp Society in USA, and the Hong Kong Philatelic Society.

A story of stamps

Macao's postage-stamp history began in the second half of the 19th century. Long before this, however, the *Correio Marítimo* (Maritime Post) was in operation, which began with the Coimbra Administration (1798–1823).

"We tend to call it the Coimbra Period, to pay homage to the first two directors of the Macao Maritime Post, Félix José [Coimbra] and Félix Vicente, father and son respectively," said Luís Frazão, in the bilingual Chinese and Portuguese book, "History and Development of Macao Post and Telecommunications, Vol. I – From the Maritime Post to the Beginning of the Adhesive Period (1798–1884)".

Frazão added: "A charter drawn up on 20 January 1798, also known as the decree for creation of the maritime post, marked the beginning of a new postal system in the Portuguese overseas territories. It introduced some major changes to the way both official and private correspondence was forwarded and distributed, of which the one with the most impact on users was the charging for carriage of letters on delivery."

The history of *Correios de Macau* (Macao Post) started with an official letter from D. Rodrigo de Sousa Coutinho to the Governor of Macao, dated Lisbon, 24 April 1798."

Macao Post was only officially established on 1 March 1884, and the first set of Macao "Crown" stamps was issued on the same day.

The set is made up of 9 stamps with different face values of 5 Reits, 10 Reits, 20 Reits, 25 Reits, 40 Reits, 50 Reits, 100 Reits, 200 Reits and 300 Reits, each in a different colour. The series was designed and engraved with the Portuguese King's crown and printed in Portugal.

Manuel da Rosa is the author of "My First Study of the Crown Stamps of Macao of 1884".

In 2000, Choi wrote up a handbook entitled, "The Crown issue and surcharges of Macao – 1884".

"Augusto Fernando Gerard, a French-born engraver

and designer, began his work at the age of 20 in Lisbon. The "Crown" stamps of Macao and other Portuguese colonies were all designed by Augusto, printed by the Portugal National Printing House and sent to Macao in 1877. On 1 March 1884, the stamps began to be sold and used in Macao," Rosa said.

In 1911, after the end of the monarchy in Portugal, the Portuguese words "República Portuguesa" were printed on the stamps, and the designs started incorporating more colonial colours. On 8 December 1941, hostilities broke out between Japan and the allied powers of Great Britain and the United States. Hong Kong became occupied on Christmas Day of the same year.

"The inherent difficulties of the war raging across the world led to the authorisation of local printing of the "Padrões" series, with face values of 1, 2, 3, 6, 10, 20 and 40 Avos. These stamps were lithographed by Sin Chun e Companhia Limitada, and the National Printing House series was typographic. This issue had a characteristic absence of the name of the engraver, as well as imperfections in its perforations. It was, however, the first series of Macao stamps printed in the territory itself. This was also when "1st Day" envelopes were issued, designed by Macao philatelist, Pedro Paulo Angelo," according to Luís Frazão, in "History and Development of the Macao Post and Telecommunications, Vol. II – Postal History of Macao (1884–1999)."

Macao Crown stamps from March 1884



A new era

The first series of Macao stamps that carried Chinese characters was entitled “1st Anniversary of the Legislative Assembly”, and was issued on 9 August 1977. “Local Medicinal Plants” (14 July 1983) was the first souvenir sheet issued in Macao; “Lunar Year of the Rat” (25 Jan 1984) marked the first cycle of Macao’s lunar stamps. The Chinese characters 鼠年 (Year of the Rat), were printed on the latter stamps.

The Chinese characters for “Macao” 澳門 were first printed on a stamp on 29 May 1987. For this occasion the chosen theme was The Dragon-Boat Festival.

The end of the 20th century (as well as of the millennium) marked a new direction for philately in the territory. “Macao Retrospective” (19 December 1999) was the last issue before the handover of Macao to China, marking also the last issue that carried 澳門 as well as “MACAU República Portuguesa”. The stamp was designed by Macanese artist and architect, Carlos Marreiros.

The Commemoration of the Establishment of the Macao Special Administrative Region of the People’s Republic of China” (20 December 1999) was the first stamp printed with “澳門 Macau, China,” which replaced the words “República Portuguesa”. The stamps were designed by mainland Chinese artists, Ren Guoen and Yang Wenqing.

Issues and characteristics

“In 1981, there were some changes to Macao stamps. CTT (the former name of Macao Post) was granted autonomy to issue stamps, and the Philately Division, which started to design and issue its own stamps, was established in the same year. The amount of stamps and souvenir sheets printed between the early 1980s and the year 1996 totals around 100,000 to 300,000 sets,” noted director Derby Lau.

“As the handover of Macao to China approached, the demand for Macao stamps and subsequent printing quantity increased from 1,500,000 sets in 1997 to a high of 3,500,000 sets for the issue entitled Commemoration of the Establishment of the Macao SAR, PRC, in 1999.

The print-run of stamps and souvenir sheets has gradually reduced from 750,000 sets in 2000 to a more stable quantity of 200,000–250,000 sets in recent years,” she added.

Local stamps are not all square or rectangular, nor is the same technology always used to produce them. The more unusual shapes to be found include circular stamps depicting the theme of Chinese and Portuguese Ceramics, hexagonal stamps in the “I Ching, Pa Kua” series and shield-shaped stamps for the 10th Anniversary of the People’s Liberation Army Garrison Stationed in Macao.

Commemorative stamp of the 10th anniversary of Macao’s return to the Motherland



Unusual production techniques include fluorescent ink used in the Charming Chinese Lanterns series, and a lotus flower made from genuine 22 carat gold leaf in the 1st Anniversary of the Establishment of the Macao Special Administrative Region series.

Postage-stamp blocks and sheets of stamps issued by Macao Post all have serial numbers. The first pages, which were signed by the Governor during the Portuguese administration and by the Chief Executive after the MSAR was established, are part of the Communications Museum collection.

Awards

It is not only private collections of stamps from Macao

that are recognised internationally. Some postage stamp issues have won awards at international competitions. The designers include Victor Hugo Marreiros (Italy, 1990 and 2007), Aser But (Italy and France, 2001), Wilson Chi Ian Lam (France, 2002), and Lio Man Cheong (Austria, 2011).

Because of their quality, diversity of themes and use of technological innovations, Macao Post’s postage stamps continue to attract international attention, from both the general public and stamp collectors. The meeting of East and West in the territory has clearly also contributed to the quality of Macao’s postage stamps. ■

Commemorative stamps of the 10th anniversary of Macao’s return to the Motherland



Book with stamps of Chinese and Portuguese ceramics – October 2000



Photos by Luís Almoester

macauhub is a free Macau-based news service in Chinese, Portuguese and English providing economic, trade and investment information about southern China's Pearl River delta and the world's eight Portuguese-speaking nations to help governments, private entities, businesspeople, researchers and others better understand the development and business potential in the respective countries and regions.

macauhub comprises a team of professionals in Asia, South America, Europe and Africa who produce information in the three languages about southern China, including the nation's economic powerhouse of Guangdong, the special administrative regions of Macau and Hong Kong, as well as the Portuguese-speaking countries of Angola, Brazil, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Portugal, Sao Tome and Principe, and East Timor.

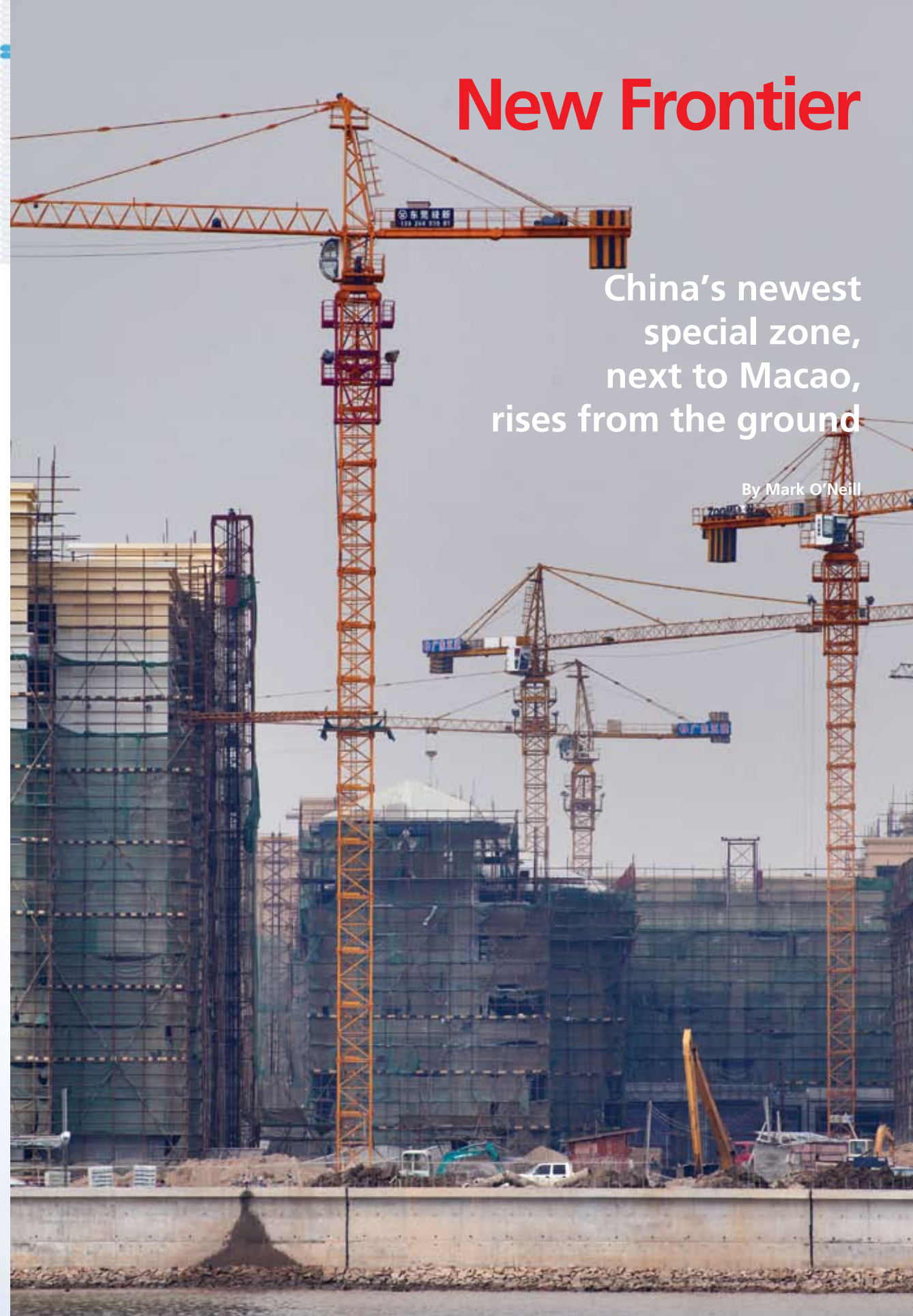
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macauhub is part of the **macaulink** media group that also produces the English-language Macao magazine and English and Chinese-language MacauNews website.

