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#38 /2020 04

# More than just fashion: fun and practical fashion designs from Macao

## 【Brand Story】

Local original IP Bucket King's grand  
adventure in Sanya —  
An interview with creator Case Wong

## 【Opinion】

Focusing on pattern-making and  
assisting emerging designers: an  
interview with fashion designer Kitty Ng

## 【Local Force】

Good Farmer Production:  
using 3D printing technology  
to print Macao's architectures



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### Editor's letter

In recent years, the fashion industry in Macao has been emerging. Quite a number of fashion brands have been trying to increase their market exposure by emphasising fashion aesthetics as well as integrating functionality and comfortability into their fashion designs. In the “Feature” section, representatives of three local fashion brands, namely MACON, Lexx Moda and GODDESS ARMOUR, which cover functional clothing such as homewear, shoes and swimsuits, to share their brand value and business philosophy.

In November last year, a Bucket King-themed restaurant for families opened in Hainan Island, China. In the “Brand Story” section, Case Wong, the creator of Macao original animation character “Bucket King”, talks about the development of this IP and the experiences of its introduction to the mainland market. Good Farmer Production Ltd. was founded by a group of local young people who use 3D printing technology to produce delicate and small models of Macao’s architecture. In the “Local Force” section, Alan Lou, one of the company founders, discusses their entrepreneurial journey and product features. Veteran fashion designer, Kitty Ng, has multiple identities in the fashion industry of Macao. Recently, she has devoted herself to assisting new designers with pattern-making service and setting up “LMD Pattern-Making Workshop”. In the “Opinion” section, she discloses the reason behind this.

As usual, our bloggers share their views and news of the creative industries around the world in Blogs, bringing latest cultural and creative information to readers.

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## More than just fashion: fun and practical fashion designs from Macao

If you open your closet and take a look at your fashion collection in it, how many pieces of garments of yours are designed by local fashion brands in Macao? In recent years, the fashion industry in Macao has been emerging. Quite a number of fashion brands have been trying to attract more consumers and increase their market exposure by integrating functionality into their fashion designs, making their fashion items more comfortable to wear and providing new features. In this issue, we have invited three local fashion brands from the pyjamas, shoes and swimwear sector to share their entrepreneurial journey and business philosophy with us.

By Lai Chou In  
Photo courtesy of interviewees



• Jane Chan

## MACON pyjamas: fun and entertaining sensations

The clothes manufacturing industry in Macao no longer enjoys rapid growth in the status quo. But local clothes manufacturers are still making active efforts to facilitate changes in recent years, hoping to find new business directions based on their existing businesses. This was how the original fashion brand MACON came into being. After establishment, MACON is now rolling out fashion series that target the homewear scene. The company first launched fragrant pyjamas, which is an integration of not only aesthetic and design, but also fun and fragrance.

### Increasing demand for fashionable homewear

MACON was founded in 2013. According to the brand's general manager Jane Chan, considering Macao Fusion Group has been good at making and exporting casual clothes and the fact that Macao is perceived as a city of tourism and leisure, MACON therefore mainly targets the casual clothes for women. The company has opened two brick-and-mortar outlets in Zhongshan and has consignment points in Hong Kong and Macao. "After several years of development, MACON has accumulated a fan base. Our fans would consult with us from time to time on whether there are products suitable for their children or their loved ones," Chan introduced. The slasher culture has risen in recent years and many people have chosen to work from home. That's why there are now higher standards for homewears. This drove Chan and her team to prepare for a new homewear product line last year.



• The brand had rolled out several fragrant pyjamas

### A combination of fun and fashion

The first product that homewear side line launched had been the Fragrant Pyjamas co-produced by MACON and local young designer Cheng Chi Auntie. The fragrant pyjamas with a delicate design are made of comfortable fabrics and can diffuse fragrance. Consumers can choose from six different fragrances, including bubble tea, sweet honey, peach, etc. According to Chan, the product adopts a technology that allows the pyjamas' fragrance to be activated by consumers' body heat. "Once our clients put on the pyjamas, their body heat will activate the fragrance and then the pyjamas will start diffusing perfume scent," Chan explained. "The fragrance can stay with the pyjamas for at least a year and will not be washed away."



• The Fragrant Pyjamas series hit fashion shows in Hong Kong and Macao in 2019

After making its appearance at two fashion shows in Hong Kong and Macao last September and October, MACON's six fragrant pyjamas then started trial sales at several outlets in the two cities since December. Macao Fashion Gallery was one of the outlets. "We got satisfying responses from the market, much better than we expected. We got the attention of many young consumers and families," Chan explained. According to Chan, the company will continue to refine the side product line and is planning to roll out cushions and beddings with fun elements, such as fragrant cushions. "Similar to fragrant pyjamas, we are hoping that clothes won't just look good, but can also bring new experiences to our customers. We want our customers to have other sensational experiences from a piece of garment," Chan said.

For Macao's fashion brands, products with special features can help them get closer to their customers. "Right now, local brands in Macao are not well recognised by consumers yet. Most of the local consumers will not buy our products for our brand name. So local brands need to roll out some appealing products that will attract consumers, and that will provide an opportunity for brands to gain exposure. That's why the homewear side product line created a channel for consumers to know MACON."

### Crossover cooperation sparks inspiration

The homewear side product line will continue to work with other designers, illustrators and artists for rolling out more crossovers, which will spark more new inspirations and generate better collaboration in the industry. "Macao does have a number of talented designers and artists. They might lack the capacity and experience in making products and marketing. We are trying to solve this problem through crossover collaboration so that we can get more exposure for these designers while getting MACON to be seen by more people," Chan said.

MACON originally planned to launch its side product line in February or March this year. But considering the impact of the novel coronavirus infection, the launch has been postponed to July or August. These products will be sold through consignment and online platforms, which will mainly target Hong Kong and Macao in the initial phase. "We pay great attention to online pop-up sales because online platforms allow us to reach customers from different backgrounds," Chan explained. "And pop-up can be more memorable."

### Going beyond Macao

Chan believes that homewear designs such as pyjamas pay more attention to the application of technologies and materials when compared with previous casual wear designs. "Casual clothes value fashion aesthetics and design more. Homewears are relatively simpler. But they give us bigger challenges in term of how to apply innovative technologies on our products," Chan said. "Take the fragrant pyjamas as an example. The biggest challenge we had when making the fragrant pyjamas was the fragrance technology. We needed to learn how to control the intensity of the fragrance. My nose suffered a lot when trying to master the skills."

To survive in the industry, local fashion brands in Macao need to look beyond Macao. "Many designers in Macao mentioned that it is hard to find manufacturers to produce their products because the market in the city is too small and therefore the order volume is naturally small. Very few factories would be willing to accept such low-volume orders. Even if there are factories who are willing to take the orders, the cost will be high anyway, which to some extent decreases our competitiveness in the market," Chan explained. "So the most important thing for local brands is to enter other markets, whether it is the Greater Bay Area or some other places."