New Frontier

China's newest special zone, next to Macao, rises from the ground

By Mark O'Neill





University of Macao under construction in Hengqin

A few hundred metres from the western edge of Macao, China's newest special zone is rising rapidly from the ground. Giant earth-shifting equipment is in place, and thousands of construction workers are busy laying roads, planting trees and building tunnels, offices and residential towers. This is the island of Hengqin, which covers an area of 106 square kilometres – three times that of Macao. Hengqin has a population of 4000, compared with 570,000 across the water. In 2009 the central government decided to transform the island into a centre of education, culture, high technology and ecological living. The workers are turning this vision into a reality.

We are in the early stages. The workers are creating the basic infrastructure; Hengqin will not be able to support a large population for at least two-to-three years. The official plans are very ambitious – 120,000 residents by 2015 and 200,000 by 2020. How many of those people will be from Macao? One official on the island forecasts that 100,000 – 18 percent of Macao's population – will move to Hengqin to take advantage of cheaper land and housing and a pleasanter living environment. He also predicts that many small and medium-sized firms from Macao will move to cheaper and more spacious offices on this side of the water. If you visit Hengqin today, this forecast is hard to

believe – clouds of dust, uneven roads and a lack of facilities. But no one who saw Pudong in its early years could imagine its prosperity and bulging population today. Only time will tell.

Sleepy island

Hengqin island covers an area of 106 square kilometres, with a useable area of 60 square kilometres; the rest is covered by hills and forests. It is part of the city of Zhuhai, a special economic zone. Its residents have for decades made a living from farming, fishing and oysters; the island is famous for its oyster restaurants.

At its closest point, it is just 200 metres from Macao; it is 2.5 kilometres from Macao airport and eight kilometres from Zhuhai airport. For many years, Macao, Zhuhai and the provincial government in Guangzhou discussed how to make best use of this empty island, but they could not agree. It was only at the end of the last decade that the State Council stepped in. In August 2009, it designated Hengqin as the third national-level New Area, after Pudong in Shanghai and Bohai in Tianjin. On 29 December 2009, President Hu Jintao visited the island in person, after attending celebrations to mark the 10th anniversary of the return of Macao, to show Beijing's seal of approval.



The master plan calls for the island to develop finance, creativity, leisure, science, education, Chinese medicine and high-technology industries. Taxes will be lower than in the mainland, imports will arrive duty-free and the renminbi, pataca and HK dollar will all be legal tender. The target is that at least 200,000 people will be living and working here by 2020. Of the total land area, 58 square kilometres will be left under-developed, to preserve the high quality of the environment. Government investment in the island last year was 12 billion yuan; this year it will be 18 billion. The funds are going into infrastructure, including a road around the island, as well as gas, power, water and telecommunications facilities and foundation work for the Shizimen Central Business District. It is an enormous challenge to start from scratch. "We are facing interminable difficulties," said Niu Jing, director of the management committee of the Hengqin New Area. "The geological conditions are not good and quite complicated. We are building everything out of nothing on this barren island." It will take another two years before the basic infrastructure, including roads, gas and sewage pipelines, is ready.

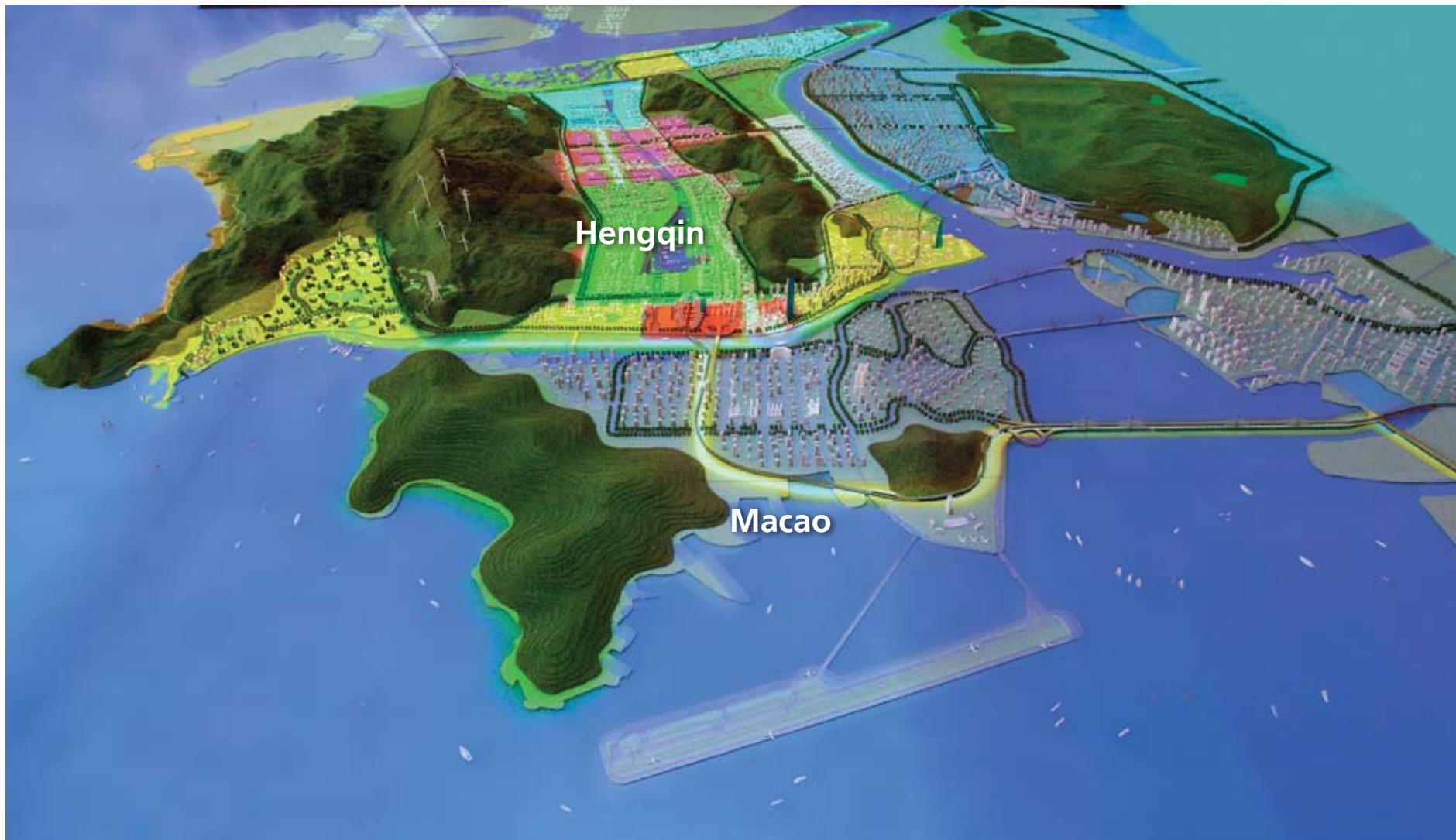
Campus and Ocean World

The most advanced project is the new campus for the University of Macau. The Macao government paid 1.2 billion patacas to lease 1.1 square kilometres on the island for the site. Construction involves a total investment of 9.8 billion patacas. The developer is due to hand the site over to the university by the end of 2012. It will be 20 times larger than the current site in Taipa, with a minimum accommodation capacity of 10,000 students. It will include faculties for Arts, Social Sciences, Business and Administration, Law, Education and Life Sciences, and Health. It will be a green campus – few cars, easy for cyclists and pedestrians, and using solar energy and reclaimed water. On 19 July, the tunnel that provides the only link to Macao collapsed. It means that the opening of the campus will be delayed. The collapse took place at the Hengqin exit close to midnight; it buried five pieces of heavy machinery inside the tunnel, but no one was injured. Construction of the tunnel is costing two billion patacas; it is 1570 metres long, of which 530 are underwater. It is being dug 25 metres underground,

to allow 3000-tonne vessels to pass through the waters above. With four lanes of traffic, the tunnel will allow movement of people and goods from Taipa to the campus, without passing through customs or immigration. It will also include a telecommunications cable, to give students and faculties the same internet access that they have now. Until 2049, the campus will be subject to Macao, not mainland, law. The smooth operation of the tunnel is critical to the successful running of the new campus, as it will be the only point of access. Also under construction is Ocean Kingdom, a giant marine resort on the southern tip of the island, involving investment of more than 10 billion yuan. It is being developed by Chimelong, a private company founded in Guangzhou in 1989. Chimelong is one of China's largest tourist and entertainment companies, operating theme parks, a safari park, a circus, a crocodile park, hotels and restaurants and golf practice ranges. The Hengqin project is its largest and most expensive to date, aiming to attract 20 million domestic and foreign visitors by 2020. The first phase involves an area of 1.43 million square metres, nearly double

the size of Ocean Park in Hong Kong. It will include a resort hotel with 1888 bedrooms – the biggest 'ecology theme' hotel in China. It has set aside an area of 5000 square metres for Macao firms to sell biscuits, cakes and other specialty products; companies are being invited to bid for space in the area. The success of this project depends heavily on transport access to the southern part of the island, where Ocean World is located. The firm is counting on a bridge that will link Hong Kong to Macao and Zhuhai, a light-rail train from Guangzhou to Gongbei, and improved roads to the site. The government is considering an extension of the light-rail line to Zhuhai airport to run down the eastern side of Hengqin, with a stop at Ocean World. The island will also contain a 390-hectare wetland, and a mangrove and avian park. Work began on the project in April 2012 and will cost 600 million yuan, including the planting of 120,000 mangrove trees. It means clearing a banana forest covering 300,000 square metres and building an exhibition hall measuring 2000 square metres. It aims to become a rest stop for birds that migrate between East Asia and Australia.





It will also offer a green and low-density living environment that could attract retired people from Macao, Hong Kong and other parts of China.

Will Macao people move?

The official plan calls for the construction of residential property. Already being built are tower blocks to house local residents whose homes are being demolished to make way for the new projects.

Niu Jing, director of the Hengqin New Area Management Committee, said that they intended to develop industries first and then the property market. "The current developments are not influencing property prices in neighbouring areas," he said. "I expect the residential standards in the future will be up-market and expensive."

An alternative view was presented in June 2010 by Liu Yang, an official of the New Area Management Committee. He said that he expected 100,000 people to move from Macao to Hengqin to live; that is almost 20 percent of the population of the SAR. Currently, about 30,000 Macao people live in Zhuhai.

A study by the Macao Economists Association proposed that, following the example of the university, the Macao government apply to lease three-to-five square kilometres of land close to the campus, and build public housing on it. It says that the area should include hospitals, old people's homes and other public facilities.

This proposal is unlikely to be implemented because the Zhuhai government will not agree to a further lease of land; building public housing is not profitable enough.

More likely is the construction of middle and up-market commercial housing aimed at both Macao and mainland people.

Jonathan Schiff, chairman of Schiff Development, a company with offices in Macao and Las Vegas, said that whether Macao people or companies move there depended on the policies adopted by Hengqin.

"These include driving licences – currently, you need two – and the Lotus bridge that connects the two closes early. Will it be open 24 hours a day?"

Business district

An important part of the New Area is the Shizimen Central Business District, which involves investment of 38 billion yuan; construction work began in 2010. It aims to attract nearly 100 financial institutions from Hong Kong and Macao and form a renminbi settlement area. As of the end of May, 40 Hong Kong and Macao firms had registered companies there, bringing in capital in excess of 50 billion yuan.

It has a planned floor space of 700,000 square metres, with a total investment of more than six billion yuan. It will include a convention centre, several five-star hotels, shopping centres, and finance towers. The completion date is set to be in 2014

One of the landmark buildings in the district

will be the Huarong Hengqin Tower, designed by British-based architect Atkins. The mixed-use development contains accommodation for a five-star hotel, international grade A offices and brand retail facilities. Designed like rippling waves, it faces the waterfront on the eastern side of the island, opposite the Cotai Strip.

Economists are sceptical as to whether Hengqin will become a financial centre. Hong Kong, Shenzhen and Guangzhou are the dominant financial centres of the region; several cities in Guangdong provide back-office and service centres for the financial institutions of these three cities. Shenzhen is offering the district of Qianhai, which borders Hong Kong, for this very purpose.

It is hard to see what Hengqin can offer that is not already available elsewhere.

Supporting role

Two large Hong Kong companies have signed contracts to build a 3D film factory and a film city respectively in the island's Culture and Creativity Park.

The Macao/Hengqin Chinese Park has been allocated 500,000 square metres of space; they are currently doing site work.

Economists believe industries with the best prospects are those that complement Macao, i.e. non-gambling tourism like golf courses and other sporting facilities, as well as resorts, spas, nature and animal reserves, hotels, and exhibition and convention centres. Education is another key area. Hengqin offers space that is unavailable in Macao and at much lower cost, which may help it attract more campuses like that of the University of Macau.

"Currently, it is very quick now to go to Hengqin via Taipa, while the Gongbei crossing gets queues of 1000 at a time. But, when the island is built up and tens of thousands are living there, how convenient will it be?" he said. "There are several participants in developing Hengqin policy, of which Macao is one." Middle-class people from Macao will only move if they find well-paid jobs in Hengqin or if they have easy access to their jobs in Macao, with a minimum of delay at the border for themselves and their children going to and from school. They will also demand a similar array of services to that which they enjoy now, including shops,

Huarong Hengqin Tower designed by British architect Atkins



restaurants, medical clinics and other amenities. Schiff said that whether Macao firms move to the island would depend on policies, such as taxes, customs, the ease of moving goods to and fro, pricing and the convenience of the border. "It is too early to speculate about this." Some firms in Macao have rented office space in Zhuhai, where they have moved staff to take advantage of the cheaper rents. The management committee must decide whether to set aside a portion of the island for the needs of Macao people and build homes and facilities catering for them. ■

Photos by Eric Tam

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Zhuhai-Macao border

Shrinking Distance

New railway will make Macao access easier for millions

By Mark O Neill

At the end of December there will open the first passenger railway along the southern coast of the Pearl River, cutting the journey time from Guangzhou to Zhuhai to just 46 minutes. The terminus is at Gongbei, next to the border with Macao, making travel simpler for millions of mainlanders.

The railway, with a total length of 177 kilometres, realises one part of the dream of Dr Sun Yat-sen 90 years ago in his "International Development of China", in which he proposed construction of 160,000 km of railroad across the country. His native place in Zhongshan is close to the new line.

The railway, plus a freight link to Zhuhai's port due to open in 2013, mean that, for the first time in history, the cities of the southern delta are connected by rail and to the national network. The two lines will have

enormous significance in developing the economy and the property market of the region.

It is part of a plan of the Guangdong provincial government to build a network that makes every major city in the delta within one hour of the capital Guangzhou by rail. The aim is to spread the wealth of the province; people can live in cities on the new line and commute every day to Guangzhou to work. Property prices in these cities will rise as a result.

Among the greatest beneficiaries will be the casinos, hotels and tourist industry of Macao. The new line means that visitors from all over China can board the train in Guangzhou South station and reach the border with Macao in less than one hour. From the station, they can walk to the frontier crossing.

Under construction is a 38.5-km extension from Gongbei to the city's airport that will pass through the island of Hengqin. There will be a stop close to the island of Taipa where many of the largest casinos are located. A link between the line and Macao's new light rail system is being considered.

Linking cities

The total length of the new line is 177 kilometres, of which 116 is between Guangzhou South station and Zhuhai. There are in addition branch lines from Xiaolan station to Xinhui, 26 km, and from Zhuhai to Zhuhai airport. It will have a maximum speed of 200 km per hour.

It passes through the main cities of the southern Pearl River Delta, including Foshan, Shunde, Jiangmen and Zhongshan. It has a total of 27 stations. Passengers will have the choice of 46 minutes non-stop from the two termini or 76 minutes with stops at each station. The current journey time by bus is about 90 minutes from Gongbei to Panyu.

The line between Guangzhou South and Zhuhai North opened on January 7, 2011, with a journey time of 41 minutes. Guangzhou South is in Panyu, a suburb of the city. Passengers there can catch high-speed trains to Shenzhen, Hong Kong, Wuhan and Guizhou. To reach other parts of Guangzhou, they must take a subway.

Guangzhou South is one of three railway stations in the city.

Extended route

The first feasibility study was completed in the spring of 2004 and the line was included as a major project for Zhuhai city in 2005. On July 14, 2004, the Ministry of Railways and Guangdong provincial government agreed to set up the Guangdong Pearl River Urban Light Rail Transport Company, owned 50-50 by the two sides. It is responsible for the construction and operation of the line.

The State Council approved the project on March 16, 2005. The route of the line was agreed and construction work began on December 18, 2005. Of the line, 92.25 per cent is bridges.

The first deadline was 2010, to be finished in time for the Guangzhou Asian Games, but this was missed.

In October 2011, the Guangdong government and the Ministry of Railways approved an extension of 38.5 km from the Gongbei terminus to the city's airport, at a cost of 13.15 billion yuan. It will have seven stations, including one in Hengqin that is planned to link with the light rail system of Macao; this may be an underwater spur line.

It includes a distance of 15.7 km between the stations of Hengqin and Sanzao, of which seven kilometres is the Jinqiao bridge. This extension is

due to be completed in 2013. The train will run at 160 km per hour, with a capacity of 24,000 an hour to the airport, in 25 minutes. The current travelling time from central Zhuhai to the airport is one hour.

Line incomplete

In the first 18 months of operation, the line carried 27 million passengers. The average daily passenger load was 60,000. It uses CRH 1 trains, the same design as high-speed trains all over China: comfortable, well-lit and spacious, with excellent service.

The main beneficiaries are the residents of Foshan, Jiangmen and Zhongshan, who are able to visit Guangzhou more quickly and conveniently than they could before.

But it has not brought so much benefit to the citizens of Zhuhai, because the Zhuhai North station is situated in the far north of the city. This means a car or bus journey of 30 minutes – or more if the traffic is bad – from the urban area to the station.

Zeng Zhi, a CPPCC member of Zhuhai, said the delay had gone on too long and caused a lot of inconvenience. "It was a huge investment and much is going to waste. "When I go on a business trip, I like to take the high-speed train, with connections at Guangzhou South. But going to Zhuhai North adds 30 minutes to the journey."

Construction work on the Gongbei station began in 2009 but was delayed due to problems acquiring the land and relocating the people living on it. Then the builder, a construction firm under the Railway Ministry, had financial problems; it was not paid 90 million yuan that it was owed. This caused further delays.

Another factor was a collision in July 2011 between two trains on a viaduct in Wenzhou, Zhejiang province, which left 40 people dead and 192 injured, 12 seriously. It was the first fatal crash involving high-speed rail in China and led to a wide-ranging two-month railway safety review.

As a result of these delays, many Zhuhai people choose not to use the line and continue to take high-speed buses that run from the city centre every 15 minutes.

"The advantage of the bus is that it takes you into central Guangzhou," said Yang Shuling, a private businessman who often goes there for work. "The train takes you to Guangzhou South, which is in Panyu, a suburb and not the city centre. From there, you have to take the metro, a bus or a taxi.

"When the new line opens from Gongbei, more people will take it, because of the speed and convenience. But there will still be customers for the buses. The train fare is reasonable," he said. The fare from Guangzhou to Zhuhai North is 44 yuan for first class, 36 for economy class and 22 for students.

Gongbei terminus of Zhuhai-Guangzhou railway



Spreading the wealth

At the start of the reform and open-door policy, China declared four special economic zones (SEZs); one was Shenzhen next to Hong Kong and one was Zhuhai next to Macao.

In the 30 years since then, Shenzhen has become the fourth richest city in China, with a population of 10 million and a GDP last year of 1.1 trillion yuan. Zhuhai, on the other hand, has a population of 1.5 million and a GDP last year of 140 billion yuan.

One of the main reasons for this disparity is the fact that Shenzhen sat on the rail line between Hong Kong and Guangzhou, while Zhuhai had no railway. Investors flocked to Shenzhen and other cities along the line; it – and an excellent road network -- enabled them to bring in raw materials and export the finished product.

By building the passenger and freight lines to Zhuhai, the Guangdong government hopes to narrow this gap and bring more prosperity to the southern side of the Pearl River Delta. The two lines will make the cities along the route more attractive to investors and tourists and give their residents easier access to the national rail network.

Carrying freight

The conventional railway is under construction between Guangzhou and Zhuhai and will mainly carry freight.

It will run 186 km from Jiangcun in Guangzhou to Gaolan port in Zhuhai, passing through Foshan and Jiangmen. It will have 11 stations and travel at 120 km an hour. It involves drilling a tunnel 9,185 metres long in Jiangmen.

The State Development and Planning Commission first approved the project in 1993 and construction began in 1997, with a budget of 13.16 billion yuan and completion within four years. But it stopped within 18 months due to lack of money. Construction resumed in September 2007, with the budget increased to 14.8 billion; it is due for completion in 2013.

Mainly for freight, it will also have the ability to carry passengers.

Gaolan is the deep-water port of Zhuhai. It handles more than seven million tonnes of cargo a year. In December 2011, the port and Hutchison Whampoa began construction of two 50,000-tonne container berths.

“We are looking at accelerating Gaolan Port’s development with the introduction of more international line-haul services there,” said Canning Fok, group managing director of HW.

The berths are part of the Gaolan Port Economic Development Zone, which had an output of 20.6 billion yuan in 2011. Among the biggest investors is BP which is building the third of three purified terephthalic (PTA) plants in the zone; BP has a 15 per cent share of the global PTA market.

The third plant will be the largest single PTA factory in the world; the three will have an annual output of 23 billion yuan.

The provincial government hopes the new rail line will attract many investors to the southern bank of the Pearl River and stimulate the growth of Gaolan port. ■

Photos by Manuel Cardoso and Xinhua



Chui Sai On in Beijing to discuss new Macao-Zhuhai border crossing

Chief Executive (CE) Fernando Chui Sai On visit Beijing to discuss with the central government the construction of a 24-hour cross-border pedestrian bridge between the northern tip of the Macao Peninsula and the Gongbei district in Zhuhai. The plan to build a 450-metre long cross-border pedestrian bridge was first announced by the government in late May. The construction would also include a building for immigration and customs facilities which would be located near the future light rapid transit railway (LRT) station.

Macao's GDP expected to post real growth of 9.8 percent this year

The Macao economy is expected to see real growth of 9.8 percent this year and 13.5 percent in 2013, according to the most recent edition of the report on Macau by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), of The Economist group. The Macao Secretary for the Economy and Finance Francis Tam Pak Yuen said some days before that economic growth would likely not exceed a single digit this year after posting real growth of 18.4 percent in the first quarter.