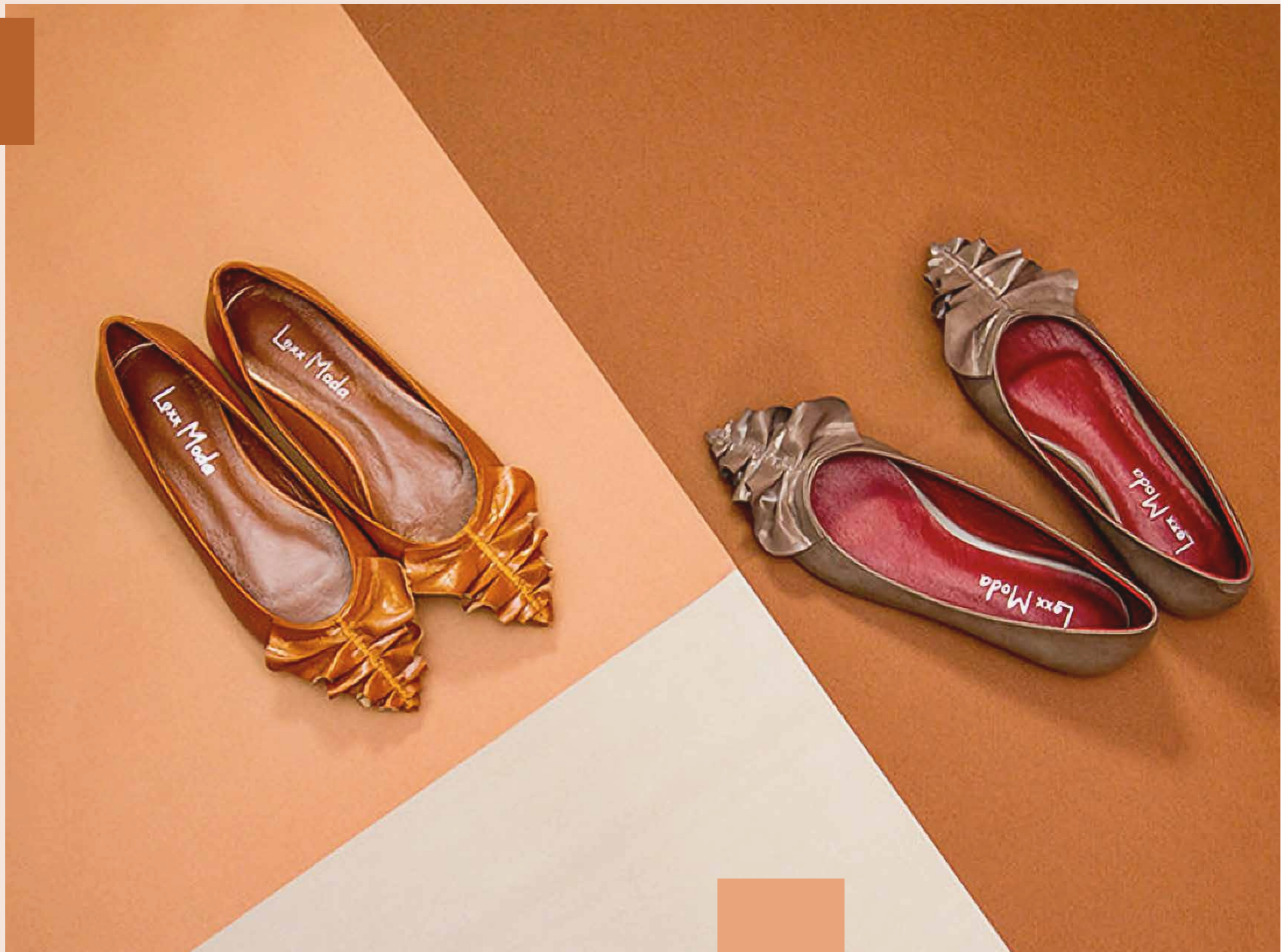
• The brand had set up a physical store in Zhongshan City and consignment points in Hong Kong and Macao



• Sanjo long

## Lexx Moda: making shoes that are light, comfortable and fashionable

Fashion develops at a rocket speed, which resonates with a classic quote from the popular reality TV show *Project Runway*: “One day you’re in, the next day you’re out.” Founded in 2002, local women’s shoe brand Lexx Moda knows this well. For the past decade, Lexx Moda has been making changes to its operation and design. What remains unchanged is the brand’s pursuit of making comfortable shoes. “For shoes, comfort is the top priority. A pair of good-looking shoes won’t appeal to you if they are uncomfortable to wear,” the brand’s founder Sanjo long said.



• The brand’s shoes are light and comfortable to wear



• long would showcase the brand in different exhibitions around the world

• The brand had opened a brick-and-mortar store in Guangzhou

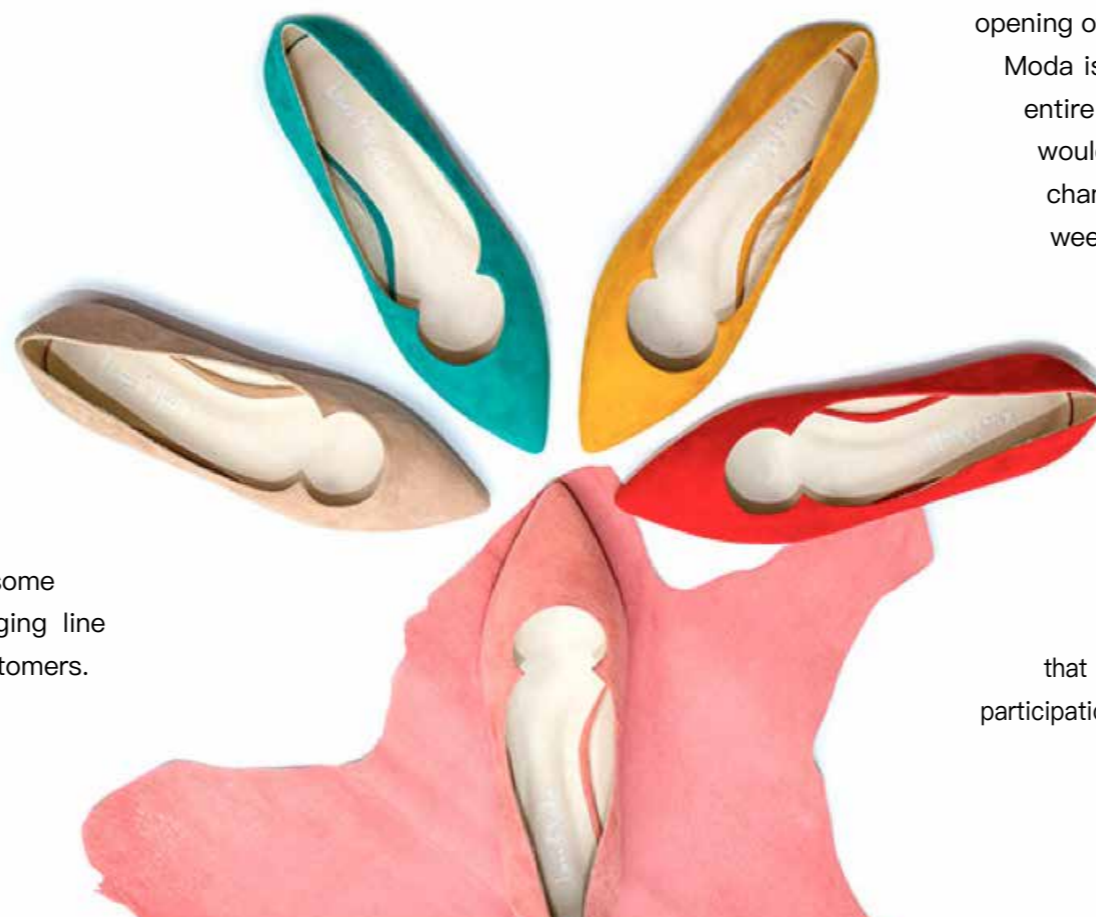
## A small shop from overseas transformed into a Macao brand

Lexx Moda was originally a small shop that long opened in Northampton in the UK by chance. “At that time, except for first-tier fashion brands, common shoe brands did not offer a lot of diversity in shoe products. So I decided to import some products from mainland China and then sell shoes with designs that I like in the UK,” long said. Also influenced by the fashion scene in Europe, long decided to come back to Macao and opened her own company in 2003, focusing on developing a women shoe brand.

Through the network that she built in the UK, long was able to participate in different exhibitions in Europe and promote her shoe designs to businesses directly, which can be considered as B2B (business to business) promotion. Her early clients were mostly from the UK and France. Now, long’s main clients are generally based in Japan, Spain, France, Italy, Hong Kong, etc. She revealed that she didn’t promote her shoes to different businesses in the brand name of Lexx Moda. “At that time, I thought that only top fashion companies have brands. But then I realised that the brand name is only a summary of a company’s style and fashion. Then I gained the confidence to develop clients through promoting my own design.”

## Careful selection of colour

Lexx Moda has been around for over a decade. According to long, even though the brand will make certain adjustments based on recent fashion trends, their shoe products are still mostly slippers, flats, and casual shoes that prioritise comfort. “We want our customers to enjoy light shoes and walk freely, while giving customers a fashion persona. That’s why we need to pay extra attention to the choice of materials and colour,” long explained. Lexx Moda prefers natural materials, including hemp, cotton, leather and some plant materials. Coupled with the use of different colours and changing line patterns, Lexx Moda’s products can leave a great impression on the customers.



## Entering the Greater Bay Area

Besides the design aesthetic, Lexx Moda has also added new elements to its marketing operation in recent years. Considering factors such as the increasing popularity of e-commerce, long pointed out that sales growth had encountered the bottleneck as the sales were mainly contributed by promotion at exhibitions. That’s why Lexx Moda decided to explore the B2C model (business to customer) two years ago, starting sales on its official website and on social media to actively approach customers. Supported by the Cultural Industry Fund of Macao, Lexx Moda had opened its first flagship store in the Greater Bay Area this March. The flagship store is located in Greater Bay Area’s centre Guangzhou. “The market in mainland China is very competitive. But still, there is a huge market and people spend a lot on not only on top brands but also common brands,” she analysed. Before becoming a famous brand, Lexx Moda needs to appeal to consumers with reasonable pricings. Therefore, most of the shoes at the flagship store in Guangzhou are priced between RMB300 and RMB600.

long stated that the brand needs to increase the diversity of shoe products after the opening of the physical outlet to show rich visual effects and variety. That’s why Lexx Moda is also producing other shoe products in addition to slippers and flats. The entire fashion industry has been changing in recent years. In the past, brands would roll out new products after several months. But now, the product cycle has changed to weeks as brands would launch new products after three or four weeks to cater to consumers’ demand.

## Importing the shopping experience

As for future plans, Lexx Moda is planning to open a second store in the Greater Bay Area. However, the goal here is not to increase sales, but rather to utilise the latest technologies to build an experience shop of the brand. The experience store will allow customers to pick the shoe material, colour and design by themselves to create their ideal shoes. “We have an IT team that is responsible for this matter,” long said. “We are hoping to increase customers’ participation in the experience store to create a new shopping experience.”



• Potinja Choi

**GODDESS ARMOUR:  
empowering Goddesses that  
bring glory to Macao**

Four years ago, Potinja Choi went to Italy for a study tour. At an exchange event attended by students from all parts of the world, Choi learned that almost everyone's hometown has a representative fashion brand. Coming from Macao, Choi suddenly found it hard to engage in the conversation. This experience somehow inspired Choi to start the women swimsuit and underwear brand GODDESS ARMOUR that tries to build an image of Goddess and let more people get to know Macao more.



• The brand participated in Centrestage Fashion Show in Hong Kong



## Refining the details to provide a luxurious experience

GODDESS ARMOUR was kickstarted in 2018. Although technically speaking Choi had never been to the fashion industry, she is very familiar with fashion design as she has always loved fashion and made clothes for herself from time to time. “I like sexy elements. I also love the underwear brand Victoria’s Secret,” Choi said. “I collect swimsuits and underwear made of different fabrics and with different designs. So I then started GODDESS ARMOUR. Macao doesn’t have a lot of original brands, let alone swimsuit and underwear brands.”

As the brand name suggests, GODDESS ARMOUR aims to construct an elegant and sexy image of a Goddess through swimsuits, underwear, perfume, bathrobes, etc. “We are hoping that our brand can bring luxury to customers. So we had spent lots of efforts in design and colour combination, making use of elements such as silk-like fabrics, gold embroidery, and pearl,” Choi said. “We want our products to be more than just swimsuits or underwear. We want them to be fashion items that can match other outfits.”



## Using alternative materials to protect the environment

GODDESS ARMOUR will roll out the Obsessed series this summer which adopted environmentally friendly alternative materials. Besides adding crystal elements to the design, GODDESS ARMOUR had also spent quite an effort in selecting materials. The brand didn’t use polyester, which is commonly used for making swimsuits, but chose cashmere instead. “We as a brand believe in a green business philosophy. We want to protect the environment and decrease pollution. That’s why we decided to feature using sustainable materials in our newest swimsuit line instead of polyester that contains plastic. Cashmere swimsuits are quite rare. I believe this will attract a lot of attention and reflect the series’ theme ‘Obsessed’ as well,” Choi said.

In comparison with other kinds of clothes, Choi points out that swimsuits and underwear are designed to fit different body types well, especially underwear, which requires the designers to have more precise control over the curves and sizes. “Besides design aesthetics, we also pay great attention to how comfortable it is to wear our products,” she explained. “For example, we didn’t use metal wire in our swimsuits and underwear so that they won’t apply too much pressure to our customers’ body.”

## Overseas expansion through social media platforms

Since establishment, GODDESS ARMOUR has participated in several fashion shows and exhibitions both in Macao and overseas. The brand’s products are currently consigned at a local hotel and also sold through online platforms. According to Choi, the sales performance in Macao hasn’t met the expectation yet. “Perhaps it is caused by our culture in some way. Asian women don’t go swimming or do sunbath very often,” Choi explained. “And our designs are quite western.” Considering factors such as consumption power and swimsuit preference, GODDESS ARMOUR is actively seeking to expand to overseas markets. In March, GODDESS ARMOUR entered the market in Dubai through authorising a local fashion agent to sell its products, which is expected to increase the brand’s exposure in the local market.

Besides, GODDESS ARMOUR is also planning to enter countries in America and Europe, such as Russia and Portugal. The brand is hoping to have some crossover promotions with social media influencers and supermodels to attract consumers. “During these two years since we opened GODDESS ARMOUR, we have been spending a lot of energy on the design and production. We also invested a lot of efforts in participating exhibitions,” Choi said. “This year could be a little bit different. More investments will be made in marketing and promotion, especially social media promotion.”



• Choi brought her brand to Street Fashion Show in Milan

## Bringing glory to Macao

GODDESS ARMOUR is now sponsoring swimsuits for beauty pageants from Macao that are participating in beauty contests in both Macao and overseas, including the swimsuits for contestants of last year’s Miss Macao. GODDESS ARMOUR has by date sponsored around 20 beauty pageants from Macao. “We mainly want to help them bring glory to Macao, which can allow more people to know Macao and its designs better,” Choi said.

“The brand had encountered lots of challenges. We used to think that if we could make it to a fashion show then people would be crazy for our products and come buy everything we have in stock. But it didn’t turn out to be like that,” Choi explained. Nevertheless, she is still feeling positive for the brand’s prospect. “We have faith in our designs. I don’t think we need to change anything or give up. The problem is that there isn’t enough exposure yet. But we did meet quite some fans who love our designs,” she concluded.

By Jasper Hou  
Photo courtesy of  
interviewee

# Local original IP Bucket King's grand adventure in Sanya —

## An interview with creator Case Wong

It must be every anime maker's goal to see their original intellectual property to penetrate other sectors. Local anime character Bucket King, designed by Case Wong and his team, is a positive cartoon character that radiates energy and enthusiasm. In November last year, a Bucket King-themed restaurant for families opened at Hilton Sanya Yalong Bay Resort & Spa in Hainan province, China. In this issue, we have invited Bucket King's creator Case Wong to show us Bucket King's gold rush to Sanya.



• Case Wong



• Bucket King's picturebooks and fan merchandise

### Everyone can be a hero

Wong has always had a keen interest in painting since little. He studied graphic design for his undergraduate study and later entered the design industry and worked for a few years after graduation. In 2013, he started his own design company in Macao, the Case Station Advertising & Planning Company Limited. "At that time, Macao started to invest a lot in developing the cultural and creative industry in the city. Lots of cultural and creative brands started to emerge," Wong said. "The government's support facilitated a favourable environment for the cultural and creative industry to thrive. Then I felt like I had accumulated some experience in the industry already and decided to build my own design team. Our main job is to provide

design services for our clients. In 2015, we started to have initial concepts for Bucket King not long after the establishment of the company."

Bucket King was inspired by Wong's childhood memory about a metal bucket at his home. "When I was little, my buddies and I would put the bucket on our head and acted as if we were superheroes and superman. So we applied this element when creating Bucket King," Wong said. "In addition, given the fact that we didn't have a concrete image of what Bucket King looked like, I was able to enjoy more space for creativity and imagination. Our underage readers can quickly immerse themselves into the story and character. Everyone can be a hero!"

### Continue to diversify content to bring new blood to the IP

Since 2015, Wong and his team have been developing more content for Bucket King. Besides hardcopy picture books, Bucket King has also been adapted into other forms of media. “After these years’ development on this IP, we have not only added more characters to Bucket King based on the progress of the story but also made innovations on the way we make content. We started from traditional 2D picture books to 3D picture books. We also produced several animation clips for online promotion. The content and character designs cater more to children’s preference.”

The first Bucket King Showroom at Rua Nova de S. Lázaro is currently under decoration and planning. Besides picture books, other related fan merchandise from Bucket King can also be found and purchased at the showroom. Wong is now eyeing social media platforms to promote Bucket King and increase the IP’s exposure. “Besides rolling out more Bucket King content and fan merchandise, we would also launch a series of mini-games and emojis on social media so Bucket King can reach more young people. This will continue to energise Bucket King as an IP,” Wong said.



• Bucket King’s showroom at Rua Nova de S. Lázaro

### Bucket King’s adventure in Sanya

When talking about the opportunities they had encountered when making the IP, Wong mentioned that 2018 was a turning point for Bucket King. Wong was working with an interior design company in Macao at that time and got the chance to bring Bucket King to China Jinmao’s headquarter in Shanghai to bid for a new family restaurant project at Hilton Sanya Yalong Bay Resort & Spa in Hainan province. “The hotel was looking for an anime IP that is suitable for a restaurant for families,” Wong explained. “Luckily, Bucket King’s design and concept were in line with the client’s preference and therefore we successfully won the bid.” After a year’s planning, the Bucket Kingdom Restaurant for families was opened to the public in November 2019.