Gaming sector employs 15 pct of total workforce

Macao's gaming sector had 52,789 employees at the end of June, up 11.6 percent year-on-year, accounting for 15.2 percent of the city's total workforce that stood at 346,000 at that time, according to official data. The gaming sector workforce included 23,144 dealers (croupiers), up 11.2 percent year-on-year.

GDP growth slows to 7.3 pct in 2nd quarter

Growth in Macao's gross domestic product slowed to 7.3 percent year-on-year in real terms in the second quarter of the year, the Statistics and Census Bureau (DSEC) said. The second quarter's growth was the lowest of any quarter since the third quarter of 2009, which stood at 6.2 percent. In the first quarter, GDP was up 18.6 percent.

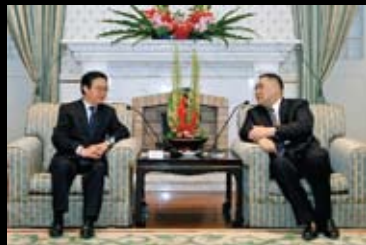
Hong Kong and Macao strengthen co-operation

Senior officials from Hong Kong and Macao said Wednesday that the two cities were willing to strengthen co-operation to promote their so-called "one trip multiple stops" joint tourism product. Hong Kong's Chief Secretary for Administration Carrie Lam Cheng Yuet-ngor was in Macao to pay a courtesy call on Chief Executive Fernando Chui Sai On and Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture Cheong U.

Macao September gambling revenue rises 12 percent

Gambling revenue in Macao rose 12.3 percent in September compared with 5.5 percent in August and 1.5 percent in July the lowest pace since 2009. Revenue in the world's largest gambling hub rose to 23.9 billion patacas (US\$3 billion) from 21.2 billion patacas a year earlier, the Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau said.

16 JUL



25 JUL



24 AUG



30 AUG



19 SEP



04 OCT



24 JUL



01 AUG



26 AUG



09 SEP



20 SEP



04 OCT



Strongest typhoon in 13 years injures 16, causes 254 incidents

Macao endured its strongest typhoon, with wind speeds of 144 km/hour at its height, in 13 years, resulting in 16 minors injuries and 254 incidents, the government said. It was also the first time this year that the No. 9 warning signal "the second highest" was hoisted since the establishment of the Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR) in 1999.

Macao trade deficit amounted to MOP 30.84 billion (US\$3.85 billion) between January and June

The total value of merchandise export from Macao, in the first half year of 2012, increased by 16.0% year-on-year to MOP 3.95 billion (US 490 million), attributable to a 23.7% increase in re-exports (MOP2.77 billion) when domestic exports (MOP1.18 billion) rose by 1.2%, according to data released by the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC). During the same period the total value of merchandise import increased by 25.4% to MOP34.78 billion (US 4.34 billion)

Government presents HK\$ 10.2 million to China's gold medallists

The Macao government gave HK\$ 10.2 million to a visiting 70-member delegation that includes the nation's 47 London Olympics gold medallists. The amount was an "award" to be shared among the gold medallists.

Chui hopes for co-operation through global tourism forum

Chief Executive Fernando Chui Sai On said Sunday that he hoped the Global Tourism Economy Forum being held in Macao for the first time will effectively promote international tourism-related exchanges and co-operation. Chui made the comment during his speech at the three-day forum's opening ceremony, marking its inaugural meeting. The forum is slated to be held annually from now on.

Las Vegas Sands plans Eiffel Tower replica in new casino-hotel project

Casino mogul Sheldon Adelson said that he was planning to build a half-size replica of the Eiffel Tower in his next 3,300-room casino-hotel project in Cotai which he called the "Parisian" and will cost US\$2.5 to US\$3 billion. The Las Vegas Sands chairman and chief executive officer made the remarks during the opening of the Sheraton Macao hotel which is part of his company's Sands Cotai Central casino-hotel complex. Hong Kong and Macao vow to promote "multiple" product

China team wins 2012 Macau International Fireworks Display Contest

Panda Fireworks Group from mainland China won, for the second consecutive year, the 24th Macau International Fireworks Display Contest followed by France's Lacroix-Ruggieri and Australia's Infinity Pyrotechnics, in second and third place respectively. This year's participating teams came from Korea, Thailand, Taiwan, Australia, Portugal, France, the United States, Italy, mainland China and Macao that substitute a Japan team dropped from the contest.

Gaganjeet Bhullar wins Macao Open

Gaganjeet Bhullar won Sunday the Venetian Macao Open title, his second title in less than a month. Moore finished second, while Thitiphun Chuayprakong (70) of Thailand and Siddikur (66) of Bangladesh were tied third.

Lawmakers pass cultural heritage protection bill

Lawmakers unanimously passed the outline of a government-initiated bill on protecting the city's intangible, movable and immovable cultural heritage. The 103-article heritage protection bill covers several aspects including laying out a clearer definition of different types of cultural heritage and having different chapters for immovable, movable and intangible heritage in order to specify the different needs and measures for conservation.

Inflation rate slows in September

Macao's inflation rate slowed to 5.69 percent year-on-year in September, its lowest rate since June last year when it stood at 5.65 percent, according to data released by the Statistics and Census Bureau (DSEC).

It was the first time since February that the rate of increase remained under six percent.



ANGOLA-CHINA Partners in Africa

14 OCT



18 OCT



22 OCT



15 OCT



21 OCT



24 OCT



Hotels log 6.2 million guests in Jan-Aug, up 11 pct
Macao's 66 hotels and 33 inns received 6.23 million guests in the first eight months, 11.4 percent more than in the same period of last year, the Statistics and Census Bureau (DSEC) said. According to a DSEC statement, the occupancy rate stood at 82.8 percent in the eight-month period, down by 0.9 percentage point.

Macao International Fair generates estimated US\$ 687.5 million in business
The 17th Macao International Fair (MIF) resulted in the signing of 88 deals worth over 5.5 billion patacas (US\$ 687.5 million), which was a 10 percent increase in the 2011 fair, the Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM). Some 700 exhibitors from 50 countries and regions took part in MIF 2012. According to figures announced by the Executive Director of IPIM, Irene Lau Kuan Va, half of the agreements were signed by companies from Macao, followed by those from mainland China (38.1 percent) and Hong Kong (5.3 percent).

Visitor arrivals drop in September
Macao recorded 2.16 million visitor arrivals last month, a decline of 0.2 percent from the same month last year, according to official statistics. Month-on-month, September's number of visitor arrivals was down 19.4 percent. Mainlanders accounted for 58.1 percent of all visitor arrivals. Hongkongers made up 26.9 percent of the total number of arrivals.



CONSULATE GENERAL OF THE REPUBLIC OF ANGOLA
Macao Special Administrative Region
People's Republic of China

Edif. FIT (Financial & Information Technology), 7ª Floor I & H, Av. Comercial
Telephone: 00 853 28716229 - Fax: 28716230 - Website: www.consgeralangola.org.mo

Blending the Old and the New

Taiwan modern dance pioneer thrills audience in Macao

By Ou Niar-le

A full house of 1200 people filled the Macao Cultural Centre on 10 August to watch the most famous modern dance troupe in the Chinese world, Cloud Gate, from Taiwan. They were performing one of their best-known works, 'Nine Songs'.

The audience was thrilled to see a mixture of the ancient and the new in dance and music, encompassing sounds from India, Tibet, Japan and Taiwan. They saw a dazzling array of characters, including witches, mountain demons and characters from myth and legend, in a fast-paced and minutely choreographed performance.

Both Cloud Gate and 'Nine Songs' are the creation of Lin Huai-min, who addressed the audience after the show and answered questions from the crowd.

It was the second time the troupe had performed in Macao. The first was in 2004, when it performed 'Moon Water'. During its visit this August, the company also held two workshops, for children and adults, where a group of dancers from the troupe presented their techniques and training routines.



Creator of Cloud Gate

Lin is the son of a prominent family in southwest Taiwan. In 1972, after graduating in journalism from National Chengchi University, he went on to study at Iowa University in the US. It was here that he attended a dance class.

It was a Saul of Tarsus moment that changed his life – the silent movements of the body overcame the written word. Ever since that day, he has devoted his life to dance. Cloud Gate was the first professional modern dance troupe in the Chinese-speaking world.

Under martial law, the Taiwan Lin grew up in was conservative. His family said that dance was ‘the business of beggars’ and not a proper profession for someone so well educated.

Forty years on, Lin has proved them wrong. Cloud Gate has performed in major venues around the

world, including London, Vienna and Frankfurt; Moscow and Jerusalem; New York, Washington and São Paulo; and the Sydney Olympics Arts Festival in 2000.

In 1999, he set up Cloud Gate II, to perform to local communities in Taiwan; last year it also began to tour abroad.

Since 1973, Lin himself has written more than 160 works, including classical literature, folk stories and Taiwan history, capturing the historical memory of two or three generations.

It is as if he has written a new page in the arena of art in China and the rest of the world.

“Lin Huai-min is a foremost innovator of dance,” said the jury of the International Movimentos Dance Prize of Germany in giving him a Lifetime Achievement Award. “He ranks among artists of the century, such as William Forsythe, George Balanchine and Birgit Culberg.”

Lin Huai-min



Early passion for dancing

Lin was born on 19 February 1947 in Chiayi, southwest Taiwan. His grandfather was a doctor who had trained in Japan, and his father was a chief of the county.

A gifted author, Lin started to write short stories when he was 14. In 1961, at secondary school, he saw a modern dance performance by the American Jose Limon company; it aroused his interest and he used money earned from his writings to enrol in a two-week dance course.

At National Chengchi University, he attended a performance of Martha Graham, the famous American dancer. In 1967, he read cover stories in Time and Newsweek about Rudolf Nureyev, the Russian ballet maestro; he was so excited that he could not eat or sleep until he had written an article about him.

In 1969, he went to the United States to study for a Masters of Fine Arts. It was the dance class in Iowa that changed his life. Despite the misgivings of his family, he returned to Taiwan, and in 1973 set up Cloud Gate in a rented apartment in Taipei. That autumn, the troupe performed for the first time and received good reviews.

Lin did everything – composing the pieces, training the dancers and marketing the performances. It was time-consuming, exhausting work. Yet he was

inspired by those who worked with him: “I did not choose dancing, dancing chose me.”

He instituted a rigorous training regime for his dancers that included martial arts, Tai Qi, meditation, Chinese opera, ancient body disciplines and calligraphy.

In 1980, he won a National Arts Award for his work.

‘Nine Songs’

Lin wrote ‘Nine Songs’, the piece performed in August in Macao, in 1993; it was his 11th composition. It is a cycle of poems written by Qu Yuan 2300 years ago. They are adapted from hymns of ancient shamans, which celebrate life, nature and honourable death. The shamans praise the deities with songs and dance in the manner of lovers.

Drawing on the ancient imagery and sensibilities, Lin has created a contemporary ritual. Masked shamans play the roles of gods and goddesses, enacting other-worldly rites to music from India, Tibet, Java, Japan and the indigenous tribes of Taiwan. Their dances are interspersed with appearances of people in contemporary dress; a man in a modern-day suit with luggage calmly crosses the stage; a young man on a bicycle dashes through the crowd; scores of protestors scurry for cover from blazing searchlights.