The Bucket Kingdom Restaurant project was an entirely new experience for Wong. “I never thought that our three-year-old IP Bucket King can actually cash in through copyright licensing so soon. We were very excited and also worried that we might run into a stone wall because of our lack of experience,” Wong said. “But it turned out that China Jinmao has a very mature and experienced team in importing IP to the project. We learned quite a lot from the cooperation with Jinmao. I believe this will prove to be very useful when finding similar opportunities in Macao in the future.”

### A highly consistent themed restaurant for families

“The interior design was completed by a local interior design firm in Macao that we were working with. As for us, our job was to authorise Bucket King’s IP copyright to the restaurant for operation,” Wong explained. “Besides integrating Bucket King’s elements into the decoration, we had also designed a series of entertainment facilities and fan merchandise based on Bucket King. There are also regular plays about Bucket King’s stories at the restaurant. These efforts have helped to ensure the elements you can see in the restaurant are highly consistent. We charge our client an annual copyright license fee for using the IP. In addition, a proportion of the revenue generated by the sales of Bucket King related merchandise will also be given to us as copyright royalty.”

According to Wong, despite the huge success in licensing out Bucket King’s copyright, Case Studio’s main sources of income are still advertisement design, publication designing, event planning, etc. “Bucket King is still a project on the go,” Wong clarified. “Currently, we are spending more money on Bucket King than we can earn. But we do have confidence in this IP. Bucket King will generate most of the revenue for the company in the future. Then this would mean our efforts in all these years have been paid off!”



• Bucket Kingdom Restaurant at Hilton Sanya Yalong Bay Resort & Spa, Hainan province.



# Focusing on pattern-making and assisting emerging designers: an interview with fashion designer Kitty Ng

Without pattern-making, even the most beautiful fashion design would not be able to become a reality. However, pattern-making is not an easy task to complete in Macao. Two factors are taking into account. For one thing, there aren't a lot of clothes-manufacturing demands in the city and therefore not that many factories are willing to accept the manufacturing orders from Macao. For another, many skilled tailors have already retired. Seeing this need in Macao, local fashion designer Kitty Ng decided to launch the LMD Pattern-Making Workshop in 2017. "At present, our clients are mostly young designers in Macao. They know how to do pattern-making, but they don't necessarily have the skills to do it well," Ng said. "Without good templates from pattern-making, you might lose the chance to win an award at a fashion competition or lose orders from your clients when doing business. That's why having good pattern-making is very important. It is the first step in turning a design into a product."



• Kitty Ng

## The passion for helping emerging designers

Ng has been working the line of fashion design for several years. She is a creative designer with great pattern-making skills and tailoring techniques. Since little, Ng had been accumulating practical skills in clothes-making when working at a factory, from basic jobs like sewing, attaching beads to handbags, to doing pearl embroidery. At the age of 15, Ng started to do pattern-making in the factory. When she was 18 years old, Ng was promoted as the director of the clothing manufacturing department at the factory. Ng also has an academic background in fashion design. She even learned 3D tailoring techniques from tailoring experts from French luxury brand CHANEL. In 2004, she started her own high-end fashion brand La Mode Désir. The brand had represented Macao in a number of fashion shows in the Cross-Strait regions. From 1985 to 2015, Ng has worked as a tutor for the Training Centre for Industrial Development, Macao Productivity and Technology Transfer Centre and the Department of Fashion Design at Macao Polytechnic Institute.

Ng's creativity, skills and experiences have enabled her to invest more in her brand, without having to worry about developing other businesses. Besides making new fashion designs, Ng is also devoted to helping local young talents. The LMD Pattern-Making Workshop was established in 2017 to help local emerging designers with pattern making. According to Ng, she was driven by her passion to launch the workshop. "I have been teaching for a long time and I have trained some young talents. So I have natural incentives to help young designers excel in their field," Ng said. "Then the government set up the Cultural Industry Fund, which provided me with the fund to open the LMD Pattern-Making Workshop."

## Pattern-making made possible for anything wearable

The pattern-making workshop is named LMD, which is short for La Mode Désir. The workshop's clients are mostly young designers in Macao, some are from Hong Kong, mainland China, Southeast Asia, etc. From clothes, accessories to fashion items, anything that is wearable can enjoy LMD's services. "For instance, if you want to make a garment with lights, then we would try every means to put LED lights on it to deliver the ideal visual effect that the client wants," Ng said, explaining that the price of pattern-making for a garment is decided by its size, materials, delivery time, etc. "But since we had subsidy from the Cultural Industry Fund at that time, we were able to provide a 30% off discount for local designers. The discount could even be bigger than that."

Ng pointed out that it is very convenient for local designers to consult with LMD because it is located in the central area of Macao and opens from 12 at noon until 9 in the evening. "If you approach businesses in mainland China, you would discover that tailors in mainland would be off work at five in the afternoon. You can't really find anyone after the business hour," Ng explained, saying that as a designer she knows designers' needs better and therefore could provide some professional advice for other designers. "I would start making patterns for a fashion sample with the client by my side. I would show my client how to make patterns for clothes step by step. That's what is special about my service."

According to Ng, high-end couture is very different from pattern-making, as the former is making fashion design of one's own while the latter is more about turning other people's concepts and



• Ng provides pattern-making service for local designers

designs into a reality. The fact that young designers are generally more creative also allows Ng to learn a lot when making patterns for her clients. "I know how to make clothes, so I would tend to be more reserved. I would not design clothes that I cannot make. Even if I could make some designs into a reality, I might still give them up considering the difficulty and high cost," Ng said. "So my works tend to go for safe directions. I need to make sure I can make them without putting too much pressure on me. But young designers oftentimes do not realise the risks coming from the decisions they make in their design. That's why they will take their creativity farther. I think this is good because fashion design is essentially about creativity. Fashion means you have to be ahead of your time. I have learned a lot from young designers when doing the workshop."



• Ng's fashion designs gained great recognition at Macao Fashion Festival

## Helping local fashion design talents

The workshop had stopped applying for subsidies from the Cultural Industry Fund. But Ng is still offering a 30% discount to local designers nonetheless. "The 30% discount doesn't cause me to lose money. It would only mean I am not making any money out of it. So I would continue to keep it this way in the long run," Ng said. She also mentioned that the Subsidy Programme for Fashion Design on Sample Making launched by the Cultural Affairs Bureau has been providing great support for the local fashion industry for many years. Ng had noticed several designers with great potential who often make it into the second round of the subsidy programme. Subsequently, Ng advised the government to provide two sets of subsidy programme: one focuses on helping emerging designers and provide them with more opportunities to enter the industry while the other one focuses on assisting designers with certain experiences in the industry to go farther.

"Since they already have relevant experiences, they could still make it into the second round of the programme for consecutive years without making much progress," Ng recalled. "So I thought we could design another subsidy programme that targets designers with experiences and those who have been subsidised by the programme before. In my opinion, this will help them go farther in fashion and subsequently drive the entire industry forward!"

## Good Farmer Production: using 3D printing technology to print Macao's architectures

Using 3D printing technology to print a house? Many might think that is merely a concept. But in fact, there are already relevant and mature technologies overseas bringing up a new industry. In Macao, there is also a group of young people who are using 3D printing technology to print “houses” with local elements. These printed “houses” attracted lots of buyers falling over each other to get one after they hit the market. So what is so special about these “houses”? In this issue, we will take you on a tour to these 3D printed “houses”.



• Alan Lou

### Printing Macao people's collective memory and culture

Good Farmer Production Ltd. was founded by a group of young people in Macao in 2019. As an emerging cultural and creative brand, Good Farmer Production makes good use of 3D printing technology to make small and delicate architectures from Macao. Alan Lou, one of the Good Farmer Production's founders, is devoted to studying Macao's history, which has been the decisive factor for him when choosing college programme as well as his career path. "I am hoping to resolve the deadlock between development and cultural preservation in the city through making architecture models," Lou explained. "Using 3D technology to print out local architectures in Macao is also a way that allows us to preserve our collective memory and culture."

But why using 3D printing technology to print models? "Our initial idea was that we could just make architecture models, like approaching some factories and asking them to make figures with us. But I didn't have relevant experience and industry resources. I didn't have any channel to look for potential manufacturers that I could work with. Plus, there wasn't enough cash for me to do mass production. All these had made finding a manufacturer extremely difficult for me," Lou recalled. "Then I noticed that 3D printing can also help us turn our ideas into actual products. I started to conduct research and collect more information on 3D printing. Eventually, I learned that 3D printing is low-cost while providing high efficiency. That's why I decided to import 3D printers to build 'houses' for our brand!"



• The printed models still need to undergo a series of delicate colouring processes



• Macao's architecture made by Good Farmer Production using 3D printing technology

### Encountering challenges and continuing to improve

For Lou, a newbie who had zero experience with 3D printing, the entrepreneurial journey had not been easy. Even looking for the right equipment and finding the correct use of it were difficult tasks. "In the beginning, we used traditional 3D printers. Simply put, they construct the model through layering. But the quality of the models they printed varies. The results couldn't meet our expectation even after we polished them," Lou said. "Later we came across stereolithography, and we have been using it ever since. Stereolithography is a relatively new 3D printing technology that uses light to cause the materials to cross-link together to form shapes. When compared with traditional 3D printing technologies, stereolithography provides more precision and prints faster. The models made by using stereolithography have smooth surface and details that match our expectations."

Having the right equipment does not mean the production process of a model becomes easier. From the 3D design, controlling the printer, to colouring the model, all these parts of the 3D printing process presented lots of challenges to the team. Lou and his team had to constantly learn and make improvements, which enabled them to greatly boost their efficiency and work quality. "Souvenir models' size ranges between 20cm and 30cm on the market. Our models, on the other hand, are small and delicate, with their figure size controlled within 12cm. The biggest reason for it is that we want to lower the cost and make sure most residents in Macao will be able to afford it," Lou said. Currently, Good Farmer Production's 3D printed architectures are priced at MOP120 each. It is surely difficult to maintain the price to such a low level after excluding the cost in labour, equipment maintenance, materials, colouring, packaging, etc.

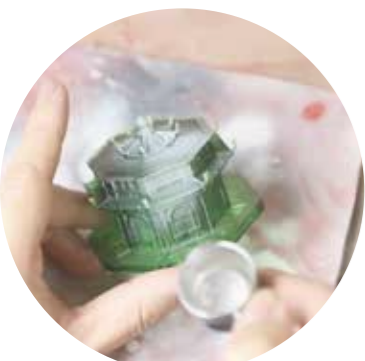
### Models that resonate with people in Macao

Good Farmer Production's models are mostly sold and purchased through online platforms. There are also a small number of products consigned in touristic areas. "At present, most of our customers are residents in Macao. I believe people come to buy our products not only because we used edgy technology like 3D printing, but also because of their nostalgia sentiment towards Macao. Our products are not perfect at this stage. Our products more or less have some flaws of their own. But there are still lots of customers in Macao who are actively making purchase orders because our products resonate with them. It is pretty similar to people willing to spend money on going to a concert," Lou said.

At present, besides producing its in-house models, Good Farmer Production is also responding to the demand for customised 3D printing. "Given the fact that we don't have enough people on our team, we would need to halt the process of creating new products and shift our attention to studying the products of our clients," Lou said. "But right now, we will focus on developing our brand and building up a brand reputation first. As for the demand for customised 3D printing, we would prolong the production cycle while making sure we can deliver quality results."

### Maturing the 3D printing production line

In the future, Good Farmer Production will strive to build an exchange platform for the cultural and creative industry besides continuing to design more 3D printed architectures. "Besides working on our brand's social media, we are building up our official website as well. In addition to showcasing our products through these platforms, we are hoping to attract different cultural and creative product fans to share and exchange their opinions on our platforms," Lou concluded, saying that expanding production scale is a key direction for the team. "We need to stabilise our production capacity, including the number of designers, production staff and equipment that we have. We need to build a more mature production line to standardise our production volume, quality, pricing, etc. Only through this way can we find more cooperation opportunities, expand our income source, and maintain healthy and steady growth for our brand."



## DigiCon6 Asia: boosting digital content creativity

Starting from 20th February, two new short animation films were available for watching online. Even though each short film only lasts for less than one minute, their art design and animation show great quality. The two films showcase a futuristic Tokyo to the audience through the stories of several distinct characters, making viewers longing for more.

### Lo Che Ying



Lo is an experienced anime producer and began independent anime creation in 1977. His works won the first prize at the Hong Kong Independent Short Film Festival for four consecutive times and he was promoted as panel member. In the next year, he joined the Radio Television Hong Kong to work as cartoon producer until 1993. Over recent years, he spent efforts on promotion of the anime industry in Hong Kong and planning of anime exhibitions. Recently, he worked as the curator of the 50 Years of Hong Kong and Taiwanese Animation. He currently worked as Secretary General of the Hong Kong Animation and Culture Association.

The animations I am talking about here are the anime commercials of VEGA laptops from NEC Corporation's LAVIE series. The anime series titled *CREATTOKYO* have two parts, namely *VEGA: The Fight* and *VEGA: Liberation*. Shunsuke Nakajima is the director and screenwriter of the animations. However, the two animations were produced by different companies. The former animation was produced by seasoned Japanese animation production team Shirogumi Inc., while Point Five Creations from Hong Kong was in charge of the latter. The cooperation between the two companies was facilitated by DigiCon6 Asia, a digital content competition organised by Japanese TV station TBS.

To my knowledge, we have introduced DigiCon6 Asia in this column several times. Last year, we witnessed the 21st DigiCon6 Asia, which was also the first time for the event to stage its grand final and award presentation ceremony outside Japan. The three-day event was held last year in Hong Kong in late November. What's more, productions from Hong Kong achieved their record-breaking performance at the 21st DigiCon6 Asia as well.

As a matter of fact, TBS had already started planning to hold DigiCon6's grand final outside Japan two years ago. Given DigiCon6 is an influential event in Asia, the organising committee was choosing between Hong Kong and Singapore for holding the event. After a round of meeting and coordination, the organising committee decided to hold the 21st DigiCon6 Asia in Hong Kong. The local co-organiser in Hong Kong, Hong Kong Digital Entertainment Association (HKDEA), acted swiftly. Besides applying for subsidies from the Hong Kong S.A.R Government, they were also busy with selecting the right venue and mobilising personnel. In addition, HKDEA also planned to add extra features and shows to the event, which would make 21st DigiCon6 Asia even more exciting and rich in content than the previous ones held in Japan. Of

course, all these initial ideas needed to be approved by the organising committee in Japan before proceeding into actions. Luckily, the two sides had smooth cooperation. The final plan for the 21st DigiCon6 Asia was set in May last year. Tai Kwun, an art museum in Central, Hong Kong, was selected as the event venue.

However, an unprecedented social movement broke out in Hong Kong last year since June. After several months of social unrest, it has become quite common for people in Hong Kong to encounter emergency situations when commuting and in their daily life. Media outlets' continuous report on the movement had turned Hong Kong into a very dangerous city in many foreigners' eyes. The co-organisers in Japan and Hong Kong, therefore, paid close attention to the development of the movement. In fact, they had both considered the possibility of delaying DigiCon6 Asia to another date.

DigiCon6 Asia still turned out to be fine, as if it was destined to happen. The organising units believed that as long as there were adequate plans for the event then DigiCon6 Asia should be able to take place in an orderly manner. Most of the filmmakers and participating units (almost 20) from Asia confirmed to attend DigiCon6 Asia in Hong Kong, which greatly boosted the organising committee's confidence in preparing for the annual event.

The 21st DigiCon6 Asia was successfully held in Hong Kong from 28th and 30th November, lasting for three days. On the first day, two animations were selected out of the gold award-winning productions from 14 regions for the highest honour by an international panel of seven judges. In addition, Hong Kong-based famous animation director Raman Hui, who was also on the panel, led the Asian Master Summit to share stories of the production process of *Monster Hun One & Two*, two popular films directed by him.

On 29th November, most of the producers that had won a gold or silver award were at the screening room of Tai Kwun, sharing their production with the audience there. That was a rare opportunity for not only the exchange of opinions on the animations but also the exchange of different lifestyles and culture. This interesting activity was part of DigiCon6 Asia's themed activities.

On 30th November at 4pm, the award presentation ceremony of the 21st DigiCon6 Asia officially kicked off. The organising committee had arranged a number of performances for the audience, including local band Nowhere Boys' songs. *Superpowers*, one of the songs that Nowhere Boys performed, was written specifically for the 21st DigiCon6 Asia. The song was easy to sing and unveiled the opening of the award ceremony. The climax of the ceremony was the announcement of two major awards. *Another World*, produced by Point Five Creations from Hong Kong, took the highest honour back home as expected. *Tea*, an amazing production from Uzbekistan, also won a gold award. In addition, another animation named *Lionverse* from Hong Kong won a silver award for best technique. A special award category, Tai Kwun Award, was created to pay tribute to the venue partner Tai Kwun. The Tai Kwun Award was given to local production "*So Sad Show*"—from *Six Paths of Samsara*. Overall, animations from Hong Kong did a great job at the 21st DigiCon6 Asia.

Point Five Creations' success at DigiCon6 Asia even won the company the rare opportunity to produce commercial animations for NEC Corporation. I believe this is a new adventure provided by DigiCon6 Asia for Point Five Creations. There is going to be more animations coming out of this in the future.



## Support for the film industry and “Parasite”

South Korean film *Parasite*'s great success at the Academy Awards (also known as Oscars) has stirred up viral discussions.