"I went to all of these places," he told a news conference in Macao. "I do not go out to do fieldwork, but what you see and hear influences you. When you compose, these things come back to you. I am a garbage can that collects things and hopes that the fertilising process will produce beautiful creations.

"The gods and goddesses (in 'Nine Songs') are not glorious – they are cruel and pathetic. So they are portrayed as snakes and grasshoppers. Of course, no gods really came down. People made up gods to worship in order to keep their hopes going. A real god is a martyr who is willing to guard his people with his flesh and sacrifice himself.

"The poems pay homage to nature and to martyrs.



My conclusion is that, in the end, human beings rise up to find their own salvation. The dance drama, 'Nine Songs', is a song of prayer," he said.

The Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung described it as "one of the most important dance works of our time".

Fighting fire

On 11 February 2008, a fire destroyed Cloud Gate's headquarters of more than 1300 square metres outside Taipei, including a rehearsal studio, costumes, props and production archives. To help it rebuild, the government donated a former art and education site in Danshui; the company signed a 50-year lease. It received more than NT\$300 million (US\$10.4 million) in over 5000 donations from business groups and individuals.

The new site, with 1.5 hectares, is due for completion in 2015. It will have four performance venues – an indoor theatre with seating for 400 people, two smaller rehearsal rooms and an outdoor stage. The fire was accidental, and thankfully, because it occurred during Chinese New Year, no one was killed or injured.

"It was a trial sent to us by Buddha," said Lin. "It was a reminder that nothing is predictable and not everything is sweet. Fire or no fire, I thank Buddha every day.

"The day after the fire we continued our work and classes. We completed all our engagements, in New York and Europe. Of course, I was very sad. We had to move to a new site. Our old one was an illegal building we had legally rented.

"Everything I do now is to prepare for my retirement. I always wanted to retire. I must see the completion of the new site and our move there. We have 100 people in two troupes, with performing areas and outdoor space. I have many interests. I can spend a week at home without leaving the apartment."



Dance in society

Cloud Gate owes its success and popularity in Taiwan to the fact that it has created and maintained an audience at all levels of society, from those attending the National Theatre to crowds in cultural centres and school auditoria in small towns and villages. It gives free outdoor performances several times a year, drawing audiences of up to 60,000.

"We have kept our links to the grassroots," he said. "There is no such thing as a bad audience, only a bad performance. For our large performances, we attract people of all ages, from children to the elderly. You need to be very good to keep people's attention for two hours.

"What is most important is a dialogue with society. We are part of society. We need new works to continue drawing in society. The media also plays an important role," he said. "The success of Cloud Gate is not due to me. It is due to the support of society as a whole. We have concentrated the energy of Taiwan."

It was to reach a wider audience that Lin set up

Cloud Gate II in 1999, to tour different communities in Taiwan and nurture young dancers and choreographers. In 1998, he also set up the Cloud Gate Dance School, to make dance education more available. Cloud Gate II has developed rapidly, and since last year has been touring abroad, like its mother company.

Despite these successes, however, and the economic growth of Taiwan, Cloud Gate remains the only professional dance company on the island.

"The land is not easy to cultivate. It is the same all over the world. We receive eight percent of our revenue from the government. During times of austerity, though, the culture budget is the first to be cut. It has happened in Spain, Italy and France. The Hong Kong government gives a bigger grant to its troupe than the one we receive, but it has not cultivated the audience as well."

Lin is modest about his own future. "After I retire, those who take over will develop new works for a new audience. Young artists will find their own way and will not need advice from an old one. They will come up with new creations." ■

Photos by Eric Tam and courtesy of Macau Cultural Centre

Imagining Macao

Portuguese directors win global acclaim with films about Macao

By Hélder Beja, in Busan

The film 'The Last Time I Saw Macao', by Portuguese directors João Rui Guerra da Mata and João Pedro Rodrigues, is doing the rounds of festivals across the world. We watched it in Busan, home of the biggest film showcase in Asia. Guerra da Mata tells us that this is just the first of many chapters on Macao due to appear in their films.





João Rui Guerra da Mata (R.) and João Pedro Rodrigues (L.)

The Busan International Film Festival (BIFF) screened over 300 movies this year, yet only one of them was a Portuguese production. Oddly, that film is not even about Portugal, but about Macao. 'The Last Time I Saw Macao', a rather hard-to-define film, was invited to screen in Busan. It was there that we met one of the directors, Guerra da Mata, to discuss it.

"It was definitely worth showing our film at the BIFF. The Busan festival is not only one of the most important film festivals in the world, but it's also the biggest in Asia. The privilege of being the only Portuguese film invited makes it even more important," João Rui Guerra da Mata told Macao magazine. The movie was warmly received by the South Korean audience, as was the filmmakers' profiles, and Guerra da Mata managed to interact

a lot with the public after the screenings. "That made us very happy and proud. For us it confirmed that cinema is a universal language. It really doesn't matter where you come from, as long as you are dealing with feelings that touch a great number of people, regardless of their culture or nationality."

In truth, to say that 'The Last Time I Saw Macao' is a film about Macao may not be the most accurate way of putting it. It certainly is about Macao, but an imaginary version of the region that the directors created in their minds. The imaginary element makes a huge difference.

The film premiered at the Locarno Film Festival in Switzerland – one of the most important film showcases in Europe – where it received a Special Mention from the Jury and the Independent Press and Critics Prize for Best Direction. After that, it

won the Best Film Award from the Critics' Jury at the Valdivia Film Festival in Chile, was presented at the Toronto International Film Festival, the Busan International Film Festival, the Vancouver International Film Festival, the Rio de Janeiro Film Festival, the New York Film Festival, La Roche sur Yon in France, the Viennale in Italy, CPH:DOX – Copenhagen, the Thessaloniki Film Festival in Greece, and many others. The film was also chosen to open the Doc Lisboa Film Festival and has already secured commercial releases in Portugal, France and Switzerland.

It is hard to find a movie about Macao with such international exposure, if there ever was one. "It's the best conjunction of festivals possible, meaning that the film is attracting the attention of audiences all over the world," the director said.

Fictional appeal

The film was originally intended to be a documentary about Macao, but when Guerra da Mata and JP Rodrigues came to the city and started filming, they soon understood that that was not what they wanted to do anymore. Fiction was the only way to go – even if not by telling a conventional fictional story, with a clear plot and actors.

Guerra da Mata's memories were the starting point for everything. "Asia means a lot to me on a very personal level. Macao seemed a natural place for making a film, as I had lived there as a child and had always wanted to go back," Guerra da Mata explained. JP Rodrigues, the other director and one of the most prominent Portuguese filmmakers of his generation, had never been to Macao before shooting the film, but Guerra da Mata had always told him "stories about that mysterious place" where he had lived.

The two filmmakers came to film in Macao three times, always with a low-budget and extremely small crew, consisting of the two directors, a cameraman, a sound technician and occasionally someone to help with production and translation.

The final result?

Following the genre of film noir, 'The Last Time I Saw Macao' is the story of a man (Guerra da Mata himself) revisiting the city 30 years after leaving. You never see him in the film – you simply hear his voice. The reason for his return to Macao is Candy, a long-time friend who is in trouble and desperately needs his help.



With references ranging from the classic movie 'Macao' by Josef von Sternberg, starring Jane Russell and Robert Mitchum, to Andy Warhol, the film shows Macao in a different light to the one we are used to seeing it in these days. It opens with an eccentric sequence involving a dancer performing the song 'You Kill Me', just as Jane Russell did in 1952. Yet the focus is not on the casinos or on the glamorous, glimmering city. The directors have reinvented the city as mysterious and gloomy, with empty streets, shadowed seashores and wandering animals. To those images – which were not filmed only in Macao but also in Guangzhou, Shanghai, Lisbon and other places – they add a voiceover. It recounts Guerra da Mata's memories from the time he spent in Macao as a child, and JP Rodrigues' Asian tastes in cinema. "Whilst I brought my memories to this movie, JP Rodrigues brought his cinephile background and all the Asian movies he's always loved," said Guerra da Mata.

Both directors had been at Busan last year with the feature film 'To Die Like a Man'. This year, however, JP Rodrigues was unable to attend, as he had been invited to a retrospective of his work at the Rio de Janeiro Film Festival, where they screened notable pieces such as 'Phantom' and 'Odete'. "We've been working together in cinema since 1995, I as an art director/production designer in all of the films, and he mostly directing. But we also worked together

in the writing of the films. In 1997 we co-directed a first short 'China, China' and then our first feature," noted Guerra da Mata.

An eye on Asia

'China, China' was the first foray this pair of filmmakers made into Asian themes. "We wanted to tell the story of a young Chinese mother and wife, living in Lisbon's Chinatown. I suppose that's how it all started," Guerra da Mata said.

For 20 years the director had been telling JP Rodrigues how much they could do in Macao. They eventually decided to move ahead, even shooting a new short film before 'The Last Time I Saw Macao' was ready for release. 'Red Dawn', a short film about the Red Market – the most charismatic public market in the city – competed at Portugal's most important film festival, the Indie Lisboa. It won the Best Short Film Award. "It was the first cinematic approach to a place that had been haunting us for the previous three years. It's as if a ghost had been in my life after returning to Portugal in the late 70's of the last century, living side by side with me until it took the shape of a film."

Now, 'Red Dawn' and 'The Last Time I Saw Macao' walk side by side, and their directors expect them to be commercially released together not only in Portugal but in other countries, too.



Guerra da Mata with fans in BIFF

Guerra da Mata gave assurances that this was only the beginning of a long cinematic relationship with Macao, because their lenses and imaginations were ready to offer up more about the city in the future. "For us Macao is a fascinating, multicultural, labyrinth-like city flaunting two faces, like the coins that the slot machines swallow at breakneck pace. One is calm and smiling, the other veiled and secretive," he explained.

The director believes "there are so many incredible fictions" to think about every time we think about Macao. "It feels like the city is telling us stories. Stories we have to listen to, we have to turn into films. So, yes, we are planning to keep on doing work about Macao. At this point we don't want to reveal much more but we do have this idea of making at least two or three films in Macao, one of which has already been funded by the Portuguese Film Institute."

The biggest concern they have regarding the viability of these upcoming projects is the financial crisis Portugal is currently facing. "Due to the policies of the Portuguese Government, after their decision to abolish the Ministry of Culture, all the funding to make films has been blocked. This situation does put Portuguese cinema, and the arts in general, in danger. Although sometimes it is hard for logic to

prevail over emotion, we are optimistic and keeping an open mind, hoping that decency will prevail," Guerra da Mata said.

To film in Macao is something they really want to keep on doing. They believe they might manage it by "establishing contacts with production companies in Macao, and creating the right conditions for it to happen". Encouragingly, Asia is showing a growing interest in JP Rodrigues' films. "Next year, in Japan, for example, there will be a retrospective of his work," said Guerra da Mata.

Macao audiences haven't yet seen 'The Last Time I Saw Macao', 'Red Dawn' or 'China China', but that day will eventually come. "Since we started shooting stories related to China, it has been our aim to show them in Asia. Therefore, to show 'The Last Time I saw Macao' in Macao would be like a dream come true. And not just this feature film... We truly hope to have the chance to present our short films as well," Guerra da Mata noted.

Screening the films in Macao will be important for many reasons, but for one above all: "I believe the only reason to make films is for those films to be seen by the most people possible. To show them in Macao would make JP Rodrigues and me very happy." ■



A Portuguese artist on the streets of Asia



Many artists from Portugal have pieces of their work on permanent public display in countries across Asia. The most prolific of those artists is José de Guimarães. With Japan topping the list of locations for his creations, he also has pieces on show in South Korea and Macao, and may be adding mainland China to his list in the near future. Born in 1939 in the city of Guimarães, in northern Portugal, the artist is back in the East with an exhibition at the brand new Suzhou Art Museum.

By Hélder Beja



José de Guimarães in Macao

Most people would agree that cities like New York, Berlin, Lisbon or Macao greatly benefit from the public artworks lighting up their streets. Nowhere is this more apparent than in Japan, whose cities are adorned with over 400 pieces by José de Guimarães spread around the country in public spaces, such as squares, parks, streets and many public buildings. This makes the Portuguese painter and sculptor the most represented Lusophone artist in Asia, and one of the world's most represented in Japan.

Unable to keep away for long, José de Guimarães has recently come back to Asia yet again – this time for an exhibition at the brand new Suzhou Jinji Lake Art Museum, in mainland China. He is the first Western artist to hold a solo exhibition there. Entitled 'Metropolis – Cities and Citizens', the show boasts 80 pieces of Guimarães' work.

"I've chosen to show recent works because this is my third exhibition in China. In 1994 I had an itinerant exhibition in Hong Kong, Macao and Beijing, and in 2008 I had another exhibition at the Today Art

Museum, also in Beijing. In this new show I only wanted to present pieces I had created after that," José de Guimarães explains to Macao magazine.

'Metropolis – Cities and Citizens' explores the idea of the big metropolis. "It's an exhibition about communication between different cultures, and understandings and misunderstandings between those cultures," continues the artist.

Guimarães was invited to show his works in Suzhou after the museum curators became familiar with his work through the project 'Dialogue with the Emperor Qin's Warriors'. Another itinerant exhibition, sponsored by the European Union (EU), the project involves artists from all of the 27 EU nations, and presents works related to the famous Xian terracotta warriors. José de Guimarães has been representing Portugal at the exhibition. "The people from the Suzhou Museum got to know my works and invited me to hold an exhibition there," he says. The showcase will be running until 21 November.



Kushiro - Hokkaido - Japan

Route to Asia

After the exhibition opening in Suzhou, Guimarães came to Macao for a visit, and we were determined to catch up with him and find out all about his special relationship with Asia.

Although his biggest love affair is with Japan, everything started with South Korea. The artist was invited by the famous art critic Pierre Restany to build a sculpture for the Seoul Olympic Park, in 1988, just before the Seoul Olympics started. "That was the first time I came to Asia," he remembers.

Almost simultaneously – and because his works were already in galleries and exhibitions across Europe and other parts of the globe – he was invited to work in Japan. "One of the first works I did in Japan was to build paper kites. I vividly remember working for about a month in Kyoto, with Japanese 'carpenters'."

By 1989, Guimarães was staying at the Buddhist Monastery of Himegi, in Japan, to paint and build kites according to the Japanese tradition. "At that time I started to understand the Japanese sensitivity towards the materials I was working with. The kites were all done exclusively with natural materials, like bamboo and silk paper," he says.

Osaka Goethe Institute and its director at the time, Paul Eubel, were also running a large-scale project involving paper kites. Again, José de Guimarães was invited to join in. "They approached 100 artists from all over the world, such as Robert Ruchenberg and Frank Stella. I was among them."

The result was an extensive exhibition that travelled across Japan and around the world. Eventually it landed in the Portuguese capital, Lisbon, at the Gulbenkian Foundation Museum, enabling Guimarães to present his Eastern works to his own country. "It was a very beautiful and valuable exhibition. It gave me huge visibility at the time," he admits.

Silk kites were only one of the types of creation the artist was destined to work on in Japan. Immediately after their completion, this Portuguese man who studied engineering instead of art, found himself holding an exhibition at the Fuji Television Gallery, in Tokyo. The show was "a tremendous success and all of the pieces were sold". The main buyer was a lady who had just created a foundation in her own name: the Akemi Foundation. Based in Osaka, the foundation has kept a significant number of Guimarães' works in its permanent collection.

Xian warriors - People's Republic of China



This period in José de Guimarães' life also involved the beginning of one of the most important trajectories of his career: public artworks in Japan. "The first project was in Tachikawa, Tokyo. It was a very interesting one because it was an area that had been an American military base for a long time," the artist recalls. The place was in the process of changing to become a residential district. The Japanese Government decided to invite 100 artists to create pieces that would be integrated into the new urban plan. "The artists had a two-fold role: to create a work of art, but one that served a use at the same time. I remember that Ruchenberg made a bicycle with neon tubes, which got used to mark out a cycle-parking area." Other artists built objects such as pieces to hide air-conditioning devices. Guimarães explains: "This double purpose for all of the artworks was a way of ensuring that people didn't criticise the Government for spending money on art."

Going global

José de Guimarães continued to hold a wide range of exhibitions and projects around the world. In 1993 he designed the logo for the Portuguese

Tourist Board – a trademark image that became quite famous. At the same time, his relationships with Japan and Asia were growing apace. In 1998, Japanese officials invited him to join a global artistic project that aimed to change the appearance of the city of Kushiro, on Hokkaido Island. Housing 350,000 inhabitants, this harbour city has the peculiarity of being submerged in a fine mist during part of the year, which affects the mood of the people, as well as the way they live their daily lives.

Within Kushiro's inhabitants lives an ethnic group named the Ainu. "They came from the Mongolian empire and were probably the first foreigners to enter Japan. In the 18th century there were around 600,000 Ainu people, but the southern Japanese killed almost all of them. Nowadays just a few Ainu people remain, whilst Japanese people living there have a lingering sense of guilt towards these people," the artist explains. "The Japanese officials thought I was the right artist to work in this area because they knew my work and my relationship with African cultures. They wanted me to intervene by helping to minimize the effects on the people of the climate conditions they have there, as well as the feelings of guilt that they carry."

The Falcon-South Korea

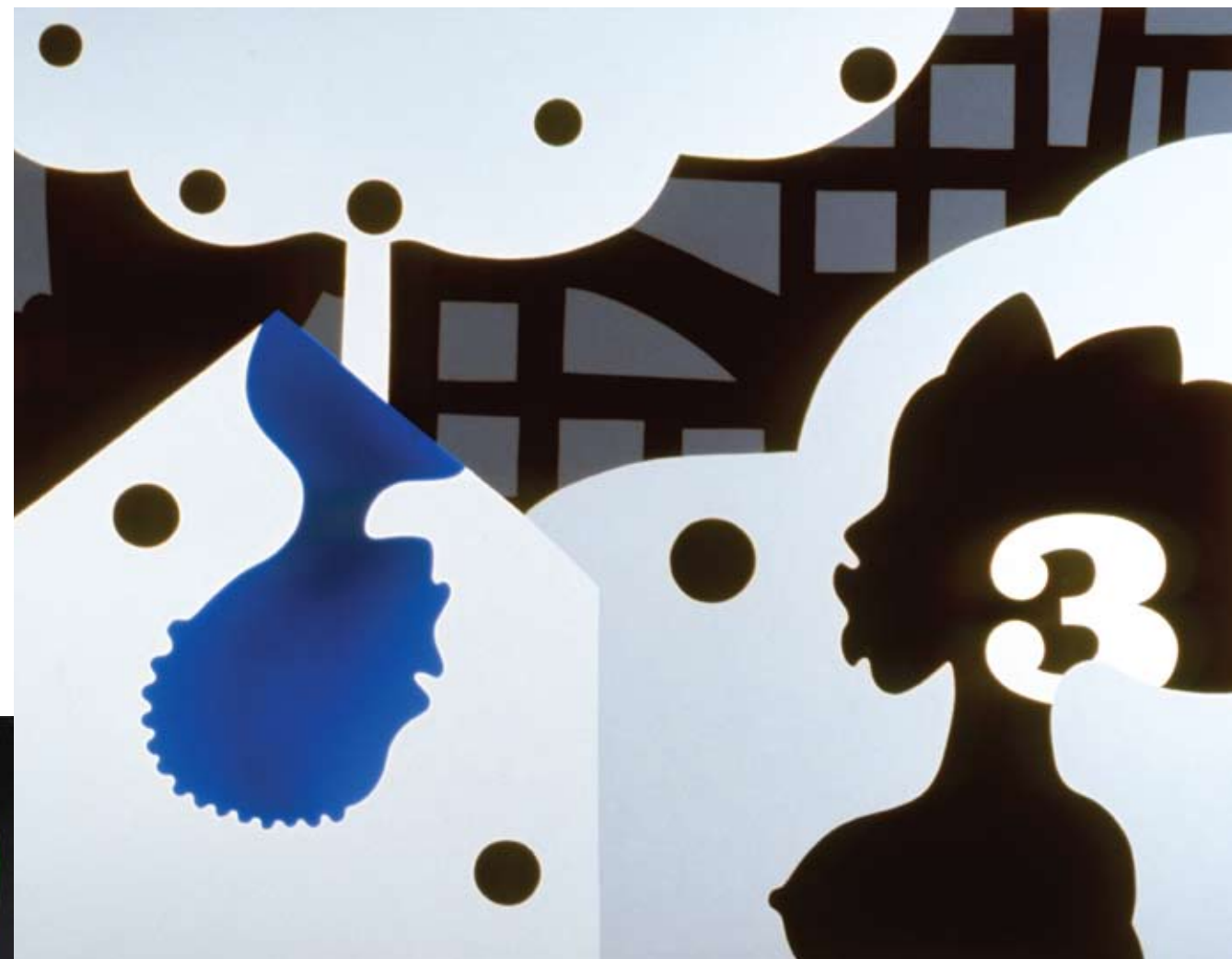


This was quite a challenge for José de Guimarães, but today, when he looks back, he feels proud: "This project used methods that were akin to my current working processes." In the 1960s and 1970s, after his experiences in Africa, Guimarães started to work almost as an anthropologist, which he drew on when discussing his ideas with the Japanese. "I went to study the Ainu people in the way that an anthropologist would. That study inspired my artwork, drawing on images I had seen from African cultures, such as masks, symbols and rituals. I appropriated all of those shapes and did a series of signs for public places using them," he continues. To help change the city, Guimarães used what he calls "luminous, cinematic architecture". The public objects – so-called 'urban furniture' – were "unique pieces", such as lamps, garden benches, shelters and information boards, and were all extremely colourful and lit up with neon or LED lights. "That created a special 'mise en scène' that really transformed the pieces," believes the artist.