Even my mom (who actually hasn't watched the film yet) told me that it must be every Asian film director's dream to win an Oscar when I was having dinner with her on that day. I don't really agree with the idea that winning an Oscar is a common dream for all Asian directors because many quality films in Asia might not really fit into the Hollywood circuit. But it is truly exciting to witness *Parasite* to be the first Asian film that takes four Academy Awards home, including Best Picture, Best Director, etc. In fact, *Parasite* had already received recognition at the Cannes Film Festival, becoming the first South Korean film to win a Golden Palm Award. In my opinion, film directors will definitely envy *Parasite*'s ability to appeal to two different kinds of film festivals, one that has more commercial considerations and one that highlights artistic expression while being able to garner a successful box office record. This means that *Parasite* has not only gained recognition for its artistic value but also won the heart of its audience. It is quite rare for a film to cater to both sides.

I believe the artistic value of *Parasite* has already been discussed by many and will continue to be a hot topic, therefore I will not dwell on it. What I am trying to explain in this article is the fact that *Parasite*'s success is not only contributed by its director and production team's talent but also the overall development of the film industry in South Korea. For people living in Hong Kong and Macao, Korean films might not always be their top choice when going to the cinema. People might probably have a hard time trying to recall some Korean films they have watched besides *Train to Busan*. But if you are talking about K-Pop singers or Korean dramas, many people will know quite a lot about them.

This does not necessarily mean the Korean film industry only emerged in recent years. As a matter of fact, Korean films have enjoyed a long history of around a century, with lots of highlight moments and lows. During the past century, the South Korean government has been providing the country's film industry with both supporting policies and restrictions. During the Japanese occupation period and the Park Chung-hee dictatorship period, Korean films were not able to enjoy the rights to free expression for a long time. Then when South Korea finally started to undergo market reform, Korean films were met with great competition from Hollywood films. This is why the government's supporting policies and subsidies were crucial to the rise of the South Korean film industry. The South Korean government has been investing efforts in the cultural industry to increase its soft power to export culture since the 1990s. The results have been satisfying. South Korea's K-Pop is now popular around the globe while Korean TV dramas are taking over major TV channels. And now, Korean films are also increasingly be seen and recognised at international film festivals.

Macao is also advocating to drive the development of its cultural industry in recent years. The successful case of South Korea will definitely become a reference for us. But there are lots of reasons why we cannot simply copy and paste South Korea's success. Firstly, even though Macao was the first region in Greater China to have film projection equipment, we do not have a long history of making films. We are still exploring the area of film production like babies learning to walk. This makes it harder for the government to design relevant supporting policies since it is not a problem that can be solved simply through subsidies. We still need to take firm steps in evaluating approaches to nurturing different filmmaking talents, improving the industrial chain, exporting Macao's movies to overseas markets, etc. The government's support will not generate quick returns as well. It took South Korea around three decades to finally achieve the record they have today. It is impossible for Macao, who is still a newcomer in the industry, to pull off similar achievement in a short time. Of course, the success of the cultural industry is hugely decided by whether we can find talents. This is a variable that no one can effectively speculate. But the point about having government support is to ensure more people will have access to adequate opportunities that help them unleash their potential. If more people can gain opportunities, then it is more likely for us to find talents. Then the next step for us will be considering how we can better nurture these talents to help them go further in the industry. Support for the cultural industry has different layers. The government needs to provide adequate policies while professional talents in the film industry also need to be pioneering and entrepreneurial. Only through this way can we achieve great success.

Tracy Choi



Movie director, her documentary *I'm Here* won the Jury Award at the 2012 Macao International Film and Video Festival and was subsequently invited to various festivals in Asia and Europe. Choi received her MFA degree in Cinema Production from the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts. Her graduation film *Sometimes Naive* was short-listed in the 2013 Hong Kong Asian Film Festival. *The Farming on the Wasteland* won the The Jury's Commendation Award of the 2014 Macao International Film and Video Festival. Her latest production *Sisterhood* was selected in the competition section at the 1st International Film Festival & Awards-Macao and won the Macao Audience Choice Award at the festival. In addition, *Sisterhood* got two nominations at the 36th Hong Kong Film Awards.

## Performing for children and teenagers: on international exchange and exporting culture —Notes on the American art education industry (Part 1)

Performing arts for children and teenagers—Segmentation of the performing arts industry

Lam Sio Man



Bachelor's degree with a double major in Chinese and Art in Peking University. Master of Art and Administration in New York University. She has served in the Macao Cultural Affairs Bureau, the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs and the Museum of Chinese in America, working as art administrator and curator. She is now working as an art educator and administrator in New York, as well as an independent curator and writer.

For many art centres and communities, children and teenagers are the main audiences of performing arts in the U.S. This is the reason why it is not uncommon to see segmentation of the performing arts industry happening in places where the industry is rather mature. Performing arts show is also an important part of the country's cultural export. Every year, International Performing Arts for the Youth (IPAY) is held in the U.S. to promote performing arts shows that are recommended by the event and provide a platform for exchange.

This year, I visited IPAY for the second time. And I wish to share some of my observation there through this piece of article.

### International exchange

IPAY is an international organisation that aims to build a platform for showcasing performing arts for young audiences and professional exchange. Its members include performing arts artists and organisations from around the world, venue partners, art festival organisers, performing arts agents, etc. Currently, IPAY members are mostly from America and Europe. In recent years, Korean agencies have

been importing quite a number of quality performances from IPAY. More art venue representatives from Mainland China, on the other hand, are also coming to IPAY to look for good shows. It is without a doubt that the art communities from Asia are recognising the importance of IPAY.

IPAY is held in Philadelphia at the beginning of every year. The intensive one-week event will showcase tens of quality performing arts performances, which will be shown through showcase exchange, show recommendations and selected parts of performances or full performances. For art venues that feature performing arts, IPAY is an important opportunity for them to purchase and import performances. This year's IPAY attracted nearly 500 participants, including internationally recognised performing arts venues like New York's Lincoln Centre, Washington's Kennedy Centre, etc. Many American artists see IPAY as a great annual gathering opportunity because IPAY enables closer exchange between the participants when compared with other major performing arts trading platform. This allowed young industry workers like me to understand the operation, culture and trends in the performing arts industry in the U.S. more.

### Cultural export

As an international performing arts platform for exchange and trade, IPAY is also a place where countries traditionally strong in exporting their culture and emerging newcomers to compete with each other. You can not only see independent artists and groups at IPAY but also representatives of state governments. Canada Council for the Arts, for example, is one of the main sponsors of IPAY since its founding. The governments of Scotland, the Netherlands, Australia, etc. have also been the showcase and exchange activity sponsors for IPAY. It is apparent that western countries think highly of this event. As more Asian artists start to participate in IPAY, the event will be able to show more diversity in the development of performing arts around the world.

Different from previous years, this year's IPAY had a new session called FITA CHILE, which showcased performances from the Chile representatives in one day. FITA CHILE was originally an art performance trading platform in Chile but it got cancelled in late 2019 because of the political instability in the country. Luckily, some of the performances were able to happen at IPAY. A representative from Chile mentioned in her remark that she was the only artist from Chile to attend IPAY when she was here for the first time three years ago. To her surprise, she was able to get both the Chile government and art community to attend IPAY together, which allowed the U.S. and art communities from different parts of the world to see quality works from Chile. I couldn't help but think that perhaps Macao's art community, which is trying to expand to overseas markets in recent years, could make use of platforms like IPAY to go international. But of course, it is important to understand the targeted market and relevant operation well when exporting cultural products. I will make a further discussion on this point in my next article.

## Welcome to the era of audiobooks

Due to the increasing severity of the novel coronavirus outbreak, both libraries and brick-and-mortar bookstores have suspended operation. Even express companies have temporarily stopped delivering books. This is when digital books and audiobooks become incredibly handy.

I have never really been a fan of audiobooks. From my perspective, audiobooks are for people like children who cannot read, old people with bad eyesight and people who are ill in hospital beds and need to do something to kill time. I also think audiobooks are for lazy people who don't want to use their brain to read. For me, the voice acting also sounds weird and lacks an adequate portrayal of what is written in a book. I believe this will kill the imagination you can get from reading an actual book. I didn't get much exposure to things like bedtime stories or historical myths under a big banyan tree when I was a kid. But I did get exposed to the form of audiobook from my audiotapes of *300 Poems from Tang Dynasty*. Then after I grew older, I also had to listen to English audiotapes for school work. The English voice actors were very professional and they articulated each word perfectly. When I was listening to *Sherlock Holmes'* audiobook version read by Benedict Cumberbatch, I felt like there was a handsome English butler reading old stories in England to me. My friends in the publishing sector became fond of Chinese audiobooks for quite a long time. They even listened to the audiobook version of *The Records of the Grand Historian of China*, a series of historical records of ancient China that bring you back to the past. Audiobooks allow our eyes to take a break from intensive reading. They also enable us to keep reading in fragmented time such as when jogging, commuting to work, relaxing in our bed and cooking in the kitchen.