Neon and other influences

Neon light is a good example of how much his experiences in the East have influenced José de Guimarães' works. "I started using neon after my multiple trips to Asia. My public works, both here in Macao and in Japan, use neon." Neon light, Guimarães stresses, is part of the urban culture of this region. "Macao has one expression during the day and another one at night. Neon vibrates with these people's souls – it's part of them." The painter thinks that in Asia, people are used to a backdrop that does not exist in the West. "Here, all the advertisements use symbols and signs that come from Chinese characters. If we go back to the old calligraphy, we can see that Chinese characters came from Nature. All of this is very natural." Going back in time and trying to find the cultural routes of the places he visits has always been Guimarães' trademark way of looking at the world – he has done it in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Suzhou Jinji Art Museum



Suzhou Jinji Art Museum

That's how he started becoming interested in the Chinese poetry from the Tang and Song dynasties. It had a tremendous influence on Guimarães' Hong Kong series of works. "The Hong Kong series was born out of a very curious episode. On one of my many trips to Asia, I missed my flight and stayed holed up instead in a hotel in Hong Kong for two days because it was raining relentlessly outside. I had 20 Hokusai books with me, which I had just bought, and I spent those two days looking at drawings, reading, and taking notes. That was how the Hong Kong series came about, and that's why those works are eminently erotic."

If Hong Kong has a place on this artistic path, so too does Macao. In 1999, Guimarães inaugurated eight monumental, life-sized sculptures – steel trees with neon lighting – for the Garden of Arts. Only two sculptures remain there, "mainly covered by trees". The others have been removed over the years.

Another place which can soon join the list of locations boasting José de Guimarães' public works is mainland China. "For now I don't have anything there, but it's very possible that that's going to happen in the future," he says.

Democratic art

The importance of having art in public spaces is unquestionable for Guimarães, who considers public art "the most democratic way of exhibiting artworks... They become part of the public space, so no one has to pay for a ticket to contemplate them. Also, they create a sense of taste," he argues. Giving the Italian city of Rome as an example, the artist considers that no Roman can have bad taste. "From birth to death, they are surrounded by beautiful architecture, sculptures and artworks. There's a natural education in artistic sensitivity almost from the beginning."

Countries like Japan are different cases, where public contemporary art has extreme importance. "There are a number of Japanese cities where the artists' participation is extraordinary nowadays," he asserts.

José de Guimarães believes public artworks should occupy their own space, though not be overtaken by their own importance. "When I say this, I don't mean that public art should be insignificant or tiny, even in terms of scale. For example, I have a piece in Lisbon, close to the Tejo River, which is 26 metres tall. That sculpture, though people don't notice it,

Macao trees



is very tall. Why did I build it like that? Because the square is so large that, if I decided to do a minor thing, it would become ridiculous, would make no sense."

The most important thing about creating public art is "to think carefully about how it will be integrated" with the things surrounding it. "Usually, for this kind of project, I work a lot with architects and urban planners, to make sure that everything will be in harmony." In Japan or in any other place, José de Guimarães believes public artworks must have a purpose and should not be "merely decorative". ■

Photos by Luis Almoater and courtesy of José de Guimarães

Suzhou Jinji Art Museum



Kushiro, Hokkaido-Japan

Frozen in Time

Jiangsu's water town
remembers its
romantic past

By Luo Xunzhi





Jiangsu channels

As you look over Jinxi, a lake in eastern China, you see a small man-made island with a statue of a lady on it.

It is the water mausoleum of a woman named Chen, the favourite concubine of Song Jiao-zhong, emperor of the Southern Sung dynasty (1127–1279). In 1164, when his empire was threatened by barbarians from the north, Song Jiao-zhong fled south, taking Chen with him.

Chen was then captured by a rival army and brought to this water town, which is surrounded by five lakes. Her captors wanted to have their way with her, so to save her honour, she threw herself into the lake and drowned.

The emperor was heart-broken at the loss. He set about building the island for her, planting trees and laying down two pavilions and fine white stone pillars. On the shore opposite, he erected a Buddhist temple where monks could say prayers for Chen's soul. The temple is still in operation today, and houses the current monks. Parts of it are being restored.

The emperor changed the name of the town to Grave of Chen – a name it retained for the next 820 years until, in response to public protest against its unlucky provenance, the local government restored its original name. So, in October 1992, the town became 'Jin Xi', which means 'beautiful stream'.

It is an appropriate description of a small town surrounded by water and at the centre of one of the richest areas in China. It has now become a tourist attraction – a fine example of an ancient 'water town' in this area south of the Yangtze River.

Blessed by nature

The town has been inhabited for 5000 years. "This part of China has been blessed by nature," said Mu Changyun, a Shanghai resident who moved here 10 years ago to run a famous restaurant in a historic two-storey building that overlooks one of the lakes.

"Here there are no earthquakes, floods or natural disasters," he said. "There have been no wars, except for a small skirmish with the Japanese. The land is very fertile, yielding two or three harvests a year of rice, wheat, fruit and vegetables, as well as silkworms. It is also well known for its bricks and tiles, made from the clay here.

"During the dynasty of the Southern Sung, whose capital was Hangzhou, this was a garrison town. The conditions of peace and prosperity resulted in a place of leisure, culture and education," he said.

In the early Republican period, more than 100 students from Jinxi went to join the many Chinese leaving to study abroad. They learnt the science, medicine, technology and culture of the outside world and tried to catch up on the decades which China had lost; they went to Japan, Canada, the United States, Britain, France, Germany and Russia.

Tourism development

In 2000 the local government decided to develop Jinxi as a tourist centre. "There was no industry here, so tourism was chosen as the way to promote economic development," Mu said. "As a pre-condition, it was necessary to improve the infrastructure – upgrade the roads, and water and power supplies."

Jinxi is close to some of the richest cities in China, which have greatly benefited from the three decades of reform and open-door policy. It is 30 kilometres from Suzhou, which had a GDP last year of 1.05 trillion yuan, ranking it sixth amongst China's cities. Jinxi has attracted thousands of foreign companies, especially from Japan, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore and the United States, and is strong in high technology. The Suzhou area has been inhabited for 2500 years; its city founded 1000 years ago.

Unlike many places in China, it has succeeded in becoming a modern city at the same time as preserving a precious past, especially the dozens of walled gardens built by retired court officials during the Sung (960–1279) and Ming dynasties (1368–1644).

It is also home to the Suzhou Museum, built by the city's most famous son, Chinese-American architect I.M. Pei, who designed the famous glass pyramid in the courtyard of the Louvre and the Bank of China buildings in Beijing and Hong Kong. The museum was built from the former residence of the Zhong Prince of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom (1851–1864).



Suzhou Museum by I. M. Pei

It has a display area of 2200 square metres and contains more than 15,000 artefacts, 70,000 books and 20,000 stone rubbings. Construction began in 2002, and the museum opened in October 2006. The preservation work done by Suzhou is a model for Jinxi.

Major Attractions

To visitors, Jinxi offers three attractions – its natural setting, its architecture and its museums. “It has 36 bridges and 72 kilns, and is surrounded by five lakes,” said Jane Jian, a Shanghai history professor who visits the town frequently. “There are few cities in China with such a setting. People call Suzhou the ‘Venice of China’, but Jinxi is too small to merit such a title. “It is also unusual in having 15 museums with collections of private individuals in historic houses. It has the setting for an ideal home for a Chinese person, with hills at the back and water in the front. Emperor Qian Long (1711–1799) loved to come to this part of Jiangsu. He travelled here three times by boat,” she said.

The museums include collections of antiques, fine art, coins and paper money, bricks and tiles, teapots, and memorabilia from the Cultural Revolution and from famous people from the area. The antiques museum was the donation of a Suzhou collector, Bi Rensheng, containing 800 items dating from the Qin dynasty 3000 years ago. The museum of coins and money contains thousands of items, including the first paper money showing the face of Mao Zedong. The museum of antique bricks and tiles is located in a house built at the end of the Ming and the early Qing dynasty and restored in the late Qing. With 1000 items, it is the first museum of its kind in China. The oldest pieces date back 1700 years. The collection is the work of a private individual, Gong Zhu-yu, who scoured the whole country for pieces, and collected more than can be found in many state museums. Jinxi has a long history of producing building materials, stretching back to the Spring and Autumn period of ancient China, when Jinxi’s bricks were used in the Imperial Palace. Even today, there are 72 kilns operating in the Jinxi area.

Private gardens

Jinxi also contains private gardens similar to the gardens that have made Suzhou famous. “Dozens of officials from the Imperial Palace came to Suzhou after their retirement and built these gardens,” said Jian. “When you come to the entrance, you see nothing. You have no idea what is inside. The Western concept of a garden is to have a large lawn and a view that is uninterrupted. “Here the concept was different – small enclosed areas, each exquisite, with carvings and sculptures; each is like a painting. Here the official would spend his retirement, writing poems, painting pictures, drinking tea or wine and listening to music,” she said. The gardens are meticulously designed for the eye, like a work of art, which the owner can enjoy for many years. In Jinxi, one of these gardens is called the Shi Yuan (Persimmon Garden). It belonged to Lu Shu-lun (1900–1980), a famous painter and national Go champion. He was a polymath who wrote poetry and history as well as being a painter and calligrapher. He played in China’s national Go team and, in 1936, was invited to take part in the Japanese national Go championships. In 1942, he represented Jiangsu

in a match against the two strongest players from Japan. Eastern China was then under Japanese occupation. After 1949, he continued to win titles in Suzhou and internationally. Lu Shu-lun’s house spans 500 square metres and is named after two large persimmon trees found in the garden. It is similar to houses found in Suzhou, with white walls and a black roof with curved tiles. The courtyard contains a pond, and plants and sculptures cover the paving stones. Another garden in Jinxi is named Jinlong, after its owner Bo Jinlong, who was a plasterer. Unlike most owners who hired architects, he and his wife designed the garden themselves. They spent more than 100,000 yuan to buy 0.2 hectares of wasteland and turn it into a garden following the Suzhou model. The lush garden contains a pond full of lotus flowers, as well as bamboos, trees and pavilions. Visitors to Jinxi can also enjoy walks along the canals, savouring tea or a meal in one of the restaurants at the side of the water, or relaxing on a boat trip around the lakes. It is a world away from the bustle and overcrowding of the Nanjing and Huaihai Roads – the main shopping streets of Shanghai. It is a place to imagine another world, in a different era, in China. ■

Photos by Xinhua and Louise do Rosário





Tourists in the channels of Jiangsu

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Musical Talent

Macao band takes off
in Chinese world

By Vanessa Moore



The rock duo Soler, featuring twin brothers Julio and Dino Acconci, has become the most successful rock band from Macao, singing in Cantonese and Mandarin across the Chinese world.

Sons of an Italian father and Burmese mother, the twins and the band they founded are a remarkable symbol of Macao as a melting pot of East and West – they speak Portuguese, English, Italian, Cantonese and Mandarin, and have siblings all over the world.

In Europe, their mixed ancestry was a handicap to their career. But here it is the reverse – they are the only Western band that can sing in Cantonese and Mandarin.

They have released five albums, one live recording, one live concert DVD and two movie theme-song singles.

They have also branched out into acting. Unlike many other performers, they compose and write all of their own music and are well known for the quality of their live performances.

They have created a style of music which reflects the multi-faceted character of their band, playing a range of different instruments and blending Western and Asian elements. They are able to compose and perform in several languages.

But it has been a long haul. The duo started performing in Italy in 1996. It was only in 2005, in Hong Kong, that their career took off. Now they are established, and they perform all over the Chinese world, including at the Macao Grand Prix in 2011 and the Macao Countdown on New Year's Eve the same year.

Idyllic Childhood

Julio and Dino were born in Macao to an Italian architect and a Karen mother from Burma. A teacher at an art academy in Pisa, their father was hired to do quality control for marble construction in Shanghai in 1936. Two years later, he moved to Hong Kong and, on a trip to Macao, fell in love with the city, settled down and started his own company. He met the twins' mother in the 1960s.

Julio is older than his twin brother by 90 minutes. It is a big family. Their father had 11 children in his first marriage and four in his second, to their mother. He was in his 70s when they were born.

Their native tongue was Italian; at home they also spoke English and Cantonese.

They spent their childhood in Macao, and were brought up as Roman Catholics. They attended the Santa Rosa de Lima English Primary School and Yuet Wah College in Macao. "Our childhood in Macao was wonderful, very idyllic," said Julio. "Everyone was happy there. We were always hanging out on the beach or playing football – having a blast."

They were good but not model students; their main interest was sports. At about 14, this changed to music – something they became very passionate about. They listened to Italian music belonging to an older half-brother; he was the only one in the house with a stereo.

"My dad was in his 80s when we were 13," said Julio. "He knew we would not have a lot of time together so he was very generous with us, trying to leave us with good memories."

"The greatest gift a parent can give to their children is the belief that they are capable of doing something great. There are too many people out there telling you that you cannot achieve what you want. Words from parents usually carry an unusual weight in their children's minds. Their voices follow you throughout life."

Dino said that they stood out in Macao. "People there are so content with their lives that very few of them would think of making a fortune or leaving the place. That is part of the reason we were noticed."

In 1984, they moved to Florence in Italy, to further their studies. It was there that they realised how different they were from most teenagers.

"We grew up among different cultural worlds, which has given us an advantage," said Dino. "We have learned several languages and made friendships

that cross racial, national and social barriers. First of all, we did not see it that way – it was just our life. When we went to Italy, we suddenly entered a monoculture. We were open-minded in terms of customs; wherever we went, we were ready to absorb the customs."

They lived for an extended period in Italy. "We probably feel the closest to Italy. We left at 18 in 1984 and spent nine years there. So we developed a close relationship with Italians." Julio spent two years studying design and advertising at an institute in Florence, and worked as a designer; Dino studied languages at the University of Florence. Then they worked in Britain, with Julio in London and Dino in Edinburgh.



The brothers Julio and Dino Acconci



Budding careers

In Italy, they began their musical careers. They formed the band Soler – named after their mother – and began performing in 1996, signing a contract with EMI Italy with the release of their first single in Europe. But things did not go well. The brothers believe that it was because the Italians were unused to seeing Eurasian performers.

In 1999, they returned to Macao.

In 2001, Paul Wong, guitarist of the Hong Kong band Beyond was looking for a guitarist to join a new rock band named HANN. He invited Dino to Hong Kong for an audition; he hired him as a member of the band. Wong soon discovered that Dino had a twin brother who joined them during practices; he often

mixed the two up.

“Being fresh in the Hong Kong music industry was confusing because we did not know the ‘game’,” said Dino. “There was a certain way of promoting artists, and the company tried hard to fit us into a mould but we’d refuse to follow the rules.”

Wong and his friends heard them play together and urged them to perform in Hong Kong. After a live gig there, they were offered a contract with a new music label. They did many live performances in Hong Kong and Macao; 2005 was the year of their breakthrough.

In July that year, they released their debut album, ‘Double Stereo’, with songs in Cantonese, Mandarin and English. It was a compilation of songs that they had written over the years.

“We looked at what we had at that moment and chose the songs that were more suitable for singing in Cantonese,” said Julio. “It was frustrating as it was the first time we had had to sing Cantonese. We realised that there’s so much you can’t do. I don’t think we knew what we were doing; we just said ‘Let’s do what sounds right.’”

It was so popular that the brothers decided to release a second album only five months later, in December; it was called ‘Intuition’ and was entirely in Mandarin.

“People think that we have suddenly become famous, but for 10 years we were only small fry doing live gigs,” said Dino. “We produced an album that no one knew about.”

The two albums they released in 2005 put them in the spotlight. They composed ‘We Will Shine’, the theme song for the East Asia Games in Macao in 2005, and performed at the Hung Hom Sports Centre in Hong Kong in April 2006.

In July 2007, they sang at the Chinese leg of Live Earth in Shanghai. Since then, they have performed all over the Chinese world, especially in Macao, Hong Kong, Taipei, Singapore and major cities on the mainland. They have won awards for their work, including an achievement award from the Macao government in 2009. They also performed at the 24th International Music Festival in Macao in the autumn of 2010.

They have developed a musical style that is, like the brothers themselves, a fusion – a blend of rock, pop and soul.

Unique identity

Their parents and upbringing have given them a multi-faceted identity.

“In Hong Kong, we are perceived as Macanese and we’re very happy with that. There is no doubt that we’re from Macao and that makes us very proud,” said Dino.

“Harmony is composed of different notes,” said Julio. “So it’s understood that, where there’s harmony, there is difference.”

When they write lyrics, they usually choose English to write them in. “Unless we know that the song we’re about to write is meant specifically for singing in Cantonese or Mandarin,” said Dino. “In that case, we just write melodies and hand them over to a lyricist to write in Chinese, because as a language to write lyrics in, Chinese is not easy.

“As far as singing in the different languages, we are comfortable with all of them. It took us quite a while to get used to Mandarin. For about three or four years, we could speak Mandarin at a basic level but understanding what we are singing has only been a recent development, so it’s been the most stressful language to work with,” he said.

An important step in their development was to work in Taiwan and make good friends there. “We started sharing a lot of ourselves, becoming friends with people and then, as in Italy, we started to connect with the language. That was when we felt an emotional connection,” he said. “Cantonese is challenging because you have to pronounce each word properly, otherwise it sounds strange.”





Julio added: "Cantonese is the hardest language to sing. Our first choice would always be English or Italian."

When they perform in Macao, they always sing 'Hey Ma'. "That was written for our mum, and Macao is our 'motherland'," said Julio. "We tend to get a more discerning type of listener in Macao. Given that we are not so mainstream, we tend to get the crowds who enjoy music, so the reaction is warm. You can see in their eyes that they are happy to see us."

Branching out

The twins have now branched out into other art forms. They have produced two film theme-song singles and taken part in the production of two other film soundtracks in Europe and for an independent Hong Kong film.

They starred in a Taiwanese movie in which they played the villains; they had to undergo two months of intensive martial arts training. "From head to toe, it broke us down, and our bodies practically had to recompose themselves," said Julio. They also worked on an original soundtrack for an independent film that was screened at the Hong Kong International Film Festival.

In the future, they plan to take part in a wider range of activities, like design, writing and teaching. "The more we move forward in our careers, the more inclined we are to do cultural projects rather than straightforward commercial projects," said Julio.

The brothers are planning to work with children in a series of music workshops. "We want to go into schools to do workshops, to get people to sing together, play together," said Dino. Probably the first ones will be in Macao; they hope to extend them in the future to Hong Kong and the mainland.

"Our aim is to bring music back," said Dino. "In Hong Kong, I find it a huge problem that music is just exploited as CV credits. Instead of children learning instruments for pleasure, they learn them to pass exams and for extra credit points to get into universities. I have met so many people who studied music just to get into schools and do not play any more. It is quite unfortunate."

They want to create a musically enriching experience for children who are over-stressed by the double expectations of a rigid school system and demanding parents. ■

Dragon boat tradition takes hold in Portugal







On September, the Amorense Naval Association – based in the south of Lisbon – organised dragon boat races with the help of Macao Government Tourist Office sponsorship. Over ten teams took part, including one made up of students from Macao studying at the University of Lisbon.





Seixal bay was the backdrop for the regattas, which were held to celebrate Macao Day at the festival known as Seixaliadas. The event served a dual purpose – both as a sporting event but also as a form of cultural exchange. The boats would have been as at home in China as they were in the Tagus River near the Portuguese capital.



The dragon boats used at these regattas are from Macao and have been “adopted” by the Amorense Naval Association after representing Macao at Expo98 in Lisbon. The association also uses the dragon boats for educational activities for local schools and associations, as well as for hiring out for corporate team-building events.



Photos by José Goulão

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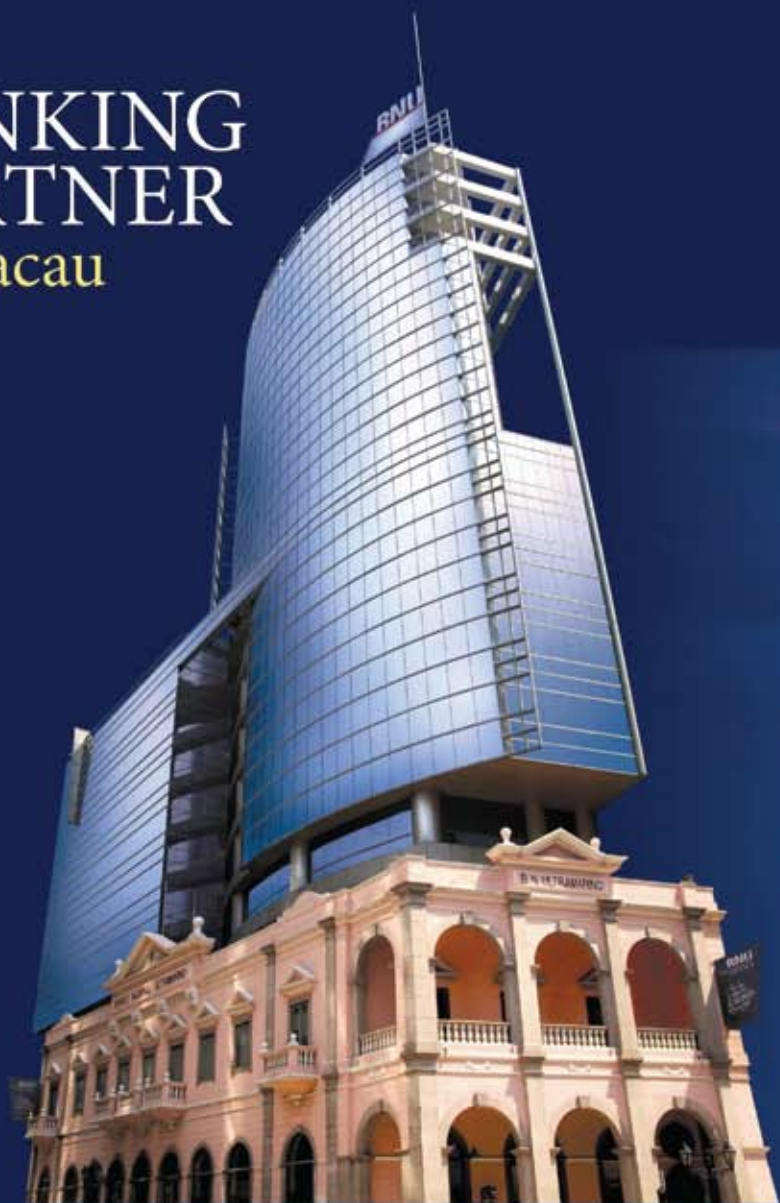


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