According to the *2019 China Digital Book Market Report*, consumers in mainland China read 7.99 books on average last year, 4.67 of which were hardcopy books while 3.32 of which were digital books. There are also statistics showing that the audiobook market in China is enjoying rapid growth as the market scale grew by one-fold in two years. In 2019, the market scale of the audiobook sector hit over six billion RMB with 478 million users. The Chinese audiobook market is witnessing the rise of a diverse pool of competitors. Besides the industry leader Ximalaya, we are also seeing the rise of Read for the Lazy (*Lanrentingshu*), Qingting FM, Migu Reading, Yuewen

Un Sio San



Un obtained the dual Bachelor degrees in Chinese Language and Art (film and television production) of Peking University and dual Master degrees in East Asia Studies and Asia Pacific Studies of University of Toronto with the research field in literature and movies. She won the Henry Luce Foundation Chinese Poetry & Translation Fellowships and had been the village residing poet in the Vermont Creative Studio. She was invited to attend many international poem festivals such as the one held in Portugal and worked as the lyricist of Macao's first original indoor opera *A Fragrant Dream*. She published some collections of poems in Cross-Strait regions, and has been engaged in academy and publication for long time and writes columns for media organisations in Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macao.

Reading, WeChat Reading, etc. We also have Audible from Amazon who enjoys the biggest market share around the globe. There is also Apple Books which mainly features foreign books and is eager to enter the Chinese market by rolling out more Chinese audiobooks.

You might think audiobooks' main audiences are old people who have bad eyesight. But as a matter of fact, the majority of audiobook readers are millennials of the Z generation, who tend to listen to audiobooks when getting ready for bed, commuting and doing housework. In contrast to the business model that believes people tend to consume cultural and creative products on weekends, audiobooks reflect the great potential that the industry has in fragmented time. The two-child policy in mainland China is also nurturing a greater prospect for audiobooks for children.

The rise of the audiobook sector is closely connected with influencers and celebrities. For example, The Poem For You, an audio poem brand in mainland China with over ten million users, had invited influential figures such as the Queen of Denmark, President of Ireland, Hollywood star Natalie Portman, Master Hsing Yun, famous director Jia Zhangke, popular actors, show hosts, athletes and Baidu's CEO, to read quality poems from both home and abroad for the audience. The Poem For You also invited You Zhangjing, a rising singer in mainland China to read my poem *Afternoon at Ninna-Ji Temple*. The audio poem attracted over a hundred thousand plays overnight. Then I was invited by Hangzhou Canal Poetry Club to read one of my poems *Japanese Rock Garden*. The audio poem can be found on Chinese podcast platform Ximalaya.

Besides traditional channels such as editor's picks, audiobook leaderboards, special columns in cooperation with publishers and audiobook festivals, artificial intelligence technology can also drive audiobooks forward. Let's take Xunfei Read as an example. The app utilises AI technology to provide customised book lists for users and supports audiobook versions in six different voices (there are deep male voice, cute voice, etc.). The app even allows users to switch the audiobook version from mandarin to other Chinese dialects. The user can enjoy customised voiceover service through voice-collecting function. In cases where left-behind children want to listen to their mother reading *Journey to the West*, you longing to listen to your ex reading you a love poem from Shakespeare, or you yourself reading *Time Raiders*, Xunfei Read can provide you with the needed service.

The increasing popularity of audiobooks also drives the development of new e-book readers, smart speakers, smart earphones, etc., making the immersive reading experience more possible. Migu Reading, for instance, is powered by features such as surround sound, 24-bit high sound quality, genre-based sound effect (for example epic sound effect for history books), VR reading experience, etc. These are the reading experiences that traditional books cannot provide.

I finished reading *Call Me by Your Name's* English version two years ago and I still long for more. Unfortunately, the audiobook version that I could find is first-person narration read by Armie Hammer. I listened to it for some time and still felt it sounded weird. Then I just stopped. Luckily, since the audiobook market is receiving more and more attention, I believe the same story will be told by different voice actors and with a variety of background music in the future. This will mean that it will no longer be a dream for you to listen to your idols telling you stories for getting ready for bed.

## The taste of sayu

“What do you drink when having a meal?” A Japanese friend asked me, who was surprised to find that we don’t really drink alcohol during dinner.

I instantly thought about a friend from Hong Kong who believes in naturopathy. That friend once told me, while frowning at me, not to drink anything during dinner because it can help keep the stomach in normal shape. When I was little, there would always be a big bowl of soup on the table during dinner. Everyone would have a spoon for drinking the soup. The whole family was basically sharing love and saliva when drinking the soup. It is actually hard to change a habit that was formed since childhood. So I would still always drink some stuff when having a meal. I couldn’t really ease the worried look of my Hong Kong friend.

“We drink warm water...” I know that Japanese people are used to drinking iced water or tea so my answer might sound a bit pretentious. I wasn’t quite sure about whether my answer would be satisfying.

“Ah... warm water? Warm water tastes nice indeed,” my friend said, looking stunned by my answer while drinking down the rest of beer in the glass. “I also love drinking warm water. I drink it in the morning after I get up from the bed. But I can’t drink over two glasses.”

In recent years, drinking warm water has been increasingly considered as a beauty diet that is good for people’s health. I believe my friend was genuine about warm water being tasty. In Japanese, there is a saying “*Karada ni oishi*”, which means that our body feels the delicious taste as our organs are relaxed by it instead of our tastebuds. When our body is feeling comfortable, our spirit is also refreshed.

Japanese people call warm water as *sayu*. “*Yu*” means boiling water. That’s why we refer to bathing as *yu*. The hot water we pour into teapots and cup noodle is also *yu*. But when hot water becomes some sort of beverage, we call it *sayu*. The white colour of *sayu* symbolises purity and clarity. There is no flavour, colour, spice, dirt, or harmful substance in a cup of *sayu*. When you pronounce *sayu* in Japanese, you might think of warm soup that radiates heat and gives you warmth in cold winter.

In most occasions, we would treat guests with cold drinks or hot tea. Only when there is a Japanese tea ceremony that involves the Way of Tea will we serve our guests with *sayu*. Japanese aesthetics is concentrated in the Way of Tea. The teaware we use for making tea, the flowers and plants between beds, the Japanese painting on the wall, the cracking sound from the burning charcoals, the sound of moving fabrics, the tea flavour in the air, the buzzing of some insects outside the window and the anticipated breaths in the room... all these are moments of beauty, about seasons, about people. The quiet room with a simplistic design is full of beauty and sensation that require the guests to appreciate with an open heart. A cup of *sayu* is offered before the tea ceremony to wash away the noises the guests are hearing from their mundane life. Some tea ceremony hosts will offer a cup of *sayu* after the guests have tasted *usucha* (thin tea). *Sayu* tastes soft and sweet after it has been boiling for quite some time in the pot. The tea ceremony host will then pour *sayu* into the teacup spoon by spoon in front of the guests. The tea will have the flavour of matcha, as well as *sayu*. The bitterness we taste from the tea will make *sayu* even sweeter. “*Sayu* is tasty,” this is the message that our body, our soul and tongue send to us.

I heard that there is more to offer the guests with *sayu* in a tea ceremony. The caffeine in matcha can affect our body’s ability to absorb iron. *Sayu* boiled by an iron pot can help supplement the iron we lose because of drinking tea. But I guess people no longer really consider this factor when offering guests with *sayu* because nutrition is very accessible nowadays.

The tea bowl that serves matcha is called *chawan*. After finishing a meal in an *izakaya* Japanese bar, *hōjicha* (a type of Japanese green tea) will be served with *yunomi*, a kind of narrow teacups. As for the teaware that is used for serving *sayu* and *sencha* (another form of Japanese green tea), we call it *kumidashi chawan*. *Kumidashi chawan* are mostly made of white porcelain with a wide cup mouth, which is best for showcasing the clarity of the tea. But why the *chawan* for serving hot water is named as *kumidashi* (water-drawing)? I have done quite a lot of research to look for a clear answer but I failed to find a satisfying one. Perhaps in a tea ceremony, getting water from the iron pot is considered as “drawing water”. Teawares were named according to their function in a tea ceremony because of tradition. Nowadays we don’t really pay that much attention to it anymore. Many young families don’t even make tea anymore and only drink bottled tea at home.

*Kumidashi chawan* is mostly used for treating guests. But our own *kumidashi chawan*, which is a ceramic clayware made by artist Naoto Ishii from Kyotamba, is used for drinking *sayu*. Our *kumidashi chawan* is a short teacup with a wide cup mouth. The boiling *sayu* can cool down very fast to a mild temperature adequate for drinking in our *kumidashi chawan*. Perhaps it is true that cold tea doesn’t taste nice. But I believe our *kumidashi chawan* provides us with just the right *sayu* drinking experience. We just need to drink the tea as soon as possible then it will be all fine. Since our *chawan* is quite wide, we don’t feel safe to hold it with one hand. When we are drinking with it, we would end up holding it with two hands, as if we are saying “*Itadakimasu*” (“I humbly receive” in English). A cup of warm water doesn’t come to us easily. Snows fall from the sky into lakes. The water from lakes is drawn to us by technologies and infrastructure that were built with the efforts of countless engineers and waterway workers. That’s how we can have access to water that soothes our throat. We are not only receiving gifts from nature, but also from hardworking workers. It makes it even more important for us to not take things for granted during a hard time when the world is undergoing a variety of challenges.

Ron Lam



Japan-based writer and traveller, specialising in design, lifestyle and travel journalism. Ron previously served as an editor of *MING Magazine*, *ELLE Decoration* and *CREAM*.

## Finnish happiness

I first met my Finnish friend S in Shanghai. S doesn't speak much, appearing to be a bit afraid of social awkwardness. Then I read a comic book named *Finnish Nightmares: An Irreverent Guide to Life's Awkward Moments*, which shows readers many different scenarios that bring social anxiety to Finnish people through fun drawings. One example in the comic book shows how a Finnish person will think the bus is already full if every row has been occupied by one passenger.

The Finnish character in the comic book is just like my friend S, who is quirky and seems indifferent. But it doesn't necessarily mean S is not feeling happy. We tend to hold the assumption that people who are happy will make all the noise they know and party like Latin Americans non-stop in a carnival. In our perception, happiness is coupled with laughter. But Finland is a country that enjoys silence. The Scandinavian country has topped the World Happiness Report for several years as the happiest country in the world. When visiting Finland, the impression that most people will get is Finland is very quiet. Perhaps, silence is the country's preferred way of communication.

If you look at different types of country index, you will probably notice that Finland excels in education, social welfare, healthcare, etc., which makes it truly a role model among nations. In Finland, income tax is incredibly high. But that also means society's overall wealth can be equally distributed, allowing the government to make use of tax to improve life quality in the country. When celebrating the 100th anniversary of its independence, Finland gave itself a special birthday gift: a library. This truly shows how much Finnish people value knowledge. Perhaps having knowledge and the freedom to pursue knowledge are the source of happiness for them. The library is so much more than a space that houses books. It was designed as a living meeting place of the city, encouraging people to do more things than reading books in the library. Different workshops can be found in the

library. Local residents can use sewing machines, 3D printers and even laser cutting machines through the workshops available in the library. Besides borrowing books, local residents can also borrow a variety of entertainment items from the library, including board games, iPads, earphones and more.

Finland is famous for its education. The book *Finland Unveiled* wrote about how learning for children in Finland can be incredibly fun while providing kids with the opportunity to expand their international outlook. For example, a Finnish school will use the national flag to teach proportion in a math class. This allows children to also learn geography while learning mathematics. Finland's diverse education perhaps teaches Finnish people to be inclusive as well. United Nations' World Happiness Report also takes the happiness of foreign immigrants into consideration. If even foreigners will feel happy in a particular society, then the locals will definitely love their life there. Knowledge comes from our life experiences. The boundary between learning and different subjects has been erased, inspiring Finnish people to think wild. This is perhaps the reason why Finland, home to only 5.5 million people, can be a robust hub of technology and design. Famous international brands such as Nokia, Marimekko and Iittala were all home-grown in Finland.

Finland's happiness is even considered as the country's soft power. The local tourism department had launched a free programme—Rent a Finn, for tourists get to know Finland's happiness better through interaction with the locals. "Finnish people's happiness comes from their close connection with nature," a tour guide from Rent a Finn said. "Whenever I have questions that I cannot find answers to, I would turn to nature for answers." Finland's capital Helsinki is actually a small town surrounded by nature. You can escape the bustling city life with a 30-minute bus ride or ferry.

If you wish to experience the Finnish way of happiness, you can look up the Finnish word *kalsarikännit*. Lots of discussions can go into this word. Some people even wrote books that specifically talk about *kalsarikännit*. The word might appear to be vulgar at first since it can be directly translated as drinking in your underwear. It actually means "me time" for Finnish people, which they care the most. Drinking in one's underwear means relaxing in the most comfortable environment. The local government even designed emojis for *kalsarikännit*. It is said that Finland is the first country to produce country-specific emojis inspired by national identity and culture.

We have been grown accustomed to being surrounded by people and looking at our phone all the time. We are having less and less quality time for ourselves. It is quite common for us to rely on others to bring happiness to us. Our happiness is established on others' expectation, which can drastically change like the clouds in the sky, turning the sunny weather into a downpour. Finnish people's *kalsarikännit* is a reminder that tells us we should try to have some me time and just be alone. Then the interference around us will gradually disappear. If a person can find happiness when he is alone, then that happiness cannot be easily taken away.

When Finnish journalist Miska Rantanen was writing about *kalsarikännit* in his book, he wrote that *kalsarikännit* wants people to face their true self with total honesty. This is similar to travelling alone. When you are travelling alone, you might lose the fun of having a bunch of people around, but you also attain soberness for yourself. This is a must-learn lesson for everyone in life.

Yap Seow Choong



Yap loves design, travel and everything beautiful in life. He writes for various media about travel and design and has published works, including *Wander Bhutan and Myanmar Odyssey*. Formerly publisher of Lonely Planet (China Office), Yap is now Chief Content Officer of Youpu Apps, a Beijing based travel app company.

## BOK at Tokyo Performing Arts Meeting in Yokohama

Johnny Tam



Theatre director, art director of the Macao Experimental Theatre, has been living and working in Shanghai and Berlin. Representative works from these years are *Mr. Shi and His Lover* and *Lungs*.

Every year, TPAM (Tokyo Performing Arts Meeting) held in February in Yokohama will attract artists, theatre companies and investors from different parts of Asia. The attendees are mostly producers from the industry. There are also people like me who are both executive producer and content creator from the theatre play sector signing up for participating in the event. Our goal is to see as many good performances with potential as possible in a short time, to engage in cultural exchange between regions, make contacts and seek cooperation.

This year is the second time for BOK to attend TPAM. Different from last year, the venue we were using was specifically reserved for showcasing productions from Macao. This means that the entire programme was more like a special art project that allows the audience to have a glimpse of the independent artists' experience and life in Macao. This project showcases productions from the perspective of a region, no longer through a fragmented perspective. This year BOK teamed up with Point View Art Association to make "Made-in-Macao", a themed project that showed productions that set their stories in Macao to the audience at TPAM. The four productions that were shown at TPAM have distinctive features but also share some common grounds.

### Experimenting with sound

Two years ago, local acappella band Water Singers brought BOK's 2017 production *Picturesque* to TPAM. *Picturesque* is an experimental production created in a theatre. A musical work of mine, *Mr Shi and His Lover*, which was made earlier than *Picturesque*, also attended TPAM in 2017. Fast forward to this year, the four productions that were shown at TPAM are all performances done through live music. This reflects the production trend in Macao to some extent. More artists working with sound and music are entering the theatre scene as more local theatres are paying more attention to having original sound effect and music. Sound experiment has also become an important way for directors, choreographers and actors to innovate and make new contents.

### Cross-cultural performances

Every time we go abroad for exchange opportunities, we are provided with a chance to have a new understanding of our own identity and culture. It is also a way for us to test our productions' ability to catch the attention of different audiences on an international platform and whether our productions can meet our expectations. The productions at this year's TPAM "Made-in-Macao" are gateways for the audience to have a cross-cultural adventure. In previous years, we paid attention to whether the production teams were consisted entirely of local talents to ensure they were 100% made-in-Macao. This year has been different. We care more about social issues and art-related matter that are happening around the world. That's why we could see themes such as reflection on war, industrialisation and childhood anxiety in the performances. These productions were made by professional talents from different cultural backgrounds, who got together to paint a picture of what the seemingly prosperous Macao looks like in different people's eyes.

As a local theatre production incubator, BOK has spent lots of efforts on connecting artists from different neighbouring regions and facilitating exchange. I believe we need a more diverse environment and spaces in Macao to help local productions thrive. We cannot simply showcase our work on the same platform over and over again. We need to find the right expression that is more flexible and powerful and in line with modern lifestyle when showing our works to the audience. We are also looking forward to productions from Macao winning more achievements in Asia in the coming future.



